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**Standing Committee on
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Ministry of Tourism,
Culture and Sport

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère du Tourisme,
de la Culture et du Sport

Chair: Cindy Forster
Clerk: Katch Koch

Présidente : Cindy Forster
Greffier : Katch Koch

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you very much for the question. Over the last three months I've had the opportunity to get out to different communities and experience different festivals, cultural shows and activities. Even last night, being at the Ontario Art Council's reception yesterday, it was just astonishing to meet the folks that are part of that creative sector, part of the arts sector that contribute to festivals.

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I was saying to them that the big difference between the former ministry I was in, citizenship and immigration, and this ministry is that at the old ministry, you meet folks who arrive in Canada and go through the biggest challenges of trying to find the right school, trying to find the right home, trying to find the right neighbourhood. Obviously, immigration is sometimes a big struggle for a new family to Canada. But then the citizenship piece kicks in once they have gone through the immigration process, and that's the full participation in society, getting out to festivals, learning about the Canadian heritage culture.

If you go across this great province, there are some extraordinary things happening. These festivals contribute so much to our economy. They raise awareness on specific issues. They celebrate things that we're proud of that actually draw people to this country. I've had the opportunity to go to, of course, big festivals like TIFF and Caribana. Caribana attracts over a million people here to Toronto and contributes hundreds of millions of dollars back into our local economy. But even the smaller festivals—I was at the Brick Works a few weeks ago when they had the garlic festival. I don't know if anyone has ever gone there, but it's extraordinary. You get thousands of people coming through. They're exchanging recipes. They have different products that use garlic and talk about—there's an education piece to it. There's a whole education side to it. There's a whole piece around the celebration of different culture and heritage.

Our festivals contribute so much to our economy. In fact, in my remarks yesterday, I said that the tourism sector here contributes almost \$30 billion back into our local economies in the province of Ontario. They contribute so much to tourism. We had over 140 million people come to visit Ontario, moving around, seeing Ontario last year. That's something we're proud of as a ministry, because we contribute to that success. But we also work with our partners, who are the real champions of tourism, and they leverage tourism through culture and sport and many different—heritage, for example. So we're very proud. We also know that there are over 22,000 jobs that are directly connected to the sector, to festivals, and we're very, very proud.

I'd like to turn it over to the deputy. We have one of our assistant deputy ministers who can talk a bit about it.

I just want to say that I am so proud of the work that our festivals do here in Ontario, not only to educate, to preserve our heritage, to share different cultures, but really to help define who we are as Ontarians and really to speak to the things that make us proud as Canadians.

Mr. Steven Davidson: Thank you, Minister.

I'd like to introduce Richard McKinnell, who is the assistant deputy minister of tourism, policy and development. I'm going to ask Richard to provide just a little bit more detail around the nature of the Celebrate Ontario program that is the principal funder for festivals and events, and also some of the impact the program has had. I am also going to ask Richard to talk about the process for assessment. Yesterday, Mr. Hillier referenced the importance of ensuring sound economic analysis that's highlighted in the minister's mandate letter. We do that in assessing applications under all the ministry's programs, and Rick will just highlight how that's done in this case as well.

Mr. Richard McKinnell: Thank you very much, Minister and Deputy, and thank you to the member for her question.

I'm really delighted to talk a little bit about the Celebrate Ontario program. As the minister alluded to, it helps us celebrate a sense of pride and place in our province. It helps us celebrate and recognize great cultural, food and local experiences, heritage etc. But most importantly, it is an economic development program. As the deputy said, I will tell you a little bit about how we do the economic impact analysis, what we expect applicants and recipients of our funding to do in terms of economic impact analysis—and then ultimately that does make a stronger economy for us.

Just stepping back and talking a little bit about the Celebrate Ontario program, it is really designed to help festival and event organizers across our province improve and enhance their festival. It's about how to increase attendance and then, in turn, how to get those people to come, attend your event and make the difference and spend a little bit more money, which in turn helps local businesses.

Colleagues at the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association tell us that our programs, through festivals and events, which really do support some of those local festivals and street fairs in so many of our communities, makes the difference between a profit and a loss for the year. The people who are on the street for that Saturday afternoon, or that Sunday, stop in at stores and visit.

In terms of economic impact, the minister was correct: It contributes. In 2012, it was a \$28-billion industry in our province, but it does continue to grow.

With that, our recipients out of Celebrate Ontario—and they are required to report back to us about what they're seeing in terms of improvements and enhancements—reported in 2012 that they saw an 18% increase in the number of visitors that attended their events, which resulted in over \$206 million being spent, in addition to what it was.

Our program is really designed to help people grow that festival, attract more people and generate more economic impact. It's not a judgment on the success of any given festival when you apply, because there are hundreds—I dare say thousands—of successful festivals