

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

## PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION 2019

1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament  
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The Honourable Ted Arnott, 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 2019 and commends it to the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Crawford".

Stephen Crawford, MPP  
Chair of the Committee

Queen's Park  
March 2019



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC  
AFFAIRS  
MEMBERSHIP LIST

1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its pre-Budget hearings in January 2019 in Dryden, Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa, Peterborough, Sarnia, Timmins, and Toronto.

Witnesses included interested individuals and representatives from associations and organizations, businesses, community groups, municipalities, service agencies, and trade unions. In total, 214 witnesses appeared before the Committee. In addition, approximately 114 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 5 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 6 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.

## **MINISTRY OF FINANCE**

### **Fiscal Strategies**

Two different approaches to fiscal policy were proposed to the Committee.

On the one hand, stakeholders such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce recommended that Ontario implement clear plans to balance the budget and reduce debt levels. This is required to improve the Province's competitiveness and restore confidence in government. They emphasized that taxes should not be increased, and that efficiencies should be found instead.

Other stakeholders such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union Ontario called for increased investment in public services. They suggested that if deficit and debt reduction is a goal of the government, it should achieve these goals by raising revenues, not cutting services.

### **Alcohol, Cannabis, and Tobacco Sales**

The Grape Growers of Ontario asked that as the Province expands consumer choice for the sale of alcohol, it also protect the agricultural sector by ensuring

the minimum floor price of \$10.95 is extended at the LCBO and other potential new markets.

The Ontario Convenience Stores Association asked that convenience stores be permitted to sell alcohol. The Liquor Board Employees Union Local 683 and OPSEU Local 684 argued that the expansion of alcohol sales into the private sector represents lost revenue that could be invested in public services.

Organizations asked the government to fund public awareness about the harms of cannabis use.<sup>1</sup>

Imperial Tobacco Canada and the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco asked that the Ministry vigorously combat contraband tobacco.

## **Financial Industry**

### *Auto Insurance*

Insurance companies presenting to the Committee welcomed the review of auto insurance announced by the Ministry of Finance.<sup>2</sup> They asked the Ministry to simplify the accident benefit and tort systems to remove the need for legal representation in all but the most complicated of cases, and amend the process for approving rates. Other suggestions included allowing auto insurance companies to do business with clients electronically, ending the adversarial system of medical assessments, and abolishing civil jury trials for motor vehicle claims.<sup>3</sup>

The Fair Association of Victims for Accident Insurance Reform asked that the Province hold insurers to account and ensure that they pay the real costs of recovery.

### *Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994*

Credit unions were consistent in requesting a review of the *Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994*.<sup>4</sup> They outlined a number of developments in the financial services industries since the Act was written 25 years ago—online banking being an obvious example—and pointed to the exponential growth of their industry. As a result of the limitations of the Act, Ontario credit unions have a high regulatory burden. Witnesses cited a 2017 MNP study, which found that while the BC credit union system is nearly 40% larger than Ontario's, Ontario credit unions pay nearly 25% more for regulation.

Credit unions asked that a new Act be simpler, principles-based rather than prescriptive, and align with the federal *Bank Act* to put credit unions on equal

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<sup>1</sup> These included, for example, the Canadian Nurses Association and the Durham Regional Health Department.

<sup>2</sup> Witnesses included Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, Josslin Insurance, The Co-operators Group, and Desjardins.

<sup>3</sup> These recommendations were made by The Co-operators Group, AssessMed, and a personal injury lawyer, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Witnesses included Desjardins, Canadian Credit Union Association, FirstOntario Credit Union, Kawartha Credit Union, Libro Credit Union, Meridian Credit Union, Mainstreet Credit Union, and Peterborough Community Savings.

footing with banks. They also asked to be allowed to offer commercial mortgages.

## **Tax Policy**

### *Corporate and Personal Income Taxes*

Different perspectives on the ideal fiscal strategy for the Province (described above) meant that some stakeholders asked that business and income taxes be raised. For example, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition and the Toronto and York Region Labour Council asked that corporate tax rates be increased to 13% and 14% respectively. CUPE Ontario requested that the Province adjust the marginal tax rate on income over \$250,000 to 32%.

Others highlighted the need to reduce taxes. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation asked that the small business tax rate be cut by 8.7% and the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce asked that the Corporate Income Tax rate be lowered to 10.5% in 2019 and 10% in 2020 in order to encourage investment and job growth. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business also requested that the Province increase the small business tax deduction threshold to \$750,000 and index it to inflation.

### *Gas Tax*

Specific recommendations relating to the gas tax included a request from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that it be reduced.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Environmental Defence, TTCRiders, and the Ontario Public Transit Association asked to increase the portion provided to municipalities. An individual also asked that the gas tax be made available to communities without public transit.

### *Other Taxes*

The Timmins Chamber of Commerce asked the Ministry to maintain current mining tax rates for remote and non-remote mining operations. The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters asked the Province to eliminate the “highest and best use” considerations in assessing industrial properties and phase out the Provincial Business Education Tax.

## **Other Matters**

The following requests were made regarding benefits distributed to Ontarians:

- An individual asked that GAINS amounts be increased for seniors.
- Ontario Campaign 2000 asked that the Province increase the Ontario Child Benefit by \$100 per child annually.
- The Income Security Advocacy Centre asked that the Ontario Trillium Benefit be increased.

## **OTHER MINISTRIES**

### **Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs**

The Committee heard from agricultural stakeholders who noted the importance of government supports for farm investment and expansion. The Beef Farmers of Ontario recommended improving access to Crown Land for agriculture. Algoma Orchards suggested that government capital expenditure incentives for agriculture stay in the community, because unlike other enterprises, farms cannot relocate.

Stakeholders recommended changes to the Risk Management Program, such as raising the cap on the Province's contribution, allowing unused portions to roll over to the following year, and allowing more diverse sector participants.<sup>5</sup>

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Grower's Association urged the government to continue the Edible Horticulture Support Program, noting that the program's payments are important in maintaining competitiveness for Ontario farms.

The Ontario Hazelnut Association requested continued government support for their efforts to diversify Ontario farms with hazelnut cultivation, and for their agricultural expertise and research, including data collection and field trials, in part through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers noted the need for access to skilled labour, and for promotion of agriculture as a viable career.

Stakeholders also urged the government to continue its support and promotion of local food through such initiatives as the Foodland Ontario brand.<sup>6</sup>

The Committee heard from the Ontario Harness Horse Association, which urged the government to establish a group to evaluate the current state of the industry and develop a plan to ensure a fair distribution of revenues between horse owners, racetracks, and the OLG. The witness cited issues with the previous government's proposed agreement on revenue sharing, including a lack of transparency, a funding claw-back, and a loss of autonomy for horse owners.

### **Attorney General**

#### *Legal Aid*

Several stakeholders urged the government to continue funding legal aid.<sup>7</sup> The Criminal Lawyers' Association suggested that the eligibility test for legal aid be increased and a levy introduced, and that Legal Aid Ontario be reformed to improve program delivery and transparency.

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<sup>5</sup> Witnesses included the Beef Farmers of Ontario, KJB Herefords, the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, and Ontario Pork.

<sup>6</sup> These included, for example, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association and the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers.

<sup>7</sup> Witnesses included the Criminal Lawyers' Association, the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, and the Law Society of Ontario.

### *Other Matters*

The Ontario Network of Victim Service Providers asked the Province to review the current funding formula for victim service providers with the goal of adequately funding their real client volume and workload. Other stakeholders asked that the Province continue to invest in justice-related infrastructure and services.<sup>8</sup>

## **Children, Community and Social Services**

### *Children and Youth Services*

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies asked for one-time start-up and infrastructure costs for newly designated Indigenous Child Wellbeing Agencies.

The Child Witness Centre and the Windsor Essex Child/Youth Advocacy Centre asked for \$2.5 million per year in funding for six centers to encourage collaboration and find efficiencies.

### *Non-profit and Volunteer Sector*

Various non-profit and voluntary sector organizations described to the Committee their role in delivering services, and offered their expertise to the Province as it develops solutions to complex problems such as homelessness and chronic poverty.<sup>9</sup>

The Ontario Nonprofit Network made a number of recommendations to strengthen the sector, including:

- reducing the regulatory burden on non-profits and charities by listing all legislation and regulations that apply to them on a single website;
- expanding the sector's access to the Infrastructure Ontario Loans Program to help non-profit organizations buy their own equipment and facilities; and
- modernizing the system used for background checks, making it easier to hire volunteers.

The Ottawa Community Foundation suggested investments to promote social enterprises to reduce the sector's reliance on grants.

Project Love suggested providing small investments in capacity-building activities such as education and recognition.

### *Social Assistance*

Several witnesses were concerned with current social assistance benefits and suggested increasing rates by \$100-\$200 per month, increasing shelter amounts

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<sup>8</sup> Advocates' Society and Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario.

<sup>9</sup> These included, for example, Project Love and United Way/Centraide Ottawa.

to better reflect the cost of housing, and raising the limits on gifts.<sup>10</sup> Witnesses asked that only 50% of income in excess of the flat rate exemption be deducted from social assistance.

Witnesses made suggestions with respect to the definition of disability for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The Ontario Campaign 2000 asked that the Province continue to use a broader definition of disability.

Healthcare Providers Against Poverty (Peterborough), the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were among those asking the Province to re-instate the basic income pilot project.

### *Supports for Persons with a Disability*

The Province currently operates two distinct direct funding programs: Special Services at Home, which supports children, and Passport, which supports adults. When transitioning from one service to the other, individuals are reassessed and put on a waiting list. Witnesses who noted that this creates hardships for families recommended merging the two programs, or at least streamlining the transition between them. They requested additional funding to reduce wait-times and improve services.<sup>11</sup>

The KidsAbility Centre for Child Development noted that Children's Rehabilitation Services are delivered separately from preschool speech and language services. They suggested that Ontario's Children Treatment Centres be made responsible for both services.

Autism Ontario explained how the number of students with autism in Ontario schools has tripled over the last decade. They asked that additional supports be provided in schools, suggesting, for example, hiring Registered Behaviour Technicians.

The following requests and comments were also made:

- Community Living Ontario asked the Province to provide a \$5,000 minimum funding allocation for anyone deemed eligible for Passport funding.
- Family Alliance Ontario emphasized the importance of distributing funds directly to families.
- The Children's Treatment Centre of Chatham-Kent requested \$22.5 million in provincial capital funding for a new facility to provide services for children and youth with special needs and autism.

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<sup>10</sup> Witness with views on social assistance included the Brain Injury Society of Toronto, Community Living Ontario, the Disabilities and Human Rights Group, Health Providers Against Poverty, the Income Security Advocacy Centre, the Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition's Food Security Working Group, Neighbourhood Legal Services, Ontario Campaign 2000, and the Thunder Bay & District Injured Workers Support Group.

<sup>11</sup> Witnesses included Autism Ontario, Community Living Ontario, and Community Living Essex County

- Having described her own disappointing experience with her brother's caregiving agency, an individual wrote to the Committee requesting the creation of an Ombudsman-type body to oversee and protect those living in agency care.
- One individual highlighted the long waitlists faced by those wishing to access autism services in northern communities.
- The Lansdowne Children's Centre asked for funds to build a new facility.
- The ALS Society of Canada asked that barriers to the Direct Funding Program be removed for those living with Lou Gehrig's disease.

## **Citizenship and Immigration**

Presenters noted the importance of attracting immigrants to Ontario. One individual noted that creating paths for foreign students to become permanent residents is important to ensure a skilled workforce and foster innovation. To this end, he suggested creating a "retention tax credit." The Council of Canadian Innovators suggested allocating 10% of immigrants accepted through the Provincial Nominee Program to the high technology sector.

Others emphasized the need to recruit workers for lower-skilled positions, particularly in rural and northern areas. The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers asked the Province to work with the federal government to improve the foreign temporary worker programs by, for example, creating a trusted employer program.<sup>12</sup>

Reception House Waterloo Region asked for continued investments in integration services for newcomers, including language learning, mental health interventions, and social integration programs. They asked for an annual investment of \$200,000.

## **Community Safety and Correctional Services**

### *Violence Against Women*

The Committee heard from several witnesses requesting ongoing and increased support for programs to prevent violence against women, or that offer supports for women escaping dangerous situations.<sup>13</sup> Some witnesses urged the government to develop a comprehensive strategy to address violence against women.<sup>14</sup> The Ontario Federation of Labour asked that the government reinstate the Roundtable on Violence Against Women. The advocacy group Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes requested funding for French-

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<sup>12</sup> The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses made a similar recommendation.

<sup>13</sup> Witnesses included Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, the Public Service Alliance of Canada - National Capital Region, and Women's Crisis Services.

<sup>14</sup> Witnesses included Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada - National Capital Region.

language services for women, and the Women's Crisis Services asked for a 4.8% increase in funding to open new shelter beds in the Waterloo Region.

### *Other Matters*

The Municipality of Sioux Lookout recommended revising the Ontario Provincial Police billing model subsidy table to reflect the needs of northern and remote communities.

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union requested 250 new full-time correctional officers, 200 probation and parole officers, as well as additional correctional health care and rehabilitation staff. They also recommended building new correctional facilities to deal with overcrowding, and retrofitting existing institutions to accommodate rehabilitation, mental health, and addictions programs.

Quantum-Safe Canada, a cyber security organization, urged the government to develop a strategy for combatting threats to Ontario's cyber systems, and allocate funding for training and research in cyber security.

## **Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade**

### *International Trade*

Some business and industry associations expressed concerns about economic vulnerabilities as a result of Canada's uncertain trade relationship with the United States, and asked for continued protection of the Province's business interests.<sup>15</sup>

The forestry industry asked the Province to defend the sector against unfair trade actions and ensure adequate access to the United States market for Ontario's current lumber capacity. The creation of a commercial loan guarantee program was proposed to provide capital in order to prevent duties collected at the border from interfering with the normal course of business (similar to what was created in Quebec and to what was announced for Algoma Steel).<sup>16</sup>

### *Regulations*

Witnesses representing various industries, businesses, and non-profit organizations commented favourably on the government's intention to reduce the regulatory burden in Ontario. Several explained how their required reporting to various ministries or levels of government is repetitive, time consuming, frustrating, and often results in delays. Concrete examples were offered of what could be changed:

- Norbord Inc. and Georgia-Pacific North Woods LP suggested streamlining annual work schedules.
- Domtar described the 10-year limit on the use of a gravel pit (despite there being more usable gravel) as arbitrary.

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<sup>15</sup> This included, for example, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters.

<sup>16</sup> Witnesses included Resolute Forest Products and the Ontario Forest Industries Association.

- The Cement Association of Canada described an onerous permit-process for the testing of new fuels, and suggested a risk-based approach like that used in British Columbia.
- The Upper Grand District School Board asked that the Province repeal Ontario Regulation 274/12 to provide local boards with more hiring flexibility.
- The Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada suggested removing the “3-hour rule” under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, which prevents local clubs from offering programs before school, at lunch and for more than three hours after school.

Other stakeholders indicated that they had more ideas they hoped to share with the Ministry at a later date. However, union representatives cautioned that when reducing regulation it is important to consider that many of the regulations were created to ensure the health and safety of workers.

### *Supporting Innovation*

Industry stakeholders and business incubators asked the Province to make investments supporting business growth and promoting innovation. The Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation suggested that incentives (e.g., grants, loans, tax abatements, and training subsidies) are imperative.

One way to focus investments, some said, is to target companies that have already demonstrated success but need help to grow.<sup>17</sup> The Association of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters asked that the Province introduce programs and policies to drive foreign and domestic investment and assist companies with scale-up, technology adoption, and product commercialization. One individual said government could help small businesses find the customers so important to their growth by incentivizing larger companies to buy from them.

Witnesses also highlighted the importance of focusing on high tech companies and processes. The Ontario Centres of Excellence and Communitech asked the Province to support technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, 5G networks, cybersecurity, and Quantum computing. The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada requested a targeted tax credit similar to what has been done in Alberta and Pennsylvania to attract new chemistry sector investments.

The role of colleges and universities in supporting local businesses and in developing new products and processes was also highlighted. The Council of Ontario Universities asked the Province to support the commercialization of research and ensure Ontario gets its fair share of federal research funding through continued support of the Ontario Research Fund.

The following requests were also made:

- The Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation asked for \$1 million.

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<sup>17</sup> Witnesses included the Council of Canadian Innovators and Pond Technologies Inc.

- Bioindustrial Innovation Canada asked for \$10 million for a network to support the continued growth of the Hybrid Chemistry Cluster in Sarnia-Lambton and launch a new hybrid Chemistry Cluster in the Eastern Ontario St. Lawrence Corridor.
- An individual requested continued investment in innovation hubs such as Communitech, the Accelerator Centre, and Velocity.
- The Timmins Economic Development Corporation asked that Timmins be funded as a regional innovation centre.

## Education

### *Child Care*

Stakeholders asked that the Province continue to support child care through operating grants, fee subsidies, and wage subsidies for workers.<sup>18</sup>

Specifically, the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario suggested the government invest \$375 million to improve salaries.

Owl Child Care Services of Ontario suggested harmonizing requirements imposed by school boards across the provinces and simplifying the administration of the wage enhancement grant.

The Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario recommended increasing parental choice by streamlining the Provincial licensing process to prioritize the expansion of licensed child care services in the small business and independent not-for-profit sectors. It also suggested a province-wide, standardized fee subsidy application form for families, accessible through the Ministry of Education website, and to allow the fee subsidy to be used at any provincially licensed centre.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada asked for \$6.5 million annually to provide after-school recreation programs.

### *Classrooms and Curriculum*

Among the recommendations relating to the curriculum and the quality of the classroom experience, a number of stakeholders suggested reducing class sizes.<sup>19</sup>

To improve financial literacy, JA (formerly Junior Achievement) asked for \$12 million over five years to scale up their programs.<sup>20</sup> Pathways to Education asked for \$9.5 million for three years to help maintain its program that helps youth living

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<sup>18</sup> Witnesses included the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, the Timmins YMCA, the Canadian Federation of University Women, and YMCA Ontario.

<sup>19</sup> Those requesting smaller class sizes included the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the ETFO Local Ontario North East, and the Greater Essex Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

<sup>20</sup> The Committee heard from JA staff including those representing JA Central Ontario, JA South Western Ontario, the Ottawa Network for Education, and JA Ottawa.

in low-income neighbourhoods graduate from high school and pursue higher levels of education.

The Fort Albany First Nations asked that age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous historical and contemporary contributions be mandatory in elementary and secondary schools.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and ETFO Local Ontario North East were among those who asked the Province to discontinue EQAO testing and replace it with random sampling.

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association asked that kindergarten remain in its current form, however the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario suggested it could be improved by increasing small business and non-for-profit involvement in its delivery.

### *Funding Formula and Grants*

The Committee heard from school boards, trustee associations, and trade unions who described current school funding models as insufficient to meet student needs. They stressed the need to avoid cuts and asked instead for increased investments.

Recommendations included:

- reworking the School Foundation Grant to allow schools to be staffed adequately, keeping schools as community hubs, and avoiding closures;<sup>21</sup>
- continuing and enhancing the Rural and Northern Education Fund, and ensuring more generally that funding models reflect northern realities;<sup>22</sup>
- amending the current funding model to allow elementary schools to hire teachers with specialties in arts, guidance, and health and physical education;<sup>23</sup> and
- reconsidering the cancellation of grants included in the Education Programs—Other allocation.<sup>24</sup>

Stakeholders asked for a commitment to providing predictable and sustainable funding for school repair. To this end, Fix Our Schools recommended an additional \$1.6 billion per year and the Ontario Student Trustees' Association suggested setting the School Renewal Allocation at 2.5% of school replacement value. The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association proposed multiyear capital funding, and the Upper Grand District School Board asked for dedicated funding to meet 2025 accessibility standards.

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<sup>21</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

<sup>22</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Student Trustees' Association, the Keewatin-Patricia Teacher Local, and the Upper Grand District School Board.

<sup>23</sup> Recommended by the Keewatin-Patricia Teacher Local, the ETFO Local Ontario North East, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

<sup>24</sup> Recommended by the Toronto District School Board.

Allowing school boards to allocate funding with greater flexibility was requested by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation asked for the reintroduction of a local priorities amount as a percentage of Pupil Foundation Grant funding to allow school boards to address local needs.

Witnesses made a series of recommendations to increase supports for students with disabilities or mental health issues.<sup>25</sup> Their recommendations included:

- calculating the Special Education Grants based on actual student need—they currently determined using a statistical model based on demographics;<sup>26</sup>
- increasing funding for educational assistants, psychologists, behavioural therapists, school support counsellors, child and youth workers, and speech-language pathologists;<sup>27</sup>
- increasing Applied Behaviour Analysis therapy in schools;<sup>28</sup> and
- continuing to support School Mental Health ASSIST.<sup>29</sup>

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association and the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association were among those who also raised issues relating to the funding of school transportation, noting that some school boards exceed the funds currently allocated to them for this purpose.

## **Energy, Northern Development and Mines**

### *Electricity Rates*

The cost of electricity was frequently raised by witnesses. Commercial and industrial stakeholders were particularly concerned about how electricity rates affect the viability of their businesses, and recommended that the government find ways to lower rates to encourage investment in the province.<sup>30</sup>

Witnesses from the forestry sector urged preservation of sector-related programs such as the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate, the Demand Response program(s), and the Industrial Conservation Initiative.<sup>31</sup> The Canadian Federation of Independent Business suggested re-examining tiered-pricing structures for commercial ratepayers (businesses tend to operate when electricity is the

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<sup>25</sup> These issues were raised, for example, by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Thames Valley Teacher Local, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Educational Support Staff.

<sup>26</sup> Recommended by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

<sup>27</sup> Recommended by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, and the ETFO Local Ontario North East.

<sup>28</sup> Recommended by Autism Ontario.

<sup>29</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Public School Boards Association.

<sup>30</sup> Witnesses included the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, the City of Timmins, Food and Beverage Ontario, and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation.

<sup>31</sup> Witnesses included Domtar, Norbord Incorporated, Rayonier Advanced Materials, Resolute Forest Products, and Weyerhaeuser Company Limited.

costliest under the current model). CLEAResult, an energy efficiency consultant, lauded the government's announced 12% reduction in electricity rates, and suggested that improved conservation demand management programs could further improve efficiency and lower ratepayers' hydro bills.

### *Natural Gas Expansion*

Improving access to natural gas service throughout the province was a recurring theme in the hearings.<sup>32</sup> Many rural and remote communities in Ontario do not have access to natural gas, and instead rely on more costly options such as propane, oil, or electricity to heat their homes and businesses. Access to natural gas could lower heating costs for residents and large-scale commercial users. Agricultural stakeholders (such as greenhouse growers) were particularly concerned about how lack of access to natural gas affects their competitiveness.<sup>33</sup> A representative from Enbridge Gas testified about the company's long-term expansion program that would invest \$650 million over 10 years to bring natural gas to up to 30,000 customers in approximately 70 communities. The company sought closer partnership with government to achieve this aim.

### *Northern Infrastructure and Investment*

The Committee heard testimony about the importance of infrastructure investments for economic development in the North.<sup>34</sup> The Timmins Economic Development Corporation requested that the government plan for increased electrical generation and transmission capacity to promote investment. Noting the lack of rail infrastructure and service, others asked that passenger rail service be restored and freight rail service expanded in the region.<sup>35</sup>

## **Environment, Conservation and Parks**

### *Environmental Approvals*

The Committee received recommendations to streamline the regulatory and approvals process. For instance, the Ontario Waterpower Association (OWA) noted that the waterpower industry has to contend with overlap and duplication between the *Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act* and the *Ontario Water Resources Act*. The OWA testified that this adds to the cost of operating hydroelectric facilities, and the additional costs are ultimately borne by hydro ratepayers. The OWA also requested that hydroelectric projects be added to the list of activities exempted from requiring a Permit to Take Water under the *Ontario Water Resources Act*, because any water used for electricity generation is returned to the watershed once it passes through the facility.

Others asked that the government introduce timelines for certain processes, similar to what is required under the *Planning Act*. For instance, the

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<sup>32</sup> Witnesses included the City of Timmins, KJB Herefords, the Lambton Federation of Agriculture, and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation.

<sup>33</sup> Among these witnesses was the Lambton Federation of Agriculture.

<sup>34</sup> Witnesses included the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Rayonier Advanced Materials, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce, and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation.

<sup>35</sup> Witnesses included Domtar, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation.

Peterborough and the Kawarthas Home Builders Association recommended that service standards be implemented to reduce timelines for environmental compliance approvals. However, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce cautioned that sufficient resources would need to be allocated to improve approvals timelines, such as for the environmental assessment process.

### *Pollution Standards*

Several witnesses addressed the issue of pollution standards. For instance, TransAlta Corporation urged the government to develop made-in-Ontario emissions performance standards and support both new technologies and upgrades to existing equipment through the Carbon Trust. Some stakeholders requested reinstatement of the Cap-and-Trade program.<sup>36</sup> The Ontario Public Transit Association requested that Drive Clean testing requirements be eliminated for public transit vehicles, while maintaining other emission requirements.

The Canadian Fuels Association (CFA) praised the government's review of regulations, and recommended that it look for ways to align regulatory policies for both fuels and facilities that produce them. The CFA also asked the government to reconsider its proposal to increase ethanol content in regular gasoline (from 10% to 15%), arguing that pending federal clean fuel standards will sufficiently reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### *Other Environmental Matters*

The Cement Association of Canada recommended that the government reduce the regulatory burden on the testing of alternative fuels, such as the use of waste for fuel.

## **Francophone Affairs**

The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO) had a number of recommendations, such as including a francophone perspective when reviewing the Province's finances. The AFO encouraged the government to diversify its trade relationships with other French-speaking countries by committing to two full-time personnel to work in the area of the *Organisation internationale de la francophonie*, and to increase immigration from those countries. The AFO also urged the government to reconsider the cancelled French-language university. La Cité described itself as a key player in improving access to French-language postsecondary education in the province.

## **Government and Consumer Services**

Canadians for Properly Built Homes (CPBH) called on the government to end the Tarion Warranty Corporation's monopoly on providing new home warranties in the province, and develop a new competitive warranty model similar to what exists in other provinces. Tarion is a non-profit corporation that administers the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan. CPBH also requested more transparency

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<sup>36</sup> These witness included, for example, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition and the Toronto and York Region Labour Council.

on how the government spends the oversight fees paid by Tarion and other administrative authorities.

Government procurement was an area of concern for some witnesses. For instance, the Appraisal Institute of Canada (AIC) urged the government to base real estate decisions on comprehensive research and analysis provided by designated appraisers. The Ontario Association of Architects recommended a Quality-Based Selection approach to procurement of professional design services. They noted that design services typically account for a small percentage of overall cost (compared to construction and maintenance), and that procuring design services on the basis of best qualifications would reduce construction and maintenance costs down the road. The Council of Canadian Innovators suggested using procurement policies to support established but scalable Ontario companies.

The AIC asked that the government review the land registry and assessment systems to ensure that access to title and assessment information is accessible and affordable to professional appraisers and other real estate professionals. Several witnesses requested that realtors be given the ability to form personal real estate corporations, similar to what is allowed for doctors, lawyers, and other regulated professionals.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Witnesses included the Kitchener Waterloo Association of REALTORS, the Ontario Real Estate Association, and the Timmins, Cochrane & Timiskaming Districts Association of Realtors.

## Health and Long-Term Care

### *Home and Community Care*

The Ontario Community Support Association asked for a 5% annual increase in home and community care funding, an average of about \$227 million per year. It suggested developing a human resources strategy for the sector, and investing in digital technology to improve efficiencies.<sup>38</sup>

OPSEU, Community Health Care Professionals suggested offering a predictable weekly wage to home care workers based on a competitive hourly rate. SEIU Healthcare Canada suggested improving scheduling for services and increasing travel allowances for workers.

The Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario explained that primary care physicians could play a greater role in coordinating home and community care. It described a pilot in Sudbury that has been successful in improving the patient experience by locating a care coordinator in a family health team.

Home Care Ontario recommended developing a tax credit or a caregiver allowance to allow for purchase of care from reputable providers.

### *Hospitals*

The Committee heard from a number of health professionals, hospital unions, and nursing associations who described over-capacity in provincial hospitals—patients are waiting in hallways and in storage rooms to be admitted. They called for increased investments in health care generally (to reduce pressure on emergency rooms) and in hospitals specifically.

The Ontario Hospital Association asked for a 3.45% funding increase to hospitals (\$656 million), while unions suggested increases as high as 5.3%.<sup>39</sup> The Ontario Psychological Association asked for an additional \$2.5 million per year for 50 new residency positions in hospitals and institutions.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario asked that Registered Nurse vacancies be filled.

### *Illness and Disease Prevention and Treatment*

Organizations advocating on behalf of those living with disease and chronic illnesses asked for funding to better serve Ontarians:

- Epilepsy South Central Ontario asked for \$11 million over four years to deliver epilepsy education and referral programs province-wide.
- The Alzheimer Society of Ontario asked for \$4.8 million to meet the demand for more front-line staff in local Alzheimer Societies.

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<sup>38</sup> Similar comments were made by Home Care Ontario and Care Watch.

<sup>39</sup> Witnesses included the London Health Coalition, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, and the Thunder Bay Health Coalition.

- The Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation asked for \$100,000 for 20 support groups in underserved areas, and \$1 million to establish a patient and treatment registry.
- The Arthritis Society asked for support for the Arthritis Rehabilitation and Education Program.
- An individual asked the Province to consider vaping a smoking-cessation tool.
- The Canadian Cancer Society asked the Province to maintain funding for the Smoke-free Ontario Strategy and the Smokers' Help Line.
- MINT Memory Clinics, which provides dementia care training to practitioners, asked for continued funding.
- The Ontario Chiropractic Association asked that the Primary Care Low Back Pain Program be expanded.

### *Long-Term Care*

Stakeholders explained that long waitlists and wait times for admission into long-term care homes force seniors to rely on hospital care because there are no beds available to them, increasing pressure on that system. By the time they are admitted to long-term care homes, they are older, frailer, with multiple medical conditions, and often suffering from some form of cognitive impairment.

To address these issues, the Ontario Long-Term Care Association recommended reviewing the *Long-Term Care Homes Act*, investing \$100 million annually to hire more staff, and making the addition of beds to existing homes the priority in recently announced expansion efforts.

To improve the quality of care, witnesses recommended the creation of a minimum care standard in long-term care homes of four hours, per resident, per day.<sup>40</sup> The Ontario Nurses Association asked for at least one registered nurse for every 20 residents and one Nurse Practitioner for every 120 residents.

Organizations also asked for more dementia care supports, with AdvantAge Ontario and the Ontario Long-Term Care Association asking that all long-term care homes have in-home behavioural supports.

Concern about the quality of life for residents in some long-term care homes motivated stakeholders to suggest the Province explore new models of care like Butterfly, Green House, and Eden Alternative (which are focused more on emotional needs).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Witnesses included AdvantAge Ontario, CLAC, CUPE Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ottawa Health Coalition, OPSEU Local 348, the Thunder Bay Health Coalition, and the Champlain Region Family Council Network.

<sup>41</sup> Witnesses included AdvantAge Ontario, the Central Lambton Family Health Team, and the Council of Canadians–Peterborough and Kawarthas.

### *Medication and Coverage*

While some witnesses asked the Committee to review the access to, and affordability of, prescription medications and services, several trade unions asked for the provision of universal prescription drug coverage.<sup>42</sup> The Canadian Cancer Society asked the province to fully fund take-home cancer drugs.

Diabetes Canada asked that access to medications, devices, and supplies required for effective diabetes management be improved by reducing deductibles associated with publicly funded programs such as the Trillium Drug Program. The War Amps asked that the Province update policies on artificial limb coverage to ensure affordable access to prosthetic care. The Alliance for Healthier Communities asked the province at least \$38 million this year for a seniors' dental program.

Stakeholders also recommended:

- endorsing PrescribeIT™ as the preferred electronic prescribing service to better connect doctors to pharmacists and to decrease the number of fraudulent prescriptions and transcription errors;<sup>43</sup>
- expanding the High-Risk Pneumococcal Pneumonia Immunization Program by adding Prevnar 13;<sup>44</sup>
- implementing strategies to switch patients from a reference biologic drug to one of its biosimilars, saving money;<sup>45</sup>
- extending the Ventilator Equipment Pool to enable people living with ALS to use BiPAP devices regardless of where they live;<sup>46</sup>
- funding Prostate-Specific Antigen testing for all men when so ordered by a physician;<sup>47</sup>
- eliminating the requirement that only physicians provide patients with the diagnosis from an assessment by a qualified speech-language pathologist or audiologist; and,<sup>48</sup>
- providing access to advanced glucose monitoring technologies such as Continuous Glucose Monitoring and Flash Glucose Monitoring to all patients and families living with type 1 diabetes.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Witnesses included the Ottawa and District Labour Council, the Ontario Federation of Labour, and the Toronto and York Region Labour Council.

<sup>43</sup> Recommended by Canada Health Infoway.

<sup>44</sup> Recommended by The Lung Association.

<sup>45</sup> Recommended by the Canadian Biosimilars Forum.

<sup>46</sup> Recommended by the ALS Society of Canada.

<sup>47</sup> Recommended by Prostate Cancer Canada.

<sup>48</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists.

<sup>49</sup> Recommended by JDRF.

### *Mental Health and Addictions*

The Committee heard accounts of Ontarians—many of whom are children—not getting the help they need when facing mental health and addictions issues, and ending up in hospital emergency rooms. After discharge, they are often placed on waitlists, waiting more than a year to access services in some regions, or forced to pay out of pocket or travel long distances because services do not exist in their communities. Witnesses said First Nations, northern, and rural communities are most likely to face difficulties accessing care.

Stakeholders expressed hope that a promised \$1.9 billion in new mental health funding from the provincial government (and a matching federal commitment) over the next decade, would provide more local, front-line, and preventative mental health services. Addictions and Mental Health Ontario indicated these funds should be focused on ensuring emergency departments are not the first or only point of contact, addressing the opioid crisis by reducing wait times for treatment, and increasing services for young people.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario suggested this investment be focused on standardizing core services, supportive housing, new data infrastructure, integrating primary care and mental health and addictions services, and the expansion of mobile crisis intervention teams. Family Service Ontario offered to be the Province's preferred services supplier and allocate funds to member agencies and coordinating services locally.

Those working with children and youth suggested investing \$150 million in children and youth mental health services, to reduce wait times, hire more front-line children's mental health professionals, and create more 24-crisis support outside of emergency rooms.<sup>50</sup> They also suggested expanding eligibility for children and youth services to age 25, noting the challenges in transitioning from programs for children to those available for adults.<sup>51</sup>

Other ideas for targeting this investment included expanding on existing programs and building on best practices. For example, witnesses recommended:

- funding the expansion of Family Services Ontario agencies' mental health and psychotherapy storefront programs;<sup>52</sup>
- funding the implementation of Sarnia-Lambton Rebound's community-based, early intervention programs for youth mental health in other locations in Ontario;<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> This view was expressed by the Chatham Kent Children's Services, St. Clair Child and Youth Services, Children's Mental Health Ontario, and Peterborough Youth Services.

<sup>51</sup> Witnesses included the Children's Mental Health Ontario, and Chatham Kent Children's Services.

<sup>52</sup> Recommended by the Family Counselling Centre, Family Services Ottawa, and the Community Counselling and Resource Centre.

<sup>53</sup> Recommended by Sarnia-Lambton Rebound.

- expanding the Lutherwood and Carizon Front Door model which helps improve local access to services and takes pressure off of emergency rooms;<sup>54</sup> and
- implementing the Stella's Place model an integrated young adult service hub that addresses youth mental health.<sup>55</sup>

Some witnesses argued that increased demand for their services has made their current facilities inadequate. The Reverend Tommy Beardy Memorial Wee Che He Wayo-Gamik Family Treatment Centre asked for a new treatment centre to increase the number of families it serves from five to eight. Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare's asked for funds to transform an eight-bed residential unit into a focused, time-limited substance use treatment facility for those with complex and/or chronic substance use issues.

As a hub for more than 30 First Nation communities, the Municipality of Sioux Lookout noted the absence of locally-available services. It requested a 20-bed detox unit, a 20-unit bail facility, a new emergency shelter facility, and addictions treatment facilities.

Other specific recommendations to target investments in mental health and addiction services included:

- developing an incentivization program that will keep new psychology graduates in smaller communities;<sup>56</sup>
- enhancing mental health support for young people seeking employment;<sup>57</sup>
- establishing an urgent assessment Centre for Mental Health Addictions at Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare;<sup>58</sup>
- expanding the "Stop Now and Plan" program, currently offered in Kenora, to other communities, teaching children aged six to 11 and their families emotional regulation, impulse control, and problem solving skills;<sup>59</sup>
- investing \$25 million in each of the next three years to strengthen the mental health services and supports available on college campuses;<sup>60</sup>
- increasing access to community supports for persons with Schizophrenia to reduce the reliance on emergency services;<sup>61</sup>
- embedding mental wellness and addictions programming in Friendship Centres;<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Recommended by Lutherwood.

<sup>55</sup> Recommended by Stella's Place.

<sup>56</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Psychological Association.

<sup>57</sup> Recommended by the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario.

<sup>58</sup> Recommended by Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare.

<sup>59</sup> Recommended by Firefly.

<sup>60</sup> Recommended by Colleges Ontario.

<sup>61</sup> Recommended by the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

<sup>62</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

- developing a fully-funded suicide prevention strategy throughout our health and social systems;<sup>63</sup>
- investing \$10 million over a five-year period for nurse-led, community-based health promotion initiatives that address opioid use disorders and chronic pain, particularly in rural and remote communities;<sup>64</sup>
- investing \$750,000 in Indigenous communities to support the rollout of a technology system that enables clients, nurses, and counsellors to support people recovering from opioid addiction and PTSD;<sup>65</sup>
- building 30,000 new supportive housing units;<sup>66</sup> and
- investing in French telehealth services.<sup>67</sup>

### *Palliative Care*

Several recommendations related to end-of-life health services:

- Hospice Palliative Care Ontario asked the Province to invest in additional residential hospice beds to sufficient levels.
- Pallium asked for investment in its approach to palliative care that builds primary- or generalist-level capacity.
- The Ontario Medical Association Section of Palliative Medicine asked for a comprehensive palliative care plan to reduce strain on the acute and long-term care sectors.

### *Primary Care*

Witnesses made the following recommendations relating to how physicians are compensated:

- The Central Lambton Family Health Team described the importance of keeping the Family Health Team model.
- The Dryden Regional Health Centre and Riverside Healthcare Facilities asked that new physician remuneration models be developed to improve recruitment and retention for small, rural, and remote communities.
- The Ontario Association of Cardiologists asked that the Province reinstate funding code E078 for congestive heart failure patient care.

### *Other Health-Related Issues*

The following health-related recommendations were also made to the committee:

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<sup>63</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Medical Association

<sup>64</sup> Recommended by the Canadian Nurses Association

<sup>65</sup> Recommended by the Canadian Nurses Association

<sup>66</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association

<sup>67</sup> Recommended by L'Hôpital Montfort

- The Province was asked to maintain funding for College of Midwives of Ontario.<sup>68</sup>
- The Alliance for Healthier Communities asked for \$30 million for community-governed health care.
- The Alliance for Healthier Communities asked for \$16.5 million per year to support performance and information management at Community Health Centres.
- The Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario offered to create new, dedicated programs to train personal support workers to become registered practical nurses, and train registered practical nurses to become registered nurses.
- The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario asked that registered nurses be granted more prescribing powers.
- The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario asked that access to French health care services be improved by strengthening the role of French language health planning entities.
- The Durham Regional Health Department suggested strategic investments in the public health system to address government priorities such as cannabis and tobacco use prevention.
- The Misiway Milopemahtesewin Community Health Centre asked that funding models be revised to better reflect indigenous models of care.

## Indigenous Affairs

The Committee heard from witnesses presenting suggestions for the improvement of services for Indigenous people. For instance, the Chiefs of Ontario called on the government to provide flexible and sustainable investment in First Nation communities, including housing, health and social services, education, the environment, and justice and law. Housing was a recurring theme, as witnesses urged the government to provide housing supports and commit to an Indigenous housing strategy.<sup>69</sup> The Mushkegowuk Territory requested that appropriate housing be provided for on-reserve police officers.

Witnesses also urged the government to invest in economic opportunities in First Nation communities. For instance, the Committee heard about the importance of providing training for Indigenous people to enter the skilled trades to unlock the potential of the First Nations workforce.<sup>70</sup> The Chiefs of Ontario asked for \$500,000 to support regional engagement of First Nation communities with the Province to discuss a Resource Revenue Sharing framework.

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<sup>68</sup> Recommended by the Association of Ontario Midwives and Moland-Osborne.

<sup>69</sup> Witnesses included the Mushkegowuk Territory, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, and the City of Timmins.

<sup>70</sup> Witnesses included the Fort Albany First Nations, the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association, and Skills Ontario.

The Chief of the Fort Albany First Nations called on the government to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation. He also asked that public servants be educated in Indigenous matters, including Aboriginal-Crown Relations. The Chiefs of Ontario asked that any decisions affecting First Nations be not arbitrary, but undertaken with proper consultation.

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) urged the government to partner with Friendship Centres to deliver culture-based social programs, employment opportunities, mental health and addictions programs, and training for urban Indigenous communities. The OFIFC also asked that the transfer payment structure be revised to increase transparency and accountability, and reduce unnecessary reporting requirements.

## **Infrastructure**

### *Broadband Internet*

Stakeholders advised the Committee about the need to expand broadband internet services province-wide.<sup>71</sup> Broadband was characterized by several witnesses as a basic service that all Ontarians should enjoy, which is critical for economic development and other opportunities.<sup>72</sup> The Municipality of Clarington noted that although the issue of broadband access is primarily associated with remote areas or rural communities far from urban centres, even small municipalities within the Greater Toronto Region have inconsistent service. The Chiefs of Ontario called for expansion of the broadband network to First Nations communities to create an environment conducive to job creation and business competitiveness.

### *Municipal Infrastructure*

Municipal representatives spoke about the need to provide funding for municipal infrastructure and regulatory compliance.<sup>73</sup> Several witnesses asked that the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) be stabilized or increased.<sup>74</sup>

Other municipalities made specific infrastructure funding requests. For instance, the City of Sarnia asked for \$6 million in assistance for its Oversized Load Corridor project, which would allow fabricators of oversized products better access to shipping. One individual requested that the government not fund the construction of a pedestrian and cyclist bridge in Waterloo Region.

### *Other Infrastructure Matters*

The Consulting Engineers of Ontario noted that much of the province's infrastructure is more than 50 years old, and recommended that the government

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<sup>71</sup> Witnesses included Clarington, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, Enbridge Gas, KJB Herefords, the Lambton Federation of Agriculture, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce, and the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture.

<sup>72</sup> Witnesses included Clarington and the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus.

<sup>73</sup> Witnesses included the City of Brampton, the City of Mississauga, the City of Timmins, the Consulting Engineers of Ontario, the Ontario Good Roads Association, the Town of Fort Frances, and the Township of Machin.

<sup>74</sup> Witnesses included the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the City of Timmins, the City of Welland, the Town of Fort Frances, and the Township of Enniskillen.

focus investments on its core infrastructure, including transportation and transit; water conservation, treatment and reuse; and health facilities.

## **Labour**

Most of the presentations to the Committee relating to this Ministry focused on recent changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act* passed by the previous government in Bill 148 (the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017*), and repealed or amended through Bill 47 (the *Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018*), which was passed in the current Parliament.

Some witnesses, such as regional labour councils and trade unions, expressed support for the provisions of Bill 148 which amended employment standards, asking that the minimum wage be increased to \$15 and that job protected leave, equal pay provisions, and scheduling protections for workers be reinstated. They suggested that amendments could go even further, by, for example, providing seven paid leave days, and asked that the government hire additional enforcement officers.<sup>75</sup>

Union representatives and members asked that amendments to the *Labour Relations Act* extend card-based certification to all sectors, including those that had been provided for in Bill 148 such as building services, home care and community services, and the temporary help agencies industry. They also asked the government to extend successor rights to all contracted services, provide automatic access to contract arbitrations in all cases, and remove six-month restrictions on the right of employees to return to work following a lawful strike or lock out.<sup>76</sup>

## **Municipal Affairs and Housing**

### *Affordable Housing*

Many witnesses referred to the lack of affordable housing in Ontario. The Committee heard that housing affordability is not only a challenge in the Greater Toronto Area and other large cities, but affects smaller communities and rural areas as well.<sup>77</sup> The City of Mississauga noted that it is not only low-income people who are having difficulty finding affordable places to live, middle-income earners are increasingly facing similar challenges.

The Province was urged to confirm its commitment to the Canada-Ontario bilateral agreement under the federal National Housing Strategy.<sup>78</sup> The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association told the Committee that investments in housing

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<sup>75</sup> Witnesses included Community Food Centres Canada, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, the London Health Coalition, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, the Timmins and District Labour Council, and the Toronto and York Region Labour Council.

<sup>76</sup> Witnesses included the Public Service Alliance of Canada - National Capital Region, and the Ontario Federation of Labour.

<sup>77</sup> Witnesses included the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, the City of Timmins, and the Point in Time.

<sup>78</sup> Witnesses included the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario and the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association.

can save public dollars elsewhere, such as health care, correctional services, and social assistance.

The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario called for sufficient funding for municipal Service Managers to repair and maintain existing social housing stock. The City of Kenora asked the government to continue and increase its support of programs like the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative.

A social housing resident asked that the Province direct the Peterborough Housing Corporation and Peterborough's housing division to apply housing rules fairly and consistently. Specifically she would like her landlord to calculate her rent based on annual income because of seasonal fluctuations in her income.

Many witnesses cited supply issues as a key factor in housing affordability.<sup>79</sup> The Ontario Real Estate Association applauded the government's decision to develop a Housing Supply Action Plan. Other witnesses made suggestions for how the government could encourage new housing supply. These include

- streamlining the development approvals process;<sup>80</sup>
- reducing development charges that municipalities may levy;<sup>81</sup>
- reducing density requirements in the Growth Plan for smaller municipalities;<sup>82</sup>
- requiring municipalities to implement standardized secondary suite by-laws;<sup>83</sup>
- directing resources from the HST, land transfer taxes, and development charges to housing;<sup>84</sup>
- reviewing the Ontario Building Code to eliminate any requirements that add unnecessary construction costs;<sup>85</sup>
- entering into equity partnerships with non-profit housing organizations;<sup>86</sup> and

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<sup>79</sup> Witnesses included the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Ontario Real Estate Association, the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, the Ottawa Real Estate Board, and the Peterborough and the Kawarthas Home Builders Association.

<sup>80</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Peterborough and the Kawarthas Home Builders Association; and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario.

<sup>81</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Peterborough and the Kawarthas Home Builders Association, and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario.

<sup>82</sup> Recommended by the Peterborough and the Kawarthas Home Builders Association.

<sup>83</sup> Recommended by the Ontario Real Estate Association.

<sup>84</sup> Recommended by the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association.

<sup>85</sup> Recommended by the Greater Ottawa Homebuilders' Association.

<sup>86</sup> Recommended by the Ottawa Community Housing Corporation.

- using provincial surplus land for housing, especially affordable housing models provided by non-profit organizations or co-operatives.<sup>87</sup>

### *Land Use Planning*

The Committee heard from witnesses with suggestions for improving the Province's land use planning regime. A common theme was modernization and streamlining of the approvals process. For instance, the Residential Construction Council of Ontario recommended allowing and encouraging electronic permitting systems, which is common in other parts of the world. Such systems can be linked to Geographic Information System data to further expedite the process. Others noted the need for shorter timelines in the approvals process; longer timelines add costs to development which is ultimately borne by property buyers. The Ontario Home Builders' Association (OHBA) asked the government to enforce provisions in the Planning Act that require municipalities to update their zoning to conform with provincial policy.

Several witnesses made recommendations to the committee on development charges (DC). DCs are levied on development by municipalities to help pay for additional infrastructure related to the development, such as new sewers or roads. Some in the home building and real estate sectors asked that development charges be reduced to encourage development, particularly of residential properties. Others, such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) noted the importance of DCs for municipalities in delivering services, arguing that they are not a significant contributor to the cost of new homes and should not be reduced.

The Committee heard from stakeholders who were pleased that the government is undertaking a review of density requirements in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.<sup>88</sup> The Peterborough and the Kawartha Home Builders Association noted that the density targets in the current plan are not suitable for development in smaller communities.

### *Municipal Finance and Administration*

Municipal stakeholders asked that the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund be maintained. Other stakeholders noted the need for new revenue tools. The Community Commonwealth Association recommended that municipalities be given a share of income tax revenues.<sup>89</sup> The Waterloo Region Homebuilders' Association recommended that new revenue tools and capital investment models be provided specifically for municipalities to develop housing-supportive infrastructure such as transit and utilities.

## **Natural Resources and Forestry**

Representatives from the forestry sector emphasized the significance of the sector to the province's economy, particularly in Northern Ontario. The Ontario Forest Industries Association praised the government's announcement to create

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<sup>87</sup> Recommended by the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

<sup>88</sup> Witnesses included the Ontario Home Builders' Association, and the Peterborough and the Kawartha Home Builders Association.

<sup>89</sup> The City of Mississauga also recommended new revenue tools.

a forestry strategy, noting that the sector creates a domestic economic impact of \$15.5 billion while employing approximately 172,000 people.

Many witnesses noted the importance of the Forest Access Road Program to maintaining a viable forestry sector, and asked that the government allocate \$75 million for the program in 2019.<sup>90</sup> Resolute Forest Products noted that these roads are public assets that benefit other groups, such as the mining industry, First Nations, and the public more broadly.

Witnesses expressed some concern over the Province's stumpage rates, noting that they are higher for some species than in other jurisdictions.<sup>91</sup> Stumpage rates are the fees paid to the Crown for each tree harvested. Another witness noted the lack of markets outside of Northern Ontario for low-end fibre such as wood chips, sawdust, and bark.<sup>92</sup>

Stakeholders called on the government to reduce the regulatory burden in the forestry industry, including duplication in the Growth and Yield Program, complying with forest management plans, and review processes.<sup>93</sup> One suggestion to streamline regulatory processes was to allow more electronic invoicing and payment options.<sup>94</sup>

Several witnesses called on the government to honour a 2007 equivalency commitment that would allow the forest sector to operate only under the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act* (CFSA), and not the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA).<sup>95</sup> The Committee was told that the requirement to comply with both Acts is an unnecessary duplication since the CFSA already contains provisions protecting species at risk.<sup>96</sup> Some witnesses asked that current ESA provisions enabling the Minister to make exemptions by regulation be made permanent.<sup>97</sup>

One individual noted the importance of the province's forests as public assets, and asked that Sustainable Forestry Licenses (which allow license-holders to harvest timber) be managed at the community level.

The Peterborough and the Kawarthas Home Builders Association recommended that conservation authorities be subject to service standards in order to reduce approvals timelines.

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<sup>90</sup> Witnesses included the Dryden Forest Management Company, Domtar, EACOM Timber Corporation, Georgia-Pacific North Woods LP, Henry Fiset and Sons, McRae Lumber Company, the Ontario Forest Industries Association, Norbord Incorporated, Rayonier Advanced Materials, Resolute Forest Products, Weyerhaeuser Company Limited and an individual.

<sup>91</sup> Witnesses included Domtar, Georgia-Pacific North Woods LP, and Norbord Incorporated.

<sup>92</sup> This witness was the McRae Lumber Company.

<sup>93</sup> Witnesses included the Dryden Forest Management Company, Domtar, and Georgia-Pacific North Woods LP.

<sup>94</sup> Recommended by the Dryden Forest Management Company

<sup>95</sup> Witnesses included EACOM Timber Corporation, Georgia-Pacific North Woods LP, McRae Lumber Company, the Ontario Forest Industries Association, and Weyerhaeuser Company Limited.

<sup>96</sup> This was communicated by Weyerhaeuser Company Limited.

<sup>97</sup> Witnesses included the Ontario Forest Industries Association and Resolute Forest Products.

## Seniors and Accessibility

To reduce the need for long-term care, an individual asked that the Ontario Building Code be amended to require that all new housing be fully accessible. The Ottawa Community Housing Corporation recommended that the government explore new housing models for seniors—models that would provide affordable housing and services for seniors under one roof.

The Seniors Safety Line asked for \$165,000 per year for a 24/7 hotline for seniors facing abuse.

## Tourism, Culture and Sport

### *Cultural Funding*

Noting the importance of tax credits for film and television production, Film Ontario requested that they be continued. It also recommended reconstituting the Film and Television Advisory Panel.

Computer Animation Studios of Ontario recommended making the Ontario Computer Animation and Special Effects tax credit independent of the Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit and the Ontario Production Service Tax Credit, which would allow visual effects and animation companies to file more quickly.

A number of witnesses made funding requests for cultural programs:

- The Centre culturel La Ronde asked for assistance to build a permanent centre in Timmins for its programs, estimated to cost \$6 million.
- The Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario asked that funding to the Conseil des arts de l'Ontario and to Ontario Créatif be maintained at the 2018 levels.
- The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario asked that funding to the Ontario Arts Council's Indigenous Culture Fund be restored to its previous level of \$5 million.
- The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) and Orchestras Canada asked that no further reductions be made to OAC's funding.
- The Young People's Theatre asked that the government contribute to the development of its new facility, as per a bilateral infrastructure agreement with the federal government.
- FilmOntario asked that the current tax credit commitment for film and television production be continued, and that the Ministry reconstitute the Film and Television Advisory Panel.
- Several witnesses asked that no further reductions be made to the Ontario Trillium Foundation's funding.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Witnesses included Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario, the Ontario Nonprofit Network, Orchestras Canada, and the Peterborough and District Labour Council.

### *Libraries*

The Committee was told about the need for a \$17 million increase to the base funding for libraries.<sup>99</sup> The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and the Ontario Library Association noted that libraries provide many services beyond book loans, such as job training, small business support, access to broadband internet, access to digital government services, and children's programming. The Committee also heard that funding shortfalls may impact the long-term sustainability of many local public libraries, especially in smaller towns and rural Ontario.

### *Museums*

Witnesses from the museums sector requested investments for Ontario's museums, including:

- \$5 million in digital access and engagement to improve access to museums across large geographic areas;
- \$5 million for workforce development in the museums sector; and
- \$4 million for centralized museum services, similar to what has been done with libraries.<sup>100</sup>

These witnesses also requested a reduction to red tape in the Community Museum Operating Grant program, recommending a simplification of the application process.

### *Tourism*

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario told the Committee that the sector generates \$34.1 billion annually. It called on the government to fund transportation and communication infrastructure across Ontario to promote tourism and improve the access to rural and Northern Ontario for tourism. The association also sought a long-term funding commitment for tourism marketing.

The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) requested that the government increase its support beyond the \$1 million currently granted to upgrade equipment and trail network. The OSFC estimated that \$12 million worth of trail network improvements is required, including bridge repairs.

## **Training, Colleges and Universities**

### *Apprenticeships and Skilled Trades*

Concern was expressed to the Committee over the shortage of skilled labour in the province by stakeholders from the agriculture, construction, forestry, and manufacturing sectors. Skills Ontario told the Committee that a province-wide skills shortage is a constraint on economic growth, citing estimates that it cost

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<sup>99</sup> Witnesses included the Dryden Public Library, the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and the Ontario Library Association, the Ottawa Public Library, and the Timmins Public Library.

<sup>100</sup> Witnesses included the Ontario Museum Association and Sunset Country Museum Network.

\$24.3 billion in foregone GDP. The Committee heard that there would be a shortfall of 190,000 skilled workers in Ontario by 2020. A witness told the Committee that the problem will inevitably worsen as skilled workers retire, noting that the Canadian Tooling and Machining Association's 2017 wage and business survey reported that 20% of skilled workers from companies surveyed are over the age of 54.<sup>101</sup>

With the winding down of the College of Trades in 2019, the Committee heard several recommendations for how apprenticeships and entry into the skilled trades could be supported in Ontario. These included:

- creating a one-window application process for apprentices;<sup>102</sup>
- creating a targeted grant to support apprentices in their preparation for their certification exams;<sup>103</sup>
- opening vocational schools with partners from industry;<sup>104</sup>
- establishing apprenticeship programs at the high school level;<sup>105</sup>
- increasing funding to post-secondary institutions in Northern Ontario to accommodate more students in the skilled trade courses;<sup>106</sup>
- offering a tax subsidy to employers who offer an apprenticeship that would cover 50% of the cost in the first year, provided the employer agrees to keep the student for a second year;<sup>107</sup>
- undertaking a comprehensive review of skilled trades training to encourage full participation of sector associations;<sup>108</sup> and
- investing in immigration programs to attract skilled tradespeople to Ontario.<sup>109</sup>

Several high tech companies and recruiters asked that there be an adequate number of seats available for registered apprentices attending college to meet the demand for highly skilled workers in the IT sector, specifically as Network and Hardware Technicians.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Recommended by Savage Arms Canada.

<sup>102</sup> Recommended by Northern College and Skills Ontario.

<sup>103</sup> Recommended by Slegers Engineered Products Inc.

<sup>104</sup> Recommended by Savage Arms Canada.

<sup>105</sup> Recommended by Savage Arms Canada.

<sup>106</sup> Recommended by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation.

<sup>107</sup> Recommended by the Tri-Mach Group of Companies.

<sup>108</sup> Recommended by the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada.

<sup>109</sup> Recommended by the Canadian Propane Association.

<sup>110</sup> Recommended by apprenticeLMS Ltd.

### *Career Colleges*

Career Colleges Ontario (CCO), an organization representing 244 privately owned career colleges, requested that the government treat private colleges similarly to publicly funded colleges, by

- publishing key performance indicators for private colleges so that they can be compared to publicly funded colleges;
- allowing private college students to receive OSAP for distance learning, which is currently only available for students in in-person courses; and
- allowing private colleges to train apprentices and registered nurses to meet skills shortages.

### *Colleges*

Colleges Ontario requested a new program that provides \$20 million in grants annually for five years to help colleges invest in specialized equipment and software needed to train students in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and robotics. They argued that such an investment is necessary to maintain the province's competitiveness, and proposed that the program be funding-matched by industry.

Lambton College sought funding for its applied research projects, which are focused on commercialization. All of Lambton's research projects are undertaken in collaboration with industry partners working in the materials, water, energy, biotechnology, information technology and manufacturing sectors. Other witnesses called on the government to support these kinds of academic-commercial collaborations in both colleges and universities, noting mutual benefits for companies and the students who participate in them.<sup>111</sup>

### *Specialized Training*

The Committee heard recommendations from witnesses in the health sector about how to address the shortage of health care professionals in the province. These include aligning training for health professionals at colleges and universities with industry demands<sup>112</sup> and expanding on-site training for personal support workers.<sup>113</sup>

Several witnesses told the Committee that the government should support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) training, starting in high school, or even at the elementary school level.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Witnesses included D-TA Systems, Ryerson University, and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

<sup>112</sup> This witness was the Dryden Regional Health Centre.

<sup>113</sup> Witnesses included Riverside Healthcare Facilities and the Thunder Bay Health Coalition.

<sup>114</sup> Witnesses included D-TA Systems, the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, and the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario Thames Valley Teacher Local.

### *Student Loans*

Several witnesses recommended a grants-focused assistance program, and the Trent Central Student Association asked that the annual debt cap on loans be kept at \$10,000.<sup>115</sup> The Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union told the Committee that a decrease in grants could prevent students with limited economic means from accessing post-secondary education.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) told the Committee that the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) should only be offered to students who have demonstrated financial need. The CTF also recommended that students' financial assistance be primarily in the form of loans, rather than grants.

### *Universities*

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) called on the government to allocate at least \$3.9 billion over three years to improve per-student funding. Low per-student funding was noted by other witnesses as well.<sup>116</sup> OCUFA also recommended that funding not be linked to performance standards, because more poorly performing schools would lose the resources they need to improve. It also recommended an additional \$100 million to allow universities to hire approximately 845 additional full-time faculty, allowing current contract faculty to move into more secure positions.

The University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) recommended reducing red tape by reviewing and consolidating the audit process for universities, streamlining university program approvals processes, and streamlining research funding applications and approvals. The UOIT also recommended reviewing and streamlining the Tuition Set Aside and Student Access Guarantee Programs, establishing a Master Transfer Payment Agreement, and an inventory and schedule of reports.

Two witnesses recommended that the government only reduce tuition if funding to universities is increased.<sup>117</sup> OCUFA recommended an increase in university operating grants of \$490 million in 2019-20 and \$610 million in 2020-21.

The Committee heard from several witnesses who asked that the government reconsider the Student Choice Initiative, which will allow students to opt out of fees for non-essential services.<sup>118</sup>

## **Transportation**

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<sup>115</sup> Witnesses included the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario, Trent University, the Trent Central Student Association, and the Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union.

<sup>116</sup> Witnesses included the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

<sup>117</sup> Witnesses included the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations.

<sup>118</sup> Witnesses included the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario, the Peterborough and District Labour Council, Trent University, the Trent Central Student Association and UNIFOR.

### *Public Transit*

Stakeholders from a broad range of sectors spoke to the Committee about the importance of local and regional transit in moving people, promoting economic development, and supporting the province's business competitiveness.<sup>119</sup> The Ontario Public Transit Association told the Committee that investments in transit can reduce congestion and greenhouse gases, and improve the mobility of 10 million Ontarians who are currently served by transit systems.

The Greater Toronto Airports Authority urged the government to view transit as a component of regional planning and development, characterizing the Toronto Pearson Airport area as an important hub for jobs, industry, and multi-modal transportation in need of more transportation options. Similarly, Connect the Corridor, a coalition representing business, academic and municipal stakeholders in the Toronto-Waterloo corridor, said that investing in reliable regional rail service in the corridor has the potential to add thousands of jobs and significantly contribute to the province's GDP.

The Railway Association of Canada recommended that the government support VIA Rail's high-frequency rail proposal, which could provide additional inter-city transit options. Another witness urged the government to consider high-performance rail as an alternative to the previous government's high-speed rail proposal.<sup>120</sup>

A common theme addressed by witnesses was to ensure that there is sufficient funding to maintain and expand Ontario's public transit systems, including, as described above, an increase in the municipal share of the gas tax.<sup>121</sup> Several witnesses also had specific funding requests. These included funding assistance for:

- the planning, detailed design, and construction of Mississauga's downtown terminal and Transitway Connection; the Dundas Bus Rapid Transit Corridor; and higher-order transit on the Lakeshore Corridor;<sup>122</sup>
- Brampton Transit improvements, including the LRT on Main Street to keep up with the population growth and high demand for transit service;<sup>123</sup>
- Regional Express Rail service west of Bramalea to Mount Pleasant, and beyond to Kitchener-Waterloo;<sup>124</sup>
- two-way all-day GO service to Cambridge and Kitchener;<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Witnesses included the Amalgamated Transit Union, the City of Brampton, the City of Mississauga, Communitech, Connect the Corridor, the City of North Bay, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Public Transit Association, the Ontario Real Estate Association, and an individual.

<sup>120</sup> This witness was All Aboard St. Marys and AllRoads Dodge Chrysler Jeep Ram.

<sup>121</sup> Witnesses included TTCRiders and several individuals.

<sup>122</sup> Recommended by the City of Mississauga.

<sup>123</sup> Recommended by the City of Brampton.

<sup>124</sup> Recommended by the City of Brampton.

<sup>125</sup> Recommended by the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

- bus storage and maintenance facilities in Kitchener;<sup>126</sup>
- Peterborough's share of transit funding under the Canada-Ontario Public Transit Infrastructure Fund agreement;<sup>127</sup> and
- the construction of GO transit stations east of Oshawa.<sup>128</sup>

Several witnesses expressed concern over the announced upload of Toronto's subway system, and urged the government to reconsider this decision.<sup>129</sup> They also cautioned the government against privatizing any components of public transit systems in Ontario.

### *Railways*

The Railway Association of Canada told the Committee about the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of freight rail. The Association urged the government to provide support for freight rail expansion, particularly through the support for short-line railways to improve the rail network. Domtar echoed this sentiment, citing the need to expand freight rail service in the north to support resource industries like forestry.

### *Roads*

The Committee heard from witnesses about the need to maintain and expand the Province's road network. Several municipal witnesses stressed the importance of the Connecting Links program, which provides up to 90% of the cost of maintaining municipal roadways that connect to provincial highways.<sup>130</sup> The City of Timmins requested that the maximum annual funding cap be raised, noting that the current cap, set at \$3 million, does not reflect the costs of maintaining the infrastructure.

The Committee also heard from stakeholders with specific requests in respect of roadway expenditures. These included:

- the completion of a new highway between Waterloo Region, the City of Guelph, and Wellington County;<sup>131</sup>
- the dedication of portions of commercial truck licensing fees to road maintenance, noting the poor condition of rural roads in particular;<sup>132</sup> and
- investments in rural roads and bridges.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Recommended by the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

<sup>127</sup> Recommended by the Peterborough and District Labour Council.

<sup>128</sup> Recommended by the Municipality of Clarington.

<sup>129</sup> Witnesses included the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1320, Toronto York Region Labour Council.

<sup>130</sup> Witnesses included the Town of Fort Frances, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce, and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation.

<sup>131</sup> Recommended by the City of Kitchener and the Chamber of Commerce Greater Kitchener Waterloo.

<sup>132</sup> Recommended by Starfra Feeds.

<sup>133</sup> Recommended by the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture

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Kel-Gor Limited, a custom fabricator in Sarnia, requested that the Ministry support its proposal to restrict a local right-of-way near its facility to heavy-haul traffic. This would allow it to expand its operations and create more jobs.

### **Treasury Board Secretariat**

The Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario asked that the Province limit the use of contractors and maintain the current number of public servants.

### **PARLIAMENTARY OFFICERS**

Witnesses asked that the Province consider maintaining independent officers such as the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner, and the Ontario Child Advocate as free-standing, independent offices of the Legislature.<sup>134</sup>

### **EXPERT PANEL**

The Committee invited two expert witnesses to provide testimony on the Province's economy on January 23, 2019 in Ottawa. The witnesses were Philip Cross, Senior Fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, and Angella MacEwen, Senior Economist at the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

Both presenters agreed that the province has seen recent growth in GDP and employment. However, they differed in their analysis of the competitiveness of the economy and its implications for the province's finances.

Mr. Cross said that since the 2008-2009 recession, job growth in the province's largest firms has grown at a higher rate than medium and small enterprises. This is concerning, he explained, because the smallest businesses (those with fewer than 20 employees) account for nearly one third of all employment in Ontario—nearly twice the number employed at the largest firms. This is not a trend seen in other provinces, where small business employment growth has outpaced the growth in larger businesses.

He attributed this to burdensome regulation. Ontario has the most regulations of any province in Canada, and twice the number of British Columbia, which has the second-most. He noted that Ontario faces increased competition from Quebec, which, he said, has shelved separatist aspirations and is dedicated to making the region more attractive to investment.

Mr. Cross concluded that Ontario should restore its competitiveness by reducing regulation. It should also pay down the debt now (when the economy is strong) because of anticipated increases to health care costs as a result of the aging population.

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<sup>134</sup> These witnesses included, for example, the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario and UNIFOR.

Ms. MacEwen said job growth and economic growth are strong and forecast to remain so. However, hidden behind the headline numbers, she explained, is a growth in inequality and poverty, as well as overburdened public services. She said that Ontario spends less per capita on health, education, housing, and social protection than all other provinces except British Columbia. In Ontario, nearly 14% of people live below the poverty line. These rates are even higher among single people and children in female-headed, one-parent households, where the rates are about 30% and 50% respectively.

If a priority is to reduce the deficit, Ms. MacEwen offered that the best way to do this is to increase revenues. She recommended raising personal income taxes on individuals earning more than \$200,000 a year, increasing capital gains tax up to 100% and targeting tax havens and evaders.

Ms. MacEwan did not think that the Provincial debt is a significant concern (beyond the carrying costs and costs of new debt), offering that government debt and household debt are different, and that government debt deflates over time.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs recommends that in the 2019-2020 budget the Minister of Finance and the Government of Ontario put forward a plan to:

1. Get government spending under control in order to ensure the sustainability of public services.
2. Review and modernize the *Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994* to reflect current practice and financial technology.
3. Simplify and modernize Ontario's auto insurance system to responsibly lower rates and increase accessibility.
4. Strengthen the government's position on combatting contraband tobacco.
5. Increase consumer choice and convenience by responsibly expanding the sale of beverage alcohol.
6. Continue the progress made in reducing red tape and burdensome regulations to make Ontario a more attractive place to invest and do business.
7. Incentivize investment in Ontario industry to allow companies to grow, adopt new technologies, and create jobs for the people of Ontario.
8. Increase the competitiveness of Ontario as a place to invest, work, and do business by supporting the adoption of new technologies like artificial intelligence, 5G networks, and cybersecurity.
9. Encourage the creation of more childcare spaces and empower parents to choose the care that best suits their child's needs.
10. Continue the work of lowering electricity rates for residential consumers and business, creating a more competitive business environment.
11. Allow realtors to form personal real estate corporations.
12. Build on the steps the government has taken towards ending hallway healthcare and ensuring Ontario's healthcare system is sustainable for future generations.
13. Leverage the government's investment in mental health and addictions services to improve areas such as wait times and early intervention.
14. Support Indigenous communities to unlock the potential of their workforce.
15. Expand access to broadband internet service in rural areas.
16. Grow the supply of housing in order to increase affordability in the face of low vacancy rates.

17. Allow the forestry sector to avoid duplicative regulatory requirements, and consider having the industry operate under either the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act* or the *Endangered Species Act*, but not both.
18. Create a Provincial Forestry Strategy that creates more jobs and opportunities for rural and Northern Ontario.
19. Continue the current tax credit commitment for film and television production.
20. Work with industry, colleges, and primary and secondary schools to encourage more young Ontarians to enter the skilled trades.
21. Support Northern Ontario communities by restoring passenger rail service to the North, and support new market opportunities in local industries, such as forestry and mining.

## LIST OF WITNESSES

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes	Written submission
Addictions and Mental Health Ontario	January 15, 2019
AdvantAge Ontario	January 25, 2019
Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario	January 15, 2019
Algoma Orchards	January 28, 2019
All Aboard St. Marys and AllRoads Dodge Chrysler Jeep Ram	January 25, 2019
Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario	January 23, 2019
Alliance for Healthier Communities	January 15, 2019
ALS Society of Canada	Written submission
Alzheimer Society of Ontario	January 24, 2019
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 113	January 29, 2019
Appraisal Institute of Canada	Written submission
apprenticeLMS Ltd.	Written submission
Arthritis Society	Written submission
Arvelin, Ed	January 21, 2019
Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario	January 23, 2019
AssessMed	Written submission
Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario	Written submission
Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario	January 29, 2019
Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario	January 22, 2019
Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario	Written submission
Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario	Written submission
Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario	January 29, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Association of Municipalities of Ontario	January 15, 2019
Association of Ontario Midwives	January 29, 2019
Autism Ontario	January 15, 2019
Beef Farmers of Ontario	January 25, 2019
Bioindustrial Innovation Canada	January 24, 2019
Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada	Written submission
Brain Injury Society of Toronto	Written submission
Brown, James	Written submission
Brown, Jim	January 22, 2019
Buck, Douglas	Written submission
Canada Health Infoway	Written submission
Canadian Biosimilars Forum	Written submission
Canadian Cancer Society	January 29, 2019
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives	January 15, 2019
Canadian Credit Union Association	Written submission
Canadian Federation of Independent Business	January 29, 2019
Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario	January 29, 2019
Canadian Federation of University Women	Written submission
Canadian Fuels Association	January 24, 2019
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters	January 15, 2019
Canadian Mental Health Association	Written submission
Canadian Nurses Association	Written submission
Canadian Propane Association	Written submission
Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation	Written submission
Canadian Taxpayers Federation	January 15, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Canadian Union of Public Employees	January 23, 2019
Canadians for Properly Built Homes	January 23, 2019
Card, Cheryl	Written submission
Care Watch	Written submission
Career Colleges Ontario	January 29, 2019
Cement Association of Canada	January 23, 2019
Central Lambton Family Health Team	January 24, 2019
Centre Culturel La Ronde	January 22, 2019
Chahal, Panveer	Written submission
Champlain Region Family Council Network	Written submission
Chard, Anita	Written submission
Chatham Kent Children's Services	January 24, 2019
Chemistry Industry Association of Canada	January 29, 2019
Chiefs of Ontario	January 23, 2019
Child Witness Centre	January 25, 2019
Children's Mental Health Ontario	January 15, 2019
Children's Treatment Centre of Chatham-Kent	January 24, 2019
Chung, Kate	Written submission
City of Brampton	Written submission
City of Kenora	January 21, 2019
City of Kitchener	Written submission
City of Mississauga	Written submission
City of North Bay	Written submission
City of Sarnia	Written submission
City of Timmins	January 22, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
City of Welland	Written submission
CLAC	Written submission
Clarkson, Jonathan	Written submission
CLEAResult Canada	Written submission
Colleges Ontario	Written submission
Communitech	January 25, 2019
Community Commonwealth Association	Written submission
Community Counselling and Resource Centre	January 28, 2019
Community Food Centres Canada	Written submission
Community Living Essex County	Written submission
Community Living Ontario	Written submission
Compassionate Caregivers	Written submission
Computer Animation Studios of Ontario	Written submission
Connect the Corridor Coalition	January 25, 2019
Consulting Engineers of Ontario	Written submission
Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada	January 15, 2019
Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada	Written submission
Council of Canadian Innovators	January 29, 2019
Council of Canadians – Peterborough and Kawarthas	January 28, 2019
Council of Ontario Universities	Written submission
Covi, Marco	Written submission
Criminal Lawyers' Association	Written submission
CUPE Ontario	January 28, 2019
Desjardins	January 15, 2019
Diabetes Canada	Written submission

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Disabilities and Human Rights Group	Written submission
Domtar	January 21, 2019
Dryden Forest Management Company	January 21, 2019
Dryden Public Library	January 21, 2019
Dryden Regional Health Centre	January 21, 2019
D-TA Systems	January 23, 2019
Durham Regional Health Department	Written submission
EACOM Timber Corporation	January 22, 2019
Eales, David	January 25, 2019
Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus	Written submission
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	January 15, 2019
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario Thames Valley Teacher Local	January 24, 2019
Elliot, Len	January 24, 2019
Enbridge Gas	January 29, 2019
Environmental Defence	January 15, 2019
Epilepsy South Central Ontario	January 25, 2019
ETFO Local Ontario North East	January 22, 2019
Fair Association of Victims for Accident Insurance Reform	Written submission
Family Alliance Ontario	Written submission
Family Counselling Centre	January 24, 2019
Family Service Ontario	Written submission
Family Services Ottawa	January 23, 2019
Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and the Ontario Library Association	Written submission
FilmOntario	January 29, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Firefly	January 21, 2019
FirstOntario Credit Union	January 15, 2019
Fix Our Schools	January 15, 2019
Food and Beverage Ontario	January 29, 2019
Fort Albany First Nations	January 22, 2019
Gagnon, Karla	January 22, 2019
Garneau, Julie	Written submission
Georgia-Pacific North Woods LP	January 22, 2019
Grape Growers of Ontario	Written submission
Greater Essex Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	January 24, 2019
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce	January 25, 2019
Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association	January 23, 2019
Greater Toronto Airports Authority	Written submission
Haché, Trevor	January 23, 2019
Health Providers Against Poverty	Written submission
Healthcare Providers Against Poverty – Peterborough	January 28, 2019
Henry Fiset and Sons	Written submission
Home Care Ontario	January 29, 2019
Hospice Palliative Care Ontario	Written submission
Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare	January 24, 2019
Imperial Tobacco Canada	Written submission
Income Security Advocacy Centre	January 15, 2019
Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario	January 15, 2019
Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition	January 28, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Janecki, Zyg	Written submission
JDRF	Written submission
Josslin Insurance	January 25, 2019
JA Central Ontario	January 15, 2019
JA South Western Ontario	January 24, 2019
Kawartha Credit Union	January 28, 2019
Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition's Food Security Working Group	Written submission
Keewatin-Patricia Teacher Local	January 21, 2019
Kel-Gor Ltd	January 24, 2019
KidsAbility Centre for Child Development	January 25, 2019
Kitchener Waterloo Association of REALTORS	January 25, 2019
KJB Herefords	January 21, 2019
La Cité	Written submission
Lambton College	January 24, 2019
Lambton Federation of Agriculture	January 24, 2019
Lansdowne Children's Centre	Written submission
Law Society of Ontario	January 15, 2019
Lermer, Anna	Written submission
Leroux, Marc	January 22, 2019
l'Hôpital Montfort	January 23, 2019
Libro Credit Union	January 25, 2019
Liquor Board Employees Union Local 683	January 22, 2019
London Health Coalition	January 24, 2019
Lumley, Murray	Written submission
Lutherwood	January 25, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Macdonald-Laurier Institute	January 23, 2019
Mainstreet Credit Union	January 24, 2019
McLeish Orlando LLP Lawyers	Written submission
McRae Lumber Company	January 28, 2019
Meridian Credit Union	January 23, 2019
MINT Memory Clinics	Written submission
Misiway Milopemahtesewin Community Health Centre	January 22, 2019
Moland-Osborne, Amy	January 22, 2019
Municipality of Clarington	January 28, 2019
Municipality of Sioux Lookout	January 21, 2019
Mushkegowuk Territory	January 22, 2019
National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco	January 15, 2019
Neighbourhood Legal Services	Written submission
Norbord Incorporated	January 21, 2019
Northern College	January 22, 2019
Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition	Written submission
Ontario Association of Architects	Written submission
Ontario Association of Cardiologists	Written submission
Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies	Written submission
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses	January 28, 2019
Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists	Written submission
Ontario Campaign 2000	Written submission
Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association	Written submission
Ontario Centres of Excellence	January 24, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Ontario Centres of Excellence	January 28, 2019
Ontario Chamber of Commerce	January 15, 2019
Ontario Chiropractic Association	January 24, 2019
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care	Written submission
Ontario Community Support Association	January 28, 2019
Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations	January 29, 2019
Ontario Convenience Stores Association	January 15, 2019
Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE	January 28, 2019
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association	January 22, 2019
Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres	Written Submission
Ontario Federation of Labour	January 15, 2019
Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs	January 28, 2019
Ontario Forest Industries Association	January 21, 2019
Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association	Written submission
Ontario Good Roads Association	January 25, 2019
Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers	January 25, 2019
Ontario Harness Horse Association	January 24, 2019
Ontario Hazelnut Association	January 28, 2019
Ontario Home Builders' Association	January 15, 2019
Ontario Hospital Association	January 15, 2019
Ontario Long-Term Care Association	Written submission
Ontario Medical Association	Written submission
Ontario Medical Association Section of Palliative Medicine	Written submission
Ontario Museum Association	January 21, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Ontario Network of Victim Service Providers	Written submission
Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association	January 22, 2019
Ontario Nonprofit Network	January 29, 2019
Ontario Nurses Association	January 29, 2019
Ontario Pork	Written submission
Ontario Psychological Association	January 15, 2019
Ontario Public School Boards' Association	Written submission
Ontario Public Service Employees Union	January 15, 2019
Ontario Public Service Employees Union Local 684	January 22, 2019
Ontario Public Transit Association	January 23, 2019
Ontario Real Estate Association	January 29, 2019
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation	January 25, 2019
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Educational Support Staff	January 22, 2019
Ontario Student Trustees' Association	Written submission
Ontario Waterpower Association	January 28, 2019
OPSEU Local 348	January 28, 2019
OPSEU, Community Health Care Professionals	January 25, 2019
Orchestras Canada	Written submission
Ottawa and District Labour Council	January 23, 2019
Ottawa Community Foundation	January 23, 2019
Ottawa Community Housing Corporation	January 23, 2019
Ottawa Health Coalition	January 23, 2019
Ottawa Network for Education and JA Ottawa	January 23, 2019
Ottawa Public Library	Written submission
Ottawa Real Estate Board	January 23, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	Written submission
Owl Child Care Services of Ontario	Written submission
Palanque, George	Written submission
Pallium Canada	Written submission
Palmer, Sally	Written submission
Panneton, Jule	Written submission
Papaioannoy, Maria	January 28, 2019
Pathways to Education	January 15, 2019
Pease, Wayne L.	January 24, 2019
Peterborough and District Labour Council	January 28, 2019
Peterborough and the Kawarthas Home Builders Association	January 28, 2019
Peterborough Community Savings	January 28, 2019
Peterborough Youth Services	January 28, 2019
Point in Time	January 28, 2019
Pond Technologies Inc.	January 28, 2019
Progressive Contractors Association of Canada	January 25, 2019
Project Love	January 22, 2019
Prostate Cancer Canada	Written submission
Public Service Alliance of Canada - National Capital Region	January 23, 2019
Quantum-Safe Canada	Written submission
Railway Association of Canada	January 21, 2019
Rayonier Advanced Materials	January 22, 2019
Reception House Waterloo Region	January 25, 2019
Regional Municipality of Waterloo	January 25, 2019

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario	January 29, 2019
Registered Practical Nurses' Association of Ontario	January 23, 2019
Residential Construction Council of Ontario	January 29, 2019
Resolute Forest Products	January 21, 2019
Reverend Tommy Beardy Memorial Wee Che He Wayo-Gamik Family Treatment Centre	January 21, 2019
Riverside Healthcare Facilities	January 21, 2019
Ryerson University	Written submission
Salituro, Francesco	Written submission
Sarnia Lambton Health Coalition	January 24, 2019
Sarnia-Lambton Rebound	January 24, 2019
Saunders, Stephen	January 23, 2019
Savage Arms Canada	January 28, 2019
Schizophrenia Society of Ontario	Written submission
SEIU Healthcare Canada	January 22, 2019
Seniors Safety Line	Written submission
Skills Ontario	January 29, 2019
Sleegers Engineered Products Inc.	January 25, 2019
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	Written submission
St. Clair Child and Youth Services	January 24, 2019
Starfra Feeds	January 28, 2019
Stella's Place	Written submission
Sunset Country Museum Network	January 21, 2019
The Advocates' Society	Written submission
The Co-operators Group	January 29, 2019
The Lung Association - Ontario	Written submission

<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
The War Amps	Written submission
Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group	January 21, 2019
Thunder Bay Health Coalition	January 21, 2019
Timmins and District Labour Council	January 22, 2019
Timmins Chamber of Commerce	January 22, 2019
Timmins Economic Development Corporation	January 22, 2019
Timmins Public Library	January 22, 2019
Timmins YMCA	January 22, 2019
Timmins, Cochrane & Timiskaming Districts Association of Realtors	January 22, 2019
Toronto and York Region Labour Council	January 29, 2019
Toronto District School Board	January 29, 2019
Tourism Industry Association of Ontario	January 29, 2019
Town of Fort Frances	January 21, 2019
Township of Enniskillen	January 24, 2019
Township of Ignace	January 21, 2019
Township of Machin	January 21, 2019
TransAlta Corporation	January 24, 2019
Trent University, Trent Central Student Association	January 28, 2019
Tri-Mach Group of Companies	January 25, 2019
TTCRiders	Written submission
Tudor, Stephen	January 23, 2019
UNIFOR	January 29, 2019
United Way/Centraide Ottawa	January 23, 2019
University of Ontario Institute of Technology	Written submission

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<b>Organization / Individual</b>	<b>Date of Appearance</b>
Upper Grand District School Board	January 25, 2019
Waterloo Federation of Agriculture	January 25, 2019
Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation	January 25, 2019
Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association	January 25, 2019
Weyerhaeuser Company Limited	January 21, 2019
Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union	Written submission
Windsor Essex Child/Youth Advocacy Centre	January 24, 2019
Women's Crisis Services	January 25, 2019
YMCA of Southwestern Ontario	January 24, 2019
YMCA Ontario	Written submission
Young People's Theatre	Written submission

**APPENDIX A – DISSENTING OPINION OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

## **Pre-Budget Consultation Dissenting Report**

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs toured the province hearing from Ontarians about what this government's priorities should be for the upcoming budget. Overwhelmingly witnesses after witness described a province in need of investment after too many years of austerity and budget cuts. Ontarians were clear during pre-budget consultations; Ontario can't afford more cuts to the programs and services families rely on.

### Essential Services are Feeling Squeezed

The Committee heard from witnesses who provide or rely on vital public services like hospitals and schools. They are feeling squeezed from past budget cuts under the previous government and increasing pressure to provide the programs and services Ontario families rely on.

Here is just a small sample of what the Committee heard:

- Home Care Ontario described the impact of net-zero funding increases for the past ten years under the previous government. Ontarians are waiting to receive home care, contributing to the hallway medicine crisis. Home care providers are unable to retain personal support workers because of low wages as a result of inadequate funding – even losing some workers to better jobs at Tim Horton's.
- The London Health Coalition demonstrated the impact of real dollar funding cuts over the last ten years and closures including the London Psychiatric Hospital, an emergency department and an intensive care unit. Now, the London Health Science Centre is the most overcrowded hospital in the country, chronically registering over 100% patient occupancy, a situation described as "neither acceptable or safe".
- Candace Rennick a representative of CUPE Ontario shared her personal struggles with long-term care facilities in Ontario as well as the chronic underfunding and understaffing workers experience everyday in long-term care homes. Her father died in a long-term care facility at the age of 66. In her own words she told the Committee, "my father was forced into incontinence within two months of living in a facility because there weren't enough people to take him to the washroom".
- The Children's Treatment Centre of Chatham-Kent is the primary service provider for children with special needs and autism in the area. They serve 4,000 children and have 1,000 children on the waitlist. They have been waiting eight years to receive funding from a capital plan they submitted in 2011 so their facility can meet accessibility standard. In their own words "our current facility fails to meet accessibility standards, which just is not appropriate at all for a children's treatment centre with our mandate. Our lack of treatment space and overcrowding result in waiting and reliance on hallway therapy".
- The Town of Fort Frances is concerned about the survival of their town if the mill, which is the pillar of their property tax base, closes. Fort Frances is the shopping hub for the entire district. Any decline in the Town's viability will affect the broader community. They have asked the government not to further reduce the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) in this budget since OMPF funding was cut in 2018.

### Recent Cuts have Hurt Communities

Other witnesses told the committee that they are already struggling to deal with recent funding cuts from this government and the impact those cuts have had on their communities. They can not afford another round of cuts and urged the government to reconsider.

Here is just a small sample of what the Committee heard:

- The Ontario Forest Industry Association discussed the importance of the Provincial Forest Access Roads Funding Program for economic development and quality of life for the many users of forestry roads. They urged the government to reconsider cutting 27% of program funding and restore it to \$75 million annually. Many other witnesses attested that the forestry roads are used not just by the industry but First Nations communities, hunters, cottagers and local residents.
- When the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario was asked about the recent cuts to the Ontario Arts Council they urged the government to restore funding for Indigenous Tourism Ontario. They said the funding cuts will have a negative impact on economic development, job creation, and our efforts towards meaningful truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
- The Ontario chapter of the Canadian Federation of Students discussed the impact of the government's recent decision to reduce OSAP grants. In their own words they described the cuts to OSAP as "a direct attack on the most marginalized students in our province". They expressed concern about student debt levels which they said sits at an average of \$20,500 per student as of January 2019.
- The Trent Student Association expressed concern about the impact on low income students and student debt as a result of the government's recent decision to increase out of pocket expenses from \$3,000 to \$4,000, reverting back to more OSAP loans instead of grants, and removing the debt cap of \$10,000 per year. They told the Committee that the removal of the six-month interest-free grace period is a major loss for students graduating and entering into the workforce putting them in the position of accumulating more debt while trying to find employment.
- The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario Keewatin-Patricia Teacher Local urged the government to reinstate EPO funding that was recently cut by the government which they used to assist at-risk students. They said schools in the north were hit especially harshly because of the significant population of at-risk students who cannot access services they need locally.
- The Toronto District School Board urged the government to reinstate the Focus on Youth summer program which helps teen dropouts re-engage with school and earn their high school diploma. Last year the program allowed them to hire 600 youth to work alongside community agencies that serve Toronto's most at-risk youth and overall benefited 11,000 young people.
- The Income Security Advocacy Centre urged the government to follow through on the full 3% increase to OW and ODSP rates after 15 years of the previous government's inaction. In their own words they describe how

far that money would go “people on OW and ODSP are unable to pay for what they need. They live far below the poverty line. They live in substandard, dangerous housing. They rely on food banks and other charities, or they go without.”

### More Investment is Needed – Not Less

Many witnesses described areas that are in need of greater government investment and support, not less. They shed light on how the government is letting Ontario families and even whole communities down.

Here is just a small sample of what the Committee heard:

- Chiefs of Ontario recommended that the government enhance critical investments needed at the regional and community level. They told the Committee about the significant shortfalls across all programs and services and that the impact of this underfunding is felt disproportionately amongst First Nation communities in comparison to the average Ontario. They said the housing shortfall in Ontario reserves is estimated at \$3 billion and described the potentially fatal impact of multiple generations of families sharing one home without clean water or a reliable furnace.
- Tara Maszczakiewicz a front-line children’s mental health therapist at Algoma Family Services shared her frustration with the children’s mental health system in Ontario. She said there are 12,000 young people stuck on the waiting list for services, waiting on average 18 months. The solution is more investment in children’s mental health so children and teens don’t get worse while waiting for treatment causing larger problems down the road.
- Rev. Tommy Beardy Memorial Wee Che He Wayo-Gamik Family Treatment Centre currently provides support and guidance to families overcoming substance abuse challenges. They told the Committee substance abuse is a growing problem in their community and in neighbouring communities and need investment to expand their treatment centre to accommodate more families. The facility is 29 years old and starting to fall apart with inadequate washroom facilities and no spaces designed for their classroom and childcare programs.
- Many communities expressed a need for greater infrastructure investment to boost economic activity and create jobs. The Municipality of Clarington asked the government for a commitment on GO Train expansion to Bowmanville by 2024 as was committed by the previous government. Additionally Clarington stressed the need for improved connectivity and broadband internet services.
- Fix Our Schools asked the government to provide an additional \$1.6 billion a year in funding to begin tackling the \$15.9 billion school repair backlog. The Committee heard from Krista Wylie about her son’s school where he spent several weeks wearing his winter coat in a 12-degree classroom.

### Conclusion & Recommendations

It’s clear that given the pressing challenges facing Ontario families, the government cannot engage in a series of reckless cuts to services people rely

on. Such an agenda would be damaging not just to the families of the province, but the overall economy.

For that reason New Democrats urge the government in their upcoming Budget to:

- Not proceed with reckless cuts to the programs and services Ontario families rely on.
- Reverse the reckless cuts already made that are hurting communities and families.
- Not proceed with plans for further reductions in corporate income tax rates. Ontario already has very competitive corporate income tax rates and further reductions are not the best way to stimulate growth.
- Reverse changes to high income surtaxes introduced in the Fall Economic Statement. This high-income tax cut is unjustifiable at a time when the government is scrambling to meet their priorities to families facing much greater challenges.