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# Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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Chair: Lisa Hepfner





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● (0815)

[English]

**The Chair (Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 41 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Before we begin, I'd ask all in-person participants to read the guidelines on the updated cards on the table in front of you. These are measures in place to help prevent audio feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, especially our interpreters. You will notice a QR code on the card that links to a short awareness video.

Pursuant to the routine motion adopted by the committee, I can confirm that the witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of this meeting.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before you speak, and all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we're meeting today for our third meeting regarding our study on the state of creative and performance spaces across Canada.

Before we go any further, I want to remark to members that you may have seen this letter from a witness from last week. We received it in our inboxes recently. I'll read it out. It's from Jennifer Brewin of the Globe Theatre, who appeared on May 28 at meeting number 39.

She says:

I have concerns about comments made by two members of the committee, MPs Kerry Diotte and Kevin Waugh, on May 28, 2026. They voiced complaints about a play presented by Regina's Globe Theatre.

Go ahead, Mrs. Thomas.

**Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** I'm sorry, but I'm just curious: Since when is it customary practice to read the correspondence that is sent to this committee? I've never seen this done before.

**The Chair:** No, it's not common, but I thought it was a good point for this committee to talk about how we treat witnesses going forward.

This is a witness who felt very attacked on a topic that didn't have anything to do with the subject we were studying, so I just wanted to ask members to perhaps be sensitive to the fact that a lot of the witnesses we invite appear in good faith. They're not politicians, and we should treat them with respect.

**Rachael Thomas:** On that point of order, I can understand that. I do think that we need to conduct ourselves with respect at this committee, both towards our colleagues across the way and towards the witnesses who come. My concern is that there are two individuals who are named in this letter. They are certainly not the only ones who have asked questions that have caused discomfort at this table. There have been members from all parties who have done that over the time that we've been at this committee.

It seems as though these individuals—my colleagues—are being targeted, because you're choosing to read their names into the record when you could simply remind the members at this table that we need to be respectful. I would ask you to reconsider, Chair.

● (0820)

**The Chair:** That's a fair comment, and I'm happy to leave it at that.

Members, just keep in mind that we invite witnesses in good faith to come and give us their thoughts on a specifically stated study topic, and we shouldn't veer too far from that or treat them as if they were politicians who are on the firing line.

Go ahead, Mr. Waugh.

**Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC):** Madam Chair, you've read my name and Mr. Diotte's name into the record already this morning. Is there any way you can omit those?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry...?

**Kevin Waugh:** Is there any way you can omit what you have just said?

My name is already on record this morning, and so is Mr. Diotte's, so it's kind of a point of privilege. You've already mentioned both of our names, and that's not customary around this table or in any other committees, so I'm just wondering how we can solve this issue. Is there any way that you can strike both of our names from the record?

**The Chair:** I'm not sure. Mr. Clerk...?

No, there is no way. We'll leave it as it is, Mr. Waugh. I'm sorry if you feel that your privilege was damaged in any way, but I just wanted to make the point that we did get this letter, and I found it concerning. We'll move on from there.

Go ahead, Mr. Diotte.

**Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** As a point of order, I had comments on those videos saying that she gave as good as she got, so I think I gave her full opportunity to rebut any of the statements that I made or the questions that I had.

**The Chair:** I would agree with that. I think she handled herself very well. I just wanted to make the point that we should be sensitive, and I apologize for reading those names.

We will move on. I hope that this didn't strike fear into the witnesses who are with us today.

We have Ryan Filsinger, the CEO of Iron Fox Games, with us in the room. No, I'm sorry; he's online by video conference.

From Arts on the Ave Edmonton Society, Christy Morin is here with us in the room.

From Glasgow Square Theatre, Morgan Simms is here with us.

From the Society for Arts and Technology, we have Jenny Thibault by video conference, and from the Union des artistes, we have Tania Kontoyanni and Alexandre Curzi.

Welcome to all.

Each organization will have five minutes for an opening statement, and then we will turn to questions from members.

We'll start with Iron Fox Games.

Ryan Filsinger, you have the floor, sir, for five minutes. Go ahead.

**Ryan Filsinger (Chief Executive Officer, Iron Fox Games):** Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for the invitation to appear before you today.

This study is one I take personally, and I'm grateful for the committee's commitment to understanding how best to support the next generation of artists.

I'm the founder and CEO of Iron Fox Games, a video game development studio based in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. I've worked in this industry for nearly 20 years in the town where I grew up. Our studio has the core value of creating the next generation of game developers. Thus, this topic is quite important to me.

We've benefited from the support of those who came before us. Many of the young artists and developers working in Atlantic Canada today have careers here because of provincial and federal programs that made those opportunities possible. I see it as part of my job to make sure that the next group coming through has the same chance I had.

When most Canadians picture a performance space, they think of a theatre or a rehearsal hall. For game developers, it's a studio floor, a home office and collaboration across many time zones, often all at once. In practice, our creative space is the ecosystem itself—the

tools, the distribution platforms we use, the training programs, the studios that give young artists somewhere to start.

When those pieces contract, the opportunities disappear with them. The pullback that happened in the game industry following the boom we saw during COVID has already started removing some of those opportunities for the next generation.

The Maritimes is not where most people expect to find game development, but I believe the track record speaks for itself. Our region developed the first game shown on stage by Steve Jobs at the launch of the App Store back in 2008. Our studios have shipped titles under franchises such as The Simpsons, Doom and Marvel, to name just a few.

What's been built here through VideogamesPEI, training at local schools and support from Innovation PEI and ACOA took years to put into place, but it's still quite vulnerable at this stage. The wave of major regional studio closures, such as at Microsoft, Ubisoft and Electronic Arts, is a reminder of that. Even so, we are finding our footing, with new studios opening in the wake of those closures and with events such as XP Game Connect Atlantic in Halifax, which is happening tomorrow.

Our creative spaces are being eroded from three directions at once. First, post-secondary programs in game design are among the first to be cut when Atlantic school budgets tighten. These programs are the talent pipeline for our small studios.

Second, there is international competition. Developers in eastern Europe, India and now Southeast Asia are producing equivalent work for 40% to 60% less cost, and publishers are acting on that math. It puts direct downward pressure on what Canadian studios can charge and what Canadian artists can realistically earn.

Third, there is AI. According to the GDC's "2025 State of the Game Industry Report", one in 10 developers lost their job in the last year, with narrative designers and visual artists taking the heaviest losses. Thirty per cent of all active developers believe AI is actively harming the industry, nearly double the year prior. Entry-level creative roles in which young Canadians can start their careers are disappearing quickly. The full effect of AI is still quite unknowable in our industry. However, skilled people are needed to take the best advantage of it.

Canada's video game industry contributed \$5.1 billion to the GDP of Canada in 2024. It employs 34,000 workers at an average salary of \$102,000 per year and generates 88% of its revenue from exports. P.E.I. posted the country's fastest provincial GDP growth in that same period, at 3.6%, and this sector played a part in that story.

That position won't hold without active support from programs, studios and talent pipelines behind it. This committee has the opportunity to treat creative spaces in the digital arts as economic infrastructure through support for mentorship programs, experimental publishing models and an expanded commitment to programs such as the CMF and other regional initiatives.

● (0825)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll turn next to Arts on the Ave Edmonton Society.

Christy Morin, welcome. You have the floor now for five minutes.

**Christy Morin (Executive Director, Arts on the Ave Edmonton Society):** Thank you so much. Good morning, everybody. Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, and thank you to Canadian Heritage. It is a department that we have grown to love over the past 20 years of working and building Arts on the Ave in Edmonton, Alberta.

Let me share the story of Arts on the Ave first. Thirty-two years ago, my husband and I wanted to buy a house. When we looked at Edmonton and the landscape, we saw that we could buy a house in the Alberta Avenue district. That district was an old, historical neighbourhood. Though it was widely seen to have a lot of crime and grime, I was a theatre artist and it was affordable for us, so we thought: Let's do it. We bought the house.

We went for a picnic. We put down our gingham blanket, and there was a fellow who was chasing a woman with a two-by-four across the picnic. We looked and saw needles scattered everywhere. My husband and I asked ourselves, "Is this the place that we need to make a home?"

It was a big question, but as we began to live in the community, we began to bump into local artists in the little neighbourhood pubs and in the little cultural grocery stores, and we began to collect and gather in homes. It was fantastic. We began to ask the question of what the arts can do to build community. This was a neighbourhood that needed a lot of love, and our hope and prayer was that we could edify this community through the arts.

The answer was the Kaleido Family Arts Festival. We closed five blocks of 118 Avenue, which was known as the strip, and we filled the rooftops with artists. Sidewalks, alleyways, storefronts and vacant lots were filled with theatre, dance, music, visual arts, artisans and street performances for three full days, and it transformed the neighbourhood. The neighbours, the newspapers, everyone started talking. Instead of saying "prostitution meets produce" and talking about crime, grime and exploitation, people began to talk about hope, creativity, resilience and what the arts can do—they change people. People see a neighbourhood. They can change themselves, and we change each other.

From there, we began a space, The Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse, an art social enterprise. Everyone said, "We'll give you six months, Christy, to see if this will work." We've been there for 19 years, but we are in a critical time right now, because funding is difficult. It is our office. It is our hub. It is our performance space.

We are also looking at building ArtsCommon 118 in the next three years.

Next came Deep Freeze: A Byzantine Winter Festival, a franco-phonie, Ukrainian, Asian and Latino winter festival—all things winter in Edmonton, including heritage, storytelling, music and culture. It was two days in which everything came alive again on 118 Avenue.

The impacts, however, extend far beyond the festivals. Arts and culture reduce isolation, build belonging, support local businesses, animate spaces, cause vacant lots to come to life, strengthen food security and create safer, more connected communities. You all know this. You're the champions who do this, but we need your help to find sustainable ways to do it. Our spaces are in jeopardy.

Arts and cultural programming create those connections. I read a report from the Edmonton Arts Council and found that arts and festivals generate more than \$171 million annually in economic activity in Edmonton.

The arts are not simply an expense; they're an investment. Where there is art, there is life. There's connection. There's support, and there's vibrancy. Our little organization is an incredible team of people who not only do art but also help newcomers. The grassroots organization that we work in doesn't just do one thing. We're hybrid, and that's what makes it difficult with Canadian Heritage. We don't fit in a box nicely. When it comes to looking at any kind of specialty work that we need—say, for the practice of accessibility, community and the artist's practice—the definition of professional artist seems to be a hindrance.

Canada's increasing cultural diversity and the arrival of many newcomers has been great in our community. We support them. We help them. We give them a leg-up. We help them write their grants. However, the pot is stretching, and there's no extra funding for those individuals, which makes it really difficult.

We also encourage Canadian Heritage to focus on four actions. The first is defining "professional artist". The endowment program seems to be a key piece to sustainability.

The second is increasing long-term operational multi-year funding for cultural spaces. That is a piece right now that is really in jeopardy.

The third is taking a renewed look at the infrastructure—what's old, what is new and what is to come for the next generation.

The fourth is building communities through arts and heritage programs. As I said, it's fantastic, but we as an arts organization are helping the younger arts groups try to manage and to walk through those grant programs.

What began as a small grassroots movement in our struggling neighbourhood has become a major force in Edmonton. I'm so proud of our team and our thousands of volunteers, but we can't do this alone. Arts, heritage and culture are not separate from community safety, economic development, mental well-being, belonging or neighbourhood renewal.

● (0830)

We have linked arms with you for two decades, and we are so glad we have. We are so thankful to have this conversation and the many more to come.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Morgan Simms from the Glasgow Square Theatre is next. You now have the floor for five minutes.

**Morgan Simms (Manager, Program, Culture, and Events, Glasgow Square Theatre):** Good morning, Madam Chair and honourable members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I have the honour of being the program, culture and events manager for the Town of New Glasgow and Glasgow Square Theatre, a municipally owned venue in a rural community within northern Nova Scotia of just under 10,000 residents.

Our theatre is the only professional arts and cultural space within the town and a central part of our downtown core. I approach this work from the perspective of managing a rural municipal theatre in which cultural programming is a daily balance of artistic value, community access and financial responsibility. Our venue is fully municipally funded by the Town of New Glasgow, with approximately \$400,000 in annual support. While modest compared to that for venues of similar capacity, this funding has remained stable despite increased financial pressure. For 2026-27, there were no cuts, and over \$40,000 has been committed for capital upgrades.

I am grateful for this support, but I recognize the ongoing challenge municipalities face in balancing culture with complex social issues, policing, fire services and other priorities. Cultural funding is increasingly required to demonstrate measurable value despite its broad community impact.

At a local level, a sold-out show extends well beyond our stage. A sold-out show means hotel stays, full restaurants and increased activity for our downtown core. In rural communities, venues like ours are both cultural anchors and economic drivers.

One challenge is access to federal funding. Many programs, including those under the Canada music fund, exclude municipally operated venues from direct operational support. While infrastructure and show-specific funding exist, there is a growing need to include wider federal support for municipal cultural spaces that carry both public service and fiscal responsibility.

We are fortunate to receive regional support through Music Nova Scotia's community presenters program, which helps offset artist guarantees for Nova Scotian artists and strengthens the ability to take performing risks while maintaining access to live performances.

We are also proud members of the Atlantic Presenters Association, a member-based, multidisciplinary arts organization that connects performing arts presenters across Atlantic Canada through shared programs, resources and professional development. The APA is essential in strengthening collaboration across a geographically dispersed region. Without this network, presenters would be far less connected, making it significantly more difficult to share artists' knowledge and opportunities across Atlantic performing landscapes.

Our programming focuses heavily on emerging and local Canadian artists. While these artists may draw strong support in their hometowns, that does not always translate into ticket sales in smaller markets like mine. As presenters, we often take intentional financial risks on culturally important programming that may not fully recoup costs. Wider federal operational support would help reduce this burden and allow greater investment in impactful programming for our community.

A further pressure is the impact of large-scale ticketing platforms and dynamic pricing. As major touring acts become increasingly expensive, many Canadians are forced to choose between one major event and several smaller community performances, typically priced at \$20 to \$40 at our venue. Once that discretionary spending is used, support for local venues declines, limiting access to emerging artists and straining grassroots spaces.

Despite this, we are seeing growth at Glasgow Square. Through consistent engagement at regional and national industry conferences, we have strengthened relationships with artists and agents alike and positioned ourselves as an active presenter of emerging talent. This has resulted in a year-over-year ticket sales increase for us of approximately \$60,000.

However, increased sales do not always translate into profitability, as some shows are intentionally programmed for artistic development rather than commercial return.

To address affordability, we've launched Moments for Everyone with our regional library. It provides people with free access to tickets using their library card, with 15 to 25 tickets redeemed per show, absorbed directly through our operating budget. Many participants tell us that it's the only way they can regularly access live performances within our community.

We're also investing in emerging artists through Songs from the Square, a monthly showcase featuring two Atlantic Canadian artists with guaranteed performance fees. It reduces barriers for artists to get on our stage while offering a pay-what-you-can model for our audiences.

Beyond culture, our venue supports broader community goals, including the attraction and retention of health care workers through Healthy Pictou County, a community-based health recruitment and retention initiative focused on recruiting and supporting health care professionals in Pictou County. We have seen that access to cultural life can influence decisions for these professionals to stay in or relocate to our region.

In closing, Glasgow Square Theatre is the heartbeat of our community. As we mark 25 years, we continue to navigate aging infrastructure and audience development while remaining committed to our mission.

• (0835)

We believe that the value of venues like ours is measured not only in ticket sales but also in cultural and social economic strength. If rural performance spaces disappear, the next generation of Canadian touring artists will lose early-stage discovery platforms and emerging artists will lose essential stages to grow and sustain their careers.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next, we'll go back online to the Society for Arts and Technology.

Jenny Thibault, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Jenny Thibault (Executive Director, Society for Arts and Technology):** Good morning.

I have been the executive director of the Society for Arts and Technology, the SAT, for five years now. This organization is celebrating its 30th anniversary this week.

Since 1996, the SAT has been dedicated to creating, disseminating and researching digital arts and electronic music in the heart of Montreal's Quartier des spectacles, or entertainment district. Over the years, it has become a pioneering site that has inspired many other spaces, both here and abroad.

I am here today because I would like to talk about the fundamental role that cultural spaces play in our society. Before a work exists, before an artist can meet their audience, they first need spaces to let their imaginations flourish, to experiment, to collaborate, to create and to take risks.

Places like the SAT are much more than buildings: They are essential cultural infrastructures. These are places where artists develop their practice, where disciplines meet, where communities come together and where the artistic practices of tomorrow are built.

For close to 30 years, the SAT has supported artists working at the intersection of arts and technology. We manage specialized infrastructure, including an immersive dome, creative research labs, studios and advanced technology equipment, which remains difficult to access elsewhere. These spaces not only support artists, but also contribute to the international profile of Canada and Montreal as hubs for digital creation, immersive experiences and electronic music.

However, these places are facing significant challenges today. Operating costs are rising rapidly. The findings are the same, whether we are talking about dance, theatre, music, circus or digital art: the evolution of costs related to the operation and maintenance of cultural venues far exceeds inflation.

A study conducted by Théâtres associés recently found that average costs related to the management of performing arts venues increased by 53% between 2017 and 2024, while inflation was around 20% over the same period. So there is a major lag, a gap of 33%.

Cultural organizations often have no choice but to prioritize the maintenance of their infrastructure, often at the expense of their mission, which is to support creation and present works. In the case of technological infrastructure, the challenge is even greater. Equipment is aging rapidly, and technologies are constantly evolving.

While programs support the creation of projects, they have a harder time supporting the maintenance, modernization and operation of the infrastructure itself. The result is that, to maintain this infrastructure, we have to reduce our programming, our activities and our artistic support.

Our infrastructure is permanent. It therefore requires long-term support mechanisms, because it becomes extremely difficult to plan for the future when funding remains ad hoc and subject to intense competition.

These issues are particularly important when we talk about the next generation of artists. We provide residences, mentorship, training, specialized equipment and, often, their first opportunities to present their work. The next generation is evolving in a particularly difficult context: growing economic insecurity, limited access to professional spaces, increased challenges related to the development of an artistic career, and so on. Supporting cultural infrastructure means directly supporting current and future artists, as well as our collective ability to innovate and shine.

Lastly, we also need to talk about another issue: the growing concentration of the cultural sector. We are operating in a context where a few major players occupy an increasingly important place. Independent venues and cultural non-profit organizations play a vital role in our ecosystem, as they develop new talent, take artistic risks and ensure cultural diversity. They provide spaces for artists who don't always find their place in more commercial models.

Canada's cultural vitality depends precisely on this balance, on the coexistence of small, medium and large players and on the diversity of voices, models and spaces. Cultural spaces are not expenses; they are key levers. They enable artists to create, communities to come together and Canada to remain a leader in creation and innovation. Supporting these spaces today means investing directly in the next generation of artists and in the cultural vitality of tomorrow.

Thank you.

• (0840)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Before giving the floor to the representatives of the Union des artistes, I'm going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes, as we have a witness experiencing technical difficulties. I want to make sure that everything is working well before we continue.

• (840)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (845)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting back to order.

We will now hear from the representatives of the Union des artistes.

Ms. Kontoyanni and Mr. Curzi, you have the floor for a total of five minutes.

**Tania Kontoyanni (Chair, Union des artistes):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Members of the committee, thank you for having us today as part of this essential study on the state of creative and performance spaces in Canada.

The Union des artistes represents more than 13,000 professional artists in Quebec and Canada, working in the performing arts, audiovisual and sound recording fields. We represent actors, dancers, singers and variety artists, among others. Our mission is to defend their professional, economic and social interests and to protect their working conditions.

The artists we represent perform across all cultural venues in all regions of the country, from the largest venues to the smallest venues. They are therefore directly dependent on the state of these spaces in order to practise their occupation. It is from this perspective, that of the interpreters, that we wish to contribute to your work.

We have carefully read the report recently tabled by Théâtres associés, "Nos scènes fragilisées, nos arts vivants menacés". This document, co-signed by 34 Quebec venues, sheds light, with very concrete figures and examples, on a reality we have been seeing for

several years on the ground: our cultural infrastructure is crumbling, and this has a direct impact on the working conditions of our artists.

In performance, rehearsal and creative venues, there are problems with heating, outdated technical equipment and inadequate sanitation facilities. In addition, there are issues specific to certain disciplines, such as the quality of floors for dancers, which is essential to preventing injuries. These conditions are not anecdotal; they are widespread and directly affect the health, safety and dignity of artists at work.

Beyond these immediate issues, the report highlights a much broader systemic problem: operating and maintenance costs for venues are rising much faster than revenues and public support. When work becomes urgent, organizations often have no choice but to dip into production budgets to deal with it. This is where the impact on artists becomes particularly concerning.

In concrete terms, this means: shows put on with fewer artistic means; smaller casts, meaning fewer artists at work; lower fees, despite already very real precarity; less rehearsal time; and, as a result, lower contributions to the social safety net, particularly for group insurance and registered retirement savings plans.

Therefore, maintaining buildings gradually erodes conditions for artistic practice conditions, but also the economic security of artists. This is in addition to other pressures that you've also heard about in your work.

At the Scènes de musique alternatives du Québec, which plays a key role in the development of careers and the discoverability of emerging artists, we see chronic underfunding and significant real estate insecurity, since the majority of these venues are rented and therefore exposed to significant rent increases and real estate speculation.

In general, when budgets stagnate, whether in festivals or venues, it is risk-taking that is set aside. It is often the next generation and artistic diversity that suffers first. Added to this is an increasing concentration of the live performance market in the hands of large integrated groups, such as Live Nation, for example, which control both distribution, ticketing, several venues and a growing part of the ecosystem.

Taken together, all these factors create a vicious circle: venues become more expensive to maintain, art budgets are compressed and artists' conditions deteriorate.

However, the public is there. Venues are filling up, festivals are attracting people and tours are working. In short, the appetite for the performing arts is real. The problem is not a lack of vitality in the sector; it's a structural imbalance in the way we fund and support the infrastructure that makes that vitality possible.

In this context, one of the requests made by venues seems essential to us: the establishment of stable and predictable funding for cultural infrastructure.

• (0850)

A fund like that would ensure that the investments needed to maintain, upgrade and modernize spaces are truly dedicated to these needs and not taken from artistic budgets. We are currently seeing that, when infrastructure is not adequately funded, creators and artists are the ones who pay the price. Salaries decline, work opportunities become scarcer and the very foundations of their social safety net are weakened.

The Canadian government has committed to strengthening the social safety net for artists, but in reality, without adequate support for infrastructure, they are still paying the price. We can't claim to be improving their living conditions while undermining them through building maintenance. This paradox must be remedied.

Providing stand-alone support for creative and performance spaces means protecting much more than buildings. It means preserving the integrity of artistic work and the living conditions of the people who are central to our culture. It also means ensuring that works continue to be created, performed and shared with the public and that artists can make a decent living.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

We will now turn to questions from members, starting with Mrs. Thomas for six minutes.

You have the floor.

**Rachael Thomas:** Thank you very much. Thank you to our witnesses for taking the time to be here.

My first question goes to Mr. Filsinger of Iron Fox Games.

You seem to be a really great Canadian success story. Congratulations.

• (0855)

**Ryan Filsinger:** Thank you very much.

**Rachael Thomas:** I was doing a bit of research, and you had an interview in which you talked about your first year of business. You made just over \$2 million in revenue. I would imagine that several years later, it has only grown. Can you talk a little about your success as a company and what your current revenue streams are?

**Ryan Filsinger:** Yes. As a bit of history, we started Iron Fox four years ago, and a majority of that revenue was brought in through relationships I built 10 years ago.

I had started a small studio here under another larger company in Vancouver, called Kabam, and then there was a chance to go out on my own with some friends whom I've been working with forever. The majority of that revenue was through a work-for-hire stream. We were hired to develop games for a company based out of San Francisco, and that relationship was from work I had done earlier in the 2010s.

We have been able to grow our revenue slowly. There's been a lot of downward pressure on the industry here, mostly from some contextual stuff around COVID. When COVID happened, everybody stayed indoors for very long periods of time. Lots of people played

video games, and then they went outside after everything was done. Companies had overhired, and the amount of work out there has contracted significantly over the last few years, but we've been able to stay stable.

Right now, the majority of our revenue stream comes from two places. One is original work for other clients. We have a contract with Electronic Arts to make games for their Pogo.com platform, which is a casual games website. We make word and card games for them. Then we also do work for hire. Other companies contract us to fill needs through engineering design and art talent.

**Rachael Thomas:** That's awesome. Thank you very much.

We do well in the video game industry in Canada. We punch above our weight in this industry, and I would say we don't draw a lot of attention to it. It's this quiet thing that goes on in the background, but there's a great deal of success there.

You have received some funding from Canadian Heritage for support—

**Ryan Filsinger:** That is correct, yes.

**Rachael Thomas:** —along the way. Some of that funding was to create a video game called Card Scramble: Viola's Diner, and uniquely, this game was targeting 55-plus women.

Can you talk about that as a project?

**Ryan Filsinger:** Yes. It was born of an idea my creative director had, in which we mash up Scrabble and poker.

Instead of playing words on a Scrabble-like board, you score poker hands. It's closer to Yahtzee. We removed a lot of the poker terminology because of the gambling implications. There's no actual gambling in the game. It's just a scoring mechanic.

In the story we built, you are restoring a diner. You're a small-town girl who moves back home and restores her uncle's diner, which was where she learned the game.

We targeted that female age demographic and up because it was mostly through the platform that we partnered with, which was Pogo.com, under Electronic Arts. That demographic is a majority of their audience. We found that one of the things that people assume when they think about video games is that it's mostly male-dominated, 20 to 35 years of age, but that's not true anymore. It's pretty much a fifty-fifty split. It's just that most people in that age range would not self-identify as gamers, even though they're playing Candy Crush or word games like Wordle at The New York Times on a daily basis, and sometimes they play more than what the assumption would be if you asked anybody out on the street.

**Rachael Thomas:** About \$400,000 of funding was given—

**Ryan Filsinger:** That's correct.

**Rachael Thomas:** —in order to assist with the export of this game to make it more visible or available in other markets. I'm curious as to what a strategy looks like with regard to exporting a product like that.

**Ryan Filsinger:** The first time we made the game, it was available only on a dot-com. The strategy behind that was translations first. We had built it in English only, and the first thing we did was translate it into Spanish and French. We then exported it to multiple platforms. It is now available on the Windows store.

As well, we started to use a significant amount of those funds for advertising. The majority of the revenue comes through one stream, so it was to expand the streams of revenue across that project.

We own the intellectual property of that product outright. Sometimes in publishing deals, you have to give up some of your intellectual property, or percentages of it, to get it funded, but in this case, we own everything.

• (0900)

**Rachael Thomas:** What measure of success have you had with exporting the game and being able to collect revenue?

**Ryan Filsinger:** The majority of the success we've had is eyeballs. Roughly about 4,000 to 5,000 players per day play this game all across the world. Because of the revenue split that we have, the revenue coming in now is roughly between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a day. The majority of that right now is to pay off the minimum guarantee style of set-up that we have with our publisher.

**Rachael Thomas:** Is most of that revenue coming in from purchases of the game, or is it from ads?

**Ryan Filsinger:** No, it's from in-app transactions. We sell power-ups. We give you a puzzle, and then we sell you the solution—

**Rachael Thomas:** That's cool. Thank you very much.

**Ryan Filsinger:** —or new content, if you want. There's also a decoration component. Maybe you want the purple chair instead of the green chair. It's those kinds of things.

**Rachael Thomas:** That's awesome.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, as a 55-year-old woman, I can tell you that a cross between Scrabble and poker is right up my alley. I'm totally looking up that game.

**Ryan Filsinger:** It's at violasdiner.com, if I'm allowed to tell you where to play it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Al Soud, you now have the floor for six minutes.

**Fares Al Soud (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning, everyone. Thank you all for taking the time to be with us today.

Over the past few weeks, I've been watching a show called *Off Campus*. It's filmed here in Canada, with much of the cast and crew being Canadian. Many on that cast are now being considered overnight success stories. I think it's funny that we often recognize talent only when it's already on that upward trajectory.

The truth is that I think that characterization does more disservice to those in this space than anything else, because it fails to recognize the challenges they faced prior to becoming overnight successes. It really makes you wonder how much talent we miss out on—actors, singers...I'd even extend this to athletes—because we don't always ensure that they get those opportunities where and when they need them most. Local pubs, coffee shops and smaller venues are a fundamental part of artists' progression, and without them, we would risk missing out on some of the greatest talent our country might produce.

Mr. Simms, through your work overseeing cultural programming, concerts and festivals at Glasgow Square Theatre, you support both emerging and established artists while helping to bring cultural experiences to local audiences. How important are regional performance venues in helping artists develop their careers before they reach larger markets, and what would be lost if communities no longer had access to these local stages?

**Morgan Simms:** I strongly believe that regional performance spaces on a smaller level are integral to supporting touring artists and artists who are just trying to sustain careers in their hometowns or in their home provinces without having stages like ours, a 250-cap venue in a rural downtown. The touring artist who may come through this year and then in two years from now to play the Scotiabank arena in Halifax won't have the opportunity to develop their audience and get them to travel to bigger centres to see them.

To name one artist, we had The Beaches headline the Jubilee music festival a couple of years ago to an audience of about 2,500 people. Fast-forward to a year later, and they're playing to 10,000 folks at the Scotiabank arena in Halifax.

Without that discovery platform, artists don't get the opportunity to make connections with people and build audiences to get to that bigger stage. That's tenfold if those spaces disappeared tomorrow. If your pubs, your coffee shops, your small-capacity venues like mine disappeared tomorrow, where are local musicians going to make a living and where are they going to play?

I would argue that the people I bring in for a show with 20 people are just as impactful as someone on the Jubilee stage playing to 3,000 or 4,000 people. They're making connections with everybody in that room. After those 20-person audiences, if you fast-forward five or six years, you see that more often than not they're playing to thousands of people or getting supporting spots at festivals, and so on and so forth. No matter if it's a theatre company or a musician, they need those small stages to sustain their career trajectories or grow their careers.

• (0905)

**Fares Al Soud:** That's fantastic. Thank you for that.

Ms. Morin, you've led Arts on the Ave and helped establish initiatives, including the Kaleido Family Arts Festival and the Deep Freeze festival. In a few weeks, Mississauga's Celebration Square will become home to festivals and events weekly, if not almost daily, including World Cup watch parties and the Polish Days festival, which I think is coming up this Saturday, and countless others.

Cultural spending on festivals brings communities together in ways that very few other investments do. That can sometimes go unstated, and I'd like to give you the opportunity to speak to what these investments mean for Canadians, small businesses, artists and our country at large.

**Christy Morin:** Thank you so much.

Absolutely. The festivals are essential to our breath in Canada. We are a leader in Canada when it comes to festivals, and the multi-disciplinary festivals are really beginning to surge now. For a long time it was compartmentalized, so it would be a music festival or a theatre festival. Now it's beginning to go across...

I was reading that \$21 in the festivals equals \$29 in the economy. That number is significant, and we don't often talk about it. When we try to look at the economic impact in KPIs, we smaller organizations don't often have a data analyst sitting there calculating all those numbers, but most certainly it's a significant part of our national economy.

**Fares Al Soud:** Mr. Filsinger, anyone who knows me knows that video games are a hobby of mine. Ms. Thomas asked some great questions on this a moment ago. She is absolutely right that Canadians are phenomenal at video game development, and it's a significant entertainment export for us.

In your opening remarks, you referred to the need to recognize creative infrastructure as economic infrastructure. What types of investments do you believe are most important for attracting and retaining game development talent in smaller communities?

**Ryan Filsinger:** I'll point to the one we currently have here in Prince Edward Island, which is quite unique. It's through Innovation PEI, and it's called a video game labour rebate.

The primary difference between what we have here and the tax rebates that happen in Nova Scotia, Quebec and British Columbia is that it's a just-in-time style of program. Every 90 days I submit my payroll and get a rebate back on the talent. Most tax rebates don't show up until 18 or 24 months later. As we're a brand new start-up and cash is tight, having that money flow in every 90 days has kept us alive in periods when we lost contracts or had major life changes in the business.

That specific model is worth our giving up a small percentage. If I have my labour in Nova Scotia or Quebec, I can get upwards of 40% back, whereas for Prince Edward Island, it's only 20%, but the frequency of the payments is significant in terms of accessing it and being able to keep going. That's why I like the model that's been presented here.

There's also the CMF. I have one more comment on the CMF side of things. My studio hasn't benefited from the CMF program,

but I've seen the impact of it on original Canadian programming, game development and ideas being developed. There was an increase of \$15 million to the fund in April, which has been well received in our industry.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

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

It's my turn to thank the witnesses for joining us for this study, which I think is very important, as do all my colleagues.

Mr. Curzi, we were informed that Ms. Kontoyanni's connection was not good enough for interpretation. Earlier, it would have been possible with the speaking notes, but now, unfortunately, it can't be interpreted. I'll direct my questions to you, then.

We're doing a study on creative and cultural spaces. I'm really glad you're a part of that. Cultural spaces exist because there are people to occupy them. These people are the artists. The Bloc Québécois has been talking with the Union des artistes, the UDA, for years. We talk about artists' conditions. We hear many requests to improve not only their financial and working conditions, but also the system in which they need to be able to work with some security and a social safety net adapted to their type of craft.

I would like you to remind us of the UDA's repeated requests, particularly regarding the tax status of artists.

• (0910)

**Alexandre Curzi (Director General, Union des artistes):** With regard to the tax status of artists, there is a recurring request that the government granted, which was to overhaul employment insurance. Artists are already precarious workers, to say the least, and, on top of that, they don't have access to employment insurance benefits. Remember that Mr. Rodriguez committed to overhauling employment insurance, and it's becoming urgent.

Then, there is also access to group registered retirement savings plans and insurance. Artists are missing out on a bunch of measures right now. It's time to fix that. They are workers like other Canadian workers, and I think they deserve to have a social safety net equivalent to that of other workers in Canada.

**Martin Champoux:** When it comes to employment insurance, there's also the issue of income averaging. We know that artists spend long periods preparing their next productions or works. This is real, concrete work that does not necessarily allow them to hold another paid job. They go through periods when they have no income, precisely to work on their creations.

As part of our study, we're talking about all kinds of performance spaces. I also find it interesting that we are talking about digital performance spaces. One example is hybrid productions. Today we are hearing from people from the Société des arts technologiques, who have a very interesting offer in terms of physical, digital and hybrid productions.

However, are performing artists concerned about the role that digital technology plays in the dissemination of culture?

Is this an issue that you see emerging?

**Alexandre Curzi:** Yes, that's a challenge.

Revenue in the music industry, for example, has plummeted with the rise of streaming platforms. Artists are therefore turning to live performances in front of an audience as a major source of income. Beyond that, digital platforms can help offset some of this. Our fear is that this could become a trend. We're already inundated with screens. Young people are already constantly in front of screens—or, at any rate, quite often. We're trying to bring them back into venues so that artists can interact with a live audience. If we place too much emphasis on digital platforms, we'll continue in this direction, which, in our view, will continue to harm the industry. We believe that live performances in front of an audience, which generate income for artists, remain the best option for our artists in Canada.

You made an important point earlier, Mr. Champoux. We're often told that an artist could do something else in addition to pursuing their artistic career. I'm sorry, but you can't tell a violinist who has a doctorate in music and has spent 20 years of their life doing that to go find another line of work, no matter how interesting it may be. That makes little sense. It would be like telling our artists to stop practising their art, to stop honing their craft, to stop raising the standard of Canadian artists to an international level, and to go do something casual on the side. This line of reasoning is starting to become problematic, to say the least.

**Martin Champoux:** We even know some who have become politicians. There are even songwriters who have become members of Parliament. It does happen.

There's another concern. We can't possibly list all the challenges artists face these days. There's artificial intelligence, the status of artists and the conditions under which they work—all of which deserve a complete overhaul. You just talked about it. I'm thinking in particular of the Employment Insurance Act and the recognition of invisible labour, which is especially prevalent among artists.

There are also the venues where artists perform. This concerns the UDA as well, because you represent actors, dancers and artists in the performing arts. Since the beginning of this study, we've been told that there's a very serious problem with the maintenance of venues and buildings. Often, these spaces aren't owned by producers or artists. We don't always have control over the maintenance of

these buildings, and this represents a significant portion of expenses that could be devoted to artistic creation but must instead be spent on repairing essential building components.

Have you observed this as well?

• (0915)

**Alexandre Curzi:** Yes. In fact, I think you've received the figures from Théâtres associés, which show that venue management costs increased by 53% between 2017 and 2024, compared to inflation of 20.4% over the same period.

In our view, there are three direct consequences for artists. First, there are fewer roles, since we have to invest in infrastructure. For example, if the elevator needs to be repaired, we'll have to scale back artistic production. Inevitably, there will be fewer roles, fewer contracts and lower fees. We're negotiating lower rates, which leads to a reduction in contributions to the social safety net. Productions will have fewer sets, for example. All of this leads to increased precariousness in the short and long term, followed by an exodus of artists.

There's also a decline in quality. I'm not talking about the quality of the acting or the dancers, but the quality of the performances. It's important to remember that, for Canadians, culture is a source of influence. Tourists come here and see plays. If we offer them plays and performances that are less well funded, and if we're no longer able to tour because we have to invest in buildings, our influence will diminish over time, and we'll become a culturally impoverished nation that is neither attractive nor able to project influence.

**Martin Champoux:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Diotte, you now have the floor for five minutes.

**Kerry Diotte:** Chair, I would like to ask a few questions of my friend Christy Morin.

Christy, I'm glad to see you here. We go back a few years, and I'm really glad to have your organization in my riding.

I'm interested in how the area has changed. I was a long-time journalist, and I remember covering more than my fair share of fatal stabbings and shootings on what we call Alberta Avenue or 118 Avenue. It's quite remarkable how you've made a change in that area.

Can you detail how that happened? I think it would be a good model for a lot of other cities to follow.

**Christy Morin:** Thanks so much, and it is nice to see you as well.

The important piece that I have learned over the 20 years of building this is that it's partnerships. It's the neighbours, and it's hearing from the community.

We had this incredible gift of artists living in the neighbourhood, because it was affordable and we could buy our homes. We then began to connect with each other, so it was very grassroots.

We started looking at partnerships, with safety as one of the biggest pieces. There was no way I would have gone out on 118 Avenue with the amount of violence there, as you mentioned. The community centre was closed because of gun violence. When we began, we met with the Edmonton Police Service and different agencies and groups, asking what we could do together. It was basically taking off all the hats and just being human, sitting around the table and trying to build, not having any one priority stronger than another and just saying that this community needed help.

Kerry, the volunteerism piece—the number of volunteers who came out—was incredible. We talked here about venues and music venues. The Carrot coffee house was volunteer-powered, without a single staff person for seven years. It was all volunteer-powered. Everyone behind the barista bar, everyone running sound and everyone running lights was a volunteer. It was the incredible gifting of people coming together to build, and the safety component remains.

As I was saying, we're social workers. We're working with opioid addicts on the avenue, working on how to change people from residents to citizens and how to make that stretch. There are veterans who are incredibly impoverished, and we work together with them.

It's creating community and stakeholders, giving voice to the table and continuing that through the decades. We still have committees that are meeting and formed.

**Kerry Diotte:** One thing a lot of people might not know is that you were quite instrumental, in a move with the Edmonton Police Service and Edmonton City Hall, in removing the sale of large knives from convenience stores, because it was a real problem.

Can you describe that?

**Christy Morin:** You are right. The arts people began to realize it, because we live there. Many convenience stores were popping up. There were about two convenience stores per block for a road 29 blocks long. We said, “Okay, look. Let's go into these convenience stores.” These were convenience stores, and usually you go in and get your Cracker Jacks or whatever. All of a sudden, you were seeing these massive machete knives that slip through the federal code of criminal weapons. We, as artists, began conversations across the whole city of Edmonton, and we went to City Hall together and created a new business class for convenience stores so that they could no longer carry dangerous knives. That's the kind of thing we do.

• (0920)

**Kerry Diotte:** I have one final question.

I believe that you're still in a building phase. I recall reading that you were once promised some money from this Liberal government, but it didn't seem to come through. Can you tell me a bit about that?

**Christy Morin:** Cultural spaces is a very important department of Canadian Heritage. When we met with former minister Rodriguez, former minister Boissonnault and others four years ago, we were in the building phase of that project and not quite yet shovel-ready. We received the promise from the city of \$4 million, and now the cultural spaces fund is completely not in existence any longer to enable building new infrastructure. It's about supporting

old infrastructure, so we're quite concerned as to where that will be, as now we are getting into the actual “shovel in the ground” phase.

**Kerry Diotte:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** It's an incredible story.

Ms. Hirtle, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everyone. It's so great to see you all here today. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Simms, I'd like to start with you. I found it interesting—your comments about balancing artistic endeavours with community access and fiscal responsibility. Can you talk a bit about how Glasgow Square Theatre assists the community?

**Morgan Simms:** Absolutely. One of the biggest ways, on a performance level, that Glasgow Square is assisting the community is by removing pay barriers to ensure that everybody has equitable access to our space. Through our Moments for Everyone campaign with the library, we're seeing a massive uptick in this, and the feedback is that there are a lot of low-income families in our community and a lot of newcomers to our community, and this is the only way they're able to get into our space.

Another way is offering pay-what-you-can models for shows, such as our songwriter circle, Songs from the Square. Outside of that, Glasgow Square doesn't maintain itself as just a performing arts space. I would say half of our time is presenting stuff on our stage and getting folks in there for performances, but the other half of our time and our bookings at Glasgow Square range from weddings to youth showcases that offer underage kids a place to come see emerging artists on our stage.

We partner with folks such as those at Big Brothers Big Sisters and a local artist, Adam MakBain, who hosts quarterly youth showcases in our space. Outside of that, churches, business groups—you name it—are in our space, and they're utilizing Glasgow Square Theatre to its fullest to make sure that it's everybody's home.

Another great partnership that we've been able to really hold on to and develop in the past year or so is with our neighbouring community, Pictou Landing First Nation. That community has really embraced our space. They do their annual Christmas gala, for their whole community, in the theatre. Just last Saturday, we had Pictou Landing's youth gala in our space. We are able to offer the space to the organizations at a reduced cost because we are municipally funded, and our town council and staff recognize the importance of having an affordable, accessible and safe space for everybody in our community.

**Alana Hirtle:** That's amazing. Thank you.

I'm interested in that Pictou Landing connection. How important would you say indigenous-led artists and cultural opportunities are in contributing to reconciliation and revitalization?

**Morgan Simms:** It's incredibly important, and not only because we are on a path of reconciliation. It's more important than ever to offer historically marginalized groups our spaces. Without extending that olive branch of having them in our spaces and seeing different groups, from African Nova Scotians and indigenous people to members of the LGBTQ+ community.... If they don't see themselves in our space and aren't represented within our theatre and our municipal mosaic, they don't feel welcome in our spaces. People don't feel that it's their space unless they're represented within it.

**Alana Hirtle:** I'm going to run out of time. How many nights a month would you say the theatre is dark?

• (0925)

**Morgan Simms:** The theatre is dark enough to give me one or two days off a week. If we are programmed seven days a week, we have an incredible staff. We're a small but mighty team. There are two full-time people who work at the theatre—me and our maintenance and event set-up guy. We also have a volunteer coordinator on a part-time basis. Generally, it's one to two nights a week. Throughout the summer, there's one weekend that I'm not booked from June until September.

**Alana Hirtle:** That's a good problem to have.

You mentioned earlier the benefits of a sold-out show. Can you expand for me on how important you think creative and performance spaces are to local economic development and tourism?

**Morgan Simms:** Absolutely.

Where we're located in Pictou County, we sell ourselves as the festival capital of our region and of our province. There's the Jubilee music festival that we host Natal Day weekend every August in New Glasgow. That three-day music festival brings upwards of half a million dollars of economic impact to our rural community of 10,000 people.

Outside of that, as we're investing more in programming and seeing full houses at Glasgow Square Theatre, the feedback from restaurants and businesses is that they are getting increased business. They have wait-lists for nights that we have sold-out shows. We partner with the local hotels in our area, and they're also noticing upticks of hotel stays in the shoulder seasons when we are hosting sold-out events or any type of event like that.

Without our cultural hub, the off-spin from that could truly be devastating to our community. Residents and politicians alike may not always think the impact is coming from the stage, but if someone's buying a ticket to a show, they are doing much more when they visit our community.

**Alana Hirtle:** Absolutely.

At the New Glasgow riverfront, The Jubilee is from July 31 to August 2. Buy your tickets now.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Champoux, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Martin Champoux:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Back to you, Mr. Curzi.

Yesterday, following the announcement made a few weeks ago regarding the increase to 15% in the contribution from digital platforms to the cultural sector and Canadian broadcasters, the government decided to send the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission back to the drawing board.

How does this decision affect the artists you represent?

**Alexandre Curzi:** Indeed, it's not quite the performing arts, but it's an important decision. This announcement is a bit misleading, actually.

I commend the government for announcing this \$600 million. It will help a sector that is facing a major crisis, in which working conditions are rapidly deteriorating. I'd like to point out that the cultural sector is, after all, an industry that generates between \$5 and \$15 for every dollar invested in it and employs more than 500,000 Canadians, relatively speaking. That said, yesterday's announcement raises some concerns for us.

First, these \$600 million will come from Canadian taxpayers. This is meant to offset the fact that we're not asking for money from the major U.S. platforms operating in Canada. These companies aren't paying their fair share, and Canadians are being made to foot the \$600 million bill.

So, as an organization, we're not in a position to criticize a government that gives us money and invests in culture, but, on the other hand, we do think there's a certain inconsistency in not making these platforms pay. We understand the government's strategy, but—

**Martin Champoux:** It's like sugarcoating the pill: They say they're giving you \$600 million, but at the same time, they're giving up on long-term funding and on the principle of making the platforms that benefit from our broadcasting and cultural systems contribute.

Madam Chair, I'm going to move a motion on the topic. We just sent it to the clerk so he can distribute it to members of the committee in both official languages. Here it is:

That the committee condemn the government's announcement that it will require the CRTC to reverse the 15% royalty fee imposed on online broadcasters to support Quebec and Canadian production.

And that the committee report to the House.

**The Chair:** I'm going to suspend the meeting so members of the committee can read it.

● (0925)

(Pause)

● (0930)

[English]

**The Chair:** Members, we will resume.

I'm reminded that we've already made rulings about motions that were submitted but are not related to the subject of the study that we're in. Therefore, I don't believe this motion is in order today.

Go ahead, Mr. Champoux.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux:** Madam Chair, we just demonstrated, with Mr. Curzi, that the government's decision has an impact on the cultural sector. I think this motion is very much related to the study, so I contest your decision.

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll take a vote.

Does everybody understand the vote? It is whether to sustain the chair's decision that this motion is out of order.

**Kerry Diotte:** On a point of order, I misunderstood the question. I want to change my vote.

**The Chair:** Do we need unanimous consent to allow Mr. Diotte to change his vote? I think it's fine.

Everybody's fine with that.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 10; nays 1)

**The Chair:** That is sustained. We'll continue with questions.

We are now going to Mr. Waugh for five minutes.

● (0935)

**Kevin Waugh:** Madam Chair, I'm going to Mr. Filsinger on start-ups.

There are a lot of start-ups in my city and my province of Saskatchewan. We use the University of Saskatchewan.... Some make it and some don't. I'd like your thoughts on this, because probably one in 10 makes it.

It's an interesting phenomenon, because we need start-ups in this country and you're one of them. You had a vision and you've seen it through, even though you've gone on your own now. I'd like your thoughts on start-ups and where in the gaming industry you see these start-ups surviving.

**Ryan Filsinger:** Yes, that's a really difficult question. There has been some conservative effort in the region. However, the major

problem—and I'll focus locally—is that most of the start-up capital remains in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. It is extremely difficult to get noticed, receive money and raise rounds in our region, mostly because of population issues.

There are some local VCs. We have one called Island Capital that focuses regionally. We have the PEI IT Alliance, which has a start-up incubator here called The Foundry, and which my co-founder led for a while. Then there's Volta. I think it's in Halifax.

I'm in full agreement that start-ups are where innovation happens and risks are taken, but it is an extremely difficult process and it's not for the faint of heart. Beyond my focus and care about that in the future, there is a lot to be desired in terms of supports, especially in the smaller regions. How the government can help on that is not something that I have formulated well in my thoughts, but I agree that [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. Without new businesses starting, economies and innovation die.

**Kevin Waugh:** That's where the future's going, and I appreciate your comments about smaller communities.

Saskatchewan, like the Maritimes, is smaller. You often fly over, or the money just isn't there and you go to Toronto or Vancouver, as you mentioned. You made a very good point that Prince Edward Island would give you the money back quicker than Quebec or Ontario would. Those are the kinds of stories that we need to hear, because you have a unique area. Canada does very well in gaming, yet it's an industry that can change just like that, as you know, and sustainability is very tough. Success stories like yours are very good, but we have so few of them.

What would you recommend to the government if you could sit down and give us an instance of these start-ups? We've mentioned the money you got, but others have received money and haven't produced the success story that your company has.

**Ryan Filsinger:** One of the things I found reasonable was that, when we did receive our Canadian Heritage funding, the application process was quite acceptable. It wasn't a serious burden on us. Then the ability to get the cash in time.... It was all pretty quick, within six to eight months from the time we applied. We just wrapped up the project at the end of March.

One thing that we're recommending, especially on the CMF side of things, is that we separate it mostly from the traditional literary media, from film and TV. In Canada across the board, that's an approximately \$10-billion industry, and video games are half of that revenue. However, on the CMF side of things, we receive only about 13% to 15% of the CMF funding. Seeing increases in that, as well as separating some of the board seats and some of the funds, should be prioritized for native Canadian intellectual property, as should having a more diverse viewpoint. A lot of the time the funding goes to traditional film and media rather than to the digital arts. It's something that changes rapidly. Having access to more of those funds would help us significantly.

• (0940)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Auguste, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Morin, you helped revitalize Alberta Avenue in your neighbourhood. You played a part in transforming rooftops, storefronts and other spaces into places where emerging artists can contribute to the cultural scene. In several interviews, you said that your dream was to see the beauty of your neighbourhood shine through the arts.

When you look at Alberta Avenue today, what stands out to you about the way the community is reclaiming it? What catches your eye?

[*English*]

**Christy Morin:** That's a great question.

The community has really begun to come together. I think the biggest thing was being able to see each other and come out of our homes. There's the public art that we now partner with the Vancouver Biennale on. Seeing murals coming together.... Also, there's even the community coming to us on a daily basis and saying, "Christy, we have trouble with this particular back alley." When we look at that back alley, we do a quick study and then realize that we need to do something. We do greening of the alleys. All of a sudden, we have food security planters that come up so that people can actually eat food from the alleyways. We're also doing presentations and putting arts and paintings in those places that are gritty, renewing and reviving. The trust of the community has probably been one of the most noteworthy things.

It's being together and building and creating spaces. When we look at the different spaces, we see that now we have new buildings coming in that wouldn't have been there if the festivals hadn't been there. We have new money coming in, with people in businesses that are contributing, not doing what we call predatory retail but doing things that are building.

[*Translation*]

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you.

I'm also a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Earlier, you mentioned how some veterans are involved in the arts—something they had less opportunity to do when they were in the military.

Could you tell us a little more about the contributions veterans make to the arts in your community?

[*English*]

**Christy Morin:** We have just created partnerships with the Veterans Association in Edmonton. Many of those folks live in our area because the former base at Griesbach is not too far away from 118 Avenue, from Alberta Avenue. Being able to see them as contributing members.... Many of them have PTSD, as you know, and

are dealing with mental health issues and poverty, even using the food bank. We become very connected.

At the festival this year, we're excited to have 1940s and 1950s military equipment—such as old Jeeps and that kind of thing—on the Avenue site so that these veterans feel a sense of pride as well, because they're part of the community. They're going to be building the festival with us. They're looking for opportunities to volunteer. This year, they're actually going to be building the entire festival with us.

[*Translation*]

**Tatiana Auguste:** That's really wonderful. Thank you very much.

Ms. Thibault, in an interview with CBC Arts about the Festival de musique émergente, or FME, you explained that, initially, you were simply tired of driving long hours to Montreal and Toronto to bring in artists, and that you wanted to create more accessible ways to bring art and artists to small towns.

When you think about how far the FME has come since its inception in Rouyn-Noranda, what has this experience taught you about the cultural potential in the regions?

**Jenny Thibault:** I didn't mention it, but I am actually a co-founder of the Festival de musique émergente, which was launched in my hometown, Rouyn-Noranda. I haven't been involved for the past three years, but I was responsible for this festival as a dedicated volunteer for over 20 years.

In my opinion, festivals in remote regions become incredibly important economic drivers for communities. They also become foundational projects in which many volunteers and people get involved in on their own. The FME had nearly 400 volunteers. I believe it's invaluable. It truly serves the common good. Regional festivals energize communities.

The FME was the most popular event, and I believe it remains the region's most important tourist attraction in terms of drawing international visitors. There were international programmers participating, but also many intra-regional tourists from Quebec and even Ontario.

Consequently, we need to protect these projects. They often rely on an army of volunteers and are fundamental to the community.

I believe the festive aspect of a festival really comes into its own when it takes place in a remote region or a small town, because people are there and can't go anywhere else. It really brings people together—not only the participating artists but also the audiences. Sometimes they have the chance to see internationally renowned artists perform on small stages and interact with them. It also helps nurture talent and support emerging artists.

• (0945)

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mrs. Thomas, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Rachael Thomas:** Ms. Morin, thank you so much for coming today and for sharing your testimony with us. What you've done is quite extraordinary and definitely worth celebrating. You've taken a whole lot of hope, vision, hard work, grit and determination and turned these things into something very lovely and worthy of celebration. There are very few people in this world who want to serve their community's prosperity and betterment, as well as to do that at personal expense in terms of money—I'm sure—along with time and energy. This is despite the attacks, I imagine, that have come against you and concerns pertaining to your personal safety and well-being. Thank you for all that.

My question is simple. I think the world needs more people like you in places of leadership—people who are going to take personal responsibility, invest capital, take risks and believe in the betterment of their communities. Would you consider running for municipal politics?

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

[Translation]

**Christy Morin:** This isn't the first time I've been asked this question.

[English]

I love community, and I love being.... In the middle—it's interesting—you can do a lot. Those people in the middle need to be able to work to the top and in the community. I love doing what I do.

**Rachael Thomas:** That's fair.

Should you have the opportunity to raise someone else up who could continue your good work and expand your legacy—if that would free up a bit of time for you to serve in the political sphere, should that be of interest to you—I think your city would greatly benefit from your leadership.

**Christy Morin:** You're so kind. Thank you so much.

**Rachael Thomas:** I am going to move a motion at this point in time, Chair.

I believe it's a topic that is very important and relevant not only to the conversation here today but also to the larger national scene. It is a motion that is currently on notice, so there should be no problem with moving it. The motion I wish to move has to do with the CBC and a show that was created called *Northland Tales*.

I will read the motion into the record and then explain why it is so important.

I move the following motion, which states:

Given that,

the CBC and *Northland Tales* lured retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers under false pretences into participating in a cruel and humiliating “prank,” in which they were instructed to wear their uniforms, brought onto a stage before a live audience, and subsequently subjected to ridicule and public vilification;

The committee undertake an investigation into this incident and invite the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, the chief executive officer of CBC/Radio-Canada, the chief executive officer of APTN, and the producers of *Northland Tales* to testify for no less than two hours each and report to the House both its condemnation of these practices as well as its findings and recommendations upon the conclusion of the committee's investigation.

Madam Chair, by way of background, the reason I am moving this motion today to investigate the conduct of the CBC is that it has been widely reported and verified that the CBC and APTN put together this production called *Northland Tales*, which tried to lure in an MP and has lured in academics and RCMP veterans, some in their seventies and eighties. They did it to humiliate them, to demonize Sir John A. Macdonald—the first prime minister of this country—and to blame veterans for residential schools. They did this under false pretences, making various promises to these individuals.

Let me read something into the record.

Organizers asked officers to wear their RCMP red serge uniforms. They were invited to film a show called “Life After Service” or “After the Call”. They were told that there would be a ceremony to honour their service at a Vancouver CBC studio. All this was a lie to simply lure in these individuals, then shame and embarrass them. Officers had their phones taken away. They were placed in front of a fake audience. A fake video of King Charles was played, “claiming that Canada was dissolving the RCMP in order to account for all the wrongs the force had committed against First Nations people”—again, a blatant lie. Following this, “A First Nation chief then came on stage and spoke to how...the RCMP were responsible for the plight of Indigenous people.” A person even pretended to be Prince William and gave a speech. Retired officers were then followed offstage with cameras in their faces, and there was a refusal to turn those cameras off. It was incredibly humiliating. It's a great example of breaking trust.

This is the problem we see with the CBC, over and over again. We see that trust for this institution is diminishing, and it's because of things like this—among others, of course. It's not only about the breaking of trust but also about the fact that \$1.6 billion is given to the CBC on an annual basis to produce content that Canadians should be able to trust and, in some cases on the entertainment side, enjoy. Trust must never be sacrificed. In this case, it was. These individuals were brought in under a lie, put on a stage and humiliated. They were ridiculed. These are RCMP veterans who have served this country faithfully and who had taken an oath to serve and protect the Canadian public.

● (0950)

Given that the CBC is under the auspices of this committee, it is incumbent upon us as members of Parliament to hold it to account. Why would it think it appropriate to take taxpayers' money and use it in this way? Why would it think it appropriate to lie to individuals in order to lure them onto a stage, so it could then ridicule them, humiliate them and berate them in order to produce a show that it felt had entertainment value?

It is a very sad day if that represents the best of media in Canada. It's a very sad day if we have an organization, a corporation and an entity that claims that this is a wise use of public dollars.

I would hope that my colleagues around this table would agree with me that this type of conduct should never transpire. Furthermore, taxpayers should never be put on the hook for such conduct, so I would ask that this situation be further investigated. We should take the opportunity to learn from the CEOs of the CBC and APTN. We should take the opportunity to hear from the minister with regard to what happened and to discern the best way to move forward.

There are several calls for action. On May 20, the National Police Federation sent a letter to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture—the minister, of course, for this committee—asking for a full investigation into the CBC and APTN production. On May 21, the Royal Canadian Legion backed up the National Police Federation's request, asking for the same. On May 22, the National Post reached out to the heritage committee, this committee, asking if we would have an investigation into *Northland Tales*. This was a piece of correspondence that was shared with all of us and that asked for this investigation.

It would seem to be not only in the interest of those who were lured in and taken advantage of but also in the best interest of the Canadian public, given that public dollars are being used.

I would ask the members of this committee to vote in favour of this motion and to allow the sunshine in, for there to be transparency and accountability with regard to what happened.

Thank you.

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Thomas.

This committee does have notice of this motion, and therefore, I consider it to be in order.

I have Mr. Myles on the speaking list so far.

**David Myles (Fredericton—Oromocto, Lib.):** Thank you very much, and thanks for the motion. I appreciate it.

As I've said before, this is a study that we've been waiting to do. I'm excited that we have witnesses here, but there are a couple of things I just want to clarify.

One is that these are creative decisions made by independent organizations. It's important for us to be careful to make comments on the creative decisions of independent organizations. The CBC as an independent Crown corporation does come here, and we will have the opportunity to ask it some questions about anything we want. Production of this show, from what I understand, has stopped and no show has ever aired. Again, I'm not justifying the actions, but I think that commenting on independent organizations and their creative decisions is a bit of a tricky situation given our position.

My main concern here is the really important study that we are all doing and have agreed upon. We're losing time consistently on motion after motion after motion. I appreciate that there are many issues happening in Canada, but I would also appreciate it if we could focus on the study we have before us. We have witnesses who wish to share with us their time and expertise regarding the importance of cultural spaces in Canada.

I vote to adjourn.

**The Chair:** Are you moving to adjourn debate?

**David Myles:** I move to adjourn, yes.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** That is a dilatory motion. The clerk will call the vote.

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Debate is adjourned on this topic. Therefore, we will return to our question.

Go ahead, Mr. Champoux.

[*Translation*]

**Martin Champoux:** I just want to make a brief comment on Mr. Myles's argument, Madam Chair. We will not be debating the motion; I want to discuss the principle and the arguments he raised to adjourn the debate on the motion.

We are in committee. The motion was entirely admissible and was introduced in accordance with the rules. Any member present at the table has the right to introduce motions and debate them. If we systematically propose to adjourn debate on motions because we consider them off-topic or believe they delay testimony, and if this becomes a persistent habit, it will constitute a breach of parliamentary privilege. I believe this must be taken very seriously by our colleagues if we wish to maintain the spirit of co-operation we have come to expect in the committee this session.

I am not defending the motion—my general position on this is well known—but if we are going to argue why we should adjourn debate on a motion, we need to come up with better arguments.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Myles, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**David Myles:** I had given several reasons, but I thank my colleague for his comments.

I would now like to address Mr. Curzi.

I am most interested in the facilities for emerging artists. Sometimes we forget how important it is for artists to have spaces that are truly accessible—places where they can hone their skills, practise their art, create works and so on.

I sometimes wonder if the definition of cultural spaces—especially when it comes to securing funding from Canadian Heritage or other departments—is too narrow. Is it broad enough to include all the cultural spaces we have in Canada that are important to artists?

**Alexandre Curzi:** That's a really good question.

I'm not really an expert on all cultural spaces in Canada, but I can tell you about the reality faced by members of the Union des artistes. I can also tell you about emerging artists and the difficulty musicians and performers face in finding creative spaces.

At the Union des artistes, we have a space for our members. Our members can use it for free to create. It's in high demand. Right now, in Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec, there is a severe shortage of creative spaces, particularly due to high rents. There is a gap in funding for creating collaborative spaces.

I'll conclude by telling you that the Union des artistes is currently working on a collective housing project for artists that also includes creative spaces. I'd like to remind you that we are a union. This is therefore far from our primary mission. We are a union trying to find solutions to create creative spaces for our artists.

To return to your question, I think there is a glaring lack of funding for the creative spaces that artists need.

• (1000)

**David Myles:** Do you have access to funds to pay for these improvised spaces?

**Alexandre Curzi:** No.

[*English*]

**David Myles:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

**Alexandre Curzi:** I could go deeper into the funding issue, but I am not an expert in this field. We are operating in a world of artists with our members, and most artists do not have access to funds for creative spaces.

**David Myles:** Right.

We often think of theatres, which are extremely important, of course, but there are other cultural spaces, like bars, basements or any other space, which are essential for allowing artists to master their craft.

**Alexandre Curzi:** Yes.

I was a musician in a past life, when I was very young. I travelled across Canada and Quebec, playing in small venues. What I'm hearing now is that touring infrastructure is practically nonexistent or very hard to come by. It fell apart a long time ago due to a lack of funding. There's also a shortage of venues in good condition. Over the past 20 years, there's been a fairly significant deterioration of creation and performance spaces.

Right now, your committee is dealing with a serious issue, and it's going to quickly escalate. We're spending money trying to save these spaces, and many of them are closing as well.

**David Myles:** I would like to think this is one of the reasons we are conducting this study.

**Alexandre Curzi:** Exactly.

**David Myles:** We can also briefly touch on the importance of networks, which we've already discussed a little. Given the cost of touring, it's good for artists to have networks and the opportunity to perform multiple shows on a single tour, rather than making a six-hour round trip just to perform in one city.

I imagine it's really important to have networks in Canada, isn't it?

**Alexandre Curzi:** Yes, that's really important. I think our friends at Scènes de musique alternatives du Québec have told you a little about it. They're doing a lot of work on this kind of network.

In the world we're heading toward, live arts performances, local shows and small tours will become an essential norm—if only for reasons related to climate issues. So I think these investments should make sense for the government.

**David Myles:** Thank you very much.

**Alexandre Curzi:** Ms. Thibault was talking earlier about festivals, among other things. They're essential. There are major funding issues there too. You already know the whole argument about foreign actors who are starting to get involved in the world of performance and broadcasting spaces.

**David Myles:** Thank you very much.

**Alexandre Curzi:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Champoux for two and a half minutes.

**Martin Champoux:** Thank you.

Mr. Curzi, I'd like to come back to you. We have very little time.

With the COVID-19 pandemic a few years ago, we saw many artists, as well as cultural sector artisans and technicians, among others, leave the sector to find jobs that they rightly considered, at the time, to be more stable and more predictable.

Tell me a little about the lack of predictability in the funding options offered by governments for the cultural sector. What consequences might this have for your members?

**Alexandre Curzi:** Underfunding is extremely problematic in the performing arts. You just mentioned this. There were waves of suicides by musicians after the pandemic, as you probably already know—

**Martin Champoux:** True.

**Alexandre Curzi:** At the Artists' Foundation, there has been a surge in requests for psychological support, among other things. Many artists have given up, and the numbers show that this trend is accelerating.

So, yes, you're right: There is a glaring lack of funding. When it comes to the dance sector, it's staggering. The major international dance tours, which used to benefit Canada, have disappeared or are all but gone. Seriously, this is a decline that is not only rapid but also profound.

• (1005)

**Martin Champoux:** There has also been a withdrawal of support from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada toward the cultural sector. We can see that it has scaled back the support it used to provide to festivals, among other things.

How do you view this withdrawal of federal support?

**Alexandre Curzi:** I won't speak for other provinces, but in Quebec, the cultural sector knows to turn to Quebec institutions, such as the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles, and so on.

Quebeckers are a bit disillusioned. Quebec artists and producers are turning to Quebec institutions. I find this problematic, since a significant portion of the funding should come from the federal government.

**Martin Champoux:** The burden was transferred to Quebec and the provinces, but also municipalities—

**Alexandre Curzi:** Completely.

**Martin Champoux:** Small municipalities are forced to stretch out funding a bit more to support local festivals. This problem is getting worse and worse.

**Alexandre Curzi:** Yes.

I would like to comment. It's a reality for municipalities to not have much money. Free shows are put on for the public, which is great, but it means that artists are working in conditions where they earn less than the minimum wage and have no social safety net. Artists accept these conditions to survive, because they have no other choice. This trend will continue to accelerate.

**Martin Champoux:** Artists are always the last to receive public funding, even though they are generally the ones who contribute the most. They are the essential link in this entire chain.

Thank you very much for appearing before the committee, Mr. Curzi.

**Alexandre Curzi:** Thank you, Mr. Champoux.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Thomas, you now have the floor for five minutes.

**Rachael Thomas:** What's interesting is that when the CBC does something good, the Liberals rush to take credit for it. However, when the CBC does something bad or embarrassing, the Liberals cannot shake their hands of it quick enough. They make the excuse that the organization or the entity is at arm's length.

In fact, the CBC comes under the purview of this committee and under the purview of the minister. We should take the opportunity to hold the Liberals to account when a wrongful action transpires, as has taken place in the last few months. They are calling witnesses forward under a false pretense and then shaming them. It's totally inappropriate. It's breaking public trust, and it's a misuse of taxpayers' dollars.

With that, I would also like to draw attention to the fact that this is actually the third time this week alone, at this committee alone, that the Liberals have dodged any sort of accountability. In this case, it's not even accountability for them. It's accountability for the CBC.

I'm confused as to why they are so allergic to letting a bit of sunshine in and allowing for transparency around the illegitimate actions of the CBC. That's incredibly sad. It's sad for Canadians, be-

cause they deserve better. It's sad for those veterans who were taken advantage of, who were lured in under false pretenses and who were lied to that the Liberals at this committee would not stand with them. It's very sad.

I'll give the floor to my colleague, Mr. Diotte.

**Kerry Diotte:** I am just disgusted by how CBC treated those veterans. They really should be here to explain themselves.

I was just looking at X. There's great irony in the fact that—

**The Chair:** Mr. Diotte, I'm sorry, but we're really descending into debate on a motion that we've already adjourned debate on. I would ask you to return to the subject of the study, please. Thank you.

**Kerry Diotte:** I'll wrap it up quickly.

The director of the CBC, the CEO and general manager, talks about how they'll tell us when they get it wrong. We read, "our journalism is fact-checked" and "We're accountable for our journalism".

**The Chair:** Again, Mr. Diotte, are you debating the motion that we've adjourned debate on?

**Kerry Diotte:** I'm not debating. I'm just saying that CBC claims to be ethical, and they've breached every ethical standard that—

**The Chair:** I understand that this is your feeling, but right now we have witnesses in the room on creative spaces.

**Rachael Thomas:** On a point of order, if you look in the green book, or perhaps consult with the clerk, Madam Chair, you will find that we have great latitude at this committee to discuss matters having to do with culture and identity. The matter at hand, having to do with the CBC, is exactly that. It falls under the purview of the minister, and it falls under the purview of this committee.

• (1010)

**The Chair:** It is not the matter at hand, Mrs. Thomas. The matter at hand is cultural spaces. That's the whole point.

I agree with you that CBC falls under the mandate of this committee—

**Rachael Thomas:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Rachael Thomas:** You just said that the study of this committee has to do with cultural spaces. If the CBC, with the creation of *Northland Tales*, doesn't fall within a cultural space, then I would ask you to clarify for us where it does fall.

**The Chair:** The point is that we are going back to debating a motion when we've already voted to adjourn debate on that motion, so we will continue.

**Rachael Thomas:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Is it an actual point of order?

**Rachael Thomas:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Rachael Thomas:** My colleague Mr. Diotte did not bring up the motion—not at all. He didn't reference it at all. He was talking about the CBC. He was talking about it as a cultural space and the actions that are transpiring there.

**The Chair:** I did not hear that from Mr. Diotte, but if he would—

**Rachael Thomas:** Then I would ask you to clarify in what ways he referenced the motion.

**The Chair:** He was talking about the content of the motion. The clerk agrees with me.

**Rachael Thomas:** In what ways was he referencing the motion?

**The Chair:** I'm not going to entertain any more debate on this. We will move on.

Mr. Diotte, if you have questions for the witnesses, I will give you your last 15 seconds. Otherwise, I will turn the floor over to Mr. Ntumba for five minutes.

**Kerry Diotte:** I think I've made my points.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Ntumba, you have five minutes. Thank you.

**Kerry Diotte:** I think it's terrible what CBC has done.

[*Translation*]

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague, Ms. Royer.

Ms. Thibault, you spoke about how your festival was created. Although you have left, the festival continues to run.

Other than creative spaces, what impact do festivals have in Quebec and in Canada, in terms of cultural impact and Canada's rich diversity?

**Jenny Thibault:** In the case of the Festival de musique émergente in particular, it's truly a festival that gives emerging artists a voice. Its mission is to give artists the opportunity to perform under professional conditions. This is incredibly important because, as mentioned earlier—by the UDA, in particular—given that music has become highly digitized in recent years, with streaming platforms, musicians can no longer make a living from their art, because they're no longer selling albums, and the royalties they receive from various digital platforms are simply not adequate or sufficient. So live performances have truly become the cornerstone of their careers. It's extremely important to maintain access to live performances and touring for artists and to provide them with good conditions so they can make a living from it.

In recent years, we've seen a rise in artists' performance fees. It's very costly to produce a music festival in a remote region. We have to bring in a lot of artists and technicians, and we have to equip the venues. Artists' fees are rising sharply, and that's understandable. It's therefore important to support these events, which often provide emerging artists with their first platform. Ultimately, they are the artists of tomorrow who will put the country on the international map.

It's important to preserve this ecosystem of small performance venues and small festivals. In my view, this truly serves the common good. Public funds are invested to ensure that projects—such as festivals—can exist. As I mentioned, they're often supported by many volunteers and communities that pour their heart and soul into these events, and that's invaluable. We need to preserve that.

At the same time, there's the entire ecosystem of the entertainment industry, with venues and theatres where more commercial projects are presented that fill large halls. I think that in Montreal, we need major festivals that host international artists, but we must also preserve what lies at the very foundation of talent development—namely, independent venues, regional festivals and festivals in small towns. These festivals are true economic drivers and a lifeline for artists, enabling them to make a living from their art.

• (1015)

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Thank you very much.

I will give the floor to my colleague Ms. Royer.

**Zoe Royer (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Lib.):** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You have a minute and a half.

**Zoe Royer:** My question is for Christy.

I'm talking about Arts on the Avenue. I was a city councillor in Port Moody when Mayor Don Iveson was speaking at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. He was talking about the transformation that was taking place in Edmonton.

He talked about the tech hub that it was becoming and how it was attracting investment and revitalization, but when you were speaking, I thought, "Wait a second, you were there first." You were actually creating the vibrancy. My very quick question is, how can arts organizations work with cities—which are often doing cultural mapping and strat plans around the arts—to access the build communities strong funds in terms of cultural precincts? Please, I have 35 seconds.

**Christy Morin:** I think it's about meeting, figuring out our priorities and getting things on the table quickly. As we know, the change of the four-year cycle is incredibly fast. You just get into it, and it's already a new group of folks—or sometimes it's the old folks hanging on. It's about getting it done quickly and finding projects that can be raised fast. Seeing that sustainable piece as well is really important with cities and municipalities.

**Zoe Royer:** I would invite every single witness—Tania, I had questions for you as well, but I know that we're out of time—to provide further written testimony, because I know there's much that you could have said and wanted to say. That would be amazing to enrich our study.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, as Ms. Royer said, if there's anything that you didn't manage to get on the record today, or anything that occurs to you afterwards, please send us a letter via the clerk. We can include that information when we move on to creating a report on this study.

Thank you very much for your attention and your excellent testimony today.

The meeting is now adjourned.

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