

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, June 25, 2024

Committee Room

Nova Scotia Film Industry

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**NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

John White (Chair)
Dave Ritcey (Vice Chair)
Hon. Steve Craig
Nolan Young
Chris Palmer
Hon. Iain Rankin
Ronnie LeBlanc
Gary Burrill
Lisa Lachance

[Dave Ritcey was replaced by Tom Taggart.]
[Chris Palmer was replaced by John A. MacDonald.]
[Ronnie LeBlanc was replaced by Braedon Clark.]

In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES

Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
Christopher Shore, Associate Deputy Minister
Susan Jeffries, Executive Director, Culture and Heritage Development



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JUNE 25, 2024

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1:00 P.M.

CHAIR

John White

VICE CHAIR

Dave Ritcey

THE CHAIR: Order. I call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development. I am the Chair of the committee, MLA John White from Glace Bay.

Today we will hear from presenters regarding the Nova Scotia Film Industry. I ask you to please turn off your phones or put them on silent. In the unlikely case of an emergency, we will exit at the back door, go out the Granville Street exit, and head to Grand Parade.

I'll now ask committee members to introduce themselves, beginning with MLA Taggart.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: I'd also like to note the presence of Chief Legislative Counsel Gordon Hebb on my left, and Legislative Committee Clerk Judy Kavanagh on my right.

Today's topic is the Nova Scotia Film Industry. It's probably not a surprise to the committee witnesses that I see this as the single biggest potential we have in the province. I'm really looking forward to today's meeting. I really can't wait to hear the questioning. I'll ask the witnesses to briefly identify yourselves, and then we'll come back for opening remarks.

[The witnesses introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: I understand both of you have opening remarks. No? Just you? Okay. Chris Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: As I said, my name is Chris Shore. I'm the ADM at the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. I'm joined today by Susan Jeffries, Executive Director of Culture and Heritage Development. I'm really happy to be here with you this afternoon to talk about the impact of the Nova Scotia film industry on our communities.

There's a lot to tell and a lot to see, and it proves that Nova Scotia film and television productions not only bring stories to life, but also have significant economic impact on our communities. In Nova Scotia, the industry is a vital source of economic growth and opportunity. For example, in the 2021-22 period, the film industry injected \$180 million into the local economy, supporting 650 well-paying jobs across the province. These productions contribute to the vibrancy of communities by spending on local restaurants, accommodations and businesses, and supporting a wide array of sectors.

Another piece of good news is that the influence of film productions extends beyond urban centres and deeply affects our rural communities. A prime example of this is the production *Washington Black*, which is a Disney production. It filmed for 56 days - 39 of those days in rural locations such as Louisbourg, Lunenburg, Mount Uniacke, Avondale, and Peggys Cove. This not only showcases Nova Scotia's diverse landscapes, but also brings economic benefits to those areas.

In the 2023-24 period, 83 projects were approved through the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund - the fund that we manage at CCTH - for a total investment of \$39 million. The investment resulted in \$140 million in direct spending in Nova Scotia. This strategic financial backing is pivotal for fostering a thriving, competitive, creative sector within our province. It underlines our commitment to nurturing an environment where filmmakers, screenwriters and performers can thrive, and the development of a successful Nova Scotia film sector is possible.

Supporting our local film industry not only creates a direct impact on our local economy but also has a cross-sectoral effect. Film and tourism have cultivated a mutually enriched relationship, thanks in part to a collaboration between Tourism Nova Scotia,

which is part of our department, and Screen Nova Scotia, which is a non-profit sector organization and partner of ours in the community.

The film tourism steering committee is actively working on leveraging locally produced movies and TV shows to augment Nova Scotia's allure as a travel destination. Meetings with the film producers have illuminated the importance of place, showcasing that locations like Lunenburg are not merely scenic backdrops but pivotal characters in the narratives we share, capable of drawing visitors from around the globe.

In the upcoming fiscal year, Tourism Nova Scotia plans to deepen this synergy through targeted advertising campaigns and marketing initiatives, with a strategic focus on enhancing content on NovaScotia.com. At the end of my comments, we actually have a couple of videos that will illustrate that piece.

The survey results underscore the appeal of film tourism, revealing a key . . . (interruption).

THE CHAIR: Order. Just one second, Mr. Shore.

We're just going to take a brief recess to fix this.

[1:06 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[1:08 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: Order. I call the committee back to order. My apologies.

Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: Thank you. No worries.

I was speaking about the relationship with Tourism. Tourism, as I mentioned, plans to deepen the synergy with the film community through advertising campaigns. As I mentioned, we have some videos that we're going to show you at the end of my comments.

We did conduct a survey, and the results underscore the appeal of film tourism, revealing a keen interest among visitors in exploring movie locations and following in the footsteps of their favourite characters. This initiative not only celebrates our cinematic achievements, but also invites the world to experience the real-life magic of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia is a province that is home to many diverse communities. Inclusivity remains a pivotal component of our industry's story. We've been working with Screen Nova Scotia on the development of a funding stream through their Content Creator Fund, which is aimed at helping diverse producers within the film and television sectors.

Recognizing the barriers faced by underrepresented groups in our department has supported a number of important projects, like the Black Below the Line project, support for the Women in Film and Television Making Waves Conference, and the equity and gender parity strategic focus of our Screenwriters Development Fund. These initiatives are all a step toward ensuring that all voices have an opportunity to be heard, and diverse narratives are brought to the forefront.

We stand at the cusp of a new era for Nova Scotia's film and television industry, an era marked by economic vitality, inclusivity, and a harmonious blend with tourism. Through strategic investments, supportive policies and collaborative initiatives, we're not just creating narratives, we're shaping the future of our creative economy.

As I said at the beginning of this speech, there's much more to discuss and to see. I want to show you a few quick videos that we have prepared, after which we'd be very happy to answer any and all questions that you have.

[A video was played.]

THE CHAIR: Order. Please take a short recess again.

[1:14 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[1:18 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: Order. My sincere apologies. Chris Shore, the floor is yours.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: I'm just going to continue. The video you just saw was a reel that was prepared by Screen Nova Scotia, which is used in the promotion of Nova Scotia as a location - interviews with a number of very well-known actors and productions that have happened over the last couple of years.

The next one - we just want to talk a little bit about film tourism. The film tourism campaign, as I mentioned in my opening remarks - part of what we want to show to you today are a couple of videos that we ran this year to promote *Sullivan's Crossing*, which is a large television production that happened last Summer. It is shot in Nova Scotia, and even features Nova Scotia as a location.

[A video was played.]

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: Just a short teaser ad that ran during the show itself - I think it was in May and June. It was actually a very successful campaign. It drove a lot of attention to the NovaScotia.com website, which is where we try to bring all the interest of potential tourists to the province.

I think that's good. I think with that we'll open it up to any questions you might have.

THE CHAIR: Before we go to questioning, MLA Burrill.

GARY BURRILL: I was just wanting to move that we agree to extend the meeting for roughly the time that the meeting was interrupted. I think it was around 10 minutes. We would agree to whatever the closing time that you had thought of for business, that we would add 10 minutes to that.

THE CHAIR: MLA Burrill has a motion on the floor to extend the meeting by 10 minutes. While you're voting on that, I just want you to know that I had intentions of bringing the questioning to a close at 2:50 p.m. Now the questions would come to a close at 3:00 p.m., and then it would be 10 minutes for correspondence.

Motion on the floor. Do we need to vote on it? I see heads nodding, so we're in agreement. Agreed. Thank you, MLA Burrill.

Thank you all for your patience.

MLA Rankin.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: The list for questions?

THE CHAIR: For questions? Yes, I'm going to come to it. You want to be on the questions, is that what you're saying?

IAIN RANKIN: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Okay. We have finally finished opening remarks. A reminder to wait until your name is called and the microphone comes on so we can record you. MLA Craig, there was a request for you to come a little closer to your microphone when you're speaking. I will maintain a speaker's list and look for you to nod your head to get you on. I have MLA Taggart on there right now, and MLA Rankin. Then both of you, I'll put you on right after that, okay? I will try to remind you two to three people out so you're ready for your questioning. We'll wrap up at 3:00 p.m. on the button for questioning. Are we ready?

Questions are open now. I have MLA Taggart to start.

TOM TAGGART: I think we all know of the successes. I shouldn't say we all know, but certainly we're gaining all the time. I'd like a little bit about specific programs that are in place to help Nova Scotia producers sell and distribute their projects to national

and international marketplaces. Is there something there that we do that supports those local producers? That's to Mr. Shore, I think.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: We actually have a number of programs that support Nova Scotia producers in the production and creation of their projects. At the beginning of any kind of film project, there's usually the creation of a script of some sort, an idea. A producer comes to us to say, I want to develop this idea into some sort of project. We have a Screenwriters Development Fund, which is accessed through Susan's division, Culture and Heritage Development. That Screenwriters Development Fund provides funding for various levels of script development from the beginning through polishing drafts. There are usually about three steps in the development of a script to the point before it's ready for production.

The key to this program is that it's accessible to a writer and a producer, and we did that very intentionally. We wanted to maximize the possibility that the project gets done. Not every script is turned into a movie, but we wanted to maximize the possibility for success. We felt that by teaming up writers and producers together, the chances of those projects moving forward would be much greater. That's one element, and that's specifically open to Nova Scotia producers - domestic producers here.

The biggest fund that we have in the department, as I made reference to in my opening remarks, is the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund. This is a fund that's been in place since 2015 and really supports Nova Scotia production. It has two streams to it. One is open to what is called service production. A service production would be, for instance, a large movie that's coming to town, perhaps from outside of Nova Scotia. Often, they can be Canadian productions but are often American productions. They're usually large scale. I made reference to a production called *Washington Black*, which is a Disney production. It's not released yet but was shot here last year. These are usually large productions that bring a lot of money and hire a lot of people. They have an ability to access that fund.

Additionally, there is another stream specifically aimed at Nova Scotia producers. They can also access the fund. It's an incentive fund. It's a rebate program where, depending on the nature of their production, they become eligible for a rebate based on the total Nova Scotia spend in the province.

Those would be two examples of how we support film producers.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. MLA Rankin.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I just have a question on the sound studio that's going to be built out on Prospect Road by the Halifax Exhibition Centre. I know it's going through the

approval process at HRM, but I'm wondering if you could speak to the status of the project and the Province's commitment on an ongoing basis? I understand there was an \$8 million investment. Does the business case require ongoing government support year to year? It's really important. I know it's going to be the only one. We don't have a sound stage yet, and it's great for film and media. I wonder if there's an update you can give the committee on where that project stands and what the Province's commitment is.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: That's a great question. I believe it was in 2023 that the Province provided support to Screen Nova Scotia. As I mentioned before, Screen Nova Scotia is the not-for-profit sector organization responsible for the screen industry in Nova Scotia. It often calls itself a film commission as well. It supports all kinds of film activity. They had conducted a number of studies and presented a number of proposals to the department over the years about the value of a sound stage here.

As you just mentioned, we don't have a purpose-built sound stage in Nova Scotia. Big productions come in. When they come here, they tend to try to locate temporary facilities in order to shoot when they need sound stage facilities. They'll find a warehouse. Curling rinks are also very popular because they're big and open - they don't have walls, and they can set up in them. The studies that Screen Nova Scotia conducted certainly pointed to a permanent sound stage as being an important step in the development of the industry.

The government had provided an \$8 million investment in the creation of a sound stage. They immediately began to look for various locations of where that could be done. Work started with them hiring project managers, doing some studies across the country. They went to Ontario and to British Columbia. There are a large number of sound stages in both Ontario and British Columbia. The film industry is very large there. They looked at all the various possibilities. They did some consultant work. They came with a preliminary idea of massing - how big of a building do they need? What really would serve the community here?

They landed upon, in general terms, a building that's about 50,000 square feet. It's two different stages with support structures in between for offices, wardrobe, all of the support activities. Then they looked for land.

Currently, the state is that they have a piece of land that's out near the Halifax Exhibition Centre. They're currently in negotiation with the Department of Natural Resources on acquiring that land. I believe right now they're still at the stage where they're discussing what the final price would be, and I believe there was some discussion about how big the piece of land is. There's a back and forth that's happening right now.

Currently, that's where it stands. They're looking at that piece of land. Until they acquire it and enter into a development deal, potentially - with HRM as well, because it's

important for them to file all the necessary paperwork there. Then they'll take the next step at looking at exactly what kind of structure they need to build.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: Next up I have MLA Lachance, followed by MLA Burrill and MLA Clark.

MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: I wanted to ask about the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund. I think one of the ideas was that this would be more transparent than the tax credit when it was eliminated in 2015. But the funding reports for the fund haven't been updated. I'm wondering why they haven't been updated for the last couple of years, and when we can publicly expect to see them.

Given that there are no reports, perhaps you could walk us through. Where did the \$25 million go in the previous fiscal year?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: Originally, when the film incentive fund was created in 2015, it was managed at the time by the then-Nova Scotia Business Inc. Because of the Accountability in Economic Development Assistance Act, all of the projects that they supported over those years went to the Accountability Act website.

The responsibility for the fund was transferred to our department in 2022. We assumed the responsibility for the fund. Initially, we assumed responsibility for the management of the fund, and then the administration of the fund got transferred to us completely. We continued to report all of the funding allocations through that fund. There was a delay in us updating because there is a desire to transfer the accountability of that fund into an open-data portal. It was more about the transition - not so much that we didn't want to report where the funding went to. That's all available. It was more of an administrative delay in the portal.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Jeffries.

SUSAN JEFFRIES: The updates that are being made to the Accountability in Economic Development Assistance Act continue to be made. I have a cold, so my apologies if I lose my voice. We're required to do that twice annually, so that reporting mechanism, that administration, is still in place, and those reports have been uploaded to the Accountability Act.

Through NSBI, they may have regularly provided press releases around different investments throughout the year. We have not kept up with the schedule of that. The year 2022 would have been the last update you would see on the Nova Scotia website, which is also undergoing some changes between the current site and the new beta site. That has also contributed to the information not being listed where the information is kept for the Nova Scotia fund itself.

The Accountability Act updates have continued to be made on a twice-annual basis. Those are still found under that portal.

LISA LACHANCE: The current allocation for this year and for last year was \$25 million. That's a decrease from 2021-22. I'm wondering if you can talk a bit about the budget trends in the fund.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: The budget allocation for the Nova Scotia film incentive program for this year is \$39 million. Last year it was also \$39 million, and \$25 million before that. Originally, when the fund was created in 2015, I believe it was at \$10 million.

Basically, we've seen, in the last number of years, a very significant increase in the number of film projects that are coming to Nova Scotia. Demand on the fund has increased significantly. We keep track of all of those projects. We want to encourage film activity. We see it as a tremendous growth potential for the province. At the time, as we enter into projections in terms of the applications that we receive, we went and asked for additional allocation.

In particular, one of the projects - and I'd made reference to it before - is called *Washington Black*, which is the Disney production. This was a substantial production. Part of the film itself takes place in Nova Scotia in the Shelburne area. It was a very large project. They approached us and said that they wanted to shoot a significant amount of the film here. They did ask us to consider an increase to the current cap. There's a cap on the fund right now, but because of the significant investment they were going to make in Nova Scotia, we went in and thought that was a good idea. That was one of the reasons why it was initially moved up to \$39 million, but mostly it's demand.

THE CHAIR: MLA Burrill.

GARY BURRILL: I wanted to ask about the impact of the MOST tax incentive in the film sector. I think this was a very welcome development when the tax refund was extended to film people. We also know that with the working of the tax refund to this point in general, the subscription has been a lot lower than had been anticipated. I'm wondering: At this point, does the department have any numbers about the number of people in the film sector who are taking advantage of the under-30 film professional tax refund?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: The MOST program is run through the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration; it's not our department. In employment, we do have some preliminary numbers that they made available. Just as a kind of refresher, the MOST program is really trying to incentivize young people to move into the industry - young, skilled workers - similar to the construction industry. That's what it was intended to do.

The total number that we have now, and this is not from our department - this total is for MOST, not film - was 2,642 applications. Ninety-eight per cent of those applications were in the trades - in the construction and trade business - and 0.2 per cent were film applications. You can probably do the math. It's not a large number there. I know that the basic breakdown is 63 per cent trades, 37 per cent in nursing, and 0.2 per cent in film. The average tax refund there was about \$3,700.

GARY BURRILL: This is amazingly precise for another department. Great. I'm wondering: Do you also then have a sense of the uptake rate in film amongst those who would potentially be eligible? Is it parallel, less, more than the general uptake, or is that not known at this stage?

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: I wouldn't be able to comment at this point. I really don't know. I know that in addition to the MOST program, there are other programs that we're running to entice people to come into the film industry. It is an area where they do need - specifically in and around crews - trained crews. We actually have other programs at CCTH - training programs - and programs that we fund through Screen Nova Scotia to encourage people to move into it and to train them. I don't know how that would compare from a numbers point of view.

THE CHAIR: Next, I have MLA Clark, followed by MLA Young and MLA Craig.

MLA Clark.

BRAEDON CLARK: As MLA Burrill mentioned, Mr. Shore, you've got lots of numbers with you today, which is great. I really appreciate that. One of the numbers you mentioned in your opening comments was around jobs, which is an important piece of any industry, obviously. I believe you mentioned 650 jobs as the number that's supported.

I'm just wondering, so I understand: Is that 650 full-time, year-round jobs for Nova Scotians who live here, or is that some combination of that and people who might be coming here for a set period of time? Could you just clarify for me how those jobs are actually distributed within the industry?

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: In that given year, those jobs would be jobs in Nova Scotia. In the film industry, we would basically use the term "full-time equivalent." The

nature of work in film industry is project to project. These are when you're working on a film crew, you work for a period of months. You do a contract under that film, and then you move on to another project. They're basically full-time equivalent jobs.

Roughly, we know the Nova Scotia film industry - and this is from Statistics Canada - about 1,100 to 1,200 people in Nova Scotia work in the film industry. In that particular year when I was recording that 650, it was related specifically to those numbers, in and around, for that given year, like a direct boost in that area. But we know that there are roughly around 1,100 people in the film industry, full-time equivalent jobs.

BRAEDON CLARK: Just touching on a point you made, Mr. Shore, in an earlier answer to MLA Lachance around the cap of the program. I'm just curious what that cap would be, and given your answer, I assume there are mechanisms in place to circumvent it. If a blockbuster movie - I took my kids to *Inside Out 2* on the weekend, which was great, by the way. Just a plug for that - really, really good. If a big movie with \$150 million to \$200 million budget or whatever landed on our doorstep tomorrow and said, "Hey, we really want to film here," I'm sure we wouldn't want to say no to that. What is the cap currently, and what exists in place to adjust that if needed?

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: The cap currently of the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund is \$10 million. Basically, that allows us in the department, when we get applications - the \$10 million is the amount of money of incentive that we would provide. We wouldn't normally provide any more than \$10 million to any given production. It allows us to spend up to that point, to receive applications from any manner of production company, whether they're domestic or from outside of Canada or within Canada.

When a blockbuster, as you said, comes - as I mentioned before, *Washington Black* being one of those, and we have one right now that's shooting in Nova Scotia called *We Were Liars*, which is a big Amazon production - they approach us. They basically say, Look, we have a very large production that's coming in. We're very interested in Nova Scotia as a location. We estimate - because they're estimators about the fund - that it's going to go beyond the \$10 million. When that happens, we seek permission. We go to the minister and basically say we're looking for permission to go beyond the cap for that period of time. Depending on how that affects our budget, we might actually also - depending on how we projected the budget, it might mean that we would go into the Department of Finance and Treasury Board and ask for permission there.

THE CHAIR: Excellent, thank you. MLA Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: I wonder if you could expand upon how the department and Screen Nova Scotia are collaborating, working together to ensure that the film industry is growing?

SUSAN JEFFRIES: We work with Screen Nova Scotia on a number of fronts. We spoke earlier about how we support producers from the time - the screenwriting capabilities that they do. We work in concert with Screen Nova Scotia as well. They also have a script development program that we help to support. That's administered by Screen Nova Scotia as well.

[1:45 p.m.]

Once a production that's been made in Nova Scotia by a local production company wants to take that to market or to expand on their distribution of the film, we support them to go to various festivals around the world. There are film festivals that producers can go to, and there are festival buyers or producer buyers, network buyers there that they have opportunities to pitch their projects with. We support those missions that Screen Nova Scotia takes on.

Generally speaking, Screen Nova Scotia has a set of two to three major missions that they set their sights on on an annual basis. Those missions are in very key markets for getting distribution for Nova Scotia producers. When they take a producer on a mission, those are all pre-screened and they go through a screening process to qualify to go on the missions. Oftentimes, the participation on those missions with Screen Nova Scotia is in concert with other provinces in Atlantic Canada, so we're supporting Screen Nova Scotia to take producers on those missions.

We also support activities that are associated with other film festivals here in the province. By extension, we have a pretty major film festival, the Atlantic International Film Festival, that has an industry component to that festival, which we support. They work in concert with Screen Nova Scotia, which also takes advantage of the industry buyers who will be here for that festival. They will take a series of buyers from that and take them around the province on what we would call a familiarization trip. So while they're in province, they take advantage of those buyers to take them around our beautiful province and show it for what it could be in terms of a film destination. That's just one example of how Screen Nova Scotia is supported by us, and also supporting other industries in Nova Scotia that support the screen development, producer development and film development world.

We are also working very closely with them to develop new producers. They've just announced, through support with us, a new Content Creator Fund. There's a stream within that fund that we were very actively involved in with the screen industry. It's targeted around developing new producers and filmmakers in marginalized communities. We did a number of consultations in the community to understand where the gaps were. Just now, they're out in the community speaking about this new program, which is going to have a pre-development component with it. What that entails will be a series of training programs that will help interested individuals who want to gain experience in the filmmaking world all of the tools that they need to make their first film. We're very excited

to be able to work with them on the development of that program, which is being rolled out in the province now.

The second component of that - the cohort that undertakes the training that is part of that stream will have an opportunity to make a first film. That's another component of the Content Creator Fund that we're working with Screen Nova Scotia to create.

There are a number of other initiatives as well. Just as an aside, Chris mentioned earlier different ways that we support film development. We have a Creative Industries Fund, which supports producers directly coming into our fund to take their film around the world to different film festivals as well. So Screen Nova Scotia also does missions, but we also support producers directly to go out and take their projects around the world.

We also work directly with AFSCOOP, the film co-operative that creates the Film 5 program. It's an opportunity for persons who have interest in getting in the film community to take training and learn to make their first short film.

There are a number of avenues for support. Screen Nova Scotia and our partnership with them is just one of them. Again, it's a very small community, and a lot of the associations, including Screen Nova Scotia and the film festivals, work together to do that work.

THE CHAIR: Next, I have MLA Craig, followed by MLA Lachance and MLA Taggart.

MLA Craig.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Thank you both for your answers and for being here. I just think back to the way we keep referring to "film," and how over the last century, entertainment has changed from silent films to having audio, and now virtual reality and screens - so much is there - and how this industry has evolved in the name of entertainment. Let's face it, this is entertainment, and it's information that's provided to a consumer, and the production of that and the many aspects of the people who are involved, as you've alluded to in a number of your answers.

My big question is: What is our unique selling proposition, whether you're the salesman or you're providing the marketing to the salesman to bring productions here? In your opening video, you indicated a few things that were - and that's good, testimonials are good. I was happy to see that from a marketing point of view you had testimonials from producers, actors, directors around that. When we take a look at the aspects of scenery and location - and the uniqueness in some cases, of that of Nova Scotia, especially in proximity to the larger centres and support centres. It was mentioned in the video about Maine and how they've got some great stuff, too, but it's far apart. The ease of travel and getting

people here, and getting the support that you need is important. I don't know if that's part of the unique selling proposition.

What about the support of the crew? We've got the crew, and we need to build on that. It was mentioned to me the other day that if we have a production in Cape Breton and they're in Halifax, we get them to Cape Breton, but if we have a couple of sales and productions going on, the scarcity of resources is a consideration. Then, of course, the dollars. It always comes down to dollars, especially where you can create any particular video now. Just have a green screen, and you can have at 'er. You don't necessarily have to have it.

I do know a number of people who are employed and part of that number that you indicated earlier, ADM - not only actors but are also part of the construction. I've got friends who do tile work, and they're telling me all the work they're doing on these sets.

I do want to come back though - this is global. Productions can be funded for anywhere in the world. They can create everything artificially, and they don't have to be here to do what we do. Not everything's in Oak Island. What is our unique selling proposition that you or the stakeholders you are with use to get people here to even consider us beyond the testimonial?

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: That's a great question, and I think what it comes down to are a couple of components. I had a colleague of mine often refer to Nova Scotia as "right-sized." It's not a province that's enormous in geographical landmass. You can go from one part of it to another in a number of hours. In terms of moving around the province, it's relatively easy to do.

Despite the fact that we've seen tremendous advances in CGI, and in fact, increasingly - you mentioned green screen technology - large productions still need locations. They still want to be able to shoot outdoors. If you're shooting something outside, although you can still recreate that inside, you need a high degree of technology in place to do that realistically speaking. Film companies are still looking for locations. They're looking to come to a place that has all the locations that they need for their particular film.

One of the advantages that we have in Nova Scotia was referenced at the beginning of the film that we showed - we have a great diversity of location. If you need to shoot like you're in a city, you can very easily replicate that in Halifax or in other towns in Nova Scotia. If you're shooting a historical film, you've got many, many historical locations here where you can do that. If you need to be out on the water, you can do that. Years ago, they shot parts of the movie *Titanic* here. I've known over the years that they've used Halifax for all manner of locations like Russia - and as I said, historic Shelburne in productions such as *The Book of Negroes*.

We have the variation, and the variation is all within a relatively small place. It's not going to cost you a lot of money to move between locations, and you can come here to do that. So location is one of the big pieces.

We also have very well-trained crews here. Despite the fact that the industry itself is growing and we're seeing a big uptick in the number of productions that are coming - and I think that's a tribute to the work of the people who are here - we need crew members. That's why programs like the MOST program are very important to attract young people. But the crews that are here are top notch. They're high quality. That's something that productions really look toward. They want to know that when they're coming here, they're not going to have a problem outfitting crews. There are enough people in Nova Scotia right now to probably support three or more full productions going on at the same time. Ideally, you don't want them all going at the same time, but that's where it is now - and more are needed. If we develop the industry here, basically the more the merrier. The more people we can have working in the film industry, the more we can accommodate.

We've got locations, we've got crews, and then the third piece that's important is incentive. There isn't a place in North America that doesn't provide some form of incentive, whether it be a tax rebate or some kind of grant in order to attract large-scale or medium-scale productions. In order to be competitive, we need to have an incentive program that is competitive. We have one. The film incentive program is that, and I think that's a very important part of attracting people to come and shoot here. They see it as attractive from an incentive point of view. They see the locations as great and varied, and the skilled labour force.

The fourth piece that I'll just mention on the side is: We can focus on the big productions that come in, but I think what's equally important is the development of a domestic industry of our own IP-controlled companies in Nova Scotia. I'll give you an example of this. Last year, you might have known that in the United States there was a very substantial labour action that took place with the Writers Guild of America and Screen Actors Guild going on strike for a long period of time. The result of that was that all production went to a standstill for a long period of time.

In Vancouver, British Columbia, most of their film industry is dependent on that large what's called "service production" - those American productions going there. It's significant there. That basically ground to a halt. That basically stopped. The industry basically in British Columbia froze for that period of time. That didn't happen here, and it didn't happen here to the same extent. We were affected by it, there's no question, but we did have domestic production, and we had companies here that were producing their own work.

The industry didn't grind to a halt. We managed to keep going. There were other productions that pivoted and came here, and Canadian productions that came as well. I think strong domestic production also implies that there are people here with the skills to

produce movies and television shows. It shows that we have, as I said, the skills. We have people here who can do post-production, studios that can work on post-production aspects of it. I think you bring all of those pieces together, and that's what makes Nova Scotia a strong contender in this business.

[2:00 p.m.]

STEVE CRAIG: If I could summarize, we've got the right stuff at the right deal. We're in the right place. That's good.

THE CHAIR: I don't think you need to reply, Mr. Shore.

MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: I wanted to ask: The Content Creator Fund was noted in the Auditor General's report on over-budget spending because of the lack of performance targets. I'm wondering where we are with that and how we will know if the fund was successful, and how we will look forward to a new fund.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: The Content Creator Fund was created in 2022. Again, - similar to the question about the sound stage - we had received a number of different proposals from Screen Nova Scotia. It's a Screen Nova Scotia program. They had submitted to the department over the years a number of different proposals for how we might strengthen and improve the film industry here in Nova Scotia.

One of the key components - we had some of the elements, as I mentioned before. We had the Screenwriters Development Fund, and we had the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund, but there was a gap there. There was a gap in funding that was putting Nova Scotia domestic filmmakers at somewhat of a disadvantage because unlike their other counterparts in other provinces, they didn't necessarily have a specific fund available to them for their own Nova Scotia projects.

Screen Nova Scotia had come to us with a proposal to create such a production fund, and that is the Content Creator Fund. This was an investment made of \$15 million given to Screen Nova Scotia. Its intention was to be over a five-year investment. Basically, \$3 million a year for five years. When they initially received the funding, it took them a little bit of time to get up and running. There were two streams of funding within that program. They had to create all of the guidelines and application forms, and get all of the administration side of it in place.

We worked with them very closely on the creation of that. We have 77 different funding programs at CCTH, so we have an understanding of how those programs are

constructed and put together. We worked with them on exactly what it would look like. That first year, I think they didn't quite meet their target because I don't think they were able to actually get the fund up and running until later in the year.

Susan had made reference earlier to the Stream 2, which is specifically geared toward marginalized communities and diverse communities. We worked with them this current year on getting that into place. They have that now. That Stream 2 is up and running, and in fact, they're holding information sessions across the province right now, which I think is a really exciting component of the fund.

We have a full report on every project that gets funded through that fund. We know that in the beginning it was a bit of a slow start. We anticipated it would be a little bit slow, but now it's running full tilt.

SUSAN JEFFRIES: I just want to point out that, as Chris alluded to, it didn't get under way the first year until November, so the targets for fully spending it were not realized. But I have some numbers here for you.

In that year of 2022, they did fund 16 productions at a total of \$1.9 million. With that fund, 21 productions have been funded in 2023 to the tune of \$2.4 million. All of the preparation of that fund that we did in concert with Screen Nova Scotia was all done with legal advice and oversight of the department. In terms of reporting, they do file an annual report specifically to that fund. Screen Nova Scotia is also an operating client. The reporting on that fund is done separate from their annual reporting, so we do have, on an over-year basis, a very thorough idea of how that money is getting spent and who it's going to.

The Content Creator Fund criteria are very closely linked to the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund. Any producer who is being funded out of the Content Creator Fund would have been funded and would have qualified for funding under the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund as well. We're very closely linked in those productions that are getting funded through that Content Creator Fund.

We are aware of the report that came out. Through the annual reporting with Screen Nova Scotia, we're addressing what needs to be done in terms of a complete annual report for that fund.

LISA LACHANCE: I presume that the financial oversight is good, but without performance targets, we don't actually know if that's successful, right? Sixteen productions sounds great. It seems like a very productive fund, but again, the question I think the Auditor General was talking about was also the performance targets. Is the intent to develop those as we move forward with that fund?

SUSAN JEFFRIES: How the fund is structured is directly related, as I mentioned, to the qualifying productions coming through the incentive fund. The modelling that was done in advance was looking directly at the number of projects that come in to the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund and how they would qualify for the Content Creator Fund. The estimation of the need for the annual fund budget of \$3 million was based on some modeling that we had done previously. The oversight for that is basically that the qualifying productions, whether they be a feature film - there are percentages that they're entitled to under the Content Creator Fund. There are different levels of funding for that.

The performance targets that will be met are directly related to the increase in the applications to the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund, so year over year that is growing. We anticipate that the incentive fund, Content Creator Fund top-up will continue to grow. The performances are directly related to the level of investment that's going on in the province and the production that's happening. The work that we're doing with Screen Nova Scotia to reach those is directly related to the film incentive fund itself.

THE CHAIR: Next, I have MLA Taggart, followed by Burrill and Young.

MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: I'm not sure who would like to take this question. We talked a lot about the financial value of the film industry and the employment it creates. I think in the beginning we talked about \$140 million in direct spending. This province is big on tourism as well, as is the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. I'm wondering what's being done to leverage the tourism industry to bring the two together. I believe that you're working on a strategy to develop a film tourism industry. Can you tell us a little bit about that? Then I will have a follow-up.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: Absolutely. One of the pieces of that film tourism strategy - it is in the mandate of the department to develop a film tourism strategy for leveraging, basically, the work of the film industry to transfer it into visitorship. Right off the top, one of the videos that we showed in the beginning just after my opening remarks was all about leveraging the television show *Sullivan's Crossing*, which is shot here in Nova Scotia. It's set in Nova Scotia, so it's not like they're using this as some fictitious place. The production is in Nova Scotia. During the airing of that show - it happens to be on CTV - we ran Nova Scotia Tourism ads that basically said: You're watching *Sullivan's Crossing*, that's great. This is an actual place. Come and visit.

That's one element of what the team at Tourism is working on. I'm going to reel it back a little bit. What we did initially was we created a film tourism working group. This

was, I want to say, two years ago. That working group consisted of our Tourism team, Screen Nova Scotia, the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia, and people from our department. We sat and brought in an international expert named Stefan Roesch who has a particular expertise in film tourism. I think he's currently in New Zealand, but he's worked in the area. He has a Ph.D. in that area, and has worked with a number of jurisdictions around the world in terms of building their film tourism strategy.

In New Zealand, of course, one of the big things that he worked on with that country was leveraging *The Lord of the Rings*, which was shot in New Zealand. They have a thriving tourist industry in and around the locations for *The Lord of the Rings*. It's obviously a fictitious story, but shot in a real place, and there are businesses that are now set up by saying, This is where this was shot, and that's where that was shot. There's an entire fanbase of *The Lord of the Rings* that travel to New Zealand every year to experience those locations.

That's one example of a kind of marketing that you might be able to attract. There are many of those types of examples. It's not just about the location, because in that example, you're dependent on a big blockbuster movie shooting in your area. For example, I mentioned the production *Titanic*. *Titanic* was shot here, and in fact, lots of people come here not just because this was the shooting location. I mean, obviously there's a collection of *Titanic* artifacts in the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. There were also recovery efforts that came from Halifax. There are people who are buried in Halifax. So it's not only the location of the movie, but there are other elements that attract that kind of tourism.

I think, as well from a marketing point of view, you can also develop partnerships with production companies that are here to say, Hey, we can help each other in our marketing. That tourism ad is a small example of that.

There were a number of different strategies that the working group looked at. We conducted meetings with local film producers, and got their input on what they think might work. The strategy is now in place. There was a survey that was done of Nova Scotia - people who had already visited Nova Scotia to gauge their interest in potentially experiencing a film package if they came here.

Right now, what we're doing is we're continuing to work on the execution of that strategy. We have the strategy in place and they're trying to build a number of film tourism-related experiences for people to take part in. There's actually a location on NovaScotia.com, which is our tourism website. You can go to that website, and it will give you an example of certain locations where films were shot if you wanted to go visit and what you can do.

That work is ongoing. We continue to try to leverage that and work in partnership with film producers who are coming, and as well, looking at strategies for after film has been produced.

TOM TAGGART: It's likely early to have any kind of real numbers, but at some point I expect we'll be able to follow that and collect it. Is that correct?

[2:15 p.m.]

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: Absolutely. That's something we're going to track. We get about two million visitors a year. I think the last reports were two million a year. The tourism division is an excellent job with tourist surveys and people coming, and what they do. We get a really great idea of what people do when they come here.

One of the interesting characteristics of people coming to visit Nova Scotia is that there are different types of tourists. They categorize them as part of their marketing initiatives. The cultural tourist is one of the very common types of tourists who come here - someone who's going to experience the local culture. They come because they want to experience heritage. They want to understand what the culture here is like. In Nova Scotia, you tend to see a high number of cultural tourists, as well as a high number of people who are looking for outdoor experiences. Our provincial park system and our national parks, and of course, the scenery attract a lot of people to Nova Scotia. Those two are high-volume tourists. That kind of lines up with the film tourist strategies, but we'll have numbers for sure.

THE CHAIR: Next up is MLA Burrill.

GARY BURRILL: I wanted to come back and ask a little more about the MOST incentives. Whenever you speak to people in the film world about how things are going, everybody identifies the shortage of crews. The shortage of people is, in some form or another, at the top of everybody's lists. Incentives that address this are awfully important.

I understand it's not the department's responsibility, but it's certainly within the department's interest because of this. I'm wondering about the set-up of film vocations that are included and those that are excluded. For example, we know special effects people and scenic painters are not eligible. There are a range of film vocations that are eligible and ones that are ineligible. If our object is to draw and retain more young film professionals, wouldn't it be the case that having a look at expanding the range of included film locations and the MOST incentives be a good idea?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: It's a really good question, because certainly we are very interested in expanding that. We know that we need to have skilled employees on film sets, and we need to encourage them to stay. Particularly, the MOST program is about young people - you have to be under 30 to access that. I can't really comment on the eligibility of the program because it's not really in our department, under our responsibility. It's really

the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, and honestly, I wouldn't want to attempt an answer because I might not give you the full answer that you actually need.

In addition to the MOST program, we do work with Screen Nova Scotia, as I said. We've worked with the Nova Scotia Community College on a microcredentialing program. Microcredentialing is a way of people accessing training in a very efficient way. They get very specific training in a particular aspect of, let's say, a film set. The course doesn't take that long. It can be cumulative. In other words, I can take a microcredential course for - I don't know the number of weeks, but it would be six or eight weeks. I can get it done in a matter of hours and then I get a credential saying, Yes, I'm qualified and I understand that aspect. You can build those microcredentials over time.

That's something that we work with the community college on, putting that together. In fact, we've also supported a program that I mentioned in my opening remarks aimed at diverse communities and getting members of diverse communities trained into that business. One of the interesting programs that we've run is called - there are two - Black Below the Line, which is a series of programs put together at the Light House Arts Centre. Again, this is microcredentialing, and it's encouraging African Nova Scotian young people to get involved. It's a series of training - it's a module, basically, that qualifies them to work on a film set after a period of time. There's another one called Black Above the Line, which again is encouraging African Nova Scotian creative people to enter into the film business on that side.

Above the Line/Below the Line, I'll just explain, is a film term. It stems back from the 1930s in terms of how people made films. Below the line are all the budget lines related to - basically it's a cost item. It has nothing to do with the actual creative element of the film; it has to do with the execution of it. All of your crew, all of your costs for construction, and all of those types of things would be a below-the-line cost. An above-the-line cost would be something like if you had a writer, a director, if you had big actors in your film. Those would be above-the-line costs. That's just a question of how they do budgeting, but typically, the people who create the idea behind the intellectual property or execute it are above the line. Those people who are working on the production itself are below the line. They're different types of jobs, basically.

I'm sure you weren't here for a lesson in film budgeting, but basically speaking, those programs - they're not the MOST program, but they are designed to increase skills.

GARY BURRILL: That all makes every sense. One of the things about the film vocations that are excluded is that many of them seem to be in areas of more, let's say, conventional, outside the film world, Red Seal trades. Lighting is excluded. Hair and makeup people aren't eligible, and yet we know hair and makeup people in film are not cosmetologists. They're not in that world. Lighting people in film are not electricians. They're not in that world. At a time when it would seem to me the priority is the attraction and retention of young film-related professionals, I'm interested in your opinion - even

though it's not your area of responsibility - might it not be a good idea to take a look at expanding the criteria under which tax refund incentives are available, from this point of view?

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: For sure. As I said, that program itself is part of the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration. Again, I would defer to them in terms of expertise. That's really their expertise, in terms of what kind of training is needed. But theoretically, absolutely. From an industry point of view, and from supporting the industry itself, yes, I would agree that it would be great to look at something like that.

THE CHAIR: Next up, I have MLA Young, followed by MacDonald and Clark.

MLA Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: Living in Shelburne, lots of films seem to come in and come out. It's a good boon to the economy.

I'm wondering if you could tell me: How does government support some of the rural communities in leveraging film industry activities for long-term development?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: The Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund - basically, the way it works is there's a percentage rebate you get, depending on how much money you're spending in Nova Scotia. I have to reaffirm this. This is all about dollars in Nova Scotia being spent here, not other money. Depending on the nature of your production, you get a certain percentage. It's currently anywhere in between 25 per cent to 32 per cent. The base is either 25 per cent or 26 per cent, depending on whether you're a Nova Scotia domestic producer or a service producer, as I have made reference to.

Then there are various incentives that stack upon that, and one of those ones that stack is called a rural incentive. It's an additional 2 per cent that's provided to productions that are shooting outside of HRM. Basically, it's a 30-kilometre distance right now, measured from downtown - from City Hall. Basically, if your production is shooting outside of that area, you get an additional 2 per cent incentive.

The other component of the Nova Scotia Film & Television Production Incentive Fund program is it is an all spend. "All spend" refers to not only labour, but also any kind of spending you would have on your production.

Currently, right now, we are working on an amendment to that rural incentive. We are looking at a model whereby we would increase it. We've seen evidence of this in other parts of the country where it worked particularly well. We're very interested in

incentivizing productions to not only shoot in proximity to HRM, but to really bring them out right across the province. Right now, we are working on an amendment to that rural incentive to increase it. All I can say is that there will be announcements in the near future about that one.

THE CHAIR: MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Just so you know, East Hants is about 36 kilometres from downtown. I drive it all the time.

You mentioned about the additional, if it's outside of 30 kilometres. Can you explain what the benefit is of having that and the impact on local businesses and services? I don't mean just where the movie is shot, because obviously I've been fortunate enough that there have been a lot of movies shot out in my neck of the woods. I know, because I go back and go, "What's this ABC?" I've learned, oh, okay, those are different spots for them. So not just right there, but how is that helping local services and businesses be able to capitalize on this coming in?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: Imagine - any size film or television production is basically like a small army of people who arrive at a various location to shoot whatever they need to shoot. In order to do that effectively, all different types of activities have to take place. In certain cases, that means renting out facilities, it means buying construction goods, it means buying food, it means housing people, it means hiring people. When you're at a location wherever you are in the province - in East Hants, for example - you're not necessarily going to bring the entire crew with you there. There are lots of different jobs that happen in and around a film set that they're looking for people locally to participate in.

In certain cases, even in terms of performers - usually background actors who are actors who don't have a speaking role in a film - if you need 75 people for your production to be in the background, you don't necessarily want to have to bring them all from Halifax. You'd really like to be able to use the people who are there.

I think with that, you get a picture of the fact that when they arrive in a specific area, they're engaging a lot of different kinds of businesses. They're buying food locally. They're getting catering locally. They're hiring people, as I said, in background and on crew. They're renting out facilities. If they do that for an extended period of time, that can actually be a significant amount of money invested in an area.

The advantage here in the film industry is in a relatively short period of time. When a large production comes to Nova Scotia, it's potentially - something the size of *Washington Black*, for instance, is literally spending \$60 million to 70 million in the course

of five months in the province. That's in Louisbourg, in Lunenburg and Shelburne. That's a significant amount of influx into those communities.

THE CHAIR: MLA Clark.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Shore, you touched on something earlier about the competitiveness of the marketplace when it comes to attracting film. As you said, there's a huge industry in British Columbia and Ontario. Obviously, California is the epicentre of it. Georgia has come on in the last little while as well. What I'm curious about is how the department thinks about balancing that so that doesn't become a race to the bottom, which is always the tricky part of it. We have unfortunately experienced in Nova Scotia, in my view anyway, government investing in not film necessarily, but industrial projects, different economic drivers that fall apart, and the taxpayer is left holding the bag, unfortunately.

I know that hasn't been the case with film, but how do you balance that out to just say: Jeez, New Brunswick is doing this and Maine is doing that, so we've got to go 10 per cent lower? How do you fight that impulse, or how do you deal with that difficult balance?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: That's a great question. Certainly, we're very cognizant of that. You have to balance it all off. Our position is that you want to make sure that Nova Scotians are the ones who benefit from this. At the end of the day, it doesn't make sense to just increase your incentive endlessly to attract whatever.

What we do is we take a look at our incentive structure, and we make sure that it's competitive. There are other provinces than Nova Scotia, quite frankly, that offer higher percentage points of incentive than we do, but we want to make sure that we're within a range. There are certain places that are higher. Manitoba is an example. You can look at Manitoba, and they have a very aggressive incentive in place there. Interestingly enough, the amount of film production that takes place in Manitoba is not that much more than it is in Nova Scotia.

We're always balancing off what exactly the volume of production is that we have here. We want to remain competitive, so we take a look at our percentage, and we make sure that it's within the realm of what other provinces are offering. It is a priority for us. We want to be in this business, so it's something that we want to be competitive at. But the incentive is not the only component of what attracts film productions. As I mentioned earlier, location is important, and the idea of a skilled workforce is very important.

Big productions are spending a lot of money, and when they come to a location, they want to know they hired talented crew people or that there's a talent pool of actors

available. They don't want to go to a place that doesn't have that kind of infrastructure. If you have that infrastructure, that's another element of what attracts business.

[2:30 p.m.]

I think that's one of the reasons why, for instance, a sound stage is an important part of an infrastructure here because that's another element of what we have. If you're shooting in November, chances are you want to probably be inside if you can. I think there's not just the incentive part of it, there are the other elements. As long as we're trying to build those pieces up, I think we're in good shape. We do keep a close eye on what other jurisdictions are doing. It's one of the reasons why we're remodelling the rural incentive.

BRAEDON CLARK: Just a quick follow-up. What do you look at for your comparators? You mentioned Manitoba there, obviously, but do you look within Canada, maybe smaller states in the U.S.? What are your main comparators when you're trying to figure out how we stack up against the competition?

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: What we usually look at are similar-sized entities. Primarily, we're competing in Canada. We're not looking at the United States, really. We have some advantages in Canada. For instance, on top of the incentive that we have for American producers, you have the exchange rate as well. It's attractive. Canada is an attractive location for them. Proximity is another reason. A lot of big production companies are located in California. It's actually not that far a flight from California to Nova Scotia - relatively easy to get to. That's another component of what it's like.

Typically, what we do is look at provinces that are roughly the same size as us. We look to Manitoba; we look to Saskatchewan. Those are the main ones. We look at the rest of Atlantic Canada as well. Interestingly enough, because of the strength of our domestic industry here - I think the latest results were that Nova Scotia was, I think, Number 4 or Number 5 in the country. If you take into consideration large centres like Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec as the big three, if we're next, then that's actually quite impressive. I would say we're very comparable to Manitoba, but largely it's a population size.

THE CHAIR: MLA Clark, I would even be inclined to give you a second follow-up because I'm trying to keep the caucuses the same. (Laughs)

BRAEDON CLARK: No, thank you, Chair. I'm good. Thank you for your indulgence.

THE CHAIR: Next, I have MLA Taggart, followed by MLA Burrill and MLA Young.

MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: MLA Young kind of stole my question there. He seems to get all the films down there in Shelburne too. (Laughter) I guess where I'm going here is that I'm very happy to hear about this rural incentive that you're working on. How do I as an MLA who believes that they have a lot to offer, especially when you talk about cultural tourism, outdoor activities and that sort of thing - we've got the highest tides in the world. I guess John A. would have some of those too. (Laughs)

We've got a world geopark, a 13,000-year-old Palaeo-Indian site, any number of beautiful scenery and locations, but we are sort of off the radar. What direction should I take to try to get the powers that be - the people within the industry - to take a look at those attractions: the communities that I believe would be great locations and be attractive? How would I go about that?

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: I think the first thing that you do is - I think, to back up a little bit, the incentive potential increase there is going to be, I think, a big factor. We'll learn more about that in the coming days.

I think one of the big things is Screen Nova Scotia, which I've mentioned before - one of the big roles that they have is location services. Basically, location services make it their job to make sure that they understand and have pictures of communities right across Nova Scotia. When a potential movie comes to Nova Scotia, when they're entertaining the idea of coming and shooting here, they reach out to Screen Nova Scotia. They say, "My movie is about this, and I need these types of locations. Do you have that kind of location available?" They have a photo bank, and they have specific people whose job it is to understand the various locations in the province, and to take them across, send pictures and say: Yes, we actually have that. We have this here, we have that there, and we can do this over here.

The first thing I would say to you would be to reach out to Screen Nova Scotia and make sure that they have all of the information for your particular area, and even to potentially invite them out, and make sure that their locations information is updated. The other thing that people are looking to is they're not only looking for the outdoor location; they also want to know what kind of services are there. It's as simple as: Are there food services available? Are there hardware stores available? Can I buy wood and lumber to build whatever I need to buy? Is that located close by? I think that list of related businesses is also very important and a consideration when films are looking to shoot in a specific area.

TOM TAGGART: Can I get some coordinates or who the right person to speak to is - maybe now or after? Thank you.

THE CHAIR: MLA Burrill.

GARY BURRILL: I think if you ask most people what the main thing is that's happened in Nova Scotia film in the last decade, most people would refer to the great collapse after the decimation of the film tax credit and the dispersion of crews across the country. It feels like we've had a long trajectory of recovery from that over a period of years with some other things getting in the way, like COVID or the strike last year. We've been on this good, long path of recovering from that time. I want to ask your opinions. In your view, have we fully recovered from 2015 yet?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: Absolutely. I think we've recovered and more. I think if you just look at the number of projects and applications that we've supported in the last number of years, it continues to rise. If you look at the level of incentive and the amount of money, just from an incentive point of view that we've been spending, that also has risen. That's a direct result of expenditure - of companies coming and spending money here.

Even if you go back to 2021-22, we had, for example, 70 projects. Now, 2021-22 is still the incentive program as we know it. We had about 70 projects that we supported. Last year, 2023-24, we had 82. We're now tracking towards 118 in this current year that we're in. You're seeing a steady increase in the rate of production. I would absolutely say, without a doubt, that we've more than recovered in terms of volume.

THE CHAIR: The next speaker I have is MLA Young, and I don't have any more on here after that, folks.

MLA Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: One thing that the pandemic brought on, I notice, is that a lot of people who moved, especially in my area, have some history in the film industry and whatnot. I don't know a whole bunch about how the film industry works, but what job opportunities are created for rural residents through the film industry?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: We've been speaking this afternoon a little bit about job creation, the MOST program - we've been looking at training. What's interesting about the film business is that there are various levels of jobs - different kinds of jobs that are available. There are certainly jobs that don't require any specified training. There are some very basic film etiquette rules that you want to follow when you're on a film set. It's easy enough. In fact, the local union, IATSE, holds regular film-etiquette training courses for people interested in getting into the film business. That's very basic stuff like: How do you act on a set?

There are various levels of jobs. There are jobs that don't require specialized training. It's really a question of you getting in touch with local producers and with Screen Nova Scotia and expressing your interest in working on sets. Sometimes there are calls that they put out: Hey, we're shooting in this location. We need these types of people.

Then there is a layer of jobs that do require specialized training to various degrees. Some of them are highly technical. But what's interesting - and I think that's the original connection to the MOST program - is that some of those are very transferrable. Now, we also happen, in this province, to need lots of construction workers, but some of those specific kinds of skills are transferrable into film. I made reference to the fact that you need to build sets. If you're going to build them, you need carpenters. You need electricians to run electricity. You need scenic painters to be able to paint those sets. So there are artists who are involved. There are people in construction who need to be engaged.

If people are interested in moving into that film business, certainly I know that any of the unions would welcome people with wide-open arms, in terms of providing opportunities for them to learn about it.

THE CHAIR: MLA Burrill.

GARY BURRILL: I just wanted to come back one more time to the question about the labour shortage and crew shortage. Does the department have a sense of how great the gap is? Do we actually know how many skilled crew we are short relative to present demand?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: I don't think we have a specific number. One of the challenges there, of course, is that to a degree, it's a moving target. Currently, I think there are three large productions shooting right now. This is the height of the season right now, in the Summertime - from now until November or December.

Typically, as I said, the rough number that we used to use was if there was a large production that was coming - large productions come into Nova Scotia. I think we have something along the lines of three full crews, so you could have three separate productions shooting concurrently. That's not always the case. They time out.

But in certain years, there is a degree of variation in the volume of film that's producing, so the number changes a little bit. I do know that the level of production is increasing. We're seeing the numbers increase, as I made reference to before. That increase is showing us that Nova Scotia is an attractive place to come and shoot. I do know that from time to time, there are productions that come here that don't end up shooting here as a result of the fact that we just can't support it.

[2:45 p.m.]

I don't have a hard number for you in that case, but certainly something that we could look at developing. We could probably work with the unions and Screen Nova Scotia to see if we could get some specific numbers for you.

THE CHAIR: My last speaker on the list so far is MLA Craig.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Last speaker? Really?

THE CHAIR: That's what I have right now. I'm looking for more hands though.

STEVE CRAIG: I'm sure you're going to get somebody who's going to ask more questions.

I'm absolutely fascinated by sales and marketing - always have been. To just build on my questioning earlier, I get a sense from the conversation that we're having that - correct me if I'm wrong - we would look at Screen Nova Scotia as being our sales arm. We support them with monies and ideas, and ask them to go out and do some work - and that is to attract business here to Nova Scotia. We, too, are an expense to the production. They pay us, okay? Productions pay Nova Scotians, and they get a little bit of money from the Province to help in doing that. Their real revenue comes from their sales of their production - the finished product - through to the consumer or to a distribution channel, and that's where they get their money.

Do you see us as being proactive in this area? I say that because some of the conversation that we've had, it seems to me as though we're reactive. We have a site out there. I look at the Screen Nova Scotia site. It puts all the elements that somebody who is going to do a production might look at. Now, if they don't stumble across that, then maybe they don't do that.

Do you know if Screen Nova Scotia or anybody else is proactively looking at the global network of productions that are out there, potential productions, if they're on anybody's short-lists? If we have a big production, does somebody in Nova Scotia know that there's a potential for a big production and has in their Rolodex - dating myself - okay, I need to build these high-level relationships with these industry movers and shakers, the people who will make the decision to bring a production here to Nova Scotia? Then we can get into that whole area of the sales proposition.

If we don't know exactly what it is they're looking for in our sales department, then how can we possibly sell? How can we be proactive and have that constructive relationship with those in the industry who are looking to produce a product that somebody else is going to buy, knowing full well that the quality of the location, the incentive that a state or a province would provide is part of that? How do we go ahead and do that prospecting, if

you will? I guess that's the short question: Who is doing the prospecting for the business for Nova Scotians to take advantage of all the things that we're doing as a government?

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: It's a really great question. One of the elements of a successful product placement in any business is that you provide to your buyer a good product. One of the things that advertises us better than anything else when you're buying something - if you buy tires, and those tires work really well for you and you love them, well, that product, you're going to go back.

One of the things that we have a great advantage of, as we showed from the video in the beginning, is we have a really good track record in terms of production. Companies come here and they produce. Again, we're talking mainly service productions, and the question that you're talking about is not so much the domestic ones, but how we attract. We're talking about large companies like Disney, NBC Universal, and Amazon. When they come here and shoot their projects, and they have really good experiences, they know things went really smoothly. Nothing advertises them coming back with a new television show than a good experience that they've had before. That's one element of what we're doing.

The other element is the missions. The trade missions that we go on, which we fund through Screen Nova Scotia and through independent producers who come to our Creative Industries Fund, they go out. They're going out in many cases to shop around their own product at film festivals, but as they do that, they become ambassadors for Nova Scotia. In fact, when Screen Nova Scotia is on those trade missions, they're also meeting and talking with production companies about Nova Scotia as a location.

I'm going to ask Susan to talk a little bit about a thing called the familiarization tour, which is something that is very successful in that area as well.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Jeffries.

SUSAN JEFFRIES: Specifically, film trade missions, generally speaking, are a method of enticing. We use it in the tourist industry, as an example. We bring in travel writers who might want to write about a destination, and people read about it, or influencers, and they come. No matter what sector you're looking at, there's an element of sales that's happening.

The film trade missions are an extremely important part of bringing in those potential buyers, if you will, in which case it could be the networks, like Disney or Netflix. There's nothing better than to bring them into your home province and actually feel and experience the place. We spoke earlier of the importance of attracting film producers. Nova Scotia becomes a character in a lot of ways. What we're selling, really, is our destination. In some respects, it's not very different from developing missions that are targeted at tourism buyers.

From a film perspective of bringing them in and seeing the various locations, Screen Nova Scotia has done that on a number of occasions. They specifically have done that, in most recent years, to rural locations. We know there have been specific missions that have gone to Cape Breton and the Valley, so they're seeing the diversity of the landscape. They are seeing what exists in terms of infrastructure in those communities. While it's hopeful that those buyers coming in have a project in mind that would be a good fit in terms of the location and experience, sometimes they're taking it back and looking at what's in their Rolodex in terms of projects that might be coming forward and where there would be a good fit.

Those are really important - to do that on your home turf - to actually have them come here and experience, and meet people who are behind the scenes. Screen Nova Scotia would include, while they're here - connects with people in the community who are supporting the film sector. They would bring in locations managers who would be part of that discussion. Those are the folks whom Screen Nova Scotia - and MLA Taggart spoke of earlier - want to connect with, so that they know that location and it's top of mind when a producer or a network is looking for a specific location.

There is also an element of missions that happen outbound as well. For those missions, we partner with other funders like Telefilm Canada. We work with our commissions abroad. Specifically, if you look at marketplaces like Berlin, Berlinale is a big show. We work with our trade commissioners there who are familiar with us as a destination and are on the ground as well.

There are also elements of what Chris spoke to earlier - producers themselves going into marketplaces and selling their content. The quality content helps to sell and attract buyers of film productions to Nova Scotia as well.

It comes at you from different areas, but for sure, being front and centre at some of these missions is very important to speak to the fact that we are actively looking for productions and that we're open for business, to use that phrase one more time.

I hope that answers your question.

THE CHAIR: Excellent note to end on. I see no further questions.

A comment from MLA Craig.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Thank you. I do appreciate that. At the base, everything is about business. There's no question about that. It's not a bad word to use here. "Profit" is not a bad word to use either.

The thing is that missions - I was very happy to hear you say inbound and outbound. As Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister, I did inbound and outbound as well. They are a great way to get your product and awareness out there.

You also spoke about testimonials - those who have been here and have done something. That is also an excellent way to get the message out and to build that awareness, and to build that quality contact and context is so important.

I want to thank you for the work that you're doing and with your stakeholders, on behalf of myself, anyhow. I'm not going to speak for everybody else, and I'm not going to take up to 3:00 p.m., which we extended the time to, unless you want me to. I could probably filibuster. (Laughter) No, I'm not going to do that.

Sincerely, the work you're doing is important. I'm so happy and pleased to see that we are investing in the industry. I'm so happy to see that we do have a number of productions in Nova Scotia. I'm so happy to see that Nova Scotians are benefiting from that work - either direct employment or supply of services and other products. Again, thank you both for being here. It's been a pleasure to speak with you and have this conversation today.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for the words, MLA Craig. Do either of you have brief closing remarks?

Mr. Shore.

CHRISTOPHER SHORE: I have very brief remarks. I do want to thank the committee for inviting us to be here today. It's been our great pleasure to come and speak about the work that we do and the work that we also feel is very important to the province.

One of the things I'll leave you with is that since the fund was created in 2015, it has invested about \$200 million in various projects. That investment has returned close to \$860 million direct spend into the Province of Nova Scotia. I think that's one of the numbers that speaks most to return on investment in terms of a business.

I think I'll just leave it at that, but once again say thank you very much for having us here. It's been our pleasure.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Shore. Ms. Jeffries. You're good? As the committee Chair, I get the pleasure of thanking you for coming in. I think I opened up by saying that this industry has more potential than anything I can dream of. You've hinted, and you've left me very excited about what's coming. I'm very happy to hear that. You are free to leave. We do have a few moments to finish up. I think I will take maybe a two-minute recess, folks.

[The committee recessed at 2:57 p.m.]

[The committee reconvened at 3:01 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: Order. I call the meeting back to order. Thank you for waiting a few minutes, folks. The only piece of correspondence we have is from Mr. Duncan Robertson, Senior Policy Analyst for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. He has provided reports regarding *Navigating Government Labour Programs: Atlantic Canadian Small Businesses' Experience*, and *Affordability, Minimum Wages, and Living Wages: Striking a Balance for Small Businesses* for review as it pertains to the committee's work. Is there any discussion?

The next meeting is set for September 24, 2024, and it's the Coastal Protection Act Implementation. Our witness will be the Department Environment and Climate Change. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 3:02 p.m.]