

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Arts Strategy Funding
Committee of the Whole—2022-2023 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Education, Culture and Employment—March 1, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So on September 17th, 2021, the new arts strategy was released, and it doesn't look like there's any -- there is no changes to any of the contributions on page 37. So when might we expect to see some changes in, you know, even culture, heritage and languages budget that reflects the new arts strategy? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So it could be the next budget. The program evaluation is happening, and you know, I'm of two minds of these strategies. Do I just do the work without telling anyone what we're doing, or do we release something that is very high level so that people know what we're doing but then I get criticized for not having dollars attached to it? And so I've opted to put something out there so that people know what we're doing and know where we're going. And so right now, the programs are being evaluated. There is a budgeting process that happens throughout year and so if there's an opportunity to perhaps increase some of those numbers, or perhaps change some of those numbers, you know, none of our arts funding programs were designed with an evaluation component. So we really don't know how they're doing. There's no way for us to look at them and say, yes, this money is well spent. So we want to do that work, ensure that what we're doing is appropriate and, if not, adjust as necessary. And if we find that, you know, an investment makes a huge difference and we'd be crazy not to increase that funding, then we can pursue those types of changes. But I understand the Member's frustration. But we are looking at the programs and determining if we need new money and how that money would be spent and where it would go. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I know the Minister was on this side of the House in the last Assembly and saw lots of different strategies. Once in a while, you might actually see one that actually had some dollar figures attached to it but pretty rare. But, you know, here a significant amount of time, I know even committee time went into reviewing draft of the strategy, not that that was really reflected in the strategy but, you know, we put a lot of time and effort into this and then we just get the same thing in the next budget. Then the Minister talks about how, well, we're reviewing things within the department. Is that part of the government renewal initiative? Because I've seen zero results from that effort so far. Zero. Nothing. No inventories. Nothing. But I understood that Education, Culture and Employment was supposed to be one of the first departments. Still haven't seen anything. Is that what the Minister's talking about here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And no, I'm not talking about the government renewal initiative. As the Member may recall, the art strategy included a number of actions in there. The first action, it's one of the foundational action, was to review the current programs that we have. And again, that work could have been done prior to a strategy being released, and we could have released the strategy with the reviews done, you know, perhaps this year or sometime next year but we decided to do it in that order. And so we have -- we know what we have. We know what our inventory of arts funding is, our programs are, and we're going to review those as part of the art strategy, not as part of a broader government renewal initiative. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.