

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tuesday, February 4, 2020

Committee Room

Funding for Community Arts Organizations

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Keith Irving, Chair
Rafah DiCostanzo, Vice-Chair
Ben Jessome
Bill Horne
Hon. Gordon Wilson
Steve Craig
Brian Comer
Lisa Roberts
Susan Leblanc

[Hon. Margaret Miller replaced Hon. Gordon Wilson]
[Barbara Adams replaced Steve Craig]
[John Lohr replaced Brian Comer]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES

Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage

Justin Huston, Deputy Minister
Craig Beaton, Executive Director, Culture and Heritage Development
Chris Shore, Director of Programs
(Past Acting Director of Culture and Heritage Development)

1588 Barrington Building Preservation Society

Emily Davidson, President

Bus Stop Theatre Co-operative

Sebastien Labelle, Executive Director

Eyelevel Gallery

Sally Wolchyn-Raab, Artistic Director



HALIFAX, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

10:00 A.M.

CHAIR
Keith Irving

VICE-CHAIR
Rafah DiCostanzo

THE CHAIR: Order, please. I'd like to call the Standing Committee on Community Services to order.

Good morning, everyone. My name is Keith Irving. I'm the MLA for Kings South and the Chair of this committee. I'm just delighted that we're being joined today by quite the artistic team at the other end of the table.

Our topic today is Funding for Community Arts Organizations. We'll be receiving presentations from the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage as well as three arts organizations: the 1588 Barrington Building Preservation Society, the Bus Stop Theatre Co-operative Ltd., and Eyelevel Gallery.

Before we get going, I would just like my colleagues at the table to introduce themselves. Perhaps we can begin with Ms. Leblanc down here.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you everyone, and welcome. We're also joined by Gordon Hebb, our counsel and Darlene Henry, clerk to the committee.

This is Darlene's last meeting with us before she heads to retirement. On behalf of everyone at this table and all of the committees, I want to thank you for all of your work over the years and for assisting me and all the other Chairs at the committees as we've worked through many, many meetings. (Applause)

Logistics: washrooms and coffee are just out in the anteroom to the left. If we are interrupted by an emergency of any sort, we can exit through the Granville Street exit and proceed to the Grand Parade Square by St. Paul's Church. A reminder for everyone to check your phones and make sure they're on the "we won't disturb you" mode. Again, only under the Rules of the House are the media permitted to take photos during our proceedings.

As well, which is relatively new, these committees are now televised so it underscores the importance that you wait to be acknowledged by the Chair so that we can get the camera on you and get your words recorded for Hansard. I think that is all of the housekeeping items.

Maybe we could just before we start go across the table here of our delegation and have everybody introduced before we move to the four presentations. Maybe we'll just start on your right - my left - and go across the table for introductions.

[The witnesses introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you all for joining us. We'll be having four presentations. Roughly about five minutes is our guidance. We'll do our best here. I believe we're going to begin with Mr. Huston from the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

JUSTIN HUSTON: Thank you for having us here. It's really a pleasure to be here representing our department and talk to you about some of the programs and investments that we're making in the arts and culture organizations and answer any questions that you might have. I'm going to work through the deck kind of quickly, so don't hesitate to jump in if I'm not clear in any areas.

Some people asked how long I've been in the department. I've been here since June. Really what struck me when I started with the department is the depth and the scope of the work that the department does - not only in arts and culture, but in areas like community transportation, accessibility, land titles and poverty reduction grants.

Our overall department is heavily invested in communities. Our budget has grown from \$62 million in 2015, to roughly \$94 million in 2019. That really reflects the scope of how many organizations and community initiatives we're investing in.

You'll see here on the slide that we're really kind of divided into four main divisions, as well as the offices that I spoke to earlier. We're investing roughly 72 per cent

of our overall budget directly into communities, on culture programs that help create jobs and drive exports, and help communities thrive.

We brought a copy of Culture in Action, which is a document that was produced by the Nova Scotia Leadership Council, which is composed of leaders from the arts and culture world. They're a departmental advisory group for us and this document will outline for you how cultural diversity through different events, festivals, galleries and programming fosters an understanding of how culture impacts our lives here in the province. If you have any questions about that, my staff and I would easily be able to answer them for you.

Nova Scotia, as many of you know, is home to a broad array of organizations that support all facets of the culture sector from the music industry, dance, visual arts and heritage interests. These organizations are a vital part of communities and make countless culture and heritage opportunities possible for Nova Scotians. We primarily support cultural organizations through the Culture and Heritage Development division - Craig and Chris are here from that division. However, cultural organizations can also apply for funding from other program areas. Last year, government invested roughly \$28.5 million into the creative economy.

Support to cultural organizations falls into three primary funding streams, which I'll talk about a little bit today, which should prime folks on what those areas are: operating support, project support, and support for cultural infrastructure. For example, an organization could apply to the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage - or CCH - for an accessibility grant for accessibility-related capital projects. They could also apply to the Culture Innovation Fund for a project that might help address social issues or opportunities within communities to use culture as a tool for positive social change.

In terms of operating investments, we provide operational support to roughly 153 not-for-profit artistic culture and heritage organizations across the province. These are well-established organizations with a proven track record. As I said, they're located from Sydney to Yarmouth across the province. We're currently investing about \$6.5 million annually into operating support. As well, Arts Nova Scotia is an arm's-length agency that provides funding to professional arts organizations, which is roughly \$1.3 million operating funds annually.

The other funding stream is around project funding. In addition to the operating support, we offer project support through various programs - both within the Culture and Heritage division where Craig and Chris lead, as well as other grant programs across the department. Organizations or individuals can apply to these programs and they're a vital component of community art initiatives; they make countless culture and heritage opportunities available for Nova Scotians province-wide.

There is approximately \$10 million available annually for project funding. An example of the impact of this would be 2b theatre company, which I'm sure many in the

room are familiar with. It's a very dynamic theatre company that was founded in 1999 and it produces and presents new theatrical work with a contemporary esthetic. They tour nationally and internationally and are critically acclaimed across the world. We understand that 2b theatre's earned revenues have increased 10 times from what they were in 2015, in part from some of the investments that they have been able to access through the Creative Industries Fund over the past three years.

Another example of some of the funding which would relate to infrastructure would be the infrastructure projects that we help support that create spaces for arts and productions to happen. For example, the Culture Link here in downtown Halifax received roughly \$2.8 million from government to help redevelop the former World Trade and Convention Centre into a performing arts hub for theatre, dance, film, television, and music, with additional space for entrepreneurs. The Convent in Sydney, which some of you may be familiar with as well, is a similar cultural hub. It received \$3.2 million to transform that space into a culture hub to support community organizations, cultural organizations, and individual artists. That's poised to open in the next few months.

Staff here at our department of course are always looking to leverage funds, so we work very closely with municipalities and our federal government to support these cultural infrastructure projects across the province.

An example of some of the support that we provide to community cultural projects - I'll highlight first the one on the bottom, which is the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning, which is a few blocks from where I live in Dartmouth. It's a non-profit training centre for youth. It's doing some really amazing work with youth who may not be thriving in traditional classroom environments or may be at risk for dropping out of school or may just have barriers to accessing creative learning opportunities in their schools or in their communities.

This community hub really is about building confidence and inspiring creativity among youth by offering unique programs in the visual arts, creative writing, or technology in a safe, welcoming, and inspiring space. It's not just about creativity and the arts. This really is about development of self-confidence, life learning skills, appreciation of the value of giving back to the community, and building those skills that can help them contribute to community and get employed.

Another example would be the top example, which is the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts near Canning. This offers Summer and March Break camps for kids, adventure weekends, adult arts workshops, international artist residents, and school and community programs. It really is a hub and a driver in that community. It's also home to the award-winning Two Planks and a Passion theatre company. In 2018, it received from our department a \$300,000 investment in capital improvements, along with support from ACOA to kind of bring it up to the next level.

I know we're short for time, so I'm going to wrap things up now just to highlight a few of those examples. I want to thank you for the opportunity to come and talk about things. I'm sure you have a lot of questions, so I'll stop for now.

THE CHAIR: We'll now proceed with Ms. Davidson.

EMILY DAVIDSON: My name is Emily Davidson, and I'll be presenting about The Turret Arts Space. You might have noticed that our organization name, 1588 Barrington Building Preservation Society, is pretty long and a little unwieldy. We'll be talking about the future of our project, and the project is actually going to be called The Turret Arts Space.

It's going to be a new multi-purpose arts space that's in the historic Khyber Building on Barrington Street. This building has a really unique history. It was the home of The Turret, which was one of the first gay social spaces in Halifax in the 1970s. Later it was the home of The Khyber, which is an artist-run centre. They're still alive and kicking. They're on Hollis Street right now.

The building has been shuttered since 2014, and due to community advocacy - which I have been a part of since then - our organization is now the proud owner of this building. We purchased it from the city for \$1 - great deal. We have been the stewards of this building since 2018.

Right now, the phase of our project is basically a quiet campaign. We're going out and looking for donors who can help us get to our capital funding goals to redevelop this building.

[10:15 a.m.]

I just want to talk a little bit about what the redevelopment will have. It will have spaces for eight non-profit offices looking to focus on the arts and LGBT community for those spaces. There will be a gallery. There will be a rehearsal and presentation space that's going to be a flexible space that's rentable by all kinds of different community groups. There will be a bookable boardroom and then there will be two commercial-leased spaces. One of the important things about our model is that the commercial leasing actually helps to offset non-profit rates. We have a combination and that's going to allow this project to be sustainable.

This project is our way of addressing what we see as a critical need for art space in Halifax. You'll see on the slide, closures of spaces over the last 15 years: Bloomfield Centre had artist spaces and administrative offices; above Propeller, there were artists studios; the Roy Building had office spaces for many arts organizations; The Khyber Building you'll see up there - happily we own that space again; the CBC Radio building; the Manual Training building that was in the North End had artist studios; the Living Room which is a theatre space; 6050 Almon Street had a combination - there were music spaces,

production studios, artist spaces; and the Waiting Room was another small theatre presentation space.

I've actually listed this one in the wrong space - Cornwallis Street is now closed after the hurricane so when I made this slide, so that's an error. The only one that's on this list that actually is still the uncertain future, is where The Khyber - the artist-run centre is now - and that's renting from NSCAD at the Fountain campus which is, as you may know, is being considered for redevelopment.

I want to talk today about what it means to support emerging artists. I thought I would start with a quick definition of what an emerging artist is. An emerging artist is someone who's just entering the professional field of practice. That is often young people, but it also can be older people or people who are in a career change. Often what we see is that it's artists from marginalized communities who haven't gotten a chance to break into the mainstream art scene. They need spaces that nurture and welcome people at a low barrier to be able to enter the professional world of the arts.

I just want to talk about some of the benefits that all Nova Scotians receive when we support emerging artists. We will get the creation of experimental and innovative art forms across disciplines. We see in emerging artworks a lot of really interesting cross-disciplinary practices: things that use dance and theatre together, visual art that also uses film, and all of these very interesting cross pollinations. I think that's something that we will really bring forward in our project because we're going to have different arts groups from many different fields.

Emerging artists feed the broader arts scene - it's how we develop a new generation. Emerging artist productions also offer a low barrier way for the public to engage with art. Often emerging artists are doing all sorts of weird and wonderful things. They happen in communities. They happen through networks of people that might not be as familiar with the arts, so it's a way to not only introduce artists to the professional community but also introduce new audiences to art appreciation. It's also an opportunity to develop cultural education opportunities for artists and audiences.

This is something that I wanted to share with you: supporting emerging artists in Halifax actually supports artists across Nova Scotia. I've made a little map just based on the network of peers and colleagues to board members of the 1588 Barrington Building Society. This is by no means a thorough take, but I just thought that it was really interesting that personally we know artists who were involved in artist-run culture between 2008 and 2012, who are now making art in rural communities. You can see on the map that we've got people in Cape Breton, in the south shore, in the north shore.

I think that often the narrative we tell ourselves is that when people graduate from NSCAD, they move right to Toronto. Actually, what we're seeing is that people stick around. They want to stick around Halifax, cut their teeth at places like The Turret Arts

Space and then move to rural Nova Scotia or stay in Halifax and really be part of these smaller and generative art scenes.

Another thing that I want to talk about is the dire need for accessible spaces in order for the arts to thrive. We need to make the arts welcoming to all Nova Scotians and that means that we need a really broad view of accessibility. At The Turret Arts Space when we think about accessibility, we're thinking about financial accessibility. We want to make sure that The Turret Arts Space can rent long term at lower than market rates to non-profits so that can sustain those organizations that are reaching out into the community. Our operating model offsets those with the commercial tenants; that's a way that we're kind of ensuring affordable space.

We're thinking about physical accessibility. We want everybody to be able to come to the arts presentations that are happening in this building, so that means having an elevator. It means having barrier-free washrooms. It means having other accessibility features that fit the community's needs. We're also thinking about cultural accessibility. We want to nurture programming that's by and for artists from marginalized communities, and really make this space speak to members from all walks of life.

Another way is thinking about having things in our built infrastructure that are welcoming. Let's say we have gender neutral washrooms, and that's a way to increase the accessibility for trans people.

Summing this up, what are some things that government can do to support emerging artists? We want to see funding for infrastructure projects. We've heard that there is funding for infrastructure projects. I think that we just want to keep that going and not think, okay, we checked that off, we funded one project, we're done, see you in 20 years. What we need is to think about the broad scope and fund projects that fit for artists from emerging all the way to professional.

We want to increase the funding that is available around physical accessibility. One of the things that I noticed in the package that was sent out was that funding for accessibility for businesses is actually double what it is for non-profits, and I think maybe it should be the other way around. I think probably an increase to both because when I look at the building plans that will involve putting an elevator into this historic building, it's quite expensive. The current levels of funding for accessibility don't really match up with the costs associated with making those types of renovations.

We want to see an increase in operating funding for arts non-profit organizations. That will really help these organizations thrive and stay afloat. The other thing is to introduce recurring funding for emerging culture grants. There is a really great program called the One-time Emerging Culture and Heritage Initiatives Program. We don't want to see things happen one time. We want to see them introduced and then supported over time.

Those are some of the ideas that I wanted to bring forward, about how the province can support emerging artists. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms. Davidson. We will now move on to Mr. Labelle from the Bus Stop Theatre Co-op.

SEBASTIEN LABELLE: Thank you so much. I don't have slides, but you can follow my presentation just by following my notes with the letterhead for the Bus Stop Theatre Co-op.

Thank you so much for having us this morning. The Bus Stop Theatre is what's called a black box theatre. Unlike a proscenium theatre which you'll find at Neptune, for example, which has a large framed stage with fixed seating in front of it, a black box theatre essentially is a dark room painted black with reconfigurable chairs and stage arrangements for any purpose. The Bus Stop Theatre is also a small intimate venue that typically seats 75 people in comparison, for example, to Neptune's main stage which seats 500 people.

The Bus Stop Theatre has been in operation for 17 years and over that time has become one of the most exciting cultural venues in Nova Scotia where people go to see works of art by performing artists across disciplines; theatre, contemporary dance, music, film, stand up comedy, improv, magic shows - you name it, it happens at the Bus Stop Theatre. We've been successful over that period of time but always remaining true to our mandate, which is to provide affordable and accessible space to a wide range of both emerging and professional artists.

The Bus Stop is host to shows put on by the Dalhousie Theatre Society and also the StART Fest for emerging artists. It's also a critical stepping stone for emerging theatre companies like Matchstick Theatre who after producing five shows at the Bus Stop, produced their first show at Neptune last year. It's also a critical space for creation and development by some of our most established and celebrated artistic companies. For example, 2b theatre which was mentioned earlier which continued to develop and create shows at the Bus Stop Theatre, often premiering them in Halifax at the Bus Stop Theatre before taking their shows on tour globally showcasing Nova Scotian talent across the world.

The Bus Stop also is home to numerous local festivals that count the Bus Stop among their network of venues for festivals like the Halifax Fringe Festival, the Halifax Pop Explosion, Prismatic Arts Festival, In the Dead of Winter, OBEY Convention which is now EVERYSEEKER - you name it. Most local festivals use the Bus Stop as one of their venues. It should also be noted that - Mr. Huston mentioned the Leadership Council earlier - the Nova Scotia Leadership Council also awarded its very first inaugural Community Impact Award to the Bus Stop Theatre this last year, in recognition of the impact that we have in communities in Nova Scotia.

The Bus Stop really plays a critical role in the economic development of Nova Scotia's cultural centre and our own mandate is very much aligned with the province's Culture Action Plan. Due to our mandate, our geographic proximity to diverse populations and community organizations in North End Halifax, and also because of our explicit effort towards relationship building - we're regularly hosts to cultural and community events presented by the Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotian, 2SLGBTQ, disability, and francophone communities coming regularly and crossing paths at the Bus Stop Theatre.

The Bus Stop regularly attracts a lot of youth, often provides learning and development opportunities for post-secondary students and recent graduates in arts-related sectors. We're one of the very few all ages venues in Halifax and that plays a critical role in exposing youth to art at a young age and also allows artists to reach young audiences. Often, especially musicians, the only alternative is performing in licensed bars where youth cannot attend.

The Bus Stop also provides space to a myriad of community organizations and plays a really important role in supporting marginalized and underserved communities by being host to cultural programs that are operated by community organizations like In My Own Voice, Stepping Stone, and the YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs. This also demonstrates an alignment with the aims of the province's Building Vibrant Communities program.

Because of all this, the Bus Stop serves as a creative incubator and a hub for cross-discipline and also cross-community partnerships and innovation. We play a really important role in supporting large segments of the cultural sector by answering a common need that crosses through disciplines, communities, and interests and that's affordable and accessible space.

Next in my presentation, you'll see the subtitle: Small independent performance venues in Halifax - RIP. Much like Emily has presented before, I'm showing a list - in this case focusing on performance space venues that have either disappeared due to redevelopment or repurposing of buildings or are threatened by the same fate. That includes The Crib; the North Street Church; The Turret; Plutonium Playhouse; the Living Room; Kamphyre; the Waiting Room; the Halifax Pavilion; Radstorm; and us, the Bus Stop Theatre.

[10:30 a.m.]

In 2018, the owner of 2203 Gottingen Street, where the Bus Stop Theatre is located, announced their intention to sell the property. Because of the sale of the property and a rapidly developing North End Halifax would almost certainly lead to the closure of the theatre and the loss of a vital piece of cultural infrastructure, we've decided to launch a campaign.

I should also mention 2b theatre, which was also mentioned in Mr. Huston's presentation. As I mentioned, 2b theatre makes heavy use of the Bus Stop Theatre - no Bus Stop Theatre, probably no more 2b theatre in Nova Scotia. Either they're changing career or they're changing city and all this investment that was poured in an artistic community that celebrates Nova Scotian talent across the world would be lost in the absence of space to actually create and develop the work that they do.

Our co-operative, which currently manages the theatre, has undertaken a campaign to purchase the property and secure a future for the theatre. So far, it was recently announced - and you may have heard this in the media - that HRM has committed \$250,000 towards our campaign. Our co-operative on our own has raised another \$145,000. We're now waiting to hear back from the province and also Canadian Heritage for support from those two levels of government as well.

It's really critically important that we support the Bus Stop Theatre, as well as others, because as it is, there is an insufficient supply of space. In 2019, the Bus Stop Theatre hosted 150 different events. That's compared to 98 events in 2018; a 50 per cent increase in a single year. This also translates to 275 days booked at the Bus Stop Theatre over the year, or three out of four days booked. In the same time period, we've declined 226 days worth of bookings due to lack of availability. Of course, that statistic doesn't represent folks who didn't bother asking, knowing that we were not available.

We ask that members of the Legislature and of this committee, please support the Bus Stop Theatre Co-operative and help prevent the closure of yet another cultural venue, and please invest in a desperately under-resourced and diminishing network of smaller art spaces that's necessary for the flourishing of the cultural sector.

I want to mention two things before I close. Mr. Huston's presentation talked about the increase of the budget in recent years for CCH from \$62 million to \$94 million. During that same time period, there has been a freeze in operating funds to arts organizations. So while there has been an increase in the overall department budget, none of that money has been going towards operating funds for arts organizations and cultural groups such as the Bus Stop Theatre.

There is also talk of infrastructure investments. Much of that is geared towards infrastructure improvements, but in the case where you don't own a space or that your space has disappeared, improvement funding cannot help you.

With that, I'll pass it over to the next person. There is additional information in the package that I've handed over to you, but in terms of my presentation, I'll leave it there.

THE CHAIR: Thank you Mr. Labelle. Our final presenter this morning is Sally Wolchyn-Raab. The microphone is yours.

SALLY WOLCHYN-RAAB: My name is Sally Wolchyn-Raab and I am the artistic director of Eyelevel. Eyelevel is an artist-run centre. We are a small, artist-driven gallery space - and we'll get into that a little bit later - founded in 1972.

Artist-run centres in particular are something that I want to share with you, for those of you who are unfamiliar with their history. They're almost a type of visualized organization that's unique to Canada. That's because in the late 1960s - early 1970s, artists were gathering together to say, we don't have the right kind of presentation venues for ourselves. University galleries and museums are only showing large scale artists, commercial galleries don't want non-commercial work.

So there was this really impressive breadth of organizations that were popping up at that time in Canada all across the country. Because Canada Council recognized that this was an exciting wave happening in visual arts, they created generous funding opportunities for these organizations. Because of that history, and that history of funding, artist-run centres continue to thrive throughout the country. Eyelevel is very much a part of that history. We are one of the oldest artist-run centres in Atlantic Canada and continue to exist through the support of operating funding from Canada Council, the province, and the HRM.

As you can see through our history, a couple of really exciting arts organizations have come out of our history and our programs: Live Art Dance, the Centre for Art Tapes, and the Association of Artist-Run Centres from the Atlantic, which is an advocacy organization.

Who is Eyelevel currently? We have what I would say is a pretty impressive reach, considering the size of our organization. We have about 45,000 attendees to our events and exhibitions. That is largely because we have a mandate of taking Nova Scotian works and Nova Scotian artists and bringing them outside to large-scale events like the New York Art Book Fair and exhibitions happening across the country. We have a pretty decent social media following, and we are fortunate enough to support 100 or more artists every year through our programming, which includes our exhibitions and our bookstore. As you can see, a small but dedicated membership, smaller but more dedicated volunteers, and it eventually filters down to a single staff person, who is me.

How we operate: Eyelevel really does believe in being a democratic kind of organization. This is something that is also intrinsic to artist-run centres. What I do want to mention too is that while I'm talking about Eyelevel as an organization, our story is not a unique one. The kinds of problems that we're facing and the way that we run and think of ourselves is something that can be applied to many artist-run centres and also many small similar arts organizations.

What it means to be kind of a democratic organization for Eyelevel is that our programming and our artistic vision isn't the taste or the artistic goals of just one person.

It's a collaborative effort that creates programming and creates a vision for the organization that's dynamic and that's responsive to our community.

In terms of our revenues, or in terms of our budget, we do all of this on about \$150,000 a year. The vast majority of that is coming from government funding, 17 per cent of which comes from the province. That is in the form of an operating grant and project grants through Arts Nova Scotia. Our earned revenues, as you will notice, are very low. This is because we don't charge admission, and we very, very rarely will charge any kind of fee for attendance or participation in any of our events. That's all with the goal of being as successful as possible.

In 2014, Eyelevel decided to get rid of its gallery space. This was a bittersweet moment in Eyelevel's recent history. We cited that the cost of maintaining the former gallery space in the North End of Halifax was becoming untenable. After a lot of careful consideration, consulting with our board and with our membership, we decided that we wanted to focus on providing services for our community through the mounting of a bookstore and through providing studio space and residencies, rather than a formal gallery. It has made us more adaptable, but it has been a creative solution to a very real problem.

Our primary challenges that I want to talk about with you now are space and time. Space meaning the availability of permanent accessible space; the availability of temporary space, which we do use when we have major projects; and time, which is people power. That is a very tight resource for our organization.

In terms of space, we have relocated three times in the past four years. We recently relocated to a space on Gottingen Street, which we had a grand opening for in November. We share it with Radstorm, which is a fabulous community arts and music organization. It's a fun space. It has a lot of character, but it has a lot of problems too. First and foremost, it's not even remotely wheelchair accessible. It's hard to spot from the street. You have to climb a flight of stairs to get up to it.

We wound up moving into the space because we got essentially renovicted from our previous location at 5663 Cornwallis, along with AFCCOOP, the Atlantic Filmmakers Co-Operative. Both of us were in a mad dash to find an affordable available space as quickly as possible. We were fortunate that Radstorm had extended an invitation to move in with them.

I also wanted to talk about space in terms of creating safer space. The ideas of diversity and accessibility are really a transversal topic in the Culture in Action Plan. It's a transversal topic at Eyelevel as well. When we're talking about how we imagine our space - what kinds of services we provide through it - we want to think about the people that we're serving, and also most importantly too, who we are not able to serve. Who is not feeling comfortable coming into our space and who is not able to get through our front door?

Something that I have referenced here is a project that happened last year, which was called Visioning an Indigenous-Led Artist-Run Centre. The result of this project was that they basically came up with a set of requests of existing artist-run centres - things that they wanted to see that would support more Indigenous artists and more Indigenous audience members. Some of them are basic but interesting requests like child care, safer spaces, workshops happening on a regular basis for board staff and for the public, mentorship. Also, what we were pleased and excited to see was more of an emphasis on providing support services, rather than exhibition space, which is what Eyelevel is doing.

When it comes to time, as it stands right now, Eyelevel takes about 5,000 hours a year of people power in order to run it. That's about a 50/50 split between those who are paid and those who are giving their time generously. Burnout is a massive issue - burnout of the artistic director and also burnout of our volunteers - specifically those on our board of directors. We've worked really hard to shrink our programming down to a manageable size. Right now, we are about at the minimum amount we can do and still serve our community.

We have known for a number of years that Eyelevel needs to be a two-staff organization; one staff doesn't really cut it. It has been a single staff organization for as far back in Eyelevel's history as I can uncover. The difficulties that we face by having a single staff person is burnout, of course, but also it's difficult to retain institutional knowledge when someone leaves. All of the nuances and all of the details about how they do their job are lost. It's very difficult to document that when you don't have another person working alongside them who is kind of carrying on the torch.

It also makes it very difficult for Eyelevel to hire a person of colour or an Indigenous person for the artistic director's position. We don't have an opportunity to mentor artists of colour or administrators of colour or people from the BIPOC community in order to prep them. People who come into this position have to already have a set amount of experience. Usually that experience is gained through volunteering and through working for larger organizations.

Ultimately too, it's unfortunate that many of our directors have quit when they've started families because it's not the kind of job that you can have and also have a family. It's also not the kind of job that you can do if you're not fully able-bodied. It's a demanding role. I wanted to highlight that.

While we have a mandate to create full-time positions - many arts organizations like Eyelevel want to see people of colour in our full-time positions. It's difficult because these positions don't support a balanced life and it kind of necessitates that person has privilege to begin with.

I also wanted to highlight that volunteering is a privilege. I don't mean that you receive the privilege of volunteering for Eyelevel. I mean that in order to give of your time

and your knowledge for free, you already have to be in a position of privilege to begin with. That's the case for many of our board members.

What can be done? The biggest thing is that our concerns are financial. More robust provincial and municipal funding through operating funds would be really the biggest thing that would support our organization. There are also some other non-funding related things such as support of multi-tenant spaces that are actually artist driven. An example is The Turret space where arts organizations and the artists themselves are driving the development of that facility.

Also, less onerous granting processes could be really big support for Eyelevel. We do struggle to meet administrative deadlines, given the amount of work that has to be done for our organization. I would love to see a three-year granting cycle, rather than an annual operating grant at Arts Nova Scotia, which is a thing that many other funders do. That's my presentation. Thank you.

[10:45 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you. With that, we will now open up the floor to questions. Just a reminder that we try to keep our preambles as short as possible so that we can get as many questions in as possible. Through the first round, we will have one question followed by a supplementary if needed. Let's go to maybe 12:50 p.m. or so. We will begin with Ms. Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you to everyone for your presentations. It makes me excited, furious - all kinds of things at the same time. I identify with a lot of things that have been said from both the department and the artist organizations, as somebody who worked in an artist-run organization for 18 years and is now free of some of the things you've talked about. One day I'll probably go back there, so I want it to be better when I return.

First, I want to talk about the ecosystem of art spaces because I think that the shiny buildings are amazing. I've been up to The Convent in one of its early stages of renovation. It's truly impressive, inspiring, and exciting, and I cannot wait to go to the opening. I hope I get an invitation. Also, Culture Link is really exciting. The Art Gallery is going to be amazing. All of those shiny buildings are so important to the ecosystem of the arts culture in Nova Scotia.

Of course, we also know that we can't have those buildings and we can't have stuff to fill those buildings unless we have The Khybers and the Bus Stops and the Eyelevels, because that is where - as we've heard - artists are cutting their teeth. That is where artists - even if they're not emerging artists - are able to experiment, as established artists experimenting and pushing boundaries and pushing the art forms, which make our arts and culture sector so important in Nova Scotia. I just want to talk a little bit about that.

This is mostly to the arts organizations that are here. Can you talk a little bit more about that idea of where small spaces, which are not necessarily for emerging artists, but small spaces for emerging and established artists, and medium spaces as well - what is their value in this larger ecosystem of art spaces? Can you talk about the availability of art spaces for alternative or under-represented voices? We've heard a little bit about that, but if you want to talk about it in the context of the larger infrastructure discussion.

EMILY DAVIDSON: To speak to your ecosystem question, I think that in order to have a vibrant fabric of an arts community, you need spaces that bring people in when they're in the start of their career, and I think those are also the same spaces that people will turn to when they want to take a new or more experimental path. I think the fact that these small and medium spaces run by artists are affordable, approachable, and are doing active outreach, really create an entry point for artists to work on that level as a building block and then move on to some of the other more established art spaces.

I think something that maybe committee members don't know is that a lot of being an artist is about writing applications. When you're beginning your professional career, you need spaces to apply to where the application process or the sign-up process has a lower barrier so that you can get the hang of it. Then years down the road, you're working with somebody and they say, didn't you do that thing at The Khyber back in the day? Then you can start to flow into the arts community more broadly. I have seen this in action as a working artist myself, so I know that it works.

To the question of marginalized artists, I see that artist-run centres have really taken it upon themselves to figure out how we can be accessible to people from all walks of life. How can we as organizations that have primarily white people on their boards think about having an arts community that doesn't look like that anymore. I see people in these emergent spaces asking the difficult questions, doing the work, and really figuring out how to transform themselves so that the artists being represented become queer artists, artists of colour, Indigenous artists. I see that happening at The Khyber, the artist-run centre. In the last four years, they have transformed their programming so it has a different feeling, and I really see that as a response to trying to make a better world.

SEBASTIEN LABELLE: I'll add a couple of things. I applaud the investments and the infrastructure projects that have been announced. I think it's great. It's seeing the government going in the right direction to a certain extent. But there's really a need to not forget about the smaller projects, the smaller pieces of infrastructure. Investments in large infrastructure projects that usually have large costs - Mr. Huston mentioned the contributions towards the Culture Link and The Convent. A contribution to any of our organizations is really a fraction of that, and it's widespread across different areas, different neighbourhoods and different communities rather than a single location.

Also, in a large infrastructure project in terms of art creation and presentation, there's often a commercial pressure because of the financial costs of running and presenting in large venues like that. Presentation and creation in small spaces allows for greater

exploration, avant-garde risk, and development in the cultural scene that challenges and allows change and growth in mainstream culture, and there's less opportunity for that in larger infrastructure spaces.

In terms of availability, Ms. Leblanc asked about availability. I mentioned at the Bus Stop - of course I'm more familiar in terms of the performance arts sector - we're booked 275 days a year, and we have turned away 226 days' worth, and that's just in the last year. That's following the closure of two performance arts spaces, The Living Room and The Waiting Room, in 2018. The slow, gradual disappearance of small pieces of infrastructure in HRM has caused a slow burn crisis over the last decade, and now there's a real sense of panic. When we came out to the public saying, we're on the chopping block too, people in the community theatre - literally jaws were dropping, saying, if you go, where do we go? There's no space. If there's no space, people give up, or they leave. There's nowhere else to go.

It's a real, real problem in HRM and I think in Nova Scotia more broadly. Certainly in HRM. Given that we're the largest urban centre east of Montreal and north of Boston and kind of a cultural flagship for the province where a lot of artists develop their craft and create here, we really need to invest in the emerging scene and the growth of new generations of artists.

On that note, there have been investments in the Fountain School of Performing Arts, the development at Dalhousie University of new infrastructure there, which signals a growth in training and development for new students to be trained in the arts. But where are they going to go after they graduate, when there's no space for them to cut their teeth, to build a career, to build audiences. They're not going to stay in Nova Scotia once they graduate if there's nowhere for them to have a career here. We really need to invest beyond the schools and beyond the big infrastructure. We need those small spaces and those stepping stones along the way.

THE CHAIR: Does anyone else wish to add to the conversation? Ms. Wolchyn-Raab.

SALLY WOLCHYN-RAAB: I could also add, just to kind of build off of Sebastien's point, about the importance of building community. I think small art spaces have a role to play not just in being stepping stones to larger venues, but also as hubs of actual living, breathing community in these spaces.

When a new artist moves to Halifax, they don't try to schedule a meeting with the curator of the AGNS, they try to sit down with me. That's because they want to connect with an arts organization that is going to provide them real resources but also help them to build friendships and welcome them. That's really what, in a lot of ways, community is about. That's why instructors at NSCAD are bringing their student groups in to meet Eyelevel and to meet with the other artist-run centres in town, because when you graduate, if you stay in Halifax, small arts organizations are going to be your family, essentially. I

think without those kinds of organizations, if you don't have an actual real community around you, you will leave.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Leblanc, do you have a supplementary? I am conscious when we have one question and three responses - if the committee's okay with that - it just means we may not get to everyone at the table in terms of a question.

Now to Ms. Leblanc with a supplementary.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Chair, in an unprecedented move of generosity, I will give up my supplementary question. I'm good.

THE CHAIR: We're floored. (Laughter) Ms. Miller.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I want to thank you for coming in. I can't tell you how much I support your industry. I was also a ceramicist in my former creative life, and after that I did fabric art when I became allergic to dust, which you know, ceramics is a big part of that. It has always been a big part of my life in creating, and there's no better sense of self satisfaction than when you create something with your hands and see the results of that. I just want to let you know that.

In my community in Hants East, we also have Gallery 215 which is down towards the Selma area, and we have the CHArt Society in Maitland that operates the High Tides centre. They took over an old church building for \$1 - another one of those great deals - and became a not-for-profit. I know they do receive minimal government funding, a couple thousand dollars here and there, to be able to run some programs. I can't tell you how beneficial it is to the community of Maitland, which is a little bit out of the way, and they have so much to give. This has really showcased its creative nature there, so I want to really commend that.

The new Culture Link - I wasn't aware that it was as far into the planning as it is, and I just wanted to ask you: Certainly I recognize that we need the small spaces, as well, they're very important for those starting people who aren't ready to move forward yet, but what kind of a role will the new Culture Link play? What kind of a facility will that be to be able to house? What kind of impact is that going to have on the industry?

JUSTIN HUSTON: I think I'll actually hand that over to Chris who has been more closely involved with that project, but it's going to be a real flagship space for the province and for the city.

CHRIS SHORE: Culture Link is going to be open in the Fall of this year; that's the plan for it. The renovations are well under way. For those of you who don't know, this is a renovation of the old World Trade and Convention Centre. It's a re-use of part of that building.

It's defined as a cultural hub. It means that the governance structure of the organizations that are in there are mixed use. We've got a combination of for-profit entities, non-profit entities, and non-profit cultural organizations. It will have a small cinema in there. There will be a performance space, there will be a television studio, there will be dance studios for the dance community, and there will be office space available for smaller non-profit organizations.

In our experience, Culture Link is kind of an example of a very long advocacy, I would say, on the part of the community. It has its roots in an entity that used to be called the Legacy Centre - more non-profit organizations came forward looking for space to perform and to have studio space and all that in.

[11:00 a.m.]

Culture Link itself is related to that, but not exactly an offshoot of Legacy, but it shows that the development of these kinds of spaces often takes a long period of time. The structure here is that it's a combination of federal, municipal and provincial funding. It also has a significant private interest.

One of the things that was very key to us was that it's working on a model of sustainability as it moves forward. All of the work that we did with the proponent was to ensure that they had a model that the Culture Link would be able to operate on its own for a long period of time.

The mixed-use model of that, the sustainability element - these are all things that are important to us because they're important indicators of what we think is a healthy entity. We want to make sure that organizations have everything that they need when you're looking at a project of that size. We think it will have benefit across the board from smaller non-profits to the dance community to the music community - because there will be a music venue there - mixed in with some television.

Allowing all of those organizations to be in the same space to interact is something that Sebastien and I think Emily made reference to earlier. The idea that they're all there in the same space able to talk to each other and exchange with each other is one of the big benefits of the project.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Miller, do you have a supplementary?

MARGARET MILLER: I will forego mine in view of the time.

THE CHAIR: We have a trend here. I had Ms. DiCostanzo, but she stepped out so let's move over to Mr. Lohr.

JOHN LOHR: I really appreciate the presentation. When I think about community art groups, I think that we could have duplicated these three many times over. There are

many small groups in the province, and certainly in my area. What I hear is a barrier is the funding process or getting through the hoops.

I guess my question is for the people from the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. Clearly, you have a very broad mandate. There are many things you're funding. I'm just wondering if you could go through the application process and how you get through the front door to get that application in and what sorts of things you're looking for - in terms of what would constitute a successful process or what you're looking for.

JUSTIN HUSTON: I'll start and speak at a general level and then I'll likely hand it over to Chris who has more specific examples. Just to highlight what you're speaking to is that we do have more than several funding programs - I believe just under 70 separate funding programs that are directed towards arts and culture initiatives or programs. There are a lot.

I think part of the work that we're going to be doing over the next year is we're going to be undertaking a review of not just those programs, but all programs across CCH to look at whether they are the most effective use of dollars. Are they easy for the sector and for community to apply to access? For the folks that typically don't access those funds, are there barriers that we need to remove? For example, from African Nova Scotian communities or Indigenous communities.

We have ranges of different programs that folks have alluded to and the way that we ask folks to provide information for a \$5,000 grant to \$100,000 grant is not necessarily the same and it's not necessarily based on the risk. We're really looking at that to see if there are some best practices that we can put in place to streamline the process so that we can reduce the administrative burden. We're certainly hearing from a number of organizations that the funding is great, but it's taking me days or weeks to apply for \$5,000 - it's not worth it, I'd rather go somewhere else. So we're looking at some of those things.

I'll hand it over to Chris and he can talk a little bit about in essence what we try to do with all the applications.

CHRIS SHORE: All of the applications come into the department, and as the deputy referred to, there are a number of different programs, about 67. Every program has a set of guidelines that are published and available to anybody in the community. They're usually managed by program officers who have certain responsibilities for programs.

Every application that comes in is reviewed basically according to a series of evaluations. There are three main kind of streams - one is with Arts Nova Scotia which is responsible for the professional arts funding in the province; they use a system called a peer assessment committee.

A peer assessment committee is made up of professional artists within a specific discipline looking at applications for that discipline. For visual arts, for example, we would

have three professional artists come in and review those applications. They make the decisions according to a series of criteria that they're looking at as to what projects should be funded.

Similarly, in other parts of the department, we use what's called a panel process. The difference between the two is that on a panel process, we have exterior people coming in but it also means that the program officer who's a staff person of the department also has a say in the evaluation of those projects.

The third stream is one where we have a program called the Creative Industries Fund where a program officer actually works long-term with a program proponent. An applicant will come in and have an idea for a project and they'll work with that program officer for a long period of time making sure that everything is proper with the application and that it falls under the program criteria. That is then passed up through a rather robust series of reviews internally in the department before it goes finally to the minister for approval.

All of the programs that we have at CCH, though, are very robust in that sense in terms of having evaluation and criteria that are set out well in advance and a rather substantive review process.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Lohr, do you have a supplementary?

JOHN LOHR: Yes, I will take it. I guess what I am concerned about is maybe what I see as two sort of anomalies that we've seen recently in your process. Coming from the Annapolis Valley, we've seen the Bridgetown track - which was a two-thirds/one-third funded federal/provincial which your department funded - which was reported in all Nova Scotia that one of your staff did the application and there was a community group that was formed after the application was approved.

I'm just very concerned about how this all panned out. Normally there's an applicant, there's a rigorous process but in this case we see the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage did all the work. There was no third partner. There was no community funding. The municipality did not put any money in. It's apparently over budget, so I'm concerned about that. I just wondered if you had any comments on that.

I did say there was two; the other one is the mental health clinic here which your minister has stated that he will find funding for. I guess that's a two part question - what happened in Bridgetown and what's happening with the mental health clinic and why are you so all over the map in your process?

JUSTIN HUSTON: I'll speak to that. In terms of the concerns around that funding, whether Bridgetown or other funding pieces, certainly it's a serious issue in terms of how funds are allocated. We went through a review from the Auditor General a couple of years back and, in general, pleased to say that the review was positive in the sense that funding

was going to where it was directed and was following departmental program guidelines. There were some areas that were identified for areas for improvement which we have been working diligently on over the past couple of years.

I'll just highlight some of those because I think it speaks to some of the issues or concerns that you're raising. Final report assessments have been implemented for many of the funds that are on track for compliance in the coming fiscal year. We've put in place an inspection process for infrastructure projects; it has been developed and implemented. Administrative deficiencies that were identified such as date stamping and pretty straight forward things have been implemented as well.

Of the discretionary grants that the Auditor General identified, we've moved those out of discretionary. Only two remain and we've put in place accountability reporting processes that we've phased in over this year to address that piece.

I can speak specifically to the North End clinic piece. We are working with the clinic. Essentially what happened in that case is that they made two applications for funding. One of those applications was funded. In the other application, the information was not clear. We have since had conversations with the clinic and the executive director there. I'm pleased to say that some positive conversation is happening, and we're moving to put in place funding that will at least take them over the next few months to look for more long-term, sustainable funding.

Again, I think that speaks to some of the things that folks have raised and others, that we do have a lot of funding programs. Sometimes what we really try to do is put the organization and the person at the centre. At times, of course, when you have this many programs and processes in place, sometimes that happens, but that's exactly why we are looking to undertake that review.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I was really excited to hear about all the presenters today, and I was kind of sad when I heard about Bus Stop. I've never been to it. I've been to the theatres in Dartmouth. I have actually been to Ross Creek. I have done all this, so my apology. I'll figure out why I have not heard about it, I don't know if it's about publicity. I have really enjoyed going to Dartmouth - is it the Little House - is that what it's called?

SEBASTIEN LABELLE: The Sawmill?

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: They have a lot of little shows. A friend of mine who's a lawyer, has a B.Sc., and is an artist at the same time. She's a wonderful actress. People have ways to show their creativity in Nova Scotia.

I was also very excited to hear about the \$80 million for the Art Gallery. It's going to put Halifax on the map. We're going to be a city. Any investment into the arts to me brings tourism. It brings us into a different level when we invest in arts. My question was about the \$5.5 million towards the development of the former Trade Centre. Can you give

me some more information on what that is going to mean to you guys, to the other arts? How is it going to develop and help with a lot of the issues that you may have? Can those spaces be used for the artists who are not finding space.

JUSTIN HUSTON: Are you referring to the Culture Link project?

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: The former Trade Centre. What is it going to look like?

JUSTIN HUSTON: I think Chris was able to highlight some of the aspects of that project. Certainly I think the key that's important is that it will serve as a hub or a key grounding place for community, the broader community and the interactions that can take place there, the high-level quality space and venues that will be accessible. If I may, I think I would rather turn it over to the representatives of the arts organizations because I think they have been talking a lot about the importance of that space and the connection. I think they probably have something they can offer.

SEBASTIEN LABELLE: I can speak to that because it's more geared towards a performance piece of infrastructure. I'm not sure how it might serve the visual arts sector. Truthfully, I'm also not sure how it will serve the theatre community either. There hasn't been much dialogue between the Culture Link and people in the theatre community. There has been as of late. There's a lot of hope because it's something when there's so little, but there is a lot of fear because of past projects where a large piece of infrastructure intended to serve so many different purposes will not adequately service specific needs. It's a very large venue, so there is apprehension around the size.

I know that folks involved in the Culture Link have talked about subsidized rates and accessibility. In my community, we're all eagerly awaiting details around that and how folks in the performing arts community at the smaller budget level will be able to access that space. Also in terms of the scale when we look at the drawing so far, it looks like a very large amphitheatre, so when you're an emerging theatre company and you're just starting out and you go to the Bus Stop Theatre where there are 70 seats and you have 60 people in the audience, it feels really great - you've got a full house. If you're going into a theatre that has 500 seats and you've got 60 people in the room, it feels pretty deadly.

[11:15 a.m.]

So there is a lot of apprehension about how well or not it will service the theatre community. I know that there are a lot of dance organizations that are involved and there is a lot of hope there because there are so few spaces for dance and with proper floor for dance. Admittedly, at the Bus Stop Theatre we are not ideal for dance for that reason.

If you look at the website for the Culture Link and you look at the artist groups that are supportive of the project, there's not a single theatre organization that's listed. That's not to disparage Culture Link or to disparage the investment into it, but it's just a flag of what needs are being focused on and what we might expect. That's why I'm saying that

there's some apprehension from the theatre community about how well the link will answer our specific needs in the theatre community around use of space and also accessibility.

I also want to address the term "community" that has been used both by us presenters and members of the committee in terms of talking about arts in the community and community arts. I want to make sure to clarify distinction between what's often called community arts and professional arts, especially in community theatre - The Sawmill Playhouse is an example of that and also Theatre Arts Guild. Those are organizations that present the work of amateur or non-remunerated artists.

In those cases, often arts organizations don't have the same pressures that we do in the professional art sector because they have to invest in the infrastructure, but they're not paying artists. In our case, we remunerate artists and ensure that we remunerate enough for artists to have a livelihood, in addition to administrators and in addition to investing in arts infrastructures. So our pressures are much greater in terms of our operating budgets and how spread thin we are.

I just wanted to clarify the distinction between community arts and professional arts. Often the smaller organizations, like us three, often create a bridge between what's called community arts and the professional arts often at entry level for artists that have been creating at no pay for a long time and are looking to build a career as a professional artist that's being remunerated for their work. Often it's through our kinds of spaces that they'll find that breakthrough.

THE CHAIR: I see everybody nodding their heads so I think I can move to the supplementary.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I was imagining if they had a large space and a smaller theatre as well that can offer some space for the smaller artists. I don't know, but your input - if the space of 500 is too large, they could have a smaller theatre within that big complex as well. You'll have to put in your input that this is an important need and I'm sure work together.

My other question was about the supplements. For example, in Clayton Park West, we have the Bella Rose and I know Spatz Theatre. Are these being used by your groups as well? Are there supplements for you so you can use those theatres? What is happening in that field? You have a theatre in the community in Clayton Park and you have a theatre at Spatz. Are these being used by your groups as well?

SEBASTIEN LABELLE: Generally little. There are some instances where groups who perform at the Bus Stop Theatre and other smaller venues will also occasionally perform at the Bella Rose Arts Centre or the Spatz, but oftentimes those spaces are not affordable for smaller arts groups. I'm not actually very familiar with the Bella Rose, but the Spatz is a very large amphitheatre. It's also a proscenium theatre, it's not a black box and so in terms of its functionality, it's not as adaptable as the Bus Stop Theatre.

It's kind of the same case if you're performing for an anticipated audience of 60 to 100 people. If you're going to the Spatz, it's a huge auditorium. As a performer myself, performing to what feels like an empty room is pretty awful. It has an impact on the show and it has an impact on the audience experience, as well.

The programming at the Spatz is often larger shows that are touring nationally and will make a stop in Halifax at the Spatz - larger-scale shows, often musicals or large concerts; things that will draw big audiences. It's not the same kind of demographic in terms of artists that are seen at the Spatz as the Bus Stop Theatre. There's a little bit of overlap, but by and large the services and functions that they serve in the arts ecosystem is not the same.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Labelle. Just a little time check - we're about halfway through our time. We've got through four members' questions and I've got four on the list, so after those four it's if time permits.

We'll go to Ms. Adams.

BARBARA ADAMS: I want to thank all of the organizations that presented. You represent all of the amazing non-profit organizations that are doing the majority of all of the work. I know in my community of Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, we are very fortunate that we have a Lions Club, a Buffalo Club, and a Legion because a lot of our musicians and our theatre group - if those places disappear, there's nowhere for them to go. It does start with the space, so I echo the other questions that talk about the small art space.

I was a little disturbed when the deputy minister mentioned, in response to the comment from Mr. Lohr, about the funding for the mental health clinic that they were looking at some sort of urgent funding for a few months for that facility. It goes to my question about the sustainability of the funding because two of the three groups mentioned that one-time grants are (a) exhausting and (b) and I'm not using your word, but the anxiety of the sustainable future is always there.

I wanted to go to Mr. Huston's comment about the fact that there was an increase in funding commitment from \$62 million in 2015 to \$94 million in 2019, because that doesn't marry with the summary of all of these places being closed down. You mentioned in your presentation that 72 per cent of the CCH budget goes directly into the community. I'm assuming that means that 28 per cent goes towards administrative costs if I'm correct - if not, you can let me know. If we had an added \$32 million more dollars over five years, how many more organizations or non-profits and artistic cultural groups are you providing grants for, or has that extra \$32 million been sucked away by the administrative costs?

When you said that there were 67 different programs with different guidelines for applying for grants - having gone through that grant process myself with various groups - it's a nightmare. I know how long it takes people to just apply for those grants, so I'm wondering if you could comment on how much of that increased \$32 million actually is

being sucked away by the administration of such a wide variety of grant application processes.

JUSTIN HUSTON: I'll try to answer that question as clearly as I can. First, let me back up a little bit. When I talked about the overall budget increasing from roughly \$62 to \$94 million, that was for the entire Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. That includes other funding in the sports and recreation field, accessibility grants, sustainable transportation, doing work around before and after programs for schools, for physical literacy and getting kids moving. So the increase in the budget - and I'm sorry if that was misleading - isn't focused just on the arts and culture organizations. That's an important piece.

I think to be clear for the committee as well, our operating funding for arts organizations has not increased for several years, and I want to be clear on that. I'm not trying to frame it in a different way. Operating funding is a piece of the funding that I have talked about. Our project and other program funding has increased. I don't have that number over that time period, but that is something that I can come back to or I can provide to you directly or to the committee if that's requested. I hope I'm able to answer that question clearly.

BARBARA ADAMS: One of the questions is, how do these organizations function if you have frozen operating supports for 10 years, I believe it is? The other thing that you mentioned is where I want to go next. You talked about the fact that with all of these 70 separate funding programs, you were planning on a review of all your Communities, Culture and Heritage programs. I know what the Auditor General said about that. This particular government has been in power for almost seven years now. I'm wondering, because I asked the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage this a couple of years ago during Budget Debate, whether there had been a review of all the programs to see if all of these 70 programs were working efficiently, and they were achieving the outcomes that people were looking at. Why are you just now starting a review of these programs, especially given this massive commitment for a new art gallery? I know you're planning on reviewing all of these at some time in the future.

My question is, given the fact that this province has committed \$130 million with funds from the feds and the municipality for a new art gallery, were there any plans to include spaces within that new art gallery for the small and medium performing arts community at all? Or is it just going to be for the larger organizations? These guys are talking about a sense of panic and apprehension about what's going to happen to their organizations and their infrastructure. If there's no space, there's nothing there.

I would like for you to supply to us at some future time, how much of that \$62 million to \$94 million went to the arts community. I realize you don't have that now. I would specifically like to know now whether the new art gallery is going to provide any kind of space for the small- and medium-size performing arts establishments.

JUSTIN HUSTON: I can speak to it in general terms. The intention really is for that art gallery to become an iconic space for an art gallery for Halifax and for the province. There are certainly efforts to make it more accessible and more open and welcoming to all Nova Scotians. To be clear, the primary focus is going to be an art gallery. To my knowledge, there aren't plans in terms of specific spaces for small - I think just like there are currently, in the current galleries, there's a small auditorium, and there are some spaces that are utilized by the broader community. I think that will continue because the real purpose is to try to make it even more accessible and open, similar to the library, an iconic piece that people can use for more than just coming to view specific pieces of art. To answer your question, I would say no, there isn't a specific focus on creating, as we talked about this ecosystem of space.

If I could further elaborate on that a little bit, I think the terminology of the ecosystem of space is a critical piece. I think we've heard that from the presenters, and it's certainly what I'm hearing from my staff as well. It's that it isn't an either/or. This isn't about just creating the big shiny places, as someone referenced. It is about creating those spaces and that pipeline, essentially, for emerging artists or artists who are looking to experiment, as folks eloquently said. The gallery will be focused on being a provincial gallery, an iconic space, but that doesn't mean we don't need to focus on those small and medium spaces as well.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you, Mr. Huston, for that. I do find your responses very refreshing, to be honest. I think that you're a straight shooter here, and I appreciate it. I think it's really important that we understand in this room one other thing about that gallery space and about the larger infrastructure pieces: that it is not - in my opinion, and I think probably I could be backed up here by other people at the table - that a large space - a big, expensive, giant piece of infrastructure - is for the top things that are happening and that the small spaces are for emerging new artists. There are a number of famous professional artists who put Nova Scotia on the map who need small spaces. I also taught theatre at Dalhousie for many, many years and I watched as those graduates would churn out and see that they had no place to cut their teeth, so that is a very important part of this.

[11:30 a.m.]

The discussion has to be about how symbiotic the relationships are between different types of art being made and that includes the symbiosis between performance art and visual art and the way that those things can intersect and cross-pollinate, as well. I think that's a really important part of this discussion.

I also wanted to comment on something Mr. Labelle said which is that as a performer performing in a large space when there's 10 people there is super depressing - totally true. Again, I want to make the point that just because a thing draws big audiences or a musical draws in a full house does not mean it's more successful than 80 people

coming to see a piece of theatre by 2b on its premier run. 2b's success is in how many people see their shows because they tour to small spaces all over the world. It's not that they're bringing in 500 people at once and they're trying to be Peter Pan or whatever. I just wanted to make that comment.

I want to talk about operating funding, actually, in my question. So we've heard already that there's been a 10-year freeze on operating organizations. I will quickly say that it was on the grounds of the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts where my theatre company got a letter from the Canada Council saying we had just received operating funding for the first time. Literally my colleagues did cartwheels across the field because it meant a life change for us. It meant that one of us would be an employee and that happened to be me which meant that when I got pregnant, I was able to take a paid parental leave. It's truly life changing to get operating funding for artists.

I want to ask the artists in the room if you could imagine for a moment; if you had the actual amount of operating funding that you needed for your organization, what would be happening in your organization? What would it look like for the artists that are working there? What would it look like to the arts sector?

THE CHAIR: Who would like to begin? Ms. Wolchyn-Raab.

SALLY WOLCHYN-RAAB: First and foremost, we would hire a second staff position. We have been planning and trying to get that happening for a long time. The effect that would have on our organization and the community at large is that we've been hearing from our community that there's no place to be an emerging arts administrator in Halifax; you have to come already with a wealth of experience. To be able to create a position that was aimed at mentorship and aimed at legacy building within our already fairly long-standing organization would be an amazing shift for the organization and also for the community. It would give us a chance to hire somebody who is maybe like a year or two out of school and interested in curating. To hire them on a full-time permanent basis would be quite an amazing thing and it would help us leverage a lot of really exciting careers.

I think for our artists, we would be able to support more projects which is something that we very much want to do. We started studio spaces this year. Permanent studio space is something in Halifax that has been also rapidly declining and artists are losing their studios left, right, and centre so we started four artist studios. It's not enough by any stretch. We'd like to start more and we'd like to be able to offer them more affordably, as well. Right now we're charging rent, that's a way of making up these losses that happen.

When operating funding is frozen, I also want to point out that it's, in effect, like getting a small decrease every year because your landlord doesn't care that your operating grant has been frozen, they're still going to raise the rent on you. The cellphone company doesn't care, they're still going to raise the rent on you. What that does is over time, it causes us to either stall salaries - which is a very real thing - or it causes us to reduce our

programming or reduce our staff. I've seen organizations of artists and centres of all kinds take all of those measures when that happens.

THE CHAIR: Would anyone else like to comment? Mr. Labelle.

SEBASTIEN LABELLE: When I heard the question, for a moment I thought, it's almost hard to imagine. What would we do if we actually had proper funding? We would actually be able to operate and do what we want to do properly and without being under constant financial duress.

In my package, I've included excerpts from a recent labour market information study of the cultural labour force in Canada that was commissioned by the Conference Board of Canada. In it, you find statistics that reveal that while cultural workers tend to be younger on average and have higher levels of education attainment than the general workforce, they are among the lowest in terms of income earners in the broader labour market force across Canada. That income is even significantly less when you consider the number of unpaid hours that paid staff do in arts organizations and the limitations that there are on hiring new staff and the over-burden that falls on existing staff and managerial staff to take on so much work and stretch ourselves so thin.

What could we do? We could retain staff for longer. We could actually properly compensate people, offer benefits, offer a proper livelihood that's expected in any other economic sector, except in ours where there is always the stigma of, you're doing it for fun so you don't really deserve the same pay or the same working conditions as people in other economic sectors.

We could get out of that cycle and actually have artists that are thriving, that have healthy livelihoods and working conditions and not constantly working under duress and burnout. We could, as organizations, properly deliver the services that we want to deliver with healthy staff and proper staffing, enough staffing. At the Bus Stop Theatre, we don't have operating funding. When we talk about the freeze in operating funds, it's not just the existing organizations that have access to operating funds and it has been frozen and depreciating in value over the years, but anybody else trying to enter cannot have access.

The Bus Stop Theatre has been operating for 17 years. We're one of the most successful performing arts venues in Nova Scotia. We do not get operating funding and when we ask the program officers if we can apply, we are discouraged from applying because we are told, don't waste your precious time and resources - the so few that you have - in applying for a grant that you will not get because there is no money available. That's a real problem.

EMILY DAVIDSON: I want to point out that The Turret Arts Space is already a response to the lack of operating funding. We're talking about the need to have the people we will be renting to, all the people who are going to be filling up these dynamic spaces from different arts organizations. All of those organizations are suffering from a lack of

operating funds. If those organizations were healthier and we keep the rent low because, heaven forbid, we have operating funding too, then all of that wiggle room is going back to artists.

The Turret Arts Space is a bit of a different arts organization because it is about being a space. It's about having the space and having those other arts organizations find a home with us. When I think about what a thriving Turret Arts Space looks like, it's all kinds of dynamic activities cross-pollinating from these various organizations - different organizations that don't rent in our building, coming in to do special events. I imagine a highlight of our year being the Nocturne festival and other forms of festival type engagement.

I really think that it can be a beautiful and dynamic space. I just wanted to kind of drive home that the model that we've chosen that balances the commercial tenants with the not-for-profit tenants to keep those rents low is already a response to the climate and to the lack of resources available. What we could do if we had plentiful resources would just skyrocket our vision up to the next level.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thanks for those responses and I want to then direct my supplementary to the department; it's kind of a two-parter. One is if you could address what Mr. Labelle said about this issue of companies not being able to get in on the operating program and being discouraged to apply. I remember there was a case to be made when applying for grants to apply for the maximum amount that you actually need so that the department sees what the true costs are. I wonder if you're taking into account those who are being discouraged from applying when you're looking at what your actual budgetary requests are when you go to the Treasury Board.

Also, if you could just talk a little bit about the review of the funding and when the program review will be completed.

JUSTIN HUSTON: I just want to also respond a little bit too, because the operating pressure piece is not something that we take lightly. I've certainly met with a number of organizations over the past six months - executive directors of organizations - and we've heard very similar things in terms of pressures coming.

I must say just a plug. I've only been here six months, but I have to say, working with these organizations - some of the strongest leadership and innovation that I've seen across any industry sector. I know they could always do more with more, but I'm continually impressed by the ability to continue to move forward a vision and support the community - professional artistic community.

Operational funding of course is one piece of it. It's the backbone for a lot of organizations, but we also have a series of other funding, which we can talk about, but I know it's not the same.

I can't speak specifically to your first question - I'll probably hand that over to Chris - but I can speak to your second one a little bit in terms of the time frame around that review. We're really getting under way with that now, and so I anticipate by the Fall, but I can certainly provide that we'll have that review complete. We're going to be working to do some internal analysis in terms of what we're doing already, but then certainly connecting with sectors and leaders in the arts community around how we can improve things, so working with those key stakeholders. I anticipate the Fall and if there's any change on that, I can get back to the committee or talk to you.

Maybe I could hand it over to Chris in terms of specifics around some of the grant funding.

CHRIS SHORE: In terms of operating, obviously we recognize that there are challenges. One of the things about operating grant programs is - as previously mentioned, we had 153 organizations in the department that applied to us for that.

I think one of the strategies that we've looked at in recent years is in terms of operating support, what people are looking for is a kind of predictable, sustainable amount of money that they can depend on. At the same time, what you're trying to do with a program like that is you're also trying to help organizations and kind of incentivize them to innovate and take some risks where they can. The focus in recent years has been on project support that kind of allows people to do that.

I made reference earlier to something called the Creative Industries Fund, and I think Emily made reference earlier to the One-Time Emerging Culture and Heritage Initiatives Program. The One-Time Emerging Culture and Heritage Initiatives Program is structured so that arts and cultural organizations can come in and apply for help in terms of strategic planning or development planning or governance planning, so helping organizations to develop strategies that strengthen them in the long term. The Creative Industries Fund is designed specifically to identify additional revenue streams for organizations - specifically in that case, in terms of increasing sales and exportability and to develop new markets.

We've seen not-for-profit organizations come into the Creative Industries Fund - a lot of theatre companies that have come into that program, especially in and around developing new markets for tours, getting people in to help them export, building capacity for when they're going into new markets. Examples of that - we've had funding to 2b theatre and Heist theatre. These names will be familiar to you guys, maybe not to the whole committee. I think the thinking has been, how do we help organizations identify new revenue streams? That's where the focus has been with the project funding, to support that.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Roberts.

LISA ROBERTS: I am lucky to have Bus Stop in my constituency, and I have seen the most incredible range of performances in that space. To echo Ms. Leblanc's comment

earlier, I have seen incredible work by very established artists in that space. I particularly think of watching - I think it may have been the debut performance - 2b theatre's *One Discordant Violin*, which has since toured the world. It was an incredibly special theatre experience. I think it certainly could have been in a venue that was twice as big, but it wouldn't have fit in many other spaces in Halifax.

[11:45 a.m.]

When I think about where people go from the Bus Stop, the next space that would make sense is the smaller stage at Neptune, where some shows end up working and fitting, but it's an incredible, fertile, and dynamic space. I would add in there some of the very community-grounded spaces where I have seen community organizations using theatre to talk about the issues that they're working on - in the case of Stepping Stone, for example, which did theatre where the performers on stage were sex workers. Just incredible stuff.

None of that is to ask my question, which is, we often hear that we have to choose between arts funding or that arts funding is seen as a luxury somehow. We know that we have needs that are not luxuries in Nova Scotia, like health care and roads - always roads. Would anyone on the committee want to respond to that narrative and that framing? Do we have to change the frame that we put on funding for the arts?

SALLY WOLCHYN-RAAB: Yes. I will say that I think there's always the proverbial pothole. I think that it is really easy to think about arts funding as at the bottom of your list of needs. I would say that small arts organizations in particular, in a lot of ways, and particularly as we grow our understanding of engaging with marginalized communities and working with marginalized communities, we take on the mantle of being front-line workers, very much so.

Eyelevel works with In My Own Voice. Eyelevel works with St. George's YouthNet. These are organizations that are providing very essential services to the community. They're doing anti-violence work. They're providing affordable child care. They're coming to us to work with them so that we can enrich their programming. I would say that when you reduce arts funding in favour of other maybe more essential services, I think it does a disservice because these are services that are working harmoniously together.

SEBASTIEN LABELLE: I think it's a false notion when we assume that there are pressing needs that supersede a need to invest in the arts and culture sector. I think it's a very well-known fact and very researched that a vibrant artistic community generates population growth and economic growth in a region.

It's also recognized by the province's own Building Vibrant Communities program, which I mentioned earlier, that arts and culture programs help alleviate poverty in a community and also help alleviate pressures on health and social programs. They

ameliorate the social determinants of health in a community in addition to providing opportunities for employment if there's proper operating support.

We know that investment in the arts is a preventive measure also in assisting people who are affected by poverty or poor health and that investing in preventive programs and measures is often much more effective and cost effective than investing in prescriptive programs that have to remedy situations once they're already present.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. That really concludes our time, and I wanted to give our witnesses an opportunity to make some quick final comments. If we can get through the group of you in six minutes or so, we can wrap up our discussions here.

Who would like to begin? Mr. Huston.

JUSTIN HUSTON: Sure, we can go right down the line. I just have a few closing statements here.

As I think we've heard today, everyone here around the table, if they didn't already, has really come to understand the value and importance of arts organizations in our province and the role that the arts and culture sector plays in making Nova Scotia the best place to live and for people to come here. We also recognize the importance of appropriate funding and supports for these important organizations and the work that they do.

As we've mentioned, I think the key is in terms of really working and talking to the sector and really understanding what those pressures are. We'll continue to try to be as flexible and responsive as possible to organizations and artists to ensure we can advance those projects that have merit and benefit not just the sector, but the communities broadly.

We know that we've done some good work, I think we've heard some of that, but we're certainly not resting on our laurels and we've heard some areas where we can continue to improve. Again, I'll reference the program review or improvement process that we're embarked on and we're working on and the way that we can enhance the effectiveness and the accessibility of those programs and the transparency of those programs.

I'll also just leave with you that I think we've heard some really great comments around the value of the culture sector. I'm sure some of you around this table have heard this, and we can get copies for folks, but I'll leave this for some. Talking about some work that we've done here provincially around the value of the culture sector to the economy - close to \$1 billion and 13,000 jobs - really is the backbone to a lot of communities across the province, as well as a survey of Nova Scotians about the value of culture that they've found, so it's some really interesting information there that I'll make sure is available to all the committee members.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. From our three external organizations, would you each like to say a couple of words? Ms. Davidson.

EMILY DAVIDSON: In closing, I just wanted to return to the broad concept of accessibility and talk about how that's such a key feature of the work that we are doing at The Turret Arts Space, a renovated Khyber building.

We're thinking about financial accessibility: making sure that the space we're building and providing meets the needs of the community, which is often in a tight pinch, so that those organizations can pass on free and low-cost programming to the community. Physical accessibility: making sure that this beautiful heritage building can actually be accessible to people with a range of mobility needs, making it wheelchair accessible. Then cultural accessibility: how we can transform the art spaces that we know and love to be spaces that are really welcoming to people from all walks of life, that support art by Indigenous artists, that help African Nova Scotian artists take their space in the spotlight.

I really think all of that good hope and good energy about creating accessibility needs to be supported by the funds to make that possible. Thank you.

SEBASTIEN LABELLE: Just in closing, I'll kind of respond to Mr. Huston's points about the focus at Communities, Culture and Heritage on grants that provide export opportunities for projects and also strategic planning. Of course, you can't export if you have nowhere to start from is an obvious one. In terms of projects, the growth in project grants has been fantastic, but once your project is done, it's hard when you can't land back on a robust administrative core in your organization to keep going from project to project.

Lastly, the strategic planning and looking for other new revenue sources. Of course, when we're talking about revenue sources other than government, then we're looking at the corporate sector and business sector for sponsorships, which can be beneficial, but that often comes with commercial needs and interests, the market interests and advertising interests of your sponsors. In terms of the spaces that we operate, which focus a lot on research and exploration in the arts, the same as in science, the arts sector research and exploration can flourish much further when there's a lower reliance on commercial needs and interest.

SALLY WOLCHYN-RAAB: I also wanted to touch again on the concept of accessibility and availability and the work that organizations like Eyelevel are doing in facilitating dialogues around anti-racism work and activism work and creating spaces where anti-oppression work is actively happening and spreading out through the community. I think that's very important and I want to acknowledge not just Eyelevel, but our fellow artist-run centres that have been really leading this charge.

I think in terms of space, it has been interesting to me in the past little while that by being in close proximity to Bus Stop, we're even starting to see a little bit of the rebounds;

the folks who can't find space at Bus Stop are coming to me in my small office space and my small bookstore and asking if they can workshop a performance publicly in that space.

We're artists and we're creative and we want to find solutions to the problems that we're facing. While sometimes those creative solutions do breed further creativity, it would be nice if we weren't always scrapping it together all of the time.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I do want to thank our witnesses from the arts community. They're really highlighting some of the challenges that the arts community faces. I think all of my colleagues learned a little bit about the importance of the whole ecosystem of the arts, the importance of small spaces and not just large spaces. I really think there's perhaps more dialogue with the Culture Link project that we might want to encourage. The issues of accessibility and the role that arts can play in that was a new angle that came to me. I do want to thank Ms. Davidson. As an architect, thank you for protecting that building.

I just have one final comment to Ms. Roberts' question around funding for the arts in our system where there's health, education, affordable housing, and all the different needs that we have. This is not a new issue. I grew up in an arts family, and my father spent three years as the Maritimes representative for the Canadian Council of the Arts in the 1970s. He could identify with these gentlemen on the left that they talked to hundreds of arts communities and just wished they had more money for all the great and creative ideas that the people on our right here are bringing forward.

I do want to thank you on both sides of that tussle of finding funding, because I think we're all working together to try to enhance the arts in our province. I think we all see the value of it. It's by working together that we can continue to make that blossom and show off the best of the heritage and culture of Nova Scotians. With that, I would like to adjourn the meeting. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]