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Monday 18 January 2016

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Lundi 18 janvier 2016

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Pre-budget consultations

**Comité permanent des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Consultations prébudgétaires

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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

Monday 18 January 2016

Lundi 18 janvier 2016

The committee met at 0900 in the Sheraton Hamilton Hotel, Hamilton.

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to commence the committee, because we have a time sensitivity this morning so that we can be out of here to head to Windsor this afternoon. Good morning, and welcome to Hamilton. We're going to begin the 2016 pre-budget consultations.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe the first item on the agenda is the report of the subcommittee. Laura, are you going to move the report? Do you want to read the report first?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Yes, I will read the report.

Your subcommittee on committee business met on Wednesday, December 2, 2015, to consider the method of proceeding on pre-budget consultation 2016, and recommends the following:

(1) That multiple requests to appear received from the same organization or individual be considered by the committee on a case-by-case basis.

(2) That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized prior to the adoption of the report of the subcommittee to commence making any preliminary arrangements to facilitate the committee's proceedings.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Do we have any questions or comments on the subcommittee report? Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Chair. How many people were on the wait-list, then, for the Toronto date, on Wednesday, December 2?

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Katch Koch): In Toronto, we had 160 requests. Out of 160, we scheduled 56, which was the maximum for the two days.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. So, point number one, we're going to look at these case by case. The groups that you've already approved for the Toronto dates: Have they also appeared in other locations, like Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay or here?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Katch Koch): They have been identified for the subcommittee to make the selection. The point is to let the subcommittee members know that it is possible that groups may have applied at multiple locations. Ultimately, the decision was up to the subcommittee to make, whether to select one group for multiple locations.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Any other questions or comments to the subcommittee report? Ms. Vernile?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I would just like to add to that. Our experience last year was that there were certain groups who appeared before us numerous times. In particular, the chiropractors come to mind. We heard from them over and over again, and they all seemed to have the same message in each of the communities that we travelled to. It might be a better use of our time and for those who are on the waiting list to specifically hear from people who have unique and original messages to give to us, as opposed to hearing the same thing said over and over again.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Any other questions and comments? Seeing none, someone needs to move the subcommittee report. Mrs. Albanese?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'll do it.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

AUTISM SERVICES WATERLOO REGION

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe the first presenter is here: Autism Services Waterloo Region. Good morning. Welcome.

While you're taking your seat, I'm going to just remind all the witnesses here, and I know there will be others watching at home, that each of the presenters will be given 15 minutes for their presentations, followed by five minutes of questioning. It's on a rotating basis, so the first round of questions will be coming from the official opposition party.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Chair, may I? I'm looking at the timing here, and it would appear that each presenter has 15 minutes, beginning to end. Is it—

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): It's 10 minutes of presentation, followed by five minutes. That's what the subcommittee has agreed to. The total is 15 minutes in a

slot, but they are only speaking for 10 to allow each party to ask questions.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Okay. You said 15 minutes of speaking on their part.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): No, 15 in total: 10 for presentation, followed by five minutes.

Before you begin, can you please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard: your name as well as your position with Autism Services Waterloo Region. You may begin any time.

Ms. Barb Hill: My name is Barb Hill. I'm a volunteer with Autism Services Waterloo Region. I'm joined by Jayne Matzeg from KidsAbility and Iuliana Ghintuiala, one of our ASWR parents.

Autism Services Waterloo Region, also known as ASWR, is a successful inter-organizational collaboration and partnership from Waterloo region that is together for the purpose of improving the outcomes for families with autism. This is a vulnerable population where there are often complex and multiple diagnoses which often impact siblings and very much challenge marriages.

We have a mom here who will talk about what ASWR has done for her. KidsAbility is one of our backbone organizations; the other one is Extend-A-Family. Sadly, Maria is in bed with the flu today.

The original goal of ASWR was to increase community capacity to support our families with autism or a suspicion of autism, beyond direct service. Our vision is to achieve inclusion and belonging for everyone, critical to any healthy community.

The collaborative membership list is impressive. It includes all agencies serving this demographic, along with two boards of education, a University of Waterloo psychologist and Conestoga College. We've been meeting monthly for over six years, with two staff positions, including a family resource coach and a coordinator role.

There are three things I want you to take from this presentation: (1) an understanding of how the collaborative supports families; (2) the efficiencies it brings to agencies and service providers; and (3) clarity about what we need from the province.

Autism is not going away. Numbers are rising dramatically. We are a community with a significant growth rate of over 6,500 babies a year. Add to this immigrants and refugees. Kids are being diagnosed at an unprecedented rate, now at one in 77.

0910

ASWR provides many referrals and resources to families while on lengthy wait-lists for IBI and ABA. With ASWR as part of the system, we are achieving a seamless system of services that simply makes life easier for vulnerable families and invests in their future well-being.

Our family resource coach is a family-centred support line for families with or without a diagnosis. It provides a single point of contact for a full range of information resources. It is accessible. There are no age restrictions and no eligibility criteria. The family resource coach connects families to community-based resources, inclusive

of social and peer connections, which enhance a sense of community and belonging. Service is continuous and responsive. There is no wait-list, and families can call as many times as they need to.

There's a centralized resource pool for information on everything from autism-friendly dentists to recreation, sibling workshops and ABA.

The resource coach provides hope and alleviates anxiety for families. We know that this mitigates stress and other mental health risks downstream.

Now Iuliana will tell us about her experience.

Ms. Iuliana Ghintuiala: Thank you. My name is Iuliana, and I am a mother of an autistic boy, Andreas, who's 11. We came to Canada three years ago, and Andy got his formal diagnosis two years ago in Toronto.

We moved to Kitchener after his diagnosis and started looking for services specifically for special kids, and we came across KidsAbility. We went there, and we got an appointment with Katie Galashan, the family resource coach from ASWR, in less than one day.

In one hour with Katie, we were introduced to a whole new world. He was referred to ABA services. He got special services at home. We got help with the disability tax credit application. She helped us with the financial application for President's Choice, and later with Jennifer Ashleigh, so that we registered Andy for special hockey and swimming lessons, which he never got before. He joined Progressive Behavior for therapy and Firefly for social skills. Katie helped us connect with the best approach for Andy's IEP at school.

ASWR is very easy to access. It's just one call away or one email away. What Autism Services did for us is incredible. It opened a new world of opportunities for our son and a new horizon for us as parents. Without ASWR, we would be lost and without connections to other families.

Ms. Barb Hill: Thank you, Iuliana.

In 2009, over 300 families completed a survey identifying the gaps in service and information resources in the region. We've built a large collection of information resources for families on the ASWR website. This helps families self-serve, but it also helps us manage our staff capacity as demand rises, and eliminates duplication by individual agencies.

Any agency can refer families to ASWR. It is a one-stop information hub. This is value for money. Last year, ASWR served over 400 families, with over 830 requests for information. Requests for support have been doubling year over year. We don't see this changing.

The monthly collaborative meetings, and the ASWR program bulletin, and many new partnerships are the mechanism for eliminating duplication in programming and achieving that continuum of service.

ASWR uses working groups to collectively problem-solve barriers to these kids achieving their potential. We are currently addressing the challenge of school refusal. This is an investment in amazing untapped potential and resources in these kids. Our next goal is to engage the business community, to understand and support their

engagement in meaningful vocations and community life. This is critical to their well-being. We need to understand accommodation.

In 2015, we also completed an evaluation of the collaborative itself. Some 97% of our members stated that if ASWR no longer existed, it would mean loss of support for families and loss of communication between organizations—impacting their ability to identify and address gaps—and the routine sharing of information which avoids duplication. Quite sadly and simply, we know we would go back to a siloed world.

This is an upstream investment. It is a modest investment that has increased our community's capacity to support vulnerable families in a holistic and cost-effective way. We believe ASWR is great value for money. Our model is replicable and we are willing to share with other communities.

Jayne will speak to the money side of things.

Ms. Jayne Matzeg: Sure. What we're looking for specifically is \$250,000 annualized. Over the past five years, ASWR has been supported at the local level through various foundations, through agencies, direct funds and in-kind, as well as some donations that we've been able to attract. We've spent over \$270,000 of our own funds on this important and effective project, but we can no longer sustain this. We are asking that \$250,000 be placed in the Ontario budget annually so we can sustain the investment in Autism Services Waterloo Region that the local community has invested in over the past five years.

As our model is replicable, we would be willing to work with any community that's interested in creating a similar collaborative to benefit their families and children with autism.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): You're finished your presentation. I'm going to turn it to Mr. Fedeli. Do you want to begin the questioning, Mr. Fedeli?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much. First, I'd like to start by congratulating you on the presentation and the wonderful efforts that you have made in your community. The fact that you have almost two dozen partners that work with you and support each other is an amazing achievement, and I congratulate you on that.

Ms. Barb Hill: Thank you. We believe it aligns with your goals, actually.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: One of my questions was going to be about your funding. You have been generating approximately \$250,000 a year from donations. Am I led to understand—is that the sole source of your funding?

Ms. Barb Hill: We were very fortunate to receive two over two years, so a total of four years' funding, from a local foundation in Waterloo region, a family foundation. First of all, the first year we did it with no funding, just as a proof of concept. That funding is running out. We have also managed to start to increase our profile and attract some private donations.

In addition, our two, I would say, backbone organizations, Extend-A-Family and KidsAbility—KidsAbility has been contributing all of the infrastructure costs, along

with cash. Extend-A-Family has been supporting all of the HR financial services, plus the mentoring every time we get an MSW student etc. So it has truly been a collaborative of those two backbones.

We have a third agency that has, in the past, been able to come up with a small donation as well.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Is that a government agency?

Ms. Barb Hill: Yes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I don't see the Trillium Foundation logo here anywhere. Is that a source that you can look at as a temporary source to help continue with you?

Ms. Barb Hill: We actually have submitted more than one application to Trillium and are anxiously waiting for the next round of decisions.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: So your ask: When you began your presentation, you said there would be three things, and the last would be your definitive ask. That's your ask, a \$250,000 annual fund to assist this organization?

Ms. Barb Hill: Yes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Okay. I have another question, then. You talked about the resource coaches and the fact that there is no age restriction. Is that typical across Ontario? I haven't seen that, personally, in my northern riding.

Ms. Barb Hill: Sorry, is which typical?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Your resource coach not having any age restrictions.

Ms. Barb Hill: The point of the family resource coach is that we're there to provide information about how to support the journey with autism. We don't care if that child is six years old or 16 years old.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: What about over 18?

Ms. Barb Hill: If we have resources in the community, we will absolutely refer them; absolutely.

0920

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You also talked about gaps in services. Can you just expand, for the short time that we have left, on just what you meant by that? I didn't take enough notes on that one.

Ms. Barb Hill: I would say perfect examples are some of the parent support workshops, sibling workshops, and gaps in terms of social skills. It's the non-direct therapy services that support the whole family journey.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again, I want to say thank you for not only a wonderful presentation, but for the obvious good work that you're doing in your community. It's deeply appreciated, I know, by the families. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you for your presentation. Before you leave, you have until February 2 at 5 p.m. to make any written submissions to the committee. All right? Thank you very much, ladies.

The next group before the committee is the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic: Mr. Craig Foye. Okay, I'm going to call from the list coming down.

CARPENTER HOSPICE

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Is the Carpenter Hospice here? Why don't you come up? I don't see the legal clinic here.

For the Clerk's information, the legal clinic is not here. Just for the committee's purposes, we are now having the Carpenter Hospice here, not the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic because they are not here. Is everybody clear with that?

Good morning, Ms. Candy. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questions will be from the third party. You may begin anytime. Please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard. Thank you.

Ms. Karen Candy: Good morning. Thank you for allowing me to present to the committee today. My name is Karen Candy and I am the executive director of Carpenter Hospice.

Care of individuals who are dying is an important part of our health care system. Palliative care meets not only the physical needs of individuals, but the psychosocial, cultural, emotional and spiritual needs of each person and their family. The goal of hospice palliative care is to improve the quality of life for patients and their families facing life-threatening illnesses. Palliative care may be the focus of care when a cure for the illness is not possible. Palliative care services in the province help these people live out their remaining time in comfort and with dignity.

Quality hospice palliative care neither hastens death nor prolongs life. As cited in the Auditor General's report, our health care system continues to underutilize and under-deliver palliative services. Improving access to quality hospice palliative care must remain a public policy and funding priority.

Carpenter Hospice is a 10-bed residential hospice located in Burlington. We were the third residential hospice built in the province, and we opened our doors in 2002. Our hospice team is made up of dedicated staff and volunteers committed to making every moment matter for our residents, their families and our program participants. We have a clinical team of 26; this team includes RNs, RPNs and PSWs who provide care to our residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We have a leadership team made up of 11 full- and part-time staff that supervises and assists in the delivery of all of our services and programs. Carpenter Hospice has a mighty team of more than 180 volunteers who give of their time to keep costs down by filling roles such as reception, resident care, companionship, cooking in our kitchen making meals for our residents, maintenance, gardening, fundraising and administrative duties. We are integrated into our community and work with all of our health care providers in the Burlington area to provide care.

While my presentation is important, I would like to take a moment to read an email that I received. Every day I receive emails and letters from families who have spent time at Carpenter Hospice and I think their words probably speak louder than anything I can say today.

"Although my dad's time spent at Carpenter Hospice was brief, words can't begin to describe what an amazing, life-changing experience it was for me and my family. The outstanding care, kindness, compassion and

support wrapped us in a blanket to help make a very difficult journey feel easier to bear. We were so grateful and touched by all the extraordinary men and women that worked there and the experience completely restored my faith in humanity, this in a world that some days can leave you wondering. Every community needs a place like Carpenter Hospice to remind us all how to live like wonderful human beings and to teach us how to die with dignity and grace."

Hospice palliative care is cost-effective, compassionate and ethical care that helps people live well and comfortably until their natural death. Hospices are truly as much about living as they are about dying. If you were to ask a group of people where they would prefer to die, the majority would answer at home. While home may be the preferred location, it may not be possible for reasons such as disease process, the medical care required and resources in the home. While some individuals may not be able to stay at home, hospice is perfect for those who don't need the expensive high level of care provided in hospital. Hospice palliative care is the perfect option. It is far less expensive than hospital care. The recent Auditor General's report cites that hospital beds are two and a half times the cost of a hospice bed. Hospice care frees up acute-care hospital beds and has been proven to reduce emergency room visits. Residential hospices are vital, as we provide very cost-effective care in a home like setting at no cost to the end-user.

Hospices look beyond end-of-life care and recognize the need to provide services across the continuum of care, which includes diagnosis, treatment, death and bereavement. Many hospices provide numerous community programs such as day wellness, visiting volunteer, caregiver support, and grief and bereavement support programs. Hospices could be doing more in the community, but funding is hampering our growth.

Carpenter is at a crossroads. Without increased operating funds, it will be very difficult for us to expand our programs and services to meet the increased demands of Burlington residents. When Carpenter Hospice first opened, our average length of stay was approximately 30 days; our current length of stay is approximately 16. A shorter length of stay means we are able to provide more care to more Burlington residents. While our occupancy rate has remained constant at approximately 85%, our throughput, or the number of individuals served, continues to grow.

Hospice palliative care in Ontario is excellent, but there isn't enough to meet the needs now, and there aren't nearly enough resources to meet the demand for services our aging population is creating. Many communities are poised to provide more capacity and care, but funding is needed immediately to achieve this increase in capacity and care.

While we are grateful for the funding we've received from the government, our current funding model is limited, as it only covers a portion of our costs and can only be spent on nursing and PSW care. For Carpenter Hospice, current government funding equates to about

43% of my operating budget and does not cover all of my nursing and PSW costs. Each year, Carpenter Hospice must raise \$1.3 million to fund our operating budget to include items such as food, non-CCAC medical supplies, heat, hydro and our community programs, which include a wellness program, caregiver support and grief and bereavement services.

Many communities across the province have fund-raised the capital money needed to open a hospice and are ready to provide care but don't have the operating dollars in place. Increasing the operational envelope will provide sufficient and stable funding to the sector and ensure that residential hospices can continue to provide vital care and their services to the community. Freeing up fundraised dollars to provide more community programs and services is vital to providing quality palliative care to Ontarians in any care setting, anywhere in the province.

Hospice palliative care is good value. It is cost-effective and desirable. Not only can hospice care save the system money, but hospice palliative care is holistic, attending to the patient, family and caregiver needs.

On behalf of Carpenter Hospice and other hospices in this province, I am requesting that the committee recommend the increased funding envelope and limit and reduce the restrictions on what we can spend the money on.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much, Ms. Candy. I'm going to turn to Ms. Fife to start this round of questioning.

Ms. Fife?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Ms. Candy, for your presentation. I think you've made a really compelling case from an economic perspective, but also as a quality-of-care issue. I think when you look at \$469 a day versus \$1,200 a day in hospital, the math tells that story.

I'm trying to get a sense of some of the weaknesses in the current funding model, if you would address those, and then I have one other question around the fundraising component.

Ms. Karen Candy: Sure. The biggest gap or weakness is that we can only spend the government dollars on clinical care, so that can only be spent on salary for our nurses and any medical supplies through CCAC. I cannot use any of the government dollars for heat, hydro, food or any of the other costs, so it's limited, really, to costs affecting the 10 residents in the hospice. To expand programs and go out into the community and service people in their homes or help them before they require hospice care, I have to use fundraised dollars.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's a huge amount of money that you fundraise. Is it \$1.3 million?

Ms. Karen Candy: Yes, \$1.3 million every year.

0930

Ms. Catherine Fife: And how sustainable is that, if you don't mind commenting?

Ms. Karen Candy: For Burlington, personally, we are very fortunate in that we've been able to meet that target, but I know some of my colleagues struggle to meet

payroll and to provide the care in communities that perhaps do not have the donor resources.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So what I'll take away is that the funding model for hospice care needs to be completely revamped. Hasn't that been in the works? I mean, the Auditor General, as you mentioned, highlighted the fact that Ontario really has no palliative care system, and this is dating back from 2014.

Ms. Karen Candy: Correct.

Ms. Catherine Fife: What are the obstacles? What is the resistance for the government to create a funding mechanism that actually serves the needs of hospice care?

Ms. Karen Candy: I can't speak specifically for the government, but I'm here to ask that all parties work towards a sustainable funding model that will ensure palliative care services well into the future.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe Mr. Miller has a question for you.

Mr. Paul Miller: Actually, I want to commend you for the job you do. Our community works quite closely with the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice, a very successful building they built, and the program has been wonderful. It certainly gives people some dignity when they are facing the final hours. I recommend highly that these types of organizations are promoted and financed, because hospitals can be kind of cold and cruel at the end. This is a homelike setting and it's a wonderful procedure. As far as dollars go, it's certainly cheaper than taking up hospital beds, and you have one-on-one personal care, which you may not get in a hospital because you have different shifts and different workers. These people develop relationships with the people who are there and they almost become like family.

I really encourage all parties to look at continued and increased funding for the hospice program in this province.

Ms. Karen Candy: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation and your written submission, Ms. Candy.

HAMILTON COMMUNITY LEGAL CLINIC

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe we have the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic here before us, and I believe the Clerk has the written submission. Mr. Foye, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning, and this round of questioning will be coming from the government side. You may begin any time. Please identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard.

Mr. Craig Foye: My name is Craig Foye. I'm a staff lawyer with the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic. Thank you very much, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to speak with you today. I very much apologize for being late. I was foolishly waiting in the hall and missed that I should have been in here.

I would suggest to the committee, as an overarching theme of my submission today, that this province, the province of Ontario, is at a critical juncture with regard to its opportunity to create a legacy of evidence-based social policy in the province.

I'd like to talk a little bit about that. I will mention our specific recommendations, and you'll see them in our submission. I won't go through all of them, but they include, perhaps most importantly for the legacy part, to create a permanent arm's-length institution to recommend evidence-based social assistance rates in the province of Ontario; also some immediate increases to social assistance rates; the reinstatement of the Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit as a mandatory benefit to ensure that people on social assistance programs don't end up homeless due to a temporary crisis in their lives; and a very critical issue in Hamilton right now: to provide funding so that Hamilton can keep their trusteeship programs going for people in receipt of social assistance who require those programs.

I had a lot of opportunity this weekend and over the past couple of months to look at the current situation in Hamilton. I'd like to talk to you a little bit about the current situation.

Currently at the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic we're writing a follow-up report to our 2006 report to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. I'm sorry: I don't have a copy for you today, as it's still in draft stage, but we'll be finished by next week and I can provide, if you would like, a copy of that report to the committee.

In writing that report, in drafting that report, it's quite striking how little has changed since our 2006 report with regard to social assistance rates and the inadequacy of those rates. The shelter allowance portion of social assistance rates still falls hundreds of dollars below average rents for really every family size. What that means is that families on social assistance are falling farther and farther behind every month that they're on social assistance.

Housing unaffordability is not just limited to those on social assistance. We know that in the city of Hamilton, 43% of all renters are paying more than 30% of their income towards rent, which is the guideline for affordability.

Not surprisingly, we're seeing hunger in our community in unprecedented numbers: 20,000 people in Hamilton every month going to food banks. Not surprisingly, 73% of those people going to food banks are actually in receipt of benefits under our provincial social assistance programs but can't afford to eat.

As an aside, I should say that with regard to the creation of a permanent institution to set evidence-based social assistance rates, our former Minister of Community and Social Services, the Honourable Ted McMeekin, before he was "Honourable," had introduced a private member's bill in the Legislature in June 2007 to establish what would have been called the Ontario Social Assistance Rates Board, which would have been a permanent

institution made up of an expert panel to recommend evidence-based social assistance rates on an annual basis.

As the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario has noted, there is currently no methodology for setting social assistance rates. They are arbitrary numbers really determined by political will.

Perhaps an anecdote from my work—I'm told that these things are helpful when you're making presentations: I'm a lawyer working in Hamilton, and one of the things that I do quite often, as a lawyer in a community legal clinic, is work as tenant duty counsel at the Landlord and Tenant Board of Ontario. One of the most unfortunate tasks with that job is that I often have to tell people who are in receipt of provincial social assistance that the best thing they can do is get evicted. Not only can they not afford to pay back the arrears of rent—and make no mistake, almost all of the eviction applications at the Landlord and Tenant Board are for arrears of rent. Not only can they not afford to enter into a repayment program to pay back those arrears of rent, they can't afford to pay their next month's rent, because social assistance rates are so low that they are falling behind every single month.

I've spoken to people from the school board in Hamilton who confirmed to me that a lot of our schools in the inner city and poor areas have over 80% turnover rates. What that means is that all of those children are moving every year and going from school to school. That's going to have huge effects for the future of our province.

I would suggest to this august committee that the social safety net in our province is currently broken due to long-term under-resourcing, and is currently creating a very expensive legacy of poor health, poor educational attainment and widespread misery—and I can guarantee you that that is happening, because I see those people in my office every day—in the province of Ontario. This government, as I said at the outset, has an opportunity to change that. I would suggest to you that the first step to changing that is to start basing these decisions, which I would suggest to you, again, are some of the most important decisions that this government or any government will ever be tasked with—don't allow those decisions to be made by political will. They're too important for that. They need to be made by arm's-length, permanent and evidence-based social policy institutions that will not allow this chronic under-resourcing to happen again due to a lack of political will.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. I'm going to turn to the government side and Ms. Albanese to begin this round of questioning.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: First of all, thank you for your presentation and thank you for the work that you do. I think that being a lawyer and working for a legal community clinic is commendable.

The first question I will ask is, have you made any submissions to the new poverty strategy that the government is entertaining with Minister Matthews in regard to this non-partisan way to look at social assistance rates?

0940

Mr. Craig Foye: Yes, we have. We have made a submission. Every time we've been invited to make a submission on the poverty reduction strategies in the province of Ontario, we have made a submission from the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, and I believe our partners at the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, as well as many other groups in city, have also made similar recommendations.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Okay. The other question—actually, before I go on to the other question, I wanted to ask about this follow-up report that you said would be ready next week. Would the committee be able to get a copy?

Mr. Craig Foye: Absolutely.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I think it would be in the interest of all the members.

Mr. Craig Foye: Absolutely, and I apologize that I don't have a draft ready today.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: No, that's fine. If we can get it, I think it would be helpful to us.

You were also talking about, I guess, a problem in Hamilton specifically but that we see in other parts of the province as well, even in Toronto. I represent a riding that is considered very low income and I see issues of affordability with rent. Do you think the solution to that is, let's say, looking at the social assistance rates, an increase of the social assistance rates, or do you see other types of solutions that you would suggest to the government as well?

Mr. Craig Foye: Thank you very much for that question, because I think that's a very important question.

First of all, I'd say at the outset that this government has made some significant efforts, particularly with regard to minimum wage, to try and improve that, and I still think that something similar to what we're suggesting with social assistance needs to happen with minimum wage, but tying the minimum wage—the significant increases and then tying the minimum wage to the consumer price index is a huge improvement on what had happened in the past. So similar things need to happen with social assistance.

With regard to the question of whether just an increase in rates is enough, no, I think that certainly there is more work that needs to be done in fine-tuning our social assistance system. What I would suggest to the committee is that the necessary condition for social assistance reform is both an increase in rates—a substantial increase in rates and resourcing—as well as basing the setting of those rates in the future on evidence. So it's making sure that it's arm's length from government to keep away from political will, and to make sure that those decisions in the future are based on evidence of what it actually costs to live in any of the communities across Ontario.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: And therefore based, let's say, on statistical facts, or do you also see a panel of experts working at this?

Mr. Craig Foye: What was the former Bill 235 which was introduced by Ted McMeekin back in 2007 would

have created an expert panel that would have been resourced by the government and would have been tasked with providing a recommendation on an annual basis to the government regarding evidence-based social assistance rates. That evidence is really not rocket science. I mean, there is research being done across Canada on what average rents are. Every municipality, certainly every larger municipality in the province of Ontario, is doing research on what a healthy food basket costs every month for every selected family size. So, really, this research is available. It's just not being done yet.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Okay. Thank you very much again for presenting to our committee.

Mr. Craig Foye: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you, Mr. Foye. Before you leave, any written submission to this committee needs to be submitted by Tuesday, February 2, at 5 p.m. I know that you made reference to that report that you're preparing, so if you could ensure that report comes to the Clerk's office by February 2 at 5 p.m.

Mr. Craig Foye: I certainly will, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the committee.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you for being here and for your written submission.

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE,
ONTARIO ASSOCIATION
OF SOCIAL WORKERS,
HAMILTON BRANCH

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Our next presenter is the social action committee of the Ontario Association of Social Workers, Hamilton branch. Can the two witnesses coming before the committee please come forward? I believe there is Mr. Basbaum and Ms. McKay. Welcome. Thank you very much. Come on down. I believe the Clerk is coming around with your written submission.

You may begin any time. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questions will be from the official opposition party.

When you begin, please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard.

Ms. Sally Palmer: Thank you. My name is Sally Palmer. I'm the chair of the social action committee of the Ontario Association of Social Workers, for the Hamilton branch. With me I have Mel Basbaum, who will also be speaking; he's a member of our committee. We may have a third person—

Mr. Mel Basbaum: She's here.

Ms. Sally Palmer: —good—Sandy Leyland, who is going to talk about the lived experience of being on social assistance.

We would certainly echo everything that Craig Foye just said to you: that social assistance rates are far too low, there should be an independent rates board, and we certainly need a restoration of the Community Start Up

and Maintenance Benefit. His mention of 80% of children moving schools in central Hamilton every year shows how much mobility there is. Families are usually leaving because they couldn't afford to pay the rent, and this is due to the low levels of social assistance.

In November 2015, the benefits for most categories of Ontario Works increased by only 1%. This has been going on ever since the Liberals came in. To their credit, at least they're giving some increase, because the Conservatives before them gave nothing, but 1% does not cover inflation. The inflation rate for food in Hamilton over the last two years was 11%, and the inflation rate for accommodation was between 4% and 9%.

Unattached people who have no children actually received an increase of 25%, which is 3.8% of what they get, and the reason for that is that it's a belated follow-up to the recommendations of your government's own social assistance review commission. In their 2012 report, they cited the very low benefits to OW singles, and recommended that they be raised by \$100 per month. So far, they've only made it to \$50 per month, and the increase by \$100 was recommended to take place back in 2012.

We're very concerned about that particular group. In fact, our committee has started a food project where we've been delivering boxes of fresh produce to single people on OW, because the nutritious food basket measure which public health services in every community of Ontario do each year showed that that particular group of OW singles was \$121 short of being able to provide the food they needed.

I'm not going to take up any more time now because I want to make sure that Sandy Leyland has enough time to give her report, but in the report that was handed around, the presentation of the board, you will see what we've done with this food project. You might find that interesting. We hope that the rates of social assistance will be raised so that we aren't as desperate getting food to these people.

Mel?

Mr. Mel Basbaum: I'm going to be very brief because I want Sandy to take the majority, speaking as a person who is experiencing what we're talking about. Most of what I'll say is already in the report, so I'm going to skip that and talk about myself.

I'm an individual who has less than a six-figure income, but I live very comfortably and I'm about to receive a tax deduction, at least federally, which I don't really need. People under \$40,000 will not receive that.

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I think that a small tax increase—there seems to be this emphasis that the middle class needs a tax reduction. I think that's probably true for some, but with a fair tax situation that takes into consideration the difference between my family—I'm retired and there are just two of us—and families that might be larger or where there may be health considerations, that can work. Preferably, I would suggest a guaranteed income. That's not going to happen for a long time. In the meantime, though, people like myself can tolerate a small increase as long as we

know that it's being directed to appropriate social services, whether that be income or other kinds of needs.

I'm just going to leave it at that. The rest of my report that compares the actual costs of food and rent that Sally was referring to is in the report with actual dollar figures, so you can hopefully get that from there.

Sandy?

Ms. Sandy Leyland: Hi. I've been introduced as Sandy Leyland. I have been a recipient of so-called social assistance for a number of years. I raised my kids on mother's allowance because every time I went to the employment office to look for work I was told that the good jobs had to go to men; they had families to support. I guess I was supposed to go out and find another man to get married again, and that wasn't in my plans. I can take care of my children myself.

I worked part-time, but we were allowed, in 1972, when I became a single mum, \$150 a month gross. That was disgustingly low back then. Then a few years ago, the government raised it to \$200 a month gross, which is an insult to anyone who is lucky enough to get a job. If you can work and you can find something part-time, we should be allowed to make—and I hate that word “allowed”—\$600 a month net so we can afford half-decent rent, so we can afford to have a better or slightly better food basket in our own homes and we can afford to allow our kids to go on school trips and pizza days and hot dog days that my kids couldn't have a lot of the time because I just simply didn't have the money. My sons had to go to school with their shoes held together with duct tape because I couldn't afford to buy them shoes, and both of them ran out of shoes the same month. I tried to get them to do it one month and then the next; they wouldn't work that way. I had limited help from family, but that wasn't enough.

People get tired of hearing about how poor we are. I don't pay more than 30%—60% of my limited income goes to rent, bills, transportation, and then after that I have to cover food. Trying to get clothes: My shoes wear out; then I have to go without food to buy shoes. It's disgusting. It is heartbreaking. I have so many friends who are trying to subsist on what we're given. I've had workers tell me that they don't get any extra money, but they're making—we all collect from the government. Everyone in this room—well, almost everyone in this room—is making money from the provincial government, but our income is at the bottom percentage. We are seen as a burden on the government. And then I read in the newspaper or I see on TV that there's a fellow being hired at \$575,000 a year to run the Ontario pension plan, which is great for him but it's not good for us. That's not counting his benefits and everything else that will go along with that, and his performance.

If you want to know how to run and how to change social assistance, hire people like myself who have lived it. I've got an honours BA in anthropology; I'm well educated. Now that I'm 65 and I'm off assistance, I'm in even worse straits on the pension. I'm going back to school. I might be working for a second degree in social

work and talking about social justice because there is none.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Leyland, I need you to stop talking right now because I need to turn over to the opposition to start this round of questioning.

Ms. Sandy Leyland: Okay.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Barrett, do you want to start this round, or Mr. Fedeli? Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you very much for your presentation. I'm married to a psychiatric social worker so I have the benefit of advice on a fairly regular basis. I very much appreciate you championing those in our society who are less fortunate.

You made mention again of a private member's bill a few years ago to set up the Ontario Social Assistance Rates Board. Part of what you're advocating is taking part of the decision-making away from the hands of political decision-makers, which oftentimes is a good idea.

We know this was recently done with the minimum wage. For example, it sits at \$11.25 an hour. Any increases, as I understand, are pegged to the rate of inflation. What you've presented is that those on Ontario Works aren't necessarily pegged to that or are falling behind.

I shouldn't talk too much here, but in reading some of the other submissions here to the Spectator, the focus is on Ontario Works. Would you wish to comment at all on those who are on ODSP, those on disability?

Ms. Sally Palmer: Probably that was my article in the Spectator.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes.

Ms. Sally Palmer: Well, they are badly off, too. This is what I think Sandy was living on at one point.

Ms. Sandy Leyland: Up until recently I've been on disability, and I was still paying 60% of my income to rent, plus bills, plus everything else. There just isn't enough money. A hands-off approach that's separate from the politicians—no offence to any politicians in the room—we're the experts because we survive it. If we can live on the little bit of money we get, imagine how we could help the province in handling their money.

Mr. Toby Barrett: By and large, I know you constantly mention Ontario Works but you're essentially including ODSP as well?

Ms. Sally Palmer: They're the ones who have been just getting a 1%-a-year increase when food goes up by about 4% a year. They're just falling further and further behind—yes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Both these initiatives from our society have been analyzed over the years. The Frances Lankin report was referenced in a previous submission, the Don Drummond report—very extensive analyses. I just wonder if you could comment. It seems to me that given the breadth and the depth of those reports and the recommendations from those reports—at least one election has come and gone—we really haven't seen too much coming out of the work that was done. These were reports that were commissioned by the government.

There's obviously stuff left to be done but it's been laid out for us. Any comments on that?

Ms. Sally Palmer: I think it's partly, as Sandy said, that the political action that would be needed to increase social assistance rates is not—many politicians feel that the general public would not be happy with raising social assistance rates.

Years ago, the Minister of Community and Social Services—it was Sandra Pupatello at that point. She spoke in Waterdown; we were there with a number of people living on social assistance talking about the kind of thing that Sandy's speaking about. She said, "You don't get elected raising social assistance rates." It was pretty bold putting it that way, but in fact I think many politicians do feel that most of the public are not on social assistance and that, as Sandy says, they begrudge those who do get it getting any more.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, sir?

Mr. Mel Basbaum: I don't think it matters which party we're talking about; that's the political issue. You're right about the commission that recommended, for example, for OW workers a \$100 increase. That hasn't happened as yet. It hasn't reached its maximum as yet; it has been gradually increased. But that was already three years ago, going on four years. The one other—

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, I'm going to stop you here.

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Mr. Mel Basbaum: One thing.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, your final point.

Mr. Mel Basbaum: I'm going to just remind you that it was also the previous government, the Conservatives, who brought the rate down to what it is now. So it doesn't really matter which political party it is; the issue needs to be addressed at a different level.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right, I'm going to stop you here. Thank you very much for your presentation, and thank you for your written submission.

REGION OF PEEL

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next group before the committee is the region of Peel. I believe we have the chair, Frank Dale—Mr. Dale, welcome—and the CAO, Mr. Szwarc. Welcome. Thank you for coming.

Before you begin, can you please make sure you identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard? You have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will be coming from the official third party. You may begin any time, and thank you again.

Mr. Frank Dale: Thank you very much. Good morning, members of the committee. My name is Frank Dale. I have the privilege of serving as the chairman of the region of Peel. I'm joined today by my colleague David Szwarc, the region's chief administrative officer.

We would like to begin by thanking the committee for allowing Peel region to make this presentation today and

share some of our thoughts and perspectives prior to the completion of this year's provincial budget.

As you are already aware, Peel region is Ontario's second-largest municipality, representing over 1.4 million residents. It is one of the country's most diverse communities, and it is an important hub of economic activity for both Ontario and Canada. Within our borders, we house over 106,000 businesses, representing approximately 10% of all businesses located within Ontario.

We currently have the densest network of 400-series highways and move over \$1.5 billion worth of goods through the region every single day. As the home of Pearson International Airport, we also facilitate the movement of thousands of people daily, an impact which extends far beyond our own municipal borders.

To meet the current challenges we face and ensure our success into the future, we look to higher levels of government to establish mutually beneficial economic and social partnerships. Our council has determined that the areas where we most need provincial government support are goods movement/transportation, affordable housing, and paramedic dispatch system. It is our collective view that if Peel is successful, then the province will be successful.

With that, I would like to turn the presentation over to David Szwarc to provide more detail.

Mr. David Szwarc: Thank you, Chairman. Good morning, Chair Wong, and committee members and attendees. As Chair Dale has said, my name is David Szwarc, and I am the chief administrative officer for the region of Peel.

There are three things, as the chair has said, that we want to talk about this morning and that affect, directly or indirectly, much of Ontario, not just the region of Peel. The three key areas, as the chair has said, are goods movement/transportation infrastructure, affordable housing, and paramedic dispatch services.

I'll start with goods movement and transportation. Peel region is one of North America's largest transportation and goods movement hubs. Some 43% of all jobs in the region of Peel are related to goods movement, and two out of every five businesses are in the goods movement sector and collectively contribute \$48.8 billion to the gross domestic product of our economy. Truck movement in Peel represents 25% of all trucking activity across the province. As Chair Dale noted, \$1.5 billion worth of goods move through Peel each and every day.

However, our goods movement industry partners continue to identify traffic congestion and travel delays as a major challenge to our economic state and potential. According to the Toronto Region Board of Trade, gridlock is estimated to cost \$6 billion in lost productivity across the GTA annually. That will grow, according to the board of trade, to about \$16 billion by 2031 if nothing changes.

The region recognizes the importance and potential impact of the government's investment in transit to help alleviate congestion throughout the GTA and Hamilton—the GTHA. However, we propose that these investments

are only a piece of the overall economic and social prosperity puzzle.

Through our work with our public and private partners on the Peel Goods Movement Task Force, we have identified three specific opportunities with regard to the 2016 budget.

The first is a need for a long-term, predictable and sustainable funding program for transportation infrastructure to address congestion on local and regional roads.

Peel needs an aggressive widening plan for the 400-series highway network within its borders and, really, across the GTA. This investment is critical to keep goods and people moving.

Thirdly, the province needs to complete the environmental assessment and commit the necessary funds to developing the GTA west corridor. The absence of the GTA west corridor will put significant strain on our transportation infrastructure and, we believe, will eventually erode both goods movement and the region's ability to attract and retain businesses. The environmental assessment that started, I think, in 2004—phase I was completed by the province in 2012—found that this new transportation corridor is required to service growth by 2031.

A move to affordable housing, our second point: Rapid population growth, increased market costs, and high unemployment rates all contribute to the increased demand for a range of affordable housing options. However, investing in affordable housing construction and repair not only meets a social need but also stimulates economic growth and employment. According to a study by CMHC, the construction of each new housing unit is estimated to generate 2.5 full-time jobs. By this measure, the almost 800 new affordable housing units built in Peel between 2011 and 2013 would have created 2,000 jobs.

While the municipalities wait for the renewal of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, through this pre-budget consultation, Peel continues to advocate for the following investments in affordable housing initiatives.

We are grateful for the approximately \$10 million per year Peel will receive through the IAH program, the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program. However, there is a need for flexible ongoing capital and operating funding for new housing and the repair of existing stock.

There also needs to be a continued push by all three orders of government for a national housing strategy, with predictable, sustainable funding and continued investment, as the federal operating agreements for housing expire.

In 2014, only 4.5% of all new housing starts in Peel were private rental housing. In discussing this with the private sector developers, they recommend that tools be put in place to encourage private sector rental housing investment, including changes to the tax system such as a reduction in capital gains tax, soft-cost deductibility, and tax incentive programs such as the HST rebate on new construction and the low-income housing tax credit program.

I'll move to paramedic dispatch. This is the last item that I want to bring to the committee's attention.

Peel's population continues to grow. We're growing at a rate right now of about 20,000 people per year, or 1.5%. The demand for paramedic services is growing at 5%. Growing pressure on ambulance resources requires that ambulances be deployed and managed as effectively and efficiently as possible. However, the provincially operated Mississauga dispatch centre, like many of the 22 dispatch centres across this province, uses technology that does not accurately prioritize ambulance calls. For example, in 2014, 72% of the calls that came into Peel from the Mississauga dispatch centre were dispatched as life-threatening. That means requiring a lights-and-sirens response. But when the paramedics got to the scene and did their triage, only 20% of those calls actually required lights and sirens to take them back to the hospital. This over-prioritization of emergency calls places increased demands on the system and leaves fewer or no ambulances available to respond to new calls.

Peel has been advocating for many years to change this dispatch system. We were pleased to see that the Auditor General recommended a more effective dispatch tool in their recent report, a tool called the Medical Priority Dispatch System. A study undertaken on behalf of Peel and all the GTA municipalities and one county a few years ago indicated that if the Medical Priority Dispatch System were implemented, it would reduce overall costs by about \$60 million over 10 years, in comparison to the current system.

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I want to reiterate today the urgent need to improve the dispatch system. Making these changes will result in greater efficiencies, improved response times and, we believe, better patient outcomes.

We will wrap up here. We believe that working with the government to address these priorities that the chairman and I have spoken to—transportation and goods movement, housing and paramedic dispatch—Peel and the province will be able to support the government's goals of creating a healthy and prosperous Ontario.

Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation. Mr. Miller, do you want to start this round of questioning?

Mr. Paul Miller: Good morning, gentlemen. Thank you for your submission and your advocacy for your region of Peel. As you can appreciate, all regions are facing similar problems, especially here in Hamilton, as well.

I must commend the government. They've actually taken an aggressive approach to transportation improvements in the province. There's only so much money in the fund and what we want to see is a fair distribution of the money for all regions because we all face the same problems.

But where I really concur with you is your concern for dispatch for paramedics. That's a very important issue. We were fortunate enough, years ago, to set some money

aside and we have a wonderful dispatch system in Hamilton which is leading in North America. We have people coming here to go to our communications centre to learn. It's on Hamilton Mountain and it services the whole Hamilton region. We get commendations from all over North America for the way we run it. Certainly—I don't know if you've worked with Hamilton on their communications systems—you might want to look at it. It's state-of-the-art.

In reference to your transportation needs, I also agree that Peel is certainly a large, growing area and requires sustainable transportation to encourage business to come to your area. But my question to you—the gentleman to your left mentioned “mutually beneficial.” What do you mean by that? When you get money from the government, how do you mean “mutually”? Do you mean a tax base? What do you mean?

Mr. Frank Dale: Well, no. I think it's mutually beneficial to both the region and to the province.

Mr. Paul Miller: In what way?

Mr. Frank Dale: Maybe rephrase your question.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay, I'll rephrase the question. You said it's mutually beneficial. Are you talking from an economic perspective or are you talking from a tax base—

Mr. Frank Dale: Oh, no. It would be economic, socially. Yes, mutually beneficial.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay, thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. French?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much. Actually, I spent some time in Peel region as a kid. I grew up there and I imagine that much has changed since I was there. I now hail from the Durham region and I'm sure that you can appreciate that we're also a growing region with many of the same needs that you've discussed.

To your point about affordable housing—and I think that that's a call that's being echoed across the province, that there's a definite need for a focus on affordable housing. I appreciate that you had mentioned the need for a national housing strategy and to sort of bring all of these pieces together and move forward in a purposeful way.

Locally, in your region, what do you see as some of the challenges to the actual building of more affordable housing?

Mr. David Szwarc: There are two. One is the cost, simply because of land cost and the growing construction costs and the lack of funding to do so. In the region of Peel, the regional council has put about \$18 million into housing in the last few years. We have, as I mentioned, built close to 800 units ourselves.

We've been working to leverage money from the provincial government. We got some provincial/federal through the IAH funding and also, in our most recent build, we have had some private sector funding in there. So they built the ground floor and second floor and they're keeping that for commercial uses and then affordable housing is on top. We're looking at more creative ways of building it.

But the lack of funding for initial capital build is one issue. The second and longer-term pressing issue is the lack of funding to sustain the buildings. Most of the buildings in Peel now are about 40 years old and are starting to show signs of aging. We need funding because the regional municipalities under the current legislation are responsible as the service managers to maintain those and to maintain a certain number of rent-geared-to-income housing, even after the federal funding ends.

The second thing that we need is funding to maintain the existing stock so that we don't lose the stock.

The third thing, as I mentioned, is that we need some kind of incentive to get the private sector to participate more in the development and management of rental housing. When we met with them, they told us quite simply that there wasn't enough return for them to invest in it.

Mr. Frank Dale: I think, too, just to add to that, if I may: David raised a good point with respect to the cost of land. Particularly in Peel, if you look at the two major municipalities, Mississauga and Brampton, the land just keeps going up in value. But it's not just the cost of the land; it's the availability of land as well. We at the region are looking at our inventory as we speak to see how we may be able to redevelop some of our own inventory because of the cost of the land in the municipality.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Chair Dale and Mr. Szwarc, thank you for your presentation. If you would like to submit anything in writing, please submit by February 2 by 5 p.m. to the committee Clerk.

Mr. David Szwarc: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you for being here today.

CHRISTIAN LABOUR ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next group before us is the Christian Labour Association of Canada. Just for the purposes of the committee, there are actually new names that the Clerk just shared with me. There are three new names coming forward. I believe there are Hank Beekhuis, Zelka Lipovac and Rhonda Gow.

As you probably heard, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questions will be coming from the government side. When you begin your presentation, please identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard. You may begin any time. Welcome.

Mr. Hank Beekhuis: Good. Thank you and good morning, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Hank Beekhuis. I serve as the provincial director for CLAC. I'm joined today by Zelka and Rhonda, who have already been introduced. They're workers in the long-term-care facilities in Ontario.

For those of you who are not familiar with CLAC, we are the largest independent labour union in Canada and one of the fastest-growing ones in the country. We represent over 65,000 workers in a broad spectrum of

sectors, including construction, health care, manufacturing, oil and gas, service, and mining. In Ontario we represent over 15,000 workers, primarily working in health care and construction. Our deputation today will focus on funding for a significant issue: understaffing in our long-term-care homes.

The problem of understaffing in health care is not a new one. It has become endemic to the industry. This situation has repeatedly been documented for many years by workers, by unions, by employers, academics and even a coroner's inquest. The awareness should be present and action should be taken, but it feels as though decision-makers have only sympathy to offer. We are hoping this year that real change will come and that the government will move forward and fund a minimum standard of hands-on care of four hours per day per patient. We ask that each of you, individually and as a committee, support our call and support workers and our aging population. You are the only ones who can fix it.

To provide a bit of background, as head of CLAC in Ontario I started calling for a minimum standard of care over 10 years ago. At that time, the acuity level in the facilities was lower. We called for 3.5 hours per patient. Since then, the needs and acuity have risen, and we have increased the ask to four hours, which is in line with the request coming from almost every other union in the province.

In that same period, we've had a resident die at the hands of another resident who was not, and could not, based on staffing levels, be adequately supervised. We have had a coroner's inquest report into that murder call for a mandated minimum staffing level. Finally, on a day-to-day basis, we have had residents neglected or hurt because of this pervasive problem. It puts workers in a difficult and often unsafe situation.

In the meantime, the demands from the employer and the government don't change. Resident acuity and resident care needs continue to rise. Front-line staff members are the only ones held accountable for services to residents whether that is possible to deliver or not. This leaves workers in a completely untenable situation and residents in our long-term-care homes neglected and, in certain cases, cared for in a manner that borders on abuse.

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The problem of understaffing cannot be addressed by just increasing the current envelope allocation for staff because of all of the cost pressures and regulatory requirements that are currently in place. We need a standard put in place that will dictate how much staff is required to meet the prescribed hands-on care level and the funding in place to support it. Increases in the current envelope system get eaten up by increasing costs and new reporting requirements and don't make it to the residents.

Last year, I made the same plea for a minimum standard of care, using facts and figures, to this committee, and nothing was done. This year, we chose to bring two exceptional front-line workers with us to talk about

this very real and devastating problem in the hope that you will listen to them.

I'll turn it over to Rhonda.

Ms. Rhonda Gow: Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Rhonda Gow and I have worked in long-term care as a PSW for 25 years. I would like to speak to you today about resident care levels in our nursing home and the effects of being short-staffed and the impact it has on residents and staff.

I currently work 7 to 3, full-time day shift, in a 60-bed nursing home. Our primary care teams consist of 10 residents per staff, allowing 7.5 minutes of a.m. care per resident when fully staffed. Currently, our home is chronically short, increasing our teams from 10 to 12 or up to as many as 15 residents, thus allowing 5 to 6.5 minutes per resident for a.m. care, which is a very sad reality. Can you prepare yourself for the day in 7.5 minutes or less?

PSWs are expected to provide oral care, bathing, grooming, shaving, perineal care and toileting, most of which often require two staff members to assist with mechanical lifts. For residents who suffer from dementia or have behavioural issues, shorter care times create a feeling of anxiety, which increases aggressive behaviours towards staff. These complications make it impossible to follow all safety measures, comply with ministry standards, as well as efficiently do my job—which make it very challenging to all—while respecting patient dignity and promoting independence.

Unfortunately, due to working short, our residents miss scheduled showers as well as nail care. Meals and snack carts are often late as well as we continue to struggle with our care loads. Many staff often choose to skip breaks and stay late to try and complete required tasks. This creates a vicious cycle of higher time loss due to work-related injuries and staff burnout. I often hear from my co-workers regarding concerns that they may have missed an important detail, thus impacting the safety of our residents due to increased workloads.

Twenty-five years ago, admissions into long-term care involved elderly residents with minimal care needs. Staffing levels at that time were adequate, and I enjoyed providing care to residents. I went home feeling satisfied that I had given the best care possible. Today, many of our residents have more complex health care needs, with increased chronic disease and aggressive behaviours, yet staffing levels have not changed to accommodate these complex needs. Due to this reality, I often go home feeling as though I am not able to provide the care that my residents truly deserve. Consequently—this hurts me to say—I feel they have been neglected.

Members of the committee, I ask today to mandate a minimum PSW-to-resident ratio to an appropriate level in order to provide our seniors with the care and respect that they rightfully deserve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. Thank you for your—is there another speaker?

Mr. Hank Beekhuis: Yes.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Go ahead. You have about three minutes.

Ms. Zelka Lipovac: Good morning. Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for letting us tell you our story. My name is Zelka Lipovac. I am a PSW and have been in a long-term-care facility for 20 years. I've seen many changes, both good and bad, but one issue that remains the same is the lack of funding for resident care.

Ministry standards have increased, and they put an emphasis on resident-centred care. The front-line workers are expected to deliver this care, but we are failing, and we are being held accountable for things we do not have any control over. The biggest one is staffing. Every resident in long-term care needs assistance with activities of daily living. PSWs want to provide quality care with dignity and compassion and meet all the ministry standards. Unfortunately, we are unable to do this because of the growing number of residents who have complex needs, which outweighs the current staffing levels, especially when we are working short.

Most of us feel we are working short even when we are fully staffed. We feel like we're working on an assembly line and not dealing with people who are vulnerable and fragile. We are spending an average of six to seven minutes per resident to provide them with their daily needs, such as grooming, dressing, toileting and eating.

We are told continually to prioritize our work, so all the responsibility falls on us, and if we make the wrong choice, we are held accountable. How do you prioritize your work when you have one resident asking to go to the bathroom and a cognitive resident asking you to go to bed but who needs physical help—or do you take care of the resident who has been sitting in a wheelchair for 12 hours and is unable to speak for themselves, so you have to become their voice? There are so many times my co-workers and I feel so overwhelmed that we feel like crying. We have cried.

Our residents deserve better than to be told, "I'm sorry, you have to wait to use the bathroom," "I'm sorry, you have to wait to lie down," "I'm sorry, you have to wait to get up," or "I'm sorry, I don't have time to talk to you," even though that's what the resident needs at that point in time. It feels like PSWs are apologizing their entire shift for the lack of time they have to spend with the residents. How can we be expected to deliver resident-centred care, when all we can do is hopefully just meet their basic needs for the shift, and more times than not, it comes at the expense of our breaks? There are ministry standards for everything, but they mean nothing if we don't have the staff or the time to provide quality care to our residents with compassion and dignity.

Our funding needs to be increased, so that staff and residents are not being demoralized because of heavy workloads and working short on a continuous basis. Chair and committee members, I am asking on behalf of all front-line workers that funding be increased to reflect the level of care that the residents require and to meet the expectations that have been set out by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. I'm going to turn to Ms. Hoggarth to start this round of questions. Ms. Hoggarth?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Good morning. Thank you very much for your presentation. I can tell that you are very involved in your work and that you really care about the patients that you deal with. I'm the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour. I know that health and safety for workers is a priority for Minister Flynn, and we're working very hard to improve that area.

I do understand that, unfortunately, the issues that you're dealing with are much more severe, particularly in the area of people with Alzheimer's and dementia and maybe mental health issues as well, and you're dealing with much more violent cases than you have in the past. I thank you for your hard work on that, and hopefully we will be able to help in that area at some point.

I would like to know if you could prioritize, other than the four-hours minimum, some other ways in which our government could help.

Mr. Hank Beekhuis: It's very difficult to say, because in so many ways, the minimum level of care is the key to so many of the questions that we have with respect to care. Ultimately, if we are working short, it ends up in people being injured; it ends up in people not wanting to come to work. So everything comes back to the funding level, and ultimately the government decides the funding level by the amount of funding they give. It's a flow-through envelope. There's no profit. It's a pure flow-through envelope.

If the home is only given a cost-of-living increase, that is eaten up by wage increases, heat, hydro, everything else. In fact, we've had situations where the funding has been increased by 1.5% and we've actually lost staff. So there's a direct relationship between what the government funds and what's happening on the floor. It's directly flow-through, so ultimately, the only people who are held accountable are the PSWs who have to actually do it.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: So your request for the 2016 budget would be that the hours of minimum care be increased?

Mr. Hank Beekhuis: Yes.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you for your presentation.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation. If there are any written submissions, you have until February 2 at 5 p.m. to submit it to the Clerk. Thank you very much.

GOOD SHEPHERD CENTRES

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. The next presenter is Good Shepherd. It's Alan Whittle. Good morning, Mr. Whittle. As you probably heard, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will be coming from the official opposition party.

You may begin any time. Please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard. Welcome.

1030

Mr. Alan Whittle: Good morning. My name is Alan Whittle. This morning, I really want to talk to you, for the most part, about ending or seriously reducing homelessness in this province.

I'm here representing Good Shepherd, a Hamilton-based organization that strives to integrate social, economic, health and community systems in an effort to reduce homelessness and to support individuals and families in creating a fuller life as part of this community. We are the largest provider of emergency, transitional and supportive housing for this community's marginalized. We offer a range of housing options, from single moms with their infants, to hospice and palliative services to those at the end of their lives. In addition, we provide emergency food and clothing programs to those in need.

On an annual basis, Good Shepherd contributes more of its resources into addressing homelessness in this community than does the city of Hamilton. If memory serves me correctly, I believe that we contribute more than the federal government, through the homelessness prevention program. Only the province contributes more.

A home, a job, a friend: Homelessness is often viewed as a process of recovery, and these three very simple things are the key to recovery and to a more productive and rewarding life. Whatever the root cause for that homelessness, a home, useful activity and friends are key. But chief among these simple requirements is having a home. Without a home, it is nearly impossible to do anything meaningful for any extended period of time. Without a home, it is easy to become isolated and lose those necessary social contacts.

But first, let's talk a little bit about what isn't a home. Living on the streets, living in an emergency shelter, residing in a hospital or jail—no, to all of the above. But it is interesting how often hospitals and jails see emergency shelters as a home and want to discharge those in their care to them.

Is sleeping on someone's couch a form of homelessness? I believe so. Is even an apartment that is too costly, isn't safe, or is plagued by vermin or anything else that keeps you constantly watching for another place a home? It may be a place to live, but it is hardly a home.

An example: A young mother told me about how she moved 13 times in two years. Her daughter was in five different schools during that time. Every day, she was constantly looking for another place to live, because wherever she was wasn't appropriate. That was three years ago. Today, she's currently living in one of our new affordable housing programs. Her daughter has stayed in the same school in those three years.

Decent affordable housing is a path to stability, a path away from homelessness and potentially a path away from poverty. For those living in poverty, a place that is comfortable, safe and affordable is difficult to find. For many, it is perhaps most akin to the fantasy of winning the lottery, with almost the same chances of success.

What do we need to do about homelessness? At its simplest, we need to build more decent, affordable

housing. I believe you hear that frequently. Probably over the past 20 years in Hamilton, we've had an annual target of producing some 300 affordable housing units. Not once have we met that target and, I believe, only once did we meet even half of it. I encourage you to ensure that there are additional funds in place in this year's budget so that we can start to meet those targets.

But we need to do more than that. For example, we have to give some thought to building a not-for-profit sector that, sometime in the future, doesn't require capital subsidies from governments. Other places in the world have done this; we should be able to as well.

In addition to building more affordable housing, we also need to ensure that the supports to assist those recovering from homelessness are able to maintain their housing and to rebuild their lives.

Years ago, it was believed that a mental illness diagnosis was basically a life sentence of institutional care. Today, we see that if proper supports are in place, most of those in recovery clamour for something meaningful to do with their lives. It might be through art or music, but it also includes volunteering and, for many, work for money.

There are other benefits to having a place to call home. Perhaps most significant among them is a reduction in institutional care, which, as we all know, is exceedingly expensive. For instance, through our supportive housing program, we see a reduction of 72% in psychiatric hospitalizations compared to what those individuals experienced prior to being in the program. The savings are even greater. They include reductions in other forms of hospitalizations, decreased involvement with the criminal justice system, decreased calls for other emergency services such as ambulances, and reductions in the incidence of obesity and diabetes. All these savings may be difficult to see in the context of rising system costs, but they are real nonetheless.

Another option here is to not only build affordable housing with supports, but also build community hubs that bring together a whole range of services in order to maximize those benefits. Doing these kinds of projects is very difficult, and perhaps some form of seed funding would help all the players come together, because we're often talking about a variety of institutions and a variety of players coming together to do this work.

Just a related thought to the affordable housing investment issue: infrastructure spending. "Infrastructure" is a big word these days, but affordable housing is infrastructure. Just as we wouldn't think of building hospitals and schools without teachers and nurses, so too we need to think about building affordable housing with supports for those who need them.

I've talked a lot about affordable housing, but certainly the most important thing would be to prevent homelessness, and I think you'd probably all agree with me. Part of the reason I fear that we don't invest as much into preventing homelessness as we should is that we're so preoccupied with counting things. We're more likely to want to count the number of prescriptions that we use

for alleviating diabetes than actually trying to prevent diabetes. Similarly, I think we're more interested in counting how many people we house rather than how many we prevent from falling into homelessness.

We have two programs in particular that I wanted to highlight about this. One is a trusteeship program. Ourselves and two other agencies in this community provide this program, and it will probably end at the end of March this year.

In the Good Shepherd situation, basically a couple of staff manage over 300 individuals who are on ODSP and ensure that they remain housed; in the past they were previously homeless or in danger of losing their housing. With those two staff, they manage in excess of \$500,000 a month, over \$6 million a year of other people's money, and keep them in homes.

Similarly, we have a youth program that for \$430,000 prevents all manner of youth from becoming homeless. I think there are about 163 distinct individuals who were prevented from becoming homeless in 2014, and 80% of those youth had maintained their housing for six months afterwards. In addition, there were, I believe, 467 individuals who, through our LHIN-funded substance use program, were diverted from hospital; they would have normally gone to hospital. Only two of those nearly 500 individuals ended up going to hospital. These programs are very important. They save the system money. I appreciate it's difficult to track those savings some days, but they are there.

In conclusion, I want to start at the beginning again. If we need something meaningful to do in our lives, if we require friends to be around us, we will require a place to call home. A home, a job, a friend: These are the keys to ending homelessness. We need programs that will prevent it, and we need more affordable housing with supports for people to live in.

Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. Mr. Fedeli? Oh, Mr. Barrett, do you want to begin this round of questions?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Chair. No, I wish to say thank you: thank you to Good Shepherd and so many of the organizations like the Scott Mission and the Salvation Army that unselfishly and unflinchingly deal with those who are less fortunate.

We've had several presentations already just this morning on the broader issues of poverty and Ontario Works, and I'm very glad you mentioned ODSP.

1040

I just want to make mention: I represent Haldimand-Norfolk, just south of Hamilton. Last Wednesday, in the town of Dunnville—it's a small town; it has had some problems—there were 220 of us from that town who spent all day taking a training program. I'll just put a plug in for this program. It's titled Bridges Out of Poverty. I recommend that. The 220 people who showed up—there were one or two from the Salvation Army and from the various services. It was farmers, volunteers, community leaders—people who want to wade in them-

selves rather than leaving it up to Good Shepherd or leaving it up to OW. I found that quite heartening. So I just wanted to put a plug in for this training program, Bridges Out of Poverty.

One thing that you mentioned, building more affordable housing I think that the town of Dunnville, the town of Simcoe, so much of urban Ontario has been hollowed out. There are a lot of empty buildings. Every storefront seems to have one or two floors up above that used to be apartments, and they're sitting empty. I don't know whether you're advocating building brand new houses. Are we talking about renovating? Could you just talk a little bit more about that, the practical side of it, of getting some bricks and mortar together?

Mr. Alan Whittle: Sure. We've done both. Right now we're actually taking what was a former warehouse and are converting it into 28 apartments. We've also built brand new. As you exit town, if you're going to the 403 out King Street way, you'll pass Good Shepherd Square. On the site are 156 new affordable housing units. So we've done a range of those. We've also worked with private developers to use whatever income supports that we could put together to get them to build housing as well.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The city of Hamilton: I firmly believe that there's a great future, a renaissance, for this city, much of it in housing and population growth. A number of years ago—maybe 40 years ago—I think of Cabbagetown, east Toronto, Moss Park. In a lot of that, the housing was there. Then the whitepainters moved in, it became gentrified and we lost that housing. I'm seeing that in some towns down my way. Real estate becomes expensive. So that's one concern that I have.

You mentioned ODSP and people living outside—it was 11 degrees below last night—I can't remember; I guess that's in the French system, the metric system. I was just saying to my colleague that I slept outside for two years, but I did that by choice and in warm weather when I was on the road. I wouldn't sleep outside when it's 11 below. ODSP: Is that a mental health issue?

Mr. Alan Whittle: Frequently it's a mental health issue, an addiction issue. Any variety of health issues often bring people to us through ODSP, yes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Any comments to wrap up? I know we're running out of time.

Mr. Alan Whittle: I know this is a big problem. It has been with us a long time but the reality is, it is solvable. It takes the will to move forward.

Mr. Toby Barrett: My colleague would like to—

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Fedeli.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I wanted to add to that “it takes the will.” When I was mayor of the city of North Bay back in 2003 to 2010, we did a study and found that we had the need for 1,000 housing units in our community. I have to say if you're looking for a solution, the model that we proposed back then was novel. Our municipality put cash in. We joined with the province, we joined with the feds, with the old AHP program—Affordable Housing Program. I haven't seen it around in a while in

that configuration. But we stepped up, not just the city of North Bay but all of the small communities: Ferris, East Ferris and Mattawa. We built 118 units in one year with municipal dollars. This is going to take everybody to solve the issue. It was a model that I don't know has been replicated anywhere. We heard that it hasn't been replicated before.

Mr. Alan Whittle: Congratulations. That program is now called IAH. If I can just quickly add: I think part of the solution—and I agree with you; municipalities also need to step up to the plate here. But I think organizations like ours are prepared to find other ways. As an example, we're working with the Diocese of Hamilton to donate a very significant property that will be used as part of a new affordable housing program.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Whittle. If you have any written submission, you have until February 2 at 5 p.m. to submit it to the Clerk, okay? Thank you very much. Have a good day.

BIOINDUSTRIAL INNOVATION CANADA

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe the next witness before us is Bioindustrial Innovation Canada, and Mr. Murray McLaughlin, the executive director. The Clerk is coming around with the written submission. Come on down, Mr. McLaughlin. Welcome.

As you probably heard, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questions will be coming from the official third party. You may begin at any time. Please identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard when you begin. Thank you.

Dr. Murray McLaughlin: Okay. My name is Murray McLaughlin. I'm the executive director of Bioindustrial Innovation Canada, located in Sarnia. We're an organization that has been around for eight years now and has focused on commercial development around green and sustainable technology, really focused on the rural communities and back into agriculture, moving it from agriculture all the way through to commercial opportunities within the regions.

I've got a set of slides that I think you all have copies of. Some of these slides I will only reference very quickly, and then there are other ones I'll spend a bit of time on, just in the interests of time.

The second slide on the first page talks about what our role is as an organization. We operate as a plug-and-play organization in Sarnia, with a pilot facility, a demonstration facility, that we have at the research park there, working very closely with the colleges and universities. We focus on sustainable technologies. We bring together business and government to focus on the commercialization aspects of bio-based and sustainable chemistries and support new companies through the Sustainable Chemistry Alliance investment fund that we manage as well. We focus on building hybrid chemistry value chains across the province.

On the second page, the first slide is on a bio-economy future. This just touches on potential opportunities regionally, and not all of them. We talk about Sarnia, which has become the hub for a bio-industrial cluster, but there are other regions. In Aylmer, Ontario, we're working with the IGPC there. In Port Colborne, we work with Jungbunzlauer and others in that region. Then we move over to eastern Ontario, with a number of groups over there. The Prescott area is an area that has a high interest in this as well.

Then in northern Ontario, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay are focused more on the forestry side, of course, in that region—but again, looking at how we convert that cellulosic material to high-value products.

The second slide here, on this page, talks about how we integrate ourselves with the chemical value chain. If you look at the blue circles, fossil-based feedstock all the way through to end-user, that is the petroleum-based value chain that we see when we look at the petroleum industry. The question becomes, where do bio-based chemicals and bio-based products from agriculture and forestry feedstocks fit into this? You can see the two green circles, the bio-based feedstock and bio-materials, and then they fit into fuels and primary chemicals or else into finished products, if we're dealing with biomaterials, the finished products being auto parts or other building materials.

I won't get into all of the other chemicals that we can work with on this, but it really is moving ourselves to a bio-based industry. How do we do that? Bio-industrial Innovation Canada's mission is to create jobs and economic value sustainably in Ontario.

I won't spend time on the process that we go through here, but the bottom of page 3 talks about our balanced portfolio. This gives you kind of a snapshot of the results over the first seven or eight years, with job creation, economic value and so on that we've been able to create, with direct jobs and indirect jobs and construction jobs in the bio-based industry. We see that as a continued growth as we look at new funding for ourselves but for the industry as well.

On page 4, the hybrid chemistry cluster in Sarnia: It's a model to replicate across this province, we see. We feel that our existing chemical industry in Sarnia forms the cluster foundation. We support Ontario's farmers and foresters who provide the biomass needed—start up bio-based and sustainable chemistry companies, bringing innovation to full commercialization; available brown-field land development into biochemical businesses such as primary chemical building blocks, polymers, biomass production from local CO₂ sources for use as fuels and chemicals; and energy generation from biomass.

1050

Some of the priorities to advance the Ontario bio-economy, where we need to put our focus: We need to develop a well-articulated vision and an integrated approach to the bio-economy. Commercialization of first- and second-generation technologies remains challenging. We need to have access to capital in fostering risks.

Sharing with government must be a priority to bridge that valley of death for our start-up companies.

A top priority in demonstrating success on commercialization of technology in Ontario: BIC has a proven track record supporting the emerging bio-economy in this area and we can touch a little bit on that.

Priorities to advance the Ontario bio-economy, where to put our focus: Recognize that this is a new growth sector that will need support. The Jobs and Prosperity Fund has programs that are designed to provide support. We need to maintain it and make sure that it has focus on areas such as this.

Growth in rural Ontario will be dependent on an industry that will complement the food industry. Agricultural biomass to chemicals and non-food products is that focus. We need to recognize it is a new future to create rural jobs and businesses and to help the farming community grow, and design support programs that are effective and timely.

Two priorities of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce—I just put this in at the bottom, just so you're aware: Develop a national bio-economy strategy. The Ontario chamber is also focusing on that from a provincial perspective. Clean technology and renewable energy development is a critical area that they see as a need, which is what we're focused on as well.

Priorities to advance the Ontario bio-economy, where to put our focus: Again, the emerging global bio-economy has a home in Ontario and that will complement Ontario's food and forestry industries. Recognize now that the future is here. The time for the Ontario government's participating with Ontario feedstock providers and global technology is today. This is an opportunity to lead growth in rural and urban jobs and BIC is one of the catalysts to help do that.

We do have global outreach and that is an important part of attracting companies to the province. We were very active in the early days of attracting BioAmber here and we see a number of companies similar to BioAmber that have interest in being located in Ontario and Canada, so we can be working, again, internationally to do that. We have collaboration with a number of centres around the world that are other clusters to do that.

The challenges that we need to overcome and some of the solutions here:

- electricity cost in this province is high. We need to have a well-supported cluster program to help figure out how we deal with some of that;

- awareness of opportunities;

- competitive financial support;

- image of being unfriendly to business opportunities, which I don't believe we are, but that's an image that we have out there, so how do we make sure that we avoid that?;

- the image of high taxes, again, is something that we really have to work with to make sure that people from outside of this province, particularly internationally, understand that that is not the case;

—lack of support for the bio-economy. There's no strategy in the province for the bio-economy and there's no national strategy, as well, for that sector;

—lack of funding for early-stage companies from pilot to demonstration scale to commercialization. That's a challenge. We're starting to overcome some of that, particularly at the later commercialization stage, but there still is a need from the pilot to demonstration.

Some of those solutions:

—support for third-party organizations like ourselves or CRIBE up in Thunder Bay to help drive the bio-economy;

—creative ways to deal with electricity costs to allow company expansion and attraction;

—appropriate programs in budget 2016-17 and beyond to overcome the challenges of building the bio-economy.

Just in summary, Ontario can take a global leadership position in the bio-economy and I believe that we have moved a long ways to that. Bio-based chemicals and bio-materials are the opportunities. Agriculture, forestry and waste are the sources for conversion materials. Home-grown technologies and international attraction will establish the bio-economy companies that we will see develop in this province.

The outcome will be rural development and jobs for the 21st century through cluster development, and BIC is a model to build the bio-economy and clusters, with eight years of experience and knowledge.

I think that's kind of the gist of what I was presenting. I thought we would just move into some questions from the group.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. Thank you very much, Dr. McLaughlin. I'm going to turn to Ms. French to start this round of questioning.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much. We appreciate both the presentation and how thorough it is.

Dr. Murray McLaughlin: Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As you mentioned, there's a lot of information here. I'd like to distill it down to a few questions that I have.

I had the opportunity recently to spend some time up north. I drove around the beautiful riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane and had the opportunity to appreciate much of the forest industry—granted, from a car window—but I had a lot explained to me. I am sure that you appreciate there's a lot to understand.

One of the things we hear at Queen's Park from stakeholders across the province is that our agricultural industries and forestry industries don't feel appropriately represented, that they're not hearing their needs addressed at Queen's Park. I think you're calling for that greater appreciation for how it all could fit together.

One of the things that you talked about is the clusters. We recognize the importance of clusters. But perhaps in this industry, if you could just delve a little bit more into how you see clusters not only being important, but what the cluster foundations would need to look like.

Dr. Murray McLaughlin: Sure. I think clusters are an important piece. I'll probably dwell on Sarnia as a

model, because that's where we've had the most experience, but there are some other clusters starting to take place around the province as well.

Sarnia basically was, and still is, a petroleum community, as most people will know. They have a number of companies in that area. But if you go back 10 or 12 years ago, Dow Chemical decided to shut down their Canadian headquarters as well as their production of chemicals in that community. That was about 1,500 to 2,000 jobs out of a 70,000 population—a major hit. The community all of a sudden became a bit of a wake-up call and the question was, what do we need to do to maintain what we have but also to create growth in this community, in Lambton county and in Sarnia?

After two years of consultation—I wasn't involved in the consultation, by the way. I was hired on afterwards to run the organization. Between industry, the local communities, the governments and businesses, they came to the conclusion that if we want to maintain what we have, we need to build a green and sustainable technology industry around it, and hence, the purpose of building a green and sustainable technology cluster in the Sarnia region, which links in the rural community—"rural" being the county—and we reached down into other counties as well, in the agricultural area.

One of the new projects we're just establishing is the conversion of corn stover to sugar. That will mean that, hopefully, this coming year, we will be building a sugar mill in Sarnia, taking corn stover to sugar.

The whole premise is if you have this sugar that's a non-food sugar, it allows companies like BioAmber or other companies in Europe and the US that need sugar to establish their production facilities in Sarnia. They don't want to go back and build a sugar mill, but they want to convert the sugar to the chemicals. If we can make the sugar, then we will attract the chemical companies there, the bio-based chemicals.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: How are we for time?

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): You've got—let me see—two minutes.

Mr. Miller?

Mr. Paul Miller: Hi, how are you doing? Yes, an excellent presentation. I've just got a question: What is your role here? Are you a for-profit organization that advocates for the bio-industry?

Dr. Murray McLaughlin: We're a not-for-profit. We've been funded for the last seven years through a CECR, a centre of excellence for commercialization and research. Our funding lapsed about a year ago, I guess, and we still have some funding.

We also manage an ag-sci cluster, which is funded through Growing Forward 2, which is a national cluster around bio-products. We're just in the process of looking for re-funding for the broader scope of the cluster development and so on for southern Ontario.

Mr. Paul Miller: We certainly support the agricultural community and their efforts for innovative ways to create food, and our water sources, so we certainly would

support that kind of initiative in any way we can, keeping in mind the environment as an important issue.

1100

Dr. Murray McLaughlin: Well, the environment is a big part of anything we do. Certainly, CO₂, climate change—managing that is all a key role of the future. I would add that we've just had approval for \$12 million in support from FedDev, but it's contingent on \$3.5 million from the province, which we're still in discussions on.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right, one minute. Ms. French?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: A quick question. One of the challenges that you cited is that electricity costs are high. This may surprise you, but you aren't the only person to say that. But you are here, so we'll ask you: Do you have any ideas on ways to deal with electricity costs, any recommendations you'd like to make to the government?

Dr. Murray McLaughlin: Well, if I look at it from the cluster development perspective and just the bio-based industry perspective, my recommendation would be, as we set up clusters across the province in the right geographic areas, that we call them geographic zones where we can provide lower-priced electricity to industries. If it's bio-based industries and they build in these zones, these clusters, then you give them a break on their electricity. It may be a five- or 10-year break or something, but it gives them a chance to get established.

To be honest, there are a lot of companies that we talk to internationally that have an interest in being in Ontario, but as soon as they start developing the costing, electricity cost, they turn away, because the biggest cost most of these companies have in their production is electricity and labour.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Dr. McLaughlin, your time is up. Thank you for your presentation and for your written submission.

HOME CARE ONTARIO

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next witness before us is Home Care Ontario. I believe the Clerk is coming around with the written submission.

Ms. VanderBent, welcome. As you've probably heard, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning, and this round of questioning will be coming from the government side. You may begin any time. Please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard when you begin. Thank you.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. My name is Sue VanderBent, and I'm the CEO of Home Care Ontario.

Ladies and gentlemen, the members of Home Care Ontario want to begin our pre-budget submission recommendations by thanking the government for the three-year investment in health care and home and community care since 2013 and the funding to increase PSW wages in 2014. We believe that the government is understanding

the importance of shifting the funding paradigm to the community as a priority in order to transform the health care system.

Home is where people want to be; we know that. Investments by government have helped to increase the numbers of people realizing their goal to stay at home. At the current time, 715,000 people are receiving home care services and the overall funding has increased.

In shifting care to the home, government is now in the process of looking at the structure and the means by which home care services are delivered, and we're hoping that there will be further efficiencies from that. However, Home Care Ontario offers two recommendations for the continuing funding of our sector.

Our first recommendation is to increase the funding for home care from 5% of the proportional health care spend to 6% of the total budget over two years.

The second is to establish an educational campaign and adopt strategies to support the needs and expectations of families to contribute to care.

The association recognizes the government's efforts to pave the way for a better health care system. It's now time to really try to tip that funding paradigm.

Home care is one of the least expensive forms of health care. We could offer four million more visits for \$172 million, which is quite remarkable. A 10% increase in PSW hours—three million hours—at current rates costs \$85 million. A 10% increase in nursing hours—that's 830,000 visits—costs \$65.2 million, and a 10% increase in therapy visits costs \$21 million, and we could give 180,000 more visits. This would really help to keep people in their home.

We know that the cost of home care is considerably less than the cost of a day in hospital or in long-term care, and caring for terminally ill patients at home is estimated to cost over 10 times less than providing care in an acute-care hospital. However, the funding for home care still remains at 5%, which is proportionately where it was in the year 2000, and it remains to this day at that proportional spend.

The Sinha report, the Donner report and the recent Auditor General's reports have demonstrated that the need is great, and the demographic shift that we are going to experience in the next 25 years will continue to shift the need for care to the home.

We want to bring more people home longer, bring people home from the hospital sooner, palliate more people at home, offer renal dialysis at home and hopefully bring people out of the hospital who do not need to be there and help them live at home, where they actually are far better off.

Funding for people, our people, is necessary as well. The service provider organizations who work in home care have had a lot of suffering related to the issues related to the cost restraint. There has been a six-year period without increases to bill rates. There has been no increase in funding to address even the impact of consumer price index changes, which is averaged at 1.5% per year over the restraint period.

We know that this is a time of cost restraint for all parts of the health care system, that every part of the health care system is affected, but more and more and more people are expected to come in to home care. That is the transformational place where we absolutely need to increase spending in order to increase care to people.

Given that the premise of government-funded home care is to supplement the care provided by families, it's vital that Ontarians understand what they can expect. Right now, I think the recent reports that we've had have demonstrated that people in Ontario do not know what they can expect. All that they are entitled to right now is an assessment. This assessment is very, very thorough, but it does not necessarily lead to service. People are quite in the dark, and that is exactly what these reports have told us.

We believe families are entitled to understand the full range of services that are available to them prior to making life-altering decisions such as sending their loved one to a long-term-care facility or taking them precipitously to the ER. This means that despite the measures already being taken, as a society, we have to understand that home care is still in its infancy and is a nascent part of the health care system right now.

The two recommendations that we're making are to increase the funding for home care to 6% of the total budget over two years. Right now, Ontario's 2015 budget has a total health care budget of \$51.7 billion. The investment that we are calling for should increase home care to \$3.1 billion, an increase of \$600 million over two years.

This level of commitment is absolutely necessary to shift care to the community. It will enable first-dollar coverage for palliative care at home; improve support for patient populations with high needs, such as COPD, congestive heart failure or renal failure; proactively support the elderly so they can remain at home longer without an acute event; increase respite for families; and improve compensation of staff so that we can narrow the widening gap between the home care world and the hospital and institutional world. Most importantly, it will answer the burgeoning need for better home care demanded by Ontarians and demonstrated in the Donner report.

Finally, our second recommendation is to establish an educational campaign and adopt strategies to support the family contribution to care. We do need to launch an educational campaign to educate all Ontarians about the actual capacity of government-funded service and the options that are available to help them as family caregivers. We need to have an honest conversation with the health care team in order to understand families' needs and our ability to care for them.

We need to support the family contribution to care by funding respite, as outlined in our recommendation 1, and we believe we need to introduce tax credits and/or tax exemptions for families who purchase care from approved providers. We know that right now, 500,000 Canadians are purchasing care every year. We know that

150,000 Ontarians are already purchasing 20 million hours of care a year. Any reduction in tax revenue through this policy change would be offset by the avoidance of more intensive and costly publicly funded health care, for instance, less long-term-care visits or visits to emergency.

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In conclusion, Home Care Ontario believes that the government's efforts to achieve health system transformation are exemplary, but will be strengthened through increased funding for home care services at the front line, and by improved education and preparation of families whose personal contribution to home care need is vital.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation. I'm going to Mr. Baker to start this round of questioning.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Hi, Sue. How are you?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Good, thank you. How are you?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Good. It's good to see you again, and thank you very much for your presentation—as always, professionally put together with a lot of clarity and a lot of thought and some very, very helpful suggestions, so thank you. I also want to thank you for the work that you and your members, the people who you represent, do.

In my riding in Etobicoke Centre, we have one of the highest percentages of seniors of any riding in the country, and so the services that your members or the people you advocate on behalf of provide are vital. I remember it was really eye-opening to me, when I was just an aspiring politician and knocking on doors and talking to people in the community, how many people I spoke with who talked about the importance of community care and how we need growth and investment in community care. It was not just seniors who were saying this to me. In fact, predominantly, it wasn't. I heard this from seniors, but I also heard it from middle-aged folks who were caring for their parents and often for children as well in that sandwich generation. So the importance of the work that the people that you represent do can't be overstated.

You talked about the funding increase. In fact, as I follow up on that point, when I heard from people—that's one of the reasons I'm so proud about the investment that you talked about that our government made in committing to a 5% increase in home and community care, which will grow by over \$750 million over the next three years.

I guess, connecting that back to my constituents and to the people who need to be served by community care and home care, can you talk a little bit about how investments like that would benefit people in the community?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Well, I hear every day from people who could benefit from one more visit, two more visits, and that visit is the very visit that could help them not go to the ER or the family not fall apart. So it's often on the margins. It would help us to have a more streamlined system where we could shift the care to the

front line to hold service providers responsible, clinically and fiscally, for outcomes, for managing a type of care like, say, healing a wound—you healed a wound in seven visits or six visits. Then we could be very, very efficient. So it would help us shift the system and offer people more visits in the home, because that's where we need the care, at the front line, right at the bedside—the bedside that belongs to the person in their own home.

It is really critical now, because I think we've shaved down, actually, home care. We're serving more people, but the care that each individual person is getting is very, very slim, and that's what we're trying to—we do want to serve more people, we want to touch more people, but those touch points have to be good touch points so that people feel that they've received an adequate amount of care.

Mr. Yvan Baker: That makes sense. You talked about the PSW wage enhancement. I have an organization called Etobicoke Services for Seniors, which does wonderful work in my community in the area of home and community care, and this issue came up in discussions with them. Can you talk a little bit about the importance of the enhancement? Why is this important?

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Well, what we need to do is stabilize our PSWs. We have found that they come and go because the pay was poorer. Now we have stabilized, and we will stabilize by April 1 to \$16.50 an hour. That's a stable wage to keep people functioning in our sector, and that was very necessary. That was a key ask for this association, over many years, to say that's critical, to stabilize the PSWs. Some 80% of the care is delivered by the PSWs.

We have a burgeoning need for our nurses and for our therapists, who are also providing really, really important work, especially when we want to bring out more people from the acute-care sector, like someone who has a renal disease or somebody who is palliative. We need to have our nurses and our therapists also receiving adequate pay, because at this point, the pay differentials between hospitals and long-term care and home care are quite wide.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. I'm going to need to stop you here, Ms. VanderBent. I know you have given your written submission to us, so thank you for your presentation and your written submission.

Ms. Sue VanderBent: Thank you.

MS. TIMEA NAGY

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): For committee purposes, the next witness is coming to us by teleconference. I just want to make sure—Ms. Nagy, are you on the line?

Ms. Timea Nagy: I am.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Can we have it a little bit louder so everybody can hear?

Just so everybody knows, I was told by the Clerk that she'd like for me as the Chair to introduce her as a sex trafficking survivor and social advocate for sex trafficking survivors.

Ms. Nagy, just so you know, I'm going to introduce the committee members so you know who is sitting at the table right now, and I'm going to go through the criteria so that you know your time to speak, as well as which party will be asking you the questions. Okay?

Ms. Timea Nagy: Sounds great.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): To my left in the room, at the left part of the round table here, are Mr. Fedeli and Mr. Toby Barrett from the opposition party. From the official third party is Ms. Catherine Fife, Ms. French from—is it Durham?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oshawa.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Oshawa, I'm sorry—and Mr. Miller from Hamilton.

From the government side, I'm going to start with Mrs. Albanese from York South–Weston, Mr. Baker from Etobicoke Centre, Ms. Ann Hoggarth from Barrie, Mr. Peter Milczyn from Etobicoke—is it South? Is it Lakeshore?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Lakeshore.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): —Lakeshore, and Ms. Daiene Vernile from Kitchener Centre.

I forgot when I was introducing Mr. Fedeli: He's from North Bay, and Mr. Barrett is from—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Haldimand–Norfolk.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Haldimand–Norfolk. And then myself: Soo Wong, Chair of the committee.

Ms. Nagy, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will begin from the official opposition party. You may begin anytime, and please just identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard.

Ms. Timea Nagy: Thank you. Good morning. I'm sorry I can't be there in person. I am not feeling well, unfortunately, so I thought it would be best if I did this over the phone.

My name is Timea Nagy. I am a survivor of sex trafficking and founder of Walk With Me Canada Victim Services. Walk With Me Canada Victim Services started in 2009 in the hopes of helping victims of sex trafficking. Before that started, I was trafficked in 1998 from Hungary to Canada. I was trafficked into the strip club industry at the age of 20. I was surrounded by foreign women, and later on, it turned out that hundreds of us were victims of sexual exploitation under the strict work visas that the federal government at the time introduced. It caused exploitation. There were no laws at the time for human trafficking. I became a witness in court. In 2004, we entered into court, except we still didn't have any laws for human trafficking, so there were no convictions.

It was 2009 when I started my organization, called Walk With Me, which is when I first started to speak out about my experience, recognizing the need for police agencies and service providers to learn about this issue. Then, when enough police and service providers realized that we probably have a lot bigger problem in Ontario with human trafficking than we initially thought, they started to reach out because they needed help with

victims, which is how we started our front-line care for victims.

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Fast-forward: In the six years that I've worked with Walk With Me, we've educated over 10,000 police officers, we assisted in three federal law changes and we're helping MP Joy Smith introduce new human trafficking-related amendments. We assisted 300 victims, 500 investigations and worked with over 39 police agencies, including ICE and the FBI from the United States. We have also worked on several large international cases. But what was the most stunning for us is that we've done all this work with very, very little grants and government funds because at the time governments haven't realized that we have a big issue. We operated mainly on private donations and mainly with a Hamilton businessman's help.

What was even more shocking is that after all the cases that we worked with, 93% of our victims we identified were Canadian girls. We identified them as young as 12 years old—sex traffic. We realized that they were recruited online, from school bus shelters, malls and so on. They were working in condos, apartment buildings, hotels and on the streets. Eventually we became the go-to agency in Ontario and in Canada and some states in the United States as well, where they came to us for help with regard to implementing education and help to provide appropriate victim care.

After six years, as there were more victims coming through our door and not enough funding, we unfortunately decided to close our doors. As of last year, 2015, we closed our doors. That gave us some time to reflect and realize that the necessary steps are so much bigger than just giving a victims' agency life, which is when I took some time off and we created, with some of the experts, I would say now, suggestions for what we need to do.

Before I go to what I would like to suggest to the Ontario government, there are just a few numbers. When we started working with Walk With Me, we started to look for online escorts on Backpage. That's where most of the victims are stored by the traffickers. In 2009, when I started to work on Backpage and tried to find victims on Backpage and return them to their families—just to give you a number, on the Hamilton side I would find maybe five ads, maybe five victims; in Cambridge I'd maybe find 20; in Barrie, I may find possibly four victims; Oakville, 10; Durham region, maybe five; in Peel, about 40.

Fast-forward in time to 2016: If you go on Backpage now, on any given day, Hamilton is about 30 to 60 possible victims on a daily basis. That's how fast our problem has grown. In Durham region, for example, when six years ago we started to work with the police, we may have found, like I said, 10 ads. Now on any given day they have about, again, 30 to 60 ads. In Durham region, one of the prime examples, their chief and deputy chief realized that the problem was so big that they decided to put in an actual human trafficking

investigation unit. So we do make some great success in some areas, but I believe that it is time for us to actually take a much bigger step towards a solution.

Ontario is the leading province with regard to how many police investigations happened here—human trafficking investigations and convictions—in the entire nation. But, with respect, that does not mean, in my opinion, that it's because Ontario has the worst situation with human trafficking. Just recently, a Toronto Star series came out and created a huge awareness and said that Ontario is the worst province for human trafficking, and I respectfully disagree. Ontario probably had the most education, which is why we see more trafficking cases, but I wouldn't say that this is where it happens the worst. I believe that it's equally bad in every province in Canada.

At Walk With Me, myself as an individual, I have sat in on many coalition meetings, international, national and regional, and we have done much research and interviewed hundreds of victims, social service providers and police agencies. We know that it's happening. We know it's bad. We know what needs to be done. I think Ontario is ready to make a professional and an appropriate step towards combatting this issue. I believe that we have enough information at hand that would be able to help us to create an educational centre.

Our suggestion to the Ontario government is not to act out of panic and not to give in to the pressure that the media and everybody is putting on right now with regard to doing something about human trafficking. Our position is to please sit down with the key stakeholders, who will give you a solution. A solution is very simple. This solution has been done in Norway and Australia and the United States, but we don't have to go that far; this solution has been done in British Columbia and Alberta, and it's as simple as a coordination centre—very, very similar to what we have for hate crime in Ontario—and it would be called the Ontario human trafficking coordination centre and would have all the sectors. The biggest key for our coordination centre would be that, in the first six months of the project, our goal would be to go out and take an inventory from every sector that has worked in human trafficking to date and see what we already have, not to reinvent them over and over again. What I have seen is that grants are given out left, right and centre constantly for the same projects—\$5,000, \$10,000 or \$20,000 here and there—and everybody is creating their own materials, but it's not consistent. I believe that having a coordination centre with the policy regulator sector, education sector, service provider sector, research and data, sponsorship and volunteer coordinator—I believe we could save so much money for the Ontario and the federal government and charities and foundations and collect the existing resources that we already have and then go from there and build on that. But again, this has been already done, so we don't actually have to start from the very beginning.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Nagy, I need to stop you right now so that I can turn—

Ms. Timea Nagy: Thank you. I'm actually done.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, that's great. Thank you. I'm going to turn to Mr. Fedeli to ask you some questions.

Okay, Mr. Fedeli.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Ms. Nagy. Let me begin by saying, first of all, how horrible for you. I think your presentation—I won't say shocked a lot of us because we've heard so much. But I think I would say it would startle us, your story of being trafficked from Hungary. In the face of this adversity, how brave of you in 2009 to develop the Walk With Me program, so I would say to you: Thank you for that initiative.

Your numbers were startling: 10,000 police officers, three federal law changes, 300 victims, 500 investigations, 39 police groups. It's just startling and stunning, and I think here we're sitting in a sense of thankfulness for you for doing that. My question to you would be: What other resources can the government allocate if they won't act on creating the task force that was proposed by MPP Scott and passed by our Legislature?

Ms. Timea Nagy: I think the task force that she meant is—and I could be very wrong, but I have been working with her on her proposals as well—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, she told us that.

Ms. Timea Nagy: Right. I think she's suggesting something very, very similar, if not the same. I call it a coordination centre; she calls it a task force. I think any politician would love to hear what I say, and I actually mean it: I don't think we need to put money and resources anywhere just yet. I think the first step we should do is create a centre and take an inventory and see what we already have and go from there. So my proposal would say is: Let's do a one-year pilot project, without starting to spend the taxpayer money on something that we don't even know exactly if it's effective. Let's just start with that. Let's take an inventory and take it one step at a time and come back with an evaluation. Then we can make recommendations on what should be next after hearing from the stakeholders in Ontario.

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Mr. Victor Fedeli: So you call it a coordination centre; MPP Laurie Scott calls it the task force, much like the guns and gangs initiative that was developed.

Ms. Timea Nagy: Exactly.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: That's what's in your mind as well; right? We have this centre and we start. We start at the beginning and create—in your case, you're suggesting the inventory: Where are we today? A picture, a snapshot in time; am I correct?

Ms. Timea Nagy: Right, exactly. Except that the guns and gangs—when, let's say, a special case happens in Simcoe, a small town, they will call in the guns and gangs from the headquarters.

My suggestion is that by having a coordination centre, as in my proposal, one of the sectors would be education or another sector where there is a human trafficking coordinator officer present, for example from the OPP. She would provide training to all cities and all units so that you don't have to have seven dedicated police

officers in one city and mobilize them any time there's a case somewhere. But you provide training to every single police agency and make it consistent training so that you save money on that.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I think you've certainly kicked it up a notch today by bringing this to light in front of our committee here.

What else could the government be doing to facilitate the sharing of the information between the departments? Is this centre or this guns and gangs initiative-like taskforce—will that do it, in your opinion?

Ms. Timea Nagy: I'm sorry; can you just repeat the question?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I was talking about what can be done to facilitate the sharing of information between the departments. Do you think that this centre or this task force based on the guns and gangs initiative—will that help in terms of sharing the information?

Ms. Timea Nagy: Absolutely, absolutely. I can give you an example, but I think we're running out of time—but absolutely.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The Durham region seems to be the leader in this area with their seven-person task force. Is that the kind of model that we should be looking at? Is that what you're recommending as well?

Ms. Timea Nagy: The leaders in Ontario, actually, are the Peel Regional Police because they have been doing this since 2000. They actually have two sets of teams of, I believe, six. But Durham region is up and coming and they have created everything that they have to date just in the last two years.

I think Peel and Durham regions are fantastic and perfect examples of what happens in a region when every single sector decides to come together and share information.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We can hope that the task force that was proposed by Laurie Scott and approved by the Legislature gets some traction in the very near future.

Ms. Timea Nagy: Thank you so much. Me too.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you, Ms. Nagy. Now, before you go, you have until February 2 at 5 p.m. to send any written submissions to the committee.

Ms. Timea Nagy: Okay.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): On behalf of the committee, I want to say thank you very much for joining us this morning; but more importantly, to thank you for sharing your story and your courage and your determination—because, at the end of the day, it's Ontarians like yourself who are prepared to share with the committee all your good work. Thank you, and keep up the great work.

Ms. Timea Nagy: Thank you so much for hearing me out. Thank you and have a great day.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): You too. Thank you, and I hope you feel better.

HAMILTON ROUNDTABLE FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next group coming before the committee is the Hamilton Roundtable for

Poverty Reduction. I believe it's Tom Cooper, the director. Mr. Cooper, welcome.

Mr. Tom Cooper: Good morning.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Good morning. Before you begin, just to understand the rules here, you will be given an opportunity to speak for 10 minutes, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will be coming from the official third party. You may begin any time. Please identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard when you begin. Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Tom Cooper: Thank you. Good morning. My name is Tom Cooper. I'm the director of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, as well as co-ordinator of the Ontario Living Wage Network.

I'm very happy to be here today. It's interesting timing, though, because this morning social media is aflutter with a headline: "The 62 Richest People on Earth Now Hold as Much Wealth as the Poorest 3.5 Billion." I don't think anybody credible would say this is either good for the world or good for the economy.

Certainly, here in Ontario, and here in Hamilton specifically, we have seen the impact of income inequality. Here in our community, there are more than 18,000 individuals who use food banks every single month. Amongst that number are 6,000 kids. So if you break down those numbers by the average class size in Ontario, in reality there are enough children going hungry, enough kids using food banks in this city alone, to fill 270 classrooms. It's unacceptable. In a society such as ours, we can do better and we must do better.

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction has been working on the issues of income inequality and poverty reduction in our community for the last decade or so, but we certainly recognize that there are key areas where the provincial government can step up and make a difference in the lives of families, children, seniors and many other individuals in our community.

I'm going to start with income security. Ontario's labour market outlook isn't as robust as it used to be. The old adage that the best way out of poverty is a job no longer holds true. Precarious employment affects approximately 44% of employees in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. We know that there are a growing number of jobs whose characteristics of precarious employment mean that they don't have health benefits, and they don't have the stability of knowing if they're still going to have a job six months, 12 months down the line.

Part-time work is also a characteristic of this, and we know that there are many individuals in the service and retail sectors who simply don't have the stability of knowing how many hours they're going to get from one week to the next. This is not only playing havoc with the stress of those individuals, but again, it's not good for the economy.

Here in Hamilton, there are 30,000 people who go to work every single day and are not earning enough to pull themselves or their families out of poverty. They're the working poor. Unfortunately, minimum wage isn't

cutting it for them. We know that minimum wage falls significantly below what families need, not only here in Hamilton but across Ontario, to make ends meet.

That's why, here in Hamilton, individual organizations and employers have stepped up and they've begun adopting a living wage. It sets a different standard. It really highlights the cost of what families need to cover in their daily lives, including food, housing, transportation, child care and health benefits. We know that many families are finding it incredibly difficult, and that's why we're glad that organizations like the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, many small retail businesses and many non-profit organizations have stepped up and started paying a living wage.

We'd really encourage the province of Ontario to look at this model and follow an example similar to what Alberta is taking up in terms of looking at a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. It is good for the economy; it is good for those workers who are pulled out of poverty.

We're also discovering that it is good for employers as well. Employers who have adopted living wages—and Catherine Fife will appreciate this, because in Waterloo region, they've recently done a survey of the employers in that community who have adopted a living wage. They have found that those employers who have adopted a living wage have actually hired more employees, so it is a benefit to those organizations.

Across Ontario, we have about 26 communities that have adopted a living wage and are looking at living wage initiatives—communities from Thunder Bay to Niagara Falls, from Windsor to Cornwall. This is very much a provincial movement that Hamilton is proud to be part of.

We would strongly encourage the government of Ontario to look at things like procurement policies. Businesses that the government has to do business with could potentially be paying their employees a living wage, and it would send a strong signal that wages are an important aspect of pulling families out of poverty.

It would certainly benefit communities. We know that when families have more disposable income, that is money that's spent locally on local goods and services. It's improving local economic conditions, economic development, and improving jobs as well.

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The other income security front I'd like to talk a little bit about today is social assistance. Now, I think you've probably had a couple of other presentations this morning, but we know social assistance rates are woefully low in this province. As I mentioned, there are about 18,000 people in Hamilton alone who are using food banks every single month. Of that number, 75% are on provincial social assistance programs.

Think about that. Three quarters of everybody who's using a food bank are really receiving their main income source from the provincial government. In a very real sense, the provincial government is instituting hunger through its inability to fix the social assistance system,

and we've been in a situation in this province where there have been tweaks to the system but not a wholesale reform, which is what is needed. Over the last 20 years, we've seen the social assistance rates actually fall relative to the cost of living. So even comparing rates to 2003, when this current government came into power, if you factor in cost of living, rates are actually lower today than they were then. And we know that those families on social assistance are living in the deepest poverty in society. Certainly food security is a big issue, and that's why so many are using food banks.

We know housing security is another threat to families, and affordable, secure, accessible housing is becoming more and more impossible to find.

We would strongly encourage the development of an evidence-based approach to setting social assistance rates: looking at the cost of goods and services in communities across the province and really setting social assistance rates based on what it costs to live. It is a rational determination of costs. If we are going to pay social assistance rates as a province, let's actually figure out what people need to live on.

Moving to housing, we know, in Ontario, housing remains a huge challenge. Here in Hamilton, for example, 80% of unattached individuals and 60% of lone-parent families spend more than 30% on housing every single month; 48% and 27%, respectively, spend more than 50% of their incomes on housing costs. And we know housing costs are only going up, as we've seen across the country a 12% increase in retail housing. That's definitely having a trickle-down effect on rents as well, and we've seen lower vacancy rates and rents soaring across this community.

We also know that homelessness remains very real in this community. There are hundreds who experience homelessness every single month in Hamilton, and certainly across the province it is becoming more and more challenging. Most disturbingly, perhaps, women who are victims of domestic violence are unable to find emergency shelters; 90% of women's shelters designated for victims of violence in Hamilton turn away about 300 individuals every single month.

We need an affordable housing strategy in this province—

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Cooper, I need you to stop because I'm going to turn to Ms. Fife to ask you some questions for the next five minutes. Oh, Mr. Miller.

I'm sorry. Mr. Miller, you may begin this round of questioning.

Mr. Paul Miller: Good morning, Tom.

Mr. Tom Cooper: Good morning.

Mr. Paul Miller: This seems to be a familiar thing for me with you. I believe we were sitting across from each other five or six years ago. I believe at that time Deb Matthews was in town promising to end poverty, 5 in 25 or something, and it obviously hasn't progressed to anywhere near where we need to go. Would that be a fair statement?

Mr. Tom Cooper: I think it is definitely a fair statement. We need more investments across the board.

Mr. Paul Miller: And I can speak from personal experience and in dealing with you on a regular basis as well from my office that 20% of the people, roughly, in my riding live below the poverty level. These are people who struggle. They pay most of their money for their hydro or their rent, and the food bank usage has gone up drastically in the last two years, especially. Would that be a fair statement?

Mr. Tom Cooper: That is accurate, yes.

Mr. Paul Miller: You're obviously a lawyer who is with the clinic, or working for the clinic. Do you find that the caseload has doubled or tripled there at the clinic?

Mr. Tom Cooper: I'm not personally a lawyer, but the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction's sponsor organization is Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, and they have certainly seen an increase in case-loads, particularly those at risk of losing their housing.

Mr. Paul Miller: Right. I would say, on a provincial average, that Hamilton is probably one of the highest-hit areas for poverty and precarious work. These loan places that Quebec banned, loan companies where for 20 bucks, you get \$300—"cash for life," or whatever it's called—have certainly had a negative impact on poverty and the poor in this city. Would you say that?

Mr. Tom Cooper: I would say predatory lending and payday loan outlets are a blight on society. We've certainly seen the impact on low-income and vulnerable Hamiltonians. We would like to see much stronger legislation, much stronger regulations, on that industry.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I hope the government is listening to this, because it's a very important issue in Hamilton, as well as Toronto and surrounding areas. Poverty has been an ongoing problem in the Hamilton area since I've been in office. People here are not happy with the performance of the provincial government in reference to poverty in this city. It has become rampant. We drastically need help here, and we need people to pay attention to this and take it seriously. Some may and some may not over there; I'm not sure. But this is an important issue.

I can't emphasize enough how important your decisions on this committee, taken back to the government, will make an influence on people's lives in this area and change their lives for the good. We've got 6,000 kids who are going hungry. We've got—how many?—30,000 people who can't find employment. We're hundreds and hundreds of affordable housing units down, and we've seen very little progress in Hamilton from the provincial government.

This has to change. This is going to become a focal point in the next two years. It has been for a long time, but we're certainly going to increase the pressure, because it's absolutely disgusting what's going on in this city, for the lack of help we're getting. I hope you're listening, because it's going to become a big issue.

Now, getting back, Tom, what would you like to see? I know we've had so many committees struck. I've seen so many, over the years, "We're going to study this to death." The bottom line is, social services need money.

We need housing. We need money for kids for food and to help pay their hydro bills. ODSP and OW are drastically disgusting amounts. We need a livable wage at \$15. Is that fair, Tom?

Mr. Tom Cooper: Yes.

Mr. Paul Miller: I can't tell you how many people are suffering in this city. I guess there's a demonstration coming up shortly, outside, for part of it. But the bottom line is that something has to be done, folks—my colleagues. Something has to be done soon.

I believe Ms. French has a question.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): You have one minute, Ms. French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you. I'm here representing the people from Oshawa. I think we share many things in common. People really hope that the government gets its fundamentals, its basics, right. Public services need to be strong. Hospitals, schools: All of these things come together. We need a strong job creation strategy.

In Oshawa, we have the second-highest youth unemployment rate, which doesn't leave us very hopeful. Our child poverty rate downtown is about 50%, if you can imagine.

One of the things that you mentioned, in terms of housing—you echoed something we heard earlier about an evidence-based way to set social assistance. Could you make a quick recommendation to the government—

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Cooper, one sentence, because I want to move, because we have another speaker before lunch, okay?

Mr. Tom Cooper: A social assistance rates board that could be presented with evidence on the cost of living in communities across the province could potentially recommend to the government social assistance rates based on what it actually costs to live in communities.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Thank you, Mr. Cooper. If there is any written submission, you have until February 2 at 5 p.m. to submit it to the Clerk. Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Tom Cooper: Thank you for your time.

OPSEU

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. The next witness before us is OPSEU. I believe it's Tammy Carson, the provincial health and safety chair. The Clerk is coming around with the written submission. Good morning.

Ms. Tammy Carson: Good morning.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): As you probably heard, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will be coming from the government side.

You may begin at any time. Please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard when you begin. Welcome.

Ms. Tammy Carson: Thank you. It's nice to meet everybody. My name is Tammy Carson, and I am the provincial health and safety chair for adult corrections,

representing OPSEU. I'm also a correctional officer at the Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene.

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Thank you for the opportunity to present today on the subject of health and safety in adult provincial corrections. My colleague Chad Oldfield, who is also the president of the Maplehurst correctional centre, will present at my conclusion.

I represent 7,000 correctional, probation and parole officers and the bailiff transport unit in Ontario. We are in a crisis in corrections. Allow me to begin with what I believe is required to rebuild the corrections system to be a healthier and safer place.

We are extremely short-staffed in corrections. The corrections college was closed down to new recruits—and a hiring freeze for over three years; for over three years there was no recruitment or hiring of new correctional officers or probation and parole officers. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services just committed to recruiting 144 new correctional officers and 25 probation and parole officers. With 20% of correctional officers and correctional managers eligible for retirement over the next three years, I am not sure how our ministry is ever going to have enough staff.

MCSCS also needs to commit to a plan to retain professional correctional officers. With our unsafe and digressing working conditions, it makes it difficult or impossible to think of working in this profession for up to 34 years.

Correctional facilities are operating on skeleton crews each shift, thus making it barely possible to perform basic correctional officers' duties such as meal delivery and supervising medication rounds. Inmate visits are cancelled on a regular basis and programs are becoming obsolete with regular lockdowns. Facility lockdowns are becoming the norm instead of a rare occurrence. In 2015, there were approximately 800 facility lockdowns throughout the province. The reasons for the lockdowns ranged from being short-staffed to assault and to weapons searches.

The lack of resources leads to the next issue: the alarming increase of inmate-upon-inmate and inmate-upon-staff threats and assaults in our facilities. The official stats for 2015 have not been released yet, but our estimate is that the number of inmate assaults on staff will be well over 1,000—the highest assault-on-staff numbers in corrections throughout Canada. This number does not include threats towards staff or the number of threats and assaults that go unreported.

To help minimize violence and maximize the health and safety in corrections, we require modern, effective equipment to detect contraband, including weapons and drugs, out of our facilities. To ensure the safety of all staff and inmates and the public, we require a full-body scanner in every facility, which are approximately 26. The metal detectors that we have are not effective in detecting non-metal weapons, drugs or other contraband. A pilot with a full-body scanner was set up in Toronto

South Detention Centre. The full-body scanner was a very successful pilot project and has been permanently installed. The body scanner is about \$400,000 per unit, for approximately \$10,400,000, keeping in mind this does not include the cost of installation, possible retrofits to accommodate the space and the training for staff.

I am also requesting that all correctional officers be issued with a bullet/stab/slash-resistant vest. It's hard to believe that we don't have this. The current practice is that only community escort trained officers are issued with a vest. With the increase in violence and weapons in our facilities, this is a very unsafe work practice. This also makes conducting a weapons search within our facilities a daunting task. About 60% of all correctional officers have been issued with a vest. We have approximately 5,000 correctional officers. We require a vest for about 2,000 more correctional officers, at a cost of approximately \$450 each.

One lockdown to search for a weapon at a superjail such as mine, Central North Correctional Centre, for four days, costs approximately \$250,000. The health and safety of a worker should not be put at risk due to the lack of funding.

We are also requesting that all operational workers in correctional facilities be provided with a radio to ensure effective communications. I know it's hard to believe that we don't even have the basic equipment such as a radio to communicate with ourselves or with our central control units, but this is a fact—we don't. There are several times that a correctional officer, including myself, or a manager reports to shift and is not issued with a radio because there are simply not enough. It is estimated that we require another 3,500 radios to ensure also that our nursing and maintenance staff are available via radio. Nine hundred dollars per radio times 3,500 would be approximately \$3,150,000.

MSA cylinder packs, similar to what firefighters wear, which we're required to be trained in to maintain operations and evacuate the area during a fire emergency, are required for every correctional officer that is assigned to posts and operational areas. This is not the case. For example, if we have four correctional officers working on one unit, we may only in fact have two MSA packs available on that unit. How is anyone supposed to do their job, or even get themselves out safely, without having this equipment made available to them?

As we became aware of this during the fires at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre and the Toronto South Detention Centre, correctional officers did not have enough MSA equipment to safely evacuate and to maintain operations. Several officers had to utilize the air pockets by covering their mouths with clothing. Over half a dozen officers were treated for smoke inhalation at both facilities, and this has happened at other facilities in the past as well.

Community escort vehicles and offender transport officer vehicles: We both have vehicles that are used to transport offenders. Correctional officers are often required to conduct emergency medical transports via

ambulance. Due to the lack of space in an ambulance, one or two correctional officers are assigned to follow the ambulance transporting the offender. The community escort vehicles do not have emergency lighting to permit us to keep up with the ambulance. We are requesting a light bar to be utilized during these emergencies.

The offender transport officers are also often stranded in northern Ontario, with little or no other civilians or traffic going by. They are also stranded in inclement weather in medical emergencies, and have no way to identify who they are or what they're trying to do.

We are also requiring mental health training for correctional staff. With facilities closing across the province, there is a significant increase in the number of offenders being incarcerated with mental health issues. We receive little to no training to assist with these offenders. We also require specialized mental health nurses to provide the care for these offenders that they require and deserve.

Also, our mental health: Occupational stress and post-traumatic stress disorder are on the increase for correctional workers. Some 30% have been diagnosed with PTSD, and it is unknown as to how many have not been diagnosed. We have limited resources available to ensure our mental well-being. In facilities in community corrections, we see and deal with the worst of the worst. We require our peer support group and early intervention, including debriefings and follow-up support.

I did put a total, with the body scanners, for the amount that I think would help with some of this. Mind you, I'm not privy to some of the information, so I had to do some research and try to come up with the numbers myself.

That concludes my presentation, and I will hand it over to Chad. Thank you.

Mr. Chad Oldfield: Thank you, Tammy. Tammy has outlined some really good points about our crisis.

Good afternoon, committee. My name is Chad Oldfield. I'm the president of OPSEU Local 234, Maplehurst Correctional Complex and Vanier Centre for Women. I've been a correctional officer for 12 years, active on the local executive since 2011, and president since 2013. I represent nearly 900 members—I don't just represent them; I feel responsible for my members and their safety.

All of our institutions have issues, as you've heard. Let's get to the meat and potatoes, and get down to the brass tacks. We need the body scanners. The best way to communicate to you how badly we need them is to come here and tell you myself.

Currently, the technology that we use in our institutions is metal detectors. There is a contracted company that the government keeps renewing, but this technology is outdated. It's about 25 years old. It's one of our tools.

In my opinion, one of the biggest threats, if not the biggest threat, we face in our institutions today is ceramic weapons. Knives that can be bought at Canadian Tire or any kitchenware store are literally walking through our metal detectors undetected. They never need to be sharpened. They are guaranteed for life. Our jails are full of them.

I could tell you about an inmate who was cut from his ear to his mouth through his cheek. His face was hanging wide open. Or I could also tell you about an inmate who was sent to hospital for 50 staples across his abdomen. But I'm not going to do that. I will instead tell you about a critical incident that happened four weeks ago at Maplehurst.

I was performing my assigned duties when I and two other officers were notified that there was an inmate being assaulted. We responded to the area and found an inmate who had been stabbed five times. He was bleeding profusely from every wound. I heard my partner say, "He has a knife," about the other inmate who had committed the stabbing.

The other officer and I, while restraining the inmate, went down to the ground. We realized the inmate had the ceramic knife tied to his wrist. As my partner struggled to get the knife off his wrist, he managed to do so without getting cut. I then had to drag the inmate out of the doorway area so that the health care nurses could attend to the inmate who was bleeding out on the floor. Once I was able to get handcuffs on the inmate and secure him in another area, we were then able to help the nurses try to stop the bleeding while waiting for the ambulance—

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Oldfield, can you wrap up your presentation? I have to turn to the government side to ask you some questions. They may have some questions related to your experience.

Mr. Chad Oldfield: Yes, I can. Basically, a body scanner would be an invaluable tool in helping us address the crisis in corrections. It's not that we want one; we need one, and we need one for every institution. We are very fortunate that we haven't had anyone killed yet, but I fear that this will happen; when it does, then we will all have to ask ourselves, "Could we have stopped it?"

Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, Mr. Milczyn, do you want to start this round of questioning?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Mr. Oldfield, I just wanted to offer you, if there was anything else you wanted to say—did you want a little bit more time to complete your statement?

Mr. Chad Oldfield: I think I made all my main points. I got through the middle of it there—oh, okay. I will say that this inmate was very lucky and the staff were very lucky. We handled it professionally. It was only by an eighth of an inch that the inmate didn't have his lung punctured. You know, these details are not nice, but this is what we are dealing with on a daily basis in corrections. The doctor said he was lucky to be alive.

I only wanted to add that if having these body scanners—even one in each institution—could save even one life, that to me is absolutely worth it. That's all I have to say.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Ms. Carson, Mr. Oldfield, I really want to thank you for your presentations today. There is a lot of very important information you gave us. I also want to thank both of you and all of your colleagues for the incredibly important and dangerous

and difficult job you do day in and day out for us. I know there have been a lot of negotiations going on. They seem to be going very well. There's more work to do. I'll just leave it at that and thank you.

Mr. Chad Oldfield: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. I believe this is the last group of witnesses before lunch. I'm going to recess the committee until 1 p.m.; right, Mr. Clerk? All right. We'll reconvene the committee at 1 p.m. in the same room this afternoon. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1200 to 1300.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Good afternoon, everybody. We'll start our pre-budget consultations once again this afternoon. Welcome to this session.

Just for all the presenters present, I'll advise you that there are 15 minutes per presenter: 10 minutes for you to make your comments and then five minutes for questions from one of the caucuses.

FIRSTONTARIO CREDIT UNION

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Our first presenter now will be FirstOntario Credit Union, and questions will be coming from the official opposition for this round. For the record, could you please introduce yourself?

Mr. Kelly Harris: Yes, my name is Kelly Harris. I'm the vice-president, corporate and public affairs, with FirstOntario Credit Union.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): The floor is yours.

Mr. Kelly Harris: A little more about FirstOntario: FirstOntario is the second-largest credit union in Ontario and the fastest-growing credit union in Canada. I would like to begin by thanking the members of the committee and you, Mr. Vice-Chair, for inviting FirstOntario to present here today.

It's not a coincidence that FirstOntario is the fastest-growing credit union in Canada. Aside from our skilled leadership and community-focused strategic plan, we have the good fortune to be based in a true Canadian success story, Hamilton.

Consistently, Hamilton is ranked one of the fastest-growing economies in Ontario and is ranked, year over year, as having one of the lowest unemployment rates in the province. The Conference Board of Canada attributes that in no small part to the diversity of Hamilton's economy. In a Hamilton Spectator article this past August, economic diversity and employment rates were credited largely to Canada's job creators: small and medium-sized businesses. To quote the article, "Small- and medium-sized businesses have been the engine of local job growth, built on a solid foundation of innovation and entrepreneurialism."

As I am sure you have heard me say numerous times, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's Battle of the Banks survey has ranked credit unions as the preferred lenders to small businesses in Canada, so it

should be no surprise that hand in glove with the success of FirstOntario Credit Union is Hamilton's growth and economic resurgence.

The signs are all around. Just outside this window is the FirstOntario Centre; the Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines and our school breakfast program, helping to give students a great start to their day, are all examples of giving back and promoting highly livable and healthy communities. The FirstOntario Business Centre on King William Street, open for small business owners to use free of charge, and the work we are doing with the province to help curb the cycle of debt through payday lending are all examples of how FirstOntario is working to improve the lives of our members and potential members in the Hamilton and Niagara region.

These initiatives have helped FirstOntario eclipse \$4 billion in size, and before the end of 2016 we are confident that the credit union will be ranked in the top 10 largest in Canada, all stemming from our roots here in Hamilton—one more Hamilton success story to be proud of.

Just as Hamilton faces challenges in the face of global economic pressures to continue to be successful, so too does FirstOntario. However, our challenges, like those of the credit union system across Ontario, are more locally based.

The province's own growth projections state that Hamilton is expected to grow by 200,000 people within 25 years. That means the economy will need to create and sustain an additional 50,000 good family-supporting jobs.

Creating those jobs takes a few key elements: entrepreneurs, who are key to start and maintain healthy and growing businesses; a sound economy, with sustainable taxation levels at all levels of government that encourage economic growth; and strong financial institutions able to invest in the economy through loans, mortgages and community investments, the kind that FirstOntario does each and every day.

But FirstOntario, like other Ontario credit unions, faces an uphill challenge when finding the capital needed to invest.

We are challenged by out-of-date rules on deposit insurance that have Ontario ranked as the lowest in North America, limiting the amount of protections our members have.

We are challenged by rules preventing credit unions from seeking non-margin income afforded to the biggest of the big banks and limits on our ownership of other businesses to 30% in many instances.

We are challenged by antiquated bylaws and out-of-date legislation that prohibit the province of Ontario's own financial services industry from doing business with Ontario's own institutions, including municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals.

We are challenged by a lack of public recognition that credit unions are the only real and safe alternative to Canada's big banks.

For more than a year, Ms. Albanese has been conducting a review of the credit union system in Ontario.

Soon her recommendations will be announced, and we are confident in the work she and others in the Ministry of Finance have done. But it is imperative that three key changes to credit union legislation in Ontario happen in this budget, and FirstOntario implores you to add them in your pre-budget recommendations.

First, increase deposit insurance on non-registered deposits held in credit unions to a minimum of \$250,000. This will help promote the safety of credit unions by equalling the North American average for deposit insurance. This will help attract more deposits, which can then be turned into job-creating and community-supporting investments.

Second, remove the list and ownership rules for non-margin business. Let our regulators decide if a business is prudent, and let the credit unions continue to do what they do each day: conduct our business in the best interest of our members. This will allow credit unions to increase retained earnings used to grow and attract new members and to invest in communities like Hamilton. This will also help provide the capital needed to help new Canadians settle and start businesses of their own.

In 2014, a Canadian Credit Union Association study found that every dollar of retained earnings that credit unions have to invest is equal to \$10 of lending ability. That means that \$100 million more in retained earnings here in Hamilton would be like \$1 billion available in student loans. It would be like Hamilton economic development hit the Powerball.

Bring in new rules that allow for credit unions to compete for MUSH sector deposits so that tax dollars paid in a community stay in the community through local credit union investment and are not sent out of Canada to the Bahamas, Costa Rica or Boston, as can be done with the banks and the Ontario pension fund, which invest in things like airports overseas.

These three changes will promote greater strength of credit unions and promote economic growth. And the price tag for Ontario taxpayers? Not a single nickel.

So once again I implore you: Promote the strength and growth of Ontario and its communities by supporting the strength and growth of Ontario's credit unions.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you, Mr. Harris. Mr. Fedeli?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for a wonderful presentation, Mr. Harris; we appreciate that today.

You already answered my biggest question, which was going to be: What would the cost of all these three changes be? So do you want to just take one more minute and go over the three of them again, if you don't mind, before I get into my real question? I've got the first two written down, but I never quite finished up on the third one.

Mr. Kelly Harris: The first one, of course, is the increased deposit insurance to equal the North American average of \$250,000.

The second one is to open up the subsidiary list so that we can own and invest in other businesses that create

non-margin income. As you can appreciate, if you're giving a penny and a half on a dollar for deposits and you are charging two cents on a loan, there's not much of a margin to run your businesses and create new businesses, so we look for other opportunities that are afforded to the big banks in things like pension funds as well.

Credit unions don't have a bond rating, because we are not interested in investing on the capital markets and overseas. Our investments happen here in Ontario, and more locally here in Hamilton. Therefore, we can't compete for many of the MUSH sector deposits—municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—which is inconsistent, because if you think about it, these are four types of businesses that the Ontario government runs in one way or another, and the financial institutions that it manages can't actually get deposits and be their bankers, really.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: So let's talk about some of the things that may or may not be in this upcoming budget, but things that we know are happening in Ontario.

I want to talk about the Ontario registered pension plan program. What can you tell us about that program in terms of the effect on the credit unions?

Mr. Kelly Harris: What I can say is that the position the credit unions took was that we should have an enhanced CPP. We believe that retirement savings—we're a financial institution; we obviously believe that people need to save more for their retirement. It's one of the things that we promote as a service.

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The actual impact, we'll have to see. But right now, again, the position that we have taken is that we would prefer an enhancement to the CPP.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I was also shocked—you've made presentations here before and I want to ask for an update. It was the one where a credit union can't be used to be involved in a mortgage with a municipality. Can you get into that and tell us if that's been corrected yet?

Mr. Kelly Harris: What that has to do with—that's tax sale properties that you're talking about. As you know, or anyone who has worked in municipal governments knows, sometimes you get a piece of property that comes into your possession because the people can't pay their taxes or whatever else is the issue. You don't really want those on your balance sheet; you're trying to sell them. One of the inconsistencies and one that I talked about—arcane bylaws and out-of-date legislation—is that if you go to a city you have to bring a 20% deposit, and one of the ways is through certified cheques. You can't use a credit union certified cheque to buy a tax sale property.

If you think about places like Iron Bridge in northern Ontario, where there's only a credit union, and the only reason why there is a financial institution is that they begged the credit union to go in after Royal Bank left, can you imagine telling one of your constituents, if you were a mayor in northern Ontario, "Sorry; you have to drive to the next town before you can buy this piece of property"? I don't imagine it would go over very well.

I don't believe that this is the type of legislation the government is interested in either. I just believe that we need to actually go through it. If you take a look at the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act which we're reviewing right now and recommendations are going to be made, hopefully for a rewrite of the piece of legislation, a few things have happened in the world since it was passed in 1994. First off, you had 9/11—that was important for things like FINTRAC and other terrorism legislation; you had the great recession that happened in 2008; and, of course, one other thing that has happened since the credit union legislation was written: the Internet. So we have legislation that predates the Internet in regular usage in our homes and our financial institutions.

The inconsistencies with legislation—I think they go back a long way. I think if you take a look at the full impact of credit union legislation across the province there's a number of instances just like the issue with tax sale properties.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: So the tax sale properties, correcting that: Is there any cost to the taxpayer?

Mr. Kelly Harris: Just what it costs to pass a new law or regulation. So they're already paying for it.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I agree entirely, by the way. It was almost a rhetorical question.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Mr. Kelly Harris: I would just like to say that I appreciate the work the government has done on the review of the legislation. Last year, there were three pieces of legislation that got province-wide public reviews and sought public input. That was the Ontario pension plan, a pretty big piece of legislation for the government; the budget, always a big piece of legislation; and the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act. I think this says how important credit unions are to the Ontario economy, and I think that once we have the recommendations—and, again, we are confident with the work Ms. Albanese has done—the next step to that is to talk about how important credit unions are to the Ontario economy, especially in places like Hamilton and Niagara region. The signs aren't too far away. Like I said, we've got a really big one right next door of signs of what credit unions are doing in these communities. So it's important, I think, not only for us to promote our industry but it's also important for you to promote your financial institutions.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I thank you very much for the presentation. Congratulations on your new position as vice-president, as well, Kelly.

Mr. Kelly Harris: Thank you very much.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you very much.

HOME OF THEIR OWN

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Our next witness is Home of Their Own, if you're here. You'll

have 10 minutes for your presentation and there will be questions from the third party. For the record, could you please identify yourselves?

Ms. Deborah Pfeiffer: My name's Deborah Pfeiffer.

Ms. Moira Hollingsworth: And my name is Moira Hollingsworth.

Ms. Deborah Pfeiffer: There is a third parent who is a part of our group but she wasn't able to attend today due to work commitments.

We would like to thank you for inviting us to present today. We are a parent group called Home of Their Own, which we sometimes refer to as HOTO.

In response to and by a leap of faith in the 2006 ministry document Opportunities and Action, we decided in 2011 to purchase a home for our three sons, who have profound, complex needs requiring 24/7 care. We have done what that document asks by working collaboratively with each other and local agencies, pooling Passport and ODSP funding as well as our own personal resources to help make this dream a reality.

We assume all capital costs for the home and maintenance. We also contribute to the support dollars for our sons to each attend their own individual day program Monday to Friday. To date, we have only been able to secure funding through two local agencies for respite at the house one weekend per month.

In the last six years, in order to try and obtain long-term funding, we have met with DSO; Parents for Community Living; K-W Association for Community Living; Elmira and District Association for Community Living; Families for a Secure Future; MCSS program manager Alayne Langerak; former MPP Elizabeth Witmer; former Ombudsman André Marin; Catherine Fife, MPP; and the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We presented before the LHIN committee. We've shared our story on a CBC radio documentary and with the Waterloo Chronicle. We made a March 2015 proposal to the housing task force and are currently making a March 2016 proposal to the housing task force.

We realized that funding for our model by regional cash-strapped agencies was not a viable solution as funding for parent-created housing like ours comes under the umbrella of MCSS. We also realized that we are not alone in this struggle, and thus in September of 2015 a Facebook page was developed for Home of Their Own to reach out to other parents.

We started to hear from parents province-wide about their struggles to find safe, secure residential supports for their children. We also heard from parents with great ideas for housing models of their own.

On November 21, 2015, we held a symposium for parents only at which HOTO and another parent group from Peterborough presented their housing models. MPP Catherine Fife, who has supported and worked with HOTO from the beginning, was also there to support and encourage parents with whatever her office is able to do for them.

The outcome of this day was that parents were unanimous in their desire for parent-created housing for

their children. Sadly, however, without some form of ministry funding none of their hopes and dreams for their children will become a reality. To date, 14,000-plus individuals sit on the registry for residential support, a registry that leads to nowhere. We as a society, and our elected representatives, have a moral obligation to protect our most vulnerable citizens. Parents are ready and eager to work together with each other and collaborate with agencies and the ministry to help lessen the crisis of an already overburdened registry for residential supports.

HOTO is about choice, about new experiences and about active participation in the community you live in. It's about choosing where, with whom and how you want to live. It's about feeling safe and secure and forming deep, meaningful relationships within. It's knowing that this is home; not so much about the bricks and mortar that make up the house but about the love, respect and dignity inside the house that make it into a home.

Sadly, without some form of funding for models like HOTO and other parent-created models, we will never see our dreams turn into reality, and the registry to nowhere will continue to grow, with no end in sight.

As a result from complaints from families, in November of 2012 an investigation was launched by then-Ombudsman André Marin. Hundreds of families responded to his invitation to contact him, some with very dire and horrific stories. As of July 2015, there have been 1,300 complaints to date. I've submitted documentation for this, as well as the link to read many complaints issued by parents. The report, due out just prior to the provincial election, was delayed twice and never issued. We ask: What has become of that report?

Again, recently in the news we are hearing of families having to resort to drastic measures to find safe, secure housing for their children. I refer to one such incident: the November 17, 2015, Global News piece by Christina Stevens where a young man with autism had to be declared homeless and spend a year in a psychiatric ward before finding safe, secure housing. Again, many parents reached out to this reporter with similar heartbreaking stories.

We acknowledge the creation of the housing task force and the commitment of \$3 million in each of two rounds of funding. However, this will only serve, for a short term, a tiny fraction of the growing number of individuals on the registry. Surely, family-created housing would represent a significant measure of savings to the province and would definitely be cheaper than a long-term hospital stay.

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As an aging population, we parents have faced our own health challenges while still being required to care 24/7 for our adult children with profound complex needs. While applications to the housing task force for demonstration projects are currently being accepted, parents are needing real answers in real time. For us, HOTO is no longer a demonstration project. It has already been demonstrated as a success story of family and agency collaboration in providing a safe, secure and loving home

for our sons while providing them with the same choices we all have: of where, with whom, and how they want to live.

We are asking that a stable funding source be created for family-created housing and to honour the commitment made in the 2012 budget to reduce the number of individuals on the registry, which has only grown since that time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you very much. Ms. Fife?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Deb and Moira, for coming in and also for sharing all the documentation. You have a strong track record here of advocating for your children.

It's frustrating because it has taken so long. You mentioned that this first started with Elizabeth Witmer—you brought the concern to her—and also John Milloy, as I recall.

When you did reach out to Minister Jaczek—this was back in just this past October, through my office—she referenced the \$810 million and then also recommended that you once again apply to the housing task force. Do you want to tell us what happened when you applied to the housing task force, the first—

Ms. Moira Hollingsworth: There were 80 submissions and only 12 were accepted, so clearly there aren't enough funds to satisfy the needs.

Ms. Catherine Fife: And can you just clarify: When you did apply to the housing task force, based on the house that you're currently funding out of your own pockets, what was the rationale as to why your project, which has proven to be successful, was not approved? Did you receive any feedback?

Ms. Moira Hollingsworth: Actually, they said our submission was incomplete, so we didn't get a full evaluation of our submission. That's why we're re-submitting. But we do know that in similar cases, often they'll talk about lack of sustainability. That's one of the key things that will prevent it from being accepted.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So even though you basically followed the government's instructions after they moved out of the group home business and you did this agency/family collaboration and you created this home of their own, and even though it has been operational now—is it four years?

Ms. Moira Hollingsworth: Five.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Five years—your application was deemed incomplete?

Ms. Moira Hollingsworth: Yes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. So you're reapplying again. Right.

This is a difficult question to ask you, though, because I've met your adult children and I know that you are trying to plan for the future. Looking down the line, when there is no plan right now for children such as yours in the province of Ontario, where do you see your adult children when you can no longer take care of them?

Ms. Deborah Pfeiffer: Well, this has been our plan A, B, C, D. We don't have another option. That's why it's a

dire situation. We're trying to be proactive before there is a crisis. For parents to go into crisis and try and get on what we parents call the wait-list—there are not beds available.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Moira, do you want to add anything?

Ms. Moira Hollingsworth: I was going to say that typically you have to be in a crisis, and even then, agencies have to try and stretch the dollars they already have to provide some placement for your child. I know of one parent whose son lived in a hospital for nine months before being found a place. So it's not the agency's fault; they just don't get any further funding even if they have to provide housing for another person.

We're trying to open up this opportunity for a new vehicle where families create their own housing and provide the capital dollars, and we just need the support costs. That does reduce the costs for the ministry, and eventually we are not going to be in a crisis, suddenly having to find an agency, or the ministry having to find some way for our sons to live, if we suddenly have a crisis, so there's a much harder burden on everybody at that point.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No; I agree. I thank you for including the review, Adults with Developmental Disabilities in Crisis, that was done by MCSS. It cites some of the stories that you've referenced. There's a huge cost to not having a plan and not having a strategy.

I just want to commend you for your leadership. We'll try to make sure, in this budget round, that this government puts a sustainably long-term plan in place to honour their original commitment that they made to parents, like you, for your children. Thank you for being here today.

Ms. Deborah Pfeiffer: Thank you.

Ms. Moira Hollingsworth: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you for your submissions this afternoon.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS NETWORK

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Our next witnesses are from the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network. You have 10 minutes to present. If you could identify yourself for the record—and questions will be coming from the government side.

Ms. Wendy Mouldsdale: Thank you very much. My name is Wendy Mouldsdale. I'm a nurse practitioner. I am also a volunteer with the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network, otherwise known as PAIL Network. I lead their education programming as a volunteer.

PAIL Network is a non-religious registered Canadian charity providing free, peer-led support programs for over 25 years in this province to families who have experienced pregnancy loss or infant death.

We also provide education programs to health care providers and other people who come in contact with bereaved families.

While I have not personally experienced pregnancy loss or infant death, over my 28-year career I have supported hundreds of families through the experience of the death of their baby in the neonatal intensive care unit setting, either through stillbirth or through neonatal death.

My colleagues and I at PAIL Network are truly thankful to the government of Ontario for recognizing the critical importance of Bill 141 and passing it through as rapidly as they did into law. But now we feel that the work truly begins. PAIL Network has already met with representatives from the Ministry of Health to discuss first steps and priorities.

I'd like to speak to you now a little bit about education as that is my role with PAIL Network. We need education to raise public awareness, which the passage of this bill has already done, but we've got more to do. We need to continue to educate health care providers in the many roles they have as they come in contact with bereaved families. We also need to educate our future health care professionals in their core undergraduate and diploma programs.

Here in Ontario, Bill 141 does represent a critical breakthrough for maternal health. Women and their partners and families who experience pregnancy and infant loss are grieving deeply. While the grief may lessen or change over time, it will never end. They will carry that grief forever. They do find support through any means that they can, such as through PAIL Network, but also through social media such as Facebook, online blogs, LinkedIn and chat rooms—just a few examples. Thanks to Bill 141, many more families are aware of PAIL Network now. For example, in the month of December our intake program has gone up by 487%. Those are requests from bereaved families or bereaved women who seek PAIL Network by self-referral. That is a tremendous rise in demand.

To move forward: Just so you are aware, in North America now, Bill 141 does stand alone as unique legislation. We have the eyes and the ears of that North American population. PAIL Network has received requests from all across Canada about how we got to this stage of the process.

We've also heard from two American states, Pennsylvania and Georgia, so we know that we're being watched to see what these next steps become.

Tomorrow, in the esteemed medical journal the *Lancet*, the entire issue will be a follow-up issue to the April 2011 issue, which addressed stillbirth around the world. This issue being released tomorrow will address what they call preventable stillbirths, a way to drastically reduce that number around the world.

Did you know that here in Ontario over 37,000 families have experienced pregnancy loss or infant death in the year 2014, that one in four women will experience pregnancy or infant loss, and that one in five pregnancies end in miscarriage?

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I would suggest to you that that number is far understated, as women may not go to their health care provid-

er. They may not realize they've had a miscarriage, or they may feel that nobody cares or that their body has let them down, and, fearing social judgment and ridicule, or lack of support, they don't say anything.

I believe it's crucial that we make pregnancy and infant loss a priority health care issue, and thanks to the government and their actions of passing Bill 141, we're on our way.

My focus, however, is in educating health care professionals.

Newfoundland and Labrador have even recognized the expertise that Ontario holds. They have nothing to offer their families in their province. They searched for help and found PAIL Network on the Internet and actually organized a grant and paid for two of us to go there in September and have a three-day education program, a one-to-one and five-to-one education session with them, to help them build something in their province. Now we're mentoring them in that process.

I know the difference that evidence-based care can make to these families, because as I've travelled the province and taught over 600 health care professionals in the last 20 months, I see the difference it makes. Unfortunately, I still hear stories that are very sad, such as that of a 35-year-old mother in her hospital room, grieving the stillbirth of her baby, when the nurse walks in and asks, "Why aren't you with your baby?" We want this to stop.

A 30-year-old woman comes into the ER, knowing she is pregnant, and having bleeding and severe abdominal pain. The doctor says to her, somewhat nonchalantly, "You're probably miscarrying. Don't you worry. It happens all the time. We'll send you home with a kit, and you can see your own doctor next week. You can always try again."

Thirdly, a couple arrives at a busy ultrasound clinic to have the third ultrasound during their current pregnancy. The year before, they did experience the loss of their twins at 19 weeks' gestation, after having four years of infertility. This is their subsequent pregnancy now. The ultrasound technician walks in and says to them, "Oh, it's you again. Why do you come so often? There's no need to worry, you know." We want this sort of behaviour to stop.

Whether or not these dear families receive compassionate care should not be the luck of the draw. Even in a major city, in situations where health care is being provided, there are incorrect and hurtful comments made, things that are perhaps well intentioned but do not turn out to be so, such as the things I've already demonstrated to you.

We know, from teaching our programs around the province, that they have made a difference. The health care professionals that we've taught feel better prepared to especially communicate; that's the big thing. People are so nervous and overwhelmed in this situation, they don't know what to say. If they say something, they feel they should say something that has meaning, but often they don't know what to say. Families will remember these remarks, even 30 years on.

Thirdly, I do want to talk about education of our future health care professionals, because time and time again, we hear from people we teach, in all different professions, “This is the first time I’ve ever heard this.”

For example, we taught midwives in Sudbury, at Laurentian University, and they let us know that in their program, they don’t have this much depth about pregnancy and infant loss. Now, isn’t that ironic and troubling? PAIL Network would like to advocate that these core education programs need a far richer inclusion of these topics of perinatal bereavement and infant death.

Just in closing, I want to speak for a couple of moments about PAIL Network. We have provided support and education around this province for almost 25 years. For all of those years, PAIL Network has struggled to meet its financial requirements, existing from one grant to the next, existing on fundraising events, member donations, and bequests, even, from bereaved families.

PAIL Network is a critical and under-resourced asset in this province. PAIL Network has two paid staff positions to offer support and coordination of services all across Ontario. PAIL Network does not have a physical office. We are a virtual office, and we have a storeroom at a storage facility for all of our materials.

PAIL Network is heavily reliant upon volunteers, such as myself, who above their full-time job travel the province to try to bring education that is evidence-based and will lead to more compassionate care for families—families who are in their very darkest hour of their life.

With a tremendous increase in public awareness thanks to the passage of Bill 141, PAIL Network is now hopeful that we could find a source of permanent funding so that we aren’t struggling to move from one grant to the next. We are deeply grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for our current grant, which expires in five months’ time. During the time of the grant, we have been able to, for example, expand our free peer-led support groups, which meet either every other week or once a month, from 11 communities in this province to 27. We are trying to have an additional eight or nine before we come to June 2016.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Could you please wrap up your comments?

Ms. Wendy Mouldsdales: Thank you. Just one closing thing: A key message I say as I travel the province to teach is that when we know better, we can do better, and I think that is definitely the goal for pregnancy and infant loss care around this province.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you very much. Ms. Wong has questions for you.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much for your presentation. As a former registered nurse, I totally agree with your comments and your suggestions to the government.

I just wanted to get some clearer idea from your group, PAIL. I assume that your group has been working very closely with MPP Mike Colle in terms of introducing Bill 141, and you know that we passed that bill with three-party unanimous consent before Christmas.

Ms. Wendy Mouldsdales: Yes, that’s indeed fantastic. Mr. Colle invited us to be a part of that right from the beginning.

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m hearing consistently you talk about education to the health professionals, education to the families and education to future health care providers. So my next question here is: Has your organization reached out to the various professional regulatory bodies? Because you know that standards are not just coming from us a government, right? Wearing my hat as a member of the College of Nurses, they set the standards of practice for the entire province. Has your group reached out to the College of Nurses, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the college of dentistry—because all of these professional colleges set the standards. So when you talk about future health professionals, they set the standards. Has your group reached out to those groups?

Ms. Wendy Mouldsdales: Not at this time, we haven’t. That’s something in our blueprint for 2016. I thank you for making that suggestion.

Ms. Soo Wong: Yes, that has to be a priority.

Ms. Wendy Mouldsdales: Definitely.

Ms. Soo Wong: Because they’re independent of the government, right? We don’t set the standards.

My other question here is: Being the province that we are, we are extremely diverse. How does your group, PAIL, reach out to the various diverse communities? Because I come from a very diverse riding called Scarborough–Agincourt, and I’m sure, in my riding, in the Scarborough Hospital, there will be pregnancy and infant loss. How is your group reaching out to the various diverse communities across the province?

Ms. Wendy Mouldsdales: Thank you. That’s an excellent question. When somebody makes a self-referral to PAIL Network, they are identified in their community, and if we are not able to physically have a peer-led support group there, we have email and telephone support.

On the other side of PAIL Network is the education mandate, and as the lead for that, we have developed an eight-hour program of which probably about an hour and a half is focused right in on the cultural diversity of this province. For example, one thing that we point out is that in our aboriginal population in this province, they have four times the infant mortality rate of the rest of the province. We also learn, every time we go to a community and we teach, we hear from the audiences—about 60 generally in each audience—and they share with us some of the different cultural experiences they’ve had surrounding infant death and bereavement, and then we carry those experiences forward as teaching points.

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m also very curious about your organization, in terms of partnership with other organizations like the bereaved families, because you talk about death and dying and grieving and what have you. Has your group reached out to Bereaved Families of Ontario in terms of doing some partnership with them?

Ms. Wendy Mouldale: Yes, we have. For example, we were partnered with BFO in Ottawa and trying to bring our program there. It is hopefully a program we'll host in 2016. We are also a member of the Bereavement Ontario Network in terms of networking with other groups that are a little less known than BFO.

Ms. Soo Wong: In these last couple of minutes here, am I hearing correctly that your ask is for the continued funding for education? But what in particular is a priority? Because you know there are a lot of asks from every group and constituency here before the committee. What is your priority for the PAIL group in terms of education?

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Ms. Wendy Mouldale: In terms of education, I think what would be most helpful to PAIL Network is if PAIL Network becomes permanently funded, because then the fundraising that we do and the education programs we teach will feed back and support the education program itself.

Ms. Soo Wong: The last question is, what amount are you asking for?

Ms. Wendy Mouldale: I'm not a member of the board of PAIL Network. The board has prepared a full plan that they are presenting in another venue today, actually. Our president, Michelle Lafontaine, is meeting with the Ministry of Finance today, I understand.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you very much for your presentation this afternoon.

Ms. Wendy Mouldale: Thank you.

COUNCIL OF ACADEMIC HOSPITALS OF ONTARIO

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Our next witness is the Council of Academic Hospitals of Ontario. If you could identify yourselves for the record—and your questions will be coming from the official opposition.

Ms. Karen Michell: Thank you. I'm Karen Michell. I'm the executive director of the Council of Academic Hospitals of Ontario. With me today is Frank Naus, who is the vice-president of research at Hamilton Health Sciences, one of two CAHO members here in Hamilton.

CAHO's 24 research hospitals are what the Premier's business adviser Ed Clark recently described as "incredible hospitals" that are "at the forefront of health research." So I wanted to just start today by reflecting on how health care has advanced in our lifetime.

Childhood leukemia is no longer a death sentence. Having tonsils removed or cataracts repaired are now simple outpatient procedures no longer requiring lengthy hospital stays. And just last week, a forearm was transplanted onto a patient here in Ontario for the first time ever in Canada.

These life-changing advances and countless others are made possible by research. All major sectors and industries recognize that investment in research is critically important to ensure that our future is better than our past.

To provide high-quality services efficiently and at the best price, you have to invest in R&D to ensure that your service constantly improves.

These are exactly the challenges that are facing the Ontario health care system today. Research, and health research in particular, is a necessity, not a luxury, even in, and perhaps most importantly in, tough fiscal times. Research creates new knowledge. It provides the evidence to make informed decisions about health care, with better results and often at less cost.

All of us in health care are committed to providing the best care for our patients, putting them first, but research hospitals have the additional responsibility and privilege of discovering tomorrow's care and applying it for our patients today. Doing this helps make Ontario healthier, wealthier and smarter. Let me tell you how.

Because of the power of scientific discovery under way right here in Ontario, we're soon going to live in a world where a virus is used to cure cancer, where surgery no longer means cutting the skin, and where genetic testing is used to ensure the best response to a medication. There are many health research developments that are dramatically changing health care today, delivering better care to our patients at less cost for the system.

One example: The Ottawa Hospital recently developed a clinical decision tool that fully detects 100% of bleeding on the brain, or subarachnoid hemorrhage cases. Doctors can now accelerate the urgent treatment needed by patients, prevent a common misdiagnosis that causes death and disability, protect hundreds of lives a year, and save the economy \$25 million annually that results from death and disability.

But to realize the value from discovery and innovation, we need to make sure that we actually use it, moving research evidence into clinical practice. So CAHO's Adopting Research to Improve Care program, or ARTIC, was created to do just that. The provincial government has invested in ARTIC over the years to address key health system challenges like enabling the transition of long-term mental health clients from hospital into the community, and combatting resistance to antibiotics.

The ARTIC program essentially facilitates change management in clinical health care so that we can use research evidence to provide our best knowledge to care for our patients now. It means that we can get that research evidence out into the health care system in two years instead of the 17 years it would normally take without facilitated change management. Clearly, a generation is far too long to wait to ensure that our patients are getting the best knowledge and the best care, so CAHO and Health Quality Ontario have now partnered to deliver this ARTIC program right across the health care sector in Ontario, beyond hospitals; to family health teams, LHINs, long-term-care homes etc. But innovation like this doesn't just happen. It needs investment. Right now, CAHO hospitals generate research revenues and spend \$1.4 billion annually on health research. We have more than 16,000 researchers and research staff in our hospi-

tals, and over 41,000 jobs, total, are supported by the R&D enterprise in our research hospitals.

Ontario's health research enterprise is actually also a magnet for investment: 14% of this research revenue is funded by private industry. That's more than twice the OECD average for business investment in higher education R&D. So relative to other sectors, Ontario research hospitals punch well above our weight in terms of our ability to attract private investment.

Health research can also transform an entire economy. Let's look at Hamilton. Like many manufacturing towns in Ontario, Hamilton had a booming economy dependent on the steel industry, but when the downturn hit, Hamilton needed to diversify its economic base, and that's where investment in health research came in. Today, the health sciences and research sector is Hamilton's largest employer. Frank's employer, Hamilton Health Sciences, is in fact the single biggest employer in this city, and St. Joseph's is not far behind. By providing high-level jobs in research, they're strengthening Hamilton's knowledge-based economy and attracting investment. For example, there are 300 life sciences businesses now operating in the Hamilton area, which is a 12% increase in the last three years alone. The innovation park at McMaster University is specifically designed to help researchers commercialize their products and their discoveries.

The success in health research has also led to the growth of Hamilton's educational institutes and in fact encouraged young people to build their careers here. According to Hamilton's mayor, Fred Eisenberger, "The health research sector has paved the way for future growth and a diversified economy."

So the return on investment in health research is real and measurable. The challenge is the sustainability of the investment.

Two trends are of major concern to us. First, many health research granting agencies and health charities that fund our research are reducing their level of research dollars. Second, many granting agencies are implementing co-funding research models that require cash matches from our hospitals for direct research funding. So while hospital foundations and their investment from their income are working hard to fill that gap, these sources of funding are quite challenging to maintain. That means that Ontario's research hospitals are increasingly required to contribute more to the cost of running a research enterprise, while receiving less investment. Of course, in any business, that's not a sustainable model.

CAHO offers four recommendations as to how we can sustain and stabilize Ontario's health research enterprise, or what we think of as the R&D arm for our health care system:

(1) We need to continue to drive discovery by maintaining the Ontario Research Fund, which is Ontario's flagship R&D investment program. We would like to thank the government for the ongoing support through this important program.

(2) We think it's time to approach health research purposefully by mandating the creation of a health

research strategy for Ontario. This would help us to make the best use of the health research assets that we have in this province.

(3) We need to invest in the implementation of research evidence, using what we know to transform health care across the province. The Adopting Research to Improve Care, or ARTIC, program is a proven pathway to do just this, but to maintain its impact, we need annual funding of \$3 million a year.

(4) Frankly, the most important thing we can do to maintain the health research enterprise is to ensure that hospitals themselves are financially healthy. We do support the case that's being made by our colleagues at the Ontario Hospital Association in support of an inflationary funding increase for hospitals in the 2016 Ontario budget, as the system itself is going through intense transformation right now.

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Research hospitals create capacity, reinvent the future of health care and we generate a healthier, wealthier and smarter Ontario, both now and in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and we would welcome your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to Mr. Barrett to start this round of questioning. Mr. Barrett?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes. Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the information.

With your recommendations, you talk about mandating the creation of a health research strategy for Ontario. I know in my previous work, I was with the Addiction Research Foundation. During the Bill Davis era there was a move at that time to create health research Ontario—addictions, cancer, heart. Beyond a strategy, it was to be an organization to try and pull together—talking about funding—university research funding grants, levels of government funding and others.

Could you tell us a little bit more about what you see in this strategy and who do you see—are you developing the strategy, or are you looking to government to develop a strategy?

Ms. Karen Michell: Yes, I would be glad to kick off and then maybe Frank can join in in terms of the value it would create.

Other jurisdictions like Alberta, British Columbia and the UK that have created health research strategies find that it's valuable to bring a large group together. It would include government for sure—government championship is important; it would also include universities, colleges, research hospitals, industry, patients and health charities.

When you all come together to define a strategy for health research for a jurisdiction, we tend to find that three things happen. First, it becomes important. With government championship and a sector working together, it is a declaration that as a society we believe that health research will help our future be better than our past, help our health care system be more efficient and help get the outcomes we want for patients. Together, you're able to start creating not necessarily a focus on disease burden

per se, but platforms that allow research to happen in a sustainable and efficient manner.

Second, we find that when people come together in that way around a strategy that's made important, you start to find ways to collaborate better together, and so you get better synergies in the sector.

Third—and I think the UK is a great example of this—you tend to find that you are able to generate more research revenues from outside of your jurisdiction. So BC, for example, had a health research strategy, and they started winning more grants from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The UK, after they put their strategy together, started getting exponentially more investment from industry. It's something that we can do together that's no net new cost, but better organization and better strategy.

Frank, is there anything you would add to that?

Mr. Frank Naus: Yes, I would certainly support those comments.

I think that at any time when you get people working together, you get a much clearer focus on what the issues are and a prioritization of what those issues are. That's really what I think a strategy would contribute. In the end, you end up spending dollars much more efficiently.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Now, just going to the dollars, point number (4), and certainly the Ontario Hospital Association's call to restore inflationary funding: We know hospital budgets have been frozen for the last four years, and that affects about 155 hospitals across the province. This freeze is, as I understand it, explained under the term "activity-based funding." But the focus you're talking about isn't necessarily activity-based; it's not so much emergency room visits or filling beds.

With our organization, we had what was called the clinical institute at 33 Russell Street—it closed—a small hospital, dependent within the global budget, but sometimes it's very difficult to explain to people—you make mention of social media—the value of research. How are you being impacted by this term "activity-based funding"? Does that apply to your work?

Ms. Karen Michell: It does. Like our colleagues at the Ontario Hospital Association, we do support the efforts to work with the government on health system funding reform. We do realize that there are finite resources in the province and we need to be thoughtful and deliberate about how we allocate those resources.

Health system funding reform is only a couple of years old, and activity-based funding is a part of it. We are still, as a sector, working with the government to unpack what the consequences of it are.

I will say that there are some unique impacts for research hospitals in particular. As I said earlier, we have a different mandate in that not only do we provide care; we provide specialized care, teaching and research. Those parts of our mission and our mandate do have costs associated with them. Some of those costs are currently addressed through the health system funding reform model. We are going through some case studies right now to demonstrate where they may not be fully

addressed. For example, extreme amounts of specialization in a hospital are probably underfunded because the activity-based model is on the basis of expected volumes. We can't turn down any trauma cases, burns or transplants that walk in our door. Equally, the fact that we offer teaching and research does have some additional costs. We're working with the government right now to ensure that those are fully funded, but it's a challenge and we're working through it together.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I think Mr. Fedeli has a question for you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It was more a comment than anything. I fully support your research. I watched in the gallery in the hospital in North Bay when a patient was lying in the hospital with her stomach open, and the surgeon was here in Hamilton with robotic tools, performing the surgery in North Bay.

When you can apply that kind of research—I think of the remote communities and First Nations communities where the doctor may not be present, but this ability is there. We just have to continue to support these kinds of endeavours. I congratulate you.

Ms. Karen Michell: Thank you very much. I think we do consider it part of our mandate as research hospitals to create capacity for the whole health care system: for all patients, not just our own, and also for not only the patients of today but of tomorrow as well. We think it's an important mandate. We take it seriously, and we're working hard to find ways to sustain and stabilize it.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. Thank you for your presentation and your written submission.

HAMILTON AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next group coming before us is the Hamilton and District Labour Council. Good afternoon. Are you Mr. Marco?

Mr. Anthony Marco: Yes.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Welcome. As you've probably heard, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. I believe the Clerk is coming around with your written submission. This round of questioning will be coming from the official third party.

You may begin any time. Please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard.

Mr. Anthony Marco: My name is Anthony Marco. I'm president of the Hamilton and District Labour Council.

In addition to my comments, you also have a short package from the local chapter of the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada, CURC. They did not get a slot here today to present, but I've included some of their comments as well.

I'd like to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to speak with you here today, and for bringing the first of your on-the-road consultations to Hamilton. Hamilton

has had a labour council since 1863. We currently have over 75 affiliates, representing over 40,000 unionized workers in the area, and I've been proud to be their president since 2014.

I was born in this city and have lived here for 47 years. This is a city that has undergone tremendous upheaval during the boom-and-bust times of our economy. The people who live here are proud, hard-working and ready for positive change. We are one of the longest-enduring manufacturing centres in this province.

Manufacturing and industrial jobs have traditionally been good jobs, well-paying jobs and, most of the time—for a long time—careers: jobs that allowed one parent to work full-time while another raised a family, while still buying a house and two cars and having benefits and a pension. It seems like a far-out notion now, but it was well within my lifetime that this was still the case. It was a time when corporate taxation treated large corporations like citizens, in that they were expected to turn over a reasonable amount of profits to the province and country that was the cause of their very existence, and not the pittance that they pay today. I dare say that if we are going to treat corporations as individuals under the law, perhaps they should at least be taxed the same as individuals under the law, without the laundry list of loopholes to skate through.

As our Canadian and Ontarian jobs disappeared south through NAFTA, or overseas due to multinationals buying up our companies, Hamilton struggled to turn one-job/one-income families into two-job/two-income families, and some of those still didn't get families out of poverty. Now parents try to stretch to five- or six-job/two-income families, or three-job/one-income families.

Since I mentioned NAFTA, I would just add as a side note that I would please ask this Parliament to take a hard look at the TPP, especially how it's going to impact Toronto and Hamilton and our municipalities in Ontario, before ratifying it.

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Our children are suffering, our city is suffering and Ontario is suffering. Hamilton's children are suffering because the child care fee subsidy program currently has a wait-list of over 1,700 children, an increase of over 50% since 2011. The provincial funding is almost solely earmarked for families living on incomes below the poverty line, and only has enough money for just under half of Hamilton's children living in poverty. That's 1,700 children in a city of just over 500,000 people who are not just living in poverty; they're not even being helped when living in poverty. They are 1,700 names on a list which can conveniently become a statistic but can't conveniently get breakfast every morning or have heat in the winter.

Provincial and municipal investment in a universal child care program for all young children would reduce child care costs for all parents and allow more parents to work. For parents to work, we have to have jobs where parents can afford to provide for their families while still spending time with them.

Our city is suffering because we have some of the highest poverty rates among urban areas in the province. Other cities might look at our unemployment rate of 5.9% and be envious, but it's a fallacy to believe that an unemployment number gives anything close to a complete picture of the jobs in this city. That 5.9% fails to capture all those who have given up looking for work at all or are underemployed and only able to find part-time work. The last long-form census data from 2006 revealed that over 10,000 Hamilton residents who worked full-time all year long still made wages so low that they were below the poverty line.

Apart from the economic impact, low wages increase the likelihood of physical and mental health issues among these workers. Living Wage Hamilton, which I know is present across the province and across Canada—living wage movements—calculated that a wage of \$14.95, including benefits, for a 37.5-hour workweek is necessary for a minimally decent standard of living in the city, and even this number was calculated a few years ago. Quite simply, working full-time hours in Ontario should ensure not having to live in poverty.

One of the surprises that I've found in my role as president of the labour council is that I've been invited to attend a couple of the round table stakeholder discussions for the Metrolinx Lakeshore West corridor, and when I attend those meetings, the thing that infuriates me is that we seem to have bought into the notion that Hamilton is simply a commuter city for Toronto. During the last provincial election, the Leader of the Opposition lamented the state of transportation throughout the Niagara-Hamilton corridor, as parents had to spend too much time commuting and miss out on family time with their children. The solution to commuter problems into Toronto should be to help ensure that more jobs are available in locations where workers don't have to commute two hours every morning.

The other confusing aspect of the Metrolinx project is that I've been shut out of access to the procurement policies twice now. Surely we have to have ways to ensure that if we are going to have light rail transit in Hamilton, the jobs are done by Hamiltonians. We must have assurances that the contractors and subcontractors will be mandated to pay their employees a living wage so that the people who have to take the GO bus or train to get to work can afford to pay the fare for the track they are laying. I hope this government will make assurances that infrastructure is not spending just to build for Ontarians, but to make sure the building is done by Ontarians.

Fifty-seven per cent of Hamilton's workers are in insecure employment, with less access to benefits and pensions. We applaud the efforts of this government to start down the road of an Ontario pension plan, and hope that the effort to convince the federal government to apply an increased CPP to the entire country hasn't been moved too far to the back burner. You see, we've found out that the promise of pensions and retirement benefits doesn't mean a lot to tens of thousands of our retirees

whose lives are at the whim of a bankruptcy judge in Toronto as we speak. We're not allowed to see a contract signed between the Harper Conservatives and US Steel when it walked in with promises to keep the former Stelco Hilton works alive. The only contracts that our steelworkers can see are the ones they voted for where, in lieu of salary increases decades ago, they chose retirement benefits, only to have them stripped away years and sometimes decades after their retirement date. While it was admirable for this government to recognize the problem of these pensioners with a one-time funding supply, it's not going to solve the real problem of close to 20,000 Hamiltonians and their families who cannot afford medications or treatment for chronic conditions or anything else past an arbitrary cut-off date. The first payee during a bankruptcy of a company located in Ontario needs to be their employees, past and present, who signed contracts and worked their end of the agreements.

An Ontario pension plan helps in this case, but even under the dream scenario of restored retiree benefits, the state of our health care system is desperate. There will be people far better prepared than me to give you statistics about the growing gaps in our health care system. Suffice to say that when the measure of health care becomes more about the health of for-profit providers than the health of Ontarians, we have a problem.

The last thing I'd like to address as near to my heart is that the only way that I've arranged to be able to be here and talk to you today is that I've rescheduled some classes, because my day job is as a high school teacher here in Hamilton, and I happen to work in a correctional facility not far from here for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. I've been involved with OSSTF here locally. Education matters are near and dear to my heart and I think about them on a daily basis. While I could spend a lot of time on the subject, I will try to be concise, with one major issue.

When Dalton McGuinty was first elected, he promised a wholesale reform of the funding formula for education in this province, and through ministers Gerard Kennedy, now-Premier Wynne, Laurel Broten and Liz Sandals, it hasn't happened—this during a time when countless ribbons have been cut over special projects and there have been announcements of one-time funding for education fads that come and go. One school gets an animation lab, and another school gets closed. One school gets iPad funding, and another one gets closed.

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board announced dates for seven of 18 secondary school closings over the next few years, with plans to only open two new schools, while still trying, and being mandated, to serve an entire city. Coterminous boards have the flexibility to play looser with their locations. The public board has to carry the geographic load of this entire city.

The answer to the problems and inequities in our education system can't all be solved by more funding, but here's the thing: A lot of them can. And the funding can't be one-time special projects that involve photo

ops—but the unglamorous, sustainable increase of a funding formula that will likely generate little more than one graph in the province's newspapers.

I cringe when I hear talk about "achievement as a measurable" and "credits as currency" and standardized tests as anything resembling education, but you could have all of it if I get to spend more time with each student in my class because I have a class size of 25 instead of 33.

Maybe allow some of the school boards to use their funding for something even more obvious, like hiring more custodians to keep our schools clean and safe for students. Maybe require that all new schools built are guaranteed to be community hubs, by having dedicated spaces for community groups to access at no charge. Or maybe ensure that there's no chance—and this has happened to me—that I can walk into a school library and find a text called *The World War*.

Ontarians deserve better than austerity. The Ontario we want, and the Ontario we need from members on both sides of the aisle, is one that's investing in the wealth of Ontario's working class and not just a ruling class whose money hibernates outside of our borders.

I thank you for letting me perhaps rant a little bit, and I will answer any questions that you have.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Your time is up, Mr. Marco. I'm going to turn to Ms. Fife.

Ms. Fife, do you want to begin this round of questioning?

Ms. Catherine Fife: You gave us a very passionate presentation, Mr. Marco, so thank you for that. The two major themes, as I see it, that you presented have been consistent throughout the morning, and that is around sustainable funding for public services, be it health care and education—and I agree. When you make the point that we deserve better than austerity—all the evidence and research shows that when you are experiencing financial crisis, cutting those two public services causes a lot of damage.

I understand there was a rally out front. Do you want to give us some sense as to what those folks were saying out there?

Mr. Anthony Marco: Sure. Thanks to those of you who managed to pop out earlier in the morning.

It was a very cold morning, yet we still managed to get between 100 and 125 Hamiltonians out in front of the Sheraton down here. It was a joint rally between the Hamilton Health Coalition, which is an offshoot of the Ontario Health Coalition, and the Ontario Federation of Labour, where we represent them as a labour council here in Hamilton.

A lot of the Hamilton Health Coalition's focus, of course, was on many of the hospital closures that have been happening. Not only that; just over the past couple of weeks you've seen the amount of cuts that have happened in nursing jobs. It seems to be hacking and slashing all over. That's not to say that people don't understand there are monetary concerns, but people are definitely concerned that there are service concerns now

that have been stretched across the city and across Ontario.

From a labour perspective, as I mentioned in my remarks, many of you can understand the devastating hit that we're dealing with right now with the retirees of what was once our biggest union here in Hamilton, and one of the biggest in the province. Local 1005 used to have close to 15,000 workers, and they're down to 500.

Understandably, corporations come and corporations go, and I don't want to get into too much of the details around that aspect of it. But the fact that the retiree benefits were swept away with the stroke of a pen by a bankruptcy judge, sometimes decades after they bargained in good faith and lived up to in good faith—that's something that needs to be helped.

There were a lot of different issues that were brought up out there. I think it was a testament, on a day like today—because it got windy out there—to the dedication of some of the people who were concerned about some of these issues, to being out there.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I thank you for raising the issue of the pensions for steelworkers. As you know, our member Paul Miller has been very supportive. I actually happened to be here the day that the news came down of the court ruling.

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We've raised this issue of protecting pensions that have already been agreed upon in the province of Ontario. The finance minister has stood up and said, "We are supportive of those steelworkers." The federal government seems to have just turned a blind eye. What's the specific ask provincially for steelworkers—retired steelworkers, if you will? Is there any recourse? Do you have any hope of justice and reclaiming those pension rights that were signed off by the employer and employees?

Mr. Anthony Marco: Sure. I'll be the first to say that one of the steelworker leaders could probably speak to it far better than I would, but I know that one of their major concerns right now is the fact that when the bankruptcy judge got a hold of the case that US Steel Canada was closing down, what US Steel Canada tried to do is claim, "All of our money remaining should go to our biggest creditor," which happens to be US Steel from the United States. They basically came in here, took all of the resources, took all of the customer base, stripped the place dry and said, "Now we owe hundreds of millions of dollars to our own parent company."

We have tens of thousands of workers here and we need legislation in place, we need guarantees in place, which would require that the first payees during a bankruptcy case are the people who live in cities like Hamilton, like London, like Ottawa, like Toronto who have worked their entire lives and need benefits—that at the time of their lives when they need benefits the most, they don't just get swept away. The number one creditor needs to be current and former employees. If there's money left after that, by all means it can probably go out of the country because that's where it seems like a lot of the money is going right now.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for that. You don't often see steelworkers cry, but on that day—really, it's legislated theft if you leave the door open for a corporation to play that kind of aggressive role in the rights of workers. That's essentially what it was.

Finally, I just want to thank you for raising the issue of education funding. If you actually are going to address the issue of poverty, public education is the great equalizer. I want to thank you for reminding us that a full review of the funding formula has not happened. We are hearing more and more about this as the years proceed, if you will. Even this morning we heard from an organization that is seeing children with autism excluded from schools because there just are not the resources to keep students safe and to keep staff safe, and that is completely unacceptable.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you, Mr. Marco, and thank you for your written submission.

Mr. Anthony Marco: Thank you.

ALUS CANADA

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): The next group before us is ALUS Canada. I believe it's Bryan Gilvesy. Good afternoon, sir. I think the Clerk is coming around with your presentation. You probably heard earlier that you have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning from, this time around, the government side. You may begin any time, sir, and please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard.

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: My name is Bryan Gilvesy. By day I'm a farmer. I operate the YU Ranch in Norfolk county. We've been raising grass-fed beef there and selling it by the piece to our local customers. A significant part of the reason that we've become known for sustainable beef production is because I got involved with a program 10 years ago called ALUS. The acronym stands for Alternative Land Use Services. I'm now executive director of that program 10 years later, which exists with about \$12 million of funding across the country, so we've had some success.

We positioned this organization as a community-led, farmer-delivered program which positions farmers to provide environmental solutions. I don't think the agricultural community and rural Canada are largely considered part of environmental solutions. I think that for too long we've considered all environments to occur inside protected spaces. We think there's a tremendous amount of environmental benefit to be harvested from what we call the working landscape, where the farmers and ranchers of Canada, and indeed Ontario, can apply their skills to environmental goals.

We're faced with a raft of environmental problems. Indeed, both the Prime Minister and the Premier have made considerable effort to make climate change a significant part of the program going forward. We're here to help solve those problems, together with problems of climate resilience, stormwater management, biodiversity and species at risk.

What's cool about our project is that we like to demonstrate that we do things in a little bit of a better way. We'll take your carbon dollars and take an un-economic or marginal piece of farmland, using the farmer's skills and knowledge and maintenance to be able to restore that farmland to something that will not only help us sink carbon but will help us store and filter water, create more biodiversity and indeed do more for species at risk.

Our tagline is that we're sustaining agriculture, wildlife and natural spaces for all Canadians. We are a community-led, farmer-delivered stewardship program that engages Ontario's rural communities to create more acres of conservation lands.

Currently, ALUS Ontario is at six communities, and we're steaming towards nine in 2017. We have 190 farmers participating by actively maintaining and creating acreages of natural spaces. The inventory that we've created so far is 1,805 acres, on a rather limited budget in our growth scale.

The Ontario investment to date has been \$300,000 through the Ministry of Natural Resources' SAR program funding. While this funding is truly appreciated, it is only a pittance of the \$1.2 million we raise on top of that from philanthropic and private dollars to invest in the environment of Ontario.

That's our promise: that we are building a model that engages rural communities and engages with new sources of funding for environmental things here in Ontario. We aim to reach out to corporate Canada, philanthropic Canada and, indeed, governments to deliver more clean air, more clean water, more biodiversity and more for species at risk. We do indeed have applicability to all the current environmental issues of the day.

My main goal in arriving here today was to make sure that the \$300,000 that was earmarked for us through the MNR this year occurs, but I also want to give consideration to the MOE and OMAFRA, and indeed the Ministry of Infrastructure. What we offer is solutions for all of their files when they're talking about issues of climate change, resilience and adaptation.

That's all I have for my formal presentation.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. Ms. Vernile, do you want to start this round of questioning?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much, Mr. Gilvesy, for coming here today, appearing before us, sharing this very interesting information with us and telling us about the very important work that you are performing.

I think that you are right that when you say the word "farmer," most people don't associate it with or attach it to environmental solutions, so it's curious to hear that you are involved in this work. When you approach farmers and let them know that you're interested in getting them to help you in creating natural spaces on their land, how do they react?

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: We do it the other way around: We let farmers approach us. Our program is not based on

rules or a top-down system; it's based on principles. When we arrive in a new community—we started in Norfolk, but when we arrived in Grey and Bruce counties, for instance—we ask them to form a community council, which is a broad-based membership including farmers, conservationists and municipal leaders. We want them all at the table.

We then hand them two things: a set of principles and money. We ask them to give us acres of conservation back, as long as they follow those two guidelines, and then they voluntarily enlist the agricultural community. It's very, very much a grassroots program, and that manifests itself in the fact that we run workshop after workshop to try to draft new farmers into our program. They always come in the door through word of mouth because their neighbour had good luck or some success with the program.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Does it take much convincing on your part?

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: No. I'd like to say that what we've done is not magic; it just seems like magic. What we've done is a very human thing. We've given people a pat on the back and, indeed, a little bit of cash every year for the work that they're doing. Conservation isn't just a question of putting fences around things; conservation is a very human activity because there's maintenance involved.

I sit on the minister's Species at Risk Program Advisory Committee, and the other day we got into sticky issues around the biology of species at risk and all those things—how we have to increase the numbers of species. I said that the most endangered thing in Ontario for species at risk is the people on the land who are willing to help those species. We've created conditions where they can come in freely and voluntarily to help those species and then get some validation going forward, for their lives and their communities, that they're truly contributors. It's an interesting point that I sometimes think rural Ontario is feeling sidelined because they're not part of the popular debate. This is the way to plug them back in.

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Ms. Daiene Vernile: So ALUS—and I like the name, by the way. A few years ago, I had a dog named Alice.

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: Thank you.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You were the recipient of an Ontario Trillium grant in 2011-12, \$430,900 over three years.

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: Yes.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Tell me how you've used that money.

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: That money was used to seed the growth in three new communities, to set up pilot projects in three new communities. That helped us establish the initial councils. It helped us establish some initial operations. Then, married together with money that we raised from the Weston foundation and others, we were able to get some programming, some acreage on the ground.

That funding is now in our rear-view mirror. We're going forward with a new tranche of funding. We're on a

three-year cycle where we've got significant new monies from the W. Garfield Weston Foundation, for instance. We have some investment from the government of Canada on the wetland fund and others. We have 46 different funding partners, if you can imagine.

So the Trillium money was very, very well used—a very effective use of money, I felt, to seed the growth of something that's good.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Now that we have a different partner federally, how do you think that that's going to affect your group?

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: I like to think that our program should have appeal for politicians of any stripe, and I'll stand by that. I don't think there's any politician in Canada or any party that doesn't care about the environmental issues of the day and certainly wants to be better engaged with rural Canada.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: In 2013, ALUS received an environmental award of excellence from the Minister of the Environment. Congratulations on that.

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: Thank you.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Just as a final note, your ask here today is that you are looking for funds to continue flowing that were committed to you.

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: That's right. Then, of course, hopefully I'll be back next year and we can talk about more. But for now, that money is still in the balance. There are still decisions being made on it, so I wanted to first—let's walk before we can run.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much for your wonderful presentation today and for being here.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much for your presentation, sir, and also your written submission.

Mr. Bryan Gilvesy: Thank you.

ONTARIO GRADUATE STUDENTS' ALLIANCE

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Our next presenter is the Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance, and I believe they are here.

Good afternoon. I don't know who is who, so you will have to introduce yourselves, gentlemen, for the purposes of Hansard, because there are two names here. I don't want to get who-is-who wrong.

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: No, and I know it's for the public record.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Can you make sure that when you introduce yourself, you identify your position with the alliance? Also, you have 10 minutes for your presentation followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will be coming from the official opposition party. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: Absolutely. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Michael Makahnouk. I'm the president of the Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance, and I'm a PhD student at the University of Waterloo.

Mr. Christopher Hyde: My name is Christopher Hyde. I am the executive director for the Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance. I've done two MAs, but I'm the full-time support for them.

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: Before I get into our presentation today, I want to take just 30 seconds to really highlight to you guys—MPP Baker recently tabled a private member's bill in the Legislature, Bill 127, the Pathways to Post-secondary Excellence Act. We, as the OGSA, support this. It was obviously said in the House that we, along with our other student colleagues, support this. It's the one time where students broadly, collectively and unanimously support a piece of legislation. I want to encourage members of this committee to go back to your parliamentary colleagues and see that this bill actually make it to royal assent. We realize that it's in the legislative process. We want to see it get into law. We want to see these amendments made because it's going to help students get information that is pertinent to understanding what education you want to pursue. We acknowledge that it is an outcomes-based ask, and we want to see that this data gets into the hands of students and parents. Thank you very much.

Now, jumping into our presentation: The OGSA is a relatively new organization. We represent roughly 20,000 graduate students in this province—I'd say an easy estimate would be about 30% of the total population of grad students. We fundamentally believe that if Ontario is going to transition to a research and innovation economy, graduate students will be at the forefront. We are here to acknowledge that we are currently falling behind our undergraduate counterparts with respect to funding, and our asks are going to be tied towards that.

Before I begin, I should note that the OGSA is well aware of the economic challenges faced by Ontario today, and we are appreciative of the substantial investments made by the province to increase post-secondary attainment over the previous decade. However, we are concerned that Ontario graduate students are falling behind their undergraduate counterparts.

While graduate students are enriched and benefit immensely from this system, they also contribute more than their fair share to the post-secondary system. They make up one of the largest workforces in the post-secondary education system, often employed as technicians, lab supervisors, researchers, teachers and instructors. In the face of tighter budgets at universities, more schools can comfortably turn to graduate students to pick up the extra amount of work that's needed to maintain a budget balance.

To be completely clear with the committee here today, when we talk about the 55,000 graduate students here in Ontario, we're not just talking about the students who receive a comfortable research scholarship from an institution or provincial or federal granting agencies or private partners. More and more often, we are talking about those students who pursue that higher level of advanced education often on their own dime.

We fundamentally believe that it is the entire system of graduate students—well-funded, research-intensive

students and highly skilled MBAs, MDs and MAs—who will be vital to our growing economy moving forward.

Yet despite their great contribution to the system, in many ways graduate students are an afterthought. We pay the highest tuition fees in the country, we are the largest workforces on campus, and we receive the smallest portion of the pie, so to speak.

Students are carrying substantial debt loads, accumulated during their undergraduate studies. By sheer numbers, the financial aid system in Ontario naturally favours undergraduate education. Recently, the 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant has not been made available to graduate students, yet the funding for this grant was based upon the elimination of several grants that actually were accessible by grad students.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague.

Mr. Christopher Hyde: One of the first things that we want to talk about with the committee is a bit of a broad, comprehensive picture when looking at graduate students. Our message is pretty simple: When we're looking at graduate studies in the province of Ontario, really begin to take a close look and examine what that means. As my colleague alluded to, it's not just a few students who are well funded by the universities or the tri-agencies federally; it's the growing number of students who are paying those high tuition bills and are using it to acquire those advanced skills that we think are going to be incredibly important to the Ontario economy.

Secondly, graduate students have their own unique characteristics, and in some ways some of the funding for universities across the board is starting to fall a bit short. What do we mean by that? For example, graduate students, at one point in time, were undergraduate students—at least, I hope they were—and many undergraduate students are graduating and are going to have some of that debt and that OSAP with them. It can become a little more cumbersome to have to take on additional debt to pursue graduate studies, especially if you're not receiving that research stipend, and we do understand that.

But there's stuff outside of the basic argument of calling for more funding. If we want to look at the expansion and support of mental health services we've recently seen, graduate students within that framework are complex. If you're a graduate student, there's a great chance you're going to be a TA or an instructor on campus. Many university campuses are looking at expanding group mental health sessions in order to reach the widest number of students as possible. Yet if you teach those students—it's incredibly complicated to ask a graduate student to be in a group mental health session and to be in the same room with many of the people they could be teaching. In many ways, we'd like to see a concern for tailored support for graduate students going forward.

The advancement of the sexual violence and harassment policy: Those of us at Laurier actually had a role to play in this. Again, for graduate students we've talked to, there's a higher incidence of domestic-partner-involved

incidents going forward which are much more research-intensive and require much more complex solutions.

Bullying and harassment: It's not just bullying from other students and online. We have to now take into consideration the relationship between students, between supervisors, the power dynamic there, and how we can really support graduate students in seeking the help that they need in order to meet these challenges while they're in this complex environment.

Essentially, it gets back to the idea that the one-size-fits-all method for addressing graduate student issues is not as cut and dried as it once was. There's a diversity of them, and there are a number of differences between them and the undergraduate student population.

So that really is the big ask.

A little bit more specifically, we did want to talk about post-residency fees. For anyone who has never heard of these, post-residency fees are fees you pay once you're done the course percentage of your work. So if you're an MA student or a PhD student, you'll do your coursework, you'll have your classes, and then, once you're done, you'll get into the intensive research and writing phase of your schools. What we're asking is that students who are in that last phase, that phase where they're not resource-intensive at the university, be allowed to pay a lower form of tuition. Back in the early 1990s, this used to be done at institutions across Ontario, where, once you completed it, once you weren't in class and receiving instruction—you were meeting with your instructor or your supervisor once a week; you're still TAing; you're still doing research and still providing valuable contributions to the university—you were allowed to pay less and less.

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Ever since the 1990s, and with the budget restrictions that we're seeing, on many campuses this was no longer allowed to happen. There are a few universities that do it, but by and large, many graduate students—including my colleague to the right of me, who's in the research phase—are paying that full tuition amount. We think there's an element of unfairness there and a conversation to be had about: If you have finished your coursework and are in the research and writing phase, you should be paying a reduced tuition. I know of students at Laurier who were in Romania doing work, and they'll pay the same tuition as somebody who's in class three days a week doing their master's. It's getting to that element of fairness we'd like to see.

Post-residency fees: In the past, they've been discussed as being, "Give us 50% off." It can be gradual. It can be 20%, 30% or 40%. There can be a phased-in approach. We're putting together a written submission to provide to this committee but we didn't want to be sticklers for that 50% number because we want to see what's flexible and accessible for the province.

In addition, there are 56,000 graduate students in Ontario. Not all of them need post-residency fees. Many are MBAs or MAs that are course-based, and not all of them are going to be in the post-residency phase at the

same time. We'd like to see the province begin examining that and to bring ideas forward that really can help graduate students on the back end of their academic piece.

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: Secondly, we'd like to ask the government to reintroduce a technology and textbook education allowance that would allow for greater support for graduate student education. As we previously alluded, the textbook and technology grant that was incorporated into the 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant was not available to grad students. This grant was vital and cost-manageable for the province. For many graduate students there are high and inaccessible costs associated with their studies. This may come as a surprise to some of the members of this committee, but many graduate students require additional technological resources to conduct their research and scholarly activity. For many of those programs, these costs can be prohibitive for graduate students. The OGSA is asking that the province work to provide a one-time allowance—an upfront grant or tax credit—that would give each graduate student 25% back for eligible information technology purchases for up to a maximum of \$4,000.

I want to also highlight one point. The Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance is very supportive of upfront grants; however, graduate student funding in this province is a very complicated situation. There is not a formula that works for everybody. We do see that grants could work as a negative grant to some students who are well funded, and we certainly do not want to see our members penalized. We are in favour of upfront grants but we also acknowledge that maybe a tax credit could be involved to put this money back into students' pockets.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to need to stop you there. I'm going to turn to Mr. Fedeli to start this round of questioning.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much. That was enjoyable, gentlemen; I enjoyed what you had to say. You made a lot of points. Do you have a written submission that will encapsulate everything that you had to say?

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: We will.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: There's a deadline coming up and whatnot.

Mr. Christopher Hyde: The 31st; yes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Okay. Closing the skills gap: I support Mr. Baker's private member's bill. This is an area that our leader, Patrick Brown, has talked about consistently: that something needs to be done. If this is the start, then this is the start. What other tools can help close the skills gap, in your opinion?

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: My personal opinion would be that institutions need to do more to educate the whole student. Obviously, from a graduate studies perspective, we go to work every day to do research. Our success is based on how many papers we publish in a certain time frame. But do we learn other skills or core competencies when we're conducting research? I would argue: possibly and probably not. I think education in this

province, specifically at the university level, should see that students are encouraged to pursue whatever knowledge they want to obtain while they're at school, not just what's going to advance other people's careers. I'm sorry to say it, but that's the reality.

I'm not convinced that real work skills are being achieved at, let's say, the average level. It's going to be up to the student who's going to have to pursue what they want to get out of their education to make themselves a well-rounded individual. I don't think the university has really caught up to really identify that. In order to make Ontario successful, students need to graduate with skills in every area, not just pursuing research.

Mr. Christopher Hyde: If I could build that, my colleague: If we're coming Waterloo region today, we have to say "co-op," because it is one of the things that we're most proud of at Laurier and at the University of Waterloo.

Second to that is also experiential learning. I think that's going to be important going forward. I think it's something the province has identified in their funding formula review, so we were very happy to see that. Graduate students weren't necessarily mentioned specifically throughout it, but there was a nod to more experiential learning being done at the university level.

Again, it's going to be a hard, tough change to do at the university: to move us more towards meeting that skills gap and ensuring that we are graduating people who are going to contribute in a meaningful way to the economy going forward, but we think it's a worthwhile endeavour to undertake and is necessary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: When you say "we think," do you think that other people think like that as well? Is it settled in now that this is critically important?

Mr. Christopher Hyde: I think other students think like that, and that's where I draw most of my experience from: hearing and talking to not only graduate students but undergrads as well who are talking about that, yes.

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: My fear as a student leader, a student and, really, as an Ontarian in general, because obviously I do live in this province and it's deferring my earning potential for a considerable amount, is that universities are moving to an activity-based budget model where it really is tied to bums-in-seats growth, whereas I don't really think quality education should be based on how many people are being pulled through and rushed out to the system.

If we're talking about the funding formula review which is currently under way, PhD students are supposed to finish after four years. That's what the government gives in terms of basic income units to the universities. However, that is based on 1960s-type philosophy.

I'm a PhD student who's well into my degree. Things break; stuff happens. There are lots of things that prevent me from finishing in four years. I certainly don't want to see the province work to, "You're in here four years; get lost." There is a time progression that—to come up with unique contributions to the field, four years in the 1960s might have made sense, but we're talking now 50 years

later. It takes a long time to develop ideas and actually enable them. I say that from a perspective of even going to industry. Even if you patent something, it takes decades from the idea to getting into the workforce.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: So do you think the “we” is suggesting that we want numbers rather than the quality student out at the end? Is that a part of the problem?

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: I have a fear that decisions are being made based on revenue and not so much based on quality.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: That’s interesting. Chair, I appreciate that opportunity to chat with the guys. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes. Gentlemen, you have until February 2 at 5 p.m. to do your written submission to the Clerk. You have until February 2.

Thank you for being here, thank you for your presentation and good luck in your studies.

Mr. Michael Makahnouk: Thanks, Chair Wong. I’ll be back.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. Thank you.

The next group before us is ApprenticeLMS Ltd. ApprenticeLMS Ltd.: Are they not here? Are they here? I’m going to call one more time: ApprenticeLMS Ltd.? Seeing none, I’m going to the town of Pelham. Are they here? The town of Pelham.

I’m going to keep calling out. The city of London: Is Mayor Brown here? Okay. All right. Let’s see—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Chair—

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Chair, it’s snowing really hard outside.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I know; I’m just looking at the weather. Mr. Fedeli?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I saw ApprenticeLMS outside earlier today.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Are they outside?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I saw them in the hallway.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I think the Clerk is going to go and see.

How about the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre? Are they here?

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): They’re not here yet, Ms. Hoggarth. I keep calling the names. Town of Pelham—nobody? City of London, Mayor Brown—nobody? Okay. How about the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario? Nobody?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They weren’t expected here—

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): No, no, no. The Clerk told them to come 20 minutes early. Some people do come early. I’m just calling to see if anybody is here from our list. How about the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits? Are they here, Mr. Clerk?

Interjection.

APPRENTICELMS LTD.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): It’s ApprenticeLMS. Welcome, sir.

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: Thank you. How are you?

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Very well, thank you. So we just keep calling the list, and our colleague here, Mr. Fedeli, said you were here outside in the hallway.

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: Oh, yes.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): So, sir, as you know, the Clerk is coming around with your written submission. You have 10 minutes—

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: I brought copies for everybody. We replicated work.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes, he’s coming around with your presentation.

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Mr. Erik Hamalainen: It’s all good.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): So I just wanted everybody to know there is a written submission being presented.

As you heard, you will have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will be coming from Ms. Fife, from the third party.

You may begin at any time. When you begin, can you please identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard? Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: Hi, everyone. I’m Erik Hamalainen, from ApprenticeLMS. I’m here today to talk about IT trades and growth in jobs for Ontario and Canada in general.

Does everybody have the slides in front of them?

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes.

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: It would be nice to look at the very last page first, because sometimes we don’t get to it—this is a recommendation—and then we’ll go backwards.

Basically, our recommendations are to:

—support growth within the IT trades;

—ensure the colleges have adequate seats that are available for registered apprentices in IT;

—make sure we’re tracking program progression, using real-time reporting; and

—reward graduates at each level annually and the sponsors who sponsor them, through tax credits and completion incentives.

The tax credits and completion incentives are currently in place. Two of these trades are covered; we’re missing one. There are three IT trades: tech support, a two-year program—and hardware/network technician programs are four years. The two-year program currently isn’t eligible for ATTC, the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit, and I believe it should be, because it’s the backbone of the four-year programs—getting people through the two-year. Many of them move on.

So those are our recommendations today.

Now I’m going to go back to the first page, just to confuse everybody. I added this page, which is different than the email I sent out.

Prime Minister Trudeau visited Kitchener-Waterloo region recently. Trudeau’s quote in the Toronto Star published Thursday, January 14, was that Waterloo is on

the “cutting edge of the global economy.” I believe that Prime Minister Trudeau is absolutely speaking the truth, and this is where we need to look at a sector to grow Canada and Ontario. He was visiting the Google offices that opened in 2005 with five engineers. Today, they employ more than 700 employees in Canada, which is phenomenal growth. Google hopes that we’re going to put infrastructure money behind training and education—I hope so too, and all my clients—for coding and other IT skills. We can read the quote by Mr. Trudeau, but he basically called himself the “geek Prime Minister.” I think you can read that on your own.

“Importance of IT in Ontario” is the next slide. Every aspect of our lives today includes technology. Look at all the devices in this room, the recording equipment. Offshoring of IT: Is there a cost savings or a security threat? We hear about hacking and infiltrations and data loss and impersonations all the time. So who are you going to trust with your IT files? Companies in Ontario with server storage, network support, hardware support and tech support. We want to make sure these jobs stay in Ontario and don’t go overseas or down south.

“Economic Effect of Technology Infrastructure” is the next slide. That’s very important. Highly skilled sectors such as technology have the highest multiplier effect on GDP. For every highly skilled technology job—which I just described; the hardware and network techs—three additional non-tech-sector jobs are created.

If we filled the demand for the 50,000 skilled technology workers today—they earn more than \$65,000 per year—we would increase gross GDP by a billion dollars annually without doing anything else but filling the demand. We already have the programs in place to do this.

If we look at the next slide, “IT Sector Growth,” according to itworldcanada.com, from July 8, 2015, Canada needs 182,000 people to fill these IT positions by 2019. We’re headed for a major technology talent shortfall in the next five years. Many workers lack the on-the-job experience. Well, we have a program to fix that. It’s the Ontario apprenticeship program for IT trades. We already have the solution. We just have to support it.

I know a lot of companies today are resorting to hiring temporary foreign workers to fill the gap. I don’t know how you feel about that when we have people in Ontario who could do these jobs.

A work placement component will create excellent opportunities, so the Ontario apprenticeship program for IT trades is the perfect solution. It uses on-the-job performance objectives coupled with in-school classes to provide adequate training over a four-year period. Our graduates are world-class technology professionals. They call us “Software North,” and we’re competing with California today. That’s what we need to do.

The next slide is “IT Trades in Ontario.” Again, it reiterates the three IT trades, a two-year and two four-year programs. Wages of a first-year apprentice in the GTA are greater than \$40,000 a year. Network technician

apprentices average over \$50,000 a year. A journey-person earns greater than \$73,000 annually. I know of tech companies in the downtown core today bidding for workers in six figures, over \$100,000 a year, once they graduate from our program. So there’s a shortage when you see the escalation of wages so high.

Advancement: A lot of the 634A or tech support grads move on to more advanced trades. This is what we’re not supporting today. The two-year program isn’t eligible for ATTC. Before I go to the next slide, the ATTC—in order to get a tax credit, the employer has to invest. In other words, they have to pay wages; they have to have a building; they have to have infrastructure. So it’s not a grant; it’s not a give-out. It’s just a very tiny portion of what they put into training that comes back to them. That’s important to understand. They’re not looking for handouts. It’s just basically a refundable tax credit on a very tiny portion of the money you put into the program.

There is a slide here from the January 20, 2015—almost a year ago—Toronto Star: “IT and Skilled Trades Are the Canadian Jobs of the Future”—who’s going to argue with that? “... computer technology and the skilled trades ... given an aging population, growing global demand for resources and Canadians’ love affair with electronic gadgets.” Don’t we all?

The next piece of evidence: Waterloo Region Record. The Information and Communications Technology Council reports: “A recent study from the council indicates Canada is facing an ‘alarming’ shortage of information and communications technology labour over the next five years. In Ontario alone, about 51,000 ICT jobs will need to be filled in the next five years.”

These technology jobs are a really rewarding place for women in the workforce, increasing the proportion of female workers. That’s important.

According to Service Canada—we’re going to talk about career advancement—in most companies, for entry-level support techs, it’s their gateway to move into more advanced computer-related occupations in networks, servers and hardware. That’s the two-year program I was talking about. Experience in tech support and the relevant training give the candidate access to computer programmers and interactive media developer positions. Considering these trends, the number of user support technicians should increase significantly over the next few years.

We’ve seen what the Toronto Star and the Waterloo Record and IT World and Prime Minister Trudeau are telling us: We need to invest in these programs. It’s the future of Canada. It’s the future of Ontario.

The next slide is “IT Demand.” IT companies I work with across Ontario, from Ottawa to Timmins to Thunder Bay to Windsor to Niagara Falls and back to the GTA, all require trained personnel to grow their workforce. Some are hiring temporary foreign workers to fill the gap. A basic Internet search the other day showed over 1,400 open tech jobs, and that was in the GTA alone. We need 51,000 of these positions filled in the next five years. A skills shortage requires training and investment. Let’s change the labour shortage and create jobs for Ontario.

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“Completions and Program Performance”: Apprentices attending the program through a sponsor with a contractual obligation to the program have a greater than 75% completion rate. When I look at other trades and completion rates that are woefully low—when we put the right tools into place we have a very high graduation rate and very low attrition within these trades.

Tech support is the basis for further advancement into networks, hardware, web development and server administration. Sponsors in the program have tracking software to demonstrate—in real time—completions, status, progress and results. By using this program effectively, we can create thousands of local homegrown jobs with good wages, starting at greater than \$40,000 for a first-year apprentice. Again, our last slide is this recommendation.

I’m asking you today, as our Prime Minister said last week when he visited Kitchener-Waterloo, to support growth within the IT trades. Ensure that adequate seats are available at the colleges to register apprentices. For those who aren’t familiar with seat purchase, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities provides funding so that apprentices can attend in-school training. That’s an essential piece of the program.

Tracking program progress through real-time reporting will ensure that businesses that are getting a tax credit are only the ones that are actually doing the work. In other words, in the past, there were a lot of tax credits and grants given out to people that may not have really deserved them.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hamalainen, can you wind up your presentation?

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: Absolutely. I’ve only got three bullet points here.

Rewarding graduates at each level annually; sponsorships through tax credits and completion incentives; and adding trade code 634A to the ATTC would help fill this 51,000-job gap, which is very important for us. We’re talking \$1 billion a year in incremental GDP by filling jobs that are required today. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. I’m going to turn to Ms. Fife to begin this round of the questioning.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you so much for the presentation. I think you make a compelling case. I want to talk a little bit about tax credits. You make the point that there has been this influx of temporary foreign workers and we should be employing—the skills are there; we just have to develop them. If we were to extend the IT apprenticeship trades to the two-year program—first of all, when was it removed? Was it ever there? Did we ever have the—

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: There was an experiment. I actually sat on a committee called the IT industry committee for a period of five years, and there was an experiment with some call centres back in 2009, which I won’t comment on today because I work with IT companies. That tax credit was withdrawn in 2014, but this two-year program is the backbone of getting the common core

curriculum and job experience so that they can go into more advanced jobs.

Ms. Catherine Fife: But I think it’s important for us to pull back the layers a little bit on why that tax credit as it related to call centres was removed. Do you want to give us some context, at least, for that?

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: Yes, absolutely. It was being abused, in all honesty. Companies were getting very large tax credits and they didn’t actually do any training. There were very, very low graduation rates, while our graduation rates today are higher than at any other time in the history of this program. So by removing the foreign-owned call centres, we fixed the problem. That was a really good decision that the government made in 2014. Now we’ve got to look back at helping Canadian employers—small and medium-sized employers. It’s not just a handout when they get a tax credit. They have to invest in a business and an infrastructure and a building, and hire people and pay wages, and then they just get a tiny amount back.

Ms. Catherine Fife: But it’s very accountable, right? Tax credits are incredibly accountable, and they level the playing field, don’t you think, especially for small and medium-sized businesses?

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: Oh, absolutely. You have to actually do the work to get the credit, and that’s what I love about them.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think one of your strongest points in this presentation is when you say that apprentices attending the program through a sponsor with a contractual obligation to the program have a greater than 75% completion rate. That’s a pretty impressive completion rate. How did you track this? Where did you get this data?

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: If you are a network or hardware apprentice or tech support apprentice in Ontario today, there’s a 90% chance you’re using curriculum that my company developed. I work with colleges throughout Ontario to deliver this program. I’m here, actually, representing more than 60 sponsors today and several colleges, so this is the aggregate statistic that we have collected.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. Just for clarification, in last year’s budget there was a reduction in the tax credits for apprentices. It was an almost 25% reduction. Was that the construction trades, or did it include IT trades?

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: It covered all trades. The tax credit was reduced back to 2009 levels. Prior to 2009 we had a program that was running wonderfully at \$5,000 a year. In 2009 there was an incentive. It was doubled to \$10,000, and there were some experiments with call centres. I was on the IT industry committee at the time; I did not agree with allowing these call centres into the program. It’s just my personal opinion on trades. Then it was reduced, in 2014, back to \$5,000.

Now we have true trades. I’m going to call them true trades. These are IT hardware, network, server support and network support; they have nothing to do with the call centre industry whatsoever. These are the jobs that

pay—I have people hiring at \$100,000 a year in Toronto right now if they can find someone to do the work.

We need to train these people. Take the people off the unemployment rolls in Ontario and give them the training. The program is beautiful because the employers are asking for on-the-job experience coupled with education. That's what apprenticeship is about: We're accomplishing both tasks.

If the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities supports this greater, then within your community you're going to see a software boom as we see in Kitchener-Waterloo today and in some other areas. Because it's online and through networks, this is not limited to the south. We have disadvantaged areas in the north that I visit regularly, and we could affect them in a very, very positive way.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. Then, just to be clear, you're calling for the reinstatement of the tax credit for the apprenticeship—

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: For one trade.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —for one trade. Okay. Thank you very much, Erik.

Mr. Erik Hamalainen: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you for your written submission as well. Thank you for being here.

TOWN OF PELHAM

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe we have the town of Pelham here. The mayor and the CAO have arrived. Thank you very much, gentlemen. Come on down. Thank you for coming early. I know the weather out there is pretty treacherous, looking out from this end.

Welcome, Mayor. I just want to let you have a moment, because I know you just arrived. For the purpose of the committee, and also for Hansard, we need you to identify yourself for Hansard. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questions will be asked from the government side.

You may begin any time, and when you begin, just identify who you are.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My name is Dave Augustyn. I'm the mayor of the town of Pelham. I've been mayor since 2006. This is Darren Ottaway, the town's CAO. We're very, very pleased that you accepted our request to be able to present to you today.

You're quite right, Madam Chair: There is a little bit of a snow squall out there—a little bit of a blizzard. I'm sorry if we're just a little bit late.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): No, you're early. Thank you.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Well, I'm glad we made it early.

I believe that the Clerk has just given to you a copy of our presentation. It's sort of a PowerPoint presentation that we'd just like to quickly go through. At the end, we

do have some policy considerations that we'd like you to consider.

Where is Pelham? Pelham is a municipality of about 17,000 and growing right in the middle of the Niagara region. It's the highest point in the Niagara region. It's close to Welland, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines; it includes five communities. Here's the map on where it is. Sixty per cent of our community is greenbelted and 90% or more is actually residential assessment. High income, high education and, if you've heard of Henry of Pelham wine, that's right in our community as well. We encourage you to sample that.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Any samples?

Mr. Dave Augustyn: We didn't bring samples, no. The shipment was coming; it's stuck on the QEW.

We're very, very, very pleased to be here.

There's a piece there about a new area. We are growing; there's a potential for 5,000 folks to move into our community over the next number of years.

The next slide is about infrastructure investments, just to let you know that we have some of that, in partnership with the stimulus funding that has been available. We have invested in our roads, in a couple of new fire stations, and in beautification of our downtowns, parks and facilities. Over the last number of years we've been able to do that in our community.

Here are some other infrastructure investments: a new skate park; there's the Lieutenant Governor in one of our nine fully accessible parks that we used for the—we received the stimulus money for that and we redid all nine of our parks. There will be a point as to why I'm telling you all of this and patting ourselves on the back in a moment.

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The next slide is some of our recent awards. We do have a silver in a bicycling-friendly community, a bronze in a walk-friendly community, and Parks and Recreation Ontario design awards for both our skate park and our playgrounds. We just received last year, from Festivals and Events Ontario, one of the Top 100 events, in our community, called Summerfest—it's a wonderful event, obviously, if it received that award—and also a community design award for this whole new expansion area that we're moving into.

That's the next slide. It's called "Growth," and it talks about what's called the East Fonthill master plan or the East Fonthill secondary plan. There's the groundbreaking ceremony there. That whole area is 450 acres with, as I mentioned, the potential for 5,000 residents, plus the groundbreaking here is for those 50 acres of mixed-use commercial, including 32 acres owned by the town. We want the desire to link with regional developments, and it's central to Niagara region. So we are planning a medical centre, some seniors' housing, and we're working with the private sector on those, and recreational facilities, which I'll highlight very quickly in a moment. We've also donated two acres of land so that Wellspring Niagara, which is a cancer support provider in Niagara, will be moving there, and we've donated the use of that land.

There's potential for a Pelham community centre. We've done all of our business case—that's the next slide—for this plan. It will include multi-purpose rooms, a double gymnasium, twin-pad arena and walking track. It will really be a community hub. There's a bit of a timeline there. That's sort of the best-case scenario, and that's what keeps the CAO up at night in terms of getting the design documents and the construction documents ready for council. We're ready to go. We're ready to put the shovel in the ground on all of this, and it has been a number of years in the making.

That's background to what we really want the committee to consider as you formulate your recommendations regarding the budget. We want to use this as an example: We applied for some funding for reconstruction of a street called Station Street. It doesn't matter, but it's close to the new development that we're planning. This would help support the East Fonthill development and would help support new community growth and investment. It's right there, and we've done a number of the other streets around it. Unfortunately, we received a rejection for the funding, and we've highlighted that and also included later on in the slide presentation a copy of the letter that we received. I do want to highlight this piece: "Your project proposal was not selected to move forward primarily because other applicants with highly critical projects had more challenging economic conditions and fiscal situations." On the one hand, you say, "That kind of makes sense," but on the other, what's really happening here is that those communities that are different than ours, that didn't concentrate on their infrastructure, that didn't redo their parks, that didn't put firehalls in etc., get a leg up over those communities like ours that have invested in those things.

So we would ask that you consider the policy goals when it comes to funding for provincial funding—and that's the next page here. Are you looking for communities—and we appreciate the partnership on this, obviously—that have demonstrated disciplined financial management? Are you looking for communities that have made wise infrastructure investments and have created wealth for the community? Are you looking for communities to help maintain their affordable tax rates?

The response is, "Well, your assessment is high, so your taxes are low, so you can just raise your taxes and get the development going." Is that really what we should be doing with these partnerships that we're trying to do? Instead, we're suggesting, on the other side, on these things—but also to encourage quality-of-life projects like social infrastructure projects, cultural and recreational facilities, community hubs. The federal government, as you know, has said that they will invest \$20 billion over the next 10 years in what's called social infrastructure projects, which include those. Under last year's rules for the applications, our community couldn't apply because that was not one of the criteria on which we could apply.

Then, the other goal is—do you want to try to help increase the overall wealth of a community? When one is thinking about infrastructure improvements, I guess what

we're saying is, please don't disallow us because we've done the right things. We've invested in our infrastructure, we have high assessment, and now we're ready to take the next phase on some things like cultural and recreational facilities. We want to be able to apply for those.

If you look at the letter, essentially the letter says that that's the one thing we knock off right away. What we're saying is: Please don't exclude us; include us in the mix and try to add those cultural and recreational facilities into the mix.

The final page here is a resolution that the town of Pelham passed. It would have been sent to the government. Our town is calling on the federal and provincial governments to eliminate economic status—which was one of the holdbacks for us—as a criteria for determining grant eligibility. We request that the provincial government expand the eligibility criteria to include recreational and cultural investments. And please don't penalize municipalities that have exercised financial discipline and wise infrastructure investment by excluding us from the grant process.

That's our submission, Madam Chair, and I'd obviously be open to any questions.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I am sure my colleague will be asking some questions. Mr. Baker, do you want to start this round of questioning?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thanks very much, and I'm going to share my time with MPP Albanese, as well, if I could.

First of all, thank you very much for your very professional presentation, and congratulations on the success you've had in the community, both in terms of growth and also in terms of how you've indicated you've managed your finances.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Thank you.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I wanted to talk, just briefly, about one of the things that since I've come to office and as a member of the Treasury Board I've become very aware of: that the provincial government is providing a tremendous amount of support to municipalities in a number of ways, but the one I wanted to focus on was around provincial uploads. There are other municipal supports as well, but the estimate that I have is that it's about \$2.3 billion across the province for municipalities. This combined benefit is about four times the level of funding that was provided in 2004, and \$2.3 billion is approximately 13% of the municipal property tax revenue in the province.

I guess my question to you is, could you talk a little bit about the benefit of those supports specifically, the uploading of services?

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Certainly. Thank you very much for the question. Niagara region has a two-tier system. I'm wearing my hat as mayor and representative of the town of Pelham, which is the lower-tier municipality, which does things like recreation and building communities—things like that.

The uploading, as the member will know, was primarily directed in those two-tier situations to the region. I do

sit on regional council, and we do appreciate very significantly the uploading that the province has done over the years. It has been dramatic. I'm sorry I don't have the number off the top of my head, but it has been millions of dollars.

I believe the amount for this year in Niagara region is something in the order of \$2.5 million. It could be slightly more. That allowed Niagara regional council to come in at a zero budget, in terms of no change on the tax rate, so we definitely appreciate that. A few years ago, when I was budget chair, we actually gave that back to taxpayers, which is what your government asked us to do.

That does allow a little bit of flexibility for the municipalities. The region makes up about 50% of the tax bill for a resident in Pelham, and we're about 30%, so that does give us a little bit more wiggle room in which we can increase the tax rate a little bit to help cover those costs. We certainly appreciate that.

I guess our point is that we know that the federal government is thinking about these investments and perhaps stimulating the economy a little bit early. We know that the provincial government has made significant promises to improve municipalities and investments. What we're saying is, please don't put a roadblock in front of us to disallow us, because we might have a little bit of a higher assessment, from trying to compete for those projects. What we're finding is a little bit of a glass ceiling, I guess; we're asking you to erase that.

We took advantage of these grants a few years ago when we fixed up Haist Street and downtown Fonthill, but please allow us, now that we've done that with stimulus money and things like that, to compete for these grants for the next phase for our community. That's what we're asking.

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Mrs. Laura Albanese: When you say that you took advantage of those grants, was that the RInC Program that was federal, provincial and municipal funding? Is that what it was?

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Yes, it was. One of them was the RInC Program. We applied for essentially two thirds funding for \$1.1 million for all of our parks. We redid all of our parks so they're fully accessible. That's why the former Lieutenant Governor came by to see them.

We also received funding for redoing downtown Fonthill, which was about \$3.6 million. Again, the province funded one third of that, the federal government, etc. That was under some of the stimulus funding for that.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It was, and then the federal government withdrew that funding and it was too challenging for the province to finance it on its own.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Yes, of course.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Hopefully, we'll get more sympathy with the new federal government, as you were mentioning.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: I think you can see that municipal leaders, not only in this province but across the country, are very optimistic about that and the significant

infrastructure promises that this federal government had made in the election campaign. But what we're asking for, essentially, is: Please don't put any more roadblocks. We want to compete with other municipalities for those dollars and try to access some of those federal dollars as well.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Have you applied for the Small Communities Fund?

Mr. Dave Augustyn: That's correct, and that's in the package here, in terms of what we applied for.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It wasn't indicated, but I don't know if that was the one that you were rejected for.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: I apologize; that wasn't in the slideshow. But if you look at the third page from the back, it was the second intake for the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. You'll notice that the bullet points here—

Mrs. Laura Albanese: That's a different fund.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Okay. May I ask the CAO to comment on that, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Darren Ottaway: Through you, Madam Chair: The municipality applied for both infrastructure funding, but the financial screening—the municipality was screened out on both occasions. The intake that you see with the letter is an example. The letter that we received on the other grant was virtually the same.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Okay. Well, as long as you're trying to take advantage of every opportunity, I and my colleagues take your point well.

I guess the last comment I would make is that the uploads, yes, are being provided at the upper-tier level, but they're supposed to benefit and trickle down to the single municipalities, so you may want to knock on their door as well. Since you're part of the regional council, you should make sure that you get your share from that saving.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Madam Chair, I appreciate the suggestion from the member. We will be trying to take advantage of that little bit of tax room that that allowed us. I appreciate that.

The point of the presentation today is, essentially, to say: Please don't put criteria in our way that disallow us from applying for those grants and knock the feet away from us. We think we have some great projects coming. We moved our community ahead because of those significant infrastructure partnerships that we formed before. We want to continue to do that. So we just ask that you consider, in your budget deliberations, making that policy change and not having that artificial line there.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor and Mr. Ottaway, for coming, and also for your written submission. I hope you have a safe journey home with this bad weather.

Mr. Dave Augustyn: Thank you so much. We really appreciated the opportunity. Best wishes on the rest of your consultations. I know you're travelling the province. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you for being here. We really appreciate it.

I'm going to call to see if the other witnesses are here. Is the city of London here? No. How about the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre? I see none. How about the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario?

I'm going to ask for a suggestion from the committee. Would you like to recess until the next witness arrives? Then, once the witness arrives, we're going to start right away, because I'm mindful of the weather and I'm sure we would like to leave promptly to head out.

I'm going to—Mr. Clerk, no? Okay. I just said to the committee, Mr. Clerk, that we'll recess until the next witness arrives.

Please don't go too far, because we want to start immediately when the next witness comes, okay? We're going to do a recess. As soon as there's a next witness come, I'm going to reconvene the committee.

The committee recessed from 1515 to 1522.

JURAVINSKI HOSPITAL AND CANCER CENTRE

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to resume the committee. I understand that we have a witness here. I believe it's Dr. Tandan. Am I correct? Doctor, I just want to give you a moment as the committee comes back. I just recessed the committee until the next witness. Just to let everybody know, we are going to have Dr. Tandan and, hopefully, the other witnesses will come forward.

Dr. Tandan, you will have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will be done by the official opposition party. When you begin, for the purpose of Hansard, please identify yourself, your name and your position at the cancer centre because we have everything for documentation purposes. Okay? So, welcome and thank you very much for coming here and coming early.

Dr. Ved Tandan: My pleasure, and thanks for having me. My name is Dr. Ved Tandan. I'm the head of surgical oncology at the Juravinski Cancer Centre at Hamilton Health Sciences. Thanks very much for the opportunity to present today at these pre-budget hearings. I've been a cancer surgeon in Hamilton for almost 20 years now, and I'm also the past president of the Ontario Medical Association.

Every day, Ontario's 28,000 doctors go to work and we put our patients first. For us, it's simple: There is no job more important than the health of our patients. I want to give you a fairly quick personal example of that. Not long ago, I finished my elective surgery around 6 in the evening—I usually operate from 8 till 6 on Tuesdays—and I was heading out, getting ready to drive my daughter to swimming. As I was leaving, I noticed some unusual activity in one of the other operating rooms, so I put my head in the door just to see what was happening.

One of my colleagues was just starting an emergency procedure on a patient who was really very sick, at risk of dying from septic shock. I knew that if I stayed and

helped him, the two of us could likely do the procedure a lot faster and have a much better chance of saving this patient's life than if he carried on working on his own. So I stayed. Two hours later, we finished, and the patient actually recovered and did very well. My wife did what she always does: She picked up the slack at home and took my daughter to swimming. I'm not special. Doctors across the province make personal and family sacrifices like that to put their patients first every day.

I'm here to call on the government of Ontario to fully fund the demand for medical care in Ontario according to the needs of our growing and our aging population. Last year alone, the Ontario government unilaterally cut, by nearly 7%, the physicians' services budget that covers the care that doctors provide to patients. But the demand for medical care in the province is growing by at least 3.5% each year, with 140,000 new patients entering the system annually. That's almost the population of Prince Edward Island.

I want to take a few minutes to explain why fully funding the demand for medical care is so critical to understand, as we believe the government's actions are having serious implications for our patients and their families across the province.

One of the building blocks for a healthy economy is a healthy population. The fact is, Ontario's population is growing and aging. This is not a time for the government to decide to fund less than half of the additional care that will be needed each year. They don't even want to pay for the new doctors to treat existing patients, who we all know are struggling to access the care that they need.

By the Ministry of Health's own estimates, the demand for medical care will grow by at least 2.7% per year due to population growth in Ontario, an aging population that needs more care and more complex care, and the need for new doctors to treat those existing patients who currently can't get access to the care they need in a timely fashion. But the government is only willing to fund 1.25%, or less than half of that growth. This is necessary care that every patient in our aging and growing population requires and deserves.

To make matters worse, today in Ontario, the number of patients struggling with chronic conditions is rising sharply. More than half of seniors have a chronic condition, and 25% have two chronic conditions. Since 2008, the growth rate of patients with chronic disease is triple the growth rate of patients without chronic diseases.

Here in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN, we're home to 1.4 million people, with more than 70% of that population living in Hamilton or Niagara. I want to give you a brief overview of the health needs of our LHIN here in HNHB.

We have 55,000 patients in our LHIN currently who do not have a family doctor. The population is aging, and over the next 10 years the largest population growth will be among seniors. The population of those between the ages of 65 and 74 is growing by 43%, and of those over 75 by almost 29%. We have already got over 200,000

seniors living here, which is the largest population of seniors in all the LHINs.

With that aging population come more chronic conditions and the need for more complex care. Yet the government's response has been not to fully fund physician services to match patient needs, but to cut it by 7% in 2015 alone.

We believe the government is failing to accept its responsibility to fund the system accordingly, and it's threatening access to the quality, patient-focused care that Ontarians need and deserve, including our community here in Hamilton and Niagara.

Recent physician service agreements in British Columbia and Saskatchewan have demonstrated how those governments have accounted for the growing and changing needs of their populations and have made changes required to fund system growth. However, Ontario is shirking its responsibility to fund natural growth in the medical needs of its population.

Doctors understand and acknowledge the economic challenges facing the government. I'd like to remind you that in 2012, Ontario's doctors accepted a 5% cut and, in doing so, helped to save over \$850 million in the health care system. We did that because we felt that we could make cuts in places that would have minimal impacts on patient care. But now the government is cutting physician services unilaterally without regard for the impact on patients. This is unsustainable. It's unrealistic if we want the best care for our patients and if we want the best doctors available in Ontario. This behaviour represents a race to the bottom. While the government unilaterally imposes their cuts to physician services, doctors will continue to do everything that we can to limit the impact of those cuts on patients. But make no mistake: There are negative impacts already happening.

So our message is clear: We want the government of Ontario to fully fund the demand for medical care in Ontario to the needs of our growing and aging population. It's time for the government of Ontario to truly put patients first and fund the growth in the health care system. The decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come. Thank you.

1530

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much. I'm going to turn to Mr. Toby Barrett to come and ask you the first round of questions. Mr. Barrett?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you for your presentation. We know there has certainly been a funding freeze for hospitals and for physicians. It's worse. We understand that the cutting of millions of dollars to physician services not only hits physicians but also patients. In the climate I represent, a rural area south of here, I didn't have a doctor for a couple of years; I have one now. That's the case with so much of rural Ontario.

Could you just comment on that? We heard recently from a research and teaching hospital association of the short-term gain but long-term loss with this kind of an approach.

Dr. Ved Tandan: Yes. We're seeing medical students becoming discouraged and young physicians becoming discouraged with the continual cuts to funding and, really, with the disrespectful way that physicians are being treated in Ontario and almost being villainized. That's leading them to make decisions to either not go into certain types of practice or to leave the province. We're seeing that repeatedly, and we're hearing that. In fact, there are groups that are tracking it very closely.

Despite attempts that the government has made to try and direct physicians or drive them into specific areas of practice in rural communities, as an example—that's not the way to get people to go somewhere and stay there. You have to have them want to go there. To try and force people to go somewhere isn't the solution. We have solutions like the Northern Ontario School of Medicine that has done exactly that. It has taken students from northern Ontario and trained them, and almost all—well, not almost all, but I think over 90% of those students go back and practise in northern Ontario. We're just starting to see the dividends from that now.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Fedeli?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: That absolutely segues into my question. Our leader, Patrick Brown, Toby Barrett, myself and others did a road tour of northern Ontario. I'm from North Bay. We started in North Bay and ended up in Dryden, by car.

In one of the communities, there were graduates from the northern school. This one unbelievably bright young woman, who told us about her student loans of several hundred thousand dollars—she's a brand new practising family physician—said that under the new set-up, she now cannot afford to stay here, and she is looking out of the province.

Is that typical? We've heard from her and others, but is this reality? Is that what is truly happening out there?

Dr. Ved Tandan: Absolutely. I was hearing that when I was president, and since that time as well, from literally dozens of new-graduate physicians, and even physicians that have been in practice, who are relatively new in practice, who have made commitments to lease space and equipment, and suddenly their revenue stream has been cut very dramatically, and they literally can't make ends meet.

I go to call some of the family doctors that refer patients to me, and I can't get through on the phone because they've gotten rid of a phone line or two or they've let go some staff because they're trying to cut expenses, just like any other business would do when its revenue is decreased so dramatically.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We started in North Bay. There are 12,000 people, including myself and my wife, without a doctor. As we went to Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay and others, the numbers were astounding, how many of these communities' families do not have doctors.

The bottom line is, how do these cuts affect the families in Ontario? What's the bottom line of all of this?

Dr. Ved Tandan: The bottom line—I mean, there are two. One is immediate access. You've already pointed

out how many patients in the province already don't have a family doctor, and that number is going to continue to grow because we're not going to keep the family doctors that we need and the specialists that we need.

But probably more important is the long-term impact. We made decisions back in the early 1990s around medical school training and realized that that was a mistake—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: A big mistake.

Dr. Ved Tandan: —and have tried to bounce back. But it takes 10 years to recover from decisions that you make. All these doctors that we're losing today won't come back. They lay down roots and they make decisions to stay somewhere, and it's really hard to get them to come back. I'm really concerned that the long-term impact of these decisions that are being made today is going to be felt for many years to come.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, I would agree with you. When I met with her—and then we found out that her husband was also a physician; he just wasn't there with us that day. That's a twofer that we're going to lose from one of these small communities in northern Ontario. I tried to get her to explain to us the math and the reasoning why. It was complicated but the bottom line is that there is just no money for the new, young docs who are coming out. Is that accurate?

Dr. Ved Tandan: It is. In fact, when we initially started this dispute with government back a year ago, one of the things that we put on the table was that doctors are willing to take a freeze in income. It's not like anybody wants more money individually. But there is more money needed in the system: to hire those new doctors and pay for them to look after the growing population of patients as well as those people who are already here who don't have a doctor, or who can't get in to see that doctor quickly enough if they need to see a specialist. So, absolutely.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to stop you. Thank you so much, Dr. Tandan, for being here. If you have a written submission, you have until February 2 at 5 p.m. to submit it to the Clerk.

Dr. Ved Tandan: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you so much for coming, and thank you for being early.

CITY OF LONDON

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe the town of London is here. Mayor Brown? I believe he's here; am I correct? Good afternoon, Mr. Brown, and welcome. Thank you so much for being here today in this weather. The Clerk is coming around to hand out your written submission to us. As you probably heard, you will have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round of questioning will be coming from the third party. You may begin any time. Please identify yourself when you begin for the purposes of Hansard. Thank you.

Mr. Matt Brown: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to introduce myself. My name is Matt Brown. I'm the

mayor of London, Ontario, the sixth-largest city in Ontario. Good afternoon.

Thank you very much, Chair and members, for the opportunity to speak to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs as you prepare for the Ontario 2016 budget. This budget, I believe, represents a critical opportunity to invest in Ontario. On behalf of the city of London, we commend the government for its leadership in making strategic decisions that will improve the lives of all Ontarians.

In particular, I would like to thank the provincial government for their continued leadership by investing more than \$130 billion into infrastructure in communities right across this province.

We are particularly interested in, and appreciative of, the \$15 billion that's earmarked through the Moving Ontario Forward process for public transit and any other infrastructure projects outside of the greater Toronto-Hamilton area. I look forward to working with you and the provincial government in building a stronger London and a stronger southwestern Ontario.

I am here today, on behalf of Londoners, London businesses and institutions, as well as the city of London, to request your support for a once-in-a-generation rapid transit project which will transform our city as well as our region.

London is Canada's eleventh-largest city. We have a population of 381,000 within the city boundary and our CMA consists of 450,000 people. London will grow by nearly 80,000 people over the next 20 years. We are the regional hub of southwestern Ontario, a wider population of more than 2.5 million Ontarians who rely on London's health care, educational institutions and amenities and services, including sports, music, culture and recreation.

Like all big cities in Canada, we're struggling with a serious and growing congestion problem. London has well above the average transit ridership rates but our current transit system is not able to meet current needs, let alone future needs. We leave far too many people at the side of the road. Transit ridership in London has increased by 94% between 1998 and 2014. We expect it to grow by another 40%, to 33 million rides per year, by 2035. We know also that there will be 25% more cars on the road by 2030. London faces a greater strain on the city roadways and public transit system, which is already operating over capacity. It's clear the existing public transit infrastructure can't handle this growth.

I want to highlight this point: London is the largest city in Canada without a rapid transit system. We know from community surveys that transit and transportation are the top concerns for Londoners and have been identified as a top priority of city council. Investing in a modern, efficient transit system is critical for our city: for our downtown and for our neighbourhoods; for our businesses and for our institutions like Western University and Fanshawe College, as well as our hospitals; and for all citizens in London, as well as those in our region who rely on a good transportation system to move across the city.

The city of London has developed plans to transform mobility and connectivity in our city. “Shift” is what we’re calling our rapid transit initiative. It charts a course for a very different London. It envisions a 22-kilometre rapid transit system. It includes improved road, bus and active transportation networks throughout the city. It will result in a more efficient, more sustainable, more convenient and more connected community.

1540

Shift will fundamentally change the way we move across the city. It will connect London’s downtown with our north, our south, our east and our west, as well as our residential and commercial hubs. The package that I provided you with today provides a map and more details about these routes.

We have already invested millions into a detailed environmental assessment process. Rapid transit has been integrated into all of our documents, including our draft official plan that will be headed to the province in the early part of 2016, our transportation master plan, our downtown plan, and council’s strategic plan. To date, we have connected with more than 40,000 Londoners—that’s 10% of our population—to contribute to these works.

In the fall, we delivered our initial submission to Minister Duguid and the government as part of the Moving Ontario Forward consultation. The submission formally introduced this rapid transit plan and requested a commitment of support for this process.

In November 2015, London city council unanimously—15 to 0—endorsed this hybrid light rail/bus rapid transit system as our preliminary preferred option in the environmental assessment. We are ready for rapid transit, and Shift will only be realized through partnering with, of course, the government of Ontario and the government of Canada.

As the mayor of the city of London, I am asking to seek one third of the total project costs—that’s amounting to \$388 million—to be phased over a 10-year period beginning in 2017. Overall, the estimated capital cost of Shift is \$900 million, and the estimated annual operating and maintenance cost over the next 30 years is \$287 million, for a total project cost of just over \$1.1 billion.

The city has already committed \$125 million towards the capital costs and will pay for all of the ongoing operating and maintenance costs. This is in addition to the investment the city will continue to make each year to support the rest of the transit system in London. We’re committed to demonstrate our willingness to partner with all levels of government to bring modern, efficient transit to London and the region.

Our request for \$388 million in provincial funding represents approximately 2.5% of the funds allocated through the Moving Ontario Forward fund outside of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. We believe this is a reasonable request, given that London is the second-largest city in Ontario outside of the GTHA, second only after Ottawa.

The provincial government has committed to investing \$15 billion over 10 years into transformative public transit infrastructure outside of the GTHA. For London and for the entire southwest region, Shift represents an immediate opportunity to demonstrate this commitment in action.

An investment from the province in Shift would provide a major stimulus for our local and regional economy through significant job creation and long-term economic growth. Shift has the potential to add over \$400 million to the country’s GDP, both in terms of short-term and long-term investment. Reducing congestion in the region through encouraging a substantial transportation modal shift will free up our roads for goods and services and encourage people outside of the city to invest in our community.

Strategically, the rapid transit corridors will be integrated into all other transportation modes, including rail, road, bus transit and active transportation routes. The government is moving ahead with plans for the high-speed rail, which will absolutely transform our community and connections for other communities right across southwestern Ontario, from Windsor to London to Kitchener-Waterloo to Toronto. Shift has been designed to fit seamlessly with that plan.

A commitment from the provincial government will demonstrate that all levels of government are working together to reduce congestion and improve the quality of life for Ontarians.

I have to tell you, we in London are very excited about this plan and the positive impact it will have on our community and our citizens. We are encouraged to see all other orders of government identifying transit and infrastructure as a priority. I note that in the 2015 provincial budget, London was identified as a potential site for rapid transit investment, and, of course, we’ve seen significant commitments made by the federal government recently as well.

To sum up, I look forward to working with you as we make transformative investments in London, in the southwest region and in this great province. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak. I’d be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. I’m going to turn to Ms. Fife to start this round of questioning.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for the presentation, Mayor Brown. It’s very comprehensive. You’ve covered all of the points that the government is looking for.

I am curious, though: When you did make your presentation to Minister Duguid, what sort of feedback did you get and how did he receive the report?

Mr. Matt Brown: I think that all of the conversations that we’ve had to this point have been very positive. We recognize that we’re at the early stages of these conversations. I have to say that it was very encouraging to see London identified as a potential site for a rapid transit investment in the 2015 budget.

Since those conversations have occurred, we've moved forward with our very extensive environmental assessment and we're getting much closer to identifying that preferred option, the right rapid transit program for London. Of course, these conversations that we're having with the provincial government as well as with the federal government will help us identify that right fit for London.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So you'll know that the competition for these dollars is intense across the province, with every community from Niagara to Kitchener-Waterloo to Toronto making the case for investment. What would you say makes your application unique, if you will?

Mr. Matt Brown: I would say that London is the largest community in Canada that doesn't have a rapid transit program. London is the second-largest community in Ontario outside of the GTHA, second only to Ottawa, and represents the hub for so many purposes for the southwest. So an investment of this kind in the London area isn't simply an investment in a single community; it's an investment in an entire region that represents 2.5 million people. An investment of this magnitude—a \$900-million infrastructure program—would have significant, positive short-, medium- and long-term impacts not only for the London region but for the entire southwest. I think that's what sets us apart.

Finally, I'd indicate that the \$15 billion that's been identified in the Move Ontario fund outside of the GTHA is a significant amount of money. What we're asking for is 2.5% of that fund.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay, thank you. I think my colleague has a question as well.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Miller?

Mr. Paul Miller: Hello, Mayor. How are you today?

Mr. Matt Brown: Very well, thank you.

Mr. Paul Miller: As you can expect, in Hamilton we're pushing for our LRT, and hopefully it does come to fruition.

Mr. Matt Brown: I just had the pleasure of meeting with your mayor 10 minutes ago.

Mr. Paul Miller: We're holding our breath and we're hoping it comes through, but we'll see.

In reference to your request, it would certainly improve—being a university hub as you are, there are a lot of people coming and going, and certainly your population is expanded in the school year, and riding is effective for students to get around the city. They may have challenges for cars and things like that, which is certainly a positive movement. But I'm just wondering: On this request, it's strictly about transportation. You talked about infrastructure as a whole. Can I assume that your bridges and your roads and your affordable housing are all going to be covered by the rest of the budget that you have in London? How is that going to work?

Mr. Matt Brown: This has been identified as our number one priority for the community in terms of preparing for the long-term congestion issues that we're expecting to encounter.

I would say that although this is public transit and certainly will provide better transportation across the

city, this is much more than that. It is a city-building initiative, just as we see in the great city of Hamilton. We expect to see development—to occur along the transportation corridors that are identified within the rapid transit document—to boom. The London Plan is our draft official plan that calls for a much more sustainable and efficient way to grow our community, a much more inward—

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't want to interrupt you, but I don't think you've quite answered my question. My question was that this is a transportation request, but I asked you about your other should-be priorities: affordable housing and other aspects of society that require funding. I don't see any of that in here. Are they two separate issues or has your council set aside contingency funds to cover those other areas that are important to people?

Mr. Matt Brown: Certainly, like all other big cities across Canada, we're focused on infrastructure and housing as well as transportation and transit as our key priorities. I think it was a very important correction to make that this is not just a transportation application. This is a city-building application that will drive our economy forward and that will make more tax dollars available to make investments in things like other infrastructure projects as well as housing, which is a significant priority—

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't think I'm getting my answer, but that's okay. We're stuck on transportation, but that's fine.

1550

So are you expecting the government to give you the same deal that Hamilton got in reference to the all-out cost and then, as you've mentioned, you would be maintaining and continuing on from there? That's not quite the deal that Hamilton cut. Where's your bottom line and where do you feel that you would be satisfied if you couldn't get your full amount?

Mr. Matt Brown: We're not asking for the entire project to be funded by the provincial government. That's a \$900-million project. We're asking for approximately \$377 million from the province. We've already earmarked \$125 million primarily from our development charge as a commitment towards the capital. We'll be reaching out to our partners in the federal government for the remainder, recognizing that we'll take care of the operating costs in perpetuity, once the system is put in place.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for your written submission, and have a safe drive back home.

Mr. Matt Brown: Thank you very much. I wish you a safe trip as well.

REGISTERED NURSES'
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. I believe that the witness from—they're early, which is good—the

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Mr. Rankin, is here from the board, the region 3 rep.

Mr. Rankin, welcome. I believe that the Clerk is coming around with your written submission. You can have a seat while he's doing it. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, followed by five minutes of questioning. This round, the questioning will be coming from the government side. Thank you.

Mr. Aric Rankin: Okay, great. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Aric Rankin and I'm a nurse practitioner. I'm representing the board of directors for the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. We are the professional association representing registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students in Ontario. The region I represent is the Brant-Haldimand Norfolk, Hamilton and Niagara chapters. I thank you for the opportunity to offer RNAO's recommendations on two important issues facing nurse practitioners within Ontario: first, to unfreeze nurse practitioner compensation; and, second, to implement immediate regulatory changes to authorize nurse practitioners to prescribe all controlled drugs and substances, including methadone, testosterone and Suboxone.

Let me provide you with some background. The nurse practitioner role was officially legislated in 1998. It was in existence for several decades before that. Nurse practitioners have had an expanded scope of practice and hold either a master's degree or a postgraduate certificate. Before becoming an NP, one must have at least two years of clinical experience as an RN. In truth, an average nurse practitioner has at least 16 years of clinical experience.

Thanks to the RNAO's evidence-based advocacy efforts, Ontario has established 26 nurse practitioner-led clinics, and they're delivering comprehensive primary health care to more than 40,000 Ontarians. At these clinics, nurse practitioners are the lead clinical practitioners who work collaboratively with teams of registered nurses, pharmacists, social workers, dietitians and others. A physician is associated with the clinic for consultation. These physicians are usually on site for a couple of hours biweekly.

Nurse practitioners also work in home care, hospitals and nursing homes. I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in North America to authorize nurse practitioners to admit, treat, discharge and transfer hospitalized inpatients—another achievement that RNAO has had working with policy-makers and other political parties such as yourselves.

Indeed, the knowledge, skills and expertise of nurse practitioners have contributed substantially to improving timely access to quality health care for all Ontarians, but we are not done.

Minister Hoskins has made his commitment to community care clear. He aims to advance person-centred care, home health care and primary care. However, there is a persistent challenge that is destabilizing the primary health care workforce. Primary care nurse practitioners have had their salaries frozen for the past nine years at

\$89,200. When you take inflation into account, salaries have actually dropped by 16%. This makes retention and recruitment in primary care a huge challenge as we are not only competing with jurisdictions like Alberta, where the average nurse practitioner's salary is \$120,000 per year, but we're also competing with NP expertise locally, within hospitals and CCACs, which pay much higher salaries and competitive benefits.

While primary care nurse practitioners have seen their compensation frozen, the Canadian Institute for Health Information reports that the gross pay for physicians in Ontario has actually gone up. In fact, between 2003 and 2013, physicians' wages jumped 61%. How is that fair? I must ask you that. Nurse practitioners work very hard and provide competent care.

Minister Eric Hoskins has promised to put patients first by improving access to care, connecting services, informing people and protecting our universal, publicly funded health care system. This plan sets the wheels in motion to make a complex health care system easier to navigate and to help people get the care that they need. Registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students are all on board. However, it's critical that we do justice to nurse practitioners, especially given that the role and accountability has grown exponentially and we are caring for Ontarians with the most complex health care needs and social needs.

As a nurse practitioner who works as a full-time NP at the Aboriginal Health Centre in Brantford, Ontario—my colleagues and I have received annual performance reviews appreciating our great work and dedication, but “due to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, which caps nurse practitioners' salaries, we are unable to provide you with a salary increase at this time.” Our organization, which works with some of the most vulnerable people, has lost excellent NPs with significant expertise because they have chosen to work elsewhere, in other provinces and other organizations, where they can get a better salary.

RNAO asks in the strongest possible terms that this provincial budget include funding to eliminate salary and benefit inequities for primary health care nurse practitioners. This recommendation is important as a stand-alone, and also given that the nurse practitioner workforce is predominantly female and that the government is currently conducting a review of the gender wage gap in Ontario and they've promised to take action on this. So the time is now.

Our second ask relates to an outstanding gap in the care that nurse practitioners are able to provide to the people of Ontario. Since 2009, we have seen our scope of practice grow with the passage of Bill 179, enabling us to prescribe most medications. However, we are prohibited from prescribing controlled substances, and this challenges our ability to deliver timely and appropriate pain management, especially for those patients who require palliative care. It limits our ability to lead harm reduction programs for those who are battling addictions, and it prevents us from helping transgendered persons who

require hormonal therapy. All of this conflicts with the evolving role and the expectations that come from being the most responsible care provider for thousands of Ontarians. It also contradicts the government's agenda in areas such as harm reduction, palliative care and gender identity justice.

In 2012, federal amendments authorized nurse practitioners to provide controlled substances. This was a big step forward, and we anticipated regulatory amendments would follow in Ontario. In 2013, we were thrilled to hear, at the RNAO AGM, that Premier Wynne committed to look at having nurse practitioners prescribe controlled substances. However, two years later, we're still waiting.

Historically, Ontario has led the way through significant expansions to the scope of practice of nurse practitioners, but we now lag behind other jurisdictions such as Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, where NPs have this prescribing authority.

With enabling regulation to authorize prescribing controlled substances, nurse practitioners will continue to decrease health care costs by reducing duplication and unnecessary referrals. It will also improve continuity of care and timely access to necessary treatments. In the States, studies have found that increasing NP prescribing authority to include controlled substances results in positive outcomes, including improved access to care and decreased costs.

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Given the demonstrated positive impact of nurse practitioners on improving access to health care services for Ontarians, RNAO calls for immediate regulatory changes to authorize nurse practitioners to prescribe all controlled drugs and substances, including methadone, testosterone and Suboxone. It is time to bring the regulations up to date to reflect the comprehensive, safe and evidence-informed care that nurse practitioners around Ontario consistently provide.

I thank you on behalf of RNAO for the opportunity to present to you today in front of the standing committee. I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you, Mr. Rankin. Ms. Wong has questions for you.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Rankin, thank you so much for coming down to the standing committee pre-budget consultations. I just want to say that we just had a previous witness, Dr. Tandan, who spoke to this committee and verbalized to the committee that physicians' salaries were not increased. Now I'm hearing two separate kinds of conflicting stories. He just presented to this committee saying that physicians' salaries have gone down, and the fact that the government has frozen physicians' salaries, when we know it's just under \$12 billion.

On page 3 of your report here to the committee, you said that physicians' salaries jumped 61%. I'm just in conflict here, because he just presented, literally less than half an hour ago, that physicians' salaries have gone down, and you just presented to us, on behalf of the

RNAO, saying that physicians' salaries actually went up. I'm just confused. Can you clarify that for us?

Mr. Aric Rankin: I'd be happy to clarify that. First of all, I don't want to get into a debate about physician salary versus NP salary. This was through evidence from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, that in fact salaries have increased over that time.

Now, whether or not physicians need an increase in salaries, the bottom line is that physicians' salaries have not been frozen for nine years. Nurse practitioners have had an increase in prescribing authority, admitting and discharging, and now ordering tests that are wide open, whether it's laboratory or ultrasounds. The scope of the nurse practitioner has grown immensely, yet the salaries have been frozen. If we look at other jurisdictions, they're much higher.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you for this clarification, Mr. Rankin. The other question I have is that you alluded earlier to the gender wage gap public hearings right now. Has the RNAO participated in those public hearings on the gender wage gap with Minister Flynn's group going around the province?

Mr. Aric Rankin: I can't speak on behalf of Doris Grinspun and our president, but I know that they have been very much involved in gender disparities, whether it's the wage or otherwise.

Ms. Soo Wong: The other question I have is, as you've probably heard as well, is that I believe the parliamentary assistant to Minister Hoskins, my colleague John Fraser, has been going around the province to look at expanding the scope of practice of NPs. Has there been a conversation between the RNAO and MPP John Fraser about revising the regulatory amendment to expand the scope of practice to allow NPs to deal with controlled substances?

Mr. Aric Rankin: Thank you for mentioning that. I don't know specifically who they have met with, but there have been a few sit-down meetings with various different ministers—I'm not too sure of the names—to expand the scope of practice. Again, we haven't seen this come to Ontario. As I mentioned, Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions that now do not have that prescribing authority for controlled substances.

Ms. Soo Wong: But when you look at the totality of all the NPs across the country, would you not say that there are more NPs in the province of Ontario than any other province?

Mr. Aric Rankin: I would definitely say that there are more NPs in Ontario, and that's why we need to lead forward and provide an example.

Ms. Soo Wong: Yes. And you also would appreciate that as a nurse—I'm a nurse first, just so you know, Mr. Rankin.

Mr. Aric Rankin: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Soo Wong: As a nurse, when we change regulatory practices across the province, whether it's the College of Nurses, the College of Physicians and Surgeons—we just expanded the scope of practice with the College of Pharmacists—that kind of consultation, Mr. Rankin, takes more than one year.

Mr. Aric Rankin: Right.

Ms. Soo Wong: I know you've made reference to the Premier coming forward and making that announcement, and that it takes time—yes, it is about three years. But the review of that kind of scope of practice requires the government to consult all the regulatory bodies, not just the College of Nurses. Just so you understand, okay? So when you review a regulatory change and amendment, it will require consultation with the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It will require review with the college of dentistry. It will require every regulatory profession to have an input, plus we need to look at the experts as well.

Because we are the largest province in the country—I could tell you right now, as a former nurse, that no other province has more nurse practitioners in the country than the province of Ontario.

Mr. Aric Rankin: Right.

Ms. Soo Wong: It will take time. So I just want to encourage the RNAO and your colleague to be patient with us. When the Premier made that commitment—and so did this minister. Minister Hoskins is very favourable about these expanded scopes of practice. You have to be patient. Okay?

Mr. Aric Rankin: Yes.

Ms. Soo Wong: So I just want to say that forefront on the record.

Mr. Aric Rankin: Yes, but might I mention just one thing there quickly? I thank you very much, and I really do appreciate that. I think it's at venues like this that we can continue to remind the government about this, because we are responsible—I'm caring for patients. I just drove from Brantford from caring for patients. It's up to us to represent and to continue pushing.

Ms. Soo Wong: Yes. We appreciate all the good work.

Mr. Aric Rankin: And certainly I want a safe way to introduce this, of course.

Ms. Soo Wong: I really, really appreciate all the hard work of the nurse practitioners. I believe there was another nurse practitioner who came forward earlier today about another issue. So thank you, on behalf of the committee, for all the great work of the nurse practitioners across the province. But I also want to say to each one of you that these expanded scopes of practice as well as the salary piece—I know that the government is committed to looking at everything, but things don't happen overnight.

Mr. Aric Rankin: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Soo Wong: So, thank you again, and please have a safe drive back home. Thank you.

Mr. Aric Rankin: Thank you very much. Thank you, everyone.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you, Mr. Rankin.

CAMPAIGN FOR ADEQUATE WELFARE AND DISABILITY BENEFITS

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Our next witness: Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability

Benefits. You're here? You have 10 minutes to present. Your questions will be from the official opposition. For the record, could you please provide us with your name?

Ms. Elizabeth McGuire: Elizabeth McGuire. I'm the chair of the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Go ahead. The floor is yours.

Ms. Elizabeth McGuire: Thank you for the opportunity to present to you this afternoon on such a day that challenges travel, walking and basically negotiating anything that takes you outside. My apologies for not being able to be here earlier today this morning when my compatriots in the anti-poverty movement were here. I understand you spoke with Craig Foye from the legal clinic; Tom, from the round table; and Sandy Leyland, who is still here, I believe—no, she left.

I'm a member of that group of people who are fighting the social justice cause. I apologize, but I have to use the words "human rights violations." Sorry about that, but you've got to call it what it is.

I hope you got the feeling this morning from what they said that homelessness will only increase if nobody tries to do anything about it. It will only get worse, and we're spiralling downward globally. We need to have a government that stands strong and that says, "No, we don't have to do things that way; we can do things differently, smarter, and help those most vulnerable." I know that those this morning brought asks, and I hope what I bring to you are solutions for the problems which I've expressed.

I don't have to tell you that the growing disparity between the wealthy and poor people is getting worse. It has never been wider in this century, except perhaps for the Roaring Twenties. We're all aware in the United States that record stock market prices were gained by firing employees in order to maximize investor returns. Manual jobs across North America were shipped offshore. Professional jobs are downgraded to precarious contract work. Responsibility has been abandoned; accountability is elusive.

Inequality really does matter. If you look at Hamilton's Code Red series, which proved that people who are poor die 21 years earlier than those who are better off—and that carries through all the communities in Ontario.

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Between 2009 and 2011, personal income fell dramatically, but the 1% saw their income increase by 11%. The cost of food, as we all know, has increased, but social assistance rates have not kept pace. The cost of processed food has declined by 40% since 1980. The cost of good food—fruits and vegetables—rose by 40% since 1980. And 1980 also marks the year that obesity started to become a problem. If you're poor, you're going to buy that processed food because you can get it in bulk; it's high calorie; you get that full feeling, which is elusive again because you need a lot of fruits and vegetables before you feel full.

Unfortunately, the poor are led to buy the cheapest food available: processed food. And then you know what

has happened. We had a raging increase in diabetes and obesity, which increases health care costs, which is another cost of poverty.

Food banks and community dinners do what they can. All the churches in Hamilton, it seems, are involved in Out of the Cold dinners. But we cannot use charity to end hunger—we cannot. Hunger is a human travesty, and I think we in Ontario are smart enough, bright enough and advanced enough that we recognize that causing the poor to eat processed food so that they get sick and die earlier is unnecessary and inappropriate. I have to ask: What if your jobs were all funded through charity? That's something to think about—if you had to go out and raise money to cover your income.

Previous governments have practised a dismissal or blindness, and they've dominated and paralyzed and blinded governments to the plight of the poor and the vulnerable who know that struggle. Economic and social pundits have been pounding the drum and sounding the alarms for a few years now. We are a country in crisis, we are a province in crisis, and I know most people don't see it. We are spiralling downward, and unless you do something now, the problems and the disparity in Ontario will just get worse. Close the loopholes, shut down tax havens, raise taxes on the rich, find efficiencies and be the government that can bring in basic income. It is possible.

I recently had lunch with a respected economist. He reported that the cost of existing supplemental payments, including OAS, CPP, CIS, EI, is around \$165 billion. A basic income for those in Ontario on OW, ODSP and low wages would cost \$30 billion. The cost of doing nothing, of leaving things the way they are—increased health care costs, increased crime, etc.: \$41 billion. So you can shave \$11 billion off your forecast right off the bat. Do you want to spend \$41 billion staying the same or do you want to spend \$30 billion raising the floor so that people can afford good food and contribute to their community in ways that make everyone happier and feel better?

Be the government that ushers in basic income. It's not impossible. And we here in Hamilton will do what we can to help you. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you very much. The questions are from Mr. Barrett of the official opposition.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you very much for your presentation on behalf of the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits. I appreciate you mentioning disability as well as welfare. We've heard a number of presentations on this issue today, as you mentioned. Year after year I've been on this committee for most of the tours since—well, the last 13 years. Predominantly the presentations are from organizations like your organization concerned about primarily Ontario Works, oftentimes disability. And you're right: For various reasons, as you said, people don't see it or they see it and perhaps draw a blind eye.

I came back from Denver a few years ago, a farm conference. In the city of Denver, you do see it with

respect to homelessness. Most of the major intersections, as we were driving around Denver, and not just downtown but greater Denver, had people in this kind of weather sleeping outside, as with much of the world. Some of my colleagues have returned from India. I spent time in India a number of years ago. There were one million people sleeping on the streets in Calcutta. You walk over the people to get anywhere. Here you don't see it.

Ms. Elizabeth McGuire: Oh, I beg to differ. If you go to Toronto and you walk from the bus station to the train station, they're right there on the corner, sleeping on the ground.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, and again, that's been the case, I would say—let me think—for the last 30 years, probably, in Toronto. Not so much before that, for whatever reason.

I'm critic for agriculture, food and rural affairs, and you made mention of causing the poor to eat processed food. Correct. Most food banks that I've been in touch with make it very clear to provide non-perishable food items. As you know, that means food in a can or food in a box.

I have an interest in this area; I used to be critic for community and social services. I just completed a one-day training program last week titled Bridges Out of Poverty in Dunnville, a town south of here, as did 220 people from that town. That's a lot of people for the town of Dunnville to come out and spend all day taking this training program to try and do something to help those less fortunate in the Dunnville area. Just think of the ratio in Hamilton if that many citizens came out. Your orientation is for government, I think, to do a lot of this work, but there is a role, a continued role, for our churches, for citizens, for community leaders and, down my way, farmers, who know a bit about food.

Just going back to causing the poor to eat processed food, one of the examples they described—as many of us probably think in different terms than people who are really down and out, they used the example where a group got together and gave a family a refrigerator. Well, that wasn't a priority for that family. They wanted to visit other family members. They sold the refrigerator to pay, I think, for a plane ticket to visit other family members. Again, you need those social groups when you are in this kind of a status. I guess you don't need a refrigerator if everything you eat is from a can and from a cardboard box.

Did you want to add anything further on this—

Ms. Elizabeth McGuire: I can tell you that the Out of the Cold dinners in Hamilton—I think it's time for government to step up to the plate, because churches and volunteers in the community have been doing everything they can, and have been burned out from doing everything they can, for some time now. At the Out of the Cold dinners in Hamilton, the crowds are increasing. From when I first went to investigate and see what they were all about to today, the attendance has doubled. It's getting worse. I didn't say "spiralling downward" lightly.

They weren't just nice words I put together. I really mean it.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, thank God for the Out of the Cold program. There's a church at Yonge and St. Clair. Myself and one of my staff members went up one cold winter night. We lined up at the back door with everybody else. It took us a while to get in the door. I wasn't wearing a suit or anything, just to see how it works. Not everybody got a mattress that night. There was a dinner. What really impressed me in this church was that a number of volunteers massaged the feet of the street people. You're not going to get a government worker to do that.

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Ms. Elizabeth McGuire: With all due respect, we don't need our feet massaged. We need food and income so we can act with dignity and participate in community events.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Sure, food and material items are important. But that church—and it's a very large organization in Toronto—they feel it's a very important part. It goes back to the religious—I don't know the Bible that well—but Jesus Christ washing the feet of those who are poor. That was very important for those people. There was a lineup. Many people would go there first, before the food or the cot.

Ms. Elizabeth McGuire: We have that kind of service in Hamilton, too. At one of the churches, there is a chiropodist there.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you very much.

Ms. Elizabeth McGuire: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you very much for your presentation.

HAMILTON-HALTON HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Our next witness is the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association. You have 10 minutes to present, and questions will be coming from the third party. For the record, please state your name.

Ms. Suzanne Mammel: My name is Suzanne Mammel. I'm the executive officer of the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, good afternoon.

The Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association, or HHHBA, is part of a nationwide network of home builder associations affiliated with both the Ontario Home Builders' Association and the Canadian Home Builders' Association. In fact, OHBA's immediate past president is Vince Molinaro. He is one of our members, and he is also a past president of the HHHBA.

Thank you for coming to Hamilton and for providing me with an opportunity to speak on the upcoming provincial budget.

HHHBA is the voice of the new housing, land development and professional renovation industries in the Hamilton and Halton areas. Our association includes

approximately 240 member companies. In our jurisdiction, we create approximately 31,600 jobs in new home construction, renovation and related fields, making us one of the area's largest employers. These jobs account for \$1.74 billion in wages each year, and the total residential construction-related economic activity represents just over \$5 billion in annual investments. We are truly an engine that drives the Hamilton-Halton economy.

Today, I'm going to focus my remarks on three areas related to the budget and provincial priorities: the underground economy, climate change, and local infrastructure.

Our association represents the professional renovations sector within the region. I'd like to emphasize the word "professional." We promote the RenoMark program, which helps to protect consumers by ensuring our members provide warranties, written contracts, carry insurance, pay their taxes, and obtain all the necessary permits for their projects. This is in contrast to a large portion of the sector, which is either the do-it-yourself sector or—our concern here today—the shadier side of the business, being the underground cash economy. These underground operators pose a risk to government, to legitimate business and, most importantly, to homeowners who may be thinking they're getting a great deal.

Some of the numerous problems that arise by paying cash to an underground operator are as follows: These illegitimate businesses don't typically take out permits. That means that neither their designs nor the structures that they build are being inspected. These people typically don't pay EI, GST or HST, and they aren't likely filing income or corporate tax returns, nor do they likely pay into WSIB. And I would suspect that their due diligence towards health and safety is likely lacking. Should an incident or an accident occur on-site, it's actually the homeowner who is liable—probably not something they're aware of when they're negotiating a cash deal. These cash operators are competing with legitimate businesses, businesses that are doing the right thing in playing by the rules: paying their taxes and obtaining the necessary permits. I'm sure all of you can appreciate that it is quite difficult to compete on a level playing field with these underground operators who are doing none of these things.

A cash deal may sound attractive to some homeowners, but they place themselves at risk. They create an unlevel playing field for businesses, and they cheat hard-working regular taxpaying citizens by not contributing their fair share of taxes that should be supporting hospitals, schools and infrastructure.

It is time for some serious action with respect to the underground economy. I'd like to share a couple of ideas.

The province should take a serious look at a consumer-focused tax credit, similar to the federal government's expired Home Renovation Tax Credit. This type of program could incent good behaviour by offering a tax credit to those homeowners renovating in a proper

way. We also believe that a well-structured tax credit would in fact result in net tax revenues being higher, by recapturing those revenues that are currently leaking to the underground economy.

This is where the climate change piece comes in. We believe that MOECC has an incredible opportunity here to incent significant change to greenhouse gas emissions, and should be looking very carefully at this concept. Recently, the national and provincial leaders returned from the Paris climate change summit, where they signed off on a pretty ambitious climate change agreement.

I would suggest that while new home construction does have a role to play, the problem lies with millions of existing homes, especially those built decades ago or even a century ago, when energy efficiency and insulation standards were either non-existent or miles behind where we are today. These buildings generate a lot of greenhouse gas emissions, and this is where the huge opportunity lies, which can be tied to our home renovation tax credit proposal.

I'd like to quote the David Crombie panel report that was released in December on the growth plan in the greenbelt. That report said, "When the energy efficiency requirements in the 2012 building code come into effect in January 2017, houses constructed after that point will consume only 50% of the energy they would have used in 2005. However, the building code primarily deals with new construction, which comprises only 1% of the overall building stock on an annual basis. Therefore, it will be essential to improve the efficiency of existing buildings."

We'd like you to consider the following, to address both the underground economy and to target greenhouse gas emissions. The home renovation tax credit I referred to a moment ago would focus on energy efficiency projects. This could be funded through money generated from the proposed cap-and-trade system.

The key here is twofold. Firstly, consumers renovating their homes save the receipts from legitimate businesses that have HST numbers, and they would apply for a tax credit by submitting them to CRA when they file their taxes. Here's the clever part: Only legitimate businesses with HST numbers could participate. The CRA could use the submitted information with that tax receipt and cross-reference the data against other databases such as WSIB, to ensure that businesses are in full compliance with provincial and federal laws on all fronts. We believe that by sharing more info with the CRA and by cross-referencing with other databases, the CRA could be better equipped to weed out businesses that are not paying taxes.

The second aspect of the credit is that only certain renovations that upgrade aging housing stock to improve energy efficiency or insulation, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions, would qualify. The MOECC could come up with the appropriate criteria to ensure that we are getting the best bang for our buck in terms of what would qualify and what the impact on greenhouse gas emissions would be. We think that an energy-efficient home

renovation tax credit hits both of these top government priorities.

I'd like to close my presentation today with a discussion about infrastructure. HHHBA strongly supports infrastructure investments made towards its expansion of core infrastructure. By that I mean setting clear priorities for roads, bridges, transit, water and waste water in support of a growing economy and population. But it is just as important to ensure that we have a long-term asset management plan to ensure the ongoing maintenance and state of good repair for Ontario's existing infrastructure.

As we all know, investments made by the public sector facilitate additional private sector investment and job creation from our members. Examples include the newly started and planned redevelopment in Hamilton's downtown core, in anticipation of future LRT, and other private sector investments such as infill projects near the new West Harbour GO station; intensification projects planned around Burlington's GO Transit hubs, such as ADI Development's StationWest and the Molinaro Group's Paradigm project. These are great examples indicative of partnerships between the public and private sectors that yield community dividends through transit-oriented development, providing new jobs, municipal tax growth and economic growth.

Infrastructure investment should be more strongly coordinated among all three levels of government to provide stability and predictability as to when and where infrastructure dollars are going to be spent. I am encouraged by comments from new federal Infrastructure Minister Amarjeet Sohi, and we anticipate that there will be a stronger partnership between Queen's Park and Ottawa on this file moving forward.

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Locally, the provincial government has made some big investments and commitments to the future of Hamilton, for which we are very grateful. But I'm going to make a suggestion that the province needs to do more than just make the investment. The province needs to ensure that all municipalities do the proper planning around these investments.

Hamilton appears to be on the right track to pre-zone for higher densities along the LRT corridor, which is essential to support transit-oriented development. We will be watching and participating in these processes in both Hamilton and Burlington, as we know from our industry colleagues in other areas of the province that some municipalities under-zone as a method to placate local NIMBY groups, or to enable local governments the ability to extract additional financial contributions from developers to build the exact type of transit-oriented development that the province is hoping that these investments will produce in the first place.

My message is essentially that we very much appreciate and support the investment in both LRT and GO Transit, but we need the province to keep an eye on local governments to ensure that they follow with the appropriate local policies that will ultimately support those provincial investments.

In closing, I'd like to thank you all for your attendance and to reiterate my two key themes: We support a home renovation tax credit designed specifically to combat the underground economy and assist in achieving greenhouse gas emissions; and we support continued investments in core infrastructure; specifically, the LRT and GO in Hamilton and Halton regions. But we need to ensure that local policies align with provincial investments.

Thank you. I look forward to any questions you may have.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Ten minutes precisely.

Ms. Suzanne Mammel: I worked on it forever.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Ms. Fife, do you have questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Hello. Thank you. I actually have no questions because I think your presentation was very comprehensive; I look forward to getting a hard copy of it.

I just want to thank you for raising the issue of the home renovation tax credit. In other jurisdictions, it has been proven very successful in flushing out the underground economy around tax revenues, around safer workplaces, around local jobs and the local economy. When we get your written submission, I'll review that. Definitely, we're more than supportive of it.

Thank you for being so clear on that. I look forward to raising that when we finally get to the budget process of debate.

Ms. Suzanne Mammel: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): You have until February 2 at 5 p.m. to submit your comments in writing.

Ms. Suzanne Mammel: Thank you.

FUTURPRENEUR CANADA

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Our next witness is Futurpreneur Canada. Good afternoon. You have 10 minutes to present. Questions will be coming from the government. For the record, could you please state your name?

Ms. Julia Deans: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. My name is Julia Deans and I'm the CEO of Futurpreneur Canada, which was formerly the Canadian Youth Business Foundation or CYBF. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here with you today.

If you're not familiar with Futurpreneur Canada, we were created in 1996. We're the only national non-profit organization that provides business coaching, collateral-free financing, mentors, networks and other key success resources to help 18- to 39-year-olds launch new businesses across the country.

We have a proven track record of advancing economic growth. Since we were started, we have helped 9,000 young entrepreneurs. They have created close to 35,000 jobs and an estimated \$217 million in tax revenue. We do this in part by complementing and leveraging the strengths of many others in the entrepreneurial landscape.

We are members of Ontario's Network of Entrepreneurs—ONE—and we work closely with many other members such as the Ontario Centres of Excellence. In fact, we're about to kick off a new partnership with OCE that will help their SmartStart applicants access our loans to grow their businesses.

Like all of you at this table, we want to strengthen the economy by creating jobs and prosperity for Ontarians. We are pleased that Ontario's recent investments in the youth jobs strategy have increased interest and activity in the area of youth entrepreneurship.

Futurpreneur directly supports the creation of jobs and prosperity. In Ontario, since 1996, we've helped launch 1,828 new businesses. These businesses have created 8,774 new jobs and an estimated \$55 million in tax revenue.

We've helped amazing entrepreneurs like Armen Bakirtzian, who is the co-founder and CEO of Intellijoint in Waterloo. It's a medical tech company that has developed a smart tool to enhance surgical accuracy in hip replacement surgery. If any of you have hip replacement surgery at Mount Sinai Hospital, it'll be using that tool. He received start-up funding from us through our Spin Master innovation fund. He now employs 15 staff. He recently received FDA approval, and he's expanding into new markets across Canada and the US.

In 2015 alone, we helped 1,000 young people launch businesses, and 31% of them were in Ontario. This was 54% more than in 2014. Ontario is our national headquarters, and we have 50 staff based in Ontario. To date, Futurpreneur Canada has invested \$43.7 million in Ontario, and we've received \$7.7 million from the province. We don't currently receive any provincial support.

Last spring, we secured \$14 million over two years from the federal government, and about \$2 million of this is coming to Ontario this year. But the government of Canada requires one-to-one matching and it's expecting Ontario to help. Without a contribution from Ontario, we will have to reallocate some of this federal investment to other provinces.

The last time I spoke to this committee, I mentioned that we were close to finalizing an agreement to secure all of our loan capital from the private sector. I'm very excited to tell you that we were successful. We now get all of our loan capital on a line of credit with RBC, which is secured by a guarantee from BDC. This is an innovative model that is being watched by our counterparts all around the world, and it can be expanded to include other banks. It's an excellent way to bring the private sector to the table to support young entrepreneurs and to help them start their businesses using private capital instead of public funds. It also, though, depends on others to continue funding our proven programs and services. Supporting Futurpreneur Canada is a low-investment way for the province to leverage a lot of private sector capital to grow the impact of the higher numbers of start-ups we're seeing in the province.

Young entrepreneurs are very important to our economy. Small and medium-sized businesses—those that employ fewer than 100 people—currently account

for 98% of all Canadian companies and more than half of our GDP. Futurpreneur shares Ontario's desire to see these entrepreneurs scale and grow. After 20 years, we have access to thousands of alumni who may be poised for growth but require help. We know these businesses well and we're ideally positioned to reach out to the young entrepreneurs who run them and help them to grow.

Through our Action Entrepreneurship consultations with young entrepreneurs and leaders in this space across Canada, we created Guide to Growth, and I have copies for you today. We know what entrepreneurs need to grow their businesses and we're seeking a three-year commitment from the province to help Main Street entrepreneurs access the tools and resources they need to grow. We're also proposing to provide targeted support for newcomer entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs in Ontario's key tourism sector.

First, we propose doing targeted outreach to Futurpreneur alumni and entrepreneurs from government-led programs such as Starter Company and Summer Company and to provide them with access to volunteer specialist advisers. These are in areas like HR, accounting and marketing, where they really need help. We also will provide them with access to growth resources and financing options. We have strong relationships with every kind of financier, from angel investors to the banks and government partners, including through ONE. We'll refer these entrepreneurs to appropriate resources and strategic partners.

At Futurpreneur, we support young entrepreneurs across a range of sectors, not just tech. There are a lot of businesses that fall outside the tech space, and they need resources and support to grow. We believe that this three-year pilot initiative will meet that need. We respectfully request \$100,000 per year for three years to support young entrepreneurs to scale and grow their businesses.

The second area of our proposal is support for newcomer entrepreneurs. You all know that newcomers play a huge role in keeping our province strong and prosperous, and we can help more of these people build businesses through better engagement and support. I had the honour of chairing Ontario's Expert Roundtable on Immigration and I know very well, as do you, that to find these people we have to go after them and talk to them, often in their own language, and encourage them to access the resources we have.

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We already work with newcomer entrepreneurs, and I wanted to share an example with you: Alexey Saltykov from Toronto. We helped him launch his business, InsurEye. They do free online tools to educate consumers about insurance, and it creates transparency in our marketplace for insurance. When Alexey arrived here, he didn't know the business customs of Ontario. He had no networks to draw on. With help from us, including his volunteer Futurpreneur mentor, Alexey has created 10 jobs.

There's definitely a gap in start-up support for newcomers in Ontario, and we are poised to help. Only 13% to maybe 30% of immigrants use settlement service

agencies, so we'll work with those, but we'll also leverage our partnerships with local and ethno-specific chambers of commerce, such as the Indo-Canadian chamber of commerce and the Chinese-Canadian chamber of commerce.

We'll maximize our impact by starting with communities with the highest newcomer populations, but we'll also be mindful of how our work can support the needs of other newcomer groups, including refugees. I've already talked to the leaders of Lifeline Syria about how we can provide Syrian refugees with access to information about how to launch businesses here.

We'll provide workshops and information sessions, and we'll develop resource materials and translate them into the languages of the communities that we're reaching out to.

We also know that mentoring is critical, and we'll provide mentoring for those who apply for a loan as well as for those newcomers who don't need a loan but do need a mentor.

As I noted earlier, Futurpreneur will provide loan financing without using provincial funds. That's not part of our request. Our request is focused on the outreach and the help in developing business plans etc. We are requesting \$100,000 per year for three years to serve newcomer entrepreneurs as they launch their businesses.

The third and final area of our proposal is promoting and supporting entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. Ontario is Canada's top tourism market. Given that it's growing and dominated by small and medium-sized businesses, it has great opportunities for young entrepreneurs. It's also heavily influenced by an aging population. Succession is a huge issue in this sector. We must encourage young people to consider entrepreneurship at a time when many small business owners in this sector are retiring.

We've helped lots of young tourism entrepreneurs, like Paul Amano, of Boreal Journeys Sled Dog Kennel, from Kaministiquia, Ontario. Paul has a wonderful business helping residents and visitors to northwestern Ontario access a unique dog experience, all-day programs in which they learn to take care of, manage and run a team of sled dogs. With your support, we know we can do more to attract and help more young tourism entrepreneurs like Paul.

I want to stress that we have experience targeting key sectors. We currently have a successful partnership with the Guelph Food Technology Centre that's yielding very positive results. We are developing eight promotional videos featuring successful young entrepreneurs in the food industry, delivering targeted outreach through strategic partnerships with regional and national organizations in this industry—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Ms. Deans, could you wrap up?

Ms. Julia Deans: Sure—and we've exceeded our expectations in terms of new food businesses, including Foundry Ice Cream in Waterdown.

Before I close, I'd like to invite you all to attend our Action Entrepreneurship expert exchange, either in

Toronto on January 28 or Ottawa on February 23. We'll have over 125 people there connecting and celebrating our entrepreneurial community. And I invite you to attend our national summit in May, in Toronto.

In closing, we again respectfully request your support for three areas of our proposal, totalling \$235,000 per year, so that we can work with others to help young entrepreneurs achieve their dreams of launching and growing their own businesses.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you. Mr. Baker has questions for you.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Julia, thanks so much for coming to present today. It's great to see you again. I want to start by congratulating you on all the wonderful work that you've done. I know you a little bit from your previous life. It was great to see your presentation.

Ms. Julia Deans: Thank you.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'll have a chance to go through it later, but just reading it over—to see some of the successes that you've had and to see the resulting impact that's having on the broader economy is fantastic.

Also, it's perhaps just coincidence, but it was great to hear your story about Alexey Saltykov and his success. I know Alexey pretty well, as well, and I sat down with him on his business, InsurEye, at one point. I've used that service on a number of occasions in a number of different contexts. It's great to hear that you were able to help him.

I have a couple of questions. One of the things that I know, going back some time—you actually put out a number. I think \$7.7 million is the number you threw out, in terms of support that the government provided to date. Can you just talk about what that support was for and what sorts of results were generated through that?

Ms. Julia Deans: Yes, absolutely. At one point, we had to raise all of our money for our loan capital, as well as for our programs and services. I mentioned that, as of October, we no longer have to raise money for loan capital. But at the time we last received money from the provincial government, it was for loan capital and some programs and services.

We've now helped close to 2,000 Ontario entrepreneurs launch businesses. Our portion of the loan is \$15,000 per entrepreneur, so Ontario money has supported a small portion of those close to 2,000 young entrepreneurs as they have launched businesses.

I might mention that our young entrepreneurs have a 50% to 60% success rate. So 50% to 60% are in business after five years, which is much higher than the national average, which is just under 50%. These are young people with no assets to begin with, and close to 90% repay the loans. So there is some recycling of the original money that we receive from Ontario, but it's a pretty small drop in the overall bucket.

Mr. Yvan Baker: If I step back from a public policy perspective for a moment, there are a lot of things that the government is doing to try to support economic growth within the entrepreneurial circles and beyond. The funding you've talked about is one element; investments in infrastructure are a piece; post-secondary education is a piece etc.

Do you have thoughts on—and I know you've written about this in the media and elsewhere—the kinds of things that government needs to be doing, beyond your request to support your organization, to spur and support entrepreneurship in Ontario?

Ms. Julia Deans: Yes. For sure, I think that any way we can leverage private sector money to help private sector businesses launch is good, so I'm definitely supporting that.

Through Action Entrepreneurship, we know that young entrepreneurs are started at birth and that we need to encourage all of our young people to be developing financial literacy skills, to have entrepreneurial skills such as communications, and, if possible, have experiences in entrepreneurship. That starts in grade school and goes right through college and university.

We do help people coming out of their last year of college and university, but many are not open to entrepreneurship. They have parents who say, "Over my dead body." That's not really very good, because whether or not they open a business, they are going to have to create their own opportunities in whatever they do, whether it's nursing or banking or social services, what have you.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thanks very much. That's great.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Julia Deans: Thank you again for all your time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn): The committee will adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning in Windsor.

The committee adjourned at 1647.

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