

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Wednesday, February 21, 2018**

**Legislative Chamber**

**Funding and Grants**

**Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services**

## **Public Accounts Committee**

Mr. Allan MacMaster (Chairman)  
Mr. Gordon Wilson (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr. Ben Jessome  
Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft  
Mr. Brendan Maguire  
Mr. Hugh MacKay  
Mr. Tim Houston  
Hon. David Wilson  
Ms. Lisa Roberts

[Mr. Tim Houston was replaced by Ms. Barbara Adams.]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb,  
Chief Legislative Counsel

Ms. Nicole Arsenault,  
Assistant Clerk, Office of the Speaker

### **WITNESSES**

#### **Department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage**

Ms. Tracey Taweel -  
Deputy Minister

Mr. Marcel McKeough -  
Executive Director, Culture and Heritage Development

Mr. Bill Greenlaw -  
Executive Director, Communities, Sport and Recreation

Ms. Rebecca Doucett -  
Manager, Financial Advisory Services



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2018**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Allan MacMaster

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Mr. Gordon Wilson

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, I call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order. This morning we have with us the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. We are going to be discussing funding and grants.

I'd like to remind everyone to place their phones on silent. We'll begin with introductions, starting with Mr. MacKay.

[The committee members and witnesses introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Taweel, we'll let you have time for opening comments now.

MS. TRACEY TAWHEEL: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. Thank you very much for inviting Communities, Culture and Heritage here today to share information on our grant programs.

As you've just heard, I am joined by Bill Greenlaw, Executive Director of Communities, Sport and Recreation; Marcel McKeough, Executive Director of Culture and Heritage Development; and Rebecca Doucett to my left, Manager of Financial Advisory Services.

The mandate and work of Communities, Culture and Heritage is fundamentally about investing in the people of Nova Scotia, in their communities, their businesses, ideas, culture and heritage, health and well-being and the ties that bind us together. Just over one year ago we launched Nova Scotia's first Culture Action Plan, which guides our decision-making priorities, investments and actions. Our goal is for Nova Scotia to be a place where cultural identity, expression and economy prosper; a place where all people honour and embrace diversity and heritage and thrive by leveraging our creative strengths; a place that is known for strong, empowered and vibrant communities; and a strong, creative economy where more Nova Scotians have access to opportunities for healthy, active living.

Through the plan, we are also working to address systemic racism, advance cultural diversity and increase initiatives to promote, preserve and celebrate our Mi'kmaq culture and heritage. One year after its launch, I am proud to say that we have made progress in implementing many of the plan's actions. For example, last month we launched the Culture Innovation Fund which invests in initiatives and projects that use culture in new and innovative ways to address social, physical, human and economic issues and opportunities.

In the coming year, we will continue this important work. For example, we will begin work to modernize the Multiculturalism Act, we will develop a government-wide strategy for attracting and supporting major events in the province and a trail strategy that ensures our citizens have ample opportunities for walking and hiking on our robust provincial trail system. We will staff a new Mi'kmaq cultural liaison position to facilitate connections between government and Mi'kmaq artists, crafters, creators and organizations. These are just a few examples of work we will undertake this year.

Our work at CCH and the investments we make not only help to build strong, vibrant and healthy communities, they also support the cultural sector and the creative economy. Our research tells us that culture is an economic driver. It contributes almost \$1 billion to Nova Scotia's GDP, and nearly 14,000 Nova Scotians work in our culture sector. There is tremendous opportunity for growth, especially in the area of exports.

Almost 70 per cent of CCH's budget is invested directly in Nova Scotia communities through our various programs and services. Through these investments we are touching and benefiting a large percentage of Nova Scotians. For example, we invest in organizations like Hope Blooms. This year we were proud to support this organization which invests in vulnerable and at-risk youth to help them install an aquaponic system in their greenhouse. This new system means they can diversify their work by growing fresh fish that is then used as food for the local community.

Our investment in Hope Blooms is an excellent representation of all our work. Work that invests in communities, making them stronger and more self-sufficient. Work that empowers our youth and helps them develop skills and experience that will benefit Nova Scotia for generations to come.

We work with and support community organizations in every corner of the province to ensure they have the resources they need to change lives. Together, we are making a direct investment of almost \$60 million in the people and communities of Nova Scotia, and we know that our investments are making a difference in the lives of Nova Scotians and are contributing to strengthening our economy.

I would like to mention a few new programs that were introduced this year that help to support diversity and social equity. The \$600,000 Building Vibrant Communities Grant program provides community-based organizations that are working to reduce the cycle of poverty with access to funding to build on their existing efforts and implement new innovative approaches.

Another important investment supports the Accessibility Act. We recently launched the \$1 million Small Business ACCESS-Ability Program, which provides cost-shared grants to small businesses to help them make their premises more accessible to Nova Scotians with disabilities.

Another program I am proud of is the new Screenwriters Development Fund. It was designed to support local writers and producers and encourage gender parity and diversity in our film and television industry.

I am proud to serve as the Deputy Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. Every day, I witness first-hand the passion and commitment of the CCH staff and the hundreds of community organizations we work with - we share a common vision. We all want our communities to be strong, healthy, empowered, and vibrant. We want a strong culture sector and creative economy. We all want to ensure our communities are empowered to develop community-based solutions and initiatives that best meet their needs.

I am fortunate that every day I work for a department and with people who are making a profound difference for Nova Scotians. With that, I would be pleased to take your questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Taweel. We'll move to Ms. Adams. You have 20 minutes.

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Ms. Taweel, for your report. I do want to commend your department. I know that everyone that I talk to around the province is really dependent on those grants to get some of the things done in their communities that would not otherwise be there. You can see the evidence around the province with all of the activities that go on over the year.

I'm wondering, first, if you could give me an overview. I have had a look at where all the grants are allocated. Can you give me a sense of how they spread out by region

around the province? In other words, is it done by constituency? How does that spread out around the province?

MS. TAWHEEL: By and large, our grants are fairly distributed from one end of the province to the other. One of the criteria is not sort of equal dispersion, if you will, across every region of the province. Projects are assessed on their merit and on community need against criteria that are set within the grant programs that we administer.

One notable exception, however, would be the Canada 150 Forward Fund, which you would all be very familiar with, I'm sure. Because of the nature of the celebration of Canada 150, we intentionally set out to make sure that there was representation in every region of the province so that every region had the opportunity to celebrate and mark the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

MS. ADAMS: The process for applying for the various grants was going to move to be online. I'm wondering how online applications compare to in-writing hard copy applications - the comparison of the percentage.

MS. TAWHEEL: I'm not sure if I can give you the exact percentage, but what I can tell you is that we really do have a blend.

While many of our application forms are online and available for applicants to access, we strongly recommend that applicants work with our program officers first. Our approach is very much a blend of the personal touch along with - where we can streamline the application process for both the applicant and the assessor on the departmental side, we try to do that.

I think the success of a lot of our programs relates to the personal touch that our staff have and try to have with every applicant that comes through the door, both at the beginning when there's just a germ of an idea and also throughout the process to kind of demystify it a little bit. We have tried to provide the grant criteria in as plain language as possible, but I fully recognize that it can be daunting for a group of volunteers for example to try to navigate a complicated system. We try to assist as much as possible with that, and in the coming year, our plan is to try to do even more of that.

MS. ADAMS: There were - I'll use my constituency as an example - four different groups that had applied for funding for the sustainability grant and they were all denied that particular grant, but they weren't given a reason. They were just advised that they weren't given the grant. I'm just wondering - both for their sake as well as for yours - if there is a process in place to let people know why their grants weren't accepted.

I do know that one of the complaints that I hear - and again maybe it's just my area - is that it takes a fair amount of literacy to fill out one of those grant applications, and not everybody has the ability to do that or the knowledge as to how to do it. I'm just wondering

if you can comment on what feedback you give to the grant applicants, especially when they're denied.

MS. TAWHEEL: When a grant is denied, it's always unfortunate because we know regardless of what the project is, the group will have invested their heart and soul in applying for that funding, largely on their own time in large measure.

When they receive notification that they have not received funding, there is typically - and I will look into the ones that you've referenced - there is an offer to have a conversation to follow up. In instances where grant applications are unsuccessful, we do make that offer because it might be slight tweaking of that project that could see it be successful the next time it applies.

Further to that, we want to always acknowledge the effort and the commitment that community groups are putting forward to try to make their communities better. We work very hard so that it's not just kind of a cold letter that is returned. I will look into these ones and make sure that there is follow-up if there hasn't been any follow-up.

MS. ADAMS: I appreciate that very much because I know in these instances - I called about one particular grant that our Lions Club had put in and I did get some of the feedback verbally and so was able to encourage the other groups that didn't get the grant to call in for an explanation.

I think it would be helpful though if they got something in writing that said, here are our criteria - and I know that you have a scoring system, whether it's formal or not - I'm not saying you want to tell people how they ranked but the area of weakness that they had.

I'm also wondering, how many of the grants that are given out each year are recurring grants? In other words, the same people get the same grant. Is there an effort to ensure that doesn't happen or that it does? How does that work?

MS. TAWHEEL: Some organizations do receive ongoing annual operating funding. Those would be recurring investments that are made on an ongoing basis. I would say we see new clients all the time. There are a number of reasons for that. One is that we try to be responsive to what we see in terms of need at the community level and at the sector level, which is why we just created the Culture Innovation Fund, for example - why the Screen Writers Development Fund was created, for example - and others that I referenced in my opening remarks. We try to make sure that we spread the reach-out as much as possible.

To that end - and back to your first question about online versus in-person, we have taken extraordinary steps - and we use the Canada 150 Fund as a starting off point for that - because we wanted to have new applicants and we wanted to make sure that we reached

as many regions of the province as possible, we did some extraordinary things that we don't normally do.

So, for example, we went to African Nova Scotian communities and we put information in church bulletins and we posted things on community bulletin boards. (Interruption) It fits with the culture theme. (Laughter) So we do want to make sure that we are seeing new applicants and our program officers - we do have program officers, regional representatives, that are located in regions across the province, their work is about talking to new community groups, engaging new groups, making sure that our reach extends as far as possible.

In the year ahead, per one of the actions in the Culture Action Plan, we will be taking a good look at our grant programs. To one of your earlier questions around literacy, we will be looking at even the language in those grant programs. We offer 34 programs - that's a lot of doors for people to try to navigate. We recognize that and our work in the year ahead will include looking at - not changing the number of programs we have available but trying to streamline the doors that people have to walk through and making sure there's a person who helps them walk through that door, versus just leaving it to an online application, for example.

[9:15 a.m.]

MS. ADAMS: Thank you for that. I wonder how many languages the application form comes in.

MS. TAWHEEL: That's a good question. I believe they are available in English and French, but I will certainly check that to make sure that it is universal. I can say that we've certainly been making efforts around translating into other languages. Our Culture Action Plan, the Executive Summary, was translated into five different languages and the full Culture Action Plan was translated into English, French, and Mi'kmaq, so we are making efforts where possible to make sure that our materials are as accessible as they can be. There's more work we can do in that area and certainly we'll try to do that in the year ahead.

MS. ADAMS: I wonder if you can tell me - there was a mention of Connect.ca, which was going to be put on the website that would connect some sporting events. I went to that site but it's not working so I'm just wondering, what happened with that?

MS. TAWHEEL: I'll ask Mr. Greenlaw to respond to that question.

MR. BILL GREENLAW: Connect.ca is broken up into the six regions of the province. It has been very successful in the highland region in connecting communities to activities in sport and recreation in the area. It's a community-led project so we have provided initial seed funding for those projects.



The one area that we're still working on in getting a Connect-type version up is in HRM, so HRM does not have a Connect.ca program. HRM is working on a new database to have a seamless portal for recreation and sport activities in HRM, plus the ability, I believe, to pay for programming and register for programming. They're still working on that database so perhaps that's why it's not working yet.

MS. ADAMS: Thank you. I'm looking at the Accountability Report for the department for 2016-17, on Page 5. It's looking at the budget for Culture and Heritage Development. Last year it was \$34 million and that's doubled from what it was the year before. I'm just wondering, what accounts for that doubling of the expenses?

MS. TAWHEEL: The increase in that particular area of the department was due to infrastructure investments.

MS. ADAMS: Thanks, and the same thing for Communities, Sport and Recreation. The year before it was \$1 million and then last year it was \$17 million. What accounts for that difference?

MS. TAWHEEL: In that year, the Sport and Recreation Division transferred from the Department of Health and Wellness to Communities, Culture and Heritage, so you would see an increase in both FTEs and also in budget.

MS. ADAMS: Does that account for the 21 extra FTEs?

MS. TAWHEEL: Yes.

MS. ADAMS: Okay, great, thank you. Under Policy and Corporate Services, that seems to be a new expense. What is that for?

MS. TAWHEEL: Let me refer to my numbers. Could you tell me which year you're looking at?

MS. ADAMS: I'm looking at 2016-17.

MS. TAWHEEL: Perhaps what you're seeing is that that division was renamed. It was called the Secretariat and it was renamed to better reflect the work of Policy and Corporate Services.

MS. ADAMS: Going down that same category there, it says that the Office of Acadian Affairs, African Nova Scotian Affairs, and Gaelic Affairs - the budgets there are less than they were the year before. I'm wondering, is that less because there were fewer applicants or monies were diverted to different things?

MS. TAWHEEL: The numbers that I have actually reflect that they are higher - the offices are just slightly higher, and it would be due to wage adjustments.

MS. ADAMS: Of course under the total department expenses, expenditures were \$16.236 million, or 19 per cent, higher than the budget. I'm just wondering what accounts for that 20 per cent budget increase.

MS. TAWHEEL: Those were additional infrastructure investments that were made across the province. Back to your earlier question about the increase in Culture and Heritage Development, that is where most of that investment was captured, in that division. That accounts for that increase.

MS. ADAMS: I'm wondering, when you look at the indicators of success and how you evaluate success, what are your strongest indicators of success?

MS. TAWHEEL: That's a great question. I think it really does vary across all of the programs that we offer. Each of the programs do have their own set criteria. Generally, however, the Culture Action Plan is our kind of guiding document.

As I said in opening remarks, we are trying to increase community cohesion and grow the creative and culture sector. That happens in a variety of different ways. A small project that is putting on, say, a small event at the community level - the indicators of success for that event might be slightly different than, say, a large-scale province-wide event that we're hosting. At the heart of all of those investments is a desire to support our communities and ensure that we are creating a climate for success at the community level.

MS. ADAMS: I'm wondering what percentage of the grants went to HRM. Do you have any idea? That's about half our population.

MS. TAWHEEL: I don't have a percentage with me, but I can certainly get that for you.

MS. ADAMS: I'm wondering about the Culture Action Plan in terms of a reference here that it's going to commit to expanding some of the STEAM programs - the writers in the schools, the professional artists in the schools, and the performers - to showcase drama, music, and dance. It mentions that you're going to increase and expand those programs, which I'm assuming means increased funding. I'm wondering, is the department going to have a larger budget moving forward, or are they going to cut back in other ways?

MS. TAWHEEL: Those programs, we will work in collaboration with our colleagues in Education and Early Childhood Development on. The funding to expand those programs will rest with that department.

The unique feature I think of the Culture Action Plan is that it truly is a government-wide plan. There are 60 actions in that plan, and they are comprised of actions that will be led or supported by Communities, Culture and Heritage. While we have, I guess, the privilege of kind of holding that plan, we are not the owners of that plan, if you will. It is a government-wide plan. So there are times when we are part of a team, and there are other times when we will lead the effort. This is an example of where the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will lead efforts in that area.

MS. ADAMS: The next section talks about supporting the integration of Nova Scotia culture in the school curriculum and positioning Communities, Culture and Heritage sites as excellent resources for learning. I'm wondering how your department has been impacted by the introduction of pre-Primary, because now we have kids who are younger, as well as the upcoming changes to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. I'm wondering how that's going to impact your department.

MS. TAWHEEL: What I would say is that the introduction of pre-Primary opens up another avenue for us, for example, to allow our publishers to engage more with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in providing resources for pre-Primary learners and also right through school curriculum. We work very collaboratively with our colleagues in Education and Early Childhood Development and will support them through any transition, always ensuring that the goals of the Culture Action Plan are upheld. They are actions that have been committed to, and I have every confidence that we'll deliver on those actions.

MS. ADAMS: In the same report on Page 11, it talks about "Pursue e-commerce other opportunities in CCH facilities and support the buy local movement." I'm just wondering if you have any sense on whether we are moving in the right direction in terms of getting Nova Scotians to buy local.

MS. TAWHEEL: I would say yes. We have a very robust Select Nova Scotia campaign, if you will, or branding effort. In a former life, when I worked with Communications Nova Scotia, we worked very successfully with Agriculture to integrate a broader buy local theme into the very important work Select Nova Scotia was already doing.

Through the efforts of the Culture Action Plan, we will again support the Select Nova Scotia branch to ensure that craft and cultural product are sort of at the forefront, to help encourage that buy local movement. Both the other departments that are involved - Communications Nova Scotia and Agriculture - could provide you with more direct measures, I would suggest, but we are moving the needle from a buy local perspective.

MS. ADAMS: On Page 12, there is talk about completing the library funding review. I'm just wondering if you know of any new libraries that are planned around the province.

MS. TAWHEEL: I'm not aware of any new libraries, no, and we are actively involved in a library funding review at present.

MS. ADAMS: I know that my community itself - Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage - doesn't have any library but there's talk about a vending machine that might come to the school, for that as an opportunity, and we have free books in my office as well. I'm wondering whether that's a new avenue you are following around the province or whether it's just a local thing that they are working on.

MS. TAWHEEL: Libraries are very good at being responsive and being innovative and approaching the challenge that is present in their communities very creatively. I would say that's one example of a very creative option to make sure that we get books into the hands of those who would like to have them.

The online access to books is also growing exponentially and has really opened up kind of the field, if you will, in terms of what Nova Scotians can access online, in terms of downloading books as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, time has expired. We'll move to the NDP caucus and Ms. Roberts.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: We've heard from arts organizations that the amount allocated for operational funding has been frozen since 2010. Can you confirm that and tell us when the last increase to operational funding was and by how much?

MS. TAWHEEL: That is correct, there has not been an increase to operational funding since 2010. I would say that operational funding is but one way that we support arts organizations. As I'm sure you are aware, there is also a myriad of other program options available, both administered through Arts Nova Scotia proper, if you will, but also through CCH generally.

The Culture Innovation Fund would be an example, the Creative Industries Fund would be another example. Virtually any of the programs that CCH has available are open to all of those organizations to ensure they do have other avenues to access funding.

MS. ROBERTS: According to the Arts Nova Scotia website, the same 27 arts organizations have received operational funding for the last two years. Can you tell us how many years it has been the same 27 organizations?

MS. TAWHEEL: I'm not sure I can provide you with that exact number. I'll have to look into that for you. I can certainly follow up on that for you.

MS. ROBERTS: I do appreciate what you said about other funds being available to organizations, various grant opportunities. What is the department's view, though, on increasing operational support funding, including to new organizations?

When I think about the arts and about creativity, there is something about here's a pot of money to allow you to do your work, which is sort of almost by its nature more free and more encouraging of creativity. That versus, okay, please propose in advance, these are the different things that I am going to hit and I am going to try to accomplish these outcomes. To me that seems a bit at odds, frankly, with the creation of art.

[9:30 a.m.]

MS. TAWHEEL: At present, our operating funding is stable for arts organizations. We have no planned increases in the immediate future. I recognize absolutely that there is a challenge that many organizations - not just arts organizations but other cultural organizations - face from an operating perspective. Part of our mandate is to work with organizations to help put them on a path to sustainability so that they are not solely reliant on the operational funding that comes through Communities, Culture and Heritage and to look at other opportunities, say export opportunities, for example, or other avenues that could be available to them.

I certainly recognize - as per some of the earlier questions - that applying for other funding can be challenging when you are trying to create and support your membership, for example, in a particular arts organization. That's why we do work very collaboratively and are always open to working collaboratively to look at what the potential solutions are that could help support an organization to advance an idea or to get to the next level, if you will.

While we have no planned operational increases - and I would say a lot of pressure on the funds that we have available - I certainly do respect and appreciate the challenge. We're very open to working collaboratively to try to address that in other ways.

MS. ROBERTS: Thank you for the answer. I would just note that many organizations that are really the backbone of arts communities are chronically underfunded. Exporting is possible at a certain level, but arts is about connecting with individuals and with communities, and those individuals and communities are here. So I would just point out that \$1 million more in funding could translate into \$35,000 increases for each of the organizations that already receive funding and would still leave room for operational funding for more organizations. It does seem like that could have a significant positive impact.

Just a further note that we did an informal survey of small and medium-sized theatre companies around Halifax and found that the executive directors were making at most \$40,000 a year before taxes, and many were making less. So while there is a lot of talk

about the economic engine the arts and creative industries is or are for Nova Scotia - that's challenging if the artists and creators are not making a living wage. I don't know if you have any further comment or what advice you would have for the arts community to maybe lobby for a bit of a relationship with the province.

MS. TAWHEEL: I would say generally we have a very good relationship with the arts community and it's one that we really do value. The challenges that you have laid out, those are legitimate challenges, so I'm not going to refute those challenges. Absolutely they are legitimate.

I guess I would offer that our department is a resource and we continue to advocate for and support creativity and culture in our community and do see the value - notwithstanding the other pressures that we have and the other competing demands - so in no way to diminish some of the challenges that your informal survey may have elicited. We are very open to having those conversations and I would continue to make that offer.

MS. ROBERTS: The community I represent - the north end of Halifax, Halifax Needham - has been an arts hotbed for many, many years, and it's also an area where their property values have increased a lot, where there is a lot of development of buildings, and so artists are being displaced by real estate development. Many artists who left the Bloomfield Centre more than a decade ago have since been kicked out of a series of other studio spaces and Wonder'neath, which is an amazing art studio, which is also very accessible and welcoming for diverse communities is rent insecure. They have a lease to 2019 and that building will one day come down.

I'm wondering what role the department plays in terms of real art infrastructure - not annual funding, but art infrastructure. I think also of The Bus Stop Theatre, which every small theatre company in Halifax relies on as the only space where you can do a full technical show with good sound and lighting, yet can only seat about 60 people and is booked all the time and has had various issues with the building itself.

MS. TAWHEEL: As you would be aware, there are a suite of programs that are available through Arts Nova Scotia. From an infrastructure perspective, the department does support infrastructure investments at the community level, and we work with organizations all the time to advance their aspirations around infrastructure - be it an arts infrastructure or recreation infrastructure.

There are avenues that the department does support in terms of infrastructure investments. It would depend on the specifics of the project, what they're trying to advance, their ability to lever other partners, et cetera, so it really would be on kind of a case-by-case basis. But again, very happy to have the conversation and recognize there need to be spaces for this art to be seen and absolutely enjoyed by the community within which it's created.

MS. ROBERTS: I note that in other Maritime cities there is significant investment that is happening - in the Aberdeen Cultural Centre for example in Moncton, the Charlotte Street School in Fredericton. We haven't had something like that in Halifax - actually in Cape Breton as well, with Holy Angels?

I think Halifax is overdue. I'm wondering if you can comment at all on the factors that are missing for a project to actually address the shortage of art creation space and art performance space?

MS. TAWHEEL: You may be familiar with the Culture Link project that is being worked on at present. CCH did provide some seed funding to the feasibility study around that project. We're still waiting for the results of that feasibility study. I think Culture Link speaks to the issue you're raising - the need for additional performance space, for example, on the peninsula, if you will. If that project proceeds, I think that will certainly help to close that gap.

MS. ROBERTS: I certainly have had the experience at the community level of working with one of your officers - I'm not sure if I'm getting the title right - on recreation funding, partnering with the municipality. I think those relationships between CCH staff with the municipality are very well developed, in recreation at least. They know how to work together with the different pots of money to make projects happen. I hope to see evidence that that can happen in the arts realm as well.

Just moving on, in terms of film and television, I know that film and television falls under the Department of Business, not under CCH, but there are many connections. Some of those folks who are making less than a living wage as artists have particularly been hurt by the loss of the film and television tax credit. What impacts has your department observed from that change in how film and television production is funded in Nova Scotia?

MS. TAWHEEL: As you reference, our role is different than NSBI's role. Our role at Communities, Culture and Heritage is fundamentally about supporting the development of local content in the film and television sector and to foster that long-term stability and growth by seeding some of that early work. That's why we've created the Screenwriters Development Fund, for example, to encourage the creation of more local content. Our role is different from NSBI, who are quite export-focused, if you will. They're on a much different level.

We do have a lot of funding options available to the film and television sector. Similar to the more general arts question, many of our programs are open or available - all of our programs are available. Not all of them would probably be of interest to the sector to help them advance their goals but there is no door that's really closed to that sector. They can access the Creative Industries Fund, they can access the emerging artists fund, they can access the new Screenwriters Development Fund, which I should add was designed in

collaboration with the sector with a goal, as I referenced earlier, of increasing diversity and gender parity in that particular area of the creative economy.

Additionally, we provide operational funding to Screen Nova Scotia to ensure that the sector has a professional body to represent it to ensure there are professional development opportunities and to support, I guess, the ongoing growth and development of the sector.

MS. ROBERTS: Have you noticed, though, the impact of the change in terms of the level of activity happening in the broader sector?

MS. TAWHEEL: I would say that from the applications we receive, our perspective from Communities, Culture and Heritage would be that our relationships are very strong with the sectors. The applications we receive continue to be high, and we have ongoing and very productive dialogue with Screen Nova Scotia on the viability of the current and future sector. I would suggest that perhaps NSBI could provide you with details on how the fund is working from their perspective.

MS. ROBERTS: I was glad to see in the Culture Action Plan priority placed on artistic production within diverse communities, especially Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities. How is the department increasing the diversity of grant recipients?

MS. TAWHEEL: In my earlier comments, I referenced the creation of a new Mi'kmaq cultural liaison position for example. That's one example of how we will try to reach into and create more of a liaison between the programs that CCH offers and the Mi'kmaq community for example.

With regard to the African Nova Scotian community, we have undertaken a number of steps to try to engage more proactively with the African Nova Scotian community, both on arts-related projects and also in other community development-related projects.

In the coming year, as we look at our grant programs, one of the particular areas of focus that we will be putting on our review of who we're reaching is that diversity and equity lens. I think we do quite a good job of reaching out across the province and of building those relationships that you spoke of earlier. But we do need to make sure that every community in the province is represented and that we see those applications coming forward, be they for arts programming or any of our other grant programming offerings that we have. Looking at how we reach out to those communities is really important.

We also have specific programs that target, for example, the Mi'kmaq community - the Mi'kmaq Cultural Activities Program, which is a \$100,000 program and very well subscribed to. As well, we have the Diversity and Community Capacity Fund, which reaches specifically into typically under-represented or marginalized groups and encourages them to apply to support any project idea that they might want to bring forward.



I would say, as I close off this response, that there's much more work that we can and will be doing in the year ahead. It will be relationship-based and also looking at what other levers are available to us to make sure that communities do know how to navigate the system and that we're providing as much support, that kind of personal touch, if you will, as we possibly can.

MS. ROBERTS: Have you looked at the granting juries from that diversity lens? Are marginalized communities represented on the granting juries where they are used to allocate grants?

MS. TAWHEEL: Yes, they are. If I could just add, we also oversee a number of agencies, boards, and commissions. We are also taking steps through the leadership of the Executive Council Office to look at agencies, boards, and commissions across the board, if you will, to make sure that we increase diversity, strive for gender parity, et cetera, on all of those agencies, boards, and commissions.

MS. ROBERTS: Going back to the earlier conversation about operational funding and the fact that both the pie has not grown and it has been sliced up the same way for a number of years, is your department concerned that our province's ability to support creativity and innovation is limited if new arts organizations, possibly coming from marginalized communities, cannot access operational funding?

MS. TAWHEEL: I would say that we make every effort to provide support where and how we can in the most appropriate fashion possible. If a new organization is established and they have a viable mandate, and they're reaching a community in a progressive and innovative way, we want to talk to those organizations, and we will try our best to figure out a way to support that organization. It may not be exactly as they may have envisioned it when they walk through the door, but we will do all we can to support those organizations.

[9:45 a.m.]

I think we have been very responsive to what we are seeing in terms of need within the community. That is why we've created the Culture Innovation Fund. It's a \$1.5 million fund that is looking to use creativity and innovation in new ways to incent different partnerships, perhaps. Sometimes people think of innovation just as technology and it's not that at all. It's about approaching things that we've always done in a different way, using different partnerships. I would suggest that the creative community has done that for a very long time. This fund can provide them with an opportunity to have some of that funding supported.

We also have the Creative Industries Fund that supports artists; that has only been in place for a couple of years. To your earlier point, some organizations are not export-ready, and some are. The Creative Industries Fund is a viable option for them. We try to

be responsive. Part of our review in the coming year of the grant programs that we are offering - and, importantly, how they're accessed - will include looking at whether there are gaps, and what we need to consider as we look at the grant options that we have available for arts organizations and other cultural organizations in the province.

MS. ROBERTS: I want to move just briefly to libraries. We were really disheartened in the NDP caucus to see that the Cumberland County public library is having to cut their hours this summer because of stagnant funding from the province. I have to say I'm not clear, as I look at municipal libraries across the province, which part of them - how much municipal funding there is for libraries, but I have been so impressed by new libraries that have been built in places like Hantsport and Tatamagouche, I think, of specifically beautiful, real community hub spaces, but then the hours are limited by operational funding.

I'm wondering if your department is taking any measures to try to prevent libraries from having to make those really hard choices of cutting hours. It sounds like they've cut them as finely as they can but with no other recourse.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. We'll have to stop the questioning there. We will move to the Liberal caucus and Mr. Maguire.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'll let you answer that question.

MS. TAWHEEL: Library funding has been held stable at \$14.4 million annually for the last number of years. Over the last decade, libraries have had a 34 per cent increase in their funding, but they are facing challenges, absolutely.

The library funding model is a per capita funding model, which - all of us in this room are certainly aware of the challenges that a per capita funding model presents in a province where we are seeing demographic shifts. We are working collaboratively with library boards and chief librarians now to take a good look at the core services that libraries provide from one end of the province to the other, as well as the funding model that supports libraries.

I can tell you and your colleague that libraries will be receiving an additional sum of money within this fiscal year - \$474,000. They received word of that yesterday. That will alleviate some of the pressures and hopefully will alleviate the pressure that Cumberland, in particular, was facing. It will allow us to have time to complete the core services review. We anticipate in the next number of months that work will be done.

I want to stress that from the department's perspective, we see libraries as an integral part of our communities from one end of the province to the other. We value the relationship that we have with those libraries.

I think we've reached a point where, because of the demographic changes and the changing demands and expectations of patrons of libraries, we do have an opportunity to look at both the funding model and the core services that Nova Scotians should expect, but also those other services that are more community-specific and perhaps don't need to be universally applied across the system.

I think we have an opportunity to really take a good look at what these libraries can be now and in the future and to make sure we have a funding model that supports that and that is reviewed on a regular cycle, to take a look at what those needs are, if libraries are meeting those needs, and if they are funded to do so.

MR. MAGUIRE: You said they will be receiving an additional \$474,000. Is this the first time they have received an additional amount over the last few years?

MS. TAWHEEL: Last year they received the exact same amount of funding and approached the department for the same amount of money - \$474,000 - this fiscal year to allow the core services review to be completed.

MR. MAGUIRE: So over the last few years, they've received an additional \$1 million. That money goes toward what?

MS. TAWHEEL: The money is distributed evenly. The money is not distributed on a per capita basis, in terms of that additional funding. It is distributed evenly across the nine boards, so it represents just under \$53,000 per board. They can use those funds to alleviate their operational pressures in the most appropriate way that they see fit.

MR. MAGUIRE: Is it fair to say that the group of librarians and libraries have been very receptive to this money?

MS. TAWHEEL: Yes.

MR. MAGUIRE: Nobody turns down additional money.

I kind of want to shift gears a little bit and we just went through the second annual Heritage Day. One of the things I heard, and obviously this was in honour of Mona Louise Parsons, and I'm sure that everybody here knows who she was, lived an exceptional life and has an exceptional story. One of the things I heard was, I am so happy to have Family Day, I'm so happy, so I think there was a bit of confusion.

What is the department doing when they honour such important Nova Scotians? I think Nova Scotians who, for one reason or another, tend to fly under the radar and the general public do not know of their impact, not just on this province but on the world, so what are you doing to encourage people to find out about Mona and the future people we will be honouring in regard to Heritage Day - not Family Day, Heritage Day?

MS. TAWHEEL: Thank you for the question. Heritage Day absolutely is a great opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge people like Mona Parsons, whose story lots of Nova Scotians would not know. It underscores one of the fundamental tenets of the Culture Action Plan, which is we have a great story to tell that goes back centuries and we need to be telling those stories and ensuring that we are honouring those Nova Scotians who have made significant contributions both in this province but also internationally, on the world stage, if you will.

This year, in terms of supporting Heritage Day, there were a number of events that took place across the province. Some communities applied for funding to support events. We also had information available online. There was information distributed across communities - fact sheets about Mona Parsons, and activities that were taking place at the community level. I would say that for the first time personally, I actually saw information about Mona Parsons in coffee shops. I saw information further afield, if you will, than I had seen perhaps in earlier Heritage Days.

We will continue to support Heritage Day and to look for opportunities to tell those important stories and to promote the culture and heritage, that is what this province is all about.

MR. MAGUIRE: If I could make a suggestion and you can tell me to pound sand if you want, but one of the things that I think would be useful - a lot of MLAs put on Heritage Day events, so next year it may be useful to have someone from your department reach out to them with material. We printed off our own information packages and kind of had them at our event but it would be kind of neat to have something like that that MLAs of all different stripes can actually put out there so that when people walk into, whether it's bowling or ice-skating or a picnic or whatever people did, the information is on hand, and the public can actually have a conversation around these people.

MS. TAWHEEL: I think that's a great idea, absolutely. Beyond Heritage Day, a lot of what the department does - we do need to get more information out into constituency offices as one method of making sure that we reach constituents. All of our grant programs, for example, should be at the fingertips of every MLA so that those community groups have someone else in addition to our staff helping them navigate the system.

We certainly do hear from MLAs right across the province with questions. Sometimes the call comes right in at the program level, and sometimes it comes to me, asking really great questions about how they can best support their community groups in terms of navigating the system. Be it Heritage Day or any of the other programs we have available, working with MLAs across the province is a really important tool that we can use.

MR. MAGUIRE: The community groups in my communities, like the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association and the Long Lake Provincial Park Association, have

dealt directly with your departments. In the Loop was another one where we were lucky enough to have Spryfield chosen for the Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award.

Personally, when I reach out to those groups afterwards to get feedback, it's always positive. Even ones that did not receive the grant have always received some type of feedback from your department on why their application was not accepted and what changes they can make in the future to possibly bump that up for consideration. I don't interfere. Once those grants are applied for, it's up to your department to make those decisions. Once the money is given to these organizations, it's up to the organizations to spend that money as they have outlined in their application.

My question to you and your department is, what do you do once the money is in the hands of the organizations to ensure that that money is being spent properly?

MS. TAWHEEL: Right from the very beginning, when community groups apply for funding, there is a program officer who is assigned, who works on that particular grant program or that particular file. That individual, and the team that works with them, is tasked not just with evaluating the proposal but also with taking a good, hard look at what measures are included in the proposal, how we would know if we have been successful, and what the process will be as this unfolds.

When applications are successful, a letter is received by the community organization that indicates clearly that they must maintain accurate records, that they can be subject to an audit at the discretion of the provincial government, and also that their program officer will be in touch with them along the way. With some of our infrastructure programs - Recreation Facility Development Grants, for example - there is a 10 per cent holdback so that we can make sure that the work has actually been completed as scoped out.

Groups are not able to change the scope of their project once they have been awarded funding for a particularly defined project without working with the department first. There are times where things change, and a project may need to be modified. That can't be undertaken kind of on the fly. It needs to be undertaken in collaboration.

To underscore some of the earlier points that I made, relationships are at the heart of all of what we do. At the end or completion of a project, if for some reason the group has not expended all of the funds, the onus is on the group as well to return any surplus funds to government, to the department. That money is then redeployed to fund other projects.

MR. MAGUIRE: Does it happen very often?

MS. TAWHEEL: Not often. It does happen sometimes, but it doesn't happen often because of the work that program officers do with organizations to properly scope their

projects. A community group may come in thinking that a particular project they want to undertake will only cost \$1,500 when experience will say that's actually a \$3,000 project, or the reverse. We work with them to properly scope the project and talk to them about examples of similar projects. We can usually find a commonality somewhere else, to help guide how they scope that project.

MR. MAGUIRE: When it comes to Communities, Culture and Heritage and support, we talk a lot about grants and money - that tends to come up quite a bit. What other support services are you offering outside of financial money, basically? What other services are you providing to, say, a new community group that is looking to take on a large project or even a small project? Is it just about money in your department?

MS. TAWHEEL: No, it's absolutely not just about money. In fact some of the other services we provide I would argue are at times more important than money, so advice and guidance in terms of if a project is actually feasible or not, before a community group invests - to a member's question earlier - before they invest their heart and soul in advancing a project, we can provide them with advice on perhaps how to shape that project, or sometimes that the project is not actually viable and there needs to be kind of going back to the drawing board on the project.

The other support we can provide are things like board governance and helping organizations figure out how to properly structure themselves for success. A lot of times these boards are volunteer in nature and you have individuals coming together with the best of intent and perhaps very little experience in terms of managing a project, how to actually convene meetings, how to manage funds. We want to make sure those groups are set up for success, how they handle disputes if there are any disputes on the board?

Sometimes organizations run into trouble because they have not clearly articulated how they are going to work together, or they don't have a good cross-section of membership on their boards, for example. I think those things are sometimes worth more than money.

When I talk about money as well, I think it is important to note that when we invest in projects, an investment as small as \$500 can sometimes have a very significant impact at the community level and deserves the relationship. The work that goes into advancing that \$500 application, from the perspective of Communities, Culture and Heritage, is as important as some of those million dollar investments that we're making. It's the totality of all of those investments and all of those conversations and all of those relationships that will ultimately help us achieve the goals of the department.

MR. MAGUIRE: I want to talk quickly about this Screen Writers Development Fund. Was that fund created in consultation with NSBI and the industry, or was it something that your department thought of and developed on their own?

MS. TAWHEEL: It was created in consultation with the industry to meet a very particular need in the industry. We work with our colleagues in every department and agency across government. NSBI was certainly aware of the creation of the fund. It was very important for us to work with industry to create that fund, to make sure it was meeting that need.

We know that we need to support the industry at kind of the grassroots level, if you will. The more stories and scripts and things that we can have written by Nova Scotia writers, the greater the odds of success of having those productions reach that kind of higher level. We need to seed the industry at that level. A good story begets a good film or a good play so we want to support that.

MR. MAGUIRE: So this was the first year for that fund. What kind of feedback did you have from the applicants? Also, was it a positive response from the industry in regard to applications?

MS. TAWHEEL: It was a positive response in terms of applications. The fund launched in January and we have already fully awarded the fund. We had a lot of response and it was very positive. I would say that the industry has responded well.

The criteria of the fund is that we contribute 50 cent dollars, so it is important for the industry to also be contributing funds for advancing these scripts or whatever the written work might be.

In addition to the Screenwriters Development Fund we do, as I mentioned earlier, also support Screen Nova Scotia, their operational funding. We work very collaboratively with Screen Nova Scotia that represents the industry.

MR. MAGUIRE: Did you say you support their operational funding?

MS. TAWHEEL: We provide operational funding to Screen Nova Scotia, yes.

MR. MAGUIRE: Is it possible to ask how much?

MS. TAWHEEL: It's \$238,000 annually. The Screenwriters Development Fund is \$262,000.

MR. MAGUIRE: Excuse me for not knowing the answer to this question, but the Screenwriters Development Fund - are they also eligible for the film tax credit?

MS. TAWHEEL: It would depend. The people who are applying to the Screenwriters Development Fund are probably not at the level - they're not the companies, if you will, the larger producers that would be applying to the NSBI fund. I couldn't say definitively if

some of those writers might have interests in other areas, but the Screenwriters Development Fund is targeted to . . .

MR. MAGUIRE: So this is the grassroots, like you said, and this is usually people on a smaller scale getting into the industry and maybe students and NSCAD graduates, et cetera.

MS. TAWHEEL: It could be those or it could be others who are perhaps more established, but have a good idea of a script that they're trying to develop. It's to support the telling of Nova Scotia stories. It also has a diversity and gender parity lens on the fund. That was a discussion point as well with the industry that agree that like other industries we need to be looking to be a little more diverse to increase gender parity in the sector and to try to incent that in some way.

MR. MAGUIRE: I'm glad you mentioned that. I was unaware of that too. I think that these funds should have a gender and a cultural lens on them so that those stories don't go untold, so I'm actually quite happy that you do that.

The last question that I want to dig into is trails. Everybody wants a trail. Everybody wants funding for trails. We were able to leverage a sizeable amount from your department into a huge private investment. My question is, how do you keep up with the demand from the communities across Nova Scotia and how many applications? Is it overwhelming, the amount of applications you're receiving on trails? What is the criteria if I wanted to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. The time has expired. Perhaps that can be answered in the next round.

We'll move back to the PC caucus. Ms. Adams, you have 12 minutes.

MS. ADAMS: Thank you. I'm going to ask you to answer that question, if you would.

MS. TAWHEEL: Such a friendly group. From a trails perspective, there certainly is demand across the province. With the healthy active living component of our mandate, certainly we want to support as much trail development, maintenance, connection as we possibly can.

In this past year, we did have an additional \$1 million investment in trails, and that helped to connect some trails that require connection to complete the Trans Canada Trail and to try to shore up some of those trails to ensure that we have greater connection with our trail system.

So again, that \$1 million investment connected several trails across the province. We know that trails do enhance quality of life, and they're another form of connection. As



we look at making sure that our communities are healthy, vibrant, we need to make sure that we are supporting trails. There are a number of programs that are available. In addition to the additional \$1 million investment that was made this year, we do offer engineering assistance to trails, so if groups have an interest in making change to trails or new trails, there is an Engineering Assistance Grant Program, a Trail Maintenance Program, Community Trails Leadership Fund. We do have a dedicated program consultant who works with communities. His job is trails.

MS. ADAMS: I was looking at the economic Culture Satellite Account and you had commented on how much Communities, Culture and Heritage contributes to the economic growth. I'm wondering whether future economic spinoff is a factor in how you rank the grant applications. Is somebody who applies where their grant is going to help grow our economy given a higher ranking than somebody whose doesn't?

MS. TAWHEEL: Again, each grant has different criteria against which we evaluate. For some, if we're providing funding to an event, we certainly do look on return on investment and we have very particular measures in place before we will invest in a large-scale event. For others, it's less kind of tangible, if you will, in terms of the impact on the GDP of the province, but no less important in terms of community fabric, community capacity building, community development.

MS. ADAMS: Under the 2016 Nova Scotia Culture Index on the final report, the survey that was done - which I appreciate the surveys finding out whether people are appreciating what your department is doing - said that 38 per cent said the government should increase its cultural investment, 11 per cent said they should decrease it and the rest said keep it the same. I'm just wondering whether the department plans on increasing it significantly, given the challenges that we have in education and health care and what the future holds for your budget?

MS. TAWHEEL: I certainly can't talk about future budgets but I can say I think we have a track record over the past couple of years of adding new programs, in terms of the Creative Industries Fund, the Culture Innovation Fund, the Screenwriters Development Fund; we have the Building Vibrant Communities Grant. We've been adding and increasing to the grant offerings and the funds that are available from a culture perspective to the department, so we do have a track record of that I would suggest over the last number of years to ensure that we are meeting those needs.

MS. ADAMS: The province announced \$3 million in funding for the new arena in Windsor. Did that funding come from your department?

MS. TAWHEEL: Are you referring to the Long Pond project? CCH does hold that funding, yes.

MS. ADAMS: Is there a cap on recreation facility development funding?

MS. TAWHEEL: There is. If an application comes through the Recreation Facility Development Grant program, there absolutely is a cap on that funding. For larger scale projects, we need to look at those outside of the RFD program because of that cap.

MS. ADAMS: The Orenda Canoe Club received \$600,000 in funding. I'm wondering if you have a breakdown of which programs that you have were used to allocate that funding?

MS. TAWHEEL: The funding for the Orenda Canoe Club came through the SFI Fund - Strategic Funding Initiatives Fund. That fund allows us a bit of flexibility to look at projects that exceed the limit on, say, the RFD fund but that are worthwhile projects at the community or provincial level.

MS. ADAMS: And probably similar in 2015-16, the Membertou Reserve Band Council received \$6,000 and in the last year the council received over \$4 million. I'm just wondering why there was such a significant increase.

MS. TAWHEEL: I'll just pull that. Did you say \$6,000? Are you sure that's not \$6 million? It was an overall rink investment in Membertou.

MS. ADAMS: The notes that I have say \$6,000.

MS. TAWHEEL: We did invest in a rink in Membertou. I'll just see if I have the number here with me so I can tell you the exact number - \$6,000 doesn't seem right.

MS. ADAMS: I may have an error on that.

MS. TAWHEEL: We will try to pull that while we are here today. If not, I'll follow up with you on that.

MS. ADAMS: Great, thank you. In 2016-17, the Municipality of Guysborough received \$780,000 and the Town of Lunenburg got over \$1 million, which is more than Cape Breton or HRM. I'm just wondering why those municipalities received such a large amount of funding.

MS. TAWHEEL: Are you referring to particular capital infrastructure investments? Those two investments were for particular projects in those areas that were advanced as part of the Strategic Funding Initiatives program. They were projects that the department worked collaboratively with those communities on advancing.

MS. ADAMS: I'm wondering if restaurants are eligible to apply for your grants.

MS. TAWHEEL: They would be eligible through the Small Business ACCESS-Ability Grant program, yes, to make their facilities accessible to disabled Nova Scotians.

MS. ADAMS: Okay, but for cultural grants, are they eligible?

MS. TAWHEEL: It would depend on what it was they were looking to do. Again, we would have a conversation with them, absolutely. Did you have a particular example?

[10:15 a.m.]

MS. ADAMS: There was a particular restaurant in our constituency that has wanted to apply for grants but they're excluded because they're in the hospitality industry. I'm just wondering whether there's a possibility of that changing. It's often our restaurants that are asked to host a lot of these events, but when they go to get funding, they can't do it themselves. It has to go through some other organization. I'm just wondering why they might be excluded where others aren't.

MS. TAWHEEL: I would suggest, if there is a particular restaurant in your constituency, that coming in and having a conversation with us is probably a good first step. From there, we can determine if there may be a particular fund for which they would qualify.

CCH is also a bit of a portal, if you will, to other funding programs that may be available provincially, or we are sometimes aware of things that may exist at the municipal or even federal level or other funds that are out there that an organization might be able to access. Without knowing the specifics of what they want to do, it would be hard for me to answer that other than to say that we're always open to having the conversation.

MS. ADAMS: Constituencies that may not have gotten grants in the past, would they have a higher preference? I'm just wondering if you can comment on what your ranking system is and how you judge the grants.

MS. TAWHEEL: The grants are judged based on the criteria that are set for the granting program. As I mentioned earlier, we're not aiming for every constituency or every region must have 10 grants. That is not one of the criteria that we look at. Each project is weighted based on its merit.

The only exception to that - I mentioned Canada 150, but also the RFD grants are divided up on a regional basis. But with that said, that doesn't necessarily mean that within their allocation, each region will have five projects. It really depends on what is advanced at the community level. The funding envelope that's available is spread across the regions.

MS. ADAMS: In 2015-16, the department gave \$6,000 in funding to the English-language school boards, and that increased in the next year to \$144,000. I'm wondering if you could explain that increase and what's going to happen to that funding if the school boards are eliminated?

MS. TAWHEEL: I'll have to get back to you on that one. I'm sorry. I don't have that at my fingertips.

MS. ADAMS: Lastly, the HRM has been considering closing some of its older arenas. Of course, it's very difficult to get rink time around here, so some of the other groups like lacrosse players are asking that they remain open and used for other purposes. I'm just wondering what the department might be able to do with such organizations to help them secure or retain these facilities.

MS. TAWHEEL: Access to rinks is certainly an ongoing challenge, particularly in HRM, I think. Through our program consultant who works in this area, we try to work collaboratively with those organizations to help link them up with individuals in the municipality who can help figure out how to mitigate against that and support them as best as we can.

Municipal-owned rinks need to consider their own infrastructure challenges and balance out the demands on those facilities. We will try to be supportive where we can be and try to broker some of those relationships if necessary.

MS. ADAMS: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll now move to the NDP caucus. Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: I just wanted to follow on your answers around the Strategic Funding Initiatives. Are those equally available to arts organizations as they are in recreation?

MS. TAWHEEL: Yes, they could be. Absolutely.

MS. ROBERTS: What are the factors that lead to those significant investments in infrastructure? What's in the secret sauce? Again, I represent a constituency where there's a real crisis for art infrastructure in terms of space.

MS. TAWHEEL: I'm not sure that there's a secret necessarily beyond coming in and having a conversation and working. In large measure, anything that's funded through the Strategic Funding Initiative, they're not projects that kind of comes up on a whim. They are long-standing projects that we've been working for a number of years, in some instances, with the community group to develop and hone and seek out additional funding partners, et cetera. I wouldn't say there's necessarily a secret, other than if there's an idea, we would like to know about it.

The majority of applicants in projects that are funded through SFI come as a result of applicants contacting the department and sitting down with us and having a conversation about what it is they are envisioning. That often will unleash or unlock a conversation about

the art of the possible, if you will, and what else is happening in other parts of the province, what other funds might be available quite outside of the provincial funding envelope.

Sometimes groups aren't aware of some of the funding, for example, that's available through Canadian Heritage or some of those other funding mechanisms that could be available. I would say if there's one secret, it is come and talk to us and we're more than interested in working collaboratively and to try to help move ideas along.

MS. ROBERTS: Okay, I'm going to figure out exactly which phone number and which person I can connect people with. I say that quite honestly, because if you've never been there, it's fine to say come and talk to us. People in the community and especially folks who are new to this, they don't know where that is.

MS. TAWHEEL: I know, I would say, and that is something. As I referenced in some of my earlier comments, we know we need to do more in that regard. It's intimidating as well to look at 34 programs and not know which door you should potentially walk through.

In the year ahead, we are going to look at trying to streamline those doors. We'll be looking at how we show up on our website, the contacts we make at community level, any mechanism we can employ to try to remove some of that intimidation, fear, confusion, whatever it might be. We don't want to be a barrier to a good idea being brought forward.

The internal kind of machinations that go on behind the scenes, if you will, in terms of ensuring that we maintain rigour with every investment we make, that happens behind the scenes. Community groups should not have to navigate 34 doors to get their project looked at.

MS. ROBERTS: I'll say as an MLA, when I was preparing for this morning, I just now realized that you had created a new funding stream, the Building Vibrant Communities grant, which I feel quite badly that I did not promulgate with direct emails to about six different places which would have had like that such an important work to advance through that grant and that somehow I just missed it.

MS. TAWHEEL: You'll have another chance, though. We're evaluating applications now. It is not a one-time fund. We will make sure and we are creating a document that lays out all of our funding programs that will be distributed to every MLA office to hopefully make it easier for MLAs and those who you serve to navigate the programs we have available.

MS. ROBERTS: Those conversations that happen when people figure out where to show up and through which door, are you able to address the challenge for arts organizations where you are able to fund 50 per cent of a project, but the other 50 per cent of their project is funded by their sweat? There isn't magic money-making capacity in the

arts community. There's a ton of in-kind labour, a ton of voluntary work, not just at board level but also in terms of arts education and art making.

Are you able to address the fact that for organizations that again do not have operating funds, it is really hard to come up with the other 25 per cent or the other 50 per cent, depending on the granting?

MS. TAWHEEL: Yes, I recognize that. It is sometimes a challenge to come up with the rest. We do work collaboratively to figure out what "in kind" look like, other partners that could be levered - be it other levels of government or even private sector companies that might have an interest.

I believe, as I mentioned earlier, sometimes there is an opportunity to bring organizations together that have not traditionally worked together to combine both the sweat equity, if you will, but also to lever additional partnerships that could help bring that project to life.

We pride ourselves on being creative as much as we can to try to help organizations come up with their portion - the contribution that they need to provide in order to access any given fund.

MS. ROBERTS: I want to go back for a moment to the increase in funding in 2016-17 for the Cultural Heritage Development string which was \$34 million, as opposed to \$20 million in 2017-18. Is that actually flow-through of federal dollars? When you refer to infrastructure funding, is that federal money that arrives in one year and gets spent and then is gone?

MS. TAWHEEL: That was infrastructure investments that were made by the provincial government, but your point around the federal government is a really important one. In large measure, all of those provincial investments that were made levered federal funding. So very few of those, if perhaps none, were a single contribution of the provincial government. They levered federal funding that was available as well.

MS. ROBERTS: So those dollars are actually provincial dollars, but they were allowed to flow in that year because they were matching up.

MS. TAWHEEL: They were matching up with federal funding, exactly.

MS. ROBERTS: I want to ask about one of the programs that moved from the Department of Health and Wellness to the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, and that is the Thrive! program. I see that it is still on the books, though with the dollar values attached to it decreasing somewhat, but there hasn't been an update to the Thrive! website since November 2015. I really appreciated that initiative as it was originally conceived in terms of a whole of government approach to trying to encourage

healthy communities, including by looking at how government invests in infrastructure, to encourage active transportation and so forth. So what update can you give me?

MS. TAWHEEL: Thrive! is a very successful program. We are working with all of the provinces and territories right across the country on a new physical active living framework. We expect to have that new framework approved sometime this summer. In the coming weeks actually, Minister Glavine will be hosting a symposium with individuals who work in this area who have been involved with Thrive!, with public health experts, to look at how we will move forward on a new physical activity framework for this province that lines up with some of the new federal options that will be available to us.

So as we look at the new federal option, we will also be looking at Thrive! to determine if the programming options that were available in Thrive! should continue under the new framework that we'll be looking to roll out or if they should be modified in some way.

There has been good uptake with most of the programs that were run through Thrive!, but we have a significant opportunity right now to work in collaboration with our federal counterparts, and other provinces and territories to lever federal programming and to really try to advance our mandate around healthy active living and physical activities, sport and recreation.

MS. ROBERTS: Are the people attached to that program - I'm not sure how many people that would be at this point - are they still playing a role in terms of convening leaders and decision makers across the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and other departments?

[10:30 a.m.]

MS. TAWHEEL: They are absolutely, yes. You referenced active transportation in your earlier question. Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is the lead on active transportation but we are an active member of that group and work very collaboratively with our colleagues, both inside and outside government, on active transportation.

We do collaborate with communities to make sure there's access to support physical recreation opportunities. The new strategy that we will be part of will increase. Our goal is to see an increase in the ability of individuals to access those opportunities, to be physically active in their own way in their own community.

I'm just seeing if there's any other facts that might support, to answer your question. We provide funding for 44 positions across the province and PAL coordinators. Those are municipal community physical activity leaders who do some of the work that you just articulated, convene groups, work together, focus on walking, cycling, what are the needs at the community level.

We also support Bicycle Nova Scotia's Blue Route, which I'm sure you are familiar with; the Heart & Stroke Walkabout; and we are part of the UNSM Active Transportation Committee. Not all those aspects obviously fall under Thrive! but they do fall under the broader mandate of healthy, active living that rests within our department.

MS. ROBERTS: I know I have just maybe a minute left. Would you say anything on how the incorporation of those various programs that came from Health and Wellness - how has that landed in Communities, Culture and Heritage?

MS. TAWHEEL: I would say fantastic. First of all, the team that came over from Health and Wellness, I think they have found a home in Communities, Culture and Heritage. They were welcomed, if you will, with open arms because of that inextricable link between healthy, active living and strong, vibrant communities. It really is a natural fit with us and it fits - it's a very complementary piece when we look at . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. I'm sorry, time has expired. We'll move back to the Liberal caucus and Mr. MacKay.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Deputy, I'd actually like to start by returning to a point you made of working with MLAs' offices. I'd like to congratulate you because I've found your team to be very accessible. In fact, they have visited my office at our request to review programs and discuss situations that would arise within the community, for possible support by your office. I feel that both myself and my constituency assistant were well versed and prepared to be able to go out into the community and do our job to bring forward the information, so thank you and congratulations to your team.

I'd also like to compliment your department on the Culture Action Plan. It's one of the more thumbed-through documents I have in my office; in fact, in my bag that I carry around with me. I think the six themes that were presented in the Culture Action Plan certainly reflect our government's commitment to culture in innovation, in diversity, in stewardship, and so much more.

I would like to maybe frame a couple of questions for expansion perhaps in two areas. The first is in the very first theme, which is to promote Mi'kmaq culture. We've seen under this government a very active movement to bring forward the traditions and support for our Mi'kmaq culture, everything from making statements at the beginning of presentations and events where we recognize that we're on traditional Mi'kmaq territory, to translation of your Culture Action Plan into the Mi'kmaq language. I compliment you on those successes.

In my own constituency of beautiful Chester-St. Margaret's, we do have an Indigenous population in the community: the Acadia First Nation and the Gold River community. I have drawn them into the tourism advisory support group network that I have within my constituency that advises me. It's also for me to advise them.



I'm wondering if you could maybe give me some hints on the promotion of Mi'kmaq culture. Are there specific staff I should work with within your department? Are there some successes already elsewhere in the province that you might point to that I could learn from?

MS. TAWHEEL: Certainly as the plan indicates, the importance of Mi'kmaq culture can't be overstated, which is where the plan really does begin. That is the first pillar in our plan, and we saw it as a very important signal to the Mi'kmaq community that we are committed to honouring the cultural contributions of the Mi'kmaq as founding people in our province.

Some of the success or activities that we have undertaken to this point include government adopting a place protocol, acknowledging the traditional lands on which we all work and play every day. That has been adopted across government uniformly, and I would herald it as a success.

We are creating a Mi'kmaq cultural liaison position. The job description is actually written, and we'll be consulting with the community on that job description and then looking to fill the position to ensure that we have an even greater link.

I would hold up as a success some recent exhibits that we have had at our Museum of Natural History. We have really worked collaboratively with the Mi'kmaq community to ensure that we are telling stories from the Mi'kmaq perspective, not in the traditional way that we have told stories, from more of a colonial perspective, if you will. We do have success, I would suggest, in those areas.

There is an individual, whose name I can provide you after the session, who has been working very collaboratively with the community particularly to advance on this pillar and aspects that are included in the pillar. I would be very happy to provide you with that contact, although I would say, any and all of our divisions work well and pride themselves on working collaboratively with the Mi'kmaq community. We sit on a tripartite forum where we discuss culture issues, issues of common interest. We certainly fully support Mi'kmaq History Month as well.

MR. MACKAY: I'm very pleased to hear about that cultural liaison position. I think that's a great step forward. Did I understand you to say that the program this year for the Culture Action Plan - specifically the Mi'kmaq - is fully subscribed or very well subscribed? Where does that stand?

MS. TAWHEEL: Yes, the Mi'kmaq Cultural Activities Program is traditionally fully subscribed. It's important, much like any other group, that we encourage the Mi'kmaq community to apply to any of our funds. While there is a particular fund that was designed in collaboration with the community, that doesn't mean that is the only fund that is

available. In fact, we see quite high uptake from the Mi'kmaq community across all of our funds and would be very happy to see more.

MR. MACKAY: That's a very good point. Thank you.

The other part of the Culture Action Plan I want to touch on is Theme 6, "Drive awareness and economic growth of the culture sector." I'm a great believer in communities bringing forward ideas but not just coming cap in hand to government to say, I have a great idea, now would you please fund it?

I would give an example. Several years ago, I started an event here in Halifax called Doors Open Halifax. From the get-go, something I impressed upon our board was that we were not going to be just another government-funded event. I'm pleased to say that over the five years that we have operated and the literally hundreds of thousands of people who have participated by visiting our venues, we're 87 per cent funded by the private sector as opposed to government grants.

As we look at supporting the Culture Action Plan and heritage and so forth here in Nova Scotia, I would certainly hope that we are impressing upon our private sector the need to participate in and support particularly events that reflect well on their sector.

I'm curious if in doing so, have we looked back at some of the recommendations in the Ivany report that said here are sectors that our economy should focus on, such as oceans, such as clean tech, such as the tourism sector itself? Do we try to connect any of our grants and funds to those specific sectors and, from your office, do we try to make an ask back to the communities and to industries in those sectors to participate financially?

MS. TAWHEEL: We do certainly - I mean the Culture Action Plan is a bible by which we conduct our work, but the Ivany report certainly was foundational to not just the Culture Action Plan but many other actions that have been undertaken in Communities, Culture and Heritage.

With regard to your question about private investment, certainly particularly with events or a number of other projects, we do encourage community groups to seek additional funding through private or other not-for-profit partnerships. Sometimes the support we provide to those groups is helping them understand which doors they should knock on and how to properly kind of cast the project, if you will, so that it is attractive to a private sector investor.

In our experience, I would say a good idea is a good idea and we have a lot of very smart, well-connected, successful businesses in Nova Scotia that are strong supporters of culture and heritage, and if presented with a good idea, very often we'll say yes. But they need to hear about the idea and sometimes we need to help facilitate getting those doors open.

We talk about how daunting some of our grant programs are. It can be daunting as well to try to advance an idea to business.

MR. MACKAY: Thank you for that and I'll pass perhaps to my colleague from Lunenburg.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: How many minutes?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have until 10:45 a.m.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Okay, thank you, so I'll be quick. I did notice in your opening statements you made reference to Hope Blooms. I love this social enterprise and what it's doing for youth. I'm familiar with their salad dressings and I'm familiar with the greenhouse projects. You mentioned that they're growing fish and I think of this as an HRM inner-city group - how do you grow fish in the city?

MS. TAWHEEL: I don't think I can probably explain the exact technical way that they're growing fish but they're growing fish. I would say I use Hope Blooms as an example because it really does encapsulate all of what we are trying to do in Communities, Culture and Heritage: to support communities when they have a great idea and really help at-risk youth, for example.

Hope Blooms is now connecting with the elderly in their community. We provided funding for a bicycle that allows them to transport their salad dressings and greens that they're growing in their greenhouse, to seniors in the community, so we're making a connection there between seniors and youth. They can also use the bicycle to drive down or bike down to the Seaport market to sell their salad dressings.

As I'm sure you are aware, the youth who participate in Hope Blooms are learning life skills and opportunities are being opened for them that they may never have conceived of as being possible.

One of the actions in the Culture Action Plan speaks to working with organizations like Hope Blooms to see what is the secret sauce, if you will - to an earlier phrase - in terms of how and what they're doing in their community and if there are aspects of that recipe, if you will, that could be transported or moved out to other communities across the province. Hope Blooms would be one example of trying to take what's happening there, and in some way, emulate it in other communities in the province.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Speaking of that, are you looking for opportunities to do that, or are you going to work with communities? I think the First Nations group would be a perfect example of reaching out around the province to do such social enterprises.

[10:45 a.m.]

MS. TAWHEEL: We are absolutely planning to embark on that work. It's important to know that a number of factors have to be in place at a community level in order for them to be ready to take up something like a Hope Blooms, for example, which was an idea that took a while to kind of form and to get legs under it.

We need to be very strategic and understand both community needs and also community capacity to receive a project like Hope Blooms, for the purposes of this conversation. We would never want to set a community up for failure, so we need to make sure that the infrastructure, if you will, is in place to support an initiative like that so that it is successful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, the time for questions has expired. Ms. Taweel, you have an opportunity to provide closing comments.

MS. TAWHEEL: I would just thank the members for your questions. Again, the door is open to have a conversation with us, and we will certainly get back to you on any aspects that require follow-up. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for being with us today and for answering our questions.

We have correspondence from Tourism Nova Scotia that was in response to information requested at a meeting we had on January 24<sup>th</sup>. Everyone has a copy of that. Are there any questions or comments?

Our next meeting will be February 28<sup>th</sup> with the Departments of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Health and Wellness, Internal Services, and the Nova Scotia Health Authority to discuss redevelopment of the QEII.

Are there any questions or any further business to come before the committee? Hearing none, this meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:46 a.m.]