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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 27, 2026

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, Mrs. Cook, MLAs Dela Cruz, Loiselle, Mrs. Robbins

Substitutions:

Mrs. Robbins for Mrs. Hiebert

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, 2025

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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 Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): –MLA Brar.

Clerk Assistant: MLA Brar has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

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

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

Are there any nominations?

MLA Dela Cruz: 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—sorry.

Committee Substitution

The Chairperson: I would like to inform the committee that, under our rule 85(2), the following membership substitution has been made for this committee, effective immediately: Mrs. Robbins for Mrs. Hiebert.

Thank you.

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The Chairperson: This meeting has been called to consider the Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

At this time, I would like to remind everyone that the 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 as to how long we should sit this afternoon?

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): I believe it was pre-arranged two hours. However—*[interjection]*

The Chairperson: MLA Loiselle.

MLA Loiselle: I suggest we start with an hour and revisit after an hour.

The Chairperson: It's been suggested that we sit for an hour and revisit.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I think we had an agreement for two hours. I think, let's—if we could just keep it at two hours. I actually don't anticipate taking that full time, but I would like the ability to do so if needed.

The Chairperson: Is there an agreement for two hours? *[Agreed]*

Does the honourable minister wish to make an opening statement, and would—please introduce the officials in attendance.

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): 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 2024-25 annual report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce Alan Goddard, chair of the board of directors; and Rob Olson, who is the chief executive officer for M-triple-C. Also joining us today are Deputy Minister Jeff Hnatiuk, acting Assistant Deputy Minister Vania Gagnon and director of our major agencies and programs branch, Roxane Hutcheson.

The Manitoba Centennial Centre plays a crucial role in supporting access to arts and culture in Manitoba. The Centennial Centre campus is home to our largest and most renowned performing arts and heritage organizations, including the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Company, the Manitoba Opera, the Manitoba Museum and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

The centre's facilities, in collaboration with resident tenants, make essential contributions to the cultural life and experiences of Manitobans.

Today provides an important opportunity to share the successes and achievements of the Centennial Centre over the past year. We look forward to continuing our work with this Crown corporation to enhance its contributions in the years to come.

Thank you so much, and I look forward to our discussion today.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister Kennedy.

Does the critic for official opposition have an opening statement?

Mrs. Cook: I just want to thank both the board chair and the president and CEO for joining us here today. It's my first time at this committee, and I'm—I just want to take this chance to put a couple words on the record about the value of what you do and the value of arts and culture to Winnipeg and to Manitoba as a whole.

I—coming from a artsy family myself and having kids who are involved in the arts, I find myself at MCCC facilities several times a year, and I always enjoy the—and am frankly blown away by the quality

of what we produce here in Manitoba. And I very much appreciate your role in facilitating that and the role of the sector as an economic driver in our province. You know, often when we talk about economic growth, we don't talk about the value of arts and culture, but it is a significant part of, and will continue to be a significant part of, growing Manitoba's economy going forward.

And I don't take for granted either the fact that the sector has faced, and continues to face, significant challenges. Certainly the pandemic created long-lasting challenges for the arts sector; and at a time when many Manitobans find themselves in an affordability crisis, I think, you know, spending on entertainment is sometimes one of the first sacrifices that they'll make, which unfortunately has an impact on arts and culture in our city.

So thank you for all that you do, and I'm looking forward to asking some questions on the report.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

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): I would just like to say, on behalf of the board of M-triple-C, my gratitude to be here representing all of us and my gratitude to our minister, the Honourable Nellie Kennedy, for this opportunity both to lead the board through this period of change and transition and growth; as well as to the incredible management team at M-triple-C for all the incredible work they do, not only supporting the—what we often think of as the concert hall, but, more than that, the footprint in the heart of Winnipeg and the mandate to support arts and culture across Manitoba.

So thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Robert Olson (President and Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation): Yes, thank you, Minister Kennedy, for this opportunity, for introducing, talking about the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation; and thank you to the official opposition for this opportunity to talk to us. It's a great opportunity on our behalf to express who we are, what we do, how we interact with the arts and cultural community.

As I've said before in other presentations, it's often not known, but we're the second oldest Crown corporation in the province next to Manitoba Hydro,

and, as such, we like to think we have a really low profile in the community because we do a very good job at supporting arts and culture. And through various administrations, we've managed to fulfill our mandate, which is always to make sure that, as best as possible, the arts can thrive in the province of Manitoba.

You know, we're an organization that was originally formed as a development agency back in the early '60s, tasked with building an arts centre in the province of Manitoba to coincide with the centennial of Canada and then the centennial of Manitoba in 1970.

*(13:10)

And so, as a result, the museum, the Planetarium, the concert hall, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the western centennial auditorium in Manitoba: these were all projects that were developed by our corporation in the '60s, early '70s. And then upon the completion of those projects, our mandate was amended and we became a management agency to some—in some respect to ensure that these venues were viable to the arts community so that they could program them appropriately and deliver the exceptional programming that they do.

So that's our co-ordination, that's our linkage to the arts and cultural community. We make sure that they have the tools that they need to present the wonderful stuff that they do present, whether it's the symphony, the ballet, the opera or commercial venues; bringing Broadway or working closely with the museum on the redevelopment of their space or, in fact, supporting RMTC in various ways, shapes and forms. So we've always been there as an additional resource to sport, culture and heritage and the government directly, and so we like to think that we do have a small role to play in the success of our arts community.

And as you pointed out, Mrs. Cook, very eloquently, we are an economic driver in this province, and there are numerous studies that would support that assumption as well. So I'm looking forward to answering your questions and just giving a brief overview, or continued overview, of what we do and how we interact with the arts and cultural community.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

The floor is now open for questions. A gentle reminder again to put your questions and responses through the Chair, please.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Cook: So it certainly takes a huge team effort to run a corporation like this. How many people does the corporation employ directly? *[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Mr. Olson.

Mr. Olson: I'm sorry, Mr. Brar—Mr. Chair. I can certainly take that one.

So we have a complement of casual, part-time and full-time employees, and if you can imagine, our casual component is the biggest component because they're the people that you first meet when you come to the concert hall, for example. They're the ushers, the ticket takers, the bar attendants. So that's a large contingent, 100-plus in that category. We have about 38—I should reference the annual report to make sure last year I get the right number.

But I believe we have about 38 full-time employees and we have approximately seven or eight part-time employees. I think the FTE component in total is around 60 on any given year, and of course, that's a fluid number. It does move back and forth.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: Are there any volunteer positions regularly at any of the facilities?

Mr. Olson: Not with us directly, but with the resident companies that we do work with, there's a volunteer committee with the symphony. I know the Manitoba theatre centre operates with a volunteer component as well, too. We do not specifically. They are most—well, they are entirely paid employees.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: So in reading the annual report, the corporation reported an operating surplus of almost \$173,000 for last fiscal. The year prior was over \$113,000. I think this question is for the CEO.

Do you anticipate—does the CEO anticipate that this is something that's going to continue moving forward?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Well, you know, our projections are favourable.

We've—as was alluded to earlier, the pandemic really stunted our ability to generate revenue. Most of you may know that the entertainment industry in particular was hit hard because of the nature of our business. People weren't attending performances, people weren't travelling, commercial artists weren't

travelling, our local performing arts groups basically shut down during the pandemic.

So there was a couple of years where—well, it was lean, quite frankly, and, again, under the previous administration, there was some support, and we thank them for that support during that period. But we have slowly been emerging, and we found that some of the traditional organizations, perhaps like symphony, ballet and operas, their audiences who tend to skew a little bit older are a little more hesitant to come back to live performances. But the commercial aspect, the commercial side to what we do is very robust right now and has returned to post—well, to exceed pre-pandemic levels. So we're excited by that.

As you may or may not know, and it was alluded to earlier, we also manage a movie production studio. So in—the film industry, as could be, you know, told by anybody here today, is doing very, very well in the province. And so we're a small cog in that wheel as well, too. So the film industry is doing well for us.

So overall, our projections are for continued balanced budgets. That's our mandate, to balance the budget. And anything more than that is what we aspire to, but we aspire to balance our budget more than anything else.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: The CEO mentioned that the commercial side of the operation is doing well, which is great.

Can you just clarify for me what—you mentioned the film production studio; I assume that's part of it. What else is encompassed within the commercial side of the operation? *[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson.

Mr. Olson: You'd think I'd know better. But, Mr. Chair, thank you for that question.

So the commercial side applies particularly to two of our business units, which is the concert hall and the Manitoba Production Centre. And a commercial entertainer, for clarity, is when we book Neil Young in the concert hall. And that would—for argument's sake, the promoters of Neil Young would pay full rental expenses for the concert hall. So we'd maximize the revenue opportunities off a performance like that.

When we're working with our resident tenant or corporations—symphony, ballet and opera—and you can see it in our report—there is a discounted rental rate to help them with their expenses from year to year.

And so that discounted rate, you know, is one of the ways that we support them by allowing them to be—well, to prosper, but to be—to have their expenses a little less onerous on their operations. So that's one of the ways that we support them.

But commercial, whether we're, you know, working with Sony or Universal to book the production centre for a movie studio, those are full commercial rates that are charged out.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: Yes, and I would assume that when a local dance school books out the concert hall for a recital, they're not paying Neil Young rates either.

So one of the concert hall's resident organizations, WSO, I understand is moving to Pantages. Can either the board chair or the CEO expound on, sort of, what impact that's going to have on the corporation's revenues?

Mr. Olson: I'll take—unless the minister wants to—well. Let—Mr. Chair, if you don't mind, I'll take the first crack at that.

If the WSO can successfully relaunch the Pantages Playhouse Theatre, I don't think we're going to, for the most part, be competing for the same type of entertainment. For example, it's not likely that Broadway Across Canada, which is a major production organization, will be able to stage anything in the Pantages Playhouse Theatre.

You've got to remember that Pantages, as it's currently configured, and I understand they're going to renovate that space, is only configured for 1,400 seats.

The concert hall has 2,300 seats. So, many of the commercial operators will look to maximize ticket sales with the larger venue. Some of the local not-for-profits, some of the dance companies, may choose to move over to the Pantages Playhouse Theatre because they would complement what we do with the larger performers.

So there will be some transition, but I think for the most part, there's enough business in our growing community that the not-for-profits, some of the for-profit organizations, might go to the Pantages, and for the most part, we'll make the adjustments we need to make.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: The CEO almost gave me a segue to ask the question I really want to ask, which is, when is

Hamilton coming to Winnipeg? But I won't ask that question, because it's probably privileged information.

Floor Comment: It's not really in the annual report.

Mrs. Cook: It's not in the annual report; it's not relevant to this committee. It's just very relevant to my own personal interests.

* (13:20)

I'm going to ask a much drier question. Last year's report outlined the corporation's new three-year strategic business plan, which concludes in 2026. So this past year would have been the midpoint of that plan, but I didn't see it—unless I missed it—I didn't see it mentioned in this report. So can you—can the CEO tell us about the status of the strategic business plan and what would you say reflects that plan in this report?

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Olson: The three-year strategic plan that we're just about to conclude was a bit of a departure for us because in prior iterations, we always focused on a five-year horizon. Coming out of the pandemic, we thought it would be prudent to shorten that horizon only because there was a little bit of uncertainty in the marketplace and uncertainty in the environment, quite frankly.

And so we shorted it to a three-year plan that was really focused on re-establishing, if you can, the audiences that that were—that had left us during the pandemic period. So that three-year plan was trying to find ways to make people more comfortable to return to live event performances.

So some of the things we focused on in that plan were enhancements to security, enhancements to the cleanliness, so, sanitation procedures to make it as comfortable as possible for people returning, and that some of the things that, you know, you might have been worried about during the pandemic could be alleviated as best as possible.

So there was a real focus on that plan. Now, coming out of that plan, as you rightly pointed out, '26 is the last year, you know, we have discussed—Alan has discussed, that us—asked us to start contemplating the next three-year strategic plan, which will happen in 2026—the planning for the next plan, if you will.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mrs. Cook: I noted that one of the pillars of that strategic plan was to establish a new charitable foundation, which was still in its early stages as of last

year, and I know that it's meant to operate independently, but I wonder if that foundation's been able to raise any funds for MCCC or if there's any expectation or goals around what that foundation might achieve on an annual basis.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Yes, so that was—and thank you for reminding me of that pillar. It was part of our strategic initiative—a three-year plan, and we did, actually, create a foundation. That foundation has been vetted through the federal government's certification process. It has been established as a charitable organization. There has been some challenges—board membership being one of them—and it does—it is intended to act independent of the organization.

And so we are—there still remains a board chair for that foundation, who we are in discussions with about reconstituting the board so they can actually get going with some of their mandate, which is to raise money to support the arts and cultural community and support the Centennial Centre, more explicitly, with some of the challenges that we face.

So it is in place. It does have the charitable certification and status and it has met all the federal requirements as a not-for-profit charitable organization.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: It's noted in the report that the CEO has been asked by the board to focus on, quote: revisiting the corporation's attention to the enhanced development of the Centennial Centre, unquote, and talks about how MCCC can take the lead to envision a cohesive cultural district in downtown Winnipeg.

And I believe that this was something the board was going to be working on in 2025-26, specifically defining the scale and the scope of this renewed vision for a cultural district.

So I guess my question—and more for the board, maybe—has the board worked any of this out yet, what this renewed vision is going to look like?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Goddard: Absolutely, we've started the process, I think. Similar to, sort of, the winding down of the last strategic plan this year, we've been winding up the planning-to-plan stage of the next strategic plan.

What we've really been focused on is underutilized space and opportunities within the footprint—the historical footprint of what is not just the concert hall, but the—what we consider the M-triple-C campus.

Primarily looking—again, you know, full disclosure—primarily looking at underdeveloped spaces and long-standing requests by both the resident partners and organizations, as well as community at large.

And I would say, probably most recently—and gratitude for support from our minister through the most recent mandate letter—direction to engage community in talking about what would it look like; what could M-triple-C develop in that area that would better address not only the sustainability, viability and impact of M-triple-C against its mandate, but also in support of our resident organizations, our partners, and those in Manitoba, those in Winnipeg, that want to be a part of M-triple-C and everything it needs.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Goddard.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that answer, and, recognizing that the chair may not be at liberty to discuss the substance of some of those conversations, I'm very curious to know what the community has to say about how that space could be utilized and which spaces in particular are underutilized that could be better used. If he could—if the chair could just provide a little bit more detail around that, if he's able to, that'd be great.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Goddard: Excellent question.

And this isn't a pass on it; the reality is, is we are in the midst of engaging community over the next several months. We have done—we're doing everything from community consultations with the public at large, arts organizations, individuals within the catchment area or affected by the catchment area of the campus, as well as of—and, of course, our resident organizations who we've now met with at least three times—the leadership—at least three times in the past year.

I don't want to get ahead of, you know, what the ultimate answers will be. But I don't think any of them—the current ones that we've heard are not going to be surprising to anyone, which is accessibility, ensuring that people feel they have a place there, you know, that there is opportunities for them to be engaged. But as I said, I don't want to spoil the results, I don't want to assume the results. So we should know by the time we revisit this opportunity next year in full detail.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Goddard.

Mrs. Cook: In addition to the resident organizations that use MCCC facilities, who do the chair or CEO or

both—or the minister—see as the relevant partners and stakeholders in this vision?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Goddard: Again, fantastic question.

I would say that we need to recognize the—and appreciate and respect the origins and genesis of M-triple-C. And so, the resident organizations, the resident tenants, will always be a primary audience in all of these discussions.

But beyond that, I think we need to recognize that—and as this administration has—and, again, appreciative of the support—that Manitoba has changed. We have new Canadians. We have, historically, individuals that have never set—or stepped foot within M-triple-C's campus. Those are the individuals that, if this is going to be a viable organization 10 years, 20 years, 50 years into the future, we need to engage and we need to—we need to create a space where they feel they belong. And that is what we're doing.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Goddard.

Mrs. Cook: I'm going to shift to ask a few questions about capital investments. This past year saw several capital projects. I—this is—I'm going to ask for a dollar figure, so take all the time you need to find the answer, but what was the total investment in capital assets in the 2024-25 fiscal year, and what was it the previous year?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Thank you for the question. It's very fluid—there's a fluid answer to that question, as there is with anything, because many of these projects, as you may know, are multiple-year projects. There are some that can be completed within a specific time frame; there are many that start, you know, two, three years out, and there—might just be completing this year.

* (13:30)

I can tell you that in the 2025 year—'24-25 year, that approximately \$30 million in capital investment was spent on the Centennial Centre, and that's through a multitude of projects, whether it was the recladding of the exterior of the Concert Hall. So for those that may not know, that's, you know, the removal of all the Tyndall stone exterior, reinsulating, building new fasteners to the side of the wall and then all of that Tyndall stone put back on. It was a very laborious multi-year project. It was completed in September of 2025. That project alone was a 26-and-a-half-million-dollar project.

So if you, you know—and there are others that are ongoing. There's a roof replacement right now to the research tower of the museum. That's a two and a half, \$2.6-million project. There's a number of smaller projects in the 200- to 500-thousand-dollar range. And I say smaller—they're all still relevant—but in terms of major overhauls, those were the two big ones. The building envelope around the Concert Hall was around 26 and a half million, and the research tower, or the roof replacement of the research tower above the museum, it was about two and a half million dollars.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for providing details of what some of those projects are. You anticipated my next question.

Can I ask, and I don't know if this is easy to answer or not, but how many of those capital projects were under way in any capacity in the prior fiscal year, in the 2024 fiscal year?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Well, certainly the building envelope restoration was one. It was—well, according to my notes and I can say I lived through it—it was a four-and-a-half-year project to do that. There were a number of setbacks in the project, but they were all overcome. But it was a very complicated project. So that one in particular, which was the bulk of the capital investment in the Centennial Centre, you know, took approximately four, four and a half years to complete.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: The CEO will correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe, based on media reports, that that renovation project was the subject of a lawsuit. Last year, my colleague who was sitting here asked a couple questions about that, but it wasn't something that the CEO was aware of at the time. So I'm recognizing that it's a legal matter. I'm just wondering if we can get some clarification on who filed that lawsuit and what the status of it is.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: You're right. I probably can't go into too much detail about that. I can tell you it didn't involve the Province or M-triple-C entirely. It was a dispute between two contractors. There was an expectation on a deliverable and that the treatment of the exterior of the Concert Hall did not meet up with the expectations. And so the contractor in this particular case is challenging the sub-trade that they hired to do the insulation work.

So it's not—we're involved, we're named, obviously, because it's our buildings; it's the Province's buildings, but I can speak for M-triple-C: we are not directly engaged in any of that litigation.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that clarification.

So are any of the capital projects that are under way, would you consider them a private-public partnership or—how are those projects structured?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Not in the true sense of the word. Some of the funding has come through some of the programs that were available to, for example, the Manitoba Museum and Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, through what they call the ACSC Fund that was—that allowed them to leverage provincial dollars or government dollars and then support—find supporting or matching funds to do some of their projects.

But these are projects that they took on—RMTC took on for themselves, the museum took on for themselves. The museum is renovating their front lobby area. That was all stimulated through the ACSC fund at the time, and they're leveraging some of their own dollars; they're hiring their own contractors in conjunction with M-triple-C because we have oversight over what happens to the building per se. But no, not directly any—is there any triple-P sort of partnership there.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: I did want to highlight the fact that the ACSC fund did enable MCCC facilities to invest in significant improvements; I think that was an important measure undertaken by the previous government. And the CEO actually answered a question that I was going to ask, which is if any of the capital projects within the past year were at least partially supported by that fund, and the answer seems to be yes.

I wonder if the board chair or the CEO would like to comment on whether there might be any value in a granting program going forward that would, similar to ACSC, that would provide funding for specific projects like this.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

MLA Kennedy: Thank you for that question.

So with regards to specific granting projects, certainly there was the ACSC, but at this point I think what we're doing is ensuring that, you know, through

our PSD, our Public Service Delivery, since this is an asset of the government, that we ensure that, you know, there is a plan moving forward with regards to what renovations or things within the building and the campus need to be done, that those are identified and that we're moving forward in that regard.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister Kennedy.

Mrs. Cook: I can't recall if the CEO mentioned this when we were talking about the renovation projects that are under way. There was the research tower, the roof of the museum. Does the concert hall need a new roof? Is that on the corporation's radar? This is just a genuine question.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: So the roof replacement at the concert hall has been—it was handled previously. I don't think we're in a cycle right now where we need to replace the roof. There are always minor repairs that are necessary because something happens.

But no, a general roof replacement on that side is—has been done previous years, and I can't tell you exactly when, but it's—we're okay on that side, on the south side of the complex.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: I just want ask a question about the Artspace building. It had been closed to the public for a few weeks due to a broken sewage pipe, which I'm—I understand lost tenants thousands of dollars in ticket sales. And the annual report mentions that the corporation co-ordinated repairs to the building to rebuild its sewer lines, which is great.

Can the CEO confirm the total cost of that sewer line repair?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: I do have that number, but I don't have that down because I'm trying to think what happened in the last fiscal year or if it's actually included in this fiscal year—no, of course not. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's in our report: \$83,000. Thank you. Thank you for pointing that out.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: Surprise repairs like that are, yes, a reality for everyone that manages large facilities like this. I just wonder what kind of contingency plan MCCC has for dealing with things like this when they come up.

Mr. Olson: Well, our contingency plan is what we're working on, on a year-to-year basis. So one of the things that maybe we don't talk about enough is, is when we do generate a little bit of a surplus at the end of fiscal year, we do roll it into restricted reserves for unanticipated costs or unanticipated—or anticipated need so that we do have a little bit of a cushion if need be.

But we also work closely with our friends at Public Service Delivery, government services, who are a valuable resource to us and we have a great working relationship with them. When things like the sewer repair do crop up or pop up, we are inevitably asked to go in and assess the situation, do a lot of the preliminary costing of the repairs and the magnitude of the repairs and we might actually take those repairs on ourselves through our operational funding.

* (13:40)

But, inevitably, we're able to work with our friends at PSD and find a recovery, through their operating expenses, to cover that unanticipated expense on our behalf. So we won't delay—as best as we can we won't delay the project. We'll get it done. We'll get it completed. A sewer repair is something you need quickly.

The delays in that particular project were not because we were looking for money. It was just, you know, all of a sudden, we had to go under the city street and we had to shut our street down and we had to dig up the street, and it just kept growing and growing and growing in a 100-plus-year-old building. But it was done as quickly as possible.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: And I'm aware that there were also repairs made to the building's windows, but it sounded like more substantial investment was needed. Artspace's executive director said last year that \$20 million is needed to cover the cost of repairs.

So this question is to the minister: What is the minister's commitment to helping cover the cost of repairs needed at the Artspace building?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

MLA Kennedy: I'd like to thank MLA Cook for that question.

Artspace is an incredible organization that does wonderful work within our cultural sector and our arts sector within Manitoba. And recognizing, you know, that within some of these spaces, for example, like the 100-year-plus old building that Artspace is in, there

are going to be capital projects that are required and renovations that are needed.

For example, about the sewer happening, those are things that just—you know, it's an older building. But certainly, as was mentioned, our Public Service Delivery branch within government, many different capital projects are—or renovations are identified and prioritized for government assets. And so that's certainly been the case that that's happening, for example, with Artspace, because that is a government asset.

And then there is a 'prioritization' that happens. We know that these things are required, and certainly, we support the resident tenants of M-triple-C. And so this is something that is on our radar, certainly.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: I do have a couple of questions that I am going to direct to the minister, recognizing that my role on this committee is to ask some tough questions, even if they sound a little more pointed than the generally from—friendly tenor and tone of this committee.

I mean, the current government abandoned the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund, and I wonder if the minister could tell the committee, given the importance of that fund to the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation and other arts and cultural organizations in the province, what has replaced it?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

MLA Kennedy: Thank you for that. So the ACSC grant certainly was there. We've, you know—see what has been done with that information and that grant program.

What I will say is, when meeting with many of the different arts organizations throughout Manitoba since being named minister, what I have heard repeatedly and over and over again is the need for stable and predictable funding. And that is something that our government is really committed to. I mean, I can't name the amount of times I've heard that from organizations.

And so with our increase to MAC this past fiscal, these are things that are really important. It allows organizations to really plan, have strategic plans, have that predictable funding from government so that they can move forward on a one-to-five-year basis and be able to hire specific staff, be able to plan for their organization and what—the things that they want to do and accomplish.

So that's really what our government is committed to doing.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: While I have a great deal of respect for the minister, I would argue that scrapping a \$100-million funding program is a de facto cut to the arts sector. And the last Culture minister, this time last year during committee—actually no, in 2024 during committee—said he was working on, quote: creating a sustainable, predictable fund that they can rely on.

It's now 2026. When will that fund be introduced?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook. May I request you to link it back to the report or mention what page of the report you're mentioning.

Mrs. Cook: Sure. We've discussed the capital projects that are under way currently, as stated in this report, and some of those capital projects were started with ACSC funding.

My question is related to the future ability of the corporation to undertake projects without the stable, predictable funding that the NDP have promised.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

MLA Kennedy: So what I—I just kind of want to reiterate what we were talking about, because I think what we're speaking about through that stable and predictable funding for organizations is it's—we're doing what you're speaking about through the operational budget.

And I think organizations continue to tell us that that is what's required, is that they require that operational funding. Because otherwise they're seeing those deficits and then they're in a place where they're not meeting balanced budgets, they're not able to do the things that they're looking to do and are at, you know, a place of fiscal loss.

So when you have stable and predictable funding for operational funding for organizations, they're able to—to be able to have these capital projects and budget for them; whether it's not this year, in three years, they can see that those operational dollars, they're safe. They are able to have that predictable funding. And so they can plan for those 'copital'—those capital budgets.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: I would still argue that unless organizations cap—operational funding has been increased by \$100 million to replace the ACSC program, it's still a cut. But at this time, I'm going to turn the floor over to my colleague to ask a few questions.

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): So I'm going to switch it over to safety. It seems to be the theme of this year's report: controlled access points, expanding video surveillances, new metal detectors and et cetera. And the report also mentions how M-triple-C has tried to minimize episodes of vandalism and theft.

My question is to the CEO. Can you expand on some of the improvements that have been made to security over the past year?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Robbins.

Mr. Olson: Thank you very much for that question.

It has been an ongoing concern of ours for the last few years, particularly post-pandemic, the episodes of vandalism. And, you know, unfortunate socioeconomic problems have impacted the Centennial Centre. And we see it show up with broken windows; we see it thrown up with homelessness on the campus, although that's not specifically a threat. But, you know, there have been two fires lit inside the concert hall in the last year.

* (13:50)

So what we've done is that we've tried to secure the perimeter of the building. We've tried to automate all the door accesses so it's no longer required to have a key, so there's a restricted access if you're given an electronic fob. We've brought in metal detectors to—when it's appropriate—to scan the crowds as they come into the concert hall to make sure no weapons or things of that nature are coming into the concert hall. We've worked with our partners on the north end of the complex, which is the museum, to allow for their public access during the day to come see the museum but also have sort of restricted movement inside the complex once those patrons do come in.

So we're trying to implement new systems and new procedures that do not impact businesses to organizations like the museum, but at the same time, we're just more cognizant, we're more aware. You mentioned some of the security systems we've put in place; we have a full monitor room now, where virtually everywhere where it's appropriately allowed, is videotaped and recorded.

We work in collaboration with the City of Winnipeg police department often to exchange video footage to try to dissuade some of this behaviour. And we've expanded the exterior lighting to the Centennial Centre because as we know, when you have a dark space, particularly when it's inactive after performance, it's just more attractive to some people that

might want to do some things that they shouldn't. So we've made an investment in lighting the exterior of the—well, I say concert hall, but Centennial Centre.

So those are investments that we've made up front. It doesn't stop everything; we're not—we don't believe that it will. But it does give us an opportunity to address some of the concerns that many of our patrons have expressed, that they're uncomfortable in some situations coming to the core of the downtown area, the core of the Centennial Centre—and that impacts everybody in that neighbourhood—for performances.

And so it's a legitimate business issue that we have to continue to address and continue to make an investment in, because it will and it has impacted our business.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Again, a gentle reminder to all members of the committee to put their questions through the Chair, please—questions and responses through the Chair, please.

Mrs. Robbins: So you sort of answered my next set of questions—was that safety's been a growing concern over the past year, which you have addressed, and that the concerns of this—how it impacts the operations. Well, obviously, if it's a concern for the people coming to the events, it's going to affect the operations, I believe, correct? So—

The Chairperson: Thank you—Mrs. Robbins.

Mrs. Robbins: Okay. So are there more security measures for the upcoming year to—that are being looked at for in the future that will—or do you feel right now that you have accomplished what you need at this time?

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Olson: Thank you for the question.

What—our intent is to continue to build on some of the improvements that we've made. So, you know, continue to automate access doors so that we have a little bit more control over entry and exits. Those—that's an ongoing thing because we obviously weren't able to take away the key to every door in our 750,000-square-foot complex. So we'll continue to pursue that.

We are looking to work with some of our resident organizations, our partners in the community, including the Sport for Life Centre, where we've recently had a discussion about introducing a mobile security van to the campus, which might—might—improve some of the

safety factors or the—you know, the apprehension that some people might have. So that's in the works. That is not part of our '24-25 plan, but you might see it in our next strategic plan.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Robbins: We also appreciate—the M-triple-C has helped support its partners with the security.

Can you expand on some of the support that's been provided to you on security?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Robbins.

Mr. Olson, through the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Olson: Yes, thank you.

I'd be happy to. So we were fortunate as a government entity that we had access to the Department of Justice, to their specific, for lack of a better word—I can't remember the actual division name.

But a couple of years ago, we reached out to the Department of Justice who's responsible for security at the Legislature and we asked them if they could do a building asset assessment with respect to security. And they graciously spent some time in our complex to develop a recommendation on how we could enhance the security of the complex and little by little—because it was it was an onerous overhaul of the security engagement of the centre—we've been implementing many of those recommendations. And so we really valued that support that we received from the Department of Justice to help us through that plan.

Now we've gone ahead and we've also extended, as best as we can commit the Department of Justice, to work with some of our partners: so, for example le Centre culturel franco-manitobain, we suggested to them that they might be able to work with the Department of Justice on a building assessment for their complex; Artspace, which they did accommodate; and the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre. They did accommodate a building assessment and tried to determine how they might be able to invest in security to make their facility a little bit more secure.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Robbins: In 2024, Mr. Olson, you told the media that there's been an uptick in occurrences of drug paraphernalia. We know that the NDP government is set on opening a supervised consumption site about 10-minutes' walking distance away from the concert hall. I'd like this—through the minister—with this added risk to safety, will the minister commit to supporting the M-triple-C in bolstering security?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Robbins.

MLA Kennedy: So essentially what we've been doing with M-triple-C is what we will continue to do. Like, we are committed to working with M-triple-C to ensure that there are safety upgrades, that they are doing what they are needing to do in order to have safety increase and security increase at M-triple-C and at the campus.

And, certainly, our government is committed to that. We want to ensure that patrons and, you know, staff and performers, people, like, are safe when they are visiting the campus downtown in the Exchange. And, certainly, that something that we will continue to do and what I've been doing since I've been appointed minister, certainly.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Robbins: Has the existent of such a site nearby have been taken into consideration in M-triple-C's overall safety plans? Is there a strategy for protecting the guests, the performers and employees of M-triple-C?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Robbins.

Mr. Olson: Not specifically, no. My comment in 2004 was just in relation to the cleanup that our crews do every year—or every day, excuse me, every morning. A lot of that had to do with encampments along the river banks. It wasn't necessarily drug consumption, per se, but it was drug-related, obviously, with the paraphernalia that was left around. But I think that that had more to do with the encampments along the Waterfront Drive, closer to the Disraeli Freeway.

* (14:00)

So that was our response, was basically, you know, we've got staff out every morning, very early in the morning, to make sure that that paraphernalia is cleaned up and is not there to harm people as they come into the complex.

But no, specifically to your question, we're—we have not considered that.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Robbins: So M-triple-C entered into a three-year agreement with St. John Ambulance to provide first aid and medical support for all live events at the concert hall. Has MCC always had such agreements, and, if not, what sparked this agreement?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Robbins.

Mr. Olson: Yes, we have, Mr. Chair. We've always had that agreement. It's been a verbal agreement with

St. John Ambulance for many, many years, and they were the ones that approached us, I guess looking for some certainty in their commitment to the Centennial Centre, and then, of course, us asking them for a commitment to make sure that there is one or two personnel for every event. That's historically always been in place. This particular situation in the previous fiscal year, we just contracted formally with St. John Ambulance to provide that service.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: So I think, you know, we've talked a little bit about how public tastes shift and evolve, and it's also—it was stated in the report that the arts industries struggle to recover from the pandemic generally and certain populations have been reluctant to come back to live events.

And I believe it was the CEO touched on this in one of his answers earlier about potential new audiences or perhaps newcomers or people who haven't typically visited M-triple-C facilities, but what other opportunities does the corporation see for attracting new audiences and evolving as public interest evolves?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Goddard: Again, excellent question.

I think this is part and parcel with our strategic plan, really getting at the heart of, in what way, in what manner—as M-triple-C evolves, it evolves its mandate, it represents the artistic interests and ambitions of Manitobans in general, in Winnipeg in particular, to create a sense of belonging, to create space for people to feel a part of the programs, a part of the opportunities, whether it is through the resident organization, our resident partners or entirely new programs and partnerships that will evolve over time as Winnipeg has evolved over the past 50-plus years since M-triple-C was established.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Goddard.

Mrs. Cook: Forgive me if this is a question that really should be asked of, you know, your resident organizations and not so much of the corporation, but I wondered if the corporation has considered expanding its reach through offering more online or digital experiences, livestreamed events, original social media content, those types of things.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Well, that's an interesting proposal. I want—just for the sake of clarity, perhaps I need to say that M-triple-C is not responsible for programming the space.

That would be up to our partners: symphony, ballet, opera; they bring the content. If they come to us, as they did during the pandemic, and said, the only way we can get our art out is through a streaming service; is there anything you can do to help us? That's when we become a little bit more engaged. And through technology, through some of the inputs of the Centennial Centre, we can allow that, we can facilitate that and that's what we have done in the past.

I don't want to speak for them. I think there's some hesitation, right, because of the live content of what they deliver. They want people to buy tickets and they want them in attendance because that's part of the experience is to have them in the audience, you know, where the musicians can hear the applause, where the musicians can hear—get the feedback directly.

And I think they realize that that's possibly a new revenue stream. I think a lot of the industry, the entertainment industry, is struggling with this because as touring costs go through the roof, a lot of artists would love to sit in—on a stage and just produce content and then sell that content to the various venues throughout—well, throughout the world, I guess. But then it's how would they retain sort of proprietary ownership of that content once it's released to the broader mediums of social media, YouTube, wherever it would go.

But during the pandemic that was certainly one of the options that our partners at WSO or WB didn't do it as much. Opera had a smaller scale version of the opera. But what we did is we worked with them to make sure that that technology could be implemented and they could get their performances out there.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for clarifying roles there. I suspected that would be the answer. But I'm sure Broadway Across Canada is listening and, as I'm sure they are, Hamilton would do really well here, and they should bring it here.

The former Culture minister, in 2024, promised that a strategy for arts and culture was going to be developed. I think that's directly relevant to what we're discussing today because any such strategy would obviously have to involve consultation with MCCC, resident organizations, as key players in the arts and culture scene in our province. But it's been two years since that committee meeting, so I wonder if the minister can tell us what is the status of that strategy and when Manitobans can expect to see it.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

MLA Kennedy: So I just recently met with the Manitoban Arts Council, which is—they're just incredible organization that works within Manitoba and are really committed to the arts and culture scheme within our province. And they are currently undertaking their strategic plan right now. They have done some assessing with regards to the economic impact of arts and culture throughout our province, and they are undertaking their strategic plan.

So we work very collaboratively with them and with other organizations throughout the province. And so that is a part of what we are doing with regards to strategic planning within arts and culture. We want to ensure that people are engaged and that these organizations are supported. We work collaboratively as government with these organizations.

And then, of course, with M-triple-C we have engaged with them—M-triple-C and with their resident tenants. That is a part of the mandate letter that was just recently issued with regards to ensuring that M-triple-C is working with their resident tenants to ensure that they are coming up with strategic plans to be able to maximize what's occurring within the campus and to support, you know, low-barrier sort of experiences for people who are coming through the campus, and opening it up to those new people that we are talking about that may never have seen themselves in these spaces. And with our province changing and our city changing, we're ensuring that people can see themselves in these spaces and that the programming within these organizations reflects that.

And so, yes, we're really committed to ensuring that the arts and culture scene really does continue in a really strong way for years to come within our province.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: So earlier in our discussion we touched on the fact that Manitoba's become a hot spot for film and TV production over the last decade, and certainly that's something, you know, the previous PC government prioritized by enhancing the film tax credit and investing millions into the film sector. And this report mentions that the Manitoba government continues to invest resources into the film sector.

I wonder if the CEO or the chair can elaborate on some of the investments they've seen from the Province to help bolster the film industry over the last year.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

* (14:10)

Mr. Olson: Certainly I can address the issue from our participation in that industry. And, as you know, ours is really with the physical asset of a movie production studio. So we do work closely with our partners at Manitoba Film and Music. We do work closely with the department of sport and culture to try to understand what the needs of the film industry is—or are. And we try to, as best as possible with the resources we're granted, to make those investments, make those improvements, make those slight adjustments to what was the first production studio in the province back in the early—late '90s and before we acquired it.

So we are constantly engaged with people that are maybe closely—more closely related to the tax credits and how that impacts their draw to the province. But once we know that, once we know that there's an interest in producing here in the province, we become engaged with the Universals, with the Sonys, with the Netflixes, and then more importantly, perhaps, with the local market as well.

Because the local film industry is quite robust and they act as a middleman to some of these major agencies, film studios, and they're in direct conversation with us about, you know, what we could do, what we need to do, what we don't have, what we could have to satisfy the film industry. And there's a lot of that discussion that continues. There's a lot of consultation that goes on. And perhaps, you know, again, not deferring to our strategic plan, you might see something in that plan, that next three-year plan, to address some of those issues.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: I'm looking forward to that strategic plan.

What investments would MCCC like to see in the film sector over the next little while?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Well, listen, I think I—you know, I want to defer to the minister a little bit on that. But if I may just say that we recognize there's a demand in this industry for things like more production space, so that's one of the angles that we're very familiar with.

So if there's anything that we can do to promote additional film development in this province, that and, quite frankly, we sit on—or I've been asked to sit on a committee with the Creative Manitoba to discuss labour issues in the province of Manitoba that support the film and television industry and some of the challenges recruiting skilled and trade-skilled labour for the movie production industry.

So those are the types of things we engage with. We don't necessarily get involved in the tax—well, we don't get involved at all with the tax credit piece and the decisions the government would like to make there. But some of the things that we can do to enhance the viability of production companies moving here is certainly something that we talk about often. Whether it's, you know, improvements to the studio, expansion of the studio, improvements to the labour market, we're actively engaged with our various stakeholders in that industry to see what it is that we can do to help promote it.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: The CEO mentioned some of the challenges with hiring skilled labour to support film production in the province. What types of skilled labour are we needing? I'm not all that familiar with working on a film set, and I'm just curious as to where we have gaps.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Well, it's not a lack of skilled trades; it's just the volume and the quantity. So we can service the industry.

Many of the people that work inside the concert hall also have a secondary role in the film and television industry because if you're a lighting technician, if you're a sound technician, you're likely to be employed when you can—if you're not a full-time employed with us—to be able to work in that industry as well.

That industry is dominated by two locals: Local 856 of the IATSE and Local 63, which is the theatre component. There's a lot of interchange between those two local halls. But there is—so there's a lot of cross-training, if you will, in the industry, and a lot of them work in both. So it's just volume. We know how many more people—well, we don't know the exact number. We know more people are needed, and so we're trying to figure out, with our partners at Creative Manitoba, how we might be able to increase that workforce, how we might be able to provide some additional training to, maybe, people that are new to the industry, leveraging some of the experience we have, particularly at the concert hall and particularly at Local 856, the union hall for movie and television production. So we're on those—we're in those discussions.

One of the things I want to point out—maybe with the movie industry, though—it's a gig economy. You know, a movie comes into town, it might shoot here for three, four, five, six months, and then there might

be a gap. So it's difficult to recruit people if there isn't consistent employment, and that's one of the challenges—that's through no fault of anybody, it's just the nature of the industry—that maybe it doesn't allow us to ramp up completely.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: I'm going to tee up a softball for the minister.

Can the minister take this opportunity to elaborate on some of the investments her government has made in the film sector since taking office?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

MLA Kennedy: I appreciate the question.

So what I will say is, you know, Manitoba's film and music sector is just incredibly vibrant. It is very, very strong. I hear about it all the time from a variety of different folks, whether it be people coming in from out of province who are filming within our province out of country. You know, just recently, I got to go to a set visit and take in what we do as a province, and we do movies really well. It's pretty incredible.

So, for Manitoba Film and Music, I do want to talk about—there's the budgeting that occurred. So their—Budget 2025 provided Manitoba Film and Music with an annual operating grant of—four—I was going to say, four million forty-three dollars, which is really—four million forty-three thousand dollars, sorry. And for the Indigenous Music Development Program, there was—that included \$75,000 for that. And it represents approximately 89 per cent of their 2025-26 budget—their operating budget.

So what I would like to say is, really, the 2025 grant is unchanged from 2024, but it provides a 13 per cent increase from the 2023-24 operating grant, which was \$3.582 million.

And I think that that's really important to note, that since our government has formed and taken government, we've increased funding to the Manitoba Film and Music by 13 per cent, which is significant. And we really do hear it from the industry how happy they are that they have this increase, how much more they can do; provide support to artists who may not be able to get that funding to get off the ground; you know, projects that, really—those funds really do help people in the arts sector.

So I would have to say, you know, that we're really proud as a government. I'm certainly proud, as minister, for the support that we've—the increased support that we've given to Manitoba Film and Music.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: Like many other industries, the arts and culture sector is pretty closely intertwined with the US, and in the previous year, a couple of major strikes and the LA wildfires had a significant impact on the Manitoba Production Centre's operations.

I wondered if there—if any of the recent tensions between Canada and the US, including around tariff discussions, have had any impact on the corporation's operations?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Thank you for that question.

Not yet. We have not seen a direct impact to the film industry. I don't know what the future holds, but with respect to, you know, the activation of the space, you know, we had—we're coming off of, in this current fiscal year, a very robust utilization of the production centre. Next year, we have several bookings already. Most of them are US-based productions.

* (14:20)

So I haven't seen it yet. I mean, there's been a lot of bluster around that, but I haven't seen it physically materialize.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that answer; that's somewhat reassuring.

Can the minister elaborate on what the government is doing at their level to specifically protect the arts and entertainment industry from tariffs or from tensions with the US?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

MLA Kennedy: I think, right now, I think all of Canada and, I know, here in Manitoba, we're all seeing what happens in the news daily from what President Trump says. And I think we're taking things as they come because there is no predictability to what comes down the pipe from the US. And so I think there's really just a lot of uncertainty, and I think we have become a bit accustomed to that uncertainty.

But, certainly, our government is working with all partners and we are collaborating with all partners where we would ensure that we are supporting the sector, because we know how important it is within our province and what—you know, how strong of an economic driver the arts and culture scene is within our province.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: TobaTickets has continued to expand its client base since its launch in 2022. Actually, one of the premier venues in my own constituency, The Gates on Roblin, uses TobaTickets.

Can the CEO talk about the kind of clients that TobaTickets has added over the past year, and tell us a little bit more about how that operation is going?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Olson: Thank you for the question, one of my favourite subject matters to elaborate or to discuss.

So that was really one of the accomplishments of our organization in the last few years. We had historically been a client of Ticketmaster's for decades, and upon the renewal of our contractual agreement with Ticketmaster, we really assessed the ticket market. And we made a conscious effort to look at the alternatives in the marketplace.

And we decided to go with a Canadian company out of Toronto called AudienceView, who provides the software, the backbone to the ticketing business. That company is in 2,100 venues across the world. It's not a small company by any way, shape or form. But the challenge was putting a front face to the software that we were purchasing, the licensing to the software we were purchasing.

So we created TobaTickets internally, and, you know, as chance would have it, we hired some of the previous staff that had been released by Ticketmaster in the city of Winnipeg, so they were intimately familiar with the ticketing business. And because of our capabilities on ticketing—you know, I may be exaggerating a little bit, but there's virtually no event in the province, in Canada for that matter, that we couldn't ticket. And I think I've said it in the report, our ticketing and sales manager, a gentleman by the name of Richard Faircloth, did a great job with contracts like Curling Canada.

Out of the blue, Richard had a previous engagement—well, he's a curler, and so when Curling Canada reached out for some ticketing support, he said, we can do that; we can do that in the province of Manitoba and we can support your ticketing for their national events, the Scotties and the Brier. So we provide ticket support to those two national events.

But we're also ticketing a bull rodeo in Dauphin, Manitoba. We're ticketing a drive-in theatre, the last remaining drive-in theatre, in Morden, Manitoba. We just ended up ticketing a mixed martial arts fighting event at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. And this is

in addition to ticketing, of course, the concert hall specifically, and providing that ticketing support to the concert hall.

So that's all ancillary revenue to our business model, which was first and foremost to provide a secure, functional ticketing service to the concert hall. But by reaching out to these external communities and providing that ticketing support, we've been able to grow that department quite consistently. Our ticketing manager is often in consultation with our software provider in Toronto because he's intimately familiar with the operations, the software application itself.

So we see that as a growth opportunity. I'll use this to do a little bit of a sales job: there's not an event in the province of Manitoba that, should you need it, that we couldn't ticket with this internal agency, so I just throw that out there. But that's how robust this system is.

And so we're slowly, through word of mouth, we're gaining new audiences, new business opportunities. The Canada winter wonderland display at the Assiniboia Downs was all ticketed through our TobaTickets. And part of that is because we offer an online presence. And what you'll see when you go to the Assiniboia Downs through their winter wonderland is, on the face of their website, you won't know that we're operating in the background.

So it's not like we're, you know, we're doing as much as we can to publish the fact that we've got this service available, but this service is available. And you'll see things like, powered by TobaTickets, underneath. So it's a growing industry for us and we are quite excited about what it will be able to do for us in the future as well.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: I would say, from a user perspective, it's great. I've had occasion to be on the purchasing end a number of times, and it's always worked really well. This is anecdotal and it's small scale, but, you know, my daughter's dance school does their annual recital at the concert hall, and it was my first time being able to just purchase tickets to that online. And, oh my goodness, what a relief that was.

So I guess—I was going to ask you if you could envision—if the CEO could envision TobaTickets being adopted more widely in Manitoba. I think that was a resounding yes; I don't need to ask that question.

But my question to the minister is: Would the government consider using and promoting TobaTickets

and its capabilities throughout the province for future events?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

MLA Kennedy: So one of the really great parts of being a minister is being able to get out to so many different events and festivals within our province, and it's wonderful to meet with community and go to different parts of our province. And a thing that we've done when I meet with organizers and people who are running these festivals is, you know, my department staff and I will always talk about TobaTickets because we are very supportive and think it's an incredible endeavour and something that we're really proud of.

And so certainly it's something that we always mention and promote, and we flag it with folks, you know, in a variety of different ways when we meet with people or attend events, that it is a great option to use.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that answer. I think it might be worth considering promoting it as a matter of policy rather than sort of anecdotally or in an ad hoc way.

* (14:30)

I'm going to move on to a different topic now: inflation and the pressure that that's placed on businesses across many sectors and on individual Manitobans. Rising costs, I suspect, have not spared the corporation or the sector as a whole.

Can the CEO just—is this a concern for the corporation and have you seen—have they seen any progress being made to reduce inflationary pressures that are impacting the sector?

The Chairperson: Thank you.

MLA Loiselle: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: On a point of order, MLA Loiselle.

MLA Loiselle: I'm just wondering if we're still referring to the annual report of 2024-2025, and more specifically, what page?

The Chairperson: Mrs. Cook, on the same point of order.

Mrs. Cook: First of all, I don't think that's a point of order. We're discussing the Manitoba centennial corporation, including its financial operations, and a question about inflation is inherently extremely relevant to the financial operations of the corporation.

But if you'd like to find a specific page, I will find a page in the audited financial statements and we'll go off of that.

Statement of operations, let's look at expenses incurred. Expenses—there's no page number. It's in the KPMG audited financial statements at the end of the report. Total operating expenses have gone up by \$700,000 from 2024 to 2025.

Could the CEO elaborate on how much of that was due to inflation?

The Chairperson: Thanks for raising the point, but this is not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Olson: Thank you for this opportunity.

If I may take it one step back, because I think it does relate to the inflationary pressures that everybody seems to be under, every business seems to be under, one of the things I want to point out is, is how grateful we are to the department of culture—Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism because in this fiscal year that we're talking about, there was a conscious decision to raise the operating grant of M-triple-C by \$500,000.

I can imagine—and it was great news to us to receive that, because it did deflect some of those operational—inflationary price increases that we're all facing. So, to the minister and to her team, we really do appreciate the fact that our operating grant was 'resport'—restored to levels of the past, and that allowed us to apply some of that operating grant to some of these pressures.

Inflationary pressures are real; there's no doubt about it. We consume a lot in our organization, particularly as it relates to entertainment. But, just on the building expense side of things, hydro costs have gone up, you know, gas consumption has gone up. Although I will say it was a great relief to us to have the carbon tax reduced off the price of natural gas. So that was—in a ballpark, roundabout way, that was an additional \$100,000 to the corporation that we had to incur, and that's since been relieved. So that's helped with some of the inflationary pressures across the board.

So we've been able to mitigate some of the inflationary pressures; we recognize them. I can't say specifically what's gone up. I can tell you that, you know, things like utilities have gone up substantially, cleaning supplies have gone up substantially, consumables inside—food prices have gone up substantially and food and beverages is one of our strategic business units. So the cost of goods, of foods, have gone up substantially.

And as a business, some of that's passed along to our consumer so that we can recover that cost. And that—I think that's what makes us a little bit unique within the department of Sport, Culture and Heritage is we are a business unit. We are a Crown corporation with that ability to generate revenue.

And so as these inflationary pressures do rise, we are appreciative of the support because the government is recognizing that pressure. But we can also make adjustments in our business model to offset some of those increases as well.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Mrs. Cook: Yes, thank you for that. I know, unfortunately, Manitoba has led the country in food inflation, and that's had a significant impact on a number of organizations.

With that, unless my colleagues have anything further that they'd like to ask, I have concluded the questions that I have and I appreciate both the CEO and the board chair's participation in this process.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Cook.

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, 2025—pass.

The hour being 2:35, what's the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

The Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 2:35 p.m.

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