



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Standing Committee

on

Crown Corporations

*Chairperson
Mr. Diljeet Brar
Constituency of Burrows*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN CORPORATIONS**

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

TIME – 1 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows)

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – MLA Robert Loiselle
(St. Boniface)**

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

Hon. Min. Kennedy

*Mr. Brar, Ms. Byram, MLAs Compton, Loiselle,
Mr. Perchotte*

APPEARING:

*Alan Goddard, Chair of the Board, Manitoba
Centennial Centre Corporation*

*Robert Olson, President and Chief Executive
Officer, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation*

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial
Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending
March 31, 2024*

* * *

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Melanie Ching): Good afternoon. Will the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): I nominate MLA Brar.

Clerk Assistant: MLA Brar has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Brar, will you please take the Chair.

The Chairperson: Good afternoon, everybody.

Our next item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): I nominate MLA Loiselle.

The Chairperson: MLA Loiselle has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Loiselle is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

At this time, I would like to remind everyone that questions and comments must be put through the Chair using third person as opposed to directly to members and representatives.

Are there any suggestions from the committee to how long we should sit this afternoon?

MLA Compton: Two hours.

The Chairperson: Two hours?

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I would suggest three hours. I think that the number of questions that I have, we can certainly probably get through that at a rapid rate if the answers are directed. But based on the amount of questions we currently have, I'd be seeking three hours.

The Chairperson: Do we agree to two hours or three hours? *[interjection]*

Sorry—MLA Compton.

MLA Compton: How about two and a half hours?

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you; let's do that. I think we can accomplish a lot in that period of time.

The Chairperson: So the committee would be sitting for two and a half hours.

It has been suggested that the committee sits for two and a half hours. Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Does the honourable minister wish to make an opening statement?

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I do.

The Chairperson: Okay.

MLA Kennedy: Good afternoon, everyone. It's my pleasure to be here today, as Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, with senior officials from the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation, to present the corporation's 2023-24 annual report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

I would like to take the opportunity to introduce Alan Goddard, recently appointed as the chair of the board of directors, and Rob Olson, chief executive 'officer'. Also joining us today here are deputy minister, Jeff Hnatiuk, and assistant deputy minister, Veronica Dyck.

The Manitoba Centennial Centre plays a central role in supporting access to arts and culture in Manitoba. The Centennial Cultural campus is home to our largest and most renowned performing arts and heritage organizations. As Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism's new minister, I have been pleased to witness how much M-triple-C's facilities, programming and partnerships with resident tenants make essential contributions to the cultural life and experiences for all Manitobans.

The arts are bouncing back after five years of a PC government that cut funding to M-triple-C and did nothing to support Manitoba's rich arts and culture through a pandemic that put our arts and cultural sector at risk. That's why I was proud when our government announced we'd be increasing funding to M-triple-C by a half million dollars for the first time in years, a more than 20 per cent increase.

This increased support will allow the Winnipeg Symponcy [*phonetic*]-Sympathy [*phonetic*] orchestra, the Manitoba Opera, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre and many other performing arts groups to thrive here at home once again.

Today provides an important opportunity to share some of the successes and achievements of M-triple-C over the past year and to continuing our work with this Crown corporation to enhance their contributions in the years to come.

Thank you to everyone, and I look forward to our discussions.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Does the critic for the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Perchotte: I do.

The Chairperson: Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Perchotte: First of all, I want to thank the CEO, the board and all the employees working within M-triple-C organization for the hard work that they do to advance the arts and the culture in Manitoba. It is those, yes, little breaks that people get in their lives to rejuvenate themselves to do that mental health check to build their spirits. I myself have fond memories of being at many events, going back to a young fellow in grade 5 seeing Roy Orbison play at the Centennial Concert Hall.

The work that goes on behind the scenes that we don't know will never be reflected in what we're seeing here today, so that, I truly thank you. From the people that we meet at—the ticket takers at the doors, greeting you and the people helping you find your seats. The first class events that are put on all the time. And without getting any political statements, I just want to say thank you very much for being here today and I look forward to having some more questions answered.

The Chairperson: Thank you, MLA Perchotte.

Do the representatives from Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation wish to make an opening statement?

Mr. Alan Goddard (Chair of the Board, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation): For me, I'd just like to express my gratitude to be a part of these proceedings and the honour of sitting as board chair of an incredible organization with an almost 60-year history supporting the arts, both performing, heritage, cultural in Manitoba, across Manitoba and specifically in Winnipeg as well.

So thank you. Thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. Robert Olson (President and Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation): If I may, as I've done in previous standing committee meetings, I use this opportunity to provide a little bit of history of the corporation. You know, we're one of Manitoba's oldest Crown corporations, established in the early '60s as a development agency.

And I do really value this opportunity to talk about our organization, because I think sometimes it's not that well-known in the broader spectrum of Crown corporations. You know, we're governed by the same act that governs many of our other sister agencies and sometimes it's incumbent upon us to talk about it and just elevate the profile a little bit.

So in '68—in the early '60s we developed the Centennial Centre for the Arts. In the late '60s we became that agency that administered the assets that were developed by our corporation, and since then we've enjoyed a positive relationship with Sport, Culture, Heritage or whomever we've reported to at that time. Because our goal truly is in something that we buy into.

* (13:10)

We're dedicated to supporting the arts and we use the assets of the Centennial Centre to advance the arts in Manitoba, and we use that holistic approach to doing so by earning revenue on our own, supplementing that with some support we get from our departments and our various agencies.

So we're very pleased with the work we've done in the last 60, 65 years. It's not to suggest there isn't more work to be done; there always is. But these are opportunities that we look forward to, to talk about our annual report, to talk about what we've accomplished and where we've been. And, you know, hopefully, you'll be kind to us and we'll have a good, positive answers for your questions.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you both, Mr. Olson and Mr. Goddard.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Perchotte: In response to that being kind, the M-triple-C does a lot of great work. It's—this committee is what I consider a feel-good committee that does so much beyond; like I said, we'll get into the weeds of this today. The role here today is not to cast aspersions on anybody or anything; it's just to find out more information as to where government should help, where some of the successes in the past and where moving forward.

I was very pleased to see under the revenue stream that M-triple-C has reported an operational surplus of \$113,000 for the fiscal year ending in 2024. I would hope that the CEO or the management team can answer if they can anticipate this is something that is sustainable moving forward.

Floor Comment: Certainly I'd be happy to answer that.

The Chairperson: Mr. Olson.

Mr. Olson: Certainly that's our goal. I think one of the objectives of our mandate, in our act, is to be revenue neutral. In other words, we balance our books as best as we can through our budgeting process. The surpluses—

or sometimes the deficits, but mostly surpluses, in the last little while has been a product of due diligence on our part.

Earning revenue is a critical element to our operations, but also maintaining costs and being responsible with our costing. With the expenses that we incur, with the revenues that we have, I think it's been a critical element of our organization over the last few years. We've been managing our expenses very well.

The cyclical nature of the entertainment industry goes up and down as we go out through the year. We might anticipate various performances on the stage of the concert hall or within our movie production studio. But as you can—as you might be able to see in our annual report, we couldn't anticipate last year that there would be a writers' strike in the United States.

And so the writers' strike did impact revenue coming from our movie production studio. But to answer your question, we always attempt to balance—provide a balanced budget to government for consideration, and then we do our due diligence to try to match as much revenue and maintain our operational costs.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: Last year during committee, it was mentioned that the inflationary pressures are rapidly overtaking M-triple-C's ability to sustain itself with earned revenue. I've got several different questions on here to different departments.

To the CEO, I would like to ask, through the Chair, is it still an increasing concern? Have you seen any progress on that fun—on that front? Also, in November, the Province said it's increasing M-C's triple—M-triple-C's funding by half a million. Is that increase enough to help address increasing inflationary pressures?

And I would like to see if the minister would be able to answer—if the minister would be able to commit to more operational funding increases into the future.

MLA Kennedy: So how about we let Mr. Olson answer the first part and then I will go to this next.

Thanks.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Olson: Well, we are very pleased to have received the additional \$500,000 that we did this year; it went a long way to addressing some long-standing issues that we've had. We've been able to manage, as I

alluded to before, through operating revenues, and managing our costs as best as possible to provide these surpluses.

But it was becoming increasingly difficult with inflationary factors running away on us, and I won't go into detail about what some of those inflationary costs can be. Some of them are well documented. But, yes, it was starting to catch up on us, and it was going to be a little bit more difficult for us going forward.

So we are very grateful. This \$500,000 that we received this year will help maintain a balanced budget again this year, is our anticipation, with potentially a small surplus again this year. But we are at that point where it's—like most organizations—becoming increasingly difficult to manage these rapidly increasing inflationary pressures.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

MLA Kennedy: So in response to the question by the member with regards to the increase and whether or not the budget—the government will commit to more, what I will say is, as you had stated, last year our government announce half a million dollars of an increase. That's a substantial amount of money to the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation's annual funding. That's more than a 20 per cent increase.

So this historic investment supports the incredible work of the tenants of Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Manitoba Opera, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre and many other performing arts groups in Manitoba.

So, you know, it—there's no way around this. We saw the way the previous government ignored Manitoba's arts and cultural community. In 2018, the PCs slashed the budget by half a million dollars, and our government—you know, during the pandemic, there were arts groups that struggled, and the government, the PC government, never restored that funding, and that put the symphony and the opera and the theatre groups at risk. So we're really incredibly proud of this. We've stepped in to restore this critical funding, and to help the arts community thrive once again.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank the minister for the answer. To the CEO, or chair, I'd like to direct this question. In 2024 fiscal year, a new three-year strategic business plan for '23 to '26 was developed to help creatively increase revenue and make needed investments.

Can you expand more on the plan, and what is the next steps of M-triple-C for implementing this plan?

Mr. Olson: I can, and I'd be happy to.

So we developed a three-year strategic plan last year. I think it will come to a conclusion in 2026. We established what we categorized as four pillars of the plan, which is launching a charitable foundation, which we have now accomplished; investing in the redevelopment of the Centennial Centre; developing a comprehensive programming strategy; and communicating the mandate and objectives of M-triple-C.

And so as I suggested, the first one, first priority of our plan, has been completed. The next one is developing the Centennial Centre to modernize the assets of the Centennial Centre. That's an ongoing struggle for a 65-year-old facility. Finding the right dollar amount to invest in the facility to maintain it, to at least ensure that we can deliver the program that we have to deliver every year, is a floating target.

We are seeing investment, but I will tell you as the CEO of a particular organization, it's probably never enough. I don't think that it can ever be enough, but it is progressing. We are seeing some investment, and we're focusing that investment in critical areas where we think needs to be focused.

Developing a programming strategy, to your point, Mr. Perchotte, is that we are trying to find ways to maximize our abilities to generate revenues. So self-generated revenue. So we're looking at programming options. We've taken a little bit more risk over the past few years, where we are actually buying entertainment, hosting entertainment on the concert hall stage, and then taking a bit of a risk that that show, if you will, will sell, and that we'll recover enough revenue off the sale of tickets, and some of the other supplementary sources of revenue, to cover the costs of that—those entertainers. And we are looking—and we are. We have been successful. We've—we have been successful at doing that.

But there's more to be done in that area. We're also looking at working with the local communities to try to bring programming to the stage that I think reflects our intention to work with our Indigenous, First Nations communities; with some of our new Canadians to bring more programming to the stage. Some of that investment may not necessarily reflect an immediate profit on those investments, but it does have, I think, an overall broader objective, which is to advance the arts in all art forms, with all organizations

and cultures. And so we are attempting to work towards that objective as well, too.

* (13:20)

And, lastly, you know, our last pillar of our strategic plan is just what I led off with earlier. We are one of the oldest Crown corporations in the province; we're probably the least known, and so we're trying to do a little bit to elevate our profile in the community and let people understand that we have a specific mandate to support arts and culture, and that's what our objective is going to be.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank Mr. Olson for that response, those four pillars; they make tremendous sense to move forward in this market space.

I'd like to see if we can expand more on what that new charitable foundation looks like and how it will operate.

Mr. Olson: Sure. So we're quite excited about this, but I want to be clear that the establishment of a charitable foundation now is an independent organization from the Crown. What we did is there's a board of governors that are—that is directing that foundation. They are in the process of recruiting an executive director. The objective of the establishment of that arts centre was to bring a charitable element to the arts with a specific focus on investing in the Centennial Centre and other assets in the province that might benefit from facilities like ours to support arts communities.

So the arts centre has a mandate and a goal to raise revenue, if you will, raise money, if you can, through charitable ventures, to then redirect to the Centennial Centre for infrastructure, for equipment, for programming that might be specific to some of the aforementioned agencies, Indigenous agencies, newcomers to Manitoba. Their focus as a charitable organization will be to support the arts and support the Centennial Centre. I liken it to the way we've set up—or they've set up charitable organizations that support the health centres: Health Sciences Centre Foundation, St. Boniface foundation. Those foundations have a particular mandate to support health. This foundation is going to have a mandate to support arts organizations.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: Mr. Olson, thank you once again for that direct answer; I think that's very important that a charitable organization is up and running and can bring the funds that we desperately need into M-triple-C.

Do you have a—is there an expectation of what this charitable foundation should bring monetarily, on an annual basis? Is there a goal set out, and when can we expect some funds to start rolling in?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Olson: There's no specific target as of yet. As I said, they're in the process of trying to hire an executive director, which will lead that fundraising strategy. So there is no definitive target right now that I can share with anybody. I think they're trying to find their way right now with some of the hurdles that had to be jumped over with Revenue Canada, with CRA, in establishing this foundation. They just put most of those to bed, and now the process of hiring an executive director will lead them to that next chapter of figuring out what do they think they can reasonably raise on an annual basis or through a specific campaign.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: Again, that's some great information, and time will tell if it's just—the groundwork is just getting going, and so the trees are just planted and hopefully they can bear fruit fairly quick.

Just trying to see if there's any particular capital projects or programs that is currently being seen as an immediate funding priority for this foundation once it's fully operational.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Chair, well, you know, if I wanted to be specific, I mean, we've talked about some of the capital deficiencies within the Centennial Centre, and I categorize as the Centennial Centre, because it's not strictly focused on the concert hall; we're talking about all 750,000 square feet that make up the Centennial Centre for the arts. What things that we've discussed in the past are new seating for the auditoriums, all of them, Planetarium auditorium. There's a secondary 230-seat theatre that is actually on the north side of the complex, all 2,300 seats of the concert hall. Those types of investments that—it's difficult to find the capital to make those million-dollar investments to replace the seats.

We think as we've—our predecessors did in the early '60s—we think we can run a capital campaign. We think they—excuse me—can run a capital campaign to replace the seats, possibly like they did before where you sell the naming rights to a particular seat and you get your plaque on the seat, and they can potentially raise some money. Whether they can raise

all of the several million dollars it will take to replace all those seats is to be discussed depending on their—how successful their campaign is. But that would be one area that they would be looking at going forward.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: Mr. Olson, thank you.

I can imagine that the undertaking of replacing seating is—it's not just a weekend project. Certainly, you're spending a long time; many, many months or even years on that.

The 2024 fiscal year saw a significant capital investment—total investment of \$736,000 in capital assets.

Can we touch base on some of the projects completed or work that was worked on in the fiscal year of 2024 and how these investments will improve visitor experiences.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Olson: If I may—if I can touch base on it, it's on our annual report. Yes, there was an investment last year in some capital investment, as there is every year.

We have a standing agreement with our partners in what was then consumer protection—I've got to get the title right; it's now known as Public Service Delivery. So that's the new name of government services. We work with them annually. They allow us on annual basement—basis to plan for about \$440,000 worth of what we'd call part B capital.

But, of course, as we talk about what could be invested and they ultimately provide approval on those investments, there are other things that crop up throughout the course of the year: a broken pipe here or roof—leaky roof that requires some supplemental funding to come along. And they've been very good at addressing what they might call urgent needs versus planned needs.

But every year, we do have a bit of—we have access to what they call 440 of part B capital. Last year, they allowed us to—through some of the projects that we undertook, to spend about \$825,000 worth of what they would consider part B capital. And I think I highlighted some of them: stage rigging, lighting upgrades, window stabilization at Artspace, one of the properties that we have a vested interest in. Artspace is the building just across the street, on Main Street, from us.

Security camera upgrade was a major investment in the last year; plant boilers, some mundane stuff that

has to be replaced, but it's expensive. Boilers and boiler controllers and things like that that power the entire centre up is where much of that investment went to.

And then we did some things on our own where we upgraded our computer network to manage some of the risks that are associated with cyberattacks so we can prevent ourselves from easily being hacked. I won't say it's impossible, or I won't say it's likely we'll never be, but, you know, we've done what we could to mitigate that.

And again, concession equipment—things of that nature that are critical to the operations of the Centennial Centre, more specifically to the concert hall, is where we focus some of our money. Yes, it was around 700-and-some thousand dollars in total over the course of the year.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

MLA Kennedy: Just wanting to bring things back around to the annual report, which is what we're here to discuss, for the 2023-2024 period ending March 31. So if I could encourage questions to be regarding specifics in the annual report, I would appreciate it.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: To the minister, I believe that I was speaking directly to the \$736,000 that was in the capital assets for the fiscal year of 2024.

* (13:30)

But barring that, page 4 of the report, the second pillar of the new strategic plan is to redevelop a state-of-the-art Centennial Centre. The report mentions that the Centennial campus requires a multi-million dollar investment to return the complex to its intended standard.

Can we expand a little bit on the kind of projects we're looking to redevelop and revive the campus?

Mr. Olson: Yes, I'd be happy to address that.

So we've undertaken with our partners in PSD what we call a building condition assessment report. So it's essentially a complete evaluation of the infrastructure of the Centennial Centre.

And as—just to remind the opposition, the Centennial Centre is multiple buildings. It's Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, the warehouse theatre, some warehouse space, all the Centennial Centre proper, which is the concert hall, Planetarium, museum, a movie production studio and the aforementioned Artspace.

So the building condition assessment is a comprehensive analysis of the capital requirements of the facility. We are working off of that report to prioritize specific investment in the most needed areas of the Centennial Centre, and we continue to work with our partners at PSD on identifying those critical areas. Reports do go back and forth from time to time that might change the urgency, depending on what's failing at the moment. But there is a comprehensive plan, or there is a plan in place—it's a 25-, 30-year plan—to tackle what is a rather significant—a required investment in the Centennial Centre going forward.

So there is a strategy in place. I don't want to get ahead of what may or may not come down the pipe. But I just want the—Mr. Perchotte to recognize that we are diligently working on that plan going forward and how to implement it and where's the best way to invest the dollars that we do have.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: Mr. Olson, thank you for that. Obviously 60 years of experience lets you know that proactive planning is much better than reactive planning.

I would like to see an answer from the ministers if the provincial government is prepared to commit to help fund these capital investments that are required more urgently than others.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Just a gentle reminder to all members that the questions and answers should be done through the Chair.

MLA Kennedy: I'm just going to confer for a moment.

So with regards to funding and with the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation, I think it's important to note that my department is working really closely with the Department of Public Service Delivery to support the long-term sustainability of the M-triple-C and the other facilities—pardon me.

We know the important role that the facilities play as a performance venue and as the home to some of the largest and the most renowned arts and heritage organizations in Manitoba, so we recognize the vital role that the arts play in the lives of Manitobans through the visual and music and dance and other forms. We really—the arts brings Manitobans together, and it really helps us define who we are as one Manitoba.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: We're getting some great answers here today, so I want to thank everybody for attending and getting down to the meat of what we are looking at here.

We know that parking is notoriously difficult anywhere you go in downtown Winnipeg. Presumably, parking around Centennial Centre is no different, and attending there myself, I can tell you sometimes it's very difficult, especially with the public safety building parkade now demolished.

Can we elaborate a little bit more on what is required for parking and how this has impacted the M-triple-C's revenue stream.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Goddard: Be happy to attempt to answer this. Thank you, Mr. Brar.

Given the relationship we have with the resident tenants or partners, the importance of serving the community, especially those that rely on automobiles to attend their conferences and the events and whatnot, there has long been a recognition by all that parking is a priority and the development of parking is a priority.

In fact, going so far back as 2016, a joint effort was brought together to create a master plan around the redevelopment of aspects of the campus. One of the first priorities was the parking lot on Rupert Avenue. And while at the time, the then-government was not able to provide the capital required to redevelop that surface lot into, like, a potential multi-use parkade, this year, we've now—we've taken the opportunity to revisit that, without commitment, but to revisit it and to look at that as a—and parking associated with that as a priority for our board to look at and to review.

So definitely recognized as a priority, something we are looking at internally with the board, with our partners and, of course, again, with support from the minister responsible.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Goddard.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank Mr. Goddard for that answer.

Parking is definitely an issue everywhere you go, so I'm glad that M-triple-C has put that on the focus of their radar to try to move forward, and hopefully, we can get some great parking around that area.

Do you want to talk a little bit about the museum lease? M-triple-C was recently in discussions with the Manitoba Museum on a new leasing agreement.

What can we expect from this revised agreement? The report mentioned that it's anticipated in the first half of the fiscal year '24-25.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Floor Comment: I'd be happy to—

The Chairperson: Mr. Olson.

Mr. Olson: —address that, Mr. Chair.

Yes, we've initiated discussions with the Manitoba Museum. For the sake of this committee, there are three organizations that we have long-term 33–99-year leases, quite frankly, divided into 33-year terms—for the use of space—for the lease of space within the Centennial Centre.

The Manitoba Museum is one of those organizations that has a long-standing commitment to lease space from the Centennial Centre—from the Centennial Centre Corporation to achieve the goals and the mandate that they've been given.

The redevelopment of the next 33-year plan is just looking to update the language. If you can appreciate, back in 1985 when this lease was first established, there were a lot of—there's a lot of terminology that does not apply to today's standards, to today's lease agreements, to the conditions—the environment that we work in today.

So we're really looking to upgrade that language. There is no—and I can say this in front of the committee—there is no intent to have the museum to relocate, to move into other spaces. It's really about updating the language, providing some clear expectations on the deliverables because M-triple-C delivers services to the museum that can be—that they count on for their operations. We want to make sure that there's some clear understanding of what those deliverables are so that there is no miscommunication or expectation beyond what is in the actual agreement going forward.

So it's really about cleaning up language and cleaning up expectations.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: I want to talk about accessibility for people to enter the facilities.

We talked a little bit about the parking, but the physical accessibility: What investments have been

made over the past year to improve accessibility to any or all of the facilities under M-triple-C?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Olson: Thank you for that question. It is a very important question to us.

* (13:40)

We have made improvements to the accessibility of the Centennial Centre in small increments. We recognize there's some more to do, but we—it's one of our priorities in any project that we're developing in the future is to make sure the building is as inclusive as possible. It takes money and time, and so some of that progress might not seem obvious, but we are, with every project that we undertake, we are ensuring that there is a development of accessibility built within the scope of the project itself so we can make those changes and make those improvements step by step.

As you can appreciate—sorry, just to finish off—65-year-old building, there is non-compliance in many areas, but we are making progress on making it a more exclusive complex.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

To all the committee members, very respectfully, I want to confirm that I'm pronouncing all the names, last names, properly. If not, feel free to correct me.

Mr. Perchotte: Perfect job on my name.

I want to talk a little bit about Artspace. It's an area I didn't really know too much about until it recently hit the news the past week, and this is one of those unforeseeable events that happen; it could happen personally in your home or anywhere else where there's some type of situation arises that you have to address.

Now, we know that it's been reported that currently there's over \$10,000 in ticket sales that have been lost from the temporary closure. I'd like to see if we have an idea on how soon this—the Artspace can get repaired and what would be the cost of that repair moving forward.

MLA Kennedy: So, in response to the question with regards to the Artspace, we're—we know that there's been a break in the sewer pipe, and it's a very serious issue for Artspace and its tenants, but I was very pleased to hear that the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation is working with the public—Manitoba Public Service Delivery, and they're going to be repairing and completing that as soon as possible.

Also I'd like to say that I was very pleased, but really not surprised, to learn that some of our city's cultural organizations have stepped up to offer space to the Artspace tenants. Manitoba's cultural community is always there to support and to really take care of the people around them with regards to crises.

So, in summation, I would say that, of course, we are assessing and this is ongoing, and we're obviously very committed to ensuring the repairs occur so that Artspace has the ability to continue doing the great work that they do.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. It is very important that we recognize the importance of the other cultural centres that we have for stepping forward and offering space.

I was just curious if M-triple-C has a contingency plan for dealing with events like this, in the event of some unforeseeable situation, that there is space available somewhere else, whether it be in other cultural centres or another building under M-triple-C's facility.

Mr. Olson: Yes, to answer your question, there is additional space from which, you know, we've had discussions with the executive director of Artspace. The Centennial Centre is one of those spaces where, if need be, some of those organizations could reside in a temporary basis until the repair is done.

They have gone to other art organizations in the community, probably a little bit more closer to their facility, and they've been generously offered space within those other buildings—private buildings, not necessarily public buildings—to temporarily reside until this work is being done.

And it is an ongoing project. It's active right now. We just don't have the timeline on the repairs itself. It's—if I might say, it's a big job.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: I can understand that the repair is a little bit of a fluid situation right now, and different things will come out of the requirement as progress is made, and it makes you proud to be a Manitoban to recognize that the other organizations are stepping forward.

I would like to see if the minister's department can ask—answer this question: Where Artspace has said that—by its own director, said that \$20 million is needed to cover the cost of repairs to that location, is there a commitment from this minister or the minister's de-

partment to cover a portion of that, and if so, what is the amount?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

MLA Kennedy: So what I would say is that with regard to funding requests, any capital requirements or requests that come through, our department really works in conjunction with our partners, with the Public Service Delivery, when we require—or, receive any requests for capital projects.

What I will say though is, you know, I recognize that this is an important issue. It's an ongoing situation that's unfolding right now for Artspace. But I would gently ask that we come back to the annual report because this is an ongoing issue, but we're really here to talk about the annual report for 2023-24.

Thank you.

* (13:50)

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

And I would echo that we should be focusing on the theme of the day, which is the annual report for M-triple-C.

Mr. Perchotte: The report does directly mention their investment into Artspace, which is clearly a part of the preview of M-triple-C. But, moving on, the report also highlights how the provincial Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund enabled M-triple-C to invest in significant improvements.

Can M-triple-C tell us more detail on what this funding was able to provide for, and the difference it made over the past year?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Olson: You know, we can. You know, the cultural fund that we were able to access did allow us to make an investment in some areas that we otherwise would have some trouble finding the capital to invest in.

So we made some modifications to our concert hall by investing in some equipment—expensive equipment. Sound boards are \$250,000; light boards are \$138,000; so, those types of investments. This fund allowed us to tackle that.

And I would remind Mr. Perchotte, too, that it came with a requirement that M-triple-C had matching funds as well. So when we made that investment, we had to make sure that our finances were in order as well, to be able to support the 50 per cent requirement for that fund.

But it allowed us to move in that direction, and we are very thankful for that.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: That's great. Having a funding model that can be specific for different programs or different requirements or different investments that are required is, you know, definitely valuable.

Is there anything that is available to M-triple-C at the moment that matches what ACSC has provided in the past?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Olson: At the moment, no, that—none that we're aware of, none that we're—yes, I guess that's the best way to put it: none that we're aware of. I'll leave it at that.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: We know that the NDP government chose not to move forward on the ACSC funding. Can the minister or the minister's department confirm that her government has no longer a predictable funding program for community arts and culture?

MLA Kennedy: So what I will say is that our government's committed to Manitoba's arts and cultural sector. There is no question about that. We're bringing back stable and predictable funding by restoring the funding that the PCs cut to the M-triple-C, which was in the amount of \$500,000.

So our efforts really do go beyond M-triple-C. Last year, we also announced we provide \$13.7 million in funding for the Manitoba Arts Council—nearly 8 per cent increase over the previous year—and we know that this funding really is helping artists, arts and cultural professionals, Indigenous knowledge keepers and organizations right across the province to really thrive and really enhance the quality of life for all Manitobans.

So I know that we're putting in the work, and I just think that, you know, our government and my department really do appreciate the arts and culture sector, and we definitely want to see this sector continue to thrive and to flourish so that all Manitobans can really appreciate the arts scene. It really is something that I think a lot of people in our province really hold dear.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: Since the ACSC fund was launched, M-triple-C in—alone has seen over \$330,000 directly. Combined with the resident tenants and the companies, the M-triple-C campus has seen over \$3 million in ACSC funding; not to mention organizations, like the Jazz Orchestra, who used this to fund to show—support shows that were held at the concert hall.

Now the NDP government has scrapped the PCs' \$100-million ACSC program, which directly related to over \$3 million to M-triple-C and replaced it with \$500,000 a year.

Is that a sustainable dollar value moving forward to keep you whole?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Honourable—okay.

MLA Kennedy: So what I will say is that the funding for the ACSC, it wasn't scrapped. The program ended. It was announced for three years by the previous government. It was shortened to two, and it ended while we saw the last intake—my predecessor, Minister Simard, saw the last intake. So that ended; we didn't scrap anything.

What I will say is we're bringing it back to the fact that our government has provided \$500,000 to the M-triple-C, which is funding that was cut under the previous PC government. This funding is ongoing and it will continue as a part of the budget that M-triple-C receives.

And I want to reiterate the fact that \$13.7 million in funding has actually occurred for the Manitoba Arts Council, so that's another 8 per cent increase along with the 20 per cent increase of the \$500,000.

Our government is incredibly committed to the arts sector and the cultural sector and we recognize the importance that that plays in the lives of Manitobans.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: You can call it any way you want. The fact that a program ends, the NDP government chose not to renew or move forward with the same program moving forward, taking millions of dollars away from M-triple-C.

Now if it hadn't been for the City of Winnipeg stepping up to provide the \$2-million shortfall, I think we might be in a different financial situation than we are today.

Last year, the culture minister in committee said he was talking to the arts and culture sector to under-

stand the particular challenges that exist within that sector and was working to create a sustainable, predictable fund that they can rely on.

I would like to find out when that fund will be introduced.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

* (14:00)

MLA Kennedy: So, in response to the question/statement from my colleague here, what I will say is, with regards to all of the organizations within Manitoba, since I've become minister in the middle of November, I've met with a majority of the folks. So I've toured the Manitoba theatre centre. I obviously have met with M-triple-C. I've—went to the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra for a tour and to talk with the folks there, the Manitoba Arts Council, Manitoba Film and Music.

So I can tell you that what I have been hearing from all of the players within this industry is that they don't want one-time grants, which is what previously was in place. They want stable, predictable funding, which is entirely understandable, so that they can continue to provide the wonderful entertainment and to really highlight the wonderful things that Manitoba has to offer within the arts.

And so, also with M-triple-C, that's exactly what we've done. We have increased their funding 20 per cent—the \$500,000. We're not providing one-time grants, so that it can—you know, these are things that are difficult for organizations to plan on and actually do anything with on a year-over-year basis.

So, yes, we're really proud of the fact that we've done that. And we've been seeing great things and I'm sure that this will continue.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Thank you to those that are present here today and for responding to our questions that we've had.

Culture, arts, entertainment: that is important to all of us here in Manitoba for our livelihoods and just pure entertainment. I have, myself specifically, attended some of the venues here in the city. I've even done a little live theatre myself, so I do enjoy that. So I can appreciate what the culture and arts provide in terms of entertainment.

This is to Mr. Olson. In your point of view, how would you describe the public interest—I'm sorry, through the Chair—in terms of, you know, are cultures changing, public—or the tastes are changing in terms of entertainment, and I'm just curious to know, in considering that, what do you think or feel the—describes public interest in the arts over the last couple of years? Has, you know, has the appetite grown, and if you can just expand on how that sort of evolved.

Mr. Olson: You know, thank you for that question. I mean, you know, it's not directly related to our annual report, but I've been in this position now for 13 years, so I have seen the evolution of the arts to some degree within our community. And I can tell you it is evolving. There has been changes, if you look back historically.

Years ago, you would see probably more engagement with some of the classical art organizations and some of the more traditional pieces that they would offer. I can't—I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the impact that COVID-19 had on the arts organizations in particular, because while there may have been supports in place to sustain these organizations, their livelihood essentially dropped off the table. There was no performances, no public gatherings, so it was very difficult for these organization to continue operating.

But it was also a moment of reflection, from what I can see, with these organizations for them to reimagine what they could deliver to the public that might be more engaging and more attractive. And I think they're all working very, very hard to find that next wave that attracts younger people, new Canadians, Indigenous peoples to their stages. I think they're really working hard.

And if you look at the programming of the Manitoba Opera with Li Keur last year, if you look at the work that the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra is doing to try to engage the Indigenous community, and some of the other cultural—Royal Winnipeg Ballet staging their first Canadian production dedicated to the history of the Indigenous people here in Canada. I think they're all trying to reach out and find that new audience. I've been looking at some recent reports that—suggesting the classic arts are coming back.

And if I may interject just a little bit on a personal matter, it has to do a lot with the way youth engage in social media. And they're finding that if you can convince younger people to attend a classic symphony performance, there's a calming effect in their minds and their concentration is actually improving.

So the arts, although they're a form of entertainment, they are also an integral part in the health of our society. And I believe they are evolving. It's just not that easy to turn a ship around when COVID really does put them in a tough spot, because you want to fall back on traditional delivery, traditional things that were profitable. But they are all evolving.

I can tell you, working with each one of them very closely, they are all trying to find that new connection with today's society. So I have a ton of hope that going forward, they will be able to find that engagement, and I think there's nothing but positive results to look forward to in the future.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

We're having good conversations. Thank you for all the points you are making.

But a gentle reminder that let's focus more on the theme of the day, which is annual report for M-triple-C.

Ms. Byram: Thank you for expanding on that. I guess the direction I was going was to, you know, see what opportunities there are for expanding what the M-triple-C offers and how you're going to engage other audiences. So appreciate your response and sort of expanding on that.

Touching again on the past minister last year who promised that a strategy for arts and culture was going to be developed—and that's going back to Hansard—it's been a year since that committee meeting, so one would assume that the strategy must be nearly complete now.

I'm just wondering if there's any update and if the minister can expand on what the status is of that strategy, and what can Manitobans expect to see in that?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Byram.

* (14:10)

MLA Kennedy: I think it's just important for me to kind of reiterate the fact that what I've been hearing as minister, since being appointed, from groups that I have met with, is really what they're wanting is stable, predictable, long-term funding. This is something that I think I've heard in probably every meeting that I've had, whether it be with, you know, the Manitoba Arts Council—I met with Folklorama the other day. Like, there are a multitude of people that I have met with since becoming minister.

And I think what's really important is that it's my responsibility to build these deep connections with these organizations to understand what it is that they're needing and what it is that they're wanting to be able to do the very best job that they can, to fulfill their mandates, to provide arts and culture experiences to all of Manitoba.

And I think what's really important is that we are, as a government, providing stable and predictable ongoing funding. We're steering away from one-time granting that doesn't help organizations in the long run. And so I think it's just—that really is our strategy, is doing that.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Byram: In the report, the fourth pillar of triple- or M-triple-C's new business plan is to communicate the MCCC purpose and capability to a broader audience.

My question is: How does M-triple-C market itself currently, and can we get a breakdown of what that market avenue looks like?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Byram.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Chair, thank you for that question. Ms. Byram, thank you for that question.

We do a poor job of marketing our organization, to be honest. And that's why we've made it one of the pillars of our strategic plan—is to elevate our profile a little bit in the committee.

We are a provincial Crown corporation. Our efforts and our history indicate that we can support arts and culture across the province if asked to do so. Unfortunately, what's happened over the years, and it's just—there's no one person to suggest has influenced this in any way, shape or form, but we've been somehow narrowed down to the organization that runs the concert hall.

And so we've looked at our mandate, our history, and we said, no. Our organization built the Centennial Centre for the Arts. We built Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre. We built the western centennial auditorium in Brandon, Manitoba. We built the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

And so when you go back to that original mandate of where our organization was at a particular time and place, we feel that we are a tool within government to be used to support the arts, and there's probably more that we can do to help achieve the mandate of the department of Culture by leveraging the fact that we

are a Crown corporation, that we can generate revenue, that we can support some of the initiatives that we might propose going forward, through some of the revenue opportunities that we might look at as well.

You know, recently we've opened up our own ticketing agency. So we operate much like Ticketmaster does. It's—matter of fact, we've hired Ticketmaster's old staff when they decided to lay everybody off in the province of Manitoba and centralize to Toronto—we picked their staff up to develop a ticketing agency here. So we'll be ticketing the rodeo in Dauphin, Manitoba this year, the Manito Ahbee Festival at the Assiniboine downs, the Morden—last starlight drive-in theatre. We provide online ticketing support for them.

And, of course, we provide all the internal ticketing for the concert hall, but that's the kind of thing that we're looking at going forward. How do we add value to the community by offering these supports to every one of these art organizations? If you want to leverage the fact that we have a ticketing company, you can. And you could probably, if you so choose to—because we're not here to force anybody to do anything—you can probably find some efficiencies if you want to work with us.

But could—is there something more we could do in The Pas? Is there something more we could do in Churchill, I mean, name any other community in the province—to leverage the fact that as a Crown corporation we have that latitude to some extent?

So that's what we're trying to do by making our profile a little but more well-known, that as a Crown corporation we have that capacity and we want to push that narrative out there a little bit more forcefully.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Perchotte: Welcome back.

I have to say this is—this committee is probably much better than I thought it would be: the direct answers, the honest responses; it's very, very, very enlightening. Thank you, everybody, for being a part of this.

MCCC and the Manitoba Métis Federation have agreed to display historical Métis artifacts at the Centennial Centre. This is something that is near and dear to many, many people in Manitoba, and we don't realize what we have either 'til it's lost or 'til we go somewhere else and we see what they don't have. Is there other opportunities to collaborate with local organizations, to highlight the Manitoba commu-

nities, culture, heritage that are going on within the campus?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Olson: If I may elaborate on that point specifically and then I would open the floor to anybody else who wants to sort of expand on that. We as a Crown corporation have committed ourselves to reconciliation and we make it a prominent feature in the opening comments of every board meeting, that one of our objectives is to acknowledge the harms of the past and to move forward in a—in an air of reconciliation.

And one of the things that were brought to our attention about a year ago is the Manitoba Métis Federation reached out; they had certain artifacts, certain displays—I believe these specific displays were at the Winnipeg Airports Authority—Winnipeg airport. And they had—their term had expired and they were looking for a new home. Sorry.

The Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

And we were more than willing to work with them to find a temporary or permanent home for some of these displays and artifacts. And we've made space inside the Centennial Centre—so there's the lower concord area.

But I think, you know, we also work in partnership with our—with the Manitoba Museum, who we have a close relationship with and we try to facilitate anything that they might need to tell the story of our First Nations peoples. And so, this was just one small gesture of appreciation and reconciliation with the Manitoba Métis Federation, to accommodate this request. It's open ended: they can leave these artifacts under our care for as long as they like or they can move them to perhaps another building later, that they might develop somewhere down the road.

But, yes.

Mr. Perchotte: On the topic of collaboration, does the M-triple-C facilitate sponsorships, and if so can you provide more of a breakdown on sponsorships?

* (14:20)

Mr. Olson: The short answer is yes. We do get a number of requests, if you can imagine, to support various organizations. We try to find a common theme. We try to find a theme that might be centralized around the arts community to provide a little bit more support, but we have, you know, made some—I don't know if donations is the right word, but—contributions through ticketing, for example. We might provide a couple of

tickets to an upcoming event that an organization might be able to leverage at one of their fundraisers.

We have recently supported an event at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, for example, where they were looking for some table sponsorship. Those types of events. We are selective. We don't do a lot of it, and we try to focus predominantly on requests that might enhance or support the arts to make those types of investments.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you for that. I think that any type of collaboration speaks volumes of your organization.

You spoke a little bit earlier about TobaTickets, and that's something that caught my attention and I—that's thinking outside the box. And I truly respect when somebody's able to think outside the box, take a look at the revenue streams and what's attacking that revenue and the cost of ticket agencies or otherwise. But this is also something that could be a made-in-Manitoba type of program, which could facilitate every event going on in the province eventually.

What is the progress looking like for the last year? I know you touched on a couple things that was brought up, but is this something that the M-triple-C would look to develop and keep expanding upon?

Mr. Olson: Short answer, yes. We see it as a real opportunity to develop our financial capabilities through the ticketing services. I think you touched on a very valid point: ticketing is a very expensive proposition for many organizations and there are a lot of hidden fees within the ticketing agency that in some cases make it cost-prohibitive for some organizations to have a formal, secure platform to ticket their events.

So our objective in setting this up is a—two-folded, initiated out of our own urgent need to establish a ticketing profile to ticket our own events, and then we just realized that we're investing in a Canadian company. The software is from a Canadian company called AudienceView, based out of Toronto.

AudienceView services 2,000 venues worldwide, so they're not a small organization. And we looked at the options available to us and we said: Can we be an agent using AudienceView's software to develop our own platform, and then make that platform available to anybody in the community that may want to leverage ticketing for their event?

There are some limitations and, you know, I'll point them out. Folklorama is a difficult one because of the multiple venues all over the place that we've had

discussions with. But the rodeo on Dauphin. You know, all we have to do is map out the arena in Dauphin and we know what kind of ticketing we need to provide to Dauphin. So the community at Dauphin in that particular event is using TobaTickets.

And we think there's potential, you know, for other organizations to use. We'd encourage the Province of Manitoba to use us as a ticketing platform going forward, too, where we can, because we're an internal agency that, you know, you would like to think we might be able to support the Province in some of their future initiatives going forward with that platform.

But it's a robust platform. There is virtually no event—you know, if we were really aggressive, I'd have sales agents across western Canada trying to convince people to come to Manitoba or to use this Manitoba-made, Canadian-made ticketing agency.

We're trying to place a premium on that, quite frankly, because it is a Canadian software platform. We are, obviously, a Canadian organization, a made-in-Manitoba organization, and we're trying to emphasize that as opposed to some of the more international ticketing agencies out there.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you, Mr. Olson, for that answer. You kind of touched a little bit more on the next question that I have.

I've been involved in a lot of different organizations and you're a hundred per cent correct that sometimes the agency fees are a tremendous amount of your profits that you're giving away. So when somebody has a very small investment of time and energy and they take that type of consideration for—from your event, it becomes very cost-prohibitive.

What steps are being done by M-triple-C to facilitate the growth of this? You talked, if you had the opportunity to have people going across the country, is M-triple-C looking at advertising this possibility of ticket sales in greater detail?

Mr. Olson: Again, thank you for that question. I mean, the short answer is yes. There's a cost factor that we have to be cognizant of. So the—this part of the business is growing organically, word of mouth, as various organizations hear about our capabilities and our abilities, they're inquiring about our service. So it is growing.

The Chairperson in the Chair

I—you know, I failed to mention, but one of the things that I'm quite proud about is that we're providing consulting services, given the expertise that

resides in our department, to Curling Canada right now. So Curling Canada has reached out to us and they've asked for support for the Brier, even though the Brier is not hosted in Manitoba; it's in Thunder Bay this year. Our ticketing manager is providing supplemental support to the Brier right now for ticketing, and who knows, you know, with that kind of engagement, perhaps we'll be ticketing the entire Curling Canada network as well.

But, again, it's growing organically as we develop the resources, as we develop the financial ability to do so, we will be looking at things like better marketing, better sales, better attempts to communicate this availability, this product's availability.

Mr. Perchotte: Mr. Olson, thank you for that.

What role could the Manitoba government play in help promote the use of TobaTickets? You alluded to the fact that for our events, that perhaps we could use that in here to promote our events. Do you see any other opportunities for the government of Manitoba to help promote this initiative?

Mr. Olson: I mean, I think the government, in particular the department of Culture, they're aware of this, and so we will work, we do work on an as-when and needed basis. I think they've been very encouraging of the establishment—when I say they—excuse me—the department has been very encouraging of this endeavour. You know, I mean, we bring it up if there's an opportunity for us to do an event that might be supported by the province. We'd be happy to take a look at it. I'm not going to commit to our ability to do everything, but there's certainly a lot that we could do, and we're there as a resource. We'd be happy to have those discussions with anybody.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

I think that this is a great opportunity to grow organically. The more people know about something, the bigger it could become.

I want to turn my focus a little bit here to safety. In the '22-23 report, it was mentioned that the increases in vandalism, drug use, homeless encampments at the arts centre campus has become a rising concern. This year the report mentions, on page 6, some of the steps taken since Manitoba adjusters performed a security audit.

Can M-triple-C touch on what the improvements have been made to security over the past year?

MLA Kennedy: I thank the member for bringing this important topic up. It is incredibly important with

regards to safety in and around the concert hall and other M-triple-C buildings.

We know that when people come to a show they want to relax and enjoy themselves. They really do. It's a—you know, people spend their hard-earned money to be entertained and to enjoy themselves. And I know for myself that when I go to the concert hall, I'm really grateful to the staff. They're incredible, and they work to create a really seamless experience for everyone who attends a show.

So certainly our government has been working closely with M-triple-C to review the security procedures and to invest in additional measures where needed. And a significant portion of our new annual funding is currently assisting with the ongoing physical security upgrades for doors and for cameras. And it's also helping the M-triple-C hire more security staff and better maintain their security infrastructure for years to come.

* (14:30)

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you, Minister, for that answer.

We know that the Manitoba NDP government is current—looking forward to opening a drug injection site about a five-minute walking distance from the concert hall.

With this added risk to safety, will the minister commit to supporting M-triple-C in bolstering security?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

May I just request Mr. Perchotte to tie it back to the report—the question you are asking. So if you can, please.

Mr. Perchotte: Sorry. So on page 4 of the 20–2022-23 report, it mentions the increase in vandalism, drug use and homelessness encampments at or near the arts centre.

This, again, will be further drug use very close to the arts centre and to the campus, so that is directly related to the question.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

MLA Kennedy: Now, I appreciate the member opposite's concern regarding safety, and I want to assure you that it's my priority as well—through the Chair.

But for most of the time that the PC government was in office, they didn't really do anything to increase

security at the concert hall and other venues. So I can say didn't provide any new annual funding, funding that could have been help to recruit and retrain the staff needed in order to run this world-class operation.

And with the half a million dollars that we have increased to the M-triple-C's funding, we're reinvesting in the performance spaces so that every Manitoban who chooses to go and enjoy a show, whether it be music or dance or art in Manitoba, can feel safe and relaxed while they're doing so.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: It was earlier mentioned in this committee that the PC government did invest heavily to get new security TV cameras and other items out there to bolster security.

An answer that you didn't do that in the past doesn't help us move forward. It's unfortunate that we're—after having such a great committee meeting, we have taken that tone.

We are looking at having a potential drug injection site five minutes away which could potentially hamper people's safety in the area. So the question was simply what is the current government going to do to increase that, and they refused to answer that in something that I'm satisfied with.

So I'm going to move over to M-triple-C. Is there a strategy in place or on the way for protecting guest performers and employees at M-triple-C?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

MLA Kennedy: So I would like to say that in the—very conclusively, as previously stated, our government has provided increased funding, \$500 million, which has been used to hire and recruit and retain security staff. It's incredibly important. We're very committed to Manitobans having a safe experience when they are enjoying any of the arts that are available around the M-triple-C—the campus there. And the money has been used or is going to be used for cameras for increasing security to ensure that the people who are going to enjoy the area and the shows and the productions there are going to be safe.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: I would just like the minister of the department to clarify. I just heard \$500 million in increased funding. Is that factual?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

MLA Kennedy: My apologies. It would be \$500,000.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you, Honourable Minister, for clarifying that.

Film production has become a very important part in Manitoba. I have seen it. I actually have had, in one of my facilities in Selkirk where they came and rented from me, just the most amazing group of people, very professional, in and out. It's something that as Manitobans we can be very proud that this is—that the film production is got the attention worldwide to develop here. Manitoba has become just a hot spot for film and TV production over the last decade.

Looking past the recent writers' and actors' strike, how much of a demand is the Manitoba Production Centre seeing from this sector?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Olson: So I think people might not be aware that we are engaged in the film and television industry through the management of what was at the time Manitoba's first and only purpose-built film production studio. Since that time, other organizations like Big Sky have come in and renovated the former Nygård building on—in—I can't remember the street name. Doesn't matter. So there are others that are opening up and there are other proposals to open up other studios as well too.

But what I can say, with our established facility and our connections and our discussions with film producers across Canada, mostly from the States, exercising the wonderful tax credit that all of these industries reflect back on or come back to us, all of these producers come back to us and say, listen, we are—you have the best support for the film industry in Canada. We want to come here. And you have the only purpose-built film studio and so we want to rent it, and we want to utilize it as best as we can.

So demand for that space is high. This past summer we had multiple competing interests for that site, and so it's unfortunate we didn't have more capacity internally to be able to accommodate that. But having said that, utilization rate has steadily gone up. And so we're very pleased that we're able to provide that space. We have made investment in that space to make sure it meets some of the demands that Hollywood producers and writers might need: high-speed Internet capacity to be able to stream services back to LA in live time; investments in the infra-

structure itself to make it more habitable for people that want to rent that space.

And so we are—there's quite a bit of traction and demand for that space. If I can throw one caveat out there: these wildfires in LA right now might have an impact on the whole film industry going forward this year, and I know that's not reflected in this report; that's just a comment on the side that we've been hearing in the last little while, that production might be a little bit slower this year because of the wildfires.

But, having said that, in general, in the past we've had significant demand for our space and we've been trying to fill that demand as best as possible.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

MLA Kennedy: So I would, as the Minister responsible for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, really want to take the opportunity to thank everyone at the Manitoba Production Centre because they have really put Manitoba on the map. And they've had an incredibly successful year. And we really are looking for another really great season coming up, with film happening in the summertime.

* (14:40)

And I think that, you know, as minister responsible, the—one of the first things that I did, the first event that I attended, after being appointed was the ACTRA awards. And the pride in the room with all of the folks who were there being recognized for their incredible contributions, you know, the actors and—it really was a very special time. The vibe in the room was very electric. People were incredibly proud to be Manitoban and to showcase the work they had done and the—everyone, you know, they were all colleagues in the room and they were supporting each other and celebrating each other. And I think it just goes to show, you know, that that really is Manitoba as a whole. And when everyone, you know, when everyone's doing well, you know, all boats rise. And that really was the vibe in the room.

So I really just want to say, you know, Selkirk is a really great space. It has been a hub. I've heard that from a multitude of people since being in this role, that for film and just scene work with regard to location, it really is a hub.

And, really, the growth of the industry has just taken off. I think that anyone that I've met within this sector has repeatedly said the same thing, that Manitoba has really—it's pretty much the envy of folks across Canada in the industry and I think that

essentially, what's going to happen is that we're just going to continually raise our profile and have global reach.

And I really think that it's really wonderful because the money that's generated by the Manitoba Production Centre, it's really just reinvested into Manitoba and Manitoba's artists and the cultural communities through M-triple-C.

So I just—really, basically the last year has just shown that Manitoba is open for business, and everybody knows this.

Mr. Perchotte: I certainly agree with the sentiments that our honourable minister has mentioned. We have attracted in the Selkirk area the likes of Woody Harrelson, Kate Beckinsale, Sean Penn, and the list goes on and on and on. These are top-quality productions that are being put there and they're looking at doing this.

Now the previous P-V-PC government greatly enhanced the film and tax credit, invested in getting direct flights from Los Angeles to and from Winnipeg. The M-triple-C report mentions on page 18 that the future of the film industry in Manitoba and MPC is encouraging as Manitoba government continues to invest resources in this sector.

We know that we need to keep that, moving forward. We know that not only the government of the day but the previous government recognized the importance of the film industry that it has here, and we wanted to make sure that we can protect that.

I was going to ask about the wildfires, but in conjunction with the wildfires, we're also looking at possibility of tariffs from the US.

Does M-triple-C see any fallout from potential tariffs in addition to possibility of lost revenue due to the wildfires?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

I would again gently remind about tying back your question to the report, which is the annual report, if you can, please. *[interjection]*

Sorry, Mr. Perchotte. I forgot Mr. Perchotte. I forgot to recognize Mr. Perchotte.

Mr. Perchotte: So according to the report on page 3, the extended writers' and actors' strike in the US led to the MPC missing budget revenue assumptions by \$85,000 for the year.

The tie-back is, will this have an implication on the budget as well from wildfires and/or other consequences such as tariffs?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

MLA Kennedy: So in response to the question from my colleague here, what I will say is that Manitoba is very committed with regards to funding. We have increased the funding to the Manitoba Film and Music industry by over \$450,000, and that will be ongoing funding. And I think that's very important to note we recognize the incredible talent that we have in Manitoba, and the industry is booming, and of course we want to ensure that we can continue to support the growth in the industry.

So with that being said, with regards to tariffs, I think what's really important to note is, you know, our Premier, Premier Kinew, has been a leader with regards to the team Canada approach with the response to the possible tariffs. He's worked across the provinces with the leaders, and across jurisdictions. And I think that really, what's important is that, you know, regardless of what occurs, our Province will be in a position to respond. And that is because of the incredible work that our Premier is doing, and I really couldn't be more proud of the fact that he has been leader in this regard across Canada.

And I think that it's really important to note that, you know, whatever the issue is with regards to tariffs, if they occur or not, I think our Premier (Mr. Kinew) is really well situated to respond to any type of tariffs across jurisdictions and all sectors—like, not just within film or music. And I think that's really important to note, that, you know, we have a really strong leader. We are opening our trade office in Washington, and we'll be situated there to continue to strengthen trade relationships with our US counterparts, and I think that Manitoba is in a really good position to be able to respond.

Thank you.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you, members of the committee, CEOs, Mr. Olson, Mr. Goddard, other chairpeople, for being here, directors.

The importance of what we did here today is not lost in the paperwork: the fundamentals that were described here, the organization, the structure, the direction moving forward, the people behind the scenes that are not here with us today, have such an

impact on what we do here as Manitobans moving forward.

* (14:50)

The ability for tremendous growth in the arts sector to have an opportunity for people to go to places for—to cleanse themselves, to have better mental health, is very important—to forget about the nuances of the day and to just immerse yourself into the arts and culture. And I think that's a very important part of what goes on behind the scenes.

This has been extremely informative. I've got pages and pages and pages of stuff, and it all kind of really comes back to the same thing. *[interjection]* Yes, exactly.

I'm going to leave this here. I want to thank everybody for their attention today and their professionalism, and I look forward to hopefully doing this again in a year from now.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Perchotte.

MLA Kennedy: Well, I appreciate this being my first committee. Want to thank my colleagues, the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation, for their excellent work, and I really want to just take a minute to thank just all the staff who work at M-triple-C. I think it's really important, you know, whether they work in the box office, they're ushers, security, stagehands or other roles that support Manitoba's artistic community. I really think that, you know, they're very dedicated, and I think that they deserve to be recognized for their incredible work in the—keeping the arts scene within Manitoba thriving for years to come.

So thanks to everyone.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Seeing no further questions, I will now put the question on the report.

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024— pass.

The hour being 2:52, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

The Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 2:52 p.m.

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