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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 April 2013

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 3 avril 2013

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Pre-budget consultations

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**Comité permanent des finances
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRSCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Wednesday 3 April 2013

Mercredi 3 avril 2013

The committee met at 0901 in the Airline Hotel and Conference Centre, Thunder Bay.

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, we're going to call the meeting to order. Good morning. We're here today in Thunder Bay for the 2013 pre-budget consultation meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

Sorry, my voice is really bad. I want to welcome everybody to Thunder Bay. This is hopefully our last stop for pre-budget consultation—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Don't look at me.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes. I just wanted to let everybody know that the witnesses will have 15 minutes for their presentations, and if there's any leftover time, there will be questions from the committee members. It will be on a rotating basis, so the first question today is from the opposition. Can I ask the first witness—

Mr. Peter Shurman: What's our name?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Our name? Oh, yes; thank you, Mr. Shurman. I'm Soo Wong. I'm the Vice-Chair of the standing committee on finance. You wanted to introduce yourself?

Mr. Peter Shurman: No.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Mr. Peter Shurman.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO
MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Can we have the first witness come forward? I believe it's the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association: Iain Angus, vice-president. Could I also ask you, before you speak, for Hansard's purposes, to identify yourself?

Mr. Ron Nelson: I am Ron Nelson, the president of NOMA. I was supposed to be out of town, but due to the budget, I cancelled to ensure that I was here.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. Welcome.

Mr. Iain Angus: Thank you, Madam Vice-Chair and members of the committee. On behalf of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, I want to start by thanking you for making the decision to hold hearings here in northwestern Ontario. We believe very strongly

that we are different from the northeast, from eastern Ontario, from southwestern Ontario and from the Golden Horseshoe—different issues and different solutions. So it's good that you're here to receive our input first-hand.

I also want to point out—and I know you flew in on a charter yesterday, so you have some sense of the distance, not to mention the wait time—that the distance from Toronto to Kenora is almost identical to the distance between Toronto and Orlando, Florida, or Cape Breton island. That's the kind of distances that we have to deal with. It takes us two days to drive to Queen's Park if we choose that route.

As you'll recall, our president, Ron Nelson, and our executive vice-president, Dave Canfield, presented to the committee at Queen's Park on March 22. We thank you for this second opportunity to meet with you and present the budget-related concerns of the northwest. The document that you have before you is the original submission made back on the 22nd; we're going to touch on parts of that, but emphasize two key areas in that.

I want to focus on one of the key issues for the northwest, and that's mining and what Ontario needs to do to make sure it happens and we benefit as a region and as a province. As you already know, northwestern Ontario is on the cusp of a mining explosion, with 250 active projects in 2011, totalling \$500 million in expenditures. That represents nearly half of all mining expenditures in Ontario last year. These opportunities are located across the northwest region, with the future's most significant project being the northwest's Ring of Fire.

Later today, I'll give you a new map that we've updated that adds some additional mines from the one that's in the document before you. We have six producing mines today. By 2020, we expect to have an additional 22 mines in operation. That's crucial because 2020 is only seven years from now.

Most of those mines are in the riding of Kenora—Rainy River—Ms. Campbell, good morning.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Good morning.

Mr. Iain Angus: Although much of the attention of all of us has been on the Ring of Fire, that really is a future project. There are only three mines there that are going to come on stream, if all goes well, within the time frame I've talked about. The rest are happening from Emo in the southwest to Pickle Lake and Red Lake in the north and over to Marathon in the east. So there's a lot of activity throughout the region.

A study done by Lakehead University and Confederation College back in the fall for Ambassadors Northwest—and only focused on nine of those mines—quantified that there was \$135 billion worth of ore in the ground. The direct, indirect and induced employment is in excess of 23,500 jobs. A lot of those jobs will occur here in the northwest and we want to make sure that happens.

We've suffered significantly because of the decline of the forest industry. We've lost in excess of 10,000 good-paying, union jobs in this region. A lot of our folks are working out in the oil sands. They're commuting on a two-week cycle. We want them back home.

So with that, let me turn it over to Ron Nelson to talk a bit about infrastructure.

Mr. Ron Nelson: Thank you, Iain. Infrastructure investment: We believe northwestern Ontario needs to be supported in its bid to develop a strong and diverse economy through the province taking leadership in planning, developing and owning the infrastructure necessary to support the northwest's Ring of Fire development, along with the other mining ventures located in northwestern Ontario, and there are a lot of them. You will see that with the map that Iain will bring back this afternoon.

Right now, we show that there are currently 19 mines outside of the Ring of Fire in process, with the vast majority located west of Thunder Bay in the Kenora-Rainy River districts, as well as in the Thunder Bay district.

The Ring of Fire requires immediate attention, along with the other mines. We need the Ontario government to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place when it needs to be there.

Power is one such infrastructure component that needs immediate attention of the government, otherwise this magnificent opportunity will be lost to all. The northwest is in negotiations with the Ontario Power Authority, integrated electrical system operators and the Ministry of Energy to ensure that the power we need, when we need it, at the quality that supports our industries, is there and has a means of getting to where it also needs to be.

We have projected that out of the 22 mines shown on the map, 11 of them are scheduled to be in production by 2016. That's three years away. As the committee will be aware, that is a very short period of time when it comes to government planning, environmental assessments and approvals.

The northwest is in danger of seeing massive investments dry up if the infrastructure deficit cannot be resolved in a timely fashion. When the northeast saw its massive mining development years ago, it was because the hydro and transportation infrastructures were already in place and there was no barrier to investment in new mines.

The northwest's existing infrastructure is inadequate to meet the anticipated needs between now and 2016 and 2020. Ontario must find a way to accelerate the planning of the transmission infrastructure to ensure that these mines can be connected to the grid in time to start pro-

duction. Any delay will mean one of two things: the mines will run on diesel generators or they will not run at all and the investment will go elsewhere. Diesel generation is not something that any of us want to see because of the threat to the environment through the bulk transportation of this fuel through remote roads.

0910

Because of the numerous discoveries and mining companies involved, the northwest's Ring of Fire is a unique development in Ontario. As such, it requires a more planned, public approach than what has occurred in the past and what we believe is currently under way.

Mr. Iain Angus: There are three key factors that should drive this development being managed for the public good rather than by the private interest: Governments, not corporations, have the legal duty to consult and accommodate, according to the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada; there is currently a multitude of owners of a multitude of individual mines that are likely to come on stream over the next 10 to 30 years, each with their own independent and unique need for transportation and energy; and there are a number of remote First Nation communities whose traditional territory encompasses the northwest's Ring of Fire development area. These communities require road, electrical and telecommunications infrastructure to meet their own economic and social needs.

NOMA recognizes that the construction of the necessary transportation and energy infrastructure will be an expensive proposition. However, we have already identified that the provincial tax revenue from the northwest's Ring of Fire—plus all those other mines—over its expected life of 100-plus years will be beyond comprehension. The return on Ontario's investment will be significant.

That being said, modern technology would allow for the province to recover its initial capital outlay in building the road and/or rail infrastructure through the use of an electronic toll system that would charge back the cost per tonne-kilometre for the ore and materials utilizing the rail/road system.

It is the government of Ontario's job to make this happen, not the private sector's. The auto industry has historically received billions in government investment to support its growth and economic development. The mining industry now needs similar support through infrastructure investments that will drive the economy for decades to come.

As you consider the proposed expenditures of the upcoming budget, please remember that our communities have unique needs. One size does not fit all. On that note, we have noted with interest the Metrolinx report on options to fund public transit in the GTA. Our final request to you is that if there is any consideration of a province-wide source of funds, it be discussed with NOMA before any final decision is made.

Thank you very much for your time, and we look forward to any questions you may have.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. You have four minutes. Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for that presentation. We appreciate you taking the time to put it together.

I guess my first question is, you talked a bit about power and the need for it, that there are going to be 11 new mines coming on stream in three short years. At the same time, the government has, I guess, made a decision to shut down both the Atikokan and Thunder Bay coal-fired electricity generating stations. This doesn't seem like good planning from a distance. On the ground, is there progress happening in terms of meeting that power need?

Mr. Iain Angus: We're getting there. The energy task force, which I'm the co-chair of, met with the Ontario Power Authority, the IESO, the ministry, and then separately with Minister Chiarelli back on February 28. I can tell you that between the meetings we had on January 17 and the 28th of February, the OPA has considerably revised its understanding of the load requirements for the northwest. They are much closer now to the estimates that we've put together based on the information from the mining companies.

Where we remain at a distance is how to get that power to the northwest. The Thunder Bay generating station conversion to natural gas is on hold pending a report from the OPA to the minister on whether it's needed or not. We think it's needed.

Mr. Norm Miller: So wouldn't it be easier just to keep some power generation here versus trying to figure out bringing it in from somewhere else?

Mr. Iain Angus: Yes, it would be, and it would be cheaper. However, our analysis suggests that even with a refurbished Atikokan generating station on wood pellets, retaining the Thunder Bay GS on gas and expanding the east-west tie line, we will still be short. We need additional generation within the northwest if we are to remain an independent energy island, which we've been pretty well since day one.

Mr. Norm Miller: There's the prospectors' conference going on across the road right now, and there have been reasonably new rules to do with prospecting coming out. Have you got any thoughts about those new rules? I gather from some of the prospectors that they're not too happy with them.

Mr. Iain Angus: That's not something that we've spent any time looking at, at least not in this iteration.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. What about the Far North Act? Any thoughts about that?

Mr. Iain Angus: I'm going to leave it to President Ron. He's such a good boy.

Mr. Ron Nelson: Thank you, Iain. In regard to the Far North Act, NOMA has previously stated that we are not in favour of it. We have had meetings with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and they do not, at this point, really want to even discuss that. They basically just don't believe it. It's there and they just leave it at that.

We believe that the Far North Act—when it was originally proposed, we asked that the growth plan not be tied to any other pieces of legislation. Unfortunately, the Far North Act was tied to the growth plan. As NOMA,

with our First Nations, we basically don't endorse the Far North Act as it stands right now.

Mr. Norm Miller: I had a private member's bill, which I'm planning on reintroducing, to repeal the Far North Act. I would also certainly appreciate input on, if it was repealed, what you'd like to see to replace it. I gather some of the planning aspects are positive, but taking half of the north, 225,000 square kilometres, I believe it is, out of development—are we just about out of time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Done. If you have a yes or no answer, I would take it.

Mr. Norm Miller: That's going to be tricky, I think. I guess we're out of time.

Mr. Iain Angus: We would look at your private member's bill once it's tabled.

Mr. Norm Miller: Certainly, your input would be appreciated.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for being here today.

Mr. Ron Nelson: Thank you.

Mr. Iain Angus: Thank you, members of the committee.

THUNDER BAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Our next witness is from the North Bay Chamber of Commerce, Michael Nitz.

Mr. Michael Nitz: Thunder Bay.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thunder Bay; I'm sorry. Thank you very much. Good morning.

Mr. Michael Nitz: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming to Thunder Bay. My name is Michael Nitz. I'm the past chair of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce here in beautiful northwestern Ontario. I want to thank you for holding pre-budget discussions here in Thunder Bay to ensure that the opportunities and issues of northwestern Ontario are taken into account during your deliberations.

The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce represents nearly 1,100 members from a variety of sectors here in the city. We have ongoing input and great engagement with our members, so we're looking forward to sharing some of our viewpoints with you today and we really appreciate the opportunity to outline these for you. Thank you for the invitation.

What you'll find through our presentation is lots of commonalities to NOMA's presentation. Really, we're looking out for the benefit of northwestern Ontario business and its people, so you may notice that there's quite a few similarities between the two.

To start off, we, the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, recognize the significant fiscal challenges that are facing the province, with debt levels approaching \$300 billion. We fully support the Ontario Chamber of Commerce view that addressing these fiscal challenges is a top priority for the business community. We cannot afford the interest payments on debt that now represent the

third-highest area of program spending, after health care and education. There must be an urgent but measured response to debt reduction that balances the need to reduce debt service charges while investing in revenue-generating opportunities that accelerate economic activity.

We believe that our region presents an exceptional opportunity for fiscal growth to the entire province. Northwestern Ontario is on the cusp of a mining explosion, with 250 active projects in 2011 totalling \$500 million in annual expenditures. These opportunities are located across the northwest region and, most significantly, 500 kilometres north of Thunder Bay in the Ring of Fire.

A recent report by Lakehead University provided an overview of nine mature or near-development mines across the northwest, representing just a fraction of the overall development potential. That report calculated the value of the minerals of these nine projects at \$135.4 billion, which represents an employment opportunity of just under 24,000 jobs. In a region with a population of about 250,000, that has a huge impact, not only on our region but the province and the entire country.

0920

The tax revenues calculated for the province of Ontario over the lifetime of just those nine mines totals an astounding \$5.75 billion in new taxation revenue. There are dozens more mines in various stages of development across the region. These natural resources have the potential to be the economic engine for all of Ontario for decades to come. But there's a catch. The province of Ontario will only realize these revenues if they take the steps necessary to facilitate the development of these once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. If the government delays, this potential could be lost and the anticipated jobs and taxes would not be realized.

The province needs to address the skills gap as well. According to a recent Ontario Chamber of Commerce survey, 45% of employers in northern Ontario have had difficulty hiring personnel with the right qualifications. A shortage of skilled labour will effectively snuff out any mining boom here in Ontario.

One area that needs improvement is the apprenticeship system. The Ontario system is outdated and requires employers in the skilled trades to have an average of three qualified journeypersons for each apprentice. This 3-to-1 journeyperson-to-apprentice ratio is forcing many companies to lay off apprentices or leave apprenticeship programs vacant. We've provided in the summary an overview of various provinces and what the apprenticeship ratios are, for your reference.

In contrast, competing resource-rich economies such as Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland have implemented a one-journeymen-to-two-apprenticeship ratio for many of their skilled trades so that a maximum number of apprentices can find jobs and obtain licences in their trades.

British Columbia has transitioned to a very aggressive one-journeymen-to-four-apprentices system where short-

ages exist, while Manitoba and Nova Scotia have a 1-to-1 ratio. These jurisdictions are drawing our talent away from Ontario. Ontario must act immediately to reform our apprenticeship system to a minimum 1-to-1 apprenticeship ratio. This action will increase profitability and competitiveness and will better position Ontario for a prosperous future.

Furthermore, our chamber is advocating for a five-year pilot project that would allow northern Ontario employers to use a one-journeyperson-to-three-apprentices ratio in order to address the ever-growing skills shortage in our region. We also encourage the province to maximize the training funds provided by the federal government. The recently announced Canada Job Grant proposes a reform of the labour market agreements that would require matching funds from employers and the provinces.

We recognize that the devil is in the details and we encourage the province to ensure that they take full advantage of the funding envelope that is available from the federal government to address the training and skills needs of Ontarians.

We also remind the province of the urgent need to engage aboriginal communities in skills training programs and opportunities to ensure they can take full advantage of the benefits of economic growth. Analysis of the 2006 census data on the North Superior Workforce Planning Board website indicates that the aboriginal population is much younger than the rest of the population in northern Ontario but that they also have a much lower rate of labour force participation than the average in the region. There is much work to be done to provide the training and skills that will enable the engagement of aboriginal peoples in our growing economy.

Another step that the province must take to realize the potential of these mining opportunities is by investing in infrastructure. Mining opportunities are rarely located in developed areas but are instead found hundreds of kilometres from road, rail and electricity infrastructure. The province needs to take the lead in developing and owning infrastructure that provides the access and energy required to make these projects happen. Furthermore, the province needs to ensure that long-term, affordable industrial energy prices are in place to be competitive with other jurisdictions and encourage processing and development of these resources within Ontario.

We recognize that the development of this infrastructure will require a substantial investment by the province. The construction of one road corridor alternative has been estimated at over \$300 million. However, the \$5.75 billion in tax revenue referenced earlier clearly demonstrates that the return on this investment will be significant. Tax revenue, however, is only one benefit from infrastructure investments in northwestern Ontario.

Providing clean power to remote communities will reduce dependency on expensive and environmentally damaging diesel fuel. Roads will provide better links to communities in need of basic amenities such as food, education and medical services. Infrastructure investment

in northwestern Ontario is an investment in improving the quality of life for some of the province's most marginalized communities.

The province has a history of supporting specific industries that represent a significant economic importance to Ontario. For example, the auto industry has received billions in investment in recent decades to create and protect jobs and growth for Ontario. Now is the time for similar investment to be made in support of the mining industry to ensure economic growth and prosperity for decades to come.

The availability of energy is also of vital importance to mining development. The uncertain business environment caused by the suspension of the Thunder Bay generating station conversion last November has a paralyzing effect on growth. There is grave concern that we may be faced with a shortage of power that could lead to rolling brownouts or blackouts following the legislated discontinuation of coal generation on December 31, 2014. We call upon the government of Ontario to take urgent action to ensure that the northwest region has significant dispatchable and reliable power to meet its economic requirements and development needs.

Mining is not the only opportunity for economic growth through our natural resources. The forest industry is on the rebound and will continue to grow and prosper with the support of the provincial government. We strongly support the proposed transition measures within the Endangered Species Act, which recognize that Ontario's forest sector already provides for the needs of species at risk through the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. We look forward to the implementation of these changes as soon as possible.

We also support the proposals contained in Bill 13, Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act, which would allow the use of wood in mid-rise construction for buildings of six storeys or less. This legislation will increase competitiveness in the Ontario construction industry and create demand for Ontario's wood products that support forest industry jobs and forest-dependent communities here in northern Ontario.

These opportunities cannot be realized without the permanent protection of a predictable and affordable wood supply. We encourage the government to permanently establish, through regulation, a minimum of 26 million cubic metres per year of accessible fibre for industrial use.

Thanks largely to investments from our governments, Thunder Bay's knowledge economy is also growing, resulting in millions in economic impact and many more career options for our youth. Continued strategic investments in Confederation College, Lakehead University and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, as well as Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute and the health sector, will ensure our region continues to thrive.

The emergent health sciences economic engine becomes even more of a northern powerhouse when one considers what the Conference Board of Canada refers to as the "health enterprise." This health ecosystem includes

education and research institutions, health and life sciences industries, and health and health care organizations and governments. Since there is a strong relationship between innovation, productivity and economic prosperity, a coordinated strategy to leverage the strengths and align the goals of the regional players in the health enterprise model will help ensure our region's economic sustainability in the long term. Northern Ontario has the potential to become a leader in health innovations. Increasingly, the north has the researchers, creative entrepreneurs, health care providers and academics to catalyze this sector of our economy.

Finally, we echo the position of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Drummond report, which encourages the government to make greater use of the private and not-for-profit sectors to deliver services. We support the need for a government-wide alternative service delivery audit to identify areas where the public would benefit from the introduction of alternate service delivery options.

Thank you, again, for your time and attention today.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): We have two more minutes, and this round of questions is to the NDP.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for taking this opportunity to present to us. Also, it's an honour for us to be here in northwestern Ontario. I'm from northeastern Ontario, and I know northern is northern.

Interjection: But there's a big difference.

0930

Mr. John Vanthof: One thing I'd like to—on the infrastructure side, with the government in financial restraints, you don't want to cut everything back that is actually going to make the government money. You mentioned the infrastructure, specifically transportation and power, and that it should be publicly owned or publicly financed. Could you explain that a bit?

Mr. Michael Nitz: It's an interesting point. The important part to note is that we have a ton of opportunity north of here. It's not the best place for it to be without the infrastructure in place. A lot of investors are cautious of investing in these companies for further growth if they don't see the investments made in infrastructure and whether the roads can be put in.

The roads wouldn't only be for mining. I mean, access to all these communities and providing them with the services that they should have is one other key point. Having the government fund the dollars to get the electricity and the roads up there, get the rocks out of the ground and make sure it's prosperous for all in the northwest—that's what it's all about.

Mr. John Vanthof: I take it you would agree that it would be a huge revenue generator for the government, not a drain on the government, to invest in that infrastructure.

Mr. Michael Nitz: Yes. We see it as not so much a cost, but an investment in the future, significant tax revenues that could be seen from the province, as well as federally and municipally. There are huge tax incentives to make this investment now. We understand that there

are fiscal challenges going on, but this will provide opportunities on the revenue side of the balance sheet.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much, Mr. Nitz.

KENORA TOURISM

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next witness is Kenora Tourism: Randy Nickle. This round of questions is from the government side.

Mr. Randy Nickle: Good morning. My name is Randy Nickle from Kenora Tourism. I have an A&W business as well that I run in Kenora. I chair the tourism committee.

The economy of northwest Ontario has performed poorly over the past few years. Our region has been hit hard as the reality of our quick decline in employment in the forestry industry has closed mills, has shaken communities and has caused families to leave the region. However, even in the good years when forestry was booming, there was a marked realization across the region that more diversification is required to create economic stability in northwestern Ontario.

Within the Kenora and Rainy River districts, which are defined as the travel region of Sunset Country, tourism supports, directly and indirectly, over 12,000 full-year jobs, \$451 million in economic activity, wages and salaries in excess of \$393 million, and \$185 million for federal, provincial and municipal taxes. There are approximately 440 tourism accommodation businesses within the region. In fact, 43% of outdoor tourism income in northern Ontario is generated in northwestern Ontario, and most of that is in the zone west of Thunder Bay called Sunset Country.

Tourism in Sunset Country is heavily reliant upon our American neighbours. American visitors to the area contribute almost 80% of all tourism expenditures. In economic terms, tourism in Sunset Country is a wealth-generating industry. The only real exception to this US trend is in Kenora, where Manitobans are attracted to the area to cottage and enjoy Lake of the Woods. After the mill closures, it has been this group of tourists that has carried the community and prevented economic collapse.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is why it was nothing short of shocking to live the past year with the government of Ontario very deliberately beginning to strip the region of its tourism investments. We closed all three of our tourism centres and shut down a provincial park. The Fort Frances border crossing, which sees more than 400,000 US visitors every year, has no tourist centre. In fact, the town currently has to have students standing in the parking lot of Canada Customs, handing out brochures. This is done under an umbrella in the rain and in the sun while the tourism building next door remains closed.

A year after the unexpected closure, the government can't even organize itself to issue the order in council to sell the building to the town—not that the province is willing to cut anyone a break here; you're asking for over

\$300,000 for that tourism centre. I'll ask to take a look at the picture that now greets visitors to our region. I feel a passion for northwestern Ontario, and the neglect and disinterest is just hard to discuss without getting a little upset.

That was last year, when the budget was passed with the blessing of the NDP and sacrifices were made in the Kenora–Rainy River riding while parks and tourist bureaus stayed opened in two Liberal-held ridings to the east of us. But this is this year, so I'm here to ask you, going forward, how are we going to rectify this?

The city of Kenora has built an interpretive centre to help visitors learn about the lake and lifestyle of Kenora and Lake of the Woods. Now the Kenora discovery centre has had to convert its functions into a greeting and brochure centre. In 2012, we had to service 7,000 more visitors. This affects our staffing costs, our building occupancy costs and the hours that we must provide service. Kenora, Fort Frances and Rainy River all should receive grants to help them staff their centres. Fort Frances should immediately be given the centre at the border, in my opinion, for a dollar, and all three should be helped with occupancy costs for the next few years as transitional funding.

Tourism rolls in northwestern Ontario on tires. Our tourists use roads to access our cities, towns and resorts. Both the Drummond report and the Rosehart report suggested that the Trans-Canada Highway be twinned from Manitoba to Kenora. Many times, and in particular throughout the summertime on Fridays and Saturdays from May to November, the highway becomes a bottleneck, dangerous and difficult to navigate. The province and the federal government agreed to twin a section of this highway in 2009. You'll note in the handouts that I provided the announcement that was made in 2009. But now it is nearing the summer of 2013 and the highway remains exactly as it was. The federal government remains committed to the project but the province has been silent. As you deliberate on the 2013 budget, we request that you remain committed to the spending promised back in 2009. The feds are ready but are asking now for the province to show them they have the money.

As a region we've been working hard to diversify. All our communities have limited resources. NPAC rulings have decreased the tax base and while we are hopeful, new mines have yet to be opened. We need tourism to help see us through these tough times, to provide employment and as a way to transform our economies back into prosperity. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. Dipika?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: How much time do we have, Soo?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Twelve minutes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: We have 12 minutes for questions?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay, excellent.

Mr. Randy Nickle: I tried to keep it short and sweet.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Mr. Nickle, for coming today. I understand you were the PC candidate in the 2011 election?

Mr. Randy Nickle: I will be the PC candidate—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Oh, you will be—

Mr. Randy Nickle: —in the next election, yes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted to ask you a very quick question. I heard you say that tourism actually jumped by 7,000 visitors, so to me that's good news.

Mr. Randy Nickle: Yes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I was just wondering if you could explain what the underlying cause was. Was it that the province is advertising better? What are we doing right that it has gone up by 7,000?

Mr. Randy Nickle: Well, in the situation of Kenora, as I mentioned, there is a discovery centre that was built in the city proper to promote the area and help get people to stay over on a longer period of time. But I'm going to say that one of the direct benefits of closing the Manitoba tourism centre by the province—it was the TIC at the time, the tourist information centres. It's right at the Manitoba border as you come in; that would provide Ontario tourism information. With that being closed, people that were looking for information had to come into the community to get it, at substantial cost to the community.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Sorry, I didn't understand that. You're saying that the volume increased because people were sort of forced to drive into Ontario to get the information?

Mr. Randy Nickle: That's correct. With the—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: So that seems like a good strategy to me, to drive traffic in, right?

Mr. Randy Nickle: I don't think that it's a poor strategy. The problem is that we don't have the operational dollars and the staffing dollars to facilitate that, and that's the same case in Rainy River and Fort Frances.
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Ms. Dipika Damerla: Sorry. You don't have the dollars to service the increase in tourists? Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Randy Nickle: That's correct.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: But don't the tourists come in—could you give me an example of what the cost would be to service the tourists? Because I'm assuming this is good news. You want to promote tourism. You have 7,000 more visitors; they're spending money. I'm just trying to understand what the challenges are here.

Mr. Randy Nickle: Well, again, I don't believe all three of the communities that are involved right now—last year, when the announcement was made, it was made without consultation at the—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Sorry. Which announcement are you talking about?

Mr. Randy Nickle: The closing of the tourism information centres in the three communities.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Right. But what I see is that despite the closing of those tourism information centres—and my understanding is that they were closed.

What I'm trying to clarify is that in today's world of the Internet, very few people actually walk in. Most people, before they come, Google; they know where they are going. That's the reason those were shut down. In general, that was the principle behind shutting them down in Ontario.

But what I'm hearing from you is, regardless of whether we have those tourist information centres or not, volumes have increased by 7,000. I'm trying to understand what the problem is.

Mr. Randy Nickle: The problem is, who's funding that?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Sorry. Who's funding what?

Mr. Randy Nickle: Who is funding the operations of the facility? So in Kenora, for instance, we had over \$30,000 extra expense added to our budget this year for toilet paper, paper towels, hand soap, cleaning. That didn't include the extra staffing that we needed to put on to pick up the extra people coming in.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: You had a question?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I do.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted to finish this train of thought, and then I'll pass it over to my colleague.

I'm still trying to understand. The 7,000 tourists are coming in, they're spending dollars, but the city is picking up the tab for something. That's what you're trying to say, I think.

Mr. Randy Nickle: That's correct.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: And I'm trying to understand, what is that tab that the tourists are not paying for? What is it that they would be using?

Mr. Randy Nickle: I guess where my frustration comes in trying to represent northwestern Ontario, diversifying our economy, working on tourism, is that here we are, and 100% of the tourism centres in our area were closed.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: But how would opening them help you with the costs of servicing the 7,000 more? I don't understand the link. What I'm seeing is that despite the closure, volumes of tourists have increased.

Mr. Randy Nickle: Right.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Your concern is that, for some reason, the city can't cope with these visitors. So I'm not quite clear how reopening the tourism centres, which is really bricks and mortar, as opposed to an online system of providing tourist information, would help your cause of picking up the tab for having tourists in the area. I don't understand how that's the solution. That's what I'm trying to say.

Mr. Randy Nickle: Right. Well, we just look at it and say, "Let's treat all visitor information centres across the province the same." In northwestern Ontario, we feel a huge slap in the face for all three of our tourism centres being closed last year. The points you bring up about people travelling and having Google and doing all their research ahead of time: Is that how we treat all the tourism centres? It wasn't last year. Again, for we who are trying to diversify our economy, it didn't really make a lot of sense to us either. When you're talking about

dollars and cents and who should be responsible for it, in all other regions in the province it's the provincial dollars that are helping facilitate tourism information centres. That's not the case in northwestern Ontario.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: And all I'm saying is, the reason that was done was probably they did studies that showed that we don't need a tourism information centre in certain areas, and you still get the—all I'm trying to say is that as long as tourism is thriving here and that is what you want, I'm not sure why there's so much focus on having those centres when tourism is growing despite not having those centres. But I'll rest my case here because I know that Steven has some questions.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you so much for sharing your time.

Mr. Randy Nickle: Typically, with tourism studies or any studies, it's usually over a period of time. I think that our member of provincial Parliament can attest that last year definitely there didn't seem to be much information provided on studies that would show that we shouldn't be funding tourism information centres in northwestern Ontario.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you, Mr. Nickle. Just a quick question: You mentioned near the end of your presentation concerns in this part of the province around some MPAC rulings. Can you elaborate a little bit on that, please?

Mr. Randy Nickle: The MPAC rulings are just situations where the forestry industries that we have, the forestry businesses that we have right now in the province, have been appealing with the decline in the wood industry. The rulings have been coming in that have been very detrimental to the communities involved. Dryden was one that just most recently had a ruling; Weyerhaeuser in Kenora right now is in a similar situation. These industries have just been looking at MPAC and asking for new rulings on what their taxable incomes would be. It has been terrible for the community. Again, we're looking to try and diversify and spread out our opportunities for success. This is just something that's really important. The tourism aspect is really important.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: So is that an issue that the businesses are having or the municipalities are having?

Mr. Randy Nickle: Municipalities.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much.

NEW STARTS FOR WOMEN

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Our next speaker is New Starts for Women. Kathy Campbell is teleconferencing.

Ms. Kathy Campbell: Hi.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Hi, Kathy.

Ms. Kathy Campbell: Hello.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): It's Soo Wong, the Vice-Chair of the standing committee. Sorry, I have a bad voice.

Ms. Kathy Campbell: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Anyway, you have 15 minutes to do your presentation and I will let you know at the two-minute mark. The next round of questions will be the PCs, the opposition party. Okay?

Ms. Kathy Campbell: All right.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. You may start.

Ms. Kathy Campbell: Okay. Good morning and thank you for the opportunity, first off, to provide this input during the consultations. I'm Kathy Campbell, the executive director of New Starts for Women women's shelter in Red Lake. Red Lake is also the secondary service centre for remote First Nations communities. Red Lake is located about 175 kilometres north of the Trans-Canada via a secondary highway. It's also 555 kilometres northwest of the largest service centre of Thunder Bay. There are no roads leading to the northern communities we provide service to, except unpredictable winter ice roads that deliver supplies to these communities. The majority of communities that New Starts for Women services do not have adequate services to address the diverse needs of abused women and their children. This is illustrated in the demand that is placed upon the shelter to provide a full range of services for women.

Our shelter is a member of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, in which I am a very active member of the social justice and action/anti-racism anti-oppression committee. I was a member of the minister responsible for women's issues' Domestic Violence Advisory Council. I'm also the secretary for the Red Lake non-profit housing board and I sit on numerous committees in the community as a representative of the only woman-centred organization and often the voice of women who are survivors of violence.

I believe it's every woman and child's human right to have freedom from all forms of violence. There is much that needs to be done to reach the goal of protecting this right for women and children in Ontario. I would like to address specifically the violence-against-women issues and how financial support is needed to eliminate violence against women. I don't intend to burden this presentation with statistics that support my argument. These current statistics are in the document provided to you, Second Stage Housing in Red Lake: Needs Assessment and Cost Analysis. I'd rather focus on the personal aspect of women's poverty—the lack of housing, child care, training, medical, addressing the needs of aboriginal and marginalized women—and how these are issues of violence against women that must be addressed in order to eliminate violence against women.

Since 1990, 555 women and children have been murdered in Ontario as a direct result of violence against women by an intimate partner. Our government continues to pledge to support the Ontario women's anti-violence community to make a commitment to work with women of our province for an end to violence against all women. All three current parties have made the commitment to include the voices of survivors of woman abuse

and the leadership of women's advocates in developing further action and direction in Ontario for ending violence against women.

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There has been progress on shared goals of responding to women and children affected by violence:

- we've begun restoring some of the 1995 cuts from women's shelter and second-stage programs;

- the development of a province-wide Sexual Violence Action Plan;

- the promise to move forward on a strategy framework to end violence against aboriginal women;

- actions to promote survivor involvement in service coordination, among other initiatives; and

- the formation of an advisory council that provided the Transforming Our Communities document, a report to the minister responsible for women's issues that identifies 45 recommendations intended to move forward the Ontario government's public policy direction to end violence against women.

Poverty and housing issues need to be addressed immediately to keep women and children from dying at the hands of their abusers and to give hope to those women who have succeeded in escaping the abuse that there can be a life free of violence for themselves and their children. Adhering to the recommendations of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, particularly the May-Iles and Hadley inquests and most recently the Pham inquest, must be committed to.

The national transition home survey 2010 identified that, between April 1, 2009, and March 31, 2010, there were about 64,500 admissions of women to shelters across Canada, representing a rate of 452 admissions per 100,000 women. The rate of admissions was up from 2007 and 2008.

Many of these women and children, when leaving the shelter, are faced with the uncertainty of where they would go due to a lack of accessible, safe, affordable housing. Even though they did not want to return to the abusive partner, they often did not have a choice. New Starts For Women women's shelter, during this same time period, provided emergency shelter to 243 women and 206 children. Staff also provided support via our crisis line to 1,341 crisis calls.

Many women do not access the shelter due to uncertainty of obtaining safe, affordable housing in Red Lake. Access to housing, a lack of subsidized housing, waiting times and inadequacy of shelter allowances are the most common barriers to women accessing safe, affordable housing. Other barriers, especially in rural or northern communities such as Red Lake: subsidized housing may not be located close enough to services the women need to address the violence in their lives.

Unhealthy, unsafe housing also exposes women and children to risk of child welfare involvement. But this same threat is there for women who are forced to return to the abusive partner. Apprehension of children by child welfare, high costs of hydro, utilities and the cost of food, which are not adequately recognized by income security

programs or covered by the low wages women often earn, are the top reasons why women lose the housing they struggle so hard to get. They can't afford to keep it.

Housing availability, accessibility and advocacy over the past 20 years has not seen much progress from what women faced in 1999. However, we are beginning to see some progress on the housing crisis that was created in the 10 years between 1995 and 2005. This progress is not enough to reverse the impacts of poverty and homelessness, even to 1995 levels.

Most new housing builds have been located in the southern portion of our province. Demographics justify this, however. With more and more housing—aboriginal peoples moving off their First Nations into rural communities, the need for housing is crucial. With the rise in urban aboriginal communities developing within our larger service centres, the families' needs for safe, affordable housing puts more strain on their already overburdened housing situation.

There is so much more that women and children deserve and need to find a safe place without the violence. A second-stage housing unit would see women and their children afforded safe, affordable housing that is specific to their needs.

The community of Red Lake is seeing a boom in its major industry of mining, which has contributed to and created a critical housing shortage. A woman who leaves the shelter is unable to find safe, affordable housing in our community. The community of Red Lake, to meet the demands for housing, has been converting hotels, restaurants and stores to provide bunkhouses to meet the needs of the miners. Existing apartment buildings and rental units have inflated their costs to accommodate and supply demand. Property that is serviced is not readily available in the municipality of Red Lake. However, a New Starts proposal is opportune, as New Starts has available serviced land for this project.

New Starts for Women would like to construct transitional and supportive housing in the form of second-stage housing units already designed by Alfred Wood. This would include 10 apartment units, three- and four-bedrooms to accommodate family size in the north.

There is so much more that women and children deserve and need to find a safe place without violence. We found that our community is seeing an influx of community members from our north coming in and trying to find affordable, safe housing, although we don't have the means to accommodate. I'm looking for—that the budget include a plan to accommodate this housing shortage in our community, as well as all of the northern communities that we have in the Kenora–Rainy River district. The safe, affordable housing plan—there are recommendations for a long-term affordable housing strategy that I've included in the document that I'm hoping you have in front of you, that gives some specifics to it. We are also looking at—hello?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes?

Ms. Kathy Campbell: Are you still there?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes.

Ms. Kathy Campbell: Sorry; something happened there.

My argument for this pre-budget consultation is that I don't see a lot of commitment to housing in the north. There have been housing bills, like I said, in southern Ontario; however, for the north, where the demographics don't often justify it—or what we see as demographics. However, there is a desperate need. The housing that we do have in Red Lake—there are very low numbers of housing units, and oftentimes they're filled with families that have come in from the north or with miners who are accessing that housing as well. We need more low-income housing units designated, so that we can at least put women in there.

Most of the women that we have coming into our community are from northern communities that are very isolated; they need to have additional support for safety, which we hope that a second-stage housing unit would accommodate. It would also free up some of the local housing, which is not much—but it would at least free that up for a time, where we could provide the women with education and knowledge about how to pay bills, since that's not something they have to do in their community.

The infrastructure grants that have been put out there are very limited, and most often, our municipality looks at that infrastructure as roads and that sort of thing, which is important, of course. However, we can't even get proper nursing staff here because of the shortage of our housing. If we start doing some supportive transitional housing builds, I'm hoping that would also free up some of the housing that we do have here so that the hospital could access it or community counselling could access it.

It's very difficult to find a place to live in Red Lake at this point in time. The cost of a market rent unit here is anywhere from \$1,200 to \$1,800, which is not something that a woman on assistance can afford.

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Our hydro is also a very drastic cost to a woman. Oftentimes she's looking at, "Do I put food on the table or do I pay the hydro bill?" Often hydro is left to last, and then the hydro gets turned off and she has to leave her accommodations.

There are a lot of struggles that we are faced with. I struggle every day when I see a woman leave the shelter and return to an abusive partner or unsafe community because she is unable to find safe, affordable housing. While the woman is here, she and her children receive information on how to keep themselves safe and they are encouraged to come back to the shelter as often—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Campbell, you have one minute left.

Ms. Kathy Campbell: Okay. So basically, I guess, I really want to encourage you to put something in the budget regarding housing—safe, affordable housing, of course—in northern communities. Don't forget about us up here. We do struggle every day, as you can tell. Here I am talking to you via telephone, which isn't really great, but that's something I have to do to be able to participate.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. Thank you, Ms. Campbell. I believe the committee has heard your concerns, so we look forward to hearing from you in the future.

SHELTER HOUSE THUNDER BAY

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next speaker is Shelter House Thunder Bay, Patty Hadju. Come on up.

Ms. Patty Hadju: I don't know if you got my email yesterday, but I did bring along Cynthia Olsen, who's the drug strategy coordinator—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Can you identify yourself for Hansard, please?

Ms. Patty Hadju: Sure. My name is Patty Hadju. I'm the executive director of Shelter House Thunder Bay, which is the largest emergency shelter here in Thunder Bay. We house men, women and youth ages 16 to 18, and we're the only facility that houses youth and women as well. I've brought along with me Cynthia Olsen, who is the drug strategy coordinator for the city of Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay has an exemplary drug strategy, of which housing is a pillar. So I'm going to let Cynthia open and then I'm going to tell you a little bit about the homeless situation in Thunder Bay.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): That's great. You have 15 minutes.

Ms. Patty Hadju: Thank you.

Ms. Cynthia Olsen: Good morning. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today. Like Patty said, my name is Cynthia Olsen and I am the coordinator for the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy.

Our strategy recommends 112 actions to reduce the harms associated with substance use. It was ratified by our city council in 2011 and accepted as our official plan to address substance use issues in our community. We have adopted a five-pillar approach, modifying the traditional four-pillar approach of prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction. We opted to include a fifth pillar for housing, recognizing the importance of access to adequate, stable and affordable housing as a basic human right and a foundation on which community members struggling with substance use issues may begin to get well.

Housing is one of the fundamental social determinants of health. There is a desperate shortage of safe and affordable housing in Thunder Bay. Policy- and community-based research has clearly established the link between poor housing and ill health. People who are homeless bear a much heavier burden of illness and premature death than those who are housed.

Failure to provide people with the building blocks essential for healthy communities inevitably leads to more complex social problems. Solutions must be found that improve housing for people affected by substance use, mental health, marginalization and poverty. People who have affordable, safe and appropriate housing have fewer health problems, including those related to substance use.

We need to see a decrease in the length of our social housing waiting lists, development of “housing first” models in our community and an increase in transitional and supportive housing, with specific housing tailored to meet the unique needs of youth, women and First Nations individuals in order to see a decrease in the number of people designated as homeless.

Ms. Patty Hadju: Thanks, Cynthia.

And so, as the chair of the housing pillar and now the executive director of Shelter House, I thought I’d give you a little bit of a snapshot of what all that means in clear language.

I thought I’d start with a story, actually. We house 62 individuals every single night. We have capacity for 42 permanent beds, and we have 20 overflow beds which are always in use; we often have to turn people away because we are actually full. Oftentimes, people who are staying with us have severe mental health and addictions issues, along with many other physical and chronic illnesses.

One story is, recently we had a young woman who had been struggling with substance use and finally made the very brave leap into treatment. She went away to treatment for four weeks—roughly 28 days—and when she was discharged, she was discharged back to Shelter House. There were no accommodating support services for her, there were no spots in any kind of transitional housing available to her, and within 48 hours she was using substances again. You can imagine how difficult it is for people to stay sober in an environment where there is so much untreated mental health and addiction. That’s the kind of cycling that we see on a regular basis.

Homelessness is severe. It’s rising in Thunder Bay, as well as other parts of Canada. We’ve actually just recently joined a federal homeless tracking system called HIFIS, which is tracking actual numbers. We hope to have some data, both locally and regionally, in the next while, because we will be using this national tracking database.

Many individuals that we see require supportive housing, so the stays in homeless shelters are typically quite long. Innovation that reduces costs across various ministries is often not financially supported, which means that homeless shelters who are providing innovative services—doing anything besides the bare minimum of sheltering—are forced to fundraise. We fundraise a third of our budget. Our budget is \$1.5 million a year; that is a no-frills budget. We feed 200,000 people a year on \$25,000 a year. Just so you know, it’s the community of Thunder Bay that is actually feeding those people. We do food drives, we do fundraising—we have a fundraising coordinator who knocks her socks off every year. What we find, though, is that the pleas are expanding in the community, that so much need for so many different kinds of services that are not funded and that are not supported—social services in particular—and that the hands are becoming multiple and the donations are getting spread thin.

Here in Thunder Bay, as in other parts of the province, the housing vacancy rate is hovering at around 1%—it

might be 1.2% sometimes, 1.1% sometimes; the range of housing is therefore shrinking. I took an economics course during my master’s of public administration, and it makes perfect sense, because the tighter the private market, the more the demand, which drives up the costs. Landlords are now reducing their desire to offer subsidized space because, of course, they are able to get full market value without any support. So, even in terms of availability, subsidized spaces are shrinking.

We have some social service agencies in town that can provide supportive living for people with substance use, and their challenge is that they can’t get any landlords to sign on and be landlords because of this tight market.

Racial profiling is extremely common. I would say that 80% of our residents are aboriginal, and when they give the person their name over the phone, many of them have very aboriginal-sounding names and they are told that the space is taken and not to bother even coming and seeing the place. It’s extremely frustrating and it’s extremely challenging for people who are homeless to get out of a homeless shelter environment.

There is also an insufficient range of housing. While there may be a number of family units, for example, available in the subsidized market, most of the individuals that we see need single units. There is not the flexibility to use those units in a different way.

Homeless shelter stays can exceed 90 days—we have some people who are with us all year round due to the severity of their illnesses. On average, we figure it’s costing our organization \$66 a day or \$23,500 annually for each person who is homeless. If you think of the cost of a bachelor apartment at \$650 a month, which is what the current rate is here in Thunder Bay, that’s \$7,800, so for the cost of the bachelor apartment and even maybe some support, you would still be saving money rather than housing people in a very expensive fashion.

Ontario’s Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy states a “continued commitment to affordable housing,” and that they are now committing to this ongoing operating funding for housing and homelessness services, which some of you may have heard about, called CHPI—consolidated homelessness partnership initiative. CHPI is basically taking all the pots of money that were formerly being spent on homelessness, putting it together and giving municipal control.

The problem is that Thunder Bay has underestimated or underspent on homelessness for many, many years, so, actually, it’s based on a three-year average of spending which is not accurately reflecting the true cost of homelessness in Thunder Bay. So we as shelter providers have a great concern that we are actually not going to even receive the revenues that we had before on the per diem basis.

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Ontario’s housing plan, however, does not include any significant investment in developing affordable housing. Although there’s a lot of talk about the whys and the importance, there’s not really a commitment in terms of dollars for the bricks and mortar, and that’s the piece

that's keeping our communities constrained: that there aren't available spots.

I'll tell you an interesting story. There are ways to do that without actually huge investments. I was a victim of the flood that happened here in Thunder Bay. My basement is suitable for an apartment. I would have had to spend \$15,000 personally to change the water intake valve from half an inch to $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch, because that is the legislation that is required to make that a self-sustained bachelor apartment. It's things like that that constrain the private sector as well from being part of the solution.

Ontario has the worst record on affordable housing of all the provinces, with over 152,000 Ontario households on wait-lists for assisted housing. This is probably something you've heard in other deputations. In 2009, Ontario spent \$64 per person on affordable housing, compared to the average among all provinces of \$115 per person. We have the highest housing costs of any province as well.

Government source funding only covers two thirds of the costs, as I told you. We do receive 20,000 tonnes of food a year and 50,000 hours of volunteer time to prepare those meals. The meals that we prepare—we serve the entire community. We don't just serve people who are homeless. Our kitchen is open two times a day, and it's for whoever is living in that community who wants to avail themselves of a hot meal. What we see is that we're serving people on social assistance, because \$599 a month—you can't even pay for a bachelor apartment at full market cost, so people are having to make excruciating decisions about whether or not they're going to feed their children or pay for accommodation.

There are little to no services in our community that are trauma-informed, harm-reduction-based, transition-focused and include support for housing stability. As I said, people who are homeless often have complex needs, so actually placing someone in an apartment is sometimes not a solution. People need support to improve their life skills, to do the healing that they need in order to be able to become productive members.

What we frequently see is that we have, also, individuals who we can't serve, highly intoxicated individuals, for example, who present at the door with aggressive behaviour, a history of violence and no other emergency services available in the community. There are no specialized mental health institutions anymore. They've been barred from every organization in the city. Unless they've actually committed a crime, the police are not willing to arrest them. We call that the "safety or the snowbank" decision, or the God decision. My staff, who are on the front line at 3 in the morning, are in the position of deciding whether or not they let someone in who is potentially going to put themselves and 62 other people at risk, or whether they turn them away and have that person die in a snowbank. That is a daily decision that happens in the life of shelter operators.

I do want to finish on something that came out of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy that was initiated by Shelter

House that is a solution and that I would encourage you to think about supporting. We have started a managed alcohol program called the Kwae Kii Win (Turning Point) Centre. It is a supportive, barrier-free, harm-reduction-modelled house that, at the moment, houses 15 people with severe and chronic alcohol use. These are the people who we typically couldn't take in and were at risk of freezing in a snowbank. They are people who will likely never recover from alcoholism. We have another one in the province; the Seaton House Annex program is who we modelled ourselves after.

We provide dosed alcohol to people. We provide supportive living. We have a partnership with the community health centre so everybody gets primary health care. We save incredible money and we also contribute to quality of life for the individuals. Better health, less injury; it reduces the load on medical and policing services. We will have an evaluation report by December 2013 that will be quantitative as well as qualitative, looking at what kinds of dollars we have saved policing, what kinds of dollars we have saved our health care system.

Sadly, this program has no stable source of funding. It's being funded through a Trillium grant, through some federal housing money and through fundraising. So we will be asking for support from the province in some way to help us sustain this kind of transitional supportive living. It's a humane and practical solution, and it's also a cost-saving to the taxpayer.

Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. You now have, I think, four minutes. This round of questions is from the NDP.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you for that presentation.

First of all, I want to commend you on the work that you're doing. It's exceptional.

I found it quite shocking; I didn't realize that you don't have any stable funding and that you rely so much on fundraising and grants. That's unacceptable. I think you did a very good job of clearly outlining the need for Shelter House.

How much money do you think would be reasonable to receive from the province?

Ms. Patty Hadju: Ideally, it would be nice to have sheltering completely covered by the province so that we could spend our energy on helping people get well, rather than spending our energy on chasing fundraising dollars. It's an enormous human resource expense to get that money, actually.

If we look just at the managed alcohol program, it costs us \$500,000 a year for 15 people, which is amazing when you think that it can cost a million dollars for an individual annually, depending on the load on services. These are individuals who are picked up sometimes two or three times a day, by the police, by the EMS, who are transported around to the city, who use emergency health care, who are back at the shelter, and on and on it goes the next day. So for half a million dollars a year, you can

take care of 15 marginalized people in an incredibly cost-effective and humane way. It is just about looking at things in a different perspective.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: One of the things that you talked about is the fact that the shelter provides food to people and that you don't discriminate between people who are homeless and people who may rely on social assistance. One of the things that we're talking to the Liberals about is allowing people who are on social assistance to keep the first \$200 of their employment income. Do you think that's something that would help people to be able to afford food? Do you think that's a step in the right direction?

Ms. Patty Hadju: I think that's an absolutely great step in the right direction. I think that if we had more transition between social assistance and employment and we helped people with stepped ideas like that, we could actually alleviate the burden on social assistance as well.

We see people who can't afford their medications and therefore can't let go of social assistance, because how are they going to be able to afford their medications if they don't have a benefit plan when they're working at Walmart? Those are the kinds of challenges that people face. So if you were able to say, "We're going to have a graded system and help people get off social assistance by not penalizing them so stringently when they do actually make money, or by supporting them to keep their benefits for a period of time while they're employed," those kinds of supports would be tremendous in helping people move along.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): One more minute.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Okay, good. Thank you.

The other thing that you talked about was the fact that there aren't a lot of options for housing. Do you have any idea what the wait-list is in Thunder Bay for subsidized housing?

Ms. Cynthia Olsen: I believe there are over 1,000 people on the wait-list.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Wow.

Ms. Patty Hadju: Yes, it can mean years in some cases.

Ms. Cynthia Olsen: And especially for single individuals. That's the highest.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Do you have any questions, John?

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I'm fine.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you.

Ms. Patty Hadju: Thank you very much.

CONFEDERATION COLLEGE

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next speaker is Confederation College, Jim Madder. Good morning.

Mr. Jim Madder: Good morning. Welcome to northwestern Ontario. It is wonderful to see all of you up here during this time of pre-budget consultations that are here.

You can tell from the way all of us speak about northwestern Ontario that we're passionate about this place, and we'd love you to stay, please. One of the reasons

why I say that is we don't have enough people here, and I'll come back to that point. We have remarkable opportunities here, and we have remarkable challenges here as well, which I'd like to address.

A number of the previous speakers have talked about a challenge around housing. In fact, as northwestern Ontario and in Thunder Bay, the CMHC says we have a 1% vacancy rate, which means we don't have a vacancy rate. Virtually every single place that we have is filled with people.

The second part is, we actually have the lowest unemployment rate in Ontario and the fifth-lowest in Canada. People say, "Are you talking about Ontario?" Yes, this is Ontario. Typically, we're running, in the last 12 months, between 5% and 5.5% unemployment, versus other parts of the province that are hitting 9% or more, with an average around 7% to 7.5%. This is a wonderful, wonderful place to be if you want to work and have a job.

One of the interesting challenges that Confederation College has, as one of 24 institutions, is we're very different than many of the other colleges. We actually deliver across 450,000 square kilometres of area, more than half of this province. We're very different than a Humber and we're very different than a Fanshawe, yet we're actually constrained by the same types of grants and the same types of activities and policies that apply to a Humber and a Fanshawe. That's not to actually in any way negate the remarkable institutions that Fanshawe and Humber and Mohawk are, but we're in a very, very different circumstance.

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Across that 450,000 square kilometres, we deliver to 250,000 people. Those are the people that I serve. In any one year, I have between 11,000 and 12,000 students. So, I have nine campuses that spread from Kenora across to Wawa, from Thunder Bay to Red Lake, which one of our previous speakers has spoken about. At any one time, I'm delivering an additional 20 to 30 locations in remote communities, communities that do not have any land access other than through the winter routes that are here.

Within that 250,000 people, I have at least 45,000 people with a declared aboriginal heritage who have remarkable challenges in terms of accessing education, significant issues in terms of numeracy and literacy, and those are our students because, to be quite blunt, the federal government has failed them in supporting their education. We look forward to a future in which their education, from kindergarten to grade 12, is better supported than it currently is so that when they do come to our full-credit programs they can be far more successful.

The First Nations that are in the regions are remarkably important partners with us. Some of the pieces that I will speak to today show those partnerships' growing success in kindergarten to grade 12, and that supports success at the college level as well.

So, in my chat here in the next couple of minutes, I'll reference what is in the paper that's here. I'm not going to read what is here.

We are one of 24 institutions, all of which look remarkably different. Having said that, I open the newspaper, the Wawatay News here, and Fred Gibbons, the president at Northern College in Timmins, wrote a letter here to the people that I could have written word for word. We are the answer for skilled trades. We're the answer for skills. We're the answer for jobs in the north. Our huge issue is having people complete high school, continue on to us or actually come to the north.

We have seats in programs that are in the six northern colleges which don't exist in the south. So we have proposed and are bringing forward to NOHFC a proposal in which we publicized those programs in the south—oversubscribed programs. In fact, we've got great partnerships with Porter and Bearskin Airlines to support students from the south coming to the north, falling in love with the place—studying up here, but falling in love with the place and staying up here. So if any of you would like to stay up here, there are employment opportunities for you all. It is a phenomenal circumstance, quite different from the story perhaps in—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Madder: Well, in Kenora as well. You're already here, Sarah, it's great.

You can't tell the excitement that I have about this region and the opportunities that are here. There was an announcement this past week—a critical announcement—for NNEC, the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council, that supports the development of accommodation for First Nations students on our campus. It is accommodation for students going to Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School. It is a First Nation high school, which is defined in Ontario as a private school.

In fact, those students—you can imagine being 13 or 14 years of age, coming out of Sandy Lake or Sachigo Lake or Pikangikum, never been outside of that community at all and coming to Thunder Bay and saying, "Okay, you're here in town. Go learn." Well, you're here in town, you've got so many temptations and other people who want to prey on you, you don't learn terribly well. The fail or dropout rate right now of DFC is over 90%. Those are all people who could be my students. Those are all people who could be in skilled trades throughout northwestern Ontario.

By putting accommodation on our campus, rather than having people boarded in the community, there's 24/7 supervision and there's much greater control, in terms of—control, it sounds horribly paternalistic but at that point in people's lives, 13- or 14-year-olds—they need to be provided with a great deal of guidance to provide their success in high school coming on to be success with us. That announcement occurred this last week. We're very pleased to share our lands, as a college, for that project.

A second piece that we're working on, and it relates to a number of pieces that have been raised by other speakers here this morning, is the development of a student village. We simply have no accommodation for our students as well. We have a residence; it is absolutely, completely filled. We talked earlier about a 1%

vacancy rate. I have many parents who call me and say, "I'd send you my son and daughter, but there's no safe place for them to stay." So we are going to expand our accommodation facilities on our campus and change our recreation facilities.

We currently live in the world of a bubble, and I mean that quite literally. That bubble is going to come down at 17 years of age, and our students have committed their own funds to renewing that recreation facility. This will be enhanced by a student success centre. I welcome the province to be part of that student success centre. You don't need to be. We're determined to do this, from fundraising and other pieces as well, but this is through private funding, through funding of our students and through funding from other agencies to make this work, but it will allow more students to come to us and increase their success rates at the same time.

Other work that you've seen here and what I've shared with you—right at the current time, I have employers virtually hiring students out of my classes. That's absolutely wonderful. What's the problem, though? I have no class at the end of the semester. In fact, I get grants on the basis of classes.

We have convinced those private enterprises to partner with us in order for students to study and work at the same time. This goes back to the 1960s, when there was huge, huge demand. In fact, those students are working full-time, and they're also studying with us full-time. I give them immense credit for that, and that's really on the backbone of industry that is making that happen.

We're doing things very, very actively in order to increase the numbers of people who are being produced for skilled trades: the success of students, attracting students from remote communities across the north into all of our communities, delivering our programs in those communities as well. One of the critical pieces that we do is to increase students' success in kindergarten to grade 12, yes, in First Nations schools but all across the northwest.

We have more than 1,000 college students—they're in high school. The School-College-Work Initiative is absolutely fantastic. As a college, we have the largest number of dual-credit students of any college across all of Ontario. It is incredibly successful. I do ask in my suggestions later on—there are some policy changes that I suggest at the bottom of this—to expand that program wherever possible; allow its full expansion into First Nations schools. Boy, that's been difficult, because First Nations schools are funded by the federal government, and in fact, the School-College-Work Initiative was not designed in order to be used that way. We will have three initiatives that will go ahead this coming year in that environment. It was challenging bringing that forward, but in fact, we will continue to do that type of work. We'll also move forward—actually, I will look at my notes.

The tuition reduction of 30% is absolutely fantastic for new people coming out of high school. One of the largest issues that I faced, though, is it doesn't fit with the life

cycle of many people in the north: Often they come out of high school and they work, or they have children. Five or 10 years later, they have the time and the opportunity to come back and study with us. They're not eligible for that tuition rebate. Please consider expanding the age that people are eligible for that tuition rebate. It's my understanding that it has not been fully subscribed to. I would think it would be terrific to actually have those dollars associated with that spread across people up to at least the age of 26 or 29. It would dramatically increase the support that we have for students here, particularly aboriginal students in the north.

I would also, as I mentioned here, invite you to participate in the study north—work north initiative that is being brought forward by the six northern colleges. Again, we have work up here; there are unemployed people in the south. We'd love people to come to the north in partnership with our communities. Porter Airlines, Bearskin Airlines, Resolute—all of these people are involved with this project. Bring people to the north, study here, fall in love with the place and work here.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. This round of questioning is from the government side.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: How much time do we have?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): You've got six minutes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you so much, Mr. Madder. Really, I applaud you for your success. It's a great, great story that you've shared with us today about this part of Ontario that is doing so very well. I will definitely take it back to my riding in Mississauga. When people come to me and talk about unemployment, I will definitely point them to you and this area.

I do have some questions though. One thing that twiggled my interest was, you already have residences for you college, right?

Mr. Jim Madder: Yes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: What is the proportion? Because then you go on to say that the aboriginal children are not able to access that accommodation currently. What is it?

Mr. Jim Madder: We have 230 spaces in our residence. Our proposal in our student village is to more than double that. The 230 isn't anywhere near enough what we have.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: What's your full enrolment?

Mr. Jim Madder: When you ask a president that, you'll have all sorts of caveats around what I'm going to say. We serve 11,700 people in any one year. Of those, much of it is in remote communities. Of those, much of it is contract training funded by the federal government. If I come down to post-secondary credit students who are coming to our campuses, it would be 3,000 FTEs, or full-time equivalents. That would be approximately 4,000 students.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: So you have 4,000 students, but 230 residence spots.

Mr. Jim Madder: Right—nowhere near enough.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I can see. And now you are expanding to—you're doubling that, you're saying, and you're doing that through private dollars. Is that correct?

Mr. Jim Madder: We are. That is the proposal.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I applaud you very, very much on that. I did want to ask—you said you wanted the province to expand a particular program. You alluded to it, but you didn't go into much detail. I just want to know more—

Mr. Jim Madder: There are two programs I'd like them to consider expanding. One is the School-College-Work Initiative; it is incredibly successful. We applied this year for \$2.4 million worth of funding that would support about 1,500 students. In fact, we are funded at \$1.7 million of funding, which is just about 1,000 students. It will end up with about 1,200 credits. It's unbelievably successful in improving the high school completion rate.

My self-interest, to be quite blunt, is also the continuation rate in post-secondary education. There are 11 school boards in northwestern Ontario, and all of them are interested in this program and simply can't fund the demand that is there.

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Ms. Dipika Damerla: How is it different from a co-op? Is it similar to a co-op?

Mr. Jim Madder: Actually, no, it's quite different. Students are delivered college curriculum, which is also recognized in the high school for credit, meaning the dual-credit pieces that are done here. So they're getting a high school credit; at the same time, they're learning what they would have learned in an introductory-level course at college. It builds unbelievable confidence in those students. Often, they say, "My God, I could never go to college. I'm not smart enough." Well, they're doing college work in the high school.

In some instances, we have a school within a college. I have nine land-based campuses, so I have high school students coming to our campuses in Kenora, for example; here in Thunder Bay—and a tremendous one that's going in Fort Frances.

So they are more comfortable taking college programs. Often, the irony of this is they take that dual credit they could use at the college—they don't. But it has built the confidence in them that they could do this.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Why do they not go on to college?

Mr. Jim Madder: Actually, many of them do who do the dual-credit program. It has been hugely advantageous for many of them who do. If they don't, a huge amount of it is family history. The primary driver of a person going on to a post-secondary institution is a family member, a parent particularly. If you don't have a parent who has done it, then often there is no exemplar to go ahead and do this.

Here we provide the opportunity to explore a college career by doing dual-credit programming.

You mentioned the other one. You have an existing program with a 30% tuition rebate, but only for students

who have recently left high school. Please expand that. Please expand the ages that are there. Especially in the north, students who leave high school—you might have a young lady who has two or three kids. The first thing on her mind is supporting and sustaining those kids. They come back to us five or six or seven years later looking for education and they can't afford it. If that 30% tuition rebate could be spread to people who are older, I think that would be fantastic.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Two more minutes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Do you have a question?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Just a comment.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Go ahead. Make the comment.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much for your presentation. I just want to make a comment. Having lived in Thunder Bay and having gotten an education in Thunder Bay, I couldn't agree with you more with respect to coming up here to get a great education. At LU, Lakehead University, I had the luxury of such a low student-prof ratio. When I went back in the summers and got together with friends from Western or York or U of T, it was amazing to hear that they had 1,000 students in one course. It's a great place to get an education, and if a person gets a job they want here, I think it's a great place, frankly, to raise a family as well.

Mr. Jim Madder: I can't agree with you more.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): One more minute.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just have a very quick question. I'm curious; you said that in some of your classes the kids are getting jobs before they graduate. I just wanted to know what kind of jobs those are.

Mr. Jim Madder: On the front of your little poster it shows welding. Welding was one of the specific areas where we had an employer coming in. I don't have permission to share them with them. I'm sure they'd be happy with that. In fact, they were hiring them out of our classes. I said, "Wonderful; I want them to have jobs. But I want them to complete the class." So we ended up with a combination of late-evening delivery—they're working on shift work, so in fact some of it's on Saturdays and weekends as well.

Please tell the story. There are jobs in northwestern Ontario. There are actually great opportunities for education in the north.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Jim Madder: Thank you.

NATIONAL AIRLINES
COUNCIL OF CANADA

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Our next presenter is National Airlines Council of Canada, Marc-André O'Rourke.

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Good morning.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Can you identify yourself for Hansard?

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Yes. Marc-André O'Rourke, director of the National Airlines Council of Canada.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much.

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here this morning. I'm not from Thunder Bay; I'm not from the region, but after hearing the last speaker, it seems like a very, very prosperous place, and I'll definitely tell my friends and have a think about that.

You were kind enough to find room for us today, so we are really quite appreciative of that.

I'm here today on behalf of Canada's major airlines, but also our partners with the International Air Transport Association.

I want to take a few minutes to explain why the time is right for Ontario to eliminate its provincial tax on aviation fuel on flights to the US and other international destinations. Ontario is one of the few remaining provinces that still has this tax, and we believe the time is right to eliminate it. So I hope to make a compelling case over the next few minutes, and then I'd be pleased to answer any questions.

In short and for the reasons that follow, we believe that Ontario's tax on aviation fuel is simply inconsistent with the interests of air travel consumers in Ontario, but also the general taxpayer, because it hinders the development of a competitive air transport network and is counterproductive to efforts to support Ontario's vital tourism and travel sector. As such, we respectfully urge the government to eliminate this provincial fuel tax.

Just by way of introduction, the National Airlines Council of Canada is a trade association that represents Air Canada, WestJet, Jazz and Air Transat. We promote safe, environmentally responsible and competitive air travel. Our members carry over 50 million passengers per year. We directly employ over 43,000 people and we support the creation of almost 260,000 jobs. Further, as the airlines that represent the underpinnings of Canada's domestic and international air services network, we are major facilitators of national economic activity and key components of Canada's multi-billion-dollar travel and trade industry. We are also the biggest users of Ontario's airports. Our partner is IATA. IATA is the world's largest air transport association and represents over 240 airlines, which represents over 84% of the world's scheduled air traffic.

The aviation industry does provide significant benefits to Ontario and Canada; however, those benefits could and should be much greater. We don't need to look much further than Canada's dramatic fall in international tourist arrivals in the last decade, and also the five million Canadians who flee our Canadian airports and drive across the border. It's a major problem.

There's an urgent need to change the way governments view our industry. In our view, governments need to realize that the aviation sector is an engine. It enables growth and facilitates trade and tourism. This means we

need more forward-looking policies to allow the aviation sector to do what it does best: create jobs. With respect, we believe that eliminating the provincial aviation fuel tax is this type of forward-looking policy.

For the airline industry, addressing the needs of eliminating taxes is nothing new. We definitely have reason to be proactive on this front, given the plethora of federal taxes and fees and third-party charges and security charges that are downloaded onto the airfare. But when we do ask for this relief, it's important not to overlook the fact that we are actually recommending that the public treasury forgo a stream of revenue. So we are in fact asking someone else to bear the cost, namely the taxpayer. When we do so, it becomes obvious that this cost needs to be transformed into a public investment; we realize that—an investment that will pay dividends to the taxpayer, maybe not in the short term, but definitely in the medium and longer term.

In brief, if we are going to ask for this type of commitment, the return-on-investment analysis becomes fundamental. To that end, we have retained an eminent economist from York University, and I have his report—I'm not sure what happened to it—but it'll be distributed to you. Basically, this report updates the impacts it would have of eliminating this—and again, I don't know how familiar you are, but this is a 2.7-cent-per-litre tax. And what we're talking about here today is the fuel that's used on flights leaving Ontario to the US, which we call the trans-border industry, and to other international flights.

This report identifies four key benefits, and I'll briefly highlight them. First of all, Ontario would harmonize its aviation fuel tax policy with the federal government, with the US federal government and with most provinces and states. North America's economy is becoming increasingly integrated, which means more competition and enhanced competitiveness for Ontario's businesses.

Eliminating this tax now would also come on the heels of a recent decision in British Columbia that eliminated their same tax, which came into effect in April 2012. Despite facing fiscal challenges, the BC government recognized the value of the industry and what these benefits could bring.

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I'll touch a bit upon those benefits later, but for now I think it's important to note that when British Columbia made this decision to eliminate their tax—the same tax, this provincial fuel tax—it recognized the need to increase BC's competitiveness in light of its neighbours. Alberta, Washington and California do not have this tax. The BC government also noted that each new international flight would create between 150 and 200 new jobs just at Vancouver airport.

The second benefit would be that Ontario's economy would be significantly better off. If we bear in mind that aviation is a major enabler and facilitator of many sectors of the economy, including travel and the high-value-added international tourism industry, the report estimates that removing this tax could generate additional econom-

ic input of between \$70 million and \$138 million, as well as lead to over 50,000 more tourists visiting Ontario, and could create almost 2,000 new jobs. On this last point of the job creation, it's important to note that the jobs would be created in the industry at about 35% to 50% less than the usual expenditure costs per job.

A third benefit is particularly important, related to Toronto Pearson airport. Toronto Pearson airport is a major economic engine for Toronto, and Ontario in general, but the country as well. Eliminating this tax, as was done for Vancouver, would help consolidate and strengthen Pearson as a major hub. It's important to note that Pearson is in direct competition with such airports as Detroit, Chicago, New York and Minneapolis. Also, Toronto is losing a lot of passengers to the Buffalo airport.

Another benefit would be that the productivity growth rates and the overall competitiveness of Ontario's manufacturing and service sectors would be enhanced. This would be realized because of positive externalities resulting from increased air transport services servicing our airports. We would expand markets. Companies could benefit from economies of scale. It would reduce travel costs and travel time.

In closing, I do want to again touch upon—because I think we can learn a lot from the British Columbia experience that eliminated their tax. British Columbia has already seen significant return on its investment. Now, I'm not going to sit here and pretend that their decision to eliminate their tax is 100% why these new services happened, but there's no question that it did contribute very, very significantly. For example, Virgin Atlantic introduced four new flights to London, Sichuan Airlines introduced three weekly flights to Shenyang-Chengdu, and Lufthansa announced new flights to Munich. Just the Munich flight alone, it's estimated, will create 131 new jobs, bringing in about 15,000 new visitors to the province. The Virgin Atlantic flight will bring in over \$20 million in new tourism revenue and create another 172 direct jobs. These are from just one new flight.

In closing, aviation plays a critical role for Ontario's economy. It's an enabler of growth. It's an economic engine. It facilitates trade and tourism. It expands markets. Aviation links our communities. It connects Canadians who are separated by great distances. We must ensure the aviation industry remains competitive. As such, we would ask you to seriously consider eliminating the 2.7-cent tax on aviation fuel.

I would welcome any questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. The questions are from the opposition party.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Marc-André. That's interesting. This is the fourth city, not including Toronto, where we've held a day's worth of hearings, plus a couple of days in Toronto. It's the first request, if memory serves, where somebody has come and said, "Please take this tax away," at a time where revenue is hard to come by in the province of Ontario. I'm not against what you're saying, but in a 10-minute presenta-

tion I need to understand a couple of things without the benefit of having read your economist's report.

You talk about the fact that if we eliminate this tax, we get a number of benefits, but being able to connect the dots is hard for me. First of all, can you tell me what the revenue stream is to the Ontario government right now, if you take all the litres of fuel consumed and sold in the province and multiply by 2.7?

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Absolutely. If we talk about all the carriers—I'm talking about not just our members—we're talking about \$49 million that the government receives.

Mr. Peter Shurman: So \$49 million is lost to the government. The government has to replace the \$49 million, and you contend that through economic activity as a result of the elimination of this tax, we would recoup—you gave us a number. I think it was \$70 million to one something.

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Exactly. You recoup—and again, this won't happen overnight. It's five, 10 to 15 years. I'd have to look at the report, but there's definitely a set-off that comes in the form of income tax and sales tax that are created by these new—

Mr. Peter Shurman: I think the members of the committee understand—I'm not chiding you in any way—that when we create jobs, we get taxes; when we have better corporate profits, we collect taxes. And so maybe there is an offset, but we have to understand what that offset would be in order to really get behind your recommendation.

I've got to ask this question: If you saved that money—say, WestJet is one of your members.

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Yes.

Mr. Peter Shurman: If WestJet doesn't pay that on fuel purchased when it is flying out of an Ontario destination, is it going to pass that along in any direct way? Are ticket prices coming down?

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: I can't speak for WestJet, but I mean, it would be in any airline's interest to reduce airfares to get more passengers.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes, but have any of your—I won't put you on the spot and say "WestJet." Have any of your members indicated that there would be a direct cause-and-effect situation? Would they reduce airfares?

The reason I'm asking the question is because economic activity comes as a result of people saying, "Hey, that's a pretty good deal. Let's go."

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Yes. My answer would be that it would be in their interest and they would definitely lean towards that direction. Again, I'm going to point to the BC experience. BC has seen a significant amount of new traffic because carriers are paying less to service the Vancouver airport.

Mr. Peter Shurman: So is it your contention, then—my colleague wants to ask a question, so I'm going to save some time. Is your contention that we would experience additional flights to new places as a result of the fact that our fuel costs would be cheaper to airlines using Ontario airports?

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Absolutely—flights to new places and more flights to existing places, especially in the expanding markets of India and China and Brazil.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you. Monte?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Just two quick questions: So how much have ticket prices gone down in BC on average?

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: I don't have the answer to that, no.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Okay. What other provinces have eliminated this tax?

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Alberta did it in 2004. They were at the forefront. I believe it's in the report here. A few provinces still have it. Alberta made the decision in 2004; British Columbia, last year. I don't know when the others made the decision, but I know that New Brunswick doesn't have one, Quebec doesn't have one and Saskatchewan doesn't have one.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Okay. I was just curious. It's just very interesting and, like my colleague Mr. Shurman said, it's something new that we haven't heard yet at any of these pre-budget consultations.

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: It's definitely something that we've been asking for, for a few years, and we think the timing now is quite right.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Chair, that's it for myself personally.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Any questions? Mr. Shurman?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have another question. My colleague from the Liberal side, because he doesn't get a chance to question you—we do a rotation—was interested in what information you might have on any benefit that airlines are deriving from some movement towards charging by weight—in other words, if you're a hefty person versus a light person. Is there any motion in Canada in that direction, and in Ontario particularly?

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: I'm not aware of any—I'm not quite sure I understand the question.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Chair, if I may?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Sure.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: There was some media coverage in the last week or so about a certain airline charging people by their weight. They would even put them on a scale if they felt they were dishonest about their declaration. It's just out of curiosity and whether, in Canada, that can be done and whether your organization has done any research on whether it's legal. I mean, I certainly think it's unfair, and so—

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: No, it's an interesting—I personally am not aware of that. As a council, we wouldn't get into that type of issue. That's kind of a—but I'd be curious to find out which airline, because if I'm not in the know, I'd like to be. But I can definitely say I'm not aware of anything like that as an association.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, that's great.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I don't know the airline, but just—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Marc-André O'Rourke: Thank you for your time.

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FAYE PETERSON TRANSITION HOUSE

HOSHIZAKI HOUSE

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next speaker is Faye Peterson house and Hoshizaki House, Debbie Zweep. Thank you very much.

Ms. Debbie Zweep: Can someone assist me with getting the PowerPoint? Sorry. I brought all my files.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Good morning. You may start.

Ms. Debbie Zweep: I'm just going to wait for one of my handouts to come back to me. Thanks.

Good morning. My name is Debbie Zweep. I am the executive director of Faye Peterson Transition House here in Thunder Bay and, at the moment, the interim director of Hoshizaki House, a shelter in Dryden, Ontario. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present to you.

If any of you don't know what women's shelters are about, I've just given you the legal definition of woman abuse. We provide service, support and shelter to women and their children who have experienced woman abuse.

A little background for you on the two agencies I'm presenting on: The first one is Faye, and it is a 24-bed shelter here in Thunder Bay. I've listed a number of the services that we provide in an effort to give you the opportunity to discover the full breadth of work that we do with women and children within the community. I wanted to emphasize that our work is with women and with children; sometimes we mistake it just as women, but we definitely are working with children, with a number of programs being offered, anything from working with substance use—we know women that experience violence have used some form of substance in 85% of cases—to a community kitchen that provides basic food, to advocacy within both criminal and family court.

Hoshizaki House in Dryden services Ignace and Vermillion Bay, and they have a 10-bed shelter, so that's a little bit smaller than Faye. They also have a 10-bed second-stage housing, so once a woman has moved out of crisis, they have the opportunity to move into a secure facility that is then supported by programs as well. They have many of the same programs around counselling, a 24-hour crisis line, and transitional and housing support for when they move on.

I wanted to give you just my brief list of gaps in service. In Thunder Bay, we definitely have a lack of affordable housing. You've probably heard that many times and will probably continue to hear that. We have no second-stage housing here in Thunder Bay. We do have priority housing that women can try and access, but that, of course, is limited and we are at, like, a 0% occupancy. This means that women and children are staying in shelter longer, and that translates into a higher usage of tax dollars, of course.

There's a lack of access to affordable transportation and access to services, and the community start-up fund that was cancelled by this government a while ago that allowed women \$1,500 to, really, pay their first and last months' rents, their utilities, and buy furniture—we certainly miss those funds.

We don't have any funding at a provincial level for fathering programs. I wanted to spend a moment to talk to you about our work, funded by United Way, to work with fathers who have been abusive or neglectful of their children, and that this is a key role that shelters can play in regard to keeping women and, more importantly in this case, children safe.

Hoshizaki House in Dryden: Their shelter is falling apart. It is quite old and physically in need of extensive repair. Even though we continue to repair it, we really do need a new shelter. I know we're on the top of the list for the northern region for the shelter, but it is getting worse, so we do need a new shelter. There is a lack of affordable housing in Dryden, and transportation for out-of-town medical appointments. We do service a high population of aboriginal people in both communities, and so getting to those appointments is really important for us.

I want to show you a couple of graphs and I want to talk to you about value for your money, seeing as money was on the table. To show you in this graph, if you look up at the top area where it says "General Government Services," that's where the funding for shelters comes from, out of that 6%. But here, in MCSS, which is our funding agent, you will see that we make up the 3%. So we have 6%, and we're 3% of the 6%. Then, we make up 52%. So overall, shelters receive—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Sorry. Could you go back—

Ms. Debbie Zweep: One more back? I gave it to you in here as well.

So we get 0.0015% of the provincial spending. I checked my math again this morning because I thought I had too many zeros, so I did it a couple of times—I just wanted to let you know.

I wanted to tell you what you get for that money, because we are system navigators and we guide women through all of the services. If you want to know what services look like, I've given you this additional diagram. When a woman comes in, we don't just give her a bed. We're not a homeless shelter. We're not a hospital bed. We're none of those things. What we are is, we provide all of the services that I've listed on the bottom: the 24-hour crisis line, the advocacy, residential services, counselling, counselling for children, early childhood education. We do case-conferencing with CAS; we do case-conferencing in the family courts. Because we don't have enough lawyers here in either of those communities, we prepare women for mediation if they're in there. We help them apply for restraining orders, emergency custody orders. We get them housed, and we support them through housing. Most importantly, we do safety plans, we do risk assessments. We continue to keep women and children safe. It's really good—what am I going to say?—bang for your buck when you talk about value for your money.

When we looked at that graph earlier—I want you to look at how much money we spend on health. That’s a whole lot more money than we spend on women’s shelters. I’m going to tell you that I believe government needs to align stronger with women’s shelters, that we give you much more bang for your buck, so to speak, in the services that we provide extensively to women and children.

So what do we need? Well, I would ask you first—it will cost the government more money if we weren’t in the system. I’ve just said that, because we aren’t a homeless shelter; we’re a full-service system. So I would like to ask for a new shelter for Hoshizaki House. It’s already on the top of the list. We are desperate for one in the Dryden area. We have no second-stage housing in Thunder Bay. Many communities, including Dryden and Atikokan, have second stage; Thunder Bay has none. We have a zero-occupancy rate—reinstatement of the community start-up dollars so that I’m not going into taxpayers’ dollars to help women pay for their utilities and their start-up of first and last month’s rent; affordable, accessible transportation, especially in Dryden. We have so many women and children who need to access services, and there is no transportation available to them. And I would ask you to consider funding the Caring Dads program at a provincial level so that we can work with the fathers to keep children and to keep women safe.

That’s me.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. You have about five minutes for your questions.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I want to start off by thanking you for that presentation. You do excellent, amazing work. There was a time in my life when I had to stay at Faye Peterson Transition House—I was homeless—and I can testify, or attest, first-hand to the important work that you do. Before I was elected, I was also the past chair of Hoshizaki House. So for those two reasons, I am going to defer the questions to my colleague, but I want to thank you very much for the presentation.

Ms. Debbie Sweep: Thank you.

Mr. John Vanthof: I’d like to, as well, thank you very much for your work and for your presentation. You’ve opened a lot of our eyes.

My first question is—you mentioned several times that you need new facilities at Hoshizaki House?

Ms. Debbie Sweep: Hoshizaki House, yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: You mentioned you’ve been on top of the list. How long have you been on top of the list?

Ms. Debbie Sweep: Five years, I believe. Yes.

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Mr. John Vanthof: And just briefly, does the place need new siding or is the place done?

Ms. Debbie Sweep: No, the place is done. We’ve done the new siding, we’ve put in the new flooring, we tried all that, the ventilation, the mould—all that stuff. No, there’s no hope for this facility. It’s on our property, so we have second stage in the back, we have the shelter in the front. We simply need to rebuild that shelter.

Mr. John Vanthof: This is more of an emergency situation than a long-term budget ask for that facility.

Ms. Debbie Sweep: Yes, that would be it for Hoshizaki House. I believe that given the current state, yes, we’ll continue to put taxpayers’ dollars into that facility and we’re still going to have to repair. We just redid our child care room. That was another \$5,000 just to fix that. There are so many things that need fixing.

When I look at Faye Peterson, for instance, because I have the privilege of running that facility, there is no comparison to the service women receive when they walk into Faye Peterson versus when they walk into Hoshizaki House. It’s very different, and we share women, so we do see that.

Mr. John Vanthof: I’d like to thank you for bringing that to our attention. My colleague has also brought it to our attention, but I’d like to thank you for coming here to bring it to our attention.

I think we all realize how important this is to the community as a whole. I think where you’ve brought a different aspect is actually what you do. It’s actually value for money, that, in the long run, services like this—governments are always worried about money, and it saves the government money. Could you expand on that?

Ms. Debbie Sweep: If you think that one in four women entering emerg are abused women, that service is far more expensive than coming to a shelter.

Mr. John Vanthof: A couple more points: We realize you’re looking for the reinstatement of the—

Ms. Debbie Sweep: Community start-up.

Mr. John Vanthof: —community start-up. And I have a lot of calls about that in my office.

Ms. Debbie Sweep: I bet.

Mr. John Vanthof: But regarding our proposal for when someone is on OW and someone is on ODSP, that they get to keep the first \$200 of their earnings, in your opinion, would that make a difference in some people’s lives?

Ms. Debbie Sweep: It would definitely make a difference in some people’s lives if they could keep that, absolutely it would. It wouldn’t eliminate the need for community start-up, but it definitely would—

Mr. John Vanthof: We’re talking two different issues here.

Ms. Debbie Sweep: Yes, we are. It would absolutely make a difference in people’s lives.

Mr. John Vanthof: And I’d just like you to, if you could, expand on the community start-up a bit more, what it actually means to people.

Ms. Debbie Sweep: So organizations like Faye Peterson, in a bigger community—you know, I have lots of donations come in for women’s furniture, all those kinds of things. But what I don’t have is, I don’t have the ability to pay first and last month’s rent. And in Thunder Bay, where the prices have skyrocketed, it’s really hard for a woman to come up with first and last month’s rent, so then they live in substandard dwellings. Hence my request for second stage. But it doesn’t only do that. It will pay the utilities because we have to pay deposits on

utilities. If they don't get that money, I sort of wonder what the government wonders. Where does that money come from? Well, it's going to come from the budgets, the taxpayers' dollars going in a different area.

We can't keep women in shelter forever. That's not a good use of funds. So in trying to get them into the community and resettled, we have to use those funds, or they have to stay with us longer. Our stays have increased from six weeks to eight weeks to three months. Now we're looking like Toronto shelters. It's a little bit different.

Mr. John Vanthof: So when the second start-up was cancelled, it was replaced—it was supposed to have been replaced by a different—

Ms. Debbie Zweep: Well, it went into the big pot, so that people can make decisions around that, depending on the community. That looks very different in Dryden and it looks very different in Thunder Bay. We have to make a special application and identify what those specific needs are and then there's an individual decision made as opposed to the woman has left an abusive relationship, she hasn't asked for start-up funds for two years and then she is entitled to do this.

There's a certain amount of empowerment in being able to make some decisions for yourself around how you will set up your home with \$1,500.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): That's great. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Debbie Zweep: Thank you.

KINNA-AWEYA LEGAL CLINIC

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next speaker is Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic, Sally Colquhoun. Thank you. Could you introduce yourself?

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: Good morning. My name is Sally Colquhoun, and I'm the coordinator of legal services at the Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic. Our office is funded by Legal Aid Ontario to provide poverty law services to low-income residents of the district of Thunder Bay—so not just in the city of Thunder Bay, but the entire district. We have branch offices in Marathon and Geraldton and we travel to Armstrong, Nipigon and a number of smaller communities in the district, which is geographically quite large.

We focus primarily on income maintenance issues and tenancy matters. In addition to providing summary legal advice and ongoing representation to individual clients, we also provide community legal education, and we do community development and law reform work towards systemic solutions for the problems that our clients face with respect to the social assistance system and housing issues primarily, but other issues as well.

Our clients have to be financially eligible for our services. Most of our clients are on social assistance, either in the Ontario Works program or the Ontario Disability Support Program; some people are on Canada pension, disability benefits or retirement benefits. But for the most part, the people that we represent are people

who are struggling to survive on social assistance in Ontario, a struggle that is becoming more and more desperate.

Our office welcomes this opportunity to speak on behalf of our clients and to urge the government to recommend a significant increase in spending on social assistance and housing in the coming budget. I am aware that Albert Einstein said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. I expect that some people who have heard me before are going to think that I am verging on insanity because they've heard me speak on these issues in the past with very little result, but I am hoping that there will be a different result this year.

I am here once again to urge you to make poverty reduction an important priority in the coming year, and to follow the recommendation of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario to increase rates for Ontario Works recipients by at least \$100 immediately. That was the number one recommendation in the commission's recent report: that Ontario Works rates have to be increased. They are far too low. The amounts paid for social assistance in Ontario are hopelessly inadequate when compared with the actual cost of basic needs—we're just talking about shelter and food. The gap between what families and individuals receive when they're on social assistance and what they need in order to pay rent and buy food is hundreds of dollars a month in all communities in Ontario.

It's important to remember that we're talking about people who, everyone agrees, need to rely on social assistance for their basic needs. We're proud in Ontario of the fact that there is a social safety net to protect people who are temporarily out of work, people who are involved in participation requirements in order to maintain their eligibility for social assistance, people who are doing everything they can to find work or who are unable to work for a period of time because of health problems or other crises, or people who are recognized to have disabilities that restrict their ability to function in a workplace. They've been through all the hoops; they've been recognized that they're eligible for social assistance. We want to live in a province where those vulnerable people have income support so that they can provide for the basic needs of themselves and their families.

People who rely on social assistance should get enough money every month to pay rent and buy food. There needs to be a significant increase in the social assistance rates; it's not effective to try to deal with these sadly inadequate rates through miniscule percentage increases.

Decreasing the number of families living in dire poverty would positively affect the budget in other areas. Poor people have more health problems; children living in poverty have more challenges in the education system; people end up in the criminal justice system because of poverty; and social assistance recipients would die without food banks and soup kitchens. This isn't because they lack budgeting skills or because they're frivolous

with their money; it's because they don't get enough money in a month to allow them to pay rent and eat every day.

The federal government should be taking the lead in developing a national poverty reduction strategy and a national housing strategy and providing additional funding. At the present time, the federal government is not taking that lead, but it's important for the provincial government to continue to work towards that.

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The Senate committee on social affairs, science and technology produced a report in 2009 called *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*. It's a compelling document, outlining numerous concrete recommendations that would result in the eradication of poverty. It's really interesting: It's a bipartisan document—both Conservative and Liberal senators in agreement that poverty reduction is not just the morally right thing to do; it is also essential to a productive and expanding economy.

Poverty expands health care costs and policing burdens, and leads to diminished educational outcomes. This depresses productivity and labour force flexibility.

There are all sorts of reasons. Really, everybody who knows anything about this sort of thing will tell you that poverty reduction does lead to economic expansion and social progress, so it's essential for the provincial government to move ahead with poverty reduction.

If people get enough money to pay rent and buy groceries, they will. We won't need a food bank industry.

Build affordable housing, and fewer people will need emergency shelter, which actually costs more per month than giving people enough money to pay rent.

Fund affordable, licensed daycare so that parents can work, at a minimum wage that brings them up to the poverty line.

In these difficult economic times, recognize that an increase to social assistance rates will stimulate the economy. Every single penny of an increase in social assistance rates is going to be spent in Ontario.

Last year's budget included a 2% increase to social assistance rates. You're thinking, "Well, I wouldn't mind a 2% raise." But 2% of the \$599 that a single person got on Ontario Works last year translates to an additional \$12 month—a month. This year, a single person on Ontario Works is entitled to \$611 a month for everything: rent, food, clothing, transportation. Sometimes you might get additional money for a bus pass if you're looking for work. In a province where the average cost just for a bachelor apartment is about \$750 a month—that's more than the entire monthly benefit for a single person.

At the same time that the budget provided for this very small increase, there were changes made in the social assistance programs that amounted to a significant decrease in social assistance. Two programs—the Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit that you briefly talked about with the previous speaker, and the home repair benefit—were cancelled without any prior consultation.

Some of the funding that used to support the CSUMB has been transferred to a consolidated homelessness prevention initiative, and that program has been downloaded to municipalities to administer. In most municipalities, payments from the CHPI will be available to all low-income people, not just people on social assistance. In a nutshell, municipalities will have less funding to provide assistance to more people. We have serious concerns about the new program.

CSUMB was the only way for people on social assistance to pay for large expenses relating to their housing needs, such as a last month's rent deposit.

Expanding eligibility to all low-income people while at the same time reducing the amount of money available is not sound social policy.

CSUMB was a needs-based program. If a person met the criteria, they were entitled to receive the benefit. The amount spent from year to year fluctuated, depending on people's needs. Now the annual funding is capped, and our DSSAB in Thunder Bay has been very upfront, saying that they expect that they're going to run out of money at some point during the year. So what happens to the woman who has fled an abusive relationship and is staying at Faye Peterson house, who needs a last month's rent deposit? She's not going to be able to get money from that program.

The benefits that are available are going to vary from municipality to municipality, undermining the principle that people who rely on social assistance should have consistent access to benefits across the province, in every municipality.

The denial of a CSUMB application used to be an appealable decision. Payments under this new program are going to be totally discretionary, with no appeal rights if a person is denied.

The government made a commitment to reducing poverty in Ontario in passing the Poverty Reduction Act in 2009, which received unanimous support in the Legislature. But instead of reducing poverty, the government has made budget decisions that are going to increase poverty.

For a single person on Ontario Works who accessed the CSUMB once every two years, the cancellation of the program amounts to a 5.5% reduction in their income support.

On the home repair benefit, just briefly: It has been cancelled. Municipalities have been told that the CHPI funding cannot be used to pay for emergency home repair benefits. There are many areas of the province where home ownership is in some cases more affordable than renting, including Thunder Bay. You can get small houses here for \$75,000 or \$80,000. You can own a mobile home for \$25,000. But if you're on social assistance and you own your own home, there needs to be somewhere where you can get assistance for emergency home repairs. We're talking about the furnace needing repairs in January. Referring somebody to some kind of program like the RRAP program that actually provides renovations is inadequate.

Locally, we had a very innovative project at a local credit union, the homeowner mortgage assistance program, which was the first program in Canada established to help people on ODSP purchase their own home. But the program has been suspended because of the cancellation of the ODSP home repair benefit, because access to funding for emergency home repairs was an important part of the program. So we ask that the CSUMB and the HRB be reinstated as needs-based social assistance programs.

I'll just briefly tell you that the lack of affordable housing—several previous speakers have spoken about it—is becoming a crisis in many communities. We have an extremely low vacancy rate in Thunder Bay. I just came from the Landlord and Tenant Board hearings where people are being evicted. They have nowhere to go; they can't find alternative housing. There's a local mental health agency that gets funding for rent supplements to help pay rent for their clients who they support. They can't find apartments. They've got the money to help people pay rent, and they can't find apartments for them. We need bricks and mortar. We need housing. We need actual housing built. It's cheaper in the long term to provide adequate housing and adequate income to vulnerable people than to pay for the costs associated with homelessness, both in terms of dollars and, more importantly, in terms of hardship and despair.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our input to you. We recognize that there are numerous competing demands as the government plans the budget for the province, and we urge you to remember the most vulnerable citizens of Ontario in your difficult budgeting process.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you for your presentation. This round of questions is for the government.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: How long do we have?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Four minutes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay. Thank you, Ms.—how do you say it?

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: Colquhoun. It's not as hard as it looks.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay, Colquhoun. Thank you so much for your very eloquent, very passionate brief. You advocate very well on behalf of your clients.

I just want you to know that I was very interested in what you said for many, many reasons, including the fact that I am on the cabinet committee for poverty reduction. As you know, Premier Wynne has made poverty reduction—she has said that she wants to be the social justice Premier as well, so certainly it is on our radar.

I read something very fascinating. There's a book called *How Children Succeed*. In that, the author talks about the fact that in the early 1960s, President Kennedy, I think it was, made a commitment to put a man on the moon and reduce poverty. We've put a man on the moon but not made much of a dent in reducing poverty. This is governments of all stripes, and not necessarily for lack of money or resources, but it just hasn't worked.

The part that I'm really interested in—it's two things. One is, you referenced the Frances Lankin-Munir Sheikh report. What do you think of the recommendation that says that they be allowed to keep a portion of the money if they earn money? If they take up a job, there's no clawback, I guess, of their Ontario Works. What do you think of that?

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: Ontario Works and Ontario disability: Currently they start—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: The clawback.

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: From the first dollar that you earn, 50% of it is deducted from your cheque. I think it would be very helpful for many people who are trying to re-enter the workforce to be able to keep more of the money that they're earning.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: So you're very supportive of that?

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: Absolutely.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I thought as much.

The other thing that the Lankin report talks about is that the average stay of somebody on Ontario Works is quite short, actually. It's four to six weeks, which is very encouraging. But it also talks about the fact that 40%, I think, will come back pretty quickly, and therein lies, I think, an opportunity for us to help these people.

I'm just curious, because you work so closely with them. What could we do? What kind of additional supports could we give so they don't come back and they can hang on to the job or whatever it is that allowed them to get off it in the first place?

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: Well, it's a very complicated question, but there are lots of different issues. There's the issue of seasonal work in communities. There's the issue of people having the necessary education in order to get jobs. But currently, the Ontario Works program does not offer much in terms of actual supports to helping people get back to work.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: That's true, yes.

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: It's very heavy on the policing aspects of the program. People are getting cut off because they don't have a copy of their birth certificate, because of the auditing requirements for the program. So the workers are spending a lot of time policing and making sure that all the hoops are jumped through, but there isn't much in terms of actual support to helping people deal with the barriers to employment that they have. Any kind of programming of that nature, you don't have to make it mandatory, because people want to be involved in the workforce. People would prefer to be working than to being on social assistance, but a lot of people have significant barriers to doing that.

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Ms. Dipika Damerla: So do you have any suggestions of what kind of supports the government could give? Because that would be something that could be looked at. What additional supports could the government give?

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: Supports in terms of additional education—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Education, yes. What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: And—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Job training, skills training—

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: Job training, skills training—all those sorts of things.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: But do you know of any programs that are in the not-for-profit sector that we could look at?

Ms. Sally Colquhoun: That's not actually my area of expertise.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: No? Okay, all right. Thank you so much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you for your presentation.

MR. GEORGE SAARINEN

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next witness is the Lakehead District School Board. George Saarinen, the public school board trustee: Can you identify yourself?

Mr. George Saarinen: Okay, good morning. My name is George Saarinen, and I'm an independent trustee of the Lakehead public school board here in Thunder Bay. I'm representing myself and not the views of the school board or any other trustees. I just wanted to make everyone aware.

I welcome you all to Thunder Bay and feel honoured that we were included in the pre-budget consultation process. Thank you very much.

I just wanted to talk briefly about public education. Public education is key to the success of all students. At Lakehead Public Schools, our vision talks about "your children—our students—the future." I am here today to advocate for additional funding for the youth of Ontario so they have a brighter future in tomorrow's world.

Adequately funded school boards are key to student success. We are striving to achieve a greater number of students graduating from grade 12 to either the workforce or on to post-secondary education. We need increased funding to provide the tools for our staff to teach the students to better themselves in tomorrow's world.

Learning and technology in the digital age: We need to re-establish the technology budget line, to enable school boards to continue to adequately implement a staff plan to provide reasonable and equitable access to current technology.

Technology and textbook budgets have been reduced. I've been budget chair for the last few years so I'm quite familiar with that. It makes it difficult to provide opportunities for our students to excel in learning.

At Lakehead Public Schools we have a three-year implementation plan to have smart boards in every school and in as many classrooms as possible, to provide technology to the students to help them learn. Unfortunately, due to budget shortfalls, we've had to dip into reserve funds to pay for this program, to the tune of \$2.6 million.

Open Minds, Healthy Minds is the government of Ontario's comprehensive strategy to address mental health and addiction issues for Ontarians. The first three years will be focused on children and youth. As trustees, we advocate for the multi-year, phased-in approach to support a full continuum of mental health issues and services in our schools. Extend mental health leads to all boards. We already have one at Lakehead Public Schools; it's great.

Provide an increase in the number of mental health workers and registered nurses in the schools across the province. Our secondary schools already have social workers in every secondary school who are working with the mental health lead and the addictions nurse to meet the needs of our students. Together, we as a community can help the students who need help with mental health or addictions issues.

PPM 150 is the school food-and-beverage policy. It has caused an impact on our school cafeterias. We are one of the few school boards that employ our employees to work in the cafeterias. Unfortunately, with the mandate to have healthy food alternatives, many students choose to leave school and head to the local greasy spoon or a fast food place that serves what they want. I am asking the government for additional funding supports to enable boards like ours to meet the needs of the secondary students through sustainable operations of our cafeterias. The cost of healthy food alternatives is more than the food we previously offered. And another thing: They also talk about buying local food. If we want to buy local food, we need the money to do that.

Also, we have had to cut services to students, so breakfast and nutrition programs that were previously available are not in the cafeteria. Our cafeterias are only open over the lunch hour, and they're reduced to a skeleton crew. Prior, they were open for breakfast and snack programs.

When changing acts, please support programs with sustainable funding; that's my request. Cafeterias do make a difference in our students' lives for years and continue to make a difference. Many students would rather talk to cafeteria staff than their guidance counselor, social worker or administrator.

We are unique in the northwest sector of the province in that we have a growing urban aboriginal population. Many of the urban aboriginal youth are attending our schools. In some instances, the students are behind their counterparts in the classroom. School boards must provide additional supports through staffing of educational assistants and resource teachers, and individual learning opportunities for the students to catch up.

The term "urban aboriginal" refers to First Nations people who have no supports from their First Nations home. There are no ties to any specific First Nation so there are no federal funding dollars to accompany these students into our system. We need to find supports for students who need them out of the existing education dollars.

School boards must put more money into special education and its supports due to the fact that the needs

are greater than the special education funding allows. I am asking that the Ontario budget realize the shortfalls in special education funding for all students who have needs. Some students are not identified as needs students and just need a little help to get through. Many of our students fall through the cracks, and there are no support dollars or people available to help them make it through high school. We have students with needs in our schools who have little or no supports to help them succeed. How will these students graduate and become successful in tomorrow's world?

School boards and schools have breakfast and nutrition programs. There are many students who come to school hungry on a regular basis. We have partnerships with many groups, like the Red Cross, who operate breakfast and nutrition programs. For these students, this is the only meal of the day. Having provincial funding for breakfast programs would support and improve student learning and achievement.

Capital funding remains a shortfall with boards. We have aging schools. Many of them need replacement boilers, windows, exterior doors and roofs. Our maintenance personnel and board office are trying to extend the life of the present structures. Sometimes, we may get 30 years out of a roof that should have been replaced after 20. We are operating safe, clean schools that are inviting and conducive to student learning, but we need additional operational funding and capital funding to maintain these structures for student learning for years to come.

We presently fund a secondary school with the International Baccalaureate program. We have supported the costs of this at Sir Winston Churchill Collegiate and Vocational Institute for many years. Lakehead Public Schools picks up the cost to run the IB program that serves hundreds of students in our board. The Ministry of Education should fund school programs such as the IB program across the province.

The remote school boards were amalgamated into the district school boards about a few years ago, I'd say. We are now responsible for two elementary schools, one in Armstrong, Ontario, which is northeast of Thunder Bay—it's a couple hours' drive up Highway 527 on the CN main line—and the Bernier-Stokes school in Collins, which is 30 miles down the CN main line. Administration must send supports up to Armstrong and Collins for student improvement and professional development opportunities for our staff. We are now dealing with two remote school board, 200 kilometres plus.

With the remote schools has come the Territorial Student Program, which administers the boarding of the remote students in Thunder Bay for their secondary school education. The TSP has been a successful program, but has limited funding for the host families, providing only \$500 a month for room and board. Many of the students are First Nations and this is their first time in a larger centre.

I feel more money needs to be spent for the school board counsellor who works with the student and provides recreational, social, emotional and community sup-

ports for the student during their time in Thunder Bay. As this is a unique program that only affects a few school boards, we feel additional financial supports are needed for the students in the cost for room and board and supports for them to receive their secondary school graduation diplomas.

Opportunities for youth in our communities are key to their success. It is important to have the Thunder Bay Boys and Girls Clubs thrive. Provincial funding would aid this group. There are many young people who attend their programs after school, on weekends and PD days.

Shelter House, which was mentioned earlier, looks after the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community without a roof over their heads. Often this group is the silent majority because there are not enough advocates out there to support them. Funding the homeless shelters across the province would help their needs. With the closure of psychiatric hospitals, many beds have been lost, and patients in the community have limited or no supports.

1130

This is one near and dear to my heart: The Junior Ranger Program was operated by the Ministry of Natural Resources. This program was an opportunity for 17-year-olds to meet challenges, meet new opportunities and see other parts of the province they may not have otherwise experienced. It's truly unfortunate such a valuable program was cut by the government. My youngest daughter Kaija attended the Junior Ranger Program eight years ago at Moose Lake near the Frost learning centre near Huntsville. To hear what these young people did over a summer of blazing trails, cleaning up after campers and giving back to the natural world we all take for granted—it was a summer of personal growth, learning to work as a team, learning independence and developing new skills. Lifelong friends were cemented over eight weeks. And she had no electricity; that was great—in junior ranger camps. It is my hope that the Junior Ranger Program will be reinstated for the youth of today and tomorrow to enjoy and see the nature and beauty of our province. They are the future leaders of tomorrow.

When I was first elected to the school board in 2006, I thought I would be able to move mountains for the betterment of student success and education. I found that I can't move mountains but I can sure divert a stream to better enrich and improve the opportunities for our students and youth of today who will be the next generation of leaders of tomorrow's world. It is my hope that some of my suggestions will be taken to heart and applied to the budget process.

Again, I would like to thank the members for coming to Thunder Bay and allowing me the opportunity to present.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. The questions are from Mr. McNaughton.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much. That was an excellent presentation. There are just a couple of things I wanted to get your opinion on. The current government is spending \$8.5 billion more on edu-

cation, yet there are 250,000 fewer students in Ontario's education system. You have quite a few asks in your presentation. I guess my question is, where would you recommend the government find the money?

Mr. George Saarinen: I would have to say, near and dear to my heart is special education. For years, that's been bounced around. Students have to be identified, but there are so many students out there who aren't identified, who just need that little boost to help them through. But special ed funding for all students would be—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: No, but where would you recommend that money come from?

Mr. George Saarinen: Where would it come from?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Through savings in the education system or raising taxes?

Mr. George Saarinen: I'll be shot for this, but taxes and savings; I'll say it.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: In your opinion, where could savings be found in the education system?

Mr. George Saarinen: That is a very difficult question, because the school boards have been running on such a strict budget line for the past few years. There's no way, I don't think, we can save any more. We are just so bare bones here.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The only thing I will push a bit on—

Mr. George Saarinen: By all means.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: We saw last week the release of Ontario's sunshine list, and the number of people now making over \$100,000 a year is almost 90,000. Back in 2003, I think that number was about 20,000. I notice that a lot of school boards across Ontario have a lot of \$100,000 people, including superintendents and teachers on that list.

Mr. George Saarinen: I have to say, through the collective agreements, a lot of the teachers are making the \$100,000 mark. They may call our superintendents and directors overpaid, but we have fewer superintendents and we have very hard-working superintendents and directors. I'm CAW; I'm as union as they go. You know what? I am very supportive of our management team for the jobs they do, working 24 hours a day. Even though they are making a salary, they're worth that money.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Okay. Our PC Party education critic Lisa MacLeod put out a white paper—

Mr. George Saarinen: I read it.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Good. We talk about special education in there—an emphasis on that, and also an emphasis on eliminating some superintendent positions across the province and giving more power and control of schools to principals. Do you have an opinion on that?

Mr. George Saarinen: I have an opinion on everything. Unfortunately, I see so much has been downloaded on the principals. I started with school councils in 1996. The principals are doing so much already, and every year there seems to be more axe. A lot of the PPMs that have come through the last couple of years—there's more responsibility, specifically for the principal—bullying,

you name it. So I really think the principals are downloaded to the hilt right now. Unfortunately, they've been given so many duties, and if a few more are thrown their way, I think that's just a little too much. As much as I don't like management, I have to support superintendents.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Okay. One thing I wanted to ask—and I should have asked this in the beginning—would you say that your view differs from the school board? I'm just curious why you're here representing yourself and not the entire school board.

Mr. George Saarinen: Well, I'm just here as an independent trustee just speaking my mind. Someone had to advocate for education, and I have to specifically say, public education, because public education rocks in Ontario. The past three governments have done great jobs with education, I have to give everyone credit there. Public education is key to our students' success. I don't know if I answered that, I'm sorry.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's okay. The one question I was excited to get to was about the Junior Ranger Program. My brother was a Junior Ranger many years ago now. I actually didn't realize that the government cut this in last year's budget. What was the cost for that program?

Mr. George Saarinen: I honestly don't know. All I know is a lot of the youth from northern Ontario went south, the ones from the south came north—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, I'm really familiar with it.

Mr. George Saarinen: It was embarrassing. My daughter saw corn crops for the first time in her life, and she kept saying, "What are those?" You know, she was a northern kid.

I don't know the cost, but just the enrichment and what the students learned and the leadership—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Was there any consultation about that or did that catch the north off guard?

Mr. George Saarinen: I honestly don't know.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It was, maybe, a made-in-Toronto decision.

Mr. George Saarinen: Well, like I say, I can't answer that question because I'm not aware.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: That's a good program.

Mr. George Saarinen: I just wanted to add: I support United Way, and over the lunch hour I'm doing the billboard challenge, if anyone wants to support me in that effort.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

TOWNSHIP OF NIPIGON

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next witness is from the township of Nipigon: Mayor Richard Harvey. Your Worship?

Mr. Richard Harvey: Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here. I'd just like to quote George. I

love the one comment he made there, that “I may not be able to move mountains, but I can divert a stream.” I think that is what we’re all here to try to do today: to divert the streams, the streams of the cash flow, and how it moves.

If I could just go back to one question you asked regarding the rangers, as a municipal politician in northwestern Ontario, I know that for most of us, as municipal politicians, that did come as a shock. That was something that we were not overly aware was coming down the pipeline, so, although that’s not in anything I have here, I would just add that in.

I really appreciate being able to be here. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I’m here speaking on behalf, of course, of the residents, the citizens, of the township of Nipigon, but also for, I believe, all communities in northern Ontario—in rural northern communities—that are not dissimilar to Nipigon.

I’ll just give you a bit of a background on our municipality. We’re a municipality of just under 1,800 people. We are one of the municipalities that has lost our entire industrial base. In 2006, we had our major employer shut down—a paper mill—and in 2007, our second-largest employer burned to the ground. It’s not a good thing to do when you’re just getting into politics, but we’ve been working on the process, and since that time, we’ve been continually working at trying to look at how we can have all of northwestern Ontario recovering and working together.

One of the messages that I am very much here—we had, already, the made-in-Toronto decision reference made, and as you do your budget deliberations, I really want to encourage everyone involved to move away from that Toronto-centric way of viewing decision-making, to move away from that made-in-Toronto type of decision-making, and look at what is good and what is going to benefit the entire province.

The reality is that the province of Ontario, the industry of southern Ontario, is fed by the resources from northwestern Ontario, and there have been a lot of decisions made recently. We look at the Far North Act and something that has been highly condemned throughout northwestern Ontario here. We look at a lot of resource-based decisions that have been made, the lack of attention to the things like the Ring of Fire, a lot of these things—and that’s just one example of how decisions need to take into account, to have full consultation with what’s happening here in northwestern Ontario. We may not have as many votes as the 416 area code does, but the reality is the decisions made up here, decisions made that benefit northwestern Ontario, have an incredible benefit on southern Ontario as well.

So I want to just talk on a few different things. One is just looking at some suggestions and comments as you’re looking at the cuts that we do understand and we recognize are coming—the reductions that have to be made.

1140

Another question was asked earlier: Do you raise taxes or do you seek savings? We’re in budget deliberations in

our municipality right now, and the reality is that the message I continually hear—and I’m sure you are predominantly hearing it when you’re outside of rooms full of people who are looking for money for things—is that the people of Ontario don’t want their taxes going up right now.

So with this in mind, we want you to know we recognize and we fully realize that there are real challenges there that are faced by the Ontario government regarding just the reducing of the deficit. It has to be tackled. We can’t wait any longer. We can’t pass this legacy on to our children. We have to attack it. But it’s really important that as that happens, good decisions based on all of Ontario have to be made as far as what programs are cut back—what programs, what things, and how do we get the most bang for our bucks?

One of the things that is of real concern to us here in northern Ontario is the whole public sector job situation. Again, I realize and I fully understand that there have to be reductions made. The spending has ballooned; I understand that. Yet at the same time, we have to look at where we can be most effective and the most efficient at making these cuts. The reality is that I think most of us from time to time—we’ve seen these studies; we’ve had consultants. The so-called experts have been telling us that you get more bang for your buck as you have those public sector jobs in the smaller communities, in the north. It has often been quoted that the economic impact on the community of having a public sector job in Toronto is not nearly as significant as it is in a place like Thunder Bay. And likewise, if you take that same public sector job and put it into one of the smaller communities, the economic impact on the community is immense.

Right now, there is a perception out there—and I’ll say it’s a perception; whether it’s true or not, we could debate for a long time, and I’d rather not get into that debate. There’s a perception that the higher proportion of job cuts are in the north, that they’re taking place in rural areas, that we’re keeping the positions in Peterborough, and I always come back to the MNR because it’s so important for us, and yet the field workers, our conservation officers, the people who are in the communities, who are doing the research, who are gathering the information—those are the jobs; that’s where we see cuts being made. The people who are doing the red tape, filling out paperwork, writing final reports, doing the duplication of services that we seem to be seeing more and more now—those jobs seem to be safe.

I want to really just encourage you, as you look at reductions, to look at that aspect of who is actually in the field, who is out in the community. Take the MNR. One of the district offices for the MNR is in Nipigon. It is our second-largest employer, next to the hospital. But going past that, one of the things that we as a municipality—as we work on infrastructure planning, we’re doing a lot with our stormwater management, something I’m very passionate about and really want to see us tackle. And as we work, having people with the Ministry of Natural Resources living in the community, who are there, who understand, who comprehend, who fully are engaged—

we can use these resources. This, I believe, is really important to have. We need to keep the people there.

Look for savings at the other end of the spectrum. Look for savings at the more senior positions. Look for savings, if you like, in the actual administrative sides of things. Are there ministries that could be put together just for the administration side of things, yet keep the actual boots on the ground? That's what we want to call on, to look at that whole aspect and make sure we move back to that decentralized view.

Up here, we talk about when the Emperor of the North was running things, good old Leo Bernier, and we had the northern development. It was in communities throughout northwestern Ontario. There were fewer employees, I understand, there were fewer public sector workers, but the impact was great because they were in all of the northern communities. That's the first thing that we wanted to certainly touch on and emphasize. I think it's really important to make sure those jobs are staying here. That's not the place to make the cuts. The perception is that that's where cuts have been made in the last few years.

Another thing: Obviously, as a municipality, we want to touch on infrastructure funding. Throughout Canada, throughout North America, our infrastructure is crumbling. We know that. We are addressing it as a municipality. We have been working very hard at this.

One of the things that we do recognize as well, though—again, for rural communities—is the fact that in rural communities, it's hard to get private sector investment in the infrastructure because the return on the money for those private sectors is not as large. And yet, if we can get those people investing, they will build their businesses, but to make the investment of actually putting their money into helping with the infrastructure—our ask here is to look at and consider whether there are, in areas that are not as financially viable, ways that it might be more difficult for business to come in, for industry to come in or for small manufacturing to come in, to have things such as forgivable loans for investment by the private sector in that infrastructure to get the services that they need—looking at those kinds of things.

We also—again, you've heard it many times: non-conditional infrastructure funding. In other words, continued, ongoing, sustainable—we really appreciate things like the OMPF funding; fantastic, but we're always sitting there, coming right to the end: "Are we going to get it again next year? Is it going to come in?" To know for our long-term planning, we need to know that that funding is going to be there and it's sustainable.

We love what the federal government has done with the gas tax: that they've made it permanent. Not only have they made it permanent, but the gas tax can be used for many things. The provincial gas tax: It's wonderful if you have a transit system. Most small communities don't have transit systems. We have other needs that we need to be addressing. I would really encourage you: Look at and move towards the same direction the federal government has gone with the gas taxes so that it's more

universally accessible by more communities. Right now, a very small number of communities in Ontario can access that. Please, move forward with that.

I'm running through quickly because I know I've got very limited time here, but I just want to touch on a few other areas that seem to never really be a priority. While you're looking at having to cut in many areas, I'd encourage, especially for northern Ontario, in the area of tourism—we've got wonderful opportunities in tourism. We really appreciate things like the Tourism Development Fund, a great fund for coming up with plans and ideas of how to develop tourism. It's really hard to access a lot of the time, and there doesn't seem to be enough money there, but then, once we have the plans, again, getting the infrastructure investment from the private sector is always more difficult. We need to also have tourism infrastructure funding made available—funding that, once we have the plans in place, will help the municipalities to develop those plans. That is really important.

Finally, I just want to cover one thing that's been really hitting us in northern Ontario. We've had a lot of comments about affordable housing. One of the things is that, in many of the smaller communities, having affordable housing is not as big of an issue, but it's the duplicity of services again. As I said, in Nipigon, for 1,800 people—less than 1,800; I'd like to claim it's 1,800, but we're a little less—we actually have four different publicly funded agencies that are providing the housing services. That makes no sense.

Thunder Bay DSSAB has talked about the importance of de-fracturing the system, and instead we see the system becoming more and fractured, where more and more agencies are involved. We need to bring that together, look for savings there in the housing and how it's administered, and then also look at seniors' housing issues. We applaud the government's move towards keeping seniors in their homes longer, but we're recognizing a real problem, because eventually all of us will have to move out of our homes and into long-term-care facilities. We need those transitional services available. The reality is that our seniors stay in their homes longer in our small rural communities, and the next thing we know, they have to be moved out of their comfort zone, away from their communities and away from their family because there are no long-term-care facilities and beds available in the communities.

I'll end it there, because I know everyone is looking at their watches.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Mayor, we only have one minute for questions.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you for your presentation. One of the things that you talked about is the challenges of infrastructure investment in the north. One of the recent suggestions by Premier Wynne is to create toll roads as a means of helping municipalities fund roads, bridges and culverts. I'm wondering what your opinion of this plan is and if it's something that you would support.

Mr. Richard Harvey: Well, I've always said I'd love to be able to put a toll right on the Nipigon river bridge,

seeing as it's the only road that goes across Canada. I'd love to do that, and every last person that goes through my town can pay. I don't think that's going to go over. I don't think that in this area—that may make sense down in southern Ontario. Again, this is that made-in-Toronto type of idea where you've got a choice of roads people can use, so if you want to use the faster or the more efficient road or whatever it is, pay.

1150

In northern Ontario, there is one road across Canada and it goes through my town. There is no other way across. If we start putting tolls on those roads—that just does not make sense. That is not a northern solution. I would not be supportive of that.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you, Mayor.

Mr. Richard Harvey: Thank you very much for your time.

MARY BERGLUND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. The next speakers are Warren Clark and Gloria Pronger from the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre. Can you identify yourself for the Hansard?

Ms. Gloria Pronger: I have a document.

Ms. Cindy Winser: I'm Cindy Winser. I'm here for Warren. I'm a member of the board.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): That's great, Cindy.

Ms. Cindy Winser: I'm a member of the board.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): That's great. Thank you. You can start.

Ms. Gloria Pronger: Good morning. Thank you for having us here. I am just going to review this document, if you don't mind, so I can stay on time.

Please accept the gratitude of the board of directors and administration of the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre for this opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs's pre-budget consultations process. We also extend gratitude to our local MPP, Sarah Campbell, for her ongoing support and encouragement.

We are currently awaiting a response from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and/or the Ministry of Infrastructure from correspondence sent to Helen Angus and Bob Chiarelli in early February 2013, expressing our concerns and requesting provincial assistance in resolving them.

The Mary Berglund Community Health Centre has a deeply rooted history in the community of Ignace. Mary Berglund, the registered nurse for whom the health centre was named, arrived before the TransCanada Highway was built. She served the community alone for decades, without government remuneration of any kind.

The health centre provides the only primary care, urgent care, health promotion and illness prevention between the communities of Dryden and Thunder Bay—

and that's a four-hour drive. We offer a range of services, including mental health and family counselling; advanced foot care; chiropody; physiotherapy; cardiac rehabilitation; seniors' services; chronic disease management; massage therapy; chiropractic care; focused wellness clinics; telemedicine; home visiting in Ignace and Savant Lake; a food bank; a community garden; and a broad range of community engagement and health promotion activities.

The current health centre has two full dentist suites, but the community has not had a dentist for over eight years. Clients who can afford dental care seek services in Dryden or Thunder Bay. The only dental care offered to Ignace is offered to people who meet the rigid criteria of the public health units' Healthy Smiles program, which is provided by the Northwestern Health Unit. For example, if you make \$20,000 a year, you meet the criteria. If you make \$21,000 a year, you do not meet the criteria.

We offer our space at no cost to the public health unit twice yearly. We work in partnership with many other organizations locally and regionally.

Ignace is on the potential cusp of significant economic change related to the scheduled opening of a new sawmill in our area by Resolute Forest Products. There will be approximately 300 jobs between the plant and the woodlands.

In addition, although the most recent census has identified 1,300 Ignace residents, the health centre has recently done an aboriginal needs assessment and has identified at least 350 aboriginal people who have moved to Ignace from northern First Nations communities. The health centre must be poised to meet the needs of a larger population within the next few months.

Governance is provided by a locally elected nine-member board, which includes broad representation from the catchment area we serve. Ignace is a designated francophone community, and the makeup of our board ensures this representation. Other directors represent the growing retirement population. For example, we are honoured to have the retired Minister of Education from Manitoba serve on our board. In fact, she helped to craft this document. The outlying community of Savant Lake, which includes people from various First Nation communities, is also represented.

The health centre recently received a four-year accreditation award from the Canadian council of accreditation. Special commendations were received by the accreditation team for innovation and our capacity to respond to the unique and challenging needs of a community that has undergone monumental losses in the last 20 years.

Our services are highly valued, not only by our local community, but clients from other communities such as Kenora, Dryden, Upsala, Savant Lake, Wabigoon and Thunder Bay. Clients will travel two to three hours for an appointment. We serve seasonal residents who come from other areas of the province, other provinces and other countries. We have at times assisted the local ambulance in the stabilization of highway traffic victims, and have provided some emergency care during inclement weather conditions.

We employ 20 staff, and I've listed the staff there for you, so you can look at that. I do want to point out that our budget is currently \$2 million. We have maintained all of our financial affairs within that budget. We have never run a deficit.

We do have some tenants in our facility. In fact, we have integrated many of our services with them. The tenants include Northwestern Health Unit, Dryden regional mental health and addictions services, and Shoppers Drug Mart provides prescription pickup. We have annual visits from the eye van and the breast van.

We have also been recognized by the Association of Ontario Community Health Centres for our leadership as one of 10 CHC early adopters of the new province-wide electronic medical records system, which was funded by the Ministry of Health at a rate of, I think, \$20 million. Our funder is the North West Local Health Integration Network, located here in Thunder Bay.

On behalf of the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre and its board of directors, we ask that you consider the following specific requests: (1) the immediate reduction of the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre's annual rent, which is paid to the Ministry of Infrastructure. Our current rent does not reflect the market rate for northwestern Ontario.

I'll move down to the second ask: (2) accept and expedite a capital request, to be submitted by the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre, for a new community health centre. This request will be submitted by June 2013, unless a private contractor with the ability to design, build and finance within our budget is identified by the end of April.

Please consider the following rationale for our requests: The current facility was a garage/warehouse in the 1970s and 1980s for the fire centre, which was closed in the mid-1990s. Although the health centre had capital funding approved in 1999, it was withdrawn by the sitting government at the time. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Natural Resources decided, instead, that the fire centre garage should be renovated to house the health centre. The health centre opened in 2000 and a 10-year lease was signed. The budget was established based on this lease.

Right from the beginning, the renovation was beset with ongoing, costly maintenance and structural issues. We have a leaking roof, which continues to this day; radiator leaking, which floods floors; and design flaws that have not been addressed adequately in spite of endless attempts by different visiting contractors. In addition, continuous leaking of the roof has recently raised concerns about possible mould. We recently had one of our clients have a very acute anaphylactic reaction and required medication at the time, and that was from inhaling air within one of the offices.

So we've had—and I've listed them—a lot of problems with the facility itself. I know that people in our community are quite accustomed to me beating the drum on the issues that are listed, but they are real. This is fact-based. It's not over-exaggerated at all.

1200

In 2010, the Ontario Realty Corp. raised the annual rent from \$98,000 to \$200,000 annually. The North West LHIN, our funder, would only agree to increase our funding by \$85,000 to accommodate this increase for a period of three years. This funding will finish at the end of March 2015.

I also want to point out that the lease that we are currently required to live with requires us to pay for any capital costs that are paid out related to building repair or improvements, in addition to the established rent. So we never know what costs we're going to have to pay for, in addition to the rent, by the end of the year.

We do want to have a new community health centre. We have taken steps to that end. In an attempt to find a facility where we can acquire a reasonable rent, we have negotiated for this to happen. However, four builders have submitted quotations and no one has been able to design a facility within our budget. We continue to negotiate with one builder, but we need to identify additional options should this initiative fail.

A new facility would be centrally located in the community residential area and would increase accessibility for marginalized populations. This is the only community health centre in this area of northwestern Ontario. There is one here in Thunder Bay. If we are unsuccessful in addressing the issues of the high cost of rent, we have nowhere else to go. All the larger buildings in Ignace are derelict and cannot be renovated at a reasonable cost.

The health centre owns property in the centre of the community. We have worked closely with the township of Ignace to identify ways to partner, share costs and benefits. If this concern is not addressed in the near future, the existence of the health centre will be at risk and the impact of Ontario's health care system will be reduced locally and raise costs overall.

This impact is verified by the recent report done by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, which demonstrated that community health centres such as ours serve people with more complex needs and do a better job than other models in keeping people out of high-cost emergency departments.

Previous discussions with the capital branch in 2011 were quite discouraging and underscored the lack of influence held by this small community. It was determined by the board that we should make a concerted effort to work with the private sector in building a new facility in a more accessible location. Our vision is to create a health centre that will accommodate community growth and serve the purposes of the community health centre model of care.

We continue to negotiate with a private builder, but we are concerned that because we are asking for a design-build-finance project, such a facility will fall short of the looming increased population needs. New CHCs, which are being funded by the Ministry of Infrastructure, have been built or are under way in northeastern and in southern Ontario. The lack of equity in this part of the province is glaring. It is imperative that this concern is

addressed immediately and that a capital request is accepted and expedited.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity we have had to appear before you today and ask for your serious consideration of our requests so that we can continue to keep the residents of our part of Ontario happy and healthy.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. This round of questions is from the government. You have one minute.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: The Ministry of Infrastructure is your landlord currently?

Ms. Gloria Pronger: That's right.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Was there at any point a rationale given for the 2010 increase in the rent?

Ms. Gloria Pronger: At the time, the Ontario Realty Corp. existed. When we first were requested to sign this new lease where the rent was essentially doubled, our health centre refused to sign. We got a lawyer and we tried to negotiate through the lawyer with the Ontario Realty Corp., which had hired a private company called CB Richard Ellis. They would not back down. We did send a letter to the Minister of Health, Deb Matthews at the time, and she was questioned during question period on November 11, 2010, about the reason for this level of rent. The only response that we were able to get from the minister's office was that they would forgive the 2010 retro rent of 100,000 additional dollars, but by 2011 we needed to sign the lease and continue paying and adjust our internal organization accordingly. That would have meant the loss of two full-time jobs.

We did proceed with signing the lease. In the first year of the lease agreement, we took the extra funding out of our physician line. Ignace has many challenges as a community. At the time, we had some difficulty attracting physicians, so recruitment has been ongoing, but we have been able to attract locum physicians within the region who come and provide locum services. We've stabilized our medical offerings now to the point where, as you can see earlier in the document, we have excelled in the provision of medical care.

But this rent is really a big challenge now, and the LHIN is saying, "You've got extra funding until the end of 2015. You need to find a way to deal with that problem." If we don't, then I'll be laying off staff in 2015.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Okay. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

I am told we are going to be adjourned until 1 o'clock for lunch.

The committee recessed from 1206 to 1303.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): We're going to resume the hearings for the pre-budget consultations for 2013 for the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

THUNDER BAY AND DISTRICT INJURED WORKERS SUPPORT GROUP

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The first witness for the afternoon session is the Thunder Bay and District

Injured Workers Support Group. Gentlemen, can you please identify yourselves for Hansard?

Mr. Steve Mantis: My name is Steve Mantis. I'm the treasurer of the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, and on my left is Eugene Lefrancois, one of our members.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. You have 15 minutes for your presentation, and this round of questions will be from the opposition party.

Mr. Steve Mantis: Thank you. Jeez, where is everybody?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): They're coming in.

Mr. Peter Shurman: They don't care about you; we do.

Mr. Steve Mantis: Well, thank you very much.

Our presentation today is about our experiences as injured and disabled workers. Our group in Thunder Bay here got started in 1984, so this is now 29 years of coming before committees like this and presenting on our experiences. We're a bit dismayed, to tell you the truth. We presented to all governments when they were in power, and what we see is a shift in our society that leads to income inequality and that leads to poorer quality of health and quality of life in our communities, resulting in a few people at the top getting very wealthy and the rest of us having to pay the bill. We see it in compensation in the WSIB very directly, as a result of an apparent financial crisis, which we see reflected across the board in Ontario.

In 2009, the Auditor General did a review of the WSIB books and said, "Oh, my God, there's not enough money." Well, why is that? The WSIB itself said they reduced assessment rates to employers by 30%, under the Harris government, in 1998. A billion dollars a year less was brought into the system. After 12 years, surprisingly, the Auditor General said, "They're \$12 billion in the hole." Big surprise: If you're asking employers to stop paying into it, or reducing it by a billion dollars, it adds up. So what do we do?

The McGuinty government first commissioned a report. Here's the report right here, done by an impartial person, Professor Harry Arthurs. He was a retired head of Osgoode Hall Law School, a famous guy who had nothing to do with compensation. He did a thorough review and he came back and said the reason we're in trouble is because of government tampering—because government has kept assessment rates low, both under the Conservatives and then under the present Liberal government, artificially, to the benefit primarily of big corporations. The big corporations employ most of the workers in Ontario who are covered by workers' compensation, and that billion dollars a year is going into the hands of those folks, the shareholders who own those big corporations.

What does that mean for workers? Well, in 2010 they hired a retired banker to be head of the WSIB, with a mandate to balance the books. Rates went up a tiny little bit for employers. So how did we balance it? We cut

benefits for workers. In our submission, we go through a list of cuts that they have made, according to their own figures and numbers.

In our office here in Thunder Bay, we have people coming in in crisis, people who are threatening to do violence to staff at the WSIB, violence to their family. We have seen suicides. We have seen murder-suicides here in Thunder Bay from our members who are at their wits' end because they are disabled from work. They thought this was a system that was going to help them; that's what people think.

Workers' compensation, now WSIB, is our oldest social program in Canada—the oldest one. It's 100 years old this year. It reflects what's happening in our social programs across the board: that the concern for the people that it was there to help is going down and down and down. It's being used, really, to help create that income inequality in our society, which studies have shown doesn't benefit anyone except, artificially, those people at the top. We all suffer in terms of reduced health, in terms of our mortality, the length of time we live, any number of things.

You may say, "What does that have to do with the budget? WSIB is separate." Well, you may remember, in 2007 the budget included issues that actually increased payments, in terms of inflation protection, on a one-time basis for injured workers.

Our first recommendation is that this report that Professor Arthurs tabled—he said that workers who are receiving benefits from WSIB should be fully indexed and there should be a catch-up, because they've lost over 25% of the value of their benefits over the last 15 years. That was his recommendation; the government has taken no action on it. Our first recommendation is that through the budget process, full indexing be restored; that there is an effort to restore the value of those benefits, and to disallow the current ad hoc practice that happens in cabinet to set the rate for inflation for injured workers' benefits on an annual basis.

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This is incredible. I mean, we were very active in this process with Professor Arthurs, trying to educate him. He didn't know anything about workers' comp, and he came out with a decent report. And then the government says, "Ah, we'll just kind of"—it was released by the government on a Friday afternoon, when there's no media, and they've really taken almost no steps to implement the recommendations.

The second one is on another aspect of the compensation system, and that is about their experience rating program. This is a program that rewards employers to discourage workers from filing claims, for fighting them on their claims. Over the last 15 years—and this is documented in Harry Arthurs's report—\$2.5 billion has gone to employers through the experience rating program to basically suppress claims. Harry Arthurs said that the WSIB is in a moral crisis. I've never seen any government report with such harsh language—a moral crisis—because they know; we've been telling them for years.

We've been telling our elected members for years that this experience rating program both underfunds the system, it undercuts the ability to pay benefits, and it creates an incentive to hide injuries. We want to prevent injuries. You don't prevent them by hiding them. In fact, if you're going to prevent them, you need to not only report all injuries, but you need to report all near misses. You need a culture that encourages people to say, "There's a problem here," rather than, "Let's hide it."

Our third recommendation is on the issue of coverage. Ontario has the lowest rate of coverage for workers for workers' compensation in all of our provinces and territories. Only about two thirds of the workforce is covered, and the way that our statute is written, your industry has to be specifically cited in the regulation in order to be included in coverage. We are recommending that that change and that it be an inclusive policy that says everybody is included, like most of the provinces in Canada, except professional athletes, for example.

Our fourth recommendation is—and interestingly, this also was something that was in that 2007 budget. The Minister of Labour at that point was Steve Peters. We convinced him that there was a real problem in how benefit levels were set. There's a process that they call "deeming" that says, "You're permanently disabled; that's accepted. You may be unemployed, you have no wages at all, but we think you can become a health and safety inspector and we're going to subtract the wage you would get in that job as if you were actually getting that job."

The facts are that two thirds of Canadians with a disability are unemployed. Our industries don't want us. We want to work. We've done surveys with our members in Thunder Bay; for 90% of them, the number one concern is to go back to work. Our employers don't want us anymore. That's the problem. We're the ones who are going to be penalized because we got hurt in their workplace doing the work they wanted and they don't want to take us back and offer us jobs, again, that are sustainable, but, "We're not going to pay you benefits." So our fourth recommendation is that legislation be brought in and that the benefit level should be based on actual loss of earnings, not on the determined or deemed level, as is currently practised.

Our brief is quite long. It's 35 pages. We've included a research project we did in partnership with Lakehead University looking at the poverty of our members. I encourage you to look at this. It tells a story of devastation to the people that the system is supposed to help.

The last appendix of our presentation is on the research that's been done looking at what happens to people after they have been injured if they have a permanent long-term injury or disability. We're looking at very high rates of unemployment, regardless of the time frame. Basically, we have a surplus of labour in society, and employers say, "We don't want you. We've got eight or 10 people signed up for every job and we're going to take able-bodied ones; we're not going to take ones that are disabled. Too bad."

The biggest problem is, that \$1 billion that's underfunded in the system is still a cost, and where does that come from? Look at your rates of ODSP in the province. Look at the rates of health care. These are things that that \$1 billion would normally cover, but those costs are being shifted on to the public purse, on to the backs of the workers and their families themselves. Here in north-west Ontario, we have 20,000 families—just in northwest Ontario—who have a permanent impairment and face these barriers in their daily lives. We need a system that is there to actually help people.

When we look at our international comparisons—the OECD looks at the programs for people with disabilities. The countries that have the best programs and have the best benefits also have the biggest rates of employment for people with disabilities. If you have a good program that's well funded and provides the supports, you're going to get the best results, and it pays off for all society. This idea of just trying to save money every step of the way, thinking that that's going to help somebody: The only people it helps is those guys on top. The rest of us end up suffering.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Mantis, you have two more minutes.

Mr. Steve Mantis: Should we turn it over for questions?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): It's the opposition party.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much. Obviously the WSIB's unfunded liability has been in the billions for many years under different provincial governments of different political stripes. Have you looked at other jurisdictions where they have it open to competition? Our party is proposing that maybe we need to look at opening the WSIB up to competition instead of having an exclusively government-run organization. What do you think about that?

Mr. Steve Mantis: Well, of course, in Canada, we don't have any of those. We have looked south of the border, where that is common. What we see is that the system is actually worse for the workers.

The only people who really benefit are the CEOs of the insurance companies themselves. Here, we complain that our CEO, David Marshall, is getting \$400,000 a year, and then he gets a 20% bonus if he cuts enough benefits. If you look in the States, \$400,000 is nothing. We're looking at \$15 million—average—for the CEO of the top 10 insurance companies in the States that do workers' compensation insurance. Look at how their expenses go; 60% of the expenses of workers' compensation are administration, marketing and medical. Only 40% goes to the actual workers the system is supposed to help.

At least here, our administration costs are much lower, and a big chunk of that is actually enforcement for the Ministry of Labour and the prevention services. Just in terms of efficiency, our system is much more efficient at achieving the goal of providing benefits for workers who have lost wages as a result of a workplace injury or disease.

The idea of opening up to competition sounds interesting, but I think the science on it says it's certainly not going to work for the community, and it's not going to work for the workers.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much—

Mr. Eugene Lefrancois: Can I just say one thing before—we're running out of time, right?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes, we are.

Mr. Eugene Lefrancois: How many MPPs in the province, and that's all you guys, know where the money comes from when somebody gets injured? We have an MPP up here—I won't say which one—who didn't know where the money comes from when you get injured. If you don't know where the money comes from when you get injured, how in the hell can you guys do anything? You think it's welfare. It's not welfare, but you treat it as welfare. That is wrong.

Mr. Peter Shurman: We think it's insurance.

Mr. Eugene Lefrancois: No, you too. You don't know where the money comes from. Neither do you, and you came in late. All three of you came in late. You didn't hear a word we said.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

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ELA SUPPORT GROUP

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next speaker is the Experimental Lakes Area Support Group: Mr. Graham Saunders. Welcome. Mr. Saunders, you have 15 minutes. The next round of questions is from the opposition third party.

Mr. Graham Saunders: Thank you. I have a handout here—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Great, thank you.

Mr. Graham Saunders: Maybe somebody will magically happen so I don't have to use any more of my time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes, the Clerk will do that.

Mr. Graham Saunders: Thank you.

Hi. I'm Graham Saunders and I'm here to argue the case for Ontario taking over the Experimental Lakes region. I'm presenting some of the information drawn up by people in Kenora about this issue.

The Experimental Lakes have been in the news quite a bit in the last week, or even month or two. Here are a few information tidbits about it: It's located between Kenora and Vermilion Bay, west of here by about three or four hours, and it consists of 58 relatively small lakes; these have been used over the last 45 years for experimental purposes—many different purposes. I'll touch on just a couple of those later on.

We have a very comprehensive record of an ecosystem that is relatively pristine; there are not many industries near there, and if we're worried about things,

mostly it's long-range transport, either in the water system or through the atmosphere.

This is a glimpse. There are 58 lakes. We don't have time to look at all these lakes, but these are a few illustrated, and some of the experimental work that has been conducted at different lakes. The international reputation of these lakes and the people working there is considerable. Over the years, many environmental problems have been identified, and there are lots of practical solutions. Algae bloom—it's happening again, but in Lake Erie etc. These are some of the things for which the Experimental Lakes research has set up some resolution to problems.

There is lots of intellectual property here, lots of research, different governments, universities. More than a thousand peer-reviewed papers have come out of the Experimental Lakes—graduate theses, books, chapters, articles and so on.

That quote there is by David Schindler. He says, "There is simply no other facility in Canada capable of" doing these kinds of experiments. The decision to close the Experimental Lakes comes at a time when current and planned projects are urgently needed to ensure Canada has freshwater policies that are firmly grounded in science.

As you probably know, technically the Experimental Lakes were closed on April Fool's Day, a couple of days ago. That's not precisely true. Although some of the buildings have been dismantled already, there are a lot of other structures there still happening. Research has been restricted, even that scheduled for this summer. Trent University in Peterborough has been refused access, and there are a few other oddities going on here. I think it's bizarre to give less than a year's notice to close this facility after operating it for 45 years. I think that's just suspicious.

In some odd ways, we're not talking about a lot of money. I know you're a budget committee, but we're talking about \$2 million a year. That covers a lot of staff and maintenance and new supplies every season—about six months of the year. In fact, a lot of the—I won't say that the lakes have been cost-effective, but they do have a lot of revenue coming in, and there are projects around the world, and people and corporations, who have come to the lakes and conducted research. One is METAALICUS, and that's long-range transportation of mercury. That was a joint study of the US and Canada.

What are the possibilities for Ontario? Technically, as I said, the facility is now technically closed, and the federal government seems to have stopped looking—if they did at all—for any kind of people and/or partners or jurisdictions to take over these lakes.

So what could happen? The government of Ontario could operate the facility. I think there's a lot of enticing research going on. It would have a lot of appeal to Manitoba. University involvement: Well, that would be automatic, really, because there are a lot of universities who have conducted research in the past, and Trent wants to conduct it right now.

Another possibility is to share costs with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, based in

Winnipeg. Pretty big players, and I haven't seen the paper trail, but I understand some substantial donations or funding are available through this institution.

The benefits: I think anybody who has a glimmering of economics in their background knows about spinoff effects. The salaries paid to staff and researchers certainly get passed on to communities in the immediate area. Suppliers of fuel, electricity, maintenance and supplies obviously benefit too.

Now, I've put the word "tourism" here. It's not exactly a tourist destination, because it's a restricted area for research. However, I think that when you have hundreds of people going back to their own locations, whether that's in the US, Britain, Australia, Germany etc., they talk about where they were. I don't think this has been done effectively to date, but it would be relatively easy to supply these people—this really substantial demographic—with literature about tourism in Ontario and in Canada. I think that's just a natural thing to do.

The lakes do have an international exposure and reputation, and it will be, I think, irresponsible to let it go. My passion about this is the research, but I think the other economic benefits are very substantial as well.

Just as a glimpse of what Ontario will be giving up if the lakes actually close, as intended—long-range transport of toxins. Ontario is downstream of several major emitters—China, North Dakota and the oil sands production—and these compromise, right now, air and water quality in Ontario. In the future, if we're going to quantify those effects and those expenses for Ontario, then we have to know what the baseline was and what is happening in the meantime. The Experimental Lakes already have some of these baselines—not just mercury, but that's one of them—and it would be absurd to discard this or discontinue this monitoring and other research in this facility.

I don't have time for it today, but there's an interesting and thoughtful presentation; there's a record of it in your handout. It's by John Shearer. He's a senior biologist, and he operated the facility for a long time, until his retirement a few years ago. That's available there. It's about four minutes long.

Discussion? Questions?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. We have four minutes for the opposition third party to ask your questions.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you for your presentation. I have a few questions for you. First of all, in your opinion, has the province of Ontario done enough to keep the Experimental Lakes Area open?

Mr. Graham Saunders: I don't think so. I'm not privy to all those transactions, but according to some of the people who have looked into it, the province of Ontario seems to be shirking that responsibility.

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Ms. Sarah Campbell: Can you elaborate on some of the benefits that the Experimental Lakes Area can bring to resource-based industries such as tourism and forestry?

Mr. Graham Saunders: That probably eats up all my time, but I'll go for it.

I think the position of the lakes is very vital because so much mining is proposed for northwestern Ontario and all of northern Ontario, and other places in Canada too. These are boreal lakes, and what you test there will have some application across the boreal zone of Canada and, for that matter, northern Europe and Russia. So there are certainly opportunities there to see what happens when you introduce new components of industry—mining—into an area.

Tourism: I explained that a little bit, that you're not going to say, "You're from Frankfurt. Why don't you come to the Experimental Lakes?" That's not going to happen. But I think there should be more dovetailing in the future with the research, what's going on there. A lot of private operators have to worry about water systems for their guests, and some of the solutions for that have already been found in research in these 58 lakes, and certainly more in the future is possible.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: How has research at this facility impacted provincial legislation? Are you able to speak to some of the concrete examples?

Mr. Graham Saunders: How does it apply to Ontario in particular?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes.

Mr. Graham Saunders: Certainly, using history, one of the reasons that we have legislation in Ontario and in North America about clean air is the acid rain crisis of a few decades ago. That's part of the reason this lake system was founded by David Schindler and Harvey and other Canadians, who played a major role in North America, first Canada and then Europe—both, actually—in dealing with acid rain. They did experiments: How much do you add to the water; and also, as important, how long does it take systems to recover if you cure the problem at the source?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Do we have some more time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): One more minute.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Okay. There has been some concern that has been expressed by some people about the transfer of responsibility of the Experimental Lakes Area from the federal government to the province, in terms of the tremendous cost, \$50 million, of rehabilitation. Do you have some suggestions about how this could successfully be transferred to the province but somehow the federal government could still maintain some of the responsibility?

Mr. Graham Saunders: My first guess has been that it would take many tens of millions of dollars to restore these lakes. A little more research into that suggests—and I'm not saying this is ironclad; I'm always the person who says whatever you think it will cost, it will double that. I think they've done these experiments fairly responsibly, and out of the 58, there's one lake that is now compromised, and it's thought that will right itself in about three more years. So there are no lakes, according to this information, that actually need any extreme remedies to bring them back to their original, pristine condition.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: One quick follow-up: Do you think that that \$50-million cost of rehabilitation is inflated?

Mr. Graham Saunders: I'm not sure. The number I've read is—and it's based on if you have three years, no lakes to clean up exactly. There are other cleanup costs too. Ten million dollars is what I'm reading.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much, Mr. Saunders.

Mr. Graham Saunders: Thank you.

POVERTY FREE THUNDER BAY

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next witness is Poverty Free Thunder Bay, Terri-Lynne Carter and Alaina King. Can you introduce yourself for Hansard?

Ms. Terri-Lynne Carter: Hello. We thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Terri-Lynne Carter. I'm the chair of Poverty Free Thunder Bay. This is Alaina King.

Poverty Free Thunder Bay is an advocacy coalition working for change at the local, provincial and national levels to eliminate poverty and its impact on our community. Ontario's income gap between the highest income earners and the lowest is at an all-time high. More and more, labour market restructuring has replaced job security with temporary, contract, part-time and precarious labour. Recent government budgets have included cuts to social assistance funding for emergencies, delayed and curtailed child benefits, and eroded affordable housing budgets, while the cost of basic necessities continues to increase. These measures have made survival even more difficult for families living in poverty.

It is great that the government has taken positive steps in the first years of the Poverty Reduction Strategy which resulted in an overall decrease in child poverty rates by 6.6%. However, this progress has stalled in recent years because of the cuts, and the primary goal of reducing child poverty by 25% by 2013 is not going to be realized if the Ontario Child Benefit, minimum wage and social assistance rates remain frozen at current rates.

At present, a single person's Ontario Works cheque does not even cover food, housing and clothing costs. According to the Thunder Bay District Health Unit's report *The Cost of Eating Well in the District of Thunder Bay 2011*, a single man aged 40 on Ontario Works will spend 78% of his income on rent. The remainder of his income is short by \$125 of the cost of a nutritious diet.

In 1995, the government cut welfare rates by 21.6% and froze disability. Subsequent governments have not only failed to reverse the Harris cuts, but have actually perpetuated a further decline in rates. As a result of that initial 21.6% cut, coupled with inflation for the last 16 years, welfare rates are approximately 55% below where they should be. If benefit levels were restored to the same level of spending power as we had in 1994, a single person on Ontario Works would receive \$936 a month instead of the \$599 they're receiving now.

In addition to increasing Ontario Works and ODSP rates by 55%, a cost-of-living increase needs to be

accompanied. Last year, social assistance rates increased by 1% while inflation rose by 3%, thus leaving people on social assistance with less purchasing power.

Thunder Bay's vacancy rate is about 1%. A one-bedroom apartment currently costs about \$700 a month; bachelor apartments are very rare and are very hard to find, but they're about \$630. So a single person on Ontario Works currently cannot afford an apartment on what they are receiving. No new social housing units have been built for 20 years. As others who have spoken here today have pointed out, landlords are giving up their rent-subsidized apartments in favour of receiving market rent, thus creating even more of a shortage of affordable housing units.

We want to see an increased investment in building new social housing units so that people don't have to spend more than 30% of their income on housing. In 2012, 64.5% of food bank users in Ontario were low-income, rental market tenants. Last year, the wait-list for social housing in Thunder Bay was 1,420, and 26% of those were on the urgent wait-list. This was before the May flood, when we had sewage come into people's basements and homes, and we've lost a lot of apartments that way. The upcoming DSSAB report is going to show an even larger wait-list.

Food banks are seeing a tremendous increase in usage since the 2008 recession. In fact, people who once donated to food banks are now using them themselves. We want to see the budget raise everyone from deep poverty and working poverty, and go beyond the system that justifies discretionary benefits over basic human rights such as shelter, healthy food and good health.

Also, it is hard for parents to leave their children to go to work or receive training when there is not enough safe, affordable and accessible child care. In Ontario, there's only space for one in five children. I have a sister who is a single parent. Next year, my nephew will be going to kindergarten. The school she wants to send her child to is in a different zone than her daycare, so she is currently looking for daycare because they will not bus him to the daycare. She hasn't found one yet. She has put her name in everywhere. It took her a year to get the daycare she has now. I'm not sure what she's supposed to do. Quit her job? So we want investment in affordable child care so that parents can access employment and training.

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This year's budget must honour the original commitment of the Poverty Reduction Strategy by increasing the Ontario Child Benefit. The Ontario government has called this the cornerstone of their Poverty Reduction Strategy. They've almost doubled the maximum benefit per child under 18 in 2009, from \$50 to \$92 per month. The OCB's increase to a maximum of \$1,310 per child per year was meant to be the main intervention for lifting 90,000 children and their families out of poverty by December 2013. However, this has been frozen.

Labour market restructuring has replaced job security with temporary, contract, part-time and precarious labour. Approximately 22% of jobs in Ontario are con-

sidered precarious, having low wages and at least two of three other features: no pension, no union or a small firm size. People disproportionately vulnerable to precarious work are women, racialized people, immigrants, aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, older adults and youth.

Full-time, full-year employment must ensure a standard of living above the poverty line. In Ontario, minimum wage workers account for almost one in 10 employees. Since March 2010, the minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25, while the costs of basic items, such as shelter, food and transportation have gone up. Thus, inflation has taken a 6.5% bite out of minimum wage's purchasing power.

The only sustainable ends to ending poverty in Ontario is to ensure that there are jobs available for those who can work, and to ensure that those jobs pay closer to a living wage. Setting the minimum wage to at least \$14 an hour offers a better situation for people trying to move from social assistance to the workforce.

I'll let Alaina—

Ms. Alaina King: Hi, there. I'm Alaina King. In front of you, if you look at the numbers, is my pay stub for Ontario Works. If you'll look down at it, the grand total is in the red. Well, mine is in the red, anyway.

So if we're here talking about budget and money, someone is in the red here. It isn't Ontario Works; it's me, and I'm getting by on my prayers. Once my expenses are paid, I have no money for toiletries, new clothing or new shoes. If you look closely, I don't own a cellphone, a vehicle or insurance of any kind. There is no miscellaneous entertainment fund either.

I am a stay-at-home mom by choice to ensure that my children are a blessing to society and not a menace. It is not my intention to stay on Ontario Works, but I have been on Ontario Works for a good length of time to see that the amount I'm getting isn't helping me to get anywhere.

I believe in making changes for the positive, so here are a few suggestions. First, increase or provide incentive to those who are actively volunteering, such as paying them for each meeting or an organization they are actively involved with. Volunteering helps build up resumés. Honour those who are contributing to society by doing the real legwork for your statistics. Yes, there are discretionary funds that can be tapped into each month, but not all social assistance workers are diligent enough to inform the working participants of these monies.

When looking at the system as well, it pays if you are a recovering addict. Participants are handed Tim Hortons cash cards for their coffee, given gym memberships etc. Why not do the same for the ones who are actually getting experience to get employed by rewarding positive behaviour?

Provide more funding for the Ontario Works employment training portion of the social assistance class. I attended a class for eight weeks, which I believe helped to reframe my mindset to have a more positive outlook on life. It could have been a more enjoyable experience if

there was money in the budget for activities that encouraged potential employment opportunities.

Allow for monies to be kept up to a certain dollar amount in order for people to climb out of the system. Nothing says defeat like having the constant dollar amount change in an instant because you are working. It's almost like panic sets in, and you opt for a lifestyle that is more familiar to you, so you quit working and you go back to your Ontario Works where your monthly cheque is the same.

Also, for the parents who have youth at working age, allow them not to have to report the children's income. It's degrading. It doesn't come off the cheques, but to do that, you keep your child in that mindset and that mind frame for Ontario Works.

Just as a last statement, Ontario Works should not be a career choice for any length of time. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. Thank you very much. This round of questions to the government side: five minutes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you to both of you for excellent presentations. I did want to commend—I was going through the stuff that you presented. What I saw was very thorough, because not only did you make recommendations that ask for more money, but then you at least went through the mental exercise of suggesting where the revenues could come from.

I did want to ask if you went the next step, which was to cost it out. If we were to implement all 10 recommendations across the province of Ontario, is there a guesstimate of how much that would cost?

Ms. Terri-Lynne Carter: No.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay. You also don't have a guesstimate—and I'm not expecting you to, but just in case you had something. You said to plug the loopholes in taxation and collect the overdues, and I'm sympathetic to those ideas, but any idea how much that would collect?

Ms. Terri-Lynne Carter: Well, a 1% increase in the tax rate for the wealthiest 5% of Ontarians, so those would be those earning \$180,000 a year or more, would raise \$480 million. Corporate tax increases are another option because Ontario has the lowest in all of Canada. If we raise the corporate tax rate to what it was in 2009, that would raise \$3 billion annually.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: All right. I had some questions for you as well. You mentioned you went through an eight-week exercise—I guess some kind of course. I just wanted to know: How helpful was that?

Ms. Alaina King: It was very helpful. The lady who was facilitating the course was introducing reframing your thinking about the situation you're in, like changing your words. Whenever we would have a classroom setting like this, somebody would say something, and she would stop them and say, "Maybe if you think about it this way." You could see the gears starting to change in the people's minds.

I do believe there is a success rate from that program, but she had to go and approach people and her friends to come in and do presentations to say, "These are ways you

could do things without having to go with drugs and alcohol as a stress releaser." She'd bring in somebody who painted. He brought in his supplies on just a volunteer basis. He showed us how to paint.

Our resumés were redone. We had to look at setting goals for ourselves to get out of where we were at. The people that have gone through since: There is a success rate with them coming off the system or looking towards better employment.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: So you mean, after going through this course, some people have started to work. Is that what you're saying?

Ms. Alaina King: Yes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay. So this is a course that actually gives you the skills to find a job?

Ms. Alaina King: Yes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Oh, excellent. This is through—who offers it?

Ms. Alaina King: It's through the Ontario Works program at the DSSAB building. It's a life skills course. It's also called Accept. They work on your resumé and help you with volunteer skills.

She also incorporates volunteering at different agencies so that people get work skills. They do janitorial stuff. You get your janitorial ticket so that you can go and get work as a janitor somewhere. But not everybody wants to be a janitorial person, so she'll go and find agencies where people can go and volunteer one day out of these eight weeks to get skills. It helps to build up the confidence in the people who are participating in this program.

It even helps them with their children, because when you're on this kind of budget, you stress out about how healthy your children are eating. You can't really afford proper healthy eating for your children.

For instance, this last month, I said, "Okay, I want my children healthy." They're not getting the proper nutrition, even though I cook from scratch. I try to do basic preparations. I went out and bought my children multivitamins and I bought myself multivitamins so that we would get our proper nutrition and so that I do not have sick children ending up in the hospital affecting my time when I'm trying to go out and do things for my neighbourhood.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Is there time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): One minute.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I understand completely how demotivating it can be to get a part-time job only to see your Ontario Works clawed back, but you talk about the panic. I'm kind of curious to know what you were referring to.

Ms. Alaina King: I started to look into getting employment. My last child is in school full-time, so I know I have to start looking for a job. I started looking for things. Sorry; I do not want to work in McDonald's. I don't want that kind of job. I want to be in a place where I'm able to help people.

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So I start looking and then I find out, hey, you've got to report that on your income statement. I'm already

getting, what, \$489, my grand total there. So I start making maybe 250 bucks; that comes off my cheque. That \$250 that I was using to help cover my other expenses and this \$250 that's coming up should be able to balance out or give me a step up to maybe affording cable, because I don't have cable on there either. I don't have cable in my home. So I'm not going up; I'm coming down from where I could be if I was able to work and maintain that money to get up and out of that system.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much, Ms. Carter and Ms. King. Thank you for your presentation.

TOWN OF IGNACE

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, the next speaker is Mayor Lee Kennard from the town of Ignace. Welcome. Can you identify yourself?

Mr. Lee Kennard: We have a handout. There's a guy coming for it, I guess.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes, the Clerk is going to pick it up. Mr. Mayor, go ahead.

Mr. Lee Kennard: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Lee Kennard from Ignace. I would like to thank everyone for being here and coming and sitting here and listening to us and giving us the chance to participate in it.

Ignace was probably one of the hardest-hit communities in the recession because we pretty well lost every corporate worker that we had. Resolute is coming back to build their mill again, which is going to bring us back up, but in the process we're here to ask for infrastructure money and to make sure that it gets added into the budget, because we are in problems. We need some infrastructure work in order to be able to sustain the workforce that's going to be coming there. It's very important to us. Lots of other communities have the same problem with their sewer system, and if ours goes, it goes straight into the creek. I don't know what MOE is going to have to say about that. So we need that in there.

The need for our MNR office—as I was saying, Resolute is going to be starting up there again and we're hoping that our Ministry of Natural Resources office can stay and maintain at least the standards that it's holding now, because there's also probably going to be a mine opening up there. Those are all very important things for the MNR. People need the MNR to be able to run their operations well.

The Municipal Partnership Fund: It's very important to keep that where it is. Our cost keeps going up, the money that we have to put out, and that one keeps going down, so it's hard to maintain the systems. The KDSB and the home for the aged and all that, and the school boards—the money that we have to pay out to them goes up every year. This system goes down. I think it is very important to get that in the budget, to maintain that at least where it is now. It certainly would be nice if it could go up, but to at least maintain where it is now would be very good.

The other thing I would like to see in the budget is possibly maybe you could get a bit more in for student funding. Student funding, to get students to work in the summer, is very important to me because it gives them a chance to get a bit of work experience and learn how to work, so when they're done school they know how to work a little bit. They're not just educated; they also know how to get out and do some work.

I think those are the foremost, most important things to me. I know that student education isn't here; it came into my mind as we were sitting here thinking about it, but again, it's very important to me.

I guess I could go on and ramble on about these things, but I would like to open it up to questions. So you can ask me, and hopefully maybe I can better answer on the things that we require and need.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): This round of questioning is from the opposition party.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. I appreciate your coming here to see us and telling us some of your thoughts on how we should be managing money.

Tell me specifically—you talked about sewers and the water system—what's in the most precarious state right now, from an infrastructure perspective, in your community of Ignace? What needs repair? What are you worried about?

Mr. Lee Kennard: Our sewer treatment plant definitely needs a rebuild. We have orders from both MOE and MOL, because our cement is deteriorating and they say it's not safe for the guys to be walking on, so we had to build a platform over the wood, as a temporary band-aid, in order to keep it running.

We have two systems there. We have what they call the new one and the old one, but there's not much difference between the age of them. The smaller one has been out of service now for approximately 25 years, 20 years for sure—

Mr. Peter Shurman: If you wanted to build one, which is really what it sounds like you have to do, what kind of money are you talking about?

Mr. Lee Kennard: We have an estimate from Boge and Boge to come in and repair that one, put it in the shape that it needs to be and update the electrical and all that, and it's around \$4.5 million.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Right now, what could you afford?

Mr. Lee Kennard: Right now?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Anything?

Mr. Lee Kennard: Well, not really.

Mr. Peter Shurman: So you really need an injection of infrastructure money.

I want to bring you to another subject, and I'm going to let my colleague ask some questions. You didn't mention this, but in your brief you say the minister wrote a letter saying that we're spending \$35 billion on infrastructure, and you noticed that in excess of \$12 billion was for transit projects in southern Ontario. There's a reason why you put that in there. I would like

you to explain to me, a southerner, what it means to live in a more remote northern community and see that we're on the list for transit and you're on the list for nothing.

Mr. Lee Kennard: That's a very good question, and it is one that always comes up. The governments of the time, federal and provincial, are always looking at the south, and in my opinion it is because that's where all the votes are. They don't even come to visit. Mulcair was here last week; would he have stopped in Ignace when he was going through? No, they never stop there. They don't stop and see. They don't know how we live. They don't know what our problems are. That's a very good question because it seems to me that they put all of the money down there because that's where the votes are, and our requests go unheard. We have sent in four requests, and we've just got turned down flat in funding for this treatment plant. There have really been no reasons, but—

Mr. Peter Shurman: I appreciate you sharing that with us. Norm?

Mr. Norm Miller: You started off by saying that Ignace has been hard hit. Can you expand on that a little bit? What industry have you lost there?

Mr. Lee Kennard: First, we had a mine there, and that's what built Ignace to 2,500 people, and then in 1992, that shut down. If we go back a little bit before that, AbitibiBowater was there—it was Abitibi at the time—cutting wood. They left before the mine shut. Then the mine shut. Then, Resolute, which was Great Lakes and CP and all those companies—they slowly left; by 2007, they were gone. They bought the mill out there and they had just started that up, and they ran it for a couple of years. That mill was the last thing left, and it closed in 2006. Since then, we have absolutely no industry.

Mr. Norm Miller: What's your population now?

Mr. Lee Kennard: It's around 1,200.

Mr. Norm Miller: You said you're concerned about maintaining the MNR office there. How big is the MNR office?

Mr. Lee Kennard: The MNR office is one of the things that went down. It used to be a very large office. We had fire crews in the summertime. There were around 78 full-time employees, but now we're down to—I think there are 10 full-time and then a couple of contractors there, so we're down to about 10 or 12 in the building.

Mr. Norm Miller: And you're worried that you might lose that.

Mr. Lee Kennard: We're worried that we may lose that when it gets down to that low of standards. I think it's very important for that to be there, to look after the mine that's possibly going to start, and definitely Resolute, which is going to start building their mill in a month or so.

Mr. Norm Miller: What, if anything, can government do to help bring jobs to Ignace and area?

Mr. Lee Kennard: It's looking like we're going to have the jobs, but we need the work on the infrastructure to be able to—

Mr. Norm Miller: Sorry, what jobs are you saying it's looking like you're going to—

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Mr. Lee Kennard: Well, Resolute's coming there to build their mill back again.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay.

Mr. Lee Kennard: The mill itself, alone, is 115 people. And 115 people to 1,000 people—that is a big influx of workers. That would be like bringing 10,000 workers to Thunder Bay.

Mr. Norm Miller: Sure. Okay.

Mr. Lee Kennard: It is a big thing, and we are concerned that our sewer system is not going to be able to handle the influx of people. It's maintaining it now. MOE says we have to get that other plant back online or redo our certificate of approval. If we redo that, then we get more people and we can't treat the sewer. What do we do?

Mr. Norm Miller: Great. Well, thanks for coming.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

NORTHERN ONTARIO SERVICE DELIVERERS ASSOCIATION

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Our next speaker is from the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association: Iain Angus. Welcome. Can you identify yourself for the Hansard?

Mr. Iain Angus: Thank you, Madam Vice-Chair. I'm Iain Angus. I am the vice-chair of the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association. With me is Bill Bradica, acting CAO of the Thunder Bay DSSAB and a member of the NOSDA board.

Thanks very much for the opportunity to meet with you today. The Clerk is handing out our presentation. I'll try to go through it quickly so that we leave an opportunity for questions.

NOSDA is the body that represents the northern Ontario municipal service managers. We're the folks who deliver Ontario Works, children's services, social housing and, in 10 out of the 12 cases, EMS or ambulance services. The majority of our organizations are responsible for the local planning, coordination and delivery of a range of community health and social services that the province of Ontario divested to us to locally manage. These services represent a significant portion of the social infrastructure of all northern Ontario's municipalities and also account for a good share of the property taxes that northern Ontario municipalities dedicate to the social support infrastructure of their municipalities.

We're primarily composed of 10 district social services boards, or district services boards, depending on the responsibilities they have taken on. They're unique to northern Ontario. We also have one municipality, also known as a consolidated municipal service manager, and that's the city of Greater Sudbury.

We collectively have annual expenditures in excess of \$650 million and together employ over 1,500 people. We thus represent a significant component of northern Ontario's economy and labour force.

We plan and coordinate the northern Ontario delivery of public services and infrastructure programs that result in measurable gains to the quality of life of northerners through:

- the provision of financial and other supports to persons having difficulty entering or re-entering the labour force;

- the creation, maintenance and provision of affordable social housing, including working with other orders of government to obtain financial investment in this sector;

- the provision of quality early learning and child care services that reassure parents that their children are in safe, nurturing environments while they busy themselves at work or upgrading their skills; and

- the provision of emergency medical services in times of personal crisis.

Northern municipalities and property taxpayers are facing increasing cost pressures related to the provision of vital, legislated local infrastructure and services. Unlike many southern Ontario centres, northern municipalities generally have a lower assessment base; lower per capita income; lower population growth, with the notable exception of First Nations; precious little public or even interurban transit, and much larger geographic areas to cover. All of this contributes to a higher per-household health, ambulance and social services cost.

Turning to some specifics: In terms of the MCSS Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit, NOSDA has a key concern about the limited recognition of differences between social policy and program development, delivery and administration between northern and southern Ontario. This matter has been the subject of previous meetings and correspondence between the ministry, various northern municipalities and NOSDA.

While we welcome Minister McMeekin to his new portfolio and commend his ministry's December 27, 2012, transfer for one-time costs in relation to the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, we are seeking clarification of next steps and long-term solutions on how to best ameliorate situations regarding the significant loss of a variety of programs that have been replaced by CHPI.

First, the one-time CHPI funding has been a good interim measure to mitigate the severe hardship anticipated before this past Christmas. However, we would appreciate having the one-time monies allocated to DSSABs as an unconditional grant, or at least until March 31, 2016, as opposed to March 2014.

Secondly, we welcome the social assistance review report and look forward to working with the ministry in establishing pilot projects in the north for this delivery of integrated services. We hope that MCSS staff will consult actively with the NOSDA membership as social assistance reform rolls out.

It is appropriate that I quote from our submission to the social assistance review on our high-level view of the changes that are needed and are reflected in the review report:

“DSSAB/CMSMs need the flexibility to address local issues in a timely manner through the design of new programs, through the elimination of existing programs that are not required or no longer achieve desired or necessary outcomes, and through the integration of existing programs to ensure they meet the needs of the populations they were intended to service.

“A one-size-fits-all will not work in all parts of Ontario. There must be local flexibility and accountability to shape social assistance delivery to be appropriate and timely across Ontario. The local service system manager has a vested interest in the whole community. This promotes an integrated system of service delivery. One program with a positive outcome can impact another negatively. This will only be addressed when there is a municipal service system manager in place to promote an integrated system.

“It has been pretty much agreed that the local property taxpayer base cannot and should not be responsible for funding social assistance and employment programs. These programs need to be funded at a provincial level as the province has the appropriate taxation powers and capacity to do so.

“A partnership between the province and municipalities should be built on a stewardship role by the province that establishes broad principles and desired outcomes while leaving the actual program design and delivery at the local level. The partnership needs to be recognized by all ministries, not just the ones directly engaged with our programs, but also those which also have ancillary relationships that may impact on the desired outcomes for a community.

“This would not include rate structures, as those would need to be developed provincially, but could allow for regional flexibility where possible. This should be done by considering the establishment of broader outcomes to which delivery agents would be accountable to achieve. However, it should be noted that there should be no transfer of program risk (funding, human resources etc.) from the province to municipalities.

“The province needs to set the principles and outcomes for the social assistance system and then challenge the delivery agents to develop the programs and resources required to achieve these in their particular communities or groups of communities, allowing for extraordinary circumstances and granting the ability to negotiate in a timely manner to address significant economic changes in communities.”

Some key principles that have been included in the recommendations from the review and that NOSDA included in their submission are as follows: Social assistance cannot be funded on the backs of the local property tax system; employment programs and resources need to be locally developed and to be flexible to adapt to local workforce development issues; and a provincial rate

structure for social assistance allowances that would not necessarily mean one rate table for the entire province; there could be room for regional variances based on local economies.

Moving on to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: Non-emergency patient transfers are a primary concern in relation to our dealings with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The main concern remains to be the limited recognition of differences between policy and program development and delivery between northern and southern Ontario related to non-emergency inter-facility patient transportation, specifically impacting the health and well-being of residents of northern Ontario.

The subject of much study, discussion, analysis and correspondence between the ministry, the local health integration networks, various municipalities, NOSDA, NOMA, FONOM—we are seeking clarification on long-term strategies proposed to mitigate risks impacting DSSABs, municipalities and, most importantly, our northern citizens.

We seek a level playing field with southern Ontario as it applies to the overall health status of northern Ontario residents and also the manner in which non-emergency inter-facility transfers are accommodated. In the south, demand resulted in the evolution of medical transfer services that are used by hospitals, LHINs and user-pay services that transfer patients between medical facilities or residences for treatments or tests.

Despite similar systemic needs in northern Ontario, the vast geography contributes to substantially higher transportation costs and, unfortunately, the continued use of emergency land ambulance resources to provide non-emergency services. Consequently, ambulances that should be available to respond to emergencies are unavailable or delayed, resulting in poor and costly patient outcomes. Some areas in the north have reported response time increases of over 20%, which does not bode well in an environment of increasing demand, compounded by an aging population.

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Multiple transportation alternatives are available in southern Ontario, but they're not possible up here because of the geography and the cost. The longer the issue remains outstanding, the greater the disparity will be between regions. We look forward to an opportunity to continue the dialogue to find a solution together.

Finally, in terms of the need for affordable housing in northern Ontario: The key issue related to affordable housing in the north is the failure to invest in areas where affordable housing is needed, causing affordable housing shortages.

We welcome Minister Jeffrey to her new portfolio, and seek clarification of next steps in how to best ameliorate situations vis-à-vis affected municipalities in the north. We urge MMAH staff to revisit the funding formula used to arrive at the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and the use of deep core housing need based on Statistics Canada data. This data does not

represent a true picture of low income for the population of northern Ontario. First Nations persons are under-represented, small communities are not counted, and statistical accuracy is lost in areas of low population due to the manner in which Statistics Canada aggregates data for the protection of privacy. We would be pleased to work with the government to arrive at a more equitable funding formula for the north.

Finally, we are pleased that the federal government, in their budget, announced a five-year extension of their housing programs, and we strongly encourage the Ontario government to quickly finalize their negotiations with the federal government by allocating their share in this budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views. We would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. You have three minutes, and this time it's the third party for questions.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a couple of comments and then a question. First of all, I want to say that I agree with you on the points that you've raised about the need for more affordable housing. It is certainly a theme that we have all heard today from many presenters.

The other comment I wanted to make is that I also agree with your comments related to it being unfair and inadequate to disproportionately make local taxpayers financially responsible for social assistance and employment programs, especially in the north, where we see that we have many communities that are single-industry, resource-based communities. What ends up happening is, when the local industry goes down, there's greater need all at the same time that there's less money and less ability to pay. If that were to be managed on a larger scale, that would definitely help us in the north.

My question is a little unrelated to your role, but I wanted to ask it nevertheless. We have an aging population, especially across the north. I'm wondering if you can speak to the need that we have for greater supportive housing. I realize that's different from what your mandate is, but I'm wondering if you can speak to that.

Mr. Iain Angus: Certainly, NOSDA as well as our individual components are very concerned about our ability to provide the bricks and mortar at a time when we also recognize that there's a need for the supportive services. It's part of this silo: Bricks and mortar come from one ministry, and supports come from another. The North West LHIN, which I'm more familiar with than the LHIN in the northeast, has been coming to the table and is rolling out additional supports in a number of communities—not in all yet, so there's more that needs to be done.

We've found, particularly from an urban centre, if the supports are not available in the smaller communities, then there will be a continued migration as the older folks move to Thunder Bay to be closer to medical services, where they can get home support services. That's depopulating our smaller communities and putting them further at risk as it relates to their own economy.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you. I'll pass it over to John.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): One minute.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much. You made a great presentation. One thing I think you did as well as anyone today is show very well that one size does not fit all across Ontario.

I'd like you to just take a few seconds to talk about non-emergency medical transfers, because I know that in Timiskaming-Cochrane, it's a big deal.

Mr. Iain Angus: I'm not sure if I can do it in a couple of seconds, but certainly we have a situation—again, I can speak for the Thunder Bay district, which is administered by the city of Thunder Bay rather than the DSSAB.

We are struggling to find a solution. We're working closely with the LHIN to obtain the necessary funding. A private sector solution is not possible. The volumes are such, the distances are such that no one could make a return on investment. So it really is up to the public sector to pay for that, and it becomes a choice between do you have an emergency ambulance available in a Terrace Bay or a Schreiber—

Mr. William Bradica: Or not.

Mr. Iain Angus: —or not, because most of the time—I think there's about a 20% utilization, at best, in the district, and that means that the rest of the time they're usually doing the transports to deliver people to Thunder Bay for tests and back again, taking them out of the communities, making them unavailable for their true role, which is emergencies.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Iain Angus: Thank you.

THUNDER BAY AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next speaker is the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council: Elaine Kerr.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: What was that, Soo? I'm just kidding.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I'll remember that next time.

Can you identify yourself for Hansard?

Mr. Carlos Santander-Maturana: Certainly. I am not Elaine Kerr, as you can see. My name is Carlos Santander-Maturana. I am currently the first vice-president of the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. You can begin.

Mr. Carlos Santander-Maturana: Thank you.

The Thunder Bay and District Labour Council is very pleased to see that the Liberal government changed their initial stand on the pre-budget 2013 consultation process and decided to hold hearings in Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay is a live, vibrant community, a geopolitical and economic hub for the vast lands in northwestern Ontario that cannot and must not be ignored.

The Thunder Bay and District Labour Council is a democratic organization chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress and is composed of a large number of unions in the private and public sectors of economic activity. The Thunder Bay and District Labour Council is generally perceived as the voice and the legitimate advocate for the interest of workers and the destitute in the Thunder Bay area.

The Ontario government is facing today a very interesting political predicament. On one hand, they could listen to the proponents of fiscal austerity to get out of a recession lingering for too long, or they could decide to move forward with a budget designed to put the interests of the people first.

Taking the path of austerity could only mean a very difficult road in order to fix the economic problems created by a market economy beyond the control of the majority of Ontario denizens. The deficit in Ontario was created in part by the reduced tax revenues due to the economic crisis and partly due to the policies of tax breaks for corporations, with the hope that the extra money would be reinvested in Ontario—policies that began during the Conservative government of Premier Mike Harris and were really never totally eradicated by the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty.

Putting the emphasis on controlling the fiscal deficit as a means of promoting economic growth is a major fallacy. Everyone understands that tightening the belt on public expenditure inevitably will result in an inability to solve the economic challenges that Ontario is facing today. Wage restraint measures as proposed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce will result in a very serious impact for small and medium-sized business that will see a significant segment of their economic base without the means to purchase that coveted new refrigerator or car, or unable to do the house renovations that are so badly needed. Other jurisdictions that have shown leadership since the outset of the 2008 recession, and did make the political decision to directly or indirectly stimulate their economies through public expenditure, have been able to show economic growth at a larger rate than those falling into the austerity trap.

We propose that the Ontario government put people back to work through serious job creation programs, either through direct stimulus or through appropriate incentives to ensure that the private sector reinvests the millions of dollars in dead money that they are hoarding and that incidentally are causing the economy great damage. According to Mr. Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of Canada, if a company cannot think of what to do with that cash, they should "give it back to shareholders and they'll figure out what to do with it." We are not big fans of Mr. Carney, but in this case, he is undeniably right.

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We also propose to re-examine the taxation system. Part of the crisis in the government coffers is undoubtedly due to the significant corporate and personal tax cuts that Ontario has been engaged in since the late 1990s.

The corporate tax rate in our province is one of the lowest among industrial North American jurisdictions.

In our opinion, there is a direct correlation between the fiscal deficit, systemic economic crisis and quality of life. While for the majority, a recession means hardship, for others it means opportunities. The vast majority of the people in Ontario have been at the receiving end of a disastrous impact of the recession, while the top 1% is steadily increasing their already inflated incomes. In fact, the latest data from Statistics Canada shows that in the province of Ontario, the gap between the haves and have nots is becoming more and more substantial.

Our proposal for your consideration is rather simple. Invest to reduce the social deficit. Invest in public transportation. Ensure that made-in-Canada and, more specifically, made-in-Ontario provisions are an integral part of any public expenditure. Ensure that the provincial infrastructure is properly addressed; emphasis should be given to the development of permanent roads reaching northern aboriginal communities to incorporate them into the economic life of the province. Invest heavily in health and public education. Pay attention to the plight of the elderly. Invest in supportive services. Reduce the deficit of the endemic lack of beds in long-term care. Increase the financial support for initiatives directed to provide supportive housing for the elderly. Implement the Ontario social assistance review recommendations. Make good on the commitment to reduce child poverty by 25% by the end of 2013.

The Ontario government is in a unique position to make a difference in the lives of the people who have suffered so much since the outset of the recession in 2008. The only component that they need is the political courage to make decisions that will benefit the majority, not the usual small elite that seem to be increasingly getting a bigger and bigger share of the pie.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. You have seven minutes for questions. Mr. Del Duca.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much for the presentation today.

You do mention that you propose that the Ontario government consider putting people back to work through a series of job creation programs. Can you elaborate on what kind of programs you're talking about?

Mr. Carlos Santander-Maturana: I don't have the information in order to elaborate mostly about economic issues, programs. But certainly any public money to reinvest into the local economy through major infrastructure would be beneficial, especially for the people in northwestern Ontario. Any money that is going to go into infrastructure is going to have a spinoff effect into different, other areas of the local economy.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you. And I don't think I heard anything during your presentation regarding the apprenticeship system in the province of Ontario. I wonder if you have any thoughts you can share with us about the status of the apprenticeship system right now.

Mr. Carlos Santander-Maturana: Any enhancement to the apprenticeship system that will benefit workers would be an excellent initiative, and we certainly hope that a more socially inclined Premier in Ontario will put emphasis in that area of the apprenticeship.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you for your presentation. I just wanted to make a comment. I was wondering if you're aware of the fact that in Ontario, we've recovered all of the jobs that we lost in the recession, and some. We are now at 140% of the jobs that we lost. I was just wondering if you had a comment on that, because for the United States, the numbers are 55%. I forget what they are for the UK. So we are far, far ahead of the Americans in terms of the number of jobs we have created since the ones we lost in the recession. I just wanted your thoughts on that.

Mr. Carlos Santander-Maturana: Yes, in fact, it was really some information, economical data, regarding the recovery in Ontario. Due to the fact that there was a direct influx of money into public areas, Ontario was able to recover quicker than other jurisdictions. That's why I put emphasis on the fact that controlling the deficit shouldn't be one of the major priorities for the Ontario government, because controlling the deficit will remove some of the money that we need in local economies in order to keep people working.

Certainly, we are in a better position to recover the many other areas due to the infrastructural—the excellent skilled labour of the Ontario workers, and the fact that in the last four years, you have been making some effort to put people back to work.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I take your point. It's not that I don't take your point, but the reality is we pay about \$10 billion a year in interest alone, and that's in a very low interest rate environment. So we're not talking that this is what we want to do. It's more about what are the options? Even a slight increase in interest rates would really balloon what we pay in interest. Think about what we could do with that \$10 billion that we're paying in interest. That's another way to look at it. I wanted your thoughts on that.

Mr. Carlos Santander-Maturana: I do get that point. Also, at this point, Ontario could borrow money at the lowest-ever interest rate. I always use the analogy of governing the province is almost like owning a house. If I need to repair the roof this year because I see that there are some potential problems, I will borrow the money in order to fix it, knowing that if I don't do it today, five years down the road I'm going to be facing a significant, major crisis.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Do we have any time left?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Two more minutes.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Because this part of Ontario, in my understanding, is booming when it comes to jobs—if anything, people aren't being able to fill the jobs. I just wanted your thoughts on—were you referring to job creation specifically for northwestern Ontario when you were talking about those programs?

Mr. Carlos Santander-Maturana: There is a great deal of potential for job creation in Ontario, but the creation is due and tied mainly to the Ring of Fire mining interests. That's why we mentioned in our presentation that we need to be able to develop roads that will incorporate aboriginal communities in the local economy and into the life of the province. I mean, at this point, there are some roads which are dealing with some mining interests, but they don't even go to the aboriginal communities, so they are not reaping the benefits.

I also bring the issue of land claims and negotiation with the provincial government regarding aboriginal issues and the natural resources that we are extracting from their ancestral lands. But that's an issue that we might examine in a different time.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much.

Mr. Carlos Santander-Maturana: Thank you.

FRIENDS OF THE ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next group coming forward is the Friends of the Ontario Ranger Program. Emily Kerton and Matthew Roy, come on down. All right, you have 15 minutes, and this round of questioning will be the opposition party. Welcome.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: Thank you. First, I'd just like to introduce myself. I'm actually Sarah Kerton, but it's not your mistake; I'm representing my sister, Emily Kerton. She wasn't able to come today, but we are both Ontario rangers.

When I was 17 years old, I had a life-changing experience. Sixteen years later, my life is still shaped by the summer I spent as an Ontario ranger at Moose Lake Ranger Camp near Minden, Ontario. As a result of my experience, I chose to pursue post-secondary education in environment and resource studies at the University of Waterloo. I worked in Ontario Parks for 11 years. I did my bachelor of education in outdoor experiential education and taught high school locally here in Thunder Bay. I then completed a master's of natural resource management at the University of Manitoba's Natural Resources Institute, and have since been working for the city of Thunder Bay, coordinating multi-stakeholder working groups on environmental issues and leading the development and implementation of municipal and community plans on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

My experience as an Ontario Ranger gave me a new personal confidence I had been lacking, and resulted in me dedicating my career to the public service and to building a more sustainable future. I like to think that the work I have done so far has made a positive impact on my community.

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I'm here today to speak on behalf of the Friends of the Ontario Ranger Program and to implore the provincial government to reverse the proposed changes to the On-

tario Ranger Program, a highly successful, community-building, transformative youth program, recently cancelled for 2013.

Run by the Ministry of Natural Resources, the program has existed for 68 years. Its roots began prior to that, during the Depression, with the creation of the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program. It became Junior Rangers in 1945. Girls were included in 1973. The program offered youth aged 17 a chance to work in an area of the province far from their hometown for eight weeks during the summer. Youth were paid minimum wage minus a room-and-board charge, and were given an opportunity of a lifetime: a chance to see the Ontario public service in action, a chance to learn new skills, develop themselves professionally and personally, and become leaders.

The mission statement of the program, taken directly from the 2012 Ontario Ranger handbook, states: "The Ontario Ranger Program strives to develop knowledge and skills in ecological sustainability and integrated natural resources management through educational, practical and meaningful work experiences for participants. Through program opportunities, the Ontario Ranger Program promotes an enhanced understanding and awareness of Ontario's natural resources management and supports the development of participant personal life and leadership skills."

Since 1944, when it was called the Junior Forest Ranger Program, it has employed approximately 78,000 youth, engaged them in stewardship and natural resource management, and achieved, with great success, the objectives set out by the Ministry of Natural Resources. In the MNR's vision statement for the program, they stated: "Through partnerships and projects, the Ontario Ranger Program succeeds in meeting the Ministry of Natural Resources's priorities to support the economy, the environment and a stronger relationship with First Nations."

The Ontario Ranger Program also provides opportunities to engage Ontario residents in promoting stewardship and fostering an improved understanding of Ontario's biodiversity conservation goals.

During the program's 68-year tenure, it saw many drastic cuts. The most notable was in 1989, when the number of positions was cut from 1,400 to 900. This was due to government constraints and decreasing enrolment in the program. The decreased enrolment was attributed to a lack of program awareness and changing demographics. Revitalization efforts included a new communication strategy, a high school co-op credit program and exploration of corporate sponsorship. In 1990, the MNR considered external funding options such as the Environmental Youth Corps. Soon after, Jobs Ontario Youth, now called Jobs Ontario Summer Employment, evolved as a special initiative, contributing \$1 million to the Ontario Ranger Program.

In 2008, the MNR and Ministry of Education collaborated to offer a co-operative education program at specified camps. Throughout 2009 and 2010, the Ontario

Ranger Program grew its co-op program to six camps, acquired \$3.2 million of federal monies for capital projects focused on upgrading camp infrastructure and delivered approximately 94 person-years' worth of natural resources management work over two years. In this past year, 2012, of the Ontario Ranger Program, 13 camps offered 278 positions, seven camps having co-op opportunities and two camps with a bilingual component.

Our province is currently devising a youth employment strategy, something that will engage its citizens, allow youth to learn new skills while earning money, and promote the public service as being one of the best employers out there. The Ontario Ranger Program is the answer and the solution. This program is already well established as being a successful, effective youth employment endeavour. Why invest tax dollars to reinvent the wheel while cutting a historical legacy? The operating budget for the entire program during the summer of 2012 was \$1.6 million, a drop in the bucket compared to many other existing programs that have far less impact.

We have been told by the previous Minister of Natural Resources that the reason for cutting the program was because it would take a capital investment of \$8 million to keep the camps operating under health and safety guidelines, and yet the staff who have been intimately associated with the camps and have been part of their maintenance and health and safety inspections do not agree that this large of an investment is anywhere close to accurate.

Not only was the program worthwhile to the participants, but the Ontario Ranger Program was of economic benefit to 13 small towns across the province. Each camp made a particular effort to buy locally, and it stands to reason that local businesses will feel the financial strain of not having this program within their community.

Not only was the Ontario Ranger Program a stimulus to the local economy, it was widely recognized as a valuable and important service within MNR districts. Without the program, many services will no longer be provided due to lack of staff and funding—maintaining hiking trails and public areas in provincial parks and maintaining canoe portage routes in remote access locations, just to name a few. These are features that bring tourism dollars into our communities.

In addition to providing these important services to the public, Ontario Rangers supported projects in local municipalities and were active in multi-day animal research projects such as gathering information on species such as barn swallows and woodland caribou; bathymetry with local fish and wildlife technicians; and restoration of fish habitats. The implications of this closure are far-reaching. We feel that this cost-cutting measure seems to be stepping on the kind of program that distinguishes our province as being particularly remarkable.

The MNR is stating that the number of youth positions will not change in the summer of 2013. While confirmation of details is still lacking, the number of jobs available may not change but the quality and experience associated with this program will be decimated. There is

no substitute for staying with peers in a camp, seeing other parts of the province, and learning by doing, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Day camp in a youth's own community, where they return to their family and established circle of friends each evening, is not going to replace this immersive experience.

The Friends of the Ontario Ranger Program aims to empower the youth of Ontario by advocating for the Ontario Ranger Program. We aim to demonstrate to all Ontarians that the Ontario Ranger Program is an integral part of the Ontario public service. The program unifies the north and the south of Ontario during a time when an ever-growing disconnect is occurring between urbanized environments and our natural resources. The Friends of the Ontario Ranger Program recognizes that cuts are being felt across the board. However, we stand to say that investing in youth programs, which unite all of Ontario through positive community engagement, are programs that are worth investing in.

Apparently the new Premier agrees. The new Ontario government has created the first-ever Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities to ensure that young people across the province have the tools they need to help them succeed.

Kathleen Wynne stated: "If we want young people to succeed, we need to understand their priorities and concerns. By giving them a voice, we will support their development and secure a brighter future for all the people of this province."

The chair of the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities has said, "Through the establishment of the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities, Ontario has demonstrated a bold commitment to ensuring that programs and supports for youth reflect the needs, wants and expectations of young people and their allies."

When truly considering the cost of a program—an incredibly efficient and incredibly meaningful program—we must consider the cost of its loss to our youth, to our provincial legacy and to our future. It makes absolutely no sense to develop new youth strategies and other youth initiatives while simultaneously cutting a time-tested, efficient and effective program which is widely adored by its participants and routinely called "the best summer of my life."

Testimonies, photos and other information can be found on the friendsoftheorp.com website if you'd like to look further at those.

I have a testimony of another ranger here as well that I would just like to share. She says: "I was a ranger at Mink Lake in 1997. The eight weeks I spent as a ranger inspired the path my life has taken since. I studied wildlife and habitat ecology, geography, anthropology and science communication in university. I've been an assistant marine archeologist with the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation; a natural heritage education interpreter at Bon Echo Provincial Park; an environmental monitoring and fisheries technician for the city of Ottawa; a teaching assistant and field technician for Laurentian University; a field technician for

Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site; and am now a science educator at the Royal Tyrrell Museum of paleontology.

“Since my time as a ranger, I’ve shared my love and passion for science with thousands of people, and it all started with eight weeks in Quetico Provincial Park when I was 17 years old.

“Without my experiences from my summer as a ranger, I can confidently say that I would not be where I am today or who I am today. The skills learned and the relationships built in eight weeks can and do last a lifetime.”

You can read testimonies like that, and many more, from lots of people of all ages on the Friends of the ORP website.

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The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. You have five minutes, and this round is the PC Party.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much. That was an excellent presentation. This topic came up earlier today with someone who presented earlier. I was saying that my brother actually was selected as a Junior Ranger in the 1980s, so I know how amazing a program it is and how it’s impacted thousands of people over the years.

Is the specific ask of the government \$1.6 million?

Ms. Sarah Kerton: That was the operating cost in 2012, so—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: That would be the ask.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: Yes. We’d like to see the program reinstated.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: So where are things at, going forward, as of right now? Are you looking at partnerships with the private sector at all? Or is it, as of right now, going to be phased out?

Ms. Sarah Kerton: As far as I know right now, it’s gone.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It’s done. Okay.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: Yes, it’s gone.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Was there any consultation before they pulled the plug on this?

Ms. Sarah Kerton: No, and staff at the camps who run the camps all closed up expecting to be there again next spring.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: So no warning—

Ms. Sarah Kerton: And no return.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Sort of a made-at-Queen’s Park decision that essentially just pulled the plug overnight on this.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: Yes.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Just one last thing: How many kids last year in the program? Did you say two hundred and—

Ms. Sarah Kerton: Two hundred and seventy-eight last year.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: And at its peak?

Ms. Sarah Kerton: At its peak, there were over 1,000. There were about 1,500 students per year.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: And in 1989, it went from 1,500 to 900.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: To 900.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: And then it’s slowly gone down.

Norm?

Mr. Norm Miller: Sure. You mentioned that the, I guess, excuse from the government for shutting down was the capital cost to maintain the—I can’t remember the number of camps you said, but \$8 million, I believe, was the dollar figure you mentioned. But you said that some of the people who work there think that’s not realistic or is greater than it needs to be. Can you expand on that, please?

Ms. Sarah Kerton: Yes, and I would be happy to get you more information on that, as well, because I’m not as intimately knowledgeable about those details. But the camp staff who run the camps and undertake their health and safety inspections and use the infrastructure every summer are not aware of any required upgrades that would come near that cost.

The camp that I’m most familiar with here, at Sleeping Giant Provincial Park, where I worked for eight years—I didn’t work at the camp, but it’s located within the staff quarters area. I worked in the provincial park for eight years there. The new quarters for the Ontario Ranger Program were built in 2001, and it’s a beautiful facility. So not all the camps—there may be some that are older than others, but not all of them require any upgrades whatsoever.

Mr. Norm Miller: So do you think an option, if the government just wants to shut it down at this point, might be to try to see if there would be sponsors that would be willing to support the program?

Ms. Sarah Kerton: It’s a potential route, yes.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I did have a question. What was the reason that the government gave? Did they just say it was because of budget issues, or did they release sort of a statement? I’m trying to figure out how the announcement was made.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: It was included in the fall in their—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Economic statement?

Ms. Sarah Kerton: I forget what they called it.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: In the fall, though?

Ms. Sarah Kerton: Yes, in the fall—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: In their economic statement.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: —in their re-evaluation of the MNR’s operations, I guess. And there was public input on their licensing. There were four components to what they cut, and there was only public input on the licensing through the Environmental Bill of Rights.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I just think, when the government spends \$120 billion a year—I mean, they pay the head of the air ambulance service at least \$1.6 million. I think some figures are saying it’s \$2.5 million a year now. I think for something that’s so important to so

many people and has such a long history in the province of Ontario—68 years, I believe you said—it's a shame.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: They have replaced it with a day—they say that they've replaced the programs with a day position, the Stewardship Youth Rangers Program, but it's not the same. This program has a far reach. It achieves so many of the goals that the Ontario public service and the MNR are trying to achieve and address through other programs.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Great. Thank you.

Ms. Sarah Kerton: Thank you.

THUNDER BAY HEALTH COALITION

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. The next speakers are the Thunder Bay Health Coalition: Evelina Pan and Jules Tupker. Can you identify yourself for the Hansard, please?

Mr. Jules Tupker: Good afternoon. My name is Jules Tupker and I'm a co-chair of the Thunder Bay Health Coalition. With me today is Evelina Pan, a member of our coalition.

The Thunder Bay Health Coalition is a public advocacy, non-partisan organization made up of community groups, individuals and unions who are committed to maintaining and enhancing our publicly funded, publicly administered health care system. We work to honour and strengthen the principles of the Canada Health Act and medicare. I just wanted to also add that we are affiliated with the Ontario Health Coalition.

The Thunder Bay Health Coalition is here today to provide some information on health care issues here in Thunder Bay and in Ontario and to offer some suggestions to the Liberal government so that it can prepare a budget that provides the proper measures to implement effective health care in Thunder Bay and Ontario.

I'd like to begin my presentation by sharing some figures about the North West Local Health Integration Network that our coalition provided for the Commission on Quality Public Services and Tax Fairness, chaired by Judy Wasylycia-Leis in January last year.

The North West LHIN covers 47% of the land mass of Ontario. It has the lowest population of any LHIN in the province, with almost half of the population living in the city of Thunder Bay. It has the highest unemployment rate in Ontario. It has the highest percentage of aboriginal peoples. Compared to the rest of the province, the North West LHIN has a higher rate of non-urgent emergency department visits; a higher rate of chronic disease, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and arthritis and rheumatism; a higher percentage of mental health visits to emergency departments for substance abuse disorders; a higher percentage of deaths before age 65; a higher rate of suicide; a higher proportion of residents who smoke; a higher proportion of heavy drinkers; a higher percentage of residents who are overweight or obese; a lower percentage of residents having contact with a medical

doctor in the past year; and a lower life expectancy for women and men.

The causes of these statistics include a lower socioeconomic situation, poor lifestyle behaviours, poor health status, decreased availability of informal caregivers, and an aging population with an ever-increasing need for health care services.

In addition to the above-noted problems, we have a shortage of skilled caregivers; a declining population, causing further diseconomies of scale; and a declining local economy.

The above-noted figures have, for a number of years, resulted in many problems in our acute care health system at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and, lately, in our long-term-care system.

Ms. Evelina Pan: The regional health sciences centre here in Thunder Bay was built to serve as a hub for all of northwestern Ontario. Because it's the hub, it has, since opening, experienced overcrowding in the emergency department, resulting in an almost continuous gridlock situation. There is a constant backlog of patients waiting in the hospital for alternate-level-of-care beds. Patients are in beds in corridors, alcoves and examining rooms. This overcrowding in the ER has resulted in unsafe conditions with regard to fire safety and causes stress on the staff in the ER. The overcrowding has also resulted in very long waits and turnaround times for ambulances because they have to wait to offload patients when there are no beds available in the ER. During one visit to the ER, five ambulance crews were waiting at one time to drop off their emergency patients. Delays like this are unacceptable.

The backlog of alternate-level-of-care patients in acute care beds is a drain on the nursing staff trained to care for acute care patients and is unfair to the patients who require the special care and treatment that can be provided in a long-term-care home but that cannot be met in an acute care setting. Alternate-level-of-care patients should be in their own homes or in a facility that serves as their home, not in a temporary bed in the hospital.

To try to overcome the latest overcrowding situation, the North West LHIN came up with an 11-point plan that included freeing up 10 beds in the surgical day care unit; placing the alternate-level-of-care patients in palliative care beds at St. Joseph's Hospital; converting five respite beds at Bethammi to long-term-care beds; placing alternate-level-of-care patients in convalescent care beds; opening up additional capacity at a hotel; and creating additional respite space in retirement homes.

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These moves are hardly appropriate and are at best temporary and lead to a number of questions, including questions about staffing requirements and nursing care regulations. A better solution needs to be found for the continuous overcrowding at the hospital.

Why is there overcrowding and a backlog at the hospital, and why are there no beds for the alternative level of care patients? We think the answer is quite simple: The government is simply underfunding the health care system.

The February 2013 hospital board meeting received a financial position for the seven months ending at the end of November as a deficit of \$1.8 million, compared to a deficit of \$2.3 million the previous year and a budgeted deficit of \$1.3 million. Not long ago, the hospital stopped cataract surgeries because of a shortage of funds. This cancellation has now been reversed because of the movement of money by the North West LHIN from one service area—which we still don't know what it is—to the cataract surgery envelope.

Hospitals all across the province are facing similar situations and are being forced to cut services. The Ontario Health Coalition in its Austerity Index report lists hospitals throughout the province that have had cuts to their budgets ranging from \$300,000 to \$17 million, with a subsequent cancellation of many procedures and the closing of many beds. The provincial government cuts have even gone as far as a proposal in the Niagara area to close five hospitals before they even build a new one.

Hospital spending in Ontario is the lowest of any province in Canada. In 2012, Ontario was funding hospitals to the tune of \$1,372 per person, while the average for all of Canada was \$1,870. Funding on health care in general in Ontario in 2012 was the third-lowest in all of Canada on a per capita basis and as a percentage of provincial GDP.

Mr. Jules Tupker: In June of last year the North West LHIN announced the closure of the 65-bed Thunder Bay Interim Long Term Care home and the 28-bed Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital psychogeriatric dementia care unit. The Thunder Bay Interim closed its doors in October, but the LPH unit is still operating because of a lack of appropriate alternate space for some of the residents living there.

These two closures were carried out despite the severe overcrowding that was and still is experienced at Thunder Bay Regional. Wait times for long-term care in Thunder Bay have been the longest in the province, at times reaching close to 200 days. This is an unacceptably long wait time for long-term-care beds, and the closures at TBI and the LPH exacerbated the situation. A new massive long-term-care home supportive housing structure was to have been completed by 2013; however, this building, called the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Seniors' Services, will not be ready for at least three years and will provide few, if any, increases in the number of long-term-care beds available in Thunder Bay. The closure of TBI was, we feel, precipitated by the need for the government to reduce costs. This closure has resulted in the unnecessary disruption of vulnerable seniors' lives.

The closure of TBI saved the provincial government just under \$3.6 million, which the North West LHIN is using to expand home care services. The North West LHIN, in its November 26, 2012, background document Keeping People Healthier at Home in the North West LHIN, reported receiving \$3.66 million in increased funding from the provincial government. We

believe that this funding is not increased funding, but merely a movement of funds from the long-term-care sector to the home care sector.

Ms. Evelina Pan: The idea of having people stay in their homes rather than moving into a long-term-care home is a wonderful idea that few people can find fault with. However, implementing such a program will cost money. The government's planned 4% increase in funding to the home care program will not come close to meeting the requirements necessary to provide the services needed. An enhanced home care service program will need a massive injection of money for the equipment and supplies sufficient to provide the services that people need to stay in their homes. Funding the homeowners to renovate or adapt their homes to enable them to stay at home will also be needed. A compensation package for home care staff to provide pay scales at the level of hospital workers must also be looked at and will cost more money.

Mental health has chronically been underfunded. The Ontario mental health strategy plan for child and adolescent psychiatry in the Thunder Bay district is short three child psychiatrists. In fact, most regions in Ontario except Toronto and Ottawa are understaffed. Children's aid society funding has been limited. The Thunder Bay children's aid society funding has been limited. The Thunder Bay children's aid society can no longer afford to pay the Thunder Bay regional children's centre for all the behavioural treatment beds that are needed. As a result, a group treatment home has been closed, and skilled staff must look elsewhere for employment.

Mr. Jules Tupker: In conclusion, we'd like to make the following recommendations.

Health care spending in Ontario is and has been shrinking as a percentage of the Ontario budget over the past few years, according to the Ministry of Finance budget reviews. This decrease in health care funding has to stop and has to be reversed in the upcoming budget.

Funding increases to the following areas are essential. Increase hospital funding annually by a minimum of 3%.

Ensure that hospital funding is not tied to increased home care funding. Reducing hospital funding to provide funding for the Home First program is unacceptable.

Put more than 4% into the new Home First philosophy for home care and take off the 2% wage freeze placed on home care workers.

Increase funding to long-term care to provide for more beds and enable homes to provide an average minimum of three and a half hours of personal care per resident.

Increase funding for all mental health programs to ensure proper treatment and care is provided for all of our citizens.

Secondly, the Ontario Health Coalition reported that since 1995, the province of Ontario has led the country in corporate and personal income tax cuts that have benefited primarily the wealthiest individuals and corporations. Ontario ranks among the lowest corporate tax jurisdictions in North America and continues to propose corporate tax cuts even though those corporations have

failed to invest the tax savings back into Ontario. According to economist Hugh Mackenzie, \$15 billion is being lost in corporate taxes each year. The tax loopholes for corporations should be closed, and taxes to corporations should be increased to provide revenues for public services like health.

Thirdly, poverty in Ontario is growing, particularly among children. Childhood poverty tends to lead to poorer health in adulthood. The rate of chronic disease in Thunder Bay is among the highest in province. To keep health care costs down, the government must make eliminating poverty a key objective, and the province must provide adequate funding to inclusive community supports such as mental and physical health care and social housing.

Ms. Evelina Pan: In conclusion, the Thunder Bay Health Coalition has been raising concerns about health care issues in Thunder Bay for a long time, and the Ontario Health Coalition has done the same for health care across Ontario. But our concerns have not yet been addressed by the provincial government.

It's important that our concerns are added to those of so many other Ontarians and that the government take the time to listen to citizens and make the proper choices in the upcoming budget. Listening to the people and implementing their wishes is the basis of a sound democratic government, and we hope that this government will act accordingly. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. You have three minutes. The third party.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you for your presentation. I think that you're right on. Certainly, the comments that you have made, the observations that you have made, are the same observations that we have been hearing, talking to people across the province.

I just wanted to touch on a couple of the things that you said. One is with regard to home care. Again, it's no surprise that people in the north have some of the longest wait times for home care. We've been hearing that time and time again. What are your views or thoughts about implementing a five-day home care guarantee? Do you think that's something that could be beneficial?

Mr. Jules Tupker: I can give you first-hand information. My wife had a knee operation back in October, and she had a home care visit within the next day. Your proposal for a five-day minimum is already being met in certain situations, so I don't know exactly what your policy is on that five days. Is that people who are elderly and have a requirement for home care right away? I'm not sure what that means.

Clearly, I think people who are sent home from the hospital—quite often, they're sent home and they are still struggling. They would probably need service within a day. So I think the five-day minimum should be within a day. Five days would be nice, but I think a one-day minimum is what's required.

Ms. Evelina Pan: We actually know of a situation where a woman—I would have said “elderly,” but she's probably my age, so—

Laughter.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Young.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: A young woman.

Ms. Evelina Pan: This woman was sent home from the hospital with a bag, but the family either wasn't told or didn't understand that they had to change the bag. So when it filled up, it backed up, and—

Interjection.

1500

Ms. Evelina Pan: Yes, exactly—the outcome was not good, and she didn't make it. I think that if home care had been provided immediately and for the five days right after she was sent home, then somebody would have been there to say, “Oh, look. The bag is 90% full. We should change it. Do you know how to change it? This is how we should change it.” This is what we do, and I think, in that one instance anyway, that person's life might have been saved. When we're talking about discharges from hospitals, an immediate home care plan needs to be set up.

I was at an Alzheimer's meeting this morning. The need for home care for Alzheimer's patients is really great, either for the patient themselves or for the in-home care partner.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. We don't have more time.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Have we run out?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): We ran out of time. Sorry.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Jules Tupker: Thank you.

CITY OF THUNDER BAY

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next speaker is Mayor Keith Hobbs from Thunder Bay. Good afternoon. Can you please identify yourself for the Hansard?

Mr. Keith Hobbs: Thank you. It's Mayor Keith Hobbs, city of Thunder Bay. Thank you, Madam Chair. With me to my left is Joe Virdiramo; he's the chair of our intergovernmental affairs committee. To my right is Chief Peter Collins, chief of Fort William First Nation and our closest partner. In October of last year, we signed a historic declaration of commitment with Fort William First Nation, and they come with us for any representation for the city. To his right is Tim Comisso, our city manager.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): You can begin.

Mr. Keith Hobbs: Okay, thank you. We'd really like to thank you for seeing us today on short notice. Thunder Bay encourages the province of Ontario to remain on course with further strategic policy directions and partnership engagements that stimulate economic growth. The city of Thunder Bay continues on course to diversify and transition our economy and labour force. Economic indicators reflect that the continued effort of each government as well as the ongoing progressive partnerships

have had substantial influences on the level of growth and economic stability of our community.

In recent years we have afforded citizens a stable labour market and a real sense of positive change and transformation, and many share a sense of optimism for their future. The momentum must keep advancing, and we outline to the province a number of economic growth opportunities in our submission today. We will address opportunities and related budget recommendations, beginning with the Thunder Bay and Fort William First Nation Mining Readiness Strategy, municipal infrastructure, rising costs of interest arbitration awards, provincial grant limitations for EMS operation costs, new social development community impacts, and increasing financial demands and integration opportunities within the northern Ontario growth plan.

If I can, I will turn it over to Chief Peter Collins to speak about the Mining Readiness Strategy.

Chief Peter Collins: Thank you, Madam Chair. On April 30, 2012, the Thunder Bay city council approved the implementation of the Mining Readiness Strategy, an integrated regional economic development plan to be prepared in collaboration with Fort William First Nation and the Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission. The draft report will be released on Friday, April 5, with the final report presented at the NOMA AGM held in Thunder Bay at the end of April.

Northwestern Ontario is well positioned to capitalize on major industrial development opportunities over the next five to 10 years related to exploration and mining, including, but not limited to, the Ring of Fire. If you look at that section there, there are lots of presentations being developed within our region, within our communities. We had a mining forum in Fort William First Nation last week here in Thunder Bay, and there are exploration and mining opportunities being developed over at the Valhalla Inn today.

The Mining Readiness Strategy is a comprehensive, inclusive and integrated economic development strategy designed to help northwestern Ontario stakeholders focus on capitalizing on many of the opportunities that mining development will bring to the region, be it job creation, business opportunities, infrastructure development or improved quality of life for aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations. This is a once-in-a-century opportunity for the region, the province and the country as a whole and is a critical economic driver for Ontario and the northern Ontario growth plan.

The mining sector has become one of the most strategic sectors of the global economy, and Ontario is the largest mineral producer in Canada, with \$10 billion in GDP annually. Ontario is already recognized as a world mining leader in education, research and development, environmentally sustainable practices and occupational health and safety. In 2011 alone, mineral exploration direct expenditures in Ontario reached a record of \$1 billion, including \$475 million in northwestern Ontario alone. A total of 13 major exploration projects in the region are forecasted by industry to be in

production between 2013 and 2017, and five existing mines are all in expansion mode today.

Goals of the Mining Readiness Strategy include optimizing job creation opportunities, estimated to be in the thousands—if you look at those, we talk about all of northwestern Ontario and the opportunities throughout the whole region—for all those living in Thunder Bay, Fort William First Nation and northern Ontario, and maximizing business opportunities, including the use of regional companies for exploration, construction and operation of mines.

On April 26, 2013, the final Mining Readiness Strategy will be presented to provincial ministers and senior staff, all of whom are closely connected to the mining sector. Areas of the strategy include local and regional needs, focusing on: transportation planning and infrastructure; power generation and transmission—potential partnerships with industry and aboriginal communities that will address future residential, business, by way of an industrial energy assessment; workforce training and development; business development; economic growth levels; economic growth strategies; environmental sustainability and responsible growth; housing and community services; research and development; and capital investment and financing. As a result, unprecedented economic growth and diversification of the entire region and the province of Ontario is expected to take place and contribute significantly to the quality of life and development of all communities, including aboriginal, local and regional.

Recommendation: Aggressive planning through partnerships between the city of Thunder Bay, Fort William First Nation and the province of Ontario is vital for northwestern Ontario development in the mining sector. The budget should recognize this significant opportunity for northern Ontario and provide strategies and funding to maximize the economic growth opportunities for all of Ontario.

I thank you.

Mr. Keith Hobbs: Thank you, Madam Chair. Did you want me to continue with the next—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Well, there will be time for questions. This round, the questions will be from the government side.

Mr. Keith Hobbs: So do you want us to go through all our—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Do you have any more you want to present? Because there's a little bit of time.

Mr. Keith Hobbs: Yes, definitely. Thanks.

We'd like to talk about municipal infrastructure first. Former Infrastructure Minister Bob Chiarelli recognized Thunder Bay as a model which other Ontario communities could follow. The city of Thunder Bay, since 2011, currently has an Enhanced Infrastructure Renewal Program. We put a 1.5% tax increase every year into roads and into infrastructure, and we are a model for Ontario.

We recognize that our streets and our infrastructure are our responsibility, but when it comes to major pro-

jects, we definitely need funding from other levels of government, and that's what we're asking for today.

We recognize ReNew Ontario, and we have our own Renew Thunder Bay, which includes a proposed new events centre on our improved waterfront, for which we received \$15 million in provincial and federal funding.

The city cannot achieve its goals without support from other levels of government. Therefore, we strongly recommend the continued development and implementation of joint provincial-federal-municipal infrastructure programs.

Since 2010, municipal infrastructure spending in Thunder Bay has incrementally increased by approximately \$3 million each year, as city council has been progressive and focused on enhanced infrastructure investments that accelerate the rebuilding and repairing of aged infrastructure. Infrastructure investment funding is critical to maintaining roads, highways, airports, power, bridges, ports, water distribution and waste water treatment. Thunder Bay can justify increasing the infrastructure spending as we transition our economy in the mining sector as the hub of northwestern Ontario.

The city of Thunder Bay recommends that the province of Ontario address the pent-up demand for infrastructure investment funding that is increasing. The greatest challenge to communities is external funding and a community's ability to fund rapid-aging infrastructure.

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Our key messages: The city of Thunder Bay thanks the government for recognizing the infrastructure challenges we face and for the much-needed support through provincial funding programs. The city of Thunder Bay fully supports the government's long-term, 10-year plan to address provincial infrastructure challenges. The northern Ontario growth plan must continue to offer a strategic framework for making decisions about economic growth that is sustainable, builds strong communities, and promotes a healthy environment within a culture of conservation.

We are hopeful provincial infrastructure spending will align with economic priorities in the growth plan and the Thunder Bay and Fort William Mining Readiness Strategy.

We encourage the government to consider infrastructure from a broader perspective and include priority projects that improve the quality of life for all citizens in our community; an example is provincial funding for community facilities focused on crime prevention and youth engagement such as event centres.

The city of Thunder Bay is well positioned to partner with the province of Ontario on priority infrastructure projects. Future provincial-municipal infrastructure investment or funding programs must provide flexibility to allow each community some latitude in determining the priorities within our own communities.

I'm going to hand it off to Councillor Joe Virdiramo for arbitration.

Mr. Joe Virdiramo: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm going to be speaking on the rising costs of arbitration.

The cost of arbitration awards for police and fire contracts is rising faster than any other municipal service area, as well as the rate of inflation, and overall represents a major fiscal challenge each year in preparing the city of Thunder Bay municipal budget.

Thunder Bay is similar to many other Ontario cities, with emergency services costs representing a substantial portion of our municipality's budget. We agree with the position of AMO that arbitration has not effectively addressed a municipality's fiscal and economic circumstances. Awards are tied to decisions that are more often based on settlements in other municipalities under different and varied economic environments. Comparing Thunder Bay's essential services workers to provincial arbitration awards is unfair as we simply do not have the tax base of larger urban centres.

Interest arbitration decisions can take years, as was the case in 2011, when a seven-year award was approved, and related to city of Thunder Bay firefighters. Decisions are inconsistent with the collective agreements we negotiate for other employees and, in the current economy, they are out of touch with the economic challenges that communities face. On average, double-the-rate-of-inflation awards are the norm for emergency services, at a time when other employee groups are agreeing to tighten their belts.

The city of Thunder Bay supports AMO's position and recommends as follows: Changes are needed to get interest arbitration working the way it was intended. The system should be fair and balanced for everyone; accountable and transparent for taxpayers; sensitive to fiscal challenges; and efficient and timely.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. There are two more minutes for the government side questions.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Do you have anything else to add?

Mr. Tim Commisso: Madam Chair, I don't think there's time, obviously, to talk in detail, but just to cover the two off, we have, through our delegations at AMO and at ROMA/OGRA, put all of these issues on the table with the government.

One is the provincial funding for EMS. EMS is an area where we provide a district service—not only Thunder Bay, but in the district—to 11 municipalities, I believe—sorry, 15 municipalities and 11 First Nations. It's an area that's under strain. It's an issue of funding, but it's an issue of how the funding is provided. A good example: We approved a new ambulance last year—24/7; \$800,000. We have to wait a year to find out whether that's going to be supported by the province, and we have to spend the money first. It hardly seems fair, as well as the fact that we built a brand new facility, a district headquarters, and the funding formula just does not match up very well. Anyway, that's covered off in our brief.

The last item—Mr. Mayor, do you want me to speak to this briefly as well?

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Commisso: Thank you. In the various deputations we've made to AMO and OGRA over probably the last three or four years, we have identified the impacts on Thunder Bay of what we would call social development issues and community issues—issues with respect to the fact that we are a community that is certainly a regional centre and also a catchment area. We accept that and we value that, but the challenges, as we are providing, and the city is having to look at providing, services that clearly go beyond the municipal mandate.

Anyway, I will leave it at that. I think it's in the brief. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. You've got one minute to ask a quick question.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Okay. Thank you, Mayor and councillors for coming. I just wanted to commend you on the great job you're doing in Thunder Bay. I've heard some presentations earlier that suggested that the economy is booming and there are a lot of jobs. So, well done. I don't have a lot of time so there's no point in asking questions, but I'm sure we can take your lead from Thunder Bay in the rest of Ontario.

Mr. Keith Hobbs: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation.

ISKATEWIZAAGEGAN NO. 39 FIRST NATION

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. The next speakers are Chief Eli Mandamin and Councillor Leon Mandamin. Welcome. Can you identify yourself for Hansard, please?

Chief Eli Mandamin: Okay.

Remarks in Ojibway.

Chief Eli Mandamin from Iskwatewizaagegan First Nation. In my language, I acknowledged and thanked everybody that is giving us this opportunity. Sarah Campbell, yourself, thanks for lobbying for this process.

I have some historical information I've got to share with you. In my language, I talked to your spirits, because that's the true us, and also to the clans, if you have clans from wherever you are from. I'm not here to offend anybody; I'm not here to overstep anybody. I've been a leader in my community for quite some time now and I'm trying to do the best I can with all the odds that are against us. That's some of the things that I want to talk about, so I want to thank the standing committee for giving me an opportunity.

Very quickly, the dynamics we're living on in Shoal Lake—it's right in a corner of the United States and Manitoba, but also we'll be much more condensed if the twinning project goes. There's a twinning proposal that was announced four years ago by the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario. But they forgot we lived there even though we were there before they ever came to this part of the world. That has been one of the hidden hinges that we've gone through.

Anyway, my presentation starts off with: One of the highest responsibilities endowed on the chief and council of Iskwatewizaagegan—Iskwatewizaagegan means “shallow lake.” It's very important because at one time we were a lake on our own but because of exploration and timber, they blasted a hole to connect us to the Lake of the Woods. Some engineer knew that a lot of people were dying in Winnipeg because of their bad water, so he figured out a way to divert the water that went into the city of Winnipeg through our lake. There are 55 million gallons of water going to Winnipeg every day, and they're trying to pump it up to 100 million gallons a day. We don't get a cent of all the impacts that we've lived through in that community.

We recognize that the political landscape has evolved since the adoption of section 35 of the Canadian Constitution and the rulings of the Canadian Supreme Court that affirm that inherent and treaty rights are paramount and must be addressed by every level of Canadian government and society.

The chief and council of Iskwatewizaagegan No.39 Independent First Nation strive to ensure that all development activities occurring within the traditional territory of the nation adhere and comply with the duty to consult and accommodate relative to their inherent and treaty rights.

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The duty to consult and accommodate has been further amplified by the passage of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which stresses that states and non-indigenous entities need to obtain the “free, prior and informed consent” of indigenous peoples when a development or undertaking is going to directly impact them.

I want to talk a little bit about the declaration. I was a chief in the early 1990s when this declaration was first announced, and I was one of the first presenters at the United Nations in Geneva to make a presentation on behalf of Iskwatewizaagegan regarding the treaties and also the water rights. So we have an investment in this declaration. A couple of years ago, I lobbied that the Olympic torch be coming into our community, and for that reason I wanted to announce to Canada and the United States back then to adopt this declaration. Shortly after that, they adopted this declaration. So I know this declaration exists and I know where it came from.

Access to the natural resources by non-aboriginal entities within our territory as part of the Treaty 3 area has always been conditioned in accordance with our traditional laws, customs and protocols. This is reinforced in the terms of the Paypom version of Treaty 3 that has been consistently held since its signing.

As we stated, our community has a long history of resource development and extraction throughout the territory. We have consistently advanced each activity and each matter, adhering to our vision and consistent with the Treaty 3 consent clause.

Mr. Leon Mandamin: Madam Chair, I'm just going to read this little section off here that affirms our right

and our treaty rights that any development within our territory must have our consent. It's one of the treaties in Canada that has the word "consent" in it, and it reads like this:

"Her Majesty reserves the right to deal with such settlers as she shall deem just so as not to diminish the extent of land allotted to Indians; and provided also that the aforesaid reserves of lands, or any interest or right therein or appurtenant thereto, may be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of by the said government for the use and benefit of the said Indians, with the consent of the Indians entitled thereto first had and obtained."

And that's one of our reasons why we've always dealt with governments and municipalities regarding this word "consent" on there. It's very important to our people and we hold that very dearly to ourselves. As the chief says, that's the backbone of our dealings, and for our future as well—because of the spirit and the intent, there are two meanings behind that. So I hope you guys go back and do some research on this and understand what the treaty is all about.

Chief Eli Mandamin: In order to honour the spirit, meaning and intent of this clause and of our treaty relationship as a whole, we advance the opportunity and importance of creating an enduring government-to-government mechanism between our nation, Canada, and the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba.

The Iskatewizaagegan chief and council find that economic discrimination against indigenous people still persists throughout the Iskatewizaagegan indigenous territory despite a large presence of non-indigenous economic opportunities generating wealth from non-indigenous members. The chief and council further find that jobs in businesses and other economic opportunities on or near the territory are important resources to which indigenous people, organizations and companies must have unique preferential rights predicated on our inherent and treaty rights.

While much attention has been given to consultation, very little has been developed that will advance the accommodation aspect of this duty. Throughout our talks with the various ministries, it has been our objective to create an enduring mechanism to adopt a process that will facilitate and give structure with one another going forward which includes a commitment to negotiate in good faith towards a mutual resolution of past impacts and infringements and an approach of mitigation and accommodation for such impacts and infringements on a go-forward basis. Such a process would ensure ongoing respect for our rights and responsibilities as affirmed by treaty is maintained now and through time regarding resources in our territory within Treaty 3. Such a process would also need to be funded appropriately so that Iskatewizaagegan can achieve a fair, balanced and mutual negotiation process.

A treaty is a relationship that requires an ongoing ability to address matters fully and openly, respectful of all interests. Through a process we describe here, the opportunity to move forward in the best interests of all

emerges. Realizing the treaty requirement of consent and achieving free, prior and informed consent as affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should not be seen as a barrier or threat against development but rather as a guiding principle that will facilitate and enable sustainable opportunity and responsible development through respectful partnership.

The goal: The creation of a framework, processes and steps for achieving accommodation of our inherent and treaty rights in a manner that fosters consistency, predictability and accountability, consistent with the principle of free, prior and informed consent; and the concrete establishment of a mechanism for nation-to-nation and government-to-government interaction that fosters sustainable, environmentally enhancing and culturally congruent development.

The process: For the nation, the concept of accommodation means the orderly process by which projects and development are conceived, planned and implemented within an environment that acknowledges and protects our nation's inherent and treaty rights and interests. No one else is equipped to know, understand and protect the inherent and treaty rights of the nation except the nation itself. Therefore, when the nation is prepared to assist in the advancement of a project or development, our participation is mandatory in all phases.

While we have and will continue to consistently oppose resource development on a post-notice or claim basis, we remain open to a positive, mutually accountable process.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): This round of questions is from the opposition party. Mr. Shurman.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Chief. I appreciate you coming here, and it's an articulate presentation. But if I could boil it down to a sentence or two, you're saying, "Respect us. We deserve it." Am I right?

Chief Eli Mandamin: Yes.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Okay. If we were sitting down and we were beginning a negotiation process that would arrive at a point where you felt you were respected, what would you be saying to me, just person to person? What would you like me to do? These are budget hearings; this is about how the province spends its money. I'm quite interested to hear what you have to say, whether it's about money or not.

Chief Eli Mandamin: I have many kids, many grandkids, so I would be thanking you on their part, because it has been a long-awaited time for people to have a dialogue. It's very difficult, as a chief who has been groomed and brought up to know about the treaty, because in your education institutes, there's no mention of the treaties. That's always the first problem that I have when you send bureaucrats to me: I have to educate them. When I sensitize them, they get changed, and I have to re-educate a bunch. It's been a very endless environment. We need a future for our kids and grandkids. That's what we're about.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Would it be fair to characterize your position as feeling cheated? Do you feel cheated?

Chief Eli Mandamin: Yes. Yes, I have been cheated.

Mr. Peter Shurman: So can you quantify that in any way? You gave us an example of water being diverted and now even more being demanded to satisfy the needs of the city of Winnipeg, and you having no say, much less financial reward or any kind of quid pro quo for providing that water. What's that worth? What should the process have been, and what should be taking place now?

Chief Eli Mandamin: I think, as we're talking about in our presentation, there are a lot of issues that have happened in the past that need to be brought up in order for us to heal properly. We had a residential school in Shoal Lake, but every time, Winnipeg would say, "You're ruining the quality of water." Every economic opportunity we had or the opportunity we had to school our own kids was taken away.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Are there other examples? For example, are there mineral rights that are being exploited in your territory that you are not being compensated for?

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Chief Eli Mandamin: Yes. In fact, there are tailings there. I'm afraid for the health of my community, because MNR denies those tailings. They're right at the mouth of my lake. When you have 55 million gallons a day streaming down, the tailings of toxics are kicking into the shorelines.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Where are you now with regard to any kind of dialogue with MNR or with aboriginal affairs?

Chief Eli Mandamin: They keep lowballing us. How we're feeling in our communities right now is that we're expected, by the provinces and by the federal government, to live on these reserves and to be poor and to die poor on these reserves. That's the reality of where we're at. We're poor.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you for your question. We can have one quick question. Mr. Miller?

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, it's not that quick a question. I was going to ask about conditions on your reserve and some more information about that.

Chief Eli Mandamin: I have about 80% unemployment. I have a big project, the twinning that's developing. I have mining companies that are banging on the door. I have the water—they want to bring it up to 100 million gallons a day so they can accommodate an industrial park that they're building in Winnipeg.

As I said in my presentation, there are all kinds of activities going on around us, but we're not getting a share of anything. We're just having a lot of feel-good meetings with Ontario.

One of the things that was left behind, besides the treaty and the Indian Act, is that the boundary—when you put the boundary right on my reserve, you didn't sort out our issues. I lost 17 rice fields in Whiteshell. To us, wild rice is very important. We harvest it. It's called manomin—good seed from the Creator—and it was taken away because now Manitoba has a Wild Rice Act.

So that border has done a lot of damage to us, and it's still damaging us today.

With the water rights: Ontario gave Manitoba the water rights when the border was put in place there. So Ontario should have a role to play in the water, but they're not there at the meetings.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much, Chief, and the councillor.

TOWNSHIP OF PICKLE LAKE

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Our last speaker is Mayor Hoffman from the township of Pickle Lake. Welcome.

Mr. Roy Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm Mayor Roy Hoffman from the town of Pickle Lake. I'm also the president of the Kenora District Municipal Association. I sit on the DSSAB for the Kenora district as a board member, and I'm also a board member on NOMA. However, today I'm here mainly to speak as mayor of Pickle Lake.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank you for coming to Thunder Bay. It's not very often that we get an opportunity to talk to a group like this, so thank you very much. On that note, I'm just going to start my presentation.

Pickle Lake is located 535 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay by road. We are a small, remote community with a population of 425 people and an annual operating budget of approximately \$2 million. Just as a side note: It's a six-hour drive to get here. I have to spend a night in a hotel. With per diems, mileage and everything else, this 15 minutes is costing me a thousand bucks, just to give you some sense of how everything up north is way more expensive.

The operation of our water and sewer plants consumes 20% of our budget, or \$400,000 annually. The township only recovers approximately \$330,000 of this, even though we know we're supposed to be on a cost-recovery basis. Over the past six years, the township has been raising the water and sewer rates by 5% to 10% per year, so we've been doing our part. Our taxes have gone up probably about 2% a year. But the operating cost of \$400,000—that still doesn't include capital. That's, on average, about \$50,000 a year for what I'll call just normal expenditures, things that you expect to go wrong. For example, last month we had two pumps we had to rebuild—\$9,000 each. We had a worm drive go on our sewage plant. That was about \$10,000 to fix, and that was about two or three months ago. However, every once in a while a huge capital expense comes up. Right now, the situation we are faced with is, our water tower has developed a leak, and all indications are it's going to be about a half-million dollar job to fix this problem. Just to get it inspected is \$30,000, just to find out what the problem is.

The infrastructure funding programs that the government currently has, this one-third, one-third, one-third split, just doesn't work for a small community like Pickle Lake. The township has no surpluses at year end to put

away into reserves. Virtually all our monies are spent every year. All monies that would have been surplus are spent keeping our water and sewage plant running.

About six or seven years ago, our issue was the costing with the OPP. Now our big issue is the water and sewer. Every time we turn around, there's something breaking down. And it's not to say we're not running a good water and sewer plant; before Walkerton, pre-Walkerton, we had great water. Now we still have great water. However, we have a lot more rules and regulations to deal with. That is very hard for a small community, because whether you're a community of 5,000 people or a community of 500 people, the cost of operating a water plant is the same.

Our town office is located in an ATCO trailer. Our community hall was built in the 1970s and has not had any kind of facelift since. Our fire department has to rely on old fire trucks that are in constant need of repair. The frustrating part of this is that the township is mandated to provide the water and sewage at a level that is not sustainable, and we have to sit back and watch the rest of our community's infrastructure suffer.

This is what I was saying. It's really hard. We're watching our community hall and everything, and we have no monies to fix them up. To apply for a grant—like I was saying, that one third, one third, one third—just does not work. We're okay with doing smaller projects, I'll say. Like we're saying, if a pump goes, we have to spend \$5,000, \$10,000. No problem. That's well within our means. Even a project of \$50,000 is maybe within our means. But when you're talking projects that are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions of dollars, it doesn't work for us, really, very well.

A number of years ago, when the infrastructure stimulus funding was out there for everyone, Pickle Lake was one of the only communities that did not receive any funding. The township had put an application in for a new multi-purpose facility that would have a new town office, a new community hall and a courthouse under one roof. The project was approximately \$5.1 million and was approved. However, several things happened that were out of the township's control.

First, by the time we got our approval and were ready to move forward to the bid process, numerous construction projects were already in play in the northwest. By the time we did go to bid, we only received two bids, the lowest being \$6.6 million and the other \$10 million. Secondly, part of the funding that would have come from NOHFC to bring our one-third portion down to approximately 10% fell through, and the whole project ended.

This brings me to this next point, which I said at the beginning: Being in a remote community such as Pickle Lake has significantly higher costs of operating, whether it's construction, whether it's attracting good people and so on. It's a much higher cost. My recommendation and what I would like to see is one of two things: either you come up with a funding formula when it comes to infrastructure that is geared to—when I say small commu-

ities, not 10,000 people, that's a city; not even 5,000, that's a big town that has a different dynamic. You have to come up with funding that is geared to small, rural communities of less than 500, less than 600, less than 700. That is within our means.

The other thing you can do, which was brought up, I believe, in the Walkerton report—the recommendations to the government; I believe it was number 84, but I'm not 100% sure on that—is that the government “may” assist small water-users financially. That's the big word: “may.” But that's another way out. If we had some help on the water and sewer side of it, that would free up cash on the other side to apply for some of these one-third, one-third, one-third grants.

Ring of Fire: The Ring of Fire is a mining opportunity that has the potential to drive the economy in north-western Ontario for years. Pickle Lake is one of the closest municipalities to this project, yet indications are that a north-south route versus an east-west route through Pickle Lake is being considered.

Presently, Pickle Lake is the only route which all goods pass through to get to the many First Nations communities north of us. Pickle Lake services approximately 18 of these communities with everything from fuel, building supplies, heavy equipment, mail, groceries—you name it, it goes through Pickle Lake.

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The decision to only service the Ring of Fire with a north-south route will have a drastic negative economic impact on our community. Businesses in our community that have built up over the last 30 years to supply these communities stand to lose 30% of their business. This north-south route will hook up six First Nations communities immediately, with the potential to hook up with more in the future. Pickle Lake, Sioux Lookout, Dryden and Ignace all stand to have a negative economic impact if the north-south route is chosen.

The solution: Give Cliffs Natural Resources and Noront Resources the north-south rail line only, to enable them to get their product out to market as cheaply as possible, and give Pickle Lake the all-weather road to the Ring of Fire so that our region, the Kenora district—which, by the way, the Ring of Fire falls in—can retain our connection to the First Nation communities and benefit from the mining activity in the area.

The comparison I like to use here, and it's sort of a reverse scenario, is: What if the federal government of Canada decided to close the Pigeon River crossing? What economic impact would that have on the Thunder Bay region and Duluth and so on and so forth? You're talking massive. Well, this is the other way around. The government is now talking about creating a whole new different access to the Far North, which currently is through Pickle Lake, through the winter road system. It's going to have a drastic impact on us, unless that win-win situation where they get the rail, and we get the all-weather road, and everybody's happy.

Lastly, the government has spent a lot of monies on the big three in southern Ontario. These mining oppor-

tunities will have an enormous impact on the economy of the entire province. The government of Ontario must step up to the plate and build the required infrastructure needed to move these projects forward.

A case in point: Pickle Lake has been maxed out on our power line that comes from Ear Falls since the Musselwhite mine was built in 1995. Musselwhite is still short on power and has to generate some of their needs by using diesel generators. But right now, the way the current system is set up, if a new mine were to open in Pickle Lake today, the mining company or corporation would be responsible to get the power to the mine site. This would require the building of a power line 350 kilometres long from Dryden or Ignace and a capital investment of at least \$250 million. This might be within a big corporation's ability to pay, but for a small junior mining company, this makes the project totally uneconomical.

This is why the government of Ontario has to step up to the plate and provide the necessary infrastructure needed to get these projects up and running. Once built, then the government can charge a toll, fee or some kind of a payback scheme over a period of years to recoup all or part of the investment. I sometimes wonder, if we had power in 1995 in Pickle Lake, how many mines would we have had—and the economic benefit to the province?

With that, it sounds like doom and gloom, but there are good things happening in Pickle Lake as well. I'm very optimistic that, through some of these activities, there is prosperity on the way. But these are the realities we have to face today.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. This round of questions is for the third party. Ms. Campbell?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: How much time do we have?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Four minutes.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Okay.

I want to thank you very much for coming here and for making the presentation. It's so important that we have perspectives and people weighing in all across the province, especially as we're leading up to this budget.

One of the questions that I have is about toll roads. It's something that I asked the mayor of Nipigon earlier, and it's something that the new Premier, Premier Wynne, has said might be a way to address some of the infrastructure needs in small northern and rural communities—in fact, communities across northern Ontario. Is that something that you think is the answer to some of the municipal infrastructure problems and challenges that you have in a community like Pickle Lake?

Mr. Roy Hoffman: Wow. I was going to say, "Explain toll roads." The only thing that I've heard about toll roads was, actually, dealing with the mining companies. I didn't realize there was something on the table about toll roads for all users. I'm not sure if that would go over well.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Okay. The other question I have for you is, you talked about the responsibility that the province has to step up and to facilitate this and, I

would say, meet industry partway to make sure that this happens. Would you say that they have this responsibility especially given the fact that it's our area where they're standing to make billions of dollars?

Mr. Roy Hoffman: Yes.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Is there anything else that you'd like to add that you didn't have the opportunity to add?

Mr. Roy Hoffman: I think it's money well invested. There's going to be a report coming out shortly from the Thunder Bay Mining Readiness Strategy, and there are already some numbers out there from the ambassadors' club in Thunder Bay about the money and taxes that the government is going to actually generate from all this mining activity. It's an investment, but the infrastructure has to be there to collect on the money. Like I was saying, a lot of these companies can't afford to put in the infrastructure.

I compare it to the national railroad when it was built. The government of Canada—somebody—had a vision. They built a railroad to where, at that point? To nowhere. But there was a vision that this was going to be a big economic boom for the country.

The government of Ontario has to come up with a big-picture vision of this whole north—not just the Ring of Fire, but the access to the communities, the power to the communities. I think that's what's lacking here, this overall lack of vision for how we're going to deal with opening up the north. There has got to be a big-picture strategy there.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you very much for your presentation. I appreciate it.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. That ends the presentations for this round of hearings.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe the Clerk is circulating some motions from the third party. Before we go through this conversation, I just want to remind members that tomorrow morning, we commence, at 9 o'clock back at Queen's Park, the writing of the report.

The motions before us will be discussed at tomorrow's meeting. Okay? The member who is presenting this will be tabling it for the purpose of the records. I just want to make sure people understand that. There will be no discussion because we have understood from last week's conversation, and historically, that the writing of the report of the finance committee is done in camera, and we need to respect that process.

Ms. Campbell or Mr. Vanthof, which one of you wants to take the lead on this?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to file these four motions to put them on the record.

Motion 1: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs recommends that the Minister of Finance, in the government's 2013-14 budget:

—direct FSCO to reduce average, industry-wide, private passenger auto insurance premiums by 15% in the next 12 months.

Motion 2: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs recommends that the Minister of Finance, in the government's 2013-14 budget:

—make permanent the temporary restrictions on the implementation of HST input tax credits that would apply to corporations and financial institutions for items like meals, entertainment, telecommunications and company vehicles;

—implement the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, the Drummond report, recommendation of reducing the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payment of provincial corporate income tax by shifting profits and losses across Canada;

—maintain the EHT exemption rule for small business but at the same time, eliminate the exemption on the first \$400,000 in payroll for all companies with payrolls over \$5 million, or roughly 100 employees.

Motion 3: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs recommends that the Minister of Finance, in the government's 2013-14 budget, implement a youth job creation initiative that would create at least 25,000 jobs over two years for participants by:

—providing young people, aged 16 to 26 years, an entry point to long-term employment opportunities, where participants would learn life and work skills while earning income;

—establishing a fund that would commit at least \$78 million in the first year and at least \$117 million the following year towards creating jobs for youth and to fund on-the-job training in these jobs.

Motion 4: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs recommends that the Minister of Finance implement a balanced approach to balancing the books without leaving people falling further behind.

We will be asking for an open session tomorrow during report writing to debate and vote on these motions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. We end the session today. All right, we are adjourned today. We are back to Queen's Park tomorrow at 9 a.m. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 1551.

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