

Fifth Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Crown Corporations

Chairperson
Mr. James Teitsma
Constituency of Radisson

Vol. LXXVII No. 2 - 1 p.m., Monday, December 12, 2022

ISSN 1708-6604

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
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FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
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GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
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LAGIMODIERE, Alan, Hon.	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
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LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
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SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
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WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Kirkfield Park	

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

Monday, December 12, 2022

TIME – 1 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere)

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

Hon. Messrs. Smith, Wharton

Mr. Brar, MLA Marcelino, Messrs. Micklefield, Teitsma

APPEARING:

Mr. Karl Loepp, Chair of the Board, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation

Mr. Robert Olson, Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022

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Clerk Assistant (Mr. Tim Abbott): Good afternoon, everyone. Will the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations please come to order.

I think we all know the drill here. Before the committee can proceed with business, we must elect a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I nominate Mr. Teitsma.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Teitsma has been nominated. Any further nominations?

Mr. Teitsma, please take the Chair.

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

Are there any other—are there any nominations?

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation): I nominate Andrew Micklefield.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Micklefield having been nominated, are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Micklefield is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the annual reports of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal years ending March 31st, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2022.

I believe that there was prior agreement that this committee complete consideration of these 17 annual reports of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal years ending March twenty–31st, 2004 to 2020 without debate.

Does the committee agree to complete consideration of these reports? *[Agreed]*

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

Mr. Micklefield: I'm going to suggest 45 minutes or until the business of the committee is finished.

Mr. Chairperson: It's been suggested that we sit for 45 minutes or until the business of the committee has been completed.

Is that agreeable? *[Agreed]*

Does the honourable minister wish to make an opening statement?

Mr. Smith: As the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, I'm pleased to be here today with senior

officials from the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation to present the corporation's '21-22 annual report ending March 31, 2022.

I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce Karl Loepp, the chair of the board of directors, and Rob Olson, chief executive officer. Also joining me today is Deputy Minister Jeff Hnatiuk and Assistant Deputy Minister Veronica Dyck.

The Manitoba Centennial Centre provides essential services for several of Manitoba's largest and most renowned arts and heritage institutions. The Centennial Concert Hall is a signature facility in Manitoba and the home to our largest performing arts organizations. Its contributions to cultural life and experiences benefit all Manitobans, and I thank you and look forward to our discussions this afternoon.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister.

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

Go ahead, Mr. Brar.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): It's my pleasure to join today to consider annual reports for the Manitoba Centennial Centre, and I welcome the executive committee CEO and board chair to the meeting and other officials and my colleagues from Manitoba Legislature. And also, my colleague, member from Notre Dame, is joining us virtually.

We've been in discussion with various issues related to this organization in the past, as well, and I'm pleased to see everybody here in person this time which feels good after—we are relieved a bit after COVID, and I do understand that COVID had negative impacts on the organization, and organization maneuvered through such tough times and now things are getting better.

I, myself, had many opportunities to attend events in your organization, which is wonderful, including ethnic programs there. So, I think we would get better as an organization and open to further discussions and open to work together to make this wonderful organization still better.

So, looking forward to the discussions.

Thank you once again.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

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

Floor Comment: We do.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, Mr. Olson, then, or Mr. Loepp to kick it off?

Mr. Karl Loepp (Chair of the Board, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation): Karl Loepp, chair of Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation. Also delighted to be here in person. I want to thank the committee for seeing us here.

And just a couple of comments about what we have gone through over the last number of years—has been challenging. I want to compliment the management staff and team that we have at the Centennial Centre that has really done a remarkable job under very unique circumstances of how we operate as a Crown corp. to be able to be back in business.

So, we are fully back in business now. We're having exciting opportunities presented us for not only entertainment, but as an operational facility and, you know, really looking forward to a successful year both this year and next year.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, thank you.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Brar: My first question would be regarding the—according to the annual report, it speaks to the expiration of 33-year lease with the Manitoba Museum.

I want to ask: what's the current status and are they close to a renewal? Or, if not, by what date are they targetting including an agreement? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: I have to recognize the—each speaker before they speak.

So, Mr. Loepp.

Mr. Loepp: I'll just—a short statement on that, that we are—we recognize that that lease is coming to its full term, and I'm going to defer to Mr. Olson to give some update of—to the current status of where we are with the details of that.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank the member for the questions.

Mr. Brar: I think it's Mr. Olson—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, a follow-up, and I was distracted with my clerk. I apologize. So, sorry.

You're going to follow up, Mr. Olson. Go ahead.

Mr. Robert Olson (Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation): Mr. Brar, with respect to the 33-year museum lease, it is a renewable 33-year lease. It does expire in March 31st of 2023. So, within the next four months, the existing 33-year lease, as it's currently written, will expire.

Now, there is a clause that allows it to continue for an additional 33 years, so there's no imminent rejection of the museum in the foreseeable future.

I think from our perspective, we'd just like to look at the terms and conditions of the current lease to make sure they're current for the next 10 to 33 years, whatever that term may be, as we go forward.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Olson.

Further questions?

Mr. Brar: Is there a look at the fundamental change to the renewal, or it would go as it is?

Mr. Olson: No, I don't think so.

I think some of the changes that we're looking forward to is the inherent responsibility that we've acquired over our 55 years to help support the museum through operational costs. And I think we have to recognize that, as inflation is sort of eroding our abilities to support the museum, we will be looking at a renewed agreement with the museum that suggests perhaps there are different ways to do—to deliver what we've been delivering over the last 55 years.

And those are discussions that Karl and I are going to be having with their board chair and their CEO in the next little while with the expectation that we're going to bring our recommendations to the department of Culture, to the minister, to have discussions going forward on what a renewal might look like.

But, fundamentally, I don't think there'll be substantial changes. Like I said before, the museum will be in its current location for many years to come, so.

Mr. Brar: Thank you, Mr. Olson, for the details on that.

Last time, we talked about the capital plan for the facility. So, can you kindly take us through the recent and current capital upgrades and budgeted amounts and amounts spent, please? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Olson.

Mr. Olson: Sorry, I jumped the gun there a little bit.

I may not be able to give the exact dollar amount on a number of the projects that we've—that we're currently looking at, but there has been a significant investment in capital over the last four or five years, not the least of which is right now there's currently—

Mr. Chairperson: If you could—Mr. Olson, if you could keep your report off of the microphone.

Mr. Olson: I'm sorry. Okay. Thank you.

*(13:10)

Mr. Chairperson: You can go ahead and continue, Mr. Olson.

Mr. Olson: Sorry.

There is a significant investment right now in the recladding of the south side of the Centennial Centre. And for those who may not be familiar with the orientation, the south end of the Centennial Centre is the concert hall side, the north end of the centre is the museum side of the operation. So, the Tyndall stone is coming off the exterior of the building. It's being refastened, reinsulated, refastened. That is going to be an approximately 13- to 15-million-dollar investment just in that one project alone.

So, fairly significant and long overdue. But Tyndall stone, as you may know, has been crumbling, as it has been with a number of other buildings that were built in that era, and so, for safety reasons, there was some urgency in getting that project completed.

We do have a number of smaller projects, but I think the most noticeable—notable one that we can talk about, especially in this last fiscal year, was we finally had the iconic red carpet inside the concert hall replaced. So, that was several hundred thousand square feet of carpeting. It was an old, wool carpet that had last been replaced 35 years prior, so it had—it was well past its best-before date, and we've had that replaced. Now, that dollar amount, I don't have. That still resides with Government Services, who funded that project directly.

And several other projects—washroom upgrades. With respect to COVID, we felt it was important to eliminate as many touchpoints as possible so all our washrooms were upgraded to hands-free washrooms. That was about a \$200,000 upgrade. That one, we partially financed ourselves with support from Government Services as well.

So, there's been a number of smaller projects like that that are currently underway or ongoing—emergency lighting, exit lighting to be code compliant.

That was just shy of \$1 million, to replace all the exit signing inside the Centennial Centre. And remember, the Centennial Centre is over 500,000 square feet of facility, so there are a lot of exit points, and everything was brought up to code compliance.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Brar: Thanks for the details, Mr. Olson.

Even if you don't have the exact budgeted amount and the amount spent for each and every development there, do you have any idea about the amount spent? Was it within the budget or way lower than it was budgeted or it was over budgeted? Just an idea.

Mr. Olson: Sure. Well, I can tell you that the—or, the recladding of the exterior of the building is more or less on budget.

It is taking a little bit more time; it was supposed to be completed in November of this year, but weather conditions, I think, have pre-empted some of their schedule. Not the least of which is also supply issues that have impacted their construction schedule. So, they're projected to be completed in the summer of this year, so we're looking at a 2023 completion date by the summer.

The carpeting, you know, if I had to estimate, it was well over \$1 million to replace the carpeting inside the concert hall itself, and that has been completed.

Mr. Brar: Last time, we had discussions about the orchestral shell.

Can you update us on their consideration of this part of the plan?

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Brar.

The orchestra shell is still a source of contention for us. It has been five years since we commissioned a report to study the operability of the orchestra shell. At the time, it was deemed unsafe to operate. If you can imagine, it's several hundred tons the—of weight on the infrastructure of the concert hall, and as it moves up and down, we were just fearful that some of the aircraft cabling and pulleys and suspensions that raise and lower the shell would slip and fail, and before we had a catastrophic failure, we locked it out five years ago.

But we also did a study on approximately what it would cost to repair that orchestra shell, and, at the time, it was a \$2.5-million investment. So, that's still sitting in a state of question right now as to whether or

not we'll receive the funding to repair it or whether we'll, in fact, go ahead to repair it.

But what's important to note is that a concert hall does need to operate with an acoustic shell—because that's one of the characteristics that allow us to call the concert hall a concert hall. Because it may not be known to this committee: we truly don't have a concert hall in this province, but the acoustic characteristics of that shell permits us to call it a concert hall. So, in the absence, we have a multi-purpose performing arts centre, which we are making do.

I must say—and I must add for you, Mr. Brar, that we have made about a \$1-million investment in what's called an electronic enhancement, which is designed to provide some microphone speaker replacement to the orchestra shell. So, if you are sitting in the audience, the 'audible'—the audible characteristics are non-discernable from the orchestra shell.

So, there has been an investment made. It's just not a truly functioning orchestra wall or acoustic wall that gets set up behind the symphony. So, we're still waiting.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, before we proceed, I'll just remind both members to direct your comments through the Chair.

So, you should be using language directed at me, rather than at the member sitting across from you.

Mr. Brar: I would like to ask the CEO about the amount just mentioned, which was, I think, \$2.5 million estimated.

How long back was that?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Chair, it was approximately \$2.5 million five years ago. That was the consultant's report.

It was studied by a company out of New York, which is the pre-eminent rigging company in North America, J.R. Clancy. We brought them in, we had them review the functionality—functionability—of the orchestra shell. They deemed it to be unsafe to operate, and they also assessed what the cost would be to repair it.

Mr. Brar: I thank you—should I say you, or—I thank the CEO for the details.

And now my question to the minister is that—what's the minister's plans for future capital planning?

Mr. Smith: Well, thank you to the member for the question, and I appreciate the member asking this type of question, specifically with M-triple-C here.

As you know, there is even a governance review right now to determine the sustainability—our financial sustainability—of the organization.

We know that—as has been mentioned by our—the two gentleman sitting here—how COVID has impacted the organization, and all the performing arts have been impacted. So my—you know, our government's been there throughout COVID to help throughout the last two years, two and a half years of the pandemic, giving \$12 million in sustainability for some of these arts groups who have been severely affected and impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, I'm looking forward to continue to working closely with the M-triple-C and the board to make sure that we have a sustainability plan in place and that, you know, all arts and culture in Manitoba is sustainable and remains sustainable for the coming years.

I know the member opposite is very aware that our government has been—introduced \$100 million in the ACSC Fund—the Arts, Culture, and Sport in Community Fund—which is spread over three years, of course, and investing in local communities and local arts groups, ethno-culture groups, sports groups and those types. And, of course, that would certainly help folks in the arts group that the gentlemen here from M-triple-C would be very, very familiar with.

So, as you know, that there is a long-term thought in place for our government, and we certainly are working very closely with our good friends with M-triple-C here to make sure that sustainability is a top priority.

Mr. Brar: Thank you—I thank the minister for the details about capital planning.

And I also appreciate a lot all the people who are working in the field of arts, because this is very, very important for our province—even socially, culturally and financially, as well, to boost our economy.

But I would like to ask specifically to the minister about the specific thing, which is orchestral shell. What is the minister's plan about the orchestral shell?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Smith? Oh—I'll give you a couple minutes.

* (13:20)

Mr. Smith: I appreciate Mr. Brar for the question.

Again, there is a capital review going on right now, and that would come mostly—especially with this specific project—under Central Services, which is a different department of government. But there is a capital review going on right now, and this'll certainly be part of the—that capital review going forward.

As a timeline, I don't have exact timeline on that. Hoping that would be done in, of course, in 2023, but we're looking at working together—both SCH here—Sport, Culture and Heritage—M-triple-C and, of course, my colleague, Minister Reg Helwer, which would be under—his department would be allocating the funds for that particular budget.

Mr. Chairperson: I'll just remind the minister that you shouldn't be using ministerial names—*[interjection]* Or, sorry, first names. Is that what the problem was? Just Minister Helwer would be fine at committee.

Thank you.

Mr. Brar: Does the minister think that the government would fund the repairs to the shell?

Mr. Smith: Of course, look, I—as I mentioned earlier, I think that the arts, culture and sport purview is very important to this government, and particular to myself. As I referenced earlier, the amount of investments we are providing right now to the arts, culture and sport communities through the ACSC funding, notwithstanding all the funding we've given throughout COVID—I think we have a strong track record on that.

And, of course, like I said, looking forward to working closely with my colleague and Minister Helwer and his department for the sustainability review and, of course, the capital review that's undergoing right now which would—this orchestra shell would fall under that specific review.

Mr. Brar: I would connect to the discussions held previously in this group when we discussed about a possible change in the governance model of the corporation, and that that included a potential move to dissolve the Crown corporation and potentially hand the assets to the corporation—of the corporation to a third party.

I would request the CEO to please share what's the status of this as of now.

Mr. Olson: Thank for the question, Mr. Brar.

The governance review was something M-triple-C commissioned several years ago to look at other ways that we could achieve the mandate that we'd been

assigned 55 years ago by the government of the day and has since been reaffirmed over the last 55 years.

We are very much aware of the pressures governments are under to fund many variable interest groups or interests, and prioritize those fundings that are all limited. So, with the help of our chair and our board, we undertook an exercise to look at other models that might be less reliant on government funding and still allow us to achieve the same mandate, which was to support the arts.

We made a recommendation to government on two possibilities out of five that have been presented to us that we felt were reasonable, and we just—we haven't really settled on what that would look like going forward.

I think we are comfortable operating as a Crown corporation, and we could be comfortable operating with any one of the two other models that were presented.

So, I think what's being discussed right now, I think at—that at our level, certainly, going forward, what is the best way to achieve what we ultimately want to do, which is support the arts more holistically, to be more self-sufficient on our abilities to generate revenues and to be somewhat less reliant on the support that we receive directly from the department. And in doing so, we were looking for that flexibility under a new governance model.

But there was never going to be—and this is the point that I'd like to make clear—there was never going to be a direct cut to our relationship with government. It would just be a reframing of our operational relationship between any department in government that we're assigned to.

Mr. Brar: I thank the CEO for the details on this.

And the CEO mentioned two models that were proposed, and one of them is the possible move to, maybe, inclusion of a third party.

I would like to know, what was the second model? Like, what two models he meant to say?

Mr. Olson: The two models that we looked at, one was developed, basically, out of consultation with another government agency in Queensland, Australia. The governance model was more of a trust model, which currently does not exist anywhere in Canada. So, it was a really novel idea, but it was fully fleshed out in Australia and the way they treat their art facilities or the—how they handle their state agencies—

and they are all state agencies that look after infrastructure.

And the other one was a not-for-profit model, modelled similarly after other organizations like the north Forks-Portage or the Assiniboine Park Conservancy as direct examples of what that might look like.

So, those were the two: a not-for-profit model and a trust model.

Mr. Brar: To the minister: Is the government still pursuing this, what we just discussed, and is the government still planning on privatizing the Manitoba centennial corporation?

Mr. Smith: I thank the member for the question but, I mean, if he did listen to the answer from Mr. Olson, there were two options that were given, and our government is still working with M-triple-C.

And I want to thank M-triple-C board and the two gentlemen that are with us today for all the good work that they've done, particularly throughout the pandemic and in navigating very difficult waters, and I think that they've done a tremendous job doing just that.

And this governance review is essentially to see the sustainability of the organization on a go-forward basis. And I think the member opposite knows that sustainability is very important for organizations, and often—it's not uncommon for organizations to undergo sustainability reviews, and I think that's a healthy sign of any organization.

At this point, we're still working with these good folks here to see what the best move forward is. It's always an important decision, but I think the best decision has to come with thought and care.

Mr. Brar: I meant to say triple-P of M-triple-C; that was my question.

So, looks like that it's still in mind of the government that it could be anything. But I would need more clarity from the minister to know if the government has rejected privatizing this Crown corporation.

Mr. Smith: And, again, I refer to the—excuse me, the answer given by Mr. Olson. I mean, he had two options in which he discussed—that would be two viable options in the minds of M-triple-C and the board as to what they would recommend to government.

And again, we are working with them on this very important initiative. We know sustainability of any

organization is incredibly important, and as is the continuous review of sustainability in any organization, particularly following a very difficult time during COVID—two, two and a half years.

We're still seeing residual effects from the pandemic in the economy and, of course, certainly on consumer demand. And impacts on consumer demand are not lost on our government or, I believe, on my colleagues here from M-triple-C.

So, I would recommend that we—as I said, we continue to work with M-triple-C on a sustainability plan for the future and making sure that M-triple-C continues to provide the supports it can and the facilities it can for the arts community here in the province.

* (13:30)

I know Mr. Brar had referenced a number of events that he's gone to there; so have I, and I know I think it's—remember as a kid growing up, going to events, whether it was through school or through family functions to these different—or, to different attractions at the Centennial Centre as an example.

And I think it's a—certainly a pride of Winnipeg to have it here and, of course, I think we'd like to continue to see it in Winnipeg, continue to see it provide these incredibly important services to the arts community and incredibly important to maintain its sustainability on a go-forward basis.

Mr. Brar: Myself, have been there so many times and, myself, I have been associated with so many cultural events and organizations all my life and I always—in the community as well, I always appreciate people to choose that facility which is our own facility over the other ones if they can, so that we can support our government organization—Crown corporation.

Yes, and myself and my caucus colleagues, we are on board to work together to make it better and it belongs to all of us.

To the next question: in 2019 letter, the former minister of Crown Services directed the corporation to develop a plan for self-sufficiency, and I quote, work with Crown services and other parties to develop a five-year plan to achieve self-sufficiency, including pursuing opportunities to develop properties within the centre and modernizing governance.

So, I would like to ask the minister: Is this no longer part of the minister's mandate?

Mr. Smith: Like I said, and I believe I've even answered that question before it was asked but, I mean, I've already said that my—I am very willing to work with the M-triple-C board and continue to work with our government's folks here on SCH and, of course, on—from Minister Helwer's department, as well. As you know, that's—all those parties are involved in creating the sustainability plan.

I know 2019's been a few years ago, but a lot has happened since 2019. We know the global pandemic has certainly impacted, well, the arts and culture community in general, whether it's consumer demand, whether it's the ability to get in person to have any kind of—even practices or any kind of training. It has really thrown off a lot of folks, it's thrown off a lot of ability to raise money in the community and it's thrown off a lot of ability to just maintain that arts and culture community.

So now that we're—pandemic is in a rear-view mirror, we are looking forward to getting the sustainability plan completed and having an idea of what that's going to look like. And then what that is available, everyone at this table will have a idea of what that's going to look like and what the future of our great M-triple-C and our arts and culture community will have in store in this great province of Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, we'll give the floor down to Mr. Loepp now.

Mr. Loepp: Just a couple things. First, some comments about, you know, our drive to sustainability. We were already—prior to the minister of the day giving us direction to attempt to achieve a self-sustainability, the board had already given direction to the administration and the staff to drive towards sustainability.

And our agenda was quite on track prior to COVID hitting all of us. We went from, six years ago, taking over the board where we were losing money on an annual basis, we faced a 22 per cent reduction in funding and still turned a profit in the subsequent years consistently.

So, we were already on track with that while maintaining all the services with our resident tenant groups, while maintaining all the operating expenses that—immense. And to maybe help with some of that information, our staff has prepared a handout here. Can I present this to members of the committee?

And you will find in it much of the information that relates to the funding we receive on an annual

basis and how very little of it actually goes into the operations of the Centennial Centre. The Centennial Centre receives funding that shares it with the operational expense of the Manitoba Museum and other facilities on the campus. So, maybe we can pass that around?

But, yes, we're—the board had given direction that we want to become a more self-sustaining organization because it's going to benefit the entire arts community as a whole. We can't be 100 per cent reliant on the Province to step up every time we need something, and the resident tenants are also excited about the opportunity that it presents for them.

Thank you.

Mr. Brar: I appreciate Mr. Loepp for the recent comments and this information. Thank you for that.

So, the minister mentioned about the changes, and we are agreed that between 2019 and today, there have been so many changes.

But my question was regarding the changes in the mandate. Has the mandate since changed or it's same as in 2019?

Mr. Smith: Well, I have—fully intend to continue to work with M-triple-C to make sure that there is a sustainability plan and we land on a sustainability plan for the organization. So, absolutely there is no change in the will to have a sustainable—a more sustainable organization in M-triple-C.

I know Mr. Loepp had just talked about how—some of the things that they do on more of an operational basis and, you know, as I said, they've done a tremendous job. And, you know, sometimes doing a good job is good, doing—but we can always do better, and we know that's where sustainability comes into play.

And we'd like to—you know, the face of Manitoba is changing. We don't know what 10, 15, 20 years holds for the arts and culture.

We—and, Mr. Brar, you're very familiar with—I mean, the amount of immigration coming to Manitoba will have an impact on it, I say in a positive way. Having said that, a sustainability plan would be important to help us adapt and change to the changing nature of our demographic landscape.

Mr. Brar: I thank the minister for his comments about the mandate that we were discussing and about the changes we were talking.

And I noticed that the minister clearly said that there's no change in the will. Very good, there's no change in the will to improve the facility. There should not be, because we are all willing to improve it, make it better.

But I wanted to hear that there's no change in the mandate or there is a change in the mandate.

I would give another opportunity to the minister.

Mr. Smith: Well, thank you very much for that question again. Mr. Chair, thank you for doing this.

I—we believe that the current governance model—we're looking at the current governance model for opportunities that will create greater flexibility to the M-triple-C to seek out new revenues to better support Manitoba's arts and culture sector and benefit our greatest—our great province here.

So, again, I think I've been pretty clear that the direction is to make sure that we have a sustainability plan in place for M-triple-C.

The arts and culture community—and, I mean, I'll rehash this again—has undergone tremendous financial strain. And that's not even talking about other—the strains of, you know, perhaps, practicing and keeping sharp and athletic. Those types of issues had huge impacts on the arts and culture community. I'm thinking some of the groups that rely on in-person practice to maintain their skillsets. All those compounding factors have created tremendous strain on the sector.

So, again, I will say this to Mr. Brar, and—we are fully intending as a government to continue to work with M-triple-C, and that includes Sport, Culture, Heritage and Minister Helwer's department, to work on a sustainability plan. And when that is available, in that when a decision is landed upon, I assure you that, Mr. Brar, you will be well kept in the loop on that one, as Manitobans in general will be. And I think that's the most responsible way to approach it.

We've—2019 is a number of years ago. I mean, you—Mr. Brar, you did mention that, that you understand there is a lot of changes that have happened since then. COVID has been—has thrown a wrench in the spokes, so to speak, and we're looking at what kind of sustainability plan we can land on on a go-forward basis.

* (13:40)

And I know that all sides of the House would like to see M-triple-C remain sustainable into the future. I know, Mr. Brar, you have a young child not too much older than my own. We'd like to see that their generation can enjoy some of the same opportunities that we have now and that we grew up with.

So I say it again: we are very intent as a government to continue to work with M-triple-C and other departments that are affected on a sustainability plan for the organization.

Mr. Brar: In our discussions, ethnicity came up, and as myself and the minister, we get together at so many ethnic events and we have common connections there in the community, as well.

I wanted to know if the minister is taking steps to ensure that the ethnic and gender diversity of Manitobans is reflected at all levels of Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation. I mean to say, from the performances to the levels of decision making, for example, board of directors.

Mr. Smith: I thank the member for the question.

But, you know, I mean—first of all, I'll say that this line of questioning is outside the scope of the annual report. Having said that, our Sport, Culture and Heritage Department does often have a lens on diversity, equity and inclusion. But, again, I will say that this is outside the scope of the annual report.

Mr. Brar: I'm always—because, you know, we talk a lot about BIPOC communities and inclusion and diversity. And that's why I ask this question, because it's important and I wanted to bring it up.

That's why I still want to know, like, if the minister is advancing inclusion in the culture and heritage community so that BIPOC community members also fully access the state-of-the-art facilities, sports and services offered by this wonderful organization.

Mr. Olson: Thank you for the question. If you don't mind, perhaps I can shed a little bit of light.

So, last year, if you'll recall, you actually asked us about how many East Indian shows we hosted at the concert hall. This year, I'm pleased to report—because I wasn't prepared for it last year—so I'll tell you, this year, we hosted six performances of various East Indian performances.

But I want to remind Mr. Brar, the concert hall is a public venue, and it's accessible to anyone who

wants and chooses to rent the facility for their particular purposes. So, there's no general restrictions on who can ask about availabilities.

We do have a little bit of a lens on the types of performances that might be coming through to make sure they're appropriate and they're not disrespectful to anyone in particular. So, there is a little bit of a lens and there is some screening that we do in advance. You know, I won't get into the particular performances that we might reject outright, because they're very far and few in between.

But it is a rental facility, and it is open to the public. And the restrictions, really, are date availability. And if there is an available date, and there is a performance to be staged on the stage, we will host it. We will actually help the organizations host those events.

And we welcome diverse audiences, diverse performances from every race, ethnicity. It's an inclusive facility. We like to pride ourselves on that, as well.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, thank you, Mr. Olson.

I'll just do a time check. We're around the 45-minute mark, so just wondering if the member is wrapping up soon. *[interjection]* Okay. Can we be definitive about how many more minutes he would like?

An Honourable Member: Five.

Mr. Chairperson: Five more minutes.

Is there will of the committee to extend five minutes? *[Agreed]* Excellent.

Mr. Brar: I really, really appreciate Mr. Olson jumping up and sharing his views. My next question was actually to you, regarding somewhat that you already said.

It is inclusive, no doubt about it. We are all inclusive. We wish that everybody uses those facilities, but there is a difference between it's open to all and bring people in. So, that was my point.

And, for clarity, it was not about East Indian immigrants, it was about diversity. That's why I mentioned gender diversity, age diversity, ethnic diversity on the board of directors and also the performances. We have started seeing diverse concerts there, which is good.

But my question to the minister was that, is the minister and his department doing something special or making special efforts or some funding to include

new Canadians, new families and various people from various ethnicities? Are there any projects or thoughts or visions or goals to bring, say, 50 per cent diversity—gender diversity—or 25 per cent ethnic events, this year, that year, in five years?

So, just for clarity, that was my question, that how we can work together and collaborate, all the parties including this side, that side and the wonderful people at the M-triple-C? So how we can work together—that's the question to my respectable CEO and board chair.

And to the minister: Are there any specific efforts that he can share to include ethnic communities on the board and on performances both?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Brar, thank you for the clarification. I appreciate that.

Absolutely, you know—and I can take more of a broader sense on this because, right now, the—our government, as you know, has taken a number of initiatives not only to invest in the arts and culture and sport community, but through a lot of our boards, agencies and commissions. We have filled a lot of vacancies with folks from communities that are—have not normally been overly represented.

I know Manitoba Arts Council, in general, in—specifically, has seen some folks—new folks come on that represent other communities, because first of all, very qualified folks that we have on there and we've—very happy to have these new folks. But they've—also bring with them a different 'prescriptive' and a different lens that I think that you were alluding to about the need for inclusion and diversity, especially with the changing demographics as we have in this province. So, look, our government is very committed to that.

We are very open to new communities, not only through immigration, as you are well aware, that we're looking at increasing immigration numbers here as best we can in the province of Manitoba through the Provincial Nominee Program.

At the arts and culture side, we're very much interested in developing and investing in these communities, as you know, with the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund. There'll be a number of organizations from ethnocultural groups who may not have received funding in the past from government, who would be interested in this particular fund.

And I know that I'm looking very forward to that, being able to invest in these types of communities

and give those communities who have been largely underrepresented in the past, not only funds to help their organization, but hopefully raise their profile in the larger community and attract folks from other parts of other communities into a greater understanding and more of an integration with a greater community.

So, I thank you for that question. I really do thank you for clarification.

Mr. Brar: Just quickly, for CEO and board chair, just quickly: Is there an opportunity to collaborate on what we are discussing? Like, what kind of opportunities could there be?

Mr. Olson: Certainly, we're receptive to any opportunities to collaborate.

And, as I said, probably in my previous statements, when many organizations first come to us and they may not know how to stage or how to present a particular performance, we afford them the opportunity to sit down with our trained stage technicians or event programmers to sort of flesh out what a performance could look like, particularly if it's something that's—involves the diversity of our community.

* (13:50)

So, we're very much willing to and supportive and encourage as many different performers and performances to come through our concert hall. We do not specifically, to answer your question, reach out to a community, because we like to keep our facility and the Centennial Centre, in general, open to anyone.

So, the messaging, perhaps, from Mr. Brar's perspective, is to continue to emphasize the fact that the Centennial Centre is a centre for the public and is accessible to anyone who has an opportunity or would

like an opportunity to rent our stage or rent any one of the other rooms or services that can be provided within our purview.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Brar, just aware of the time. Go ahead.

Mr. Brar: In conclusion, thank you so much everybody who participated, and I really appreciate and respect the comments and the hard work everybody is doing.

I thank the minister for his work, because we are all working for Manitobans.

I would wish that we all work together to reach out—underlined and bold—to reach out to diverse communities—women, gender-diverse folks—to be on the board, to be in the building, various committees and be part of the decision making. That's what I'd wish. You might agree to it, and I'm open to further discussions on that.

Thank you. That was the last comment. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, we thank the member very much for all of that and, seeing no further questions, I'll now put the question on the report.

Annual Report of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022—pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 1:52 p.m., what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 1:52 p.m.

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