

Legislative
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of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION 2018

2nd Session, 41st Parliament
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The Honourable Dave Levac, MPP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Sir,

Your Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs has the honour to present its Report on its Pre-Budget Consultation 2018 and commends it to the House.

Ann Hoggarth, MPP
Chair of the Committee

Queen's Park
February 2018

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC
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2nd Session, 41st Parliament

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INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its pre-Budget hearings in Toronto in December 2017, and in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Ottawa, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Windsor in January 2018.

Witnesses included interested individuals and representatives from associations and organizations, businesses, community groups, municipalities, service agencies, and unions. In total, 123 witnesses appeared before the Committee. In addition, approximately 83 written submissions were received from individuals and groups who did not appear before the Committee. The Committee also heard from an expert panel of witnesses, whose testimony is summarized in Section 3 of the report.

The pre-Budget consultation provides an important forum for citizens, stakeholders, and local government partners to discuss their social, economic and program-related concerns with elected representatives. The submissions to the Committee are a vital part of the political process by which governments are held accountable for their decision making and administration by the electorate.

This report is an overview of the main issues raised by presenters during the pre-Budget consultation. Details of submissions by witnesses and their responses to questions by Committee Members can be found in the *Hansard* of the Committee's Proceedings. Committee recommendations are listed in Section 4 of the report. A list of witnesses, as well as the organizations and individuals from whom written briefs were received, appears at the end of the report.

1. MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Fiscal Strategies

Stakeholders such as The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recommended that Ontario implement clear plans to reduce the debt level, run balanced budgets, and engage only in prudent and restrained government spending. Other stakeholders such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario emphasized the importance of continuing to invest in public services that reduce inequality.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation recommended that Ontario adopt the Auditor General's accounting standards for public pension plans, which they argued would ensure that the budget reflected an accurate state of government finances.

Financial Services

Pensions

Stakeholders touched on issues that related to making pensions safer and more accessible to non-unionized and non-profit workplaces. The Ontario Nonprofit Network identified pension premiums as one key cost pressure facing non-profit organizations, and recommended increasing government funding to non-profits. The Ontario Federation of Labour expressed concern about potential pension plan sponsor insolvency, and recommended increasing the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund coverage to \$3,000 a month.

Insurance

Insurance industry stakeholders had recommendations for improving insurance markets and adapting to technological change. For instance, Insurance Brokers Canada advocated for the adoption of a use-and-file system of rate regulation, which would allow them to respond quickly to changing market conditions. Stakeholders also recommended that the government consult them on the development of regulations for new sectors such as driverless cars, ride-sharing companies, and non-bank and private lending institutions.¹

The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association recommended that the government work to bring down the cost of prescription medicines through bulk-buying and including private drug benefit plans in the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance. They also advocated for the removal of the retail sales tax and premium tax on life, health, and disability insurance premiums, and asked that the government phase out the special capital tax on life and health insurers.

Financial Services Regulatory Authority

The newly created Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) will oversee the regulation of financial services in Ontario, including insurers, pension plans,

¹ Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada, and Mortgage Professionals Canada.

and credit unions. Financial services stakeholders had several suggestions as to how the FSRA should operate

- The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association (CLHIA) and Mortgage Professionals Canada recommended that the FSRA engage in meaningful consultation with the insurance industry during the transfer of regulatory oversight from the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to the FSRA. The CLHIA also recommended that the FSRA support the harmonization of insurance regulation between provinces.
- The Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario (IBAO) expressed a desire to work with the FSRA to reassess insurance rating territories and ensure that territory borders are an effective reflection of claims patterns.
- The IBAO is supportive of the move to a more adaptive and responsive regulator that can respond to evolving customer needs; however, they asked the FSRA to proceed cautiously with auto insurance rate regulation, in order to avoid short-term swings in the insurance market.

Tax Policy

Corporate and Personal Income Tax

Few stakeholders commented on the personal tax rate in Ontario. The Council of Canadian Innovators asked the government to carefully consider how the personal tax rate might impact the province's economic competitiveness when attracting talent to Ontario. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce recommended that tax rates be reduced to their 2014 levels to improve Ontario's ability to compete with other jurisdictions. One individual proposed that the Ontario Health Premium be altered so lower-income people would not be required to pay it. He recommended raising the income threshold to \$40,000 and increasing the premium's upper limit to between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

Many stakeholders proposed that the government lower the corporate tax rate in response to the labour and employment standards changes of Bill 148 and the recent corporate tax cuts in the United States. To maintain competitiveness with neighbouring jurisdictions, business groups proposed that the government cut the corporate tax rate from 11.5% to 10% and in some cases even lower.² Conversely the Communist Party of Canada's Ontario Chapter and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario both advocated for increased corporate taxes, to 23% and 14% respectively. Another individual also supported higher corporate taxation, recommending that the balance of taxation shift to corporations.

² Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Tourism Industry Association of Ontario.

Some stakeholders maintained that the recently increased minimum wage will place an undue burden on small- and medium-sized businesses, and proposed that the government either reduce the small business income tax rate or create a bracketed small business deduction that would apply to all businesses with income less than \$500,000.³ The bracketed system would encourage growth for start-ups and small businesses, without penalizing them for scaling up. To further ease the tax burden on businesses, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and others asked the province to lower the Business Education Tax rate and further standardize it across the province.⁴ The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recommended a time-limited grant for a targeted group of small businesses, while the Toronto Region Board of Trade recommended that the province work with municipalities to reduce business property taxes in order to offset the costs associated with implementing Bill 148.

To help increase business investment in Ontario and increase the productivity of manufacturing and processing industries, stakeholders from the chemical, forestry, and manufacturing industries recommended changes to the Accelerated Capital Cost Allowance (ACCA). They noted that recent tax changes in the United States have made that country's ACCA more generous. The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada asked that the ACCA be made permanent for certain industries and that the coverage of eligible assets be broadened. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters asked that a 100% ACCA be allowed in certain instances, such as the purchase and installation of advanced technology, or the upgrading of resources into manufactured products. White River Forest Products also recommended a 100% capital tax offset for the purchase of capital investments.

Employer Health Tax

Business groups and several chambers of commerce recommended that the Employer Health Tax be reduced, especially for industries most affected by the minimum wage increase.⁵ In addition, the Retail Council of Canada asked that the exemption threshold be raised to \$1 million to protect small- and medium-sized businesses.

Tobacco Taxes

The Committee heard from two stakeholders on tobacco taxation, the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco (NCACT) and Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited, both of whom testified to the negative impacts of contraband tobacco. They recommended that the province not raise the price of legitimate tobacco because contraband tobacco is already relatively inexpensive. Imperial Tobacco advised that the government adopt the same approach to tobacco as they are applying to cannabis, wherein prices are kept low in order to compete with the black market. They also asked the government to cancel the planned excise tax increases in 2018 and 2019, while NCACT asked for a price freeze until the contraband tobacco problem has been resolved. The Canadian Cancer Society,

³ Canadian Federation of Independent Business and Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

⁴ Canadian Federation of Independent Business, North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce.

⁵ Canadian Federation of Independent Business, North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce.

Ontario Division recommended that the government raise taxes on tobacco products and introduce a retailer licensing fee of \$365 in order to discourage the sale of tobacco products.

Cannabis Excise Taxes

Municipal stakeholders testified to the importance of creating a framework to share the revenues from cannabis excise taxes with municipalities.⁶ They noted that a large share of the costs of cannabis legalisation will fall onto the municipal sector, for things such as increased roadside impairment testing and public health education campaigns, and asked that tax revenues be split accordingly.

Aviation Fuel Tax

Northern Ontario stakeholders asked that Northern Ontario be exempted from the Aviation Fuel Tax or, at minimum, from the annual 1% increase in the tax rate.⁷ They noted that the tax puts a large burden on regional airlines operating in Northern Ontario, where fuel costs are already quite high and some communities can only be accessed by airplane.

Railway Taxes

Municipal organizations asked the government to reconsider their approach to railway right-of-way taxation in order to provide municipalities with a larger tax base. The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FNOM) recommended that taxation be based on assessed value and tonnage, while the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association suggested a dollar per ton per mile taxation structure. FNOM also asked that short-line railways be exempted from any taxation. In addition, FNOM recommended that railway rights-of-way tax rates be adjusted to mitigate the regional disparities in railway taxes, with the lowest tax rates being approximately one-twentieth of the highest rate.

Caisses Populaires and Credit Unions

Stakeholders from caisses populaires and credit unions had several suggestions for expanding their role in the financial services industry. FirstOntario Credit Union recommended that the government continue to open up the MUSH (municipal, university, hospital, and school board) sector to credit unions. The Fédération des caisses populaires de l'Ontario and Mouvement Desjardins asked the province to recognize the concept of Integrated Financial Groups (IFGs) and allow caisses populaires and credit unions to create IFGs with out-of-province institutions. They also said that caisses populaires and credit unions should be allowed to sell property and casualty insurance and life insurance products, which could increase competitiveness in the insurance market and result in more products at lower prices.

Heads and Beds Levy

Several stakeholders noted that the heads and beds levy, a payment in lieu of property taxes paid by public institutions such as hospitals and correctional facilities, has not been increased since 1987 and is not pegged to inflation. They

⁶ Association of Municipalities of Ontario, City of Burlington, City of Mississauga, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Ontario Small Urban Municipalities, Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and Town of Tecumseh.

⁷ Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association and Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce.

recommended that the levy be increased to at least \$100 a bed, and to be automatically increased every year according to inflation.⁸ This would direct more revenue to municipalities that are home to several public institutions.

Tax Credits

The Committee received many proposals to expand and create new tax credits, including

- the Community Commonwealth Association advocating for the creation of a community income tax credit allowing municipalities to collect a portion of federal or provincial income tax revenues;
- FilmOntario asking for updates to the Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit and the Ontario Production Services Tax Credit to better reflect licensing and business realities, loosen residency requirements, and expand location fee eligibility;
- FilmOntario also asking to ease the administrative burden of the Ontario Computer Animation and Special Effects Tax Credit by changing application submission dates and redefining a “film and television production” as a screen-based production;
- the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada recommending extending the Healthy Home Renovation Tax Credit to people under 65 who are living with chronic and episodic disabilities, to allow them to retrofit their homes to accommodate their disabilities;
- Home Care Ontario calling for a tax credit for purchasing legitimate home care services, which would help finance caregivers and battle the underground homecare economy;
- the Ontario Caregiver Coalition asking that the Ontario Caregiver Tax Credit be made refundable or ideally, that the Ministry create a means-tested caregiver benefit allowance modeled on one that exists in Nova Scotia;
- caisses populaires and credit union stakeholders seeking the creation of a tax credit for investing in a regional development fund to help the government raise money for local economic development;
- White River Forest Products recommending the expansion of the employer training tax credit to 2% of payroll for specific classroom programs;
- the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario asking that caregiver tax credits be made refundable to help caregivers remain financially solvent, even at low income levels; and

⁸ North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, and Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

- the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association advocating for the creation of a Home Renovation Tax Credit that would reward homeowners who contract with legitimate contractors and builders.

Other

The Greater Toronto Airports Authority asked that arrival duty free and dual duty free be permitted, which would increase tax revenues and create jobs at Toronto Pearson International Airport.

2. OTHER MINISTRIES

Advanced Education and Skills Development

The Committee heard from colleges and universities, as well as related faculty and student associations, many of whom were supportive of recent changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program and the benefits it provides to students but noted concerns that post-secondary institutions in the province receive some of the lowest per-student funding in Canada. The Council of Ontario Universities explained that the new funding formula negotiated between universities and the government through Strategic Mandate Agreements offers revenue stability, but does not allow universities to address funding shortfalls through enrolment growth.

To address this, stakeholders asked for increased operational funding, as well as targeted investments to improve the student-to-teacher ratio and to enhance the learning experience by providing services for at-risk and Indigenous students, mental health care services, experiential learning programs, entrepreneurship programs, and incubators.

Specific funding requests included:

- Colleges Ontario asked that college operating grants be increased by \$165 million.
- The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations asked that the Ministry invest \$335 million to return to 2008-2009 per student funding levels, and for an additional \$80 million to hire 1,126 full time faculty.
- The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance asked that university funding be indexed to the weighted national average, requiring an initial investment of \$750 million.
- A number of universities including York University asked that new funding be provided in order to achieve a 25% increase in STEM graduates.
- Lakehead University asked that the Ministry fund the Gitchi Kendaasiwin Centre and the tele-presence project, which allow rural and northern students to attend class from home.

- Algonquin College, Confederation College, La Cité, Council of Ontario Universities, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and York University requested that the government increase funding to address the costs associated with Bill 148.
- The Council of Ontario Universities asked that the province continue investing at least \$500 million annually in the Postsecondary Greenhouse Gas Campus Retrofits Program, and provide \$400 million from the program in 2018 to universities to reflect the universities' share of emissions.

A number of institutions and associations also asked for capital investments to address the backlog of deferred maintenance, as well as new digital infrastructure to support growth. To this end, Colleges Ontario asked for \$100 million and the Council of Ontario Universities asked for \$360 million. The University of Ontario Institute of Technology asked for a \$26.9 million investment in its Centre for Advanced Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship.

Student groups asked for additional investments to improve affordability, while acknowledging the recent investments in the Ontario Student Assistance Program. The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the Students' General Association at Laurentian University asked for \$2 million over three years to expand the eCampus open educational resource project, which would help provide free textbooks in large entry-level classes. The Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario suggested that universities introduce a system of post-residency fees for graduate students so that they are not charged tuition while writing a thesis. Carleton University asked that the Ministry cement the future success of the tuition waiver program by creating a parallel framework for tuition increases.

Skilled Trades and On-the-Job Learning

Some presenters highlighted the benefits of on-the-job training. They noted that students can learn practical skills that make them more employable when they seek their first job.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association spoke highly of the Graduated Apprenticeship Grant for Employers, explaining that upfront grants provide a necessary incentive for employers. However, Apprentice LMS recommended the grant be revised to include technical support trades. The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce suggested the apprenticeship system could be improved by lowering journeyman-to-apprentice ratios.

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance asked that the Ministry expand the Career Kick-Start Strategy and Career Ready Fund to ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate in workplace learning. The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers proposed that these initiatives earmark funds to support engineering employment, especially with small and medium employers.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

The Committee heard from several rural and agricultural stakeholders, many of whom brought attention to the lack of broadband internet access and reliable

cellular access in rural and Northern regions of the Province.⁹ Noting that this harms the competitiveness of rural businesses and makes it more difficult to attract newcomers to the area, they urged the government to make more investments in broadband infrastructure.

Other delegates recommended that the government invest more in rural Ontario community hubs and economic development. For instance, Ontario Small Urban Municipalities recommended the expansion of policy to support economic development targeted to rural and agrarian areas. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture asked that the government invest in rural Ontario in order to support continued rural growth. An individual asked for continued support for Northern agriculture investments through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation.

School closures and rural education were another topic of discussion. Constituents participating in an MPP's town hall recommended that the government complete a full review of rural education, which would consider the merits of community schools that are shared across school boards and open to community usage.

Attorney General

Access

Presentations to the Committee regarding the Ministry of the Attorney General focused primarily on improving access to the justice system. A few witnesses asked that a fund be created, modeled on the federal Court Challenges Program, to support civil society groups that are using the courts to seek legal systemic remedies to address the inequities experienced by racialized communities.

Witnesses voiced their support for the unique and important services provided by legal aid and funded by the province.¹⁰ While supportive of the 2014 ten-year announcement for increased investments in legal aid, the Criminal Lawyers' Association and the Law Society of Ontario raised concerns about the adequacy of legal aid funding and the financial eligibility test required. As of April 2017, to qualify for legal aid or a contribution agreement, a family of three would need to earn less than \$33,102. Noting that as the minimum wage increases, fewer families will qualify, the Criminal Lawyers' Association suggested increasing the financial eligibility test by 21%. The Law Society of Ontario also asked that funding to legal aid be made more predictable through a permanent review process to provide reasonable remuneration on an ongoing basis.

Noting that in 2017 Legal Aid Ontario had threatened to suspend immigration and refugee services due to insufficient resources, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants asked that \$21 million a year be provided to Legal Aid Ontario to continue to serve these clients.

The Criminal Lawyers' Association suggested establishing a guarantee mechanism to backstop Legal Aid Ontario funding shortfalls resulting from fluctuating funds from the Law Foundation of Ontario, and recommended that the

⁹ Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, and Tourism Industry Association of Ontario.

¹⁰ Law Society of Ontario and an individual.

province increase legal aid funding by \$100 million and direct these funds to the private certificate program.

Other

Organizations representing municipalities proposed that joint and several liability be amended to discourage frivolous lawsuits. The Town of Tecumseh explained that this would help municipalities continue to provide services such as bicycle trails, tobogganing, and outdoor skating. However, the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association urged the Ministry to continue to reject this call for “unwarranted reductions” in the protection of accident victims.

The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario also asked that the Province continue to implement reforms that help municipalities collect unpaid *Provincial Offences Act* fines.

The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association asked that they, along with the Law Society, be consulted on the implementation of changes to contingency fee arrangements.

Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario

The Ontario Convenience Stores Association and Gateway Newstands asked that the commission for online lottery sales be raised from 5% to 8% to help them deal with rising business expenses including hydro costs, local taxes and minimum wage increases.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business requested that Ontario craft distillers’ access to Liquor Control Board of Ontario stores be improved.

Cabinet Office

The Committee heard from stakeholders testifying on the Anti-Racism Directorate, several of whom cited the disparities that affect racialized Ontarians in finding employment and accessing social services. The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition recommended that anti-racism training be mandatory for employees in social services, in order to teach service providers about the challenges facing racialized people. Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change asked that the Anti-Racism Directorate be adequately funded in order to collect and analyze ethno-racial data across all ministries and public institutions, which would be a key resource when developing equity policy. Focusing specifically on employment disparities facing racialized workers, the Ontario Federation of Labour asked that the Directorate work alongside the Ministry of Labour to apply an equity lens on employment conditions in Ontario.

Children and Youth Services

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies asked that increased investments be made to help support change management that will result from the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* coming into effect in April, and to support the Child Protection Information System that will be implemented in 2020.

A number of organizations advocated for increased investment in youth mental health services to better support young people and their families before they find themselves in crisis, and to save health care costs due to the inappropriate use of emergency services.¹¹ Children’s Mental Health Ontario, Carizon Family and Community Services, and the Roberts/Smart Centre asked for a sector investment of \$120 million to hire more staff and expand community services, bringing wait times for child (and adult) mental health treatment down to 30 days.

Citizenship and Immigration

Explaining that the current 18-month model is insufficient, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants asked that the immigrant settlement sector be funded over longer periods to better provide intensive and specialized supports.

The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce asked that the province develop a local nominee program under the Provincial Nominee Program to support labour market development in the Northwest region. The Council of Canadian Innovators asked that 10% of Provincial Nominees be reserved for workers with unique and in-demand skills.

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council proposed that the Ministry invest \$9.6 million per year in mentoring programs, up from \$3.6 million, to help immigrants find jobs and learn about Canadian workplace culture.

Community and Social Services

Various legal clinics, unions, religious groups, and individuals as well as housing, poverty reduction, and health-related organizations described current social assistance benefits as inadequate and punitive, and urged the government to implement the recommendations of the report *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change*.¹² They encouraged the government to increase investments in social assistance and to provide more services outside the program to reach all low-income Ontarians. Several *Roadmap* recommendations were specifically highlighted by witnesses:

- Immediately increase Ontario Works by 10% and the Ontario Disability Support Program by 5%.
- Change the rate structure of social assistance by merging and eliminating distinctions between basic needs and shelter costs. This will reduce intrusion in people’s lives and eliminate

¹¹ These included the Child and Family Centre, Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare, and Roberts/Smart Centre.

¹² These included multiple individuals as well as the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario; Anglican Diocese of Toronto; Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario; Windsor-Essex County; Hamilton Community Legal Clinic; Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group; Income Security Advocacy Centre; Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition; Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic; Legal Assistance of Windsor and Community Legal Aid; Neighbourhood Legal Services (London and Middlesex); Ontario Association of Social Workers; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants; Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Alliance; Poverty Free Thunder Bay, Schizophrenia Society of Ontario; Social Assistance Action Committee; and Windsor and District Labour Council.

punishingly low rate categories that depend on a person's living situation.

- Design an “assured income” mechanism for persons with disabilities that would stack income benefits to reach adequacy, adjust to in-year income changes, allow recipients to move in and out of employment, and would not include asset testing.
- Expand access to mandatory core health benefits to all adults receiving Ontario Works and adult children in families under the Ontario Disability Support Program, and add coverage for dentures for all social assistance recipients.
- Expand access to medical transportation benefits.
- Change the social assistance definition of common-law spouses to be consistent with the *Family Law Act*.
- Expand existing health benefits for all low-income adults over the next 10 years, starting with the expansion of prescription drug coverage to adults aged 25 to 65, and followed by dental, vision, hearing, and medical transportation coverage.
- Define a made-in-Ontario Market Basket Measure that would reflect the true cost of living adjusted to all regions of the province, including the far north.

Additional recommendations focussing on social assistance adequacy were also made. For example, the Social Assistance Action Committee asked that social assistance rates match those offered by the Ontario Basic Income Pilot. The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario requested an immediate 10% increase to both Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program followed by subsequent annual increases. One individual argued that social assistance rates should be raised, resulting in less lost productivity, less poverty, fewer health expenditures, and greater economic benefits. Another individual asked that the intended outcomes of the Basic Income Pilot and its implications for future policy be clarified.

Other recommendations for this Ministry included:

- The Ontario Public Service Employees Union asked that the Ministry hire more social assistance case workers and set lower caseload thresholds.
- The MS Society of Canada, Ontario Division asked the Ministry to increase funding to the Direct Funding Program through the Centre for Independent Living, in order to increase the number of clients served and to allow participants to access additional staff hours.

Community Safety and Correctional Services

Municipal Policing

The Committee heard from municipal stakeholders concerned with the growing cost of policing services in Ontario, which they said are the highest in Canada. They indicated that this is an unsustainable cost pressure for many rural, Northern, and small municipalities. The most commonly heard recommendation was to amend the proposed *Safer Ontario Act, 2017* to explore more civilian roles in policing for certain functions that do not require a sworn, armed officer.¹³ For example, civilians could direct traffic around construction sites.

Municipal stakeholders also recommended that the province acknowledge the increased costs that municipalities will bear when tackling impaired drivers and enforcing the new laws around the sale and consumption of cannabis.¹⁴ Municipalities emphasized that law enforcement and community services will require adequate funding and resources in light of this change.

Tobacco

The Committee heard from several stakeholders concerned with the contraband tobacco industry in Ontario, which holds a 37% market share resulting in upwards of \$1 billion of lost tax revenue annually, according to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The Ontario Convenience Stores Association, Imperial Tobacco Canada, and the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco all recommended that the province adopt an enforcement model similar to the ACCES Tabac program that has been successful in Quebec. This model increases fines for trafficking contraband, publishes contraband charges to raise public awareness and deter offences, allows any peace officer to enforce the *Tobacco Tax Act* and conduct investigations into contraband tobacco, and takes other measures to stamp out contraband tobacco.

Corrections

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) offered several suggestions to make correction facilities safer. For example, they asked that the government provide the necessary infrastructure and services to offer mental health care in all facilities, and to increase the number of officers, nurses, and other staff in corrections. They also recommended that the government build housing and hire staff as needed in order to reduce the use of segregation.

To meet provincial standards for parole reviews and supervision after release, OPSEU recommended an increase in the number of probation and parole officers.

Economic Development and Growth

Accessibility Directorate

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada testified on the need for more arms-length inspections and monitoring of the standards set out in the *Access for*

¹³ Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Ontario Small Urban Municipalities, Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and Township of Hornepayne.

¹⁴ Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities and Town of Bracebridge.

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, to ensure more businesses and service locations are accessible to those with chronic diseases and disabilities.

Economic Development

Stakeholders from various industries across the province lobbied for increased economic development efforts in their sector, including

- the manufacturing, logistics, and agribusiness industry (Workforce WindsorEssex);
- the emerging bioeconomy sector (Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce); and
- the chemical sector (Chemistry Industry Association of Canada).

Several representatives spoke about the Jobs and Prosperity Fund. The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada asked that the grants program be expanded, and the Council of Canadian Innovators (CCI) recommended that more of the fund be invested in domestic firms that have successfully commercialized intellectual property around the world. Stakeholders also offered support for several other government initiatives. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME) celebrated the federal supercluster strategy, and asked that the province continue to support its development. The Retail Council of Canada recommended accelerating the implementation of the Open for Business initiative.

Several new economic development initiatives were proposed. CCI proposed that Ontario introduce a version of the federal program Innovative Solutions Canada, which mandates that government departments set aside a percentage of their procurement budgets to buy from small- and medium-sized domestic firms. CME and 3M Canada proposed that Ontario adopt a 'patent box' regime similar to those in Quebec and Saskatchewan, which incentivizes innovation by taxing profits from the sale of innovative products and intellectual property at a more favourable rate.

Red Tape and Regulation

Some industry stakeholders expressed concern with the burden of regulatory measures, and stated that regulation was a barrier to economic competitiveness. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) asked the government to determine the total economic cost of provincial regulations, and to cap that cost. The Canadian Fuels Association asked that regulations be staged and paced in order to help refineries and fuel producers manage the costs of new measures, while the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada recommended regulatory modernization in order to weed out costly, redundant, and outdated rules.

Some witnesses asked for more pan-Canadian coordination on regulation. The CFIB stated that a common corporate registry, shared across provinces, could eliminate the need to register a business in different provinces. The Canadian Fuels Association and 3M Canada also asked that Ontario align regulatory policies with other provinces and the federal government, to reduce market fragmentation and administrative complexity. In particular, 3M Canada asked that

Ontario support the Canada Free Trade Agreement's Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table.

Education

Early Years and Child Care

A number of witnesses cited evidence that suggested universal child care can have a positive economic impact, benefit children's health, development and well-being, support poverty reduction activities, and promote gender equality.¹⁵ One often-cited research study finds that Quebec's child care system provides an annual net gain of over \$200 million in the form of provincial tax revenues from increased parental participation in the labour force.

Witnesses expressed optimism about recent investments in child care, with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care explaining "the conversation has changed, and for that we're mostly grateful." Nevertheless, there continued to be concerns that the province has the highest fees in the country with long wait times in some communities. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care suggested an investment of \$635.5 million to provide operational funding for child care centres and to establish a sliding-fee scale for parental contributions. The Coalition noted that to ensure quality, salaries would need to improve, and suggested an additional commitment of \$375 million to establish an entry-level salary of \$25 an hour for childhood educators and child care staff.

Funding Formula and Grants

The Committee heard from school boards, trustee associations, and unions who described a number of challenges facing the school system such as inflexible funding models, disruptive student behaviour, difficulties addressing the mental health and other special needs of students, and large class sizes.

In light of these and other challenges, witnesses asked that the funding formula be revised to

- allow school boards to collect education development charges in order to repair and replace schools (Toronto District School Board);
- provide flexibility so that boards can effectively manage resources and respond to local needs (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Ontario Public School Boards' Association);
- re-establish the Local Priorities Grant (Ontario Public School Boards' Association);

¹⁵ These included the Canadian Mental Health Association, Windsor-Essex County; Ontario Federation of Labour; Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association; and Communist Party of Canada.

- fund illness absences for education employees to reflect actual costs and absence rates (Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association);
- expand funding for student mental health needs (Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Ontario Public School Boards' Association, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association);
- create a dedicated funding envelope for the ongoing specialized needs of refugees (Ontario Public School Boards' Association);
- provide additional funds to deal with the impact of the *Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014* (Ontario Public School Boards' Association); and
- better support children with special needs by, for example, providing funding to hire specialists, offering training to occasional teachers, undertaking independent audits of special education budgets, and conducting a province-wide review of the adequacy of special education funding.¹⁶

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association also asked that the Ministry restructure the student transportation funding formula to reflect the current competitive procurement process, costs associated with new employment standards, and other factors such as enrolment density, geography, and special needs students.

Some of the other proposals shared by boards or groups representing teachers included the following:

- Expand funding for English Language Learner programs in both regular and French Immersion schools, and ensure that these funds are spent on the intended programs.
- Provide funding for training of all school staff on reporting procedures for incidents of violence in the workplace, and intervention training that requires non-physical contact with a student.
- Provide funding to integrate Indigenous education opportunities in the curriculum and to help certified teachers engage in Indigenous professional development.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association recommended a provincial review of French as a Second Language opportunities with a focus on teacher availability issues, in an effort to alleviate significant school board pressures and to more accurately reflect parental choices.

¹⁶ These were among the recommendations to improve special needs education shared by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Greater Essex; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Thames Valley Teacher Local; Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association; Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association; and Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

An individual asked that funding be directed to the classroom and stressed that the oversight of funds should remain a priority.

Capital Infrastructure

School boards asked for increased spending in capital projects. Specifically, they asked that criteria for Capital Priority Process funding give consideration to boards that have demonstrated success and capability in capital planning and that the Province provide sufficient facility maintenance funding. The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board explained that it is unfair to penalize boards that are efficiently maintaining their infrastructure.

School boards also asked that the Province consult with them with respect to community hubs and to implement a multi-year capital funding cycle to support effective and predictive capital planning. The Ontario Small Urban Municipalities proposed that municipalities be allowed to purchase closed schools for a reasonable price in order to develop community hubs.

The Toronto District School Board asked that the Ministry consider increasing the capital construction benchmark funding for schools in urban settings and for all schools that require air conditioning retrofits.

Other

A number of witnesses argued that class sizes were too large. The recommendations for ideal class size ranged from 22 in all elementary school grades to 26 in kindergarten and 24 in grades 4 to 8. A few also suggested that the EQAO be replaced with random-sample tests.

Mouvement Desjardins suggested that the government include industry leaders in the implementation of the action plan to improve financial literacy, while the Canadian Federation of Independent Business proposed the creation of a mandatory full-semester financial literacy high school course.

Building Up Our Neighbourhoods and Peel Poverty Action Group asked that the Ministry continue to fund and provide funding increases to Parents Reaching Out Grants, especially for grants targeting those who are not in employment, education, or training.

The Ontario Library Association and Federation of Ontario Libraries requested that school boards be mandated to use the funding allocated for school libraries and teacher-librarians for its intended purpose.

Energy

The Committee heard from some stakeholders concerned with the cost of energy.¹⁷ Businesses and chambers of commerce explained how high hydro

¹⁷ Stakeholders who cited high hydro costs in their submissions included the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; Canadian Mental Health Association, Sudbury/Manitoulin; Canadian Mental Health Association, Windsor-Essex County; Canadian Taxpayers Federation; Chemistry Industry Association of Canada; Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities; Gateway Newstands; Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition; Norbord Inc.; NorWest Community Health Centres; Ontario Convenience Stores Association; Ontario Museum Association; Resolute Forest

rates impact their competitiveness. Non-profits noted that high energy prices can constrain their operating budgets and affect their services. Other organizations pointed to high energy costs as a contributing factor to the housing affordability crisis. Some attributed high prices to long-term locked-in energy contracts, and recommended renegotiating the contracts or buying them out.¹⁸

Aside from electricity prices, some witnesses expressed concern for the efficiency and transparency of the energy sector, and made suggestions such as

- eliminating the *Fair Hydro Plan* (Canadian Taxpayers Federation);
- committing to electricity price increases that will not outpace the rate of inflation (Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce);
- debating the *Long-Term Energy Plan* in the Assembly, and asking the Financial Accountability Officer to evaluate the economic impact of energy policies (Toronto Region Board of Trade);
- removing any costs not directly associated with generation, transmission, and distribution from the price of electricity (Toronto Region Board of Trade); and
- requiring the Global Adjustment Fee to be easily visible on electricity bills (Canadian Federation of Independent Business).

Industrial Electricity Users

Forestry stakeholders applauded the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program, and asked that it remain well-funded and permanent.¹⁹ The Ontario Forest Industries Association asked that the Industrial Conservation Initiative be expanded to all manufacturers regardless of size, a suggestion echoed by Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME). CME also suggested that the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program be revived and expanded to benefit all manufacturers, and that the debt retirement charge be eliminated for manufacturers. The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada noted the need for a program to assist around-the-clock industrial electricity users who cannot shift production to take advantage of low time-of-use rates.

Businesses and Municipalities

Some testimony related to the difficulties of small municipalities and businesses that have fewer incentives programs and are less able to adjust to high energy prices. The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities asked that the province address energy costs for municipalities, especially because of the high cost of operating municipal facilities such as recreation centres and wastewater plants. Business groups advocated for the elimination of time-of-use pricing for small businesses, and for the expansion of the residential “pick your peak” pilot to the business sector.²⁰

Products; Retail Council of Canada; Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce; and Toronto Region Board of Trade.

¹⁸ Canadian Taxpayers Federation and a private individual.

¹⁹ Norbord Inc., Ontario Forest Industries Association, and Resolute Forest Products.

²⁰ Canadian Federation of Independent Business and Retail Council of Canada.

Access to Natural Gas and Propane

One commonly heard recommendation was the need for natural gas expansion in rural, remote, and Northern communities. Less than 20% of rural Ontario households have access to natural gas, according to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and expanding access could attract new industry to rural areas, make transportation and agriculture more affordable, and spread the use of cleaner energy across Ontario. Business groups, agricultural stakeholders, and municipalities all asked that the government prioritize the expansion of natural gas infrastructure beyond the \$100 million already invested by government in the Natural Gas Grant Program.²¹

Stakeholders from the propane industry advocated for expanding access to propane for rural, remote, and Northern Ontarians who currently rely on heating oil to heat their homes.²² The Canadian Propane Association recommended that the province adopt a Rural Propane Retrofit Program, which would provide a \$2,500 rebate to people who convert from oil to propane in rural areas. Propane is cited in the Climate Change Action Program as a lower-carbon fuel with fewer emissions than conventional fossil fuels.

Environment and Climate Change

Climate Change

Several witnesses advocated for increased investments in home energy efficiency in order to help achieve Ontario's climate change objectives. The Ontario Real Estate Association advocated for upgrades to home energy efficiency through the funding of targeted retrofits. The Ontario Home Builders' Association recommended the creation of a home energy rating and disclosure program to make homebuyers aware of a home's energy performance before they purchase it. In addition, the Cement Association of Canada recommended that Ontario's housing codes and standards reflect climate change priorities, such as moving to net-zero energy-ready housing standards. Their recommendation was echoed by the Ontario Association of Architects, who encouraged net-zero standards for all new buildings.

On the topic of vehicle emissions, one individual recommended abolishing subsidies for electrical vehicles and proposed that the government subsidize off-grid electrical vehicle charging stations rather than charging stations connected to the neighbourhood power grid. Another individual asked that the Ministry focus on truck emissions rather than car emissions, and cancel emissions testing for cars.

Cap and Trade

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation called for the abolishment of the cap and trade system, while other stakeholders had suggestions to mitigate its impact on businesses. For instance, the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce suggested that companies who adopted carbon reduction technology prior to cap and trade

²¹ Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities; Jim McDonell, MPP; North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce; Ontario Chamber of Commerce; Ontario Federation of Agriculture; and Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce.

²² Canadian Propane Association, McDougall Energy, and Primemax Energy.

be provided with extra allowances. Transparency and accountability were of prime importance to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who asked that the government commit to annual value-for-money audits of cap and trade programs, and the Ontario Forest Industries Association, who asked that the government provide full disclosure on how cap and trade impacts electricity pricing.

Commercial groups had suggestions for how the revenues of cap and trade should be used; chambers of commerce suggested that revenues should go towards protecting emissions-intensive, trade-exposed industries,²³ while the Retail Council of Canada asked that revenues be reinvested in the retail sector.

Environmental Protection

Flood protection was a key concern for environmental stakeholders such as Conservation Ontario, who advocated for increased investments in flood forecasting and warning programs run by Conservation Authorities. They also asked for \$2 million in annual funding to help rural and northern municipalities fund improvements to flood infrastructure. The Insurance Bureau of Canada advocated for better flood resiliency through increased investments in consumer education, better land use planning, and wetland preservation and restoration.

The ecological health of lakes and wetlands was another commonly cited priority. The Canadian Environmental Law Association and the Association for Canadian Educational Resources asked for financial commitments to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River region by tackling algal blooms, invasive species, and other threats. Freshwater Future Canada proposed a \$50 million joint federal-provincial Lake Erie Fund to reduce runoff pollution. Ducks Unlimited Canada recommended that the government create a fund for wetland conservation and invest 15% of annual infrastructure funding in natural green infrastructure such as wetlands.

On the topic of air quality, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada asked that new air quality regulations not add to the complexity of the overall regulatory regime, nor delay approval processing times. They emphasized that regulations should not have negative impacts on competitiveness or investment. Resolute Forest Products asked that the standards for concentrations of sulphur dioxide in Northern Ontario not be altered.

The Region of Peel requested that the environmental assessment for the Greater Toronto Area West Corridor be completed and that measures to protect the corridor be implemented.

Francophone Affairs

The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario presented on how the government can support the Ministry of Francophone Affairs by

- increasing the Ministry's budget by 75% to help it fulfill its mandate;

²³ Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Toronto Region Board of Trade, and Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce.

- investing in francophone culture and arts by providing at least \$50,000 in base funding to each francophone arts institution;
- creating a multi-year assistance fund to help francophone organizations transition to the higher minimum wage;
- investing in French-language health planning entities and mental health services; and
- dedicating 5% of government advertising dollars to the province's French language media.

Post-secondary education stakeholders asked for more support for francophone students in Ontario. The French-language college La Cité asked for an additional \$2.5 million from the French-language funding envelope of the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Minority-Language Education and Second Official-Language Instruction, to go towards improving access to francophone education services and augmenting student services. The Canadian Federation of Students (Ontario) asked that the government continue to support the development of a French language university in Toronto, and requested that funding for the university be new, dedicated funding. They also recommended the creation of a French Education Fund to support francophone and bilingual education, which could go toward hiring francophone faculty or purchasing French language textbooks.

Government and Consumer Services

Consumer Protection

Consumer advocates testified about the importance of increasing government accountability and transparency. For instance, advocates from the Canadians for Properly Built Homes asked that the government report on how they spend mandatory oversight fees paid by Administrative Authorities, and report publicly on the cost of special reviews such as the Tarion Warranty Corporation review in 2015/16. Consumer protection was also a key theme in the presentation of the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association, who recommended more regulation around automobile advertising by car manufacturers, who, unlike dealers, are not required to provide “all in pricing” (i.e. pricing that includes all fees and charges). In addition, the Insurance Bureau of Canada advocated for condominium owners by recommending that legislation include a definition for a standard condominium unit, so that individuals are not required to pay for repairs to what should be considered common elements.

A consumer advocate spoke about Ministry consultations, recommending that they be a separate budget line item to ensure accountability and transparency. She also asked that Ministerial working group member lists be non-confidential, and that the terms of reference and selection procedure of the working groups be posted on Ministry websites to prove that consumers have appropriate representation. To increase consumer participation in working groups and consultations, she recommended that participants be compensated by a stipend.

Government Services

Representatives from the Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic recommended that the government provide official photo identification for free to people who do not have a driver's license or a birth certificate. They noted that some Ontarians do not have any forms of identification and cannot afford the \$35 fee for the Ontario Photo Card.

On the subject of government procurement, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce recommended that the government use a strategic, value-based procurement method, which could result in more innovation and cost savings. The Ontario Association of Architects urged the province to implement Quality Based Selection as their method to procure architectural services.

The Ontario Real Estate Association asked that the government continue to review the *Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002*. They recommended that the government modernize the Act and allow real estate agents to form personal real estate corporations.

Government Data

The Committee heard several suggestions for broadening and improving the quality of data collected in Ontario, such as

- collecting labour market and economic impact data on the non-profit sector (Ontario Nonprofit Network);
- improving labour market data through collaborations with the federal government, other provinces, and post-secondary institutions (Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce);
- funding the collection of data on mental health and child care (Addictions and Mental Health Ontario and Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care); and
- striking a Premier's Advisory Council of Digital Industries in order to develop a Provincial Data Strategy (Council of Canadian Innovators).

Health and Long-Term Care

Hospitals

Health care coalitions, hospital unions, and nurses urged the government to significantly increase funding to hospitals, describing historical underfunding, recent overcapacity issues, long-wait times, and the impact of population growth. For example, the Ontario Hospital Association asked for an operational funding increase in 2018-19 of 4.55% (\$815 million) to maintain current levels of service and \$180 million to create a Patient Safety Equipment Fund. The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions and the London Health Coalition asked for a funding increase of 5.2%.

A few organizations noted the importance of adjusting the hospital funding formula to acknowledge the diverse models of hospital operations, including

rural, small, northern, and multi-site hospitals. The Town of Bracebridge asked that municipalities be involved in service planning and decision-making by the Local Health Integration Networks, especially if they must contribute capital to new hospital facilities.

The Ottawa Health Coalition asked that the Ottawa Hospital Civic Campus be constructed in such a way that it will not have to contract out services such as knee or eye surgeries to private for-profit clinics.

Class 1 Inc. asked the Ministry to invest \$100 million per year in technologies to prevent Healthcare Acquired Infections.

Mental Health and Addictions

Witnesses explained that mental health illnesses should be treated the way physical illnesses are treated. Just as a doctor would not wait until a cancer has spread to treat a patient, our health care system should not require patients with mental illness to languish on a waitlist until their illness is critical. The long wait times—many months in some regions—are forcing individuals to use emergency clinics, a costly model that is not preferred by the patients themselves.

The Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Alliance, which consists of nine mental health organizations, cited a recommendation by the Mental Health Commission of Canada that the mental health and addictions sector should represent 9% of the total health care budget. The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario noted that in 1979 the proportion of health spending on mental health was higher, at 11.3%, than the current proportion of 6.5%.

Specific funding requests included:

- Increase the base budget of 30 Canadian Mental Health Association branches by 3%, for a total cost of \$7.4 million (Canadian Mental Health Association, Sudbury/Manitoulin, Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario, Canadian Mental Health Association, Windsor/Essex County).
- Invest \$50 million in each of the next four years to hire 550 front-line staff such as counsellors, case managers, social workers, and community treatment staff (Addictions and Mental Health Ontario).
- Increase the operational funding of community services by 3.75% (\$41 million) for the next four years to improve services and staffing (Addictions and Mental Health Ontario).
- Establish a mental health data system with a robust technology network and the staff to support it, which would cost \$24 million over three years in start-up costs, and \$8 million in subsequent annual operating costs (Addictions and Mental Health Ontario).

The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario also asked for funding increases for French mental health services.

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario asked that the province invest in supports that can assist with early intervention, psychotherapy and psychosocial supports, peer supports, and crisis supports. An individual requested additional services for people with borderline personality disorder, suggesting a pilot program within a geographical region with a psychology/social worker-run Dialectical Behaviour Therapy program.

Organizations welcomed the Strategy to Prevent Opioid Addiction and Overdose but municipalities asked that additional funding be provided to reduce the burden on the local level of government. The Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association asked for investments in mobile units and e-tools that would support recovery from opioid addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder in Indigenous and remote communities. The Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada and the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) presented a proposal that would see local pharmacists delivering a pain management program to reduce opioid dependency. The OPA also requested that pharmacists be permitted to prescribe for common ailments, that the Ministry work with its federal counterparts to ensure that pharmacists dispense cannabis for medicinal purposes; and that legislation be enacted to allow any pharmacy to join a Preferred Provider Network.

A joint submission by the College Student Alliance, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, Colleges Ontario, and the Council of Ontario Universities asked that a dedicated portion of the province's mental health and addictions budget be dedicated to services provided in post-secondary institutions.

Long-Term Care

While many elderly will remain healthy throughout their lives, the incidence of disease and illness will increase as the population grows. According to AdvantAge, the Ontario seniors population will double from 2.3 to 4.6 million between 2016 and 2041 and it will grow by 25% in the next four years. Witnesses explained that the long-term care sector is already feeling the pressures associated with this, and that these trends will continue to require significant investments in the range of services provided in the community and in institutions.

Stakeholders, including healthcare unions, nurses, and health coalitions, pressed for the implementation of a required minimum care standard in long-term care homes of four hours per resident per day of hands-on care.²⁴ The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Ontario Nurses' Association specified the four hours should include the following mix: 20% registered nurse, 25% registered practical nurse, 55% personal support workers, and one nurse practitioner for every 120 residents. AdvantAge Ontario also asked that the Nursing and Personal Care and Programs and Supports Services funding envelopes be increased by 2.3% to address pressures associated with non-acuity related costs.

²⁴ This included AdvantAge Ontario; Champlain Region Family Council Network; Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario; Family Council of Cassellholme Home for the Aged; Jim McDonnell, MPP; Ontario Council of Hospital Unions; Ontario Federation of Labour; Ottawa Health Coalition; and Unifor Local 229.

Stakeholders explained that understaffing can leave patients and staff vulnerable to violence. The Ontario Nurses' Association asked that the province implement the recommendations of the 2017 Workplace Violence Prevention in Health Care Leadership Table. The Ottawa Health Coalition requested that the Ministry fund specialized facilities for cognitively-impaired patients who have been assessed as potentially aggressive, and staff the facilities with appropriately trained workers. AdvantAge Ontario asked the Ministry to provide funding to the Behavioural Supports Ontario program for the creation of dedicated, in-home behaviour teams in all long-term care homes, as well as 12 new designated behaviour units.

The Champlain Region Family Council Network asked that the Provincial Dementia Strategy address the issue of dementia patients in long-term care homes, and that the province expedite the redevelopment and renewal of the 30,000 long-term care beds that do not currently meet design standards. Also relating to the strategy, the Region of Peel asked that dementia and responsive behaviour supports be enhanced throughout the sector through funding that aligns with increasing resident care needs, dedicated and consistent training related to person-centred dementia care, enhanced specialized supports, and supportive structural design.

More generally, witnesses recommended increased funding, more beds, and a labour market strategy to address the current and anticipated employment needs of the sector. AdvantAge Ontario asked that the Ministry prioritize the recently announced 5,000 new long-term care beds based on local demand, redevelopment need, and consumer preference.

Home and Community Care

The focus of recommendations in home care related to funding levels, information sharing, and improving caregiving quality by professionalizing and improving the working conditions of personal support workers. For example:

- The Ontario Community Support Association requested an additional \$359 million for frontline care.
- Care Watch asked for a 5% increase to achieve parity with institutional care and grow services across the province.
- The Champlain Region Family Council Network asked for consistent standards for personal support worker education and on-the-job development.
- SEIU Healthcare requested \$55 million over three years to be invested in creating a retirement savings vehicle for personal support workers.
- Home Care Ontario requested an additional \$600 million annually to deliver more frontline patient care, resulting in 9 million more personal support worker and 5.1 million more nursing visits.

The Ontario Caregiver Coalition suggested that the rollout of the Self-Directed Care Program include an evaluation of its impact on providing flexible respite options for caregivers. They hope to see the program eventually expanded to a wider range of client groups.

The Ontario Retirement Communities Association asked for the creation of a Senior Services Benefit, a monthly allowance to help seniors pay for their housing and care needs to allow them to stay in their communities for as long as possible and reduce the waiting lists for long-term care homes.

Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP)

Several witnesses discussed matters related to the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). Recommendations include eliminating the three-month wait for new and returning residents, and extending eligibility to refugee claimants, foreign temporary workers, and international students.

Some poverty reduction advocates, health organizations, unions, community groups and individuals also expressed support for OHIP+ and recommended expanding the program to include all Ontarians. The Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division suggested that the Ministry fully fund take-home cancer drugs. GSK asked that the Ministry explore opportunities to expand the cohort of the current vaccination program for shingles beyond the ages of 65 to 70. Pfizer Canada asked that the pneumococcal immunization program be expanded to include Prevnar 13 for adults older than 65. The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association proposed that the Ministry work with industry to coordinate efforts to bring down the cost of prescription medications, including in private drug benefit plans.

Some witnesses proposed developing a benefit for dental, hearing and vision care, in particular for low income individuals and seniors. As a member of the Ontario Oral Health Alliance, the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre explained that the first phase of this investment would require \$38 million and could maximize existing public investments in dental clinic infrastructure in Community Health Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres, and Public Health Units.

Illness and Disease Prevention and Treatment

The Committee heard from a number of organizations advocating for Ontarians living with disease and chronic illness. The recommendations included:

- The Alzheimer Society of Ontario requested an investment of \$7.6 million over the next two years for its First Link program and asked for primary care provider training to ensure accurate and timely dementia diagnoses.
- Diabetes Canada asked the Ministry to introduce a renewed Provincial Diabetes Strategy that sets aggressive targets to reduce the number of people diagnosed and to improve outcomes.
- The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Ontario Division requested significant investments into supporting Multiple

Sclerosis research with clinical applications and commercialization opportunities.

- The Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division asked for investments in cancer patient support services to support symptom management and address psychosocial needs.
- The Ontario Chiropractic Association requested that Primary Care Low Back Pain Pilots be transitioned into a regional primary care strategy linked to the new regional Rapid Access Clinics, requiring funding of \$7.6 million in the 2018 budget.
- The Lung Association-Ontario asked for \$30 million to ensure that a breathing test is administered to all patients at high or moderate risk of lung disease, particularly current or former smokers over 40, in order to properly diagnose Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.
- The Ontario Association of Cardiologists asked that funding for the Echocardiography Quality Improvement Program be fast-tracked and that the province incorporate cardiologists' ideas on how to improve patient care and management upon discharge from hospital.

Two diabetic Ontarians asked that the Ministry improve access to diabetes sensors that test glucose levels continuously.

Other

General health care recommendations included requests to invest heavily in health care, protect patients and their families, and reduce the contracting out of services. An individual asked that the province create an ombudsman or oversight body to oversee caregiving agencies and protect the developmentally disadvantaged and their families. NorWest Community Health Centres asked that funding to community health centres be increased by 5%. A doctor requested that the province invest \$1.7 million toward the creation of a Family Health Team in Wilmot Township.

The Committee heard from nurses who urged the government to improve the nurse-to-population ratio. The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario asked that nurse practitioners be allowed to perform point-of-care testing, order all diagnostic imaging, order ECGs in all situations, certify a death, and complete legal forms for mental health services. The Canadian Nurses Association and Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association requested a one-time investment of \$600,000 in professional development for nurses to build skills and capacity in support of public education related to cannabis. The Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario asked that the Nursing Education Initiative be renewed and the budget increased by \$400,000 to provide access to more grants. The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities asked that public health units not be reduced from 36 to 14, as proposed by the Expert Panel on Public Health's report. They also asked that the Province not proceed with the pilot project to expand medical responses by firefighters who are primary care paramedics while on fire duty.

The Ontario Association of Social Workers asked that the Ministry close the pay gap between social workers working in acute settings and those working in primary health care. The Ontario Association of Social Workers, Hamilton and District Branch requested that the Ministry not phase out the Nutritious Food Basket annual report provided by public health units, as it is an important measure of the cost of healthy eating.

DeafBlind Ontario Services asked that the value of specially trained intervenors for individuals who are deafblind be acknowledged by adopting living wage standards and policies that promote decent work and income fairness.

Housing

Affordable Housing

Housing advocates asked the province to sign onto the federal National Housing Strategy, which would result in 2,000 affordable housing units being built in Ontario, and provide financial support for about 90,000 people to attain housing.²⁵ The province would enter into a cost-sharing agreement with the federal government to help fund the cost of building and subsidizing this housing. The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada recommended that Ontario go further, and build roughly 4,500 more units per year by earmarking a portion of Land Transfer Tax revenues for affordable housing.

Stakeholders from the non-profit and social services sectors strongly supported efforts to battle the several-billion dollar capital repair backlog in social housing units across the province.²⁶ Municipal organizations advocated for provincial assistance in building, repairing, and maintaining housing for low- and middle-income households.²⁷ In addition, there was widespread support for the *Roadmap to Change* report, which contained a proposal to create an Ontario Housing Benefit.²⁸ This would be an income-tested portable housing benefit for low-income renters, and would cover 25% of the affordability gap between what a household could afford based on their income and their actual rent. The benefit would increase each year until it reached 75% coverage of the gap by 2027-28.

²⁵ Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (Ontario Region), Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group, and Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association.

²⁶ Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Anglican Diocese of Toronto, Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, and Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association.

²⁷ Association of Municipalities of Ontario, City of London, City of Mississauga, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Ontario Small Urban Municipalities, Region of Peel, Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Town of Bracebridge, and Windsor and District Labour Council.

²⁸ Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, Neighbourhood Legal Services (London and Middlesex), Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Alliance, Poverty Free Thunder Bay, Social Assistance Action Committee, and Schizophrenia Society of Ontario.

The Committee also heard several proposals to increase the affordability of housing in Ontario:

- The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association recommended earmarking revenue from the Non-Resident Speculation Tax to fund affordable housing, and to partner with municipalities to take advantage of CMHC's National Co-Investment Fund.
- The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition recommended making provincial Crown land available for affordable housing projects, and designating 50% of the land for rent-geared-to-income units.
- The Anglican Diocese of Toronto recommended that Ontario work with the federal government to free up federal Crown lands for affordable housing.
- The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada recommended that Ontario partner with the co-op sector to introduce project development funding via a mix of loans and capital grants to allow non-profits to develop new housing.
- The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario recommended that all new affordable rental housing be managed by the non-profit sector in order to keep it affordable in the long term.

Supportive and Seniors Housing

NorWest Community Health Centres asked that the province expand investments in supportive housing for those living with mental health and addiction needs. Stakeholders from the mental health sector, including the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and various regional chapters, recommended that the province create 30,000 supportive housing units over the next decade.²⁹ They estimated the cost of building these units at \$278 million in the first year, rising cumulatively to \$721 million by 2027.

The Township of Atikokan emphasized the importance of creating affordable housing for seniors, including apartment units and assisted living facilities. As the population ages, there may not be enough housing for seniors in small municipalities that have insufficient housing infrastructure.

Housing and Rental Supply

Some stakeholders focused on the importance of increasing the rental housing supply. The Toronto Region Board of Trade, for instance, advocated for the revocation of rent controls and housing taxes, and recommended that the province focus instead on densification and development around transit hubs to increase the amount of rental housing available.

²⁹ Canadian Mental Health Association (Sudbury/Manitoulin) and Canadian Mental Health Association (Windsor-Essex County).

The real estate and home building industries had several recommendations to support the housing market and increase housing supply. Red tape and regulatory burden were key themes in their submissions; several groups recommended addressing the lack of serviced land, zoning challenges, and long approval processes that delay the development of housing.

- The Toronto Region Board of Trade recommended that the Province alter planning laws to allow for more townhouses, multi-bedroom condos, and laneway and coach houses.
- The Ontario Association of Architects suggested that the site plan approval process be streamlined and expedited in order to reduce regulatory barriers to development.
- The Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association proposed a government review of the \$400,000 HST threshold for housing, to determine if it is still an appropriate level given the appreciation of house values over the past several years.
- Mortgage Professionals Canada recommended that the Province find ways to increase housing supply, such as investing in infrastructure and increasing financial incentives for constructing single-family homes.
- The Ontario Real Estate Association made several suggestions, such as increasing the First Time Home Buyer Land Transfer Tax rebate, introducing a provincially backed loan program for first-time buyers, and offering Land Transfer Tax rebates to downsizing seniors.

Infrastructure

Policy

A common refrain the Committee heard was the importance of long-term, dedicated, multi-year infrastructure funding commitments, particularly for universities, colleges, municipalities, and school boards.³⁰ Many stakeholders stressed that long-term funding would help alleviate persistent budget gaps and assist with multi-year capital planning.

Several non-profit groups offered suggestions on how to improve infrastructure policy. Colour of Poverty-Colour of Change and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants recommended that mandatory Community Benefit Agreements be included in all provincially funded infrastructure projects, in order to ensure equitable development. The Ontario Nonprofit Network recommended that Infrastructure Ontario expand access to their loans program to help non-profit community hubs procure capital funding and low-cost loans. Ducks Unlimited Canada's submission asked that non-profits be eligible to serve as full

³⁰ City of Burlington, City of Mississauga, Colleges Ontario, Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Ontario Council of Universities, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, and Town of Bracebridge.

project partner proponents under infrastructure programs, allowing non-profits to apply directly to the government for infrastructure funding.

Municipal Infrastructure

Municipalities were particularly worried about their ability to finance and maintain infrastructure due to a growing need for infrastructure and the insufficiency of municipal revenue sources to finance large, multi-year projects. One of the most prevalent recommendations the Committee heard was support for the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Local Share proposal. AMO proposed a 1% increase in the HST, with revenues dedicated for municipal infrastructure. According to AMO, municipalities are responsible for a large share of infrastructure maintenance and construction, and they have access to limited revenue sources, especially under the constraints of property taxes. Almost all municipalities expressed the need for new revenue tools to meet their requirements of maintaining facilities, bridges, roads, water and wastewater systems, while still providing good quality municipal services. Local Share received support from several municipalities, particularly small and rural municipalities, including the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Ontario Small Urban Municipalities, Town of Atikokan, Town of Bracebridge, Township of Hornepayne, and Township of Puslinch.

There were several other proposals to allow municipalities to access more capital financing, including

- the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities proposal that the Province allow multi-year funding and private partnerships for major capital projects that exceed the \$3 million per-project funding cap under the Connecting Links program;
- the Ontario Federation of Agriculture recommendation that the government develop an infrastructure program for rural municipalities to invest in roads, bridges, drainage, and broadband;
- the City of Burlington's recommendation that the province maintain its funding share of the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund, even in the case of higher federal contributions;
- the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities' call for municipalities be able to use capital funding from other application programs to cover costs for a priority Connecting Links project; and
- the Town of Atikokan's proposal for the creation of an infrastructure funding program for municipalities with fewer than 10,000 residents, in which the Province would provide 90% of the funding, and not cap funding at \$2 million, as is currently done.

The Ontario Good Roads Association recommended that the province offer long-term funding for municipalities to help them satisfy all their obligations under asset management regulations. The Cement Association of Canada recommended that all funds disbursed to municipalities for infrastructure apply a three-screen lifecycle approach comprising of a full lifecycle cost assessment, a

'best available solution' assessment, and a comprehensive carbon assessment. This would ensure smart, environmentally sustainable decision making. Their suggestion was echoed by the Region of Peel, who recommended that the province integrate climate change considerations with infrastructure planning by setting criteria for infrastructure investments that would result in improved climate change outcomes.

Projects

The Committee heard several funding requests for specific infrastructure projects, including

- \$30 million over three years for the Massey Hall Revitalization project from the Corporation of Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall;
- \$20 million over ten years to help the City of London address their social housing maintenance deficit; and
- \$6 million from the Sinai Health System and the Hospital for Sick Children to establish a fetal care, research, and education centre.

Other stakeholders did not specify funding levels, but requested support and funding for the following infrastructure projects:

- the four-laning of Highway 69 (Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce);
- the construction of Metrolinx's Big Move "Next Wave" priority projects (Ontario Chamber of Commerce);
- the completion of an outer ring road in Ottawa to link Highway 416 and Highway 417 (Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association);
- the addition of two HOV/transit lanes on County Road 17 and Regional Road 174 in Ottawa and the counties of Prescott and Russell (United Counties of Prescott and Russell);
- improvements to cycling infrastructure such as segregated and protected bike lanes in Burlington (City of Burlington);
- improvements to rural and Northern transportation infrastructure such as new rest stops, passing lanes, four-laning on key roads, and improved signage (Tourism Industry Association of Ontario);
- the creation of a public/private initiative to improve mobile broadband services in Eastern Ontario (Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus);
- the construction of downtown Mississauga Transitway and Terminal, Regional Express Rail on the Milton GO Corridor, the "Missing Link" rail line, and Regional Express Rail Service on Lakeshore West and Kitchener GO corridors (City of Mississauga); and

- the creation of a multi-modal transportation hub at Toronto Pearson, and investments in transit lines to connect to the hub such as Eglinton Crosstown West Light Rail Transit, Mississauga Bus Rapid Transit, Regional Express Rail, Finch Light Rail Transit, and Windsor-Waterloo-Toronto High Speed Rail (Greater Toronto Airports Authority).

Intergovernmental Affairs

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business asked that the province broaden mutual recognition of trade and professional certifications, so elevator technicians and dental hygienists, for example, are permitted to work in different provinces without having to be recertified. They also asked that the Province work with their counterparts across the country to align regulations for wide-load transportation.

International Trade

A few organizations asked that the Government protect Ontario's interest in NAFTA negotiations. The Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce asked that the province protect local businesses by not increasing the de minimis threshold, while Resolute Forest products asked that the Chapter 19 dispute resolution mechanism be maintained in order to protect the forestry industry.

In terms of the softwood lumber dispute (Lumber V), Ontario Forest Industries Association and Resolute Forest Products urged the province to protect Ontario forest industries by negotiating for at least 1.5 billion board feet per year in access to the US market.

Labour

Bill 148

Much of the discussion around labour during the hearings was centered on Bill 148, the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017*. Some stakeholders opposed minimum wage increases, and others noted that the adjustment to Bill 148 would be costly.³¹ Several stakeholders set out proposals to lower business taxes or offer credits, grants, and rebates to help counteract increased labour costs.³²

Other organizations advocated for the strengthening of employment and labour standards. Several stakeholders supported the removal of exemptions in Bill 148 for domestic workers, agricultural workers, and dependent contractors.³³ The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) disagreed, advocating for the continued exemption for agriculture workers, and the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce recommended exempting municipalities from the requirements of construction employers.

³¹ Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Toronto Region Board of Trade.

³² See Ministry of Finance section for details.

³³ Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and Ontario Federation of Labour.

The Ontario Federation of Labour supported extending card-based certification to all workers in all sectors, and, alongside the Windsor and District Labour Council, recommended stronger protections for franchise employees. Other proposals that the Committee heard from the Ontario Federation of Labour included

- prohibiting the use of replacement workers during strikes and lockouts;
- implementing stronger investigation and enforcement in the case of workplace deaths;
- increasing paid personal leave days to seven;
- extending successorship rights to all subcontracted services; and
- eliminating the lower liquor server and student minimum wages.

Non-profit organizations and publicly funded services expressed strong support for increased government funding to help them comply with the obligations under Bill 148, for instance for the provisions that mandate benefits such as paid statutory holidays and equal pay.³⁴ Universities and colleges similarly expressed a desire for increased transfer funding to cope with the transition to Bill 148.³⁵ Some school boards also noted that expenses like student transportation would increase due to minimum wage increases under Bill 148, and asked for accordingly more funding.³⁶

Enforcement

Several organizations believe that extensive employer education and enforcement will be needed in light of Bill 148's changes to labour and employment law. Stakeholders advocated for hiring more enforcement officers than has been previously announced and expediting their hiring.³⁷ In addition, several witnesses emphasized the need to help workers file complaints about employer violations, and recommended providing interpretation services to allow non-English or French speakers, temporary foreign workers, and recent immigrants to make complaints.³⁸ The CFIB, representing the interests of small businesses, noted the difficulty in obtaining adequate information from the Ministry of Labour in order to comply with the changes. They asked that the enforcement start after a six-month education campaign so employers can understand their new responsibilities.

³⁴ Anglican Diocese of Toronto, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, NorWest Community Health Centres, Ontario Community Support Association, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, and Ontario Nonprofit Network.

³⁵ Algonquin College, Confederation College, La Cité, Council of Ontario Universities, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and York University.

³⁶ Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and Toronto District School Board.

³⁷ Anglican Diocese of Toronto, Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, Income Security Advocacy Centre, Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, Legal Assistance of Windsor and Community Legal Aid, OPSEU, and Poverty Free Thunder Bay.

³⁸ Income Security Advocacy Centre and Poverty Free Thunder Bay.

Interest Arbitration

Municipal groups were nearly unanimous in advocating for changes to the interest arbitration system. They asked that the province reform the system to reflect the ability of municipalities to pay for increased service costs, especially for police and fire service salaries.³⁹ According to AMO, legislative changes could help contain wage growth and save Ontario municipalities millions of dollars. The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities also recommended that arbitrators not be allowed to replicate agreements across the municipal sector, while the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario called for an end to interest arbitration entirely.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

The Committee heard several different viewpoints on the WSIB. Business groups like the Retail Council of Canada advocated for lowering WSIB premiums in 2019 to offset higher wage costs resulting from Bill 148, and the CFIB recommended eliminating the 72-month lock-in provision to allow the WSIB to investigate cases when there is a noted improvement in work-related injuries.

However, some stakeholders advocated for a more worker-friendly WSIB system. The Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group expressed concern that the WSIB system can sometimes force people to go onto social assistance if their claims are denied or delayed. They recommended that the WSIB not use experience rating, as it can provide an incentive for employers to hide claims and mistreat employees. Mr. John Rae called for an end to the practice of deeming because it can penalize injured workers by reducing their benefits if they are deemed able to work.

Municipal Affairs

Infrastructure

Recommendations relating to municipal infrastructure can be found in the Ministry of Infrastructure section.

Revenue

Municipalities made a number of recommendations to expand revenues, which included

- Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association's recommendation that the province either increase the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund or implement a revenue-neutral service uploading program;
- Several municipalities and organizations' request that municipalities be given new and expanded revenue sources;⁴⁰ and

³⁹ Association of Municipalities of Ontario, City of Burlington, Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Ontario Small Urban Municipalities, Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and Town of Tecumseh.

⁴⁰ Anglican Diocese of Toronto; Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario; City of Burlington; and City of Mississauga.

- The Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston’s proposal to revise wind turbine regulations to increase the taxes owed to municipalities for each turbine.

Reporting

Stakeholders testified to the administrative burden of municipal reporting. The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) has found that most municipalities submit between 90 and 200 reports each year to the province. AMO, along with other supportive municipalities, recommended that a systemic review of municipal reporting requirements be conducted.⁴¹ Open Data initiatives, central data portals, and priority indicator trackers were all suggestions to reduce reporting burden. AMCTO recommended the development of a cross-ministry list of all provincial reports a municipality must fill out in order to avoid duplication and reduce the time that local public servants spend filling out reports.

Professional Development

Stakeholders identified skills and professional development in the municipal sector as a major challenge. Municipal public servants are a relatively older workforce, and will soon be retiring in waves, necessitating good succession planning. AMCTO recommended that the government make funding available for public servants in small, remote, and Northern municipalities, to allow them to access professional development opportunities. They also advocated for the creation of an internship program that would help young professionals in local government gain experience in municipal workplaces.

Natural Resources and Forestry

Forestry

The Committee heard from forestry industry stakeholders, chambers of commerce, and Northern Ontario municipalities who emphasized the importance of the forest sector to Ontario’s economy. They stressed the need for a provincial forestry strategy that would help increase the sustainable use and harvest of Crown forests, support reliable and affordable access to wood fibre, support full-time and non-precarious employment, and align with Ontario’s economic and climate change objectives.⁴² Forest companies Norbord Inc. and Weyerhaeuser Ontario Timberlands emphasized the need to address the labour shortage in the forest industry, and encouraged the government to promote the forest industry to youth and train specialty workers such as foresters and millwrights in order to be prepared when the current generation of forest workers retires.

The Ontario Forest Industries Association (OFIA) emphasized the importance of Ministry programs such as the Ontario Wood Initiative and the Ontario Wood WORKS! Program, for which they requested continued support. A coalition of stakeholders, including forestry companies, Indigenous organizations, and municipalities, asked that the province increase annual funding for the Forest Access Roads Funding Program to \$75 million, noting that this program is

⁴¹ Ontario Small Urban Municipalities, Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and Township of Hornepayne.

⁴² Ontario Forest Industries Association and Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce.

essential for the construction and maintenance of rural and Northern Ontario infrastructure and for the continued viability of the region.⁴³ Stumpage fees for hardwood – poplar and white birch –were also a key issue.⁴⁴

Some forest stakeholders touched on climate change and Ontario’s environmental goals in their submissions. Weyerhaeuser Ontario Timberlands asked that forests be included in all climate change analyses to acknowledge that forests are a carbon sink. They also asked that private companies be given the flexibility to make forest management decisions to meet their obligations under the cap and trade system. Resolute Forest Products and OFIA recommended that the government develop industry transformation programs or provide incentives to help forest companies reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote energy efficient manufacturing, and develop innovative forest products.

Endangered Species Act, 2007

The final key issue brought forward by forest stakeholders was the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA). The Alliance, a group comprised of northern chambers of commerce, municipal organizations, Indigenous groups, unions, and forest industry associations, strongly encouraged the government to fulfill the 2007 equivalency commitment to allow the forest sector to operate only under the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act* (CFSA).⁴⁵ Equivalency would ensure forest companies would not have to operate under both the CFSA and ESA. The duplication in regulation, stakeholders argued, is an undue burden on forest companies that will have a detrimental effect on access to wood supply. If the equivalency commitment is not fulfilled, they recommended that the Ministry extend the current ESA provisions enabling the Minister to make exemptions via regulation for at least another 5 years.

Stakeholders asked that they be fully consulted on the ESA, including in the development of any new regulations that could impact the forest industry.⁴⁶ Norbord Inc. and Weyerhaeuser recommended that the Ministry conduct a socioeconomic impact analysis of the ESA to quantify its effects on wood supply and the economic health of the forest industry. The Town of Atikokan asked that the forest industry be included when new species at risk prescriptions are developed, and recommended that the province provide appropriate phase-in provisions to allow the forest industry time to adjust to new regulations.

⁴³ EACOM Timber Corporation, Norbord Inc., Resolute Forest Products, Weyerhaeuser Ontario Timberlands, White River Forest Products, and the Alliance, which is made up of Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek First Nation, Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, Mitaanjigamiing First Nation, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Ontario Forest Industries Association, Red Rock Indian Band, Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Seine River First Nation, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, UNIFOR, and United Steelworkers.

⁴⁴ Norbord Inc., Ontario Forest Industries Association, and Resolute Forest Products.

⁴⁵ The Alliance is made up of Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek First Nation, Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, Mitaanjigamiing First Nation, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Ontario Forest Industries Association, Red Rock Indian Band, Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Seine River First Nation, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, UNIFOR, and United Steelworkers.

⁴⁶ Ontario Forest Industries Association, Resolute Forest Products, and Town of Atikokan.

Northern Development and Mines

Stakeholders from the Northern Ontario region asked that the government continue to make strategic investments in the transportation, energy, and technology infrastructure that will make mining more viable in Northern Ontario. In particular, the Thunder Bay and Sudbury Chambers of Commerce would like a renewed commitment to planning and development in the Ring of Fire area. The Sudbury Chamber of Commerce added that the government must invest in skills training for Indigenous communities in the North in order to make the Ring of Fire viable.

To improve Northern development, White River Forest Products recommended that the budget and mandate of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) be expanded, and recommended that NOHFC make low-interest loans to help Northern businesses make capital investments. One individual, a Northern Ontario farmer, also recommended continued support for NOHFC, and applauded its investments in Northern agriculture.

Seniors Affairs

The Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario asked for changes to the Seniors Active Living Centres Program, including increasing the maximum operating funding from \$42,700 to \$50,000 per year and continuing the special grant funding at \$15,000 per organization per year. These changes would result in an overall increase in program funding from \$11.5 million to \$19.5 million.

AdvantAge Ontario asked that a stakeholder taskforce be created to determine the best method of allocating funding relating to *Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors*.

Other witnesses presented on the health care needs of Ontario's aging population, and these recommendations are included in the section relating to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Treasury Board Secretariat

The Ontario Nonprofit Network asked that the transfer payment modernization process, which seeks to reduce the administrative burden on non-profit organizations, continue to be prioritized. Long-term funding agreements should reflect the real costs of health benefit coverage, pension premiums, research, and program innovation.

Tourism, Culture and Sport

Arts and Culture

The Ontario Museum Association asked that the province invest an additional \$5 million in the Community Museums Operation Grant Program, and adopt a province-wide, coordinated approach to ensuring that museum collections represent the diversity of Ontario.

The AOE Arts Council and Orchestras Canada asked that the Ministry renew the Ontario Culture Strategy every five years and revitalize the Ontario Arts Foundation by introducing a matching endowment incentive program. Orchestras Canada further requested additional investments in the Ontario Arts Council and Ontario Trillium Foundation. FilmOntario asked that the Ontario Media Development Corporation Film Fund be tripled to at least \$12 million a year to fund more Canadian feature films.

Tourism

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario asked for a number of infrastructure investments highlighted elsewhere in this report, in addition to seeking long-term support for its Careers in Tourism Campaign and an investment of \$2 million a year to grow Indigenous tourism.

Libraries

The Ontario Library Association and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries asked that the Ministry increase the annual base funding of the Public Library Operating Grant from \$33 million to \$50 million and dedicate \$25 million in new, annual funding for the development and implementation of Ontario's Digital Library. The City of Mississauga asked that the household operating grant for the Mississauga library be increased.

Transportation

Organizations made specific requests for transportation projects that would better move people and goods and promote economic development. Specifically:

- The City of London asked that the province develop rapid transit in London.
- Communitech asked for investments in transit between Toronto and Waterloo, particularly noting the government's commitment to two-way GO service. They asked that implementation of this investment be expedited if possible.
- The Greater Toronto Airports Authority asked for investments in the airport's planned regional transit centre.
- All Aboard St. Marys asked that high performance rail be included in the government's \$15 million environment assessment, public consultation and study process for creating high-speed rail between Toronto and Windsor.

- The Canadian Propane Association asked that propane be included in the Green Commercial Vehicle Program, and that the Ministry provide incentives in the new program for propane usage.
- White River Forest Products asked that rail pricing be reviewed because of a concern that prices are too high and difficult to negotiate.

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities requested that the Ministry revise the Connecting Links program to allow multi-year funding for major projects that cannot be completed when subject to the \$3 million per-project cap. It also proposed that municipalities be allowed to use capital funding from other application programs for a Connecting Links project, so long as that project is deemed a priority.

The Trillium Automobile Dealers Association asked that the *Highway Traffic Act* be amended to allow registered motor vehicle dealers to access more services electronically, including applications for permits, number plates, and used car information packages.

3. EXPERT PANEL

The Committee invited three expert witnesses to provide testimony on the Province's economy on January 17, 2018. The witnesses were Craig Alexander from the Conference Board of Canada, Angella MacEwan from the Canadian Labour Congress, and Mark Cameron from Canadians for Clean Prosperity. This section provides a summary of their discussion.

Growth

In 2017 Canada and Ontario experienced strong economic growth, at a rate of 3%, as a result of strong consumer spending and a booming real estate market. According to Mr. Alexander, the outlook will continue to be positive in 2018, when growth will likely be at 2%; however, he forecasts the growth rate to fall to 1.7% in 2019 as consumer spending moderates.

One large impact on economic growth will be new measures to cool the housing market, including several increases in interest rates and new income stress tests for some mortgages. Mr. Alexander said that rather than cause a large correction in the market, these will be a headwind that slows the market. Ms. MacEwan echoed these thoughts and forecast that higher interest rates will pose a threat to the sustainability of Ontarians' high household debt levels through 2018.

Trade

Mr. Alexander noted that while exports are rising, many Ontario industries are losing market share in their most important markets, especially as other countries export more to the United States. He identified the precarious status of NAFTA as the single biggest risk to Ontario's economy. Failure in NAFTA negotiations will not only mean higher tariff rates and fewer exports, but will also deter domestic and foreign investment in the province. Ontario would likely become

subject to more non-tariff punitive trade measures from the United States, which would mean more disputes like the softwood lumber dispute.

Mr. Cameron explained that as the United States lowers their corporate taxes, along with NAFTA uncertainty, there will likely be pressure for Ontario to cut corporate taxes to remain competitive. In his view, the government should use the fiscal space provided by carbon and pollution pricing revenues to lower tax rates. Ms. MacEwan also spoke to the impacts of the NAFTA negotiation, noting that a failure would especially harm certain pockets of Ontario such as border towns and the automotive sector.

Employment

Mr. Alexander noted that in 2017 Ontario's unemployment rate was 5.5%, which is close to full employment, although labour market participation has not yet recovered to pre-recession levels. Ms. MacEwan agreed that unemployment is low, but pointed out the precarious nature of some of this employment, with many people working fewer hours than they would like or at jobs for which they are overqualified.

Ms. MacEwan spoke about the large-scale labour and employment changes brought about by Bill 148, applauding the increase to the minimum wage that will especially help female, immigrant, and racialized workers. The legislation signals a shift, she suggested, from a low wage, high turnover workforce to a high wage, high productivity workforce. She noted, however, that the government could have further increased the bargaining power of labour, which can lead to higher wages, less exploitation, and more inclusive growth. Her key concern with Bill 148 is that it excluded dependent contractors and workers in agriculture and domestic work. She recommended further changes to labour laws to address the need for more card-based certification, anti-scab legislation, and provisions to extend successorship rights for subcontracted services.

Mr. Alexander had mixed views on the minimum wage increase, encouraging the government to stick with the \$15 target but to implement it at a slower rate to allow businesses to adjust. He noted that the minimum wage is now more than 50% of the median wage in Ontario, which will make the employment effects of the increase more pronounced. In addition, geographic disparities in median wage across the province will affect how much adjustment will be seen in various regions.

Commenting on recent media reports about job losses stemming from the wage increase, Mr. Alexander stressed that these will mostly be due not to lay-offs, but rather jobs that will not be created in the future as more employers slow their hiring and turn to self-checkouts and automation. In addition, he acknowledges that there will be a partial offset because minimum wage workers will benefit from higher wages.

Business Investment

Both Mr. Alexander and Ms. MacEwan pointed to slack business investment as a key issue in the Ontario economy since the 2008-09 recession. Capital per worker in Ontario is 42% lower than it is in the United States, which impairs the ability of Ontario businesses to grow their productivity. Mr. Alexander found it

worrisome that only businesses running into capacity constraints are investing, because it means that businesses are not proactively building new capacity. According to a study cited by Mr. Alexander, only 52% of Ontario businesses said that now is a good time to invest. This stems from a combination of factors such as difficulties finding skilled workers, changes to labour laws and regulations, and NAFTA. He recommends that the government review the regulatory environment and streamline regulations, especially around new industries such as life sciences and fintech.

Energy

Mr. Cameron spoke about revenues from climate change initiatives, estimating that Ontario's carbon revenues will reach \$5 billion per year once the price rises to \$50 per tonne. He recommends that these carbon revenues be used to provide direct rebates to households or to cut taxes, resulting in revenue neutrality. In particular, low-income households for whom home heating, transportation, and electricity costs are a proportionally larger share of their income will require progressive tax credits or rebates.

Mr. Cameron believes that Ontario should not spend carbon revenues on green initiatives such as cycling paths because the cost per tonne of achieving emission reductions in these spending areas is relatively high. He stressed the importance of pricing carbon in order to change consumer behaviour; his preferred tool is the carbon tax rather than cap-and-trade. He emphasized that the best way to reduce emissions is to set a market price and allow the market to adjust because when price goes up, demand will decline. He noted that this thinking could extend to other areas, such as pricing congestion in GTA municipalities.

In Mr. Alexander's opinion, the relatively high price of electricity in Ontario is a competitive disadvantage for businesses. Mr. Cameron added that the key issue is long-term contracts, especially for renewable energy, and recommended that underlying issues in the electricity sector be addressed.

Other

The witnesses discussed income inequality in Ontario. Ms. MacEwan observed that Ontario has the highest levels of income inequality in the country. The situation is particularly acute for women, racialized people, new immigrants, Indigenous persons, and persons with disabilities. Ms. MacEwan said that public services are the great equalizer in society and that equal access to public services, such as education and health care, can reduce inequality and ultimately result in positive economic impacts. In addition, Ms. MacEwan noted the value of undertaking a gender-based analysis of the budget.

Mr. Alexander noted that the gap between the richest and poorest families has increased over several decades, since the federal austerity efforts in the 1990s. Mr. Alexander, while generally supportive of a small degree of inequality as a means to incentivize work, saving, and investment, also says that high income inequality has deep economic and social consequences. He recommended that the best way to tackle inequity is to remove barriers to opportunity.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs recommends that:

1. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to balance the budget by meeting the government's annual savings target as outlined in the 2017-2018 Budget, while also making strategic investments to grow Ontario's economy and providing high quality public services.
2. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to maintain a competitive tax environment.
3. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continuing to reduce the regulatory burden in Ontario.
4. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to reducing inter-provincial trade barriers.
5. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to maximize the potential of Northern economies.
6. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to maintain regional economic development strategies to foster inclusive growth.
7. The Minister of Finance remain committed in the 2018-2019 Budget to ensure that residential electricity is clean, reliable, and affordable in Ontario.
8. The Minister of Finance remain committed in the 2018-2019 Budget to ensure that business electricity is clean, reliable, and affordable in Ontario.
9. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to invest in vital infrastructure projects, creating jobs and economic growth.
10. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to provide Ontarians with local access to health care so they can have the right care closer to home.
11. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to invest in quality health care to ensure that patients receive high quality health care wherever they access health services.
12. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to make learning accessible for all through a strong public education system.
13. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to modernize child care in Ontario and create more child care spaces.

14. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to make tuition more affordable for students and their families.
15. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue commitments to apprenticeship opportunities.
16. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to invest in a highly skilled workforce strategy to broaden labour force participation and improve productivity.
17. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget for Ontario to continue to be a welcoming and inclusive province for refugees and newcomers.
18. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to invest in local and regional transit.
19. The Minister of Finance remain committed in the 2018-2019 Budget to ensure that Ontario's auto insurance system is fair, affordable and that consumers are protected.
20. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue the implementation of Ontario's first five year plan to fight climate change, reduce greenhouse gas pollution, and transition to a low-carbon economy.
21. The Minister of Finance commit in the 2018-2019 Budget to continue to support the sharing economy by fostering innovation, and protecting workers, consumers and communities.

LIST OF WITNESSES

Organization / Individual	Date of Appearance/ Written Submission
3M Canada	Written submission
Addictions and Mental Health Ontario	January 18, 2018
AdvantAge Ontario	Written submission
Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario	Written submission
Alexander, Craig	January 17, 2018
Algonquin College	January 17, 2018
All Aboard St. Marys	January 18, 2018
Alzheimer Society of Ontario	January 18, 2018, written submission
Anglican Diocese of Toronto	Written submission
AOE Arts Council	January 17, 2018
Apprentice LMS	Written submission
Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario	January 17, 2018
Association for Canadian Educational Resources	Written submission
Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario	January 17, 2018
Association of Municipalities of Ontario	January 18, 2018
Batmazian, Laurence	Written submission
Bergeron, Ronald	Written submission
Brekveld, Peggy	January 15, 2018
Building Up Our Neighbourhoods and Peel Poverty Action Group	January 15, 2018
Cameron, Mark	January 17, 2018
Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division	January 19, 2018
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives	December 14, 2017
Canadian Environmental Law Association	Written submission
Canadian Federation of Independent Business	January 18, 2018, written submission
Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario	December 14, 2017, written submission

Organization / Individual	Date of Appearance/ Written Submission
Canadian Fuels Association	January 17, 2018
Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association	Written submission
Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters	January 17, 2018
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario	December 14, 2017
Canadian Mental Health Association, Sudbury/Manitoulin	January 16, 2018
Canadian Mental Health Association, Windsor-Essex County	January 19, 2018
Canadian Nurses Association/Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association	January 17, 2018, written submission
Canadian Propane Association	Written submission
Canadian Taxpayers Federation	January 18, 2018
Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario	January 19, 2018
Canadians for Properly Built Homes	January 17, 2018
Captijn, Barbara	Written submission
Card, Cheryl	Written submission
Care Watch	Written submission
Carizon Family and Community Services	January 18, 2018
Carleton University	Written submission
Cement Association of Canada	January 17, 2018
Champlain Region Family Council Network	January 17, 2018
Chemistry Industry Association of Canada	January 17, 2018
Child and Family Centre	January 16, 2018
Children's Mental Health Ontario	December 14, 2017, written submission
City of Burlington	Written submission
City of London	January 19, 2018
City of Mississauga	Written submission
Class 1 Inc.	January 19, 2018
College Student Alliance	Written submission
College Student Alliance/Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance/Colleges Ontario/Council of Ontario Universities	Written submission

Organization / Individual	Date of Appearance/ Written Submission
Colleges Ontario	Written submission
Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change	January 18, 2018
Communist Party of Canada (Ontario)	Written submission
Communitech	January 18, 2018
Community Commonwealth Association	Written submission
Confederation College	January 15, 2018
Conservation Ontario	Written submission
Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada - Ontario Region	January 18, 2018
Corporation of Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall	December 14, 2017
Council of Canadian Innovators	Written submission
Council of Ontario Universities	January 18, 2018, written submission
Criminal Lawyers' Association	Written submission
Deafblind Ontario Services	Written submission
Diabetes Canada	January 17, 2018
Ducks Unlimited Canada	Written submission
Dunne, Alan	Written submission
EACOM Timber Corporation	January 16, 2018
Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus	January 17, 2018
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	December 14, 2017
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Greater Essex	January 19, 2018
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Thames Valley Teacher Local	January 19, 2018
Family Council of Cassellholme for the Aged	January 16, 2018
Fédération des caisses populaires de l'Ontario	Written submission
Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities	January 16, 2018, written submission
Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and Ontario Library Association	Written submission
FilmOntario	Written submission
FirstOntario Credit Union	January 18, 2018

Organization / Individual	Date of Appearance/ Written Submission
Freshwater Future Canada	Written submission
Gateway Newstands	Written submission
Gollinger, Robert G.	Written submission
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce	January 18, 2018
Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association	January 17, 2018
Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce	Written submission
Greater Toronto Airports Authority	December 14, 2017, written submission
GSK	January 19, 2018
Hamilton Community Legal Clinic	Written submission
Home Care Ontario	January 19, 2018
Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group	January 18, 2018
Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare	January 19, 2018
Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited	January 17, 2018
Income Security Advocacy Centre	December 14, 2017, written submission
Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario	January 18, 2018
Insurance Bureau of Canada	December 14, 2017
Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition	January 18, 2018, written submission
Johnson, Sjann	January 19, 2018
Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic	January 15, 2018
Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre	January 18, 2018
La Cité	Written submission
Lakehead University	January 15, 2018
Law Society of Ontario	January 17, 2018
Legal Assistance of Windsor and Community Legal Aid	January 19, 2018
London Health Coalition	January 19, 2018
MacEwan, Angella	January 17, 2018
Mantis, Steve	January 15, 2018
Martisek, Marianna	Written submission

Organization / Individual	Date of Appearance/ Written Submission
McDonnell, Jim – MPP	Written submission
McDougall Energy	Written submission
Mortgage Professionals Canada	Written submission
Mouvement Desjardins	January 17, 2018
MS Society of Canada, Ontario Division	January 17, 2018
Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston	January 19, 2018
National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco	December 14, 2017
Neighbourhood Legal Services (London and Middlesex)	Written submission
Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada	Written submission
Norbord Inc.	January 15, 2018
North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce	Written submission
Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association	January 15, 2018
NorWest Community Health Centres	January 15, 2018
Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario	Written Submission
Ontario Association of Architects	Written submission
Ontario Association of Cardiologists	December 14, 2017
Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies	January 19, 2018, written submission
Ontario Association of Social Workers	Written submission
Ontario Association of Social Workers, Hamilton and District Branch (Social Action Committee)	Written submission
Ontario Caregiver Coalition	Written Submission
Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association	January 18, 2018
Ontario Chamber of Commerce	January 15, 2018
Ontario Chiropractic Association	January 17, 2018
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care	December 14, 2017, written submission
Ontario Community Support Association	January 18, 2018
Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations	January 16, 2018, written submission
Ontario Convenience Stores Association	January 18, 2018

Organization / Individual	Date of Appearance/ Written Submission
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants	December 14, 2017, written submission
Ontario Council of Hospital Unions	January 18, 2018
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association	Written submission
Ontario Federation of Agriculture	January 18, 2018
Ontario Federation of Labour	January 18, 2018
Ontario Forest Industries Association	January 15, 2018
Ontario Good Roads Association	December 14, 2017
Ontario Home Builders' Association	December 14, 2017
Ontario Hospital Association	December 14, 2017, written submission
Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Alliance	Written submission
Ontario Museum Association	December 14, 2017
Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association	January 19, 2018
Ontario Nonprofit Network	Written submission
Ontario Nurses' Association	December 14, 2017
Ontario Pharmacists Association	Written submission
Ontario Public School Boards' Association	Written submission
Ontario Public Service Employees Union	January 17, 2018
Ontario Real Estate Association	Written submission
Ontario Retirement Communities Association	Written submission
Ontario Small Urban Municipalities	Written submission
Ontario Society of Professional Engineers	January 18, 2018
Ontario Trial Lawyers Association	Written submission
Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance	January 18, 2018
Orchestras Canada	Written submission
Ottawa Health Coalition	January 17, 2018
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	January 17, 2018
Pfizer Canada Inc.	Written submission
Poverty Free Thunder Bay	January 15, 2018, written submission

Organization / Individual	Date of Appearance/ Written Submission
Primemax Energy	Written submission
Rae, John	Written submission
Ramsay, David	Written submission
Region of Peel	Written submission
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario	January 19, 2018
Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario	Written submission
Resolute Forest Products	January 15, 2018
Retail Council of Canada	January 18, 2018
Roberts/Smart Centre	January 17, 2018
Rural Ontario Municipal Association	Written submission
Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce	January 19, 2018
Schizophrenia Society of Ontario	Written submission
SEIU Healthcare	Written submission
Sellers, Laurene	January 19, 2018, written submission
Shulist, Mark	Written submission
Sinai Health System/ Hospital for Sick Children	Written submission
Slade, Fred	January 16, 2018
Smith, Bill	Written submission
Social Assistance Action Committee	Written submission
Students' General Association, Laurentian University	January 16, 2018
The Alliance	Written submission
The Lung Association – Ontario	Written submission
Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group	January 15, 2018
Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board	January 15, 2018
Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce	January 15, 2018
Toronto District School Board	Written submission
Toronto Region Board of Trade	December 14, 2017
Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council	Written submission

Organization / Individual	Date of Appearance/ Written Submission
Tourism Industry Association of Ontario	Written submission
Town of Atikokan	January 15, 2018
Town of Bracebridge	January 16, 2018
Town of Tecumseh	January 19, 2018
Township of Hornepayne	Written submission
Township of Puslinch	Written submission
Trillium Automobile Dealers Association	January 18, 2018
Unifor Local 229	January 15, 2018
United Counties of Prescott and Russell	Written submission
University of Ontario Institute of Technology	Written submission
Weyerhaeuser Ontario Timberlands	January 15, 2018
White River Forest Products LP, Hornepayne Lumber LP and Hornepayne Power Inc.	January 16, 2018
Windsor and District Labour Council	January 19, 2018
Workforce WindsorEssex	January 19, 2018
York University	Written submission

**APPENDIX A – DISSENTING OPINION OF THE PROGRESSIVE
CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

Introduction

The Ontario Progressive Conservative members of the committee would like to thank each and every individual, group, and organization that attended the Committee's pre-budget hearings to share their stories and make their requests. The Committee heard from a wide range of speakers touching on a vast range of topics. Prevailing themes were evident in each city and presenters made a compelling argument that the province can and must do better.

Mental Health

In almost every city the committee heard about the impacts of mental health on the people of Ontario. It is clear the government is not doing enough to support children and youth mental health issues. Presenters made it clear that mental health must be treated the same as physical health. Many called for Ontario to become a global leader in support of mental health issues.

Kim Moran from Children's Mental Health Ontario noted that "Child and youth mental health issues have been ignored too long. We have called for investment each and every year with little response by government. We're losing too many kids from suicide. It's way past time to act" and "By investing \$160 million in child and youth mental health centres, you save \$190 million each year in hospitals. It's a win-win: we make sure that all kids get the help they need. Nobody waits more than 30 days, including youth in post-secondary institutions, in colleges and universities."

While it may be easy for some to ignore the dirty secret in Ontario Healthcare, presenters to the committee did everything they could to highlight the lack of support for helping fight mental issues. One presenter, Camille Quenneville of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division noted the following, "our branches are, quite frankly, struggling to meet the needs of individuals and their communities. The branches have gone without budget increases in as many eight years, some of them. Any new investment is always tied to the delivery of a specific program, not to overall operations. As a result, it's becoming impossible to balance service delivery with rising operational costs. It's a challenge to pay the bills."

Continuing their presentation they requested, "a 3% increase in budgets for our 30 Canadian Mental Health Association branches next year. That's an additional \$7.4 million from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for our branch network. You might think that \$7.4 million doesn't seem like much compared to a \$54-billion health budget, which really highlights a significant issue, which is the general lack of funding for mental health and addictions services in the province."

Roch Goulet a student in Sudbury and an OUSA Member talked about the importance of mental health support on campus. He highlighted the inefficiencies when he told the committee "It has gotten to the point that, on our campus, if you want access to a psychologist or a psychiatrist, the psychologist is a four-week wait, but for a psychiatrist, you're looking at months. For my friend who booked an appointment with a psychiatrist in November, they can't access a meeting until April. If anyone is familiar with our calendar year, your exams are in April. You're abandoning, pretty much, your exam schedule when you have to wait that

long.” This simply is not good enough and the committee must recognize the importance of doing better.

Jaydon Turgeon a youth mental health advocate told the committee that he was “here in front of you today to talk to you about a broken system—not just a broken system that almost claimed my life but a broken system that has and will continue to take more lives if we don’t start acting now.”

Peter Bergmanis with the London Health Coalition told the committee that as a health care worker he has witnessed “some pretty tragic instances.” He shared this disheartening story “we’ve had people turned away from the doors in the urgent care department at St. Joe’s. One of those poor souls committed suicide in the parking lot. No services, no psychiatric services that can be attained in a timely manner: This is unacceptable.”

The Progressive Conservative Caucus members want to highlight one of the most impactful, moving, and important presentations that came during the Sudbury delegations.

It came from Josh Tillson, he had this to say:

I’m a 17-year-old student here in Sudbury, Ontario. Back in February 2016, someone very close to me, my stepfather, took his life in our home. It was abrupt, something I could have never anticipated. It was truly traumatizing because I was not only left with the feeling that I had some kind of responsibility in his death, but I was also left with a feeling of betrayal.

In the weeks and months that followed, I distanced myself completely from my friends and family and I tried to suppress all of my dark emotions. Several times I sought the help of a counsellor. However, these interactions were extremely difficult because I felt as though no one could understand me—I was just an extremely successful student and athlete, and that’s all anyone ever saw.

Eventually, it got to the point where I attempted suicide. I’m extremely fortunate to be here today. I felt utterly alone. I did not know of the resources that were available to me. There are so many other youth who struggle with these same thoughts and emotions. I was fortunate to have turned to running as my escape, where I could release my emotions. However, most youth are unsure of what to do and where to go when they’re faced with depression and low mental wellness. They don’t know of the resources that are available to them, and sometimes they can’t even access these resources. Here in Canada, 1.2 million children and youth are affected by mental illness, yet only 20% will ever receive the proper treatment.

This was a powerful statement from a strong young man. It should move the committee to recognize that increasing mental health support should be the number one priority in the coming budget.

Health Care

Another prominent issue heard in each city was the lack of support in health care from the Liberal majority Ontario government.

Cathryn Hoy the ONA Vice-President highlighted the fact that, “unfortunately, at the moment, Ontario’s registered nurses feel under attack in their workplaces [and that] the hospitals are overcrowded. They’re overflowing. I don’t know if the average Ontarian really understands what it’s like.”

The needed support for increases in health care was echoed by Dr. Jim Swan the president, Ontario Association of Cardiologists. He told the committee that “the cuts that this government made to cardiologists unilaterally between 2012 and 2015 have undermined the outpatient cardiac infrastructure that you as a government, the Liberal government, asked us to build. Now you’re chopping it down, which I don’t think is good for Ontario patients. I know it’s not good for the cardiologists who are trying to serve the patient.”

Kari Jefford, a representative of Unifor Local 229 in Thunder Bay brought important attention to the growing trend of hallway medicine in Ontario. They told the committee that there “are 803 people waiting for long-term care, so they have to go somewhere. They’re sitting in Thunder Bay regional in the hallways. Patients are paying out of their pocket what they would normally pay in long-term care to keep their patients in long-term care. Literally, walk into any emergency room in—I would say Ontario, but spend some time in our emergency room here, where we built one hospital to facilitate a district that can’t do it. And it’s not just Thunder Bay regional; it’s Nipigon—we service all those hospitals. We have members right across the North Shore. We are in crisis everywhere.” A crisis is a word Ontario hears a lot about the state of healthcare across the province.

Ann McIntyre representing the Cassellholme Home for the Aged told the committee that, “according to the North East LHIN, there are 684 people waiting to receive beds in a long-term-care facility in North Bay and the surrounding area. The wait time ranges from 140 days to 1,481 days. This puts a huge strain on families and their loved ones.” Those wait times are astonishing and unacceptable.

The chronic lack of support by the Liberal government over the last 15 years has put aspects of our healthcare system on the brink of crisis. The Ontario government must make a conscious effort to rectify the years of attacks on our healthcare system in the 2018 budget.

Aviation Fuel Tax

The committee heard from Lorrie McKee, the public affairs director with GTAA. Her presentation includes important notes about the aviation fuel tax. Noting “any opportunity to reduce the burden and make us more competitive is something that we would support. The challenge with the aviation fuel tax today is that competing jurisdictions don’t have it, so across the board, in the United States it doesn’t exist, nor does it exist in some of our neighbouring provinces. In Ontario, it actually is the highest as well.”

The Ontario budget should start removing the aviation fuel tax in northern Ontario as a result of the impact heard at the committee.

Business Policy

Red tape and the cost of doing business in Ontario was a frequent topic of conversation by presenters at the committee.

For example, Joe Vaccaro the CEO of the Ontario Home Builders' Association told the committee that "the activist government has been busy adding new layers of legislation and regulation on the new housing industry. This is against a backdrop of continued new home price escalation as demand is outstripping supply. Yes, resale home pressures may have been eased, but that has not translated into the new housing sector. I want to go back to my earlier list of the regulations passed in the last year. It is really an overwhelming list. While 2017 may have been overwhelming from a policy standpoint, in the year to come, it will now be up to the industry and municipalities to absorb and implement and ultimately deliver the housing supply Ontario needs. The bottom line, from OHBA's perspective, is that it's getting harder and more complicated to bring new housing supply—ownership, rental, high-rise, low-rise or the missing middle—to growing communities and people who need it."

Rocco Rossi the new President & CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce brought important remarks forward. He discussed the fact that "In order to maximize economic growth, Ontario's fiscal policies must confront those challenges. In our recent Business Confidence Survey, which will be formally released as part of our 2018 Ontario Economic Report later next month, 62% of our members indicate that they are not confident about the economic outlook of the province due to the high price of inputs such as business costs and electricity. Our members have made it clear: The rising cost of doing business in Ontario is hindering their future growth and prosperity and Ontario's by extension."

That sentence should not be ignored by this committee. It bears repeating "Our members have made it clear: The rising cost of doing business in Ontario is hindering their future growth and prosperity and Ontario's by extension."

Rossi added that Ontario must "Look, all decisions around where you're going to move, where you're going to live, where you're going to raise a family and where you're going to invest have all kinds of factors involved. But clearly, taxation levels are a key factor, both in determining the quality of life around you and in determining the kinds of risk that you're willing to take."

Taking that into consideration the government must reduce the tax burden on businesses and families.

Charla Robinson, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce said that "this year, the changes to employment standards are making it extremely difficult for Thunder Bay businesses to create jobs, pay taxes and donate to community charities. Small businesses need help through this transition." This confirms the government has acted hastily in their changes.

Gary Rygus of the Retail Council of Canada told the committee about negative impacts government policy is having when he said, “Faced with these challenging circumstances and an uncertain economy, the government must focus on improving the conditions for economic development. The government must foster a positive job-creating environment. Members of Retail Council of Canada are concerned about the economic implications of the rapid implementation of the significant increase to minimum wage.”

Juanita Lawson the CEO of the Norwest Community Health Centres noted the government policies don’t just impact business but touch many sectors. She told the committee that “Some of our sector has laid off staff. They have decreased programming, and they’ve had to look at how they can realign some of their other services. For us, in terms of Bill 148, we are looking at how we can keep our current staffing model, because we’re very flexible with our staff, to ensure that people can flex their schedule to meet family needs. But as an organization, we are looking at whether we can continue that, based on some of the parameters of Bill 148.”

Mathew Wilson and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters commented that “In Ontario, operating costs due to government policies have been on the rise. Just a couple of examples are the recently implemented Bill 148 with minimum wage increases and a range of other workplace regulatory changes that will directly increase costs for manufacturers.”

Mr. Plamen Petkov from the CFIB summed up the government policy changes by saying “It is very clear that for those businesses that are struggling right now in the province; this was too much, too fast.”

Government Expert Witness

The government party’s own Expert Witness Craig Alexander from the Conference Board of Canada echoed many concerns of the business community when he told the committee:

- When I said that 75% of the businesses on the survey are indicating that they are close to capacity constraints, it’s a little discouraging to find that 52% of the businesses in Ontario said that they felt now was a good time to invest.
- The key point here is I don’t think that the real challenge is going to a \$15 minimum wage.
- I think a lot of the shock for our business point of view is whether you have time to adjust your business models to accommodate that change, and so from the point of view of the upcoming budget,
- I would personally encourage—we can stick to the commitment to going to \$15. I would rather see that next stage delayed to give businesses more chance to adjust.
- An example is Alberta is going to a \$15 minimum wage, but if you look at the speed at which it implemented it, it did it over a longer time horizon, simply to give businesses a bit more time to adjust. Alberta went to \$15 with a longer time horizon.
- The pace of investment growth that we’ve seen is disappointing. That’s one of the things I was trying to emphasize, that in the surveys we do,

what we're hearing is that businesses are running into capacity issues but at the same time they are not stepping up to the plate to respond from an investment point of view.

- I think that there's many things that the government could do to try and enhance investment.
- At the top of my list would be looking at the regulatory environment. We need sound, prudential regulations, no question, but in the current environment, reviewing the existing regulations to look for opportunities to enhance investment, in particular regulations around new industries like life sciences and fintech, could actually help to accelerate investment in industries that have real, strong growth potential in Ontario.

It was rather surprising to see the government's own expert witness contradict the policy process of the government.

Rural Ontario

One of the more profound statements was made by Keith Currie from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture he said "much of rural Ontario is actually feeling very abandoned."

He added that rural Ontario needs "Infrastructure investments like widespread broadband, access to affordable energy, especially natural gas, as we've been advocating for quite some time, and increased social infrastructure including local schools and medical care centres will attract new businesses, it will increase new jobs and it will attract new residents."

Peggy Brekveld a farmer and OFA member also said "they really do need to deal with investments in rural infrastructure, in particular, broadband Internet access. Those investments are critical, and I agree. As a dairy farmer, if I want a milk robot, I need to have Internet access so that my technician can remotely check out what my machine is doing. It can do the software updates from afar. As well, outside of my business, I have kids, and I want them to be able to do their homework and thrive in school, and part of that is having Internet access."

The Progressive Conservative members of the committee think it is important to mention the exchange between Don McGugan, Mayor, Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston with the committee:

Mr. Don McGugan: I'm glad you asked that question, because I've only talked to the Premier twice in my life, and the second time I talked to her, I did mention about OMPF funding. I realize—I forgot to mention—that there are many formulas to make that work. It's something that has to do with density; I understand that. My population is going down. The Premier said, "Well, Don, you'll have to put taxes up." That was her answer.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Raise taxes?

Mr. Don McGugan: Raise taxes, yes.

The Ontario Progressive Conservatives believe the burden on rural Ontario—and all of Ontario—is already too high. The committee should not recommend it be any higher.

Recommendations

1. The government commit to introducing \$1.9 billion to build a comprehensive mental-health system, which would be the largest mental-health commitment in Canadian provincial history.
2. The government commit to reducing hospital and emergency room wait times.
3. The government commit to treating doctors with respect by always consulting them on future reforms to the healthcare system, as well as protecting their conscience rights.
4. The government commit to making broadband and cellular infrastructure projects eligible under the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund and put up to \$100 million towards funding these projects directly.
5. The government commit to slowing the minimum wage increase to a timeline over the next four years as to not hurt business and lose jobs in Ontario.
6. The government commit to removing the aviation fuel tax in Northern Ontario.

**APPENDIX B – DISSENTING OPINION OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY
MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE**

Dissenting Opinion from the New Democrat Caucus

Travelling Ontario over the past few weeks gave us another precious opportunity to see firsthand the province we love. The hard work and dedication of Ontarians has built this province and its communities into something incredible.

New Democrats thank all individuals and organizations that participated in the pre-budget process. Unfortunately, we've seen many of the same proposals put forward year after year, only for Ontarians to be let down once again when the budget is released.

Hospital Funding

Nurses, multiple health care coalitions and unions representing hospital and health care workers stressed that chronic underfunding of Ontario's hospitals has led to long wait times for care, and severe overcrowding in hospitals.

The Ottawa Health Coalition reported that area hospitals routinely operate at over 100 per cent capacity, often climbing as high as 110 per cent – while health experts consider a maximum of 85 per cent occupancy safe. In Southwestern Ontario, the London Health Coalition reported that the London Health Sciences Centre reached an astronomical overcrowding level of 177 per cent occupancy. This chronic overcrowding has been exasperated by cuts to front-line staff, deepening the crisis.

Ottawa and London families aren't alone. The Ontario Hospital Association (OHA), presenting on behalf of 143 publically funded hospitals, stated that hospital occupancy is at an all-time high. Hospital budgets were virtually frozen over the past five years, while hospitals face increased pressure from inflation, Ontario's aging and growing population, and increases in patients requiring complex care. The Ontario Nurses Association, representing 65,000 registered nurses and health care professionals, further stressed that hospitals are starved of adequate funding, leading to cuts to registered nursing positions at hospitals throughout the province.

The 2014 pre-budget consultation report notes that health care coalitions, hospital unions and nurses urged a moratorium on cuts to hospital services and increases to base hospital funding. That didn't happen. Front-line caregivers repeated this call again in 2015, 2016 and 2017, describing the need for hospital funding to keep pace with inflation, an aging and growing population and the unique needs of each community.

Unfortunately, every year, this Liberal government ignored these concerns. The result has been chronic overcrowding, patients being treated in hallways, and long waits at every step of a person's care.

The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions noted this troubling pattern in their presentation, stating that the Liberal government promised increases in health care funding in 2014, only to cut funding after the provincial election.

New Democrats call for a moratorium of front-line health care staff layoffs. We further call for hospital funding that keeps pace with inflation, population growth and the unique needs of each community.

Long-term Care

Overcrowding and a strained long-term care system is forcing seniors and complex care patients to remain in hospital. While that exacerbated the overcrowding crisis in hospitals, as described by the OHA, it also fails the individuals who require a home in a long-term care residence, not a hospital bed.

Ultimately, Ontario's 32,000-person wait list for long-term care is putting immense pressure on our hospitals and the staff that work in them.

While wait-lists – and the long wait for comfortable placements for individuals and couples – must quickly be addressed, the quality of care in Ontario's long-term care homes also needs urgent improvement. As reported by CUPE Ontario, long-term care staff have between five and 10 minutes to help residents get ready in the morning. For most residents, that personal care includes washing, brushing their teeth, dressing and using the washroom. To accomplish that in under 10 minutes – often with residents that require two-person lift protocols to move them from their bed, to a toilet, to a wheelchair – at best, impacts the dignity of the resident, and can also have an impact on their health, hygiene and their safety. This also places tremendous stress on staff.

Health care unions, nurses and health coalitions have called for a minimum requirement of four hours of daily hands-on care to be offered to each resident in every pre-budget submission they have made since 2014, but for years, the government has let them down and put seniors at risk.

The government must stop failing long-term care residents and staff, and finally mandate a minimum of four hours per resident of daily hands-on care as outlined in NDP Private Member's Bill 33, the *Time to Care Act*. Furthermore, in light of the deteriorating conditions in long-term care homes, New Democrats call for a find-and-fix public inquiry into Ontario's long-term care system, looking into systemic concerns brought forward by stakeholders including safety of residents and staff, funding levels, quality of care, staffing levels, enforcement and inspection.

Addictions and Mental Health

Throughout the province, families are struggling for mental health and addictions support and left languishing on long wait lists for care. Many end up in the hospital when their situation becomes critical – with statistics showing dangerous overcrowding in hospital mental health and addictions units.

Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) described during these consultations that children are waiting up to 18 months for treatment and mental health support.

CMHO network coordinator Mary-Anne Leahy went so far as to say: "We keep hearing that children and youth mental health is the government's number-one priority and that you can't have health without mental health, but still kids don't get treatment that they need in Ontario."

New Democrats share Ms. Leahy's concern – that while the government has talked about mental health, it's clear that this government has failed to address Ontario's mental health and addictions services and treatment needs, despite years of requests from mental health organizations, advocates and families.

As far back as 2014, stakeholders requested that mental health be given a greater share of the health care budget, totaling nine per cent. That request is repeated once again in this year's submission — but this government continues to let families down.

It's clear that mental health and addictions services is not getting the funding, resources and attention Ontarians deserve for it to have. New Democrats call for the creation of a dedicated ministry of mental health and addictions to be put in place in the 2018-19 budget.

Affordability

Increased costs for housing, electricity and child care mean that Ontario families are feeling the squeeze. Many are losing hope that they'll be able to raise their kids in the same neighbourhood their parents brought them up in. Parents are losing hope that their children will have the same opportunities that they had to build a good life here in Ontario.

Multiple witnesses during these consultations sounded alarm over the housing affordability crisis; citing decreases in vacancy rates, a 481,000-person wait-list for subsidized housing and a billion-dollar social housing repair backlog.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care noted that Ontario has the highest child care fees in the country, with long waiting lists for fee subsidies in communities throughout the province.

Small businesses are coping with skyrocketing hydro bills, and families are being punished for cooking dinner at dinner time, thanks to mandatory time of use (TOU) pricing.

The government's ideological fixation on privatization and public-private partnerships (P3s) is further driving up costs for Ontario families by adding private profits onto our taxes, hydro bills and transit fares. The Auditor General revealed that Ontario's 74 P3 projects needlessly cost an extra \$8 billion, most of which flowed to banks and financiers. The government's privatization policies have locked Ontarians into long-term contracts for hydro, winter road maintenance and hospital operations that are costlier than public delivery — and riskier too, as the collapse of Carillion PLC has shown.

Again, it's troubling that similar issues were raised with this Liberal government in pre-budget hearings as far back as 2014. Housing advocates have long called for increased funding to build and maintain affordable housing, and the need for inclusionary zoning was a consistent theme in pre-budget submissions over the past four years. Low-cost child care continues to be raised in pre-budget hearings, but that has not translated into transformational change from this government. Affordable electricity for families and businesses continues to be a concern.

Starting in the 2018-19 budget, New Democrats call for the implementation of Andrea Horwath's plan to bring Hydro One back into public hands, bring rates down for residents and businesses, and eliminate mandatory TOU pricing. Further, we call for the government to commit in the 2018-19 budget to immediately fund one-third of the repair costs for affordable and social housing units in partnership with municipalities and the federal government. The NDP calls on the 2018-19 budget to commit that new funding to create child care spaces be used to create not-for-profit and public child care, increasing accessibility and affordability for all families. Finally, beginning in the 2018-19 budget, New Democrats call for an end to the use of wasteful and costly P3 agreements to ensure that public infrastructure dollars go towards funding and maintaining public assets, not private profits.