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**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Pre-budget consultations

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday 22 January 2019

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

Consultations prébudgétaires

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Mardi 22 janvier 2019

Chair: Stephen Crawford
Clerk: Timothy Bryan

Président : Stephen Crawford
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Tuesday 22 January 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Mardi 22 janvier 2019

The committee met at 0901 in the Senator Hotel, Timmins.

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Good morning, everybody. On behalf of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in Ontario, I am proud to say we're in Timmins today. We're looking forward to testimony throughout the day.

Of course, we're here for pre-budget consultations. Each witness will have up to seven minutes for his or her presentation. That will be followed by eight minutes of questioning from both sides. It's four minutes from each side, for a total of eight minutes of questioning. As well, I'll give you a one-minute warning, because we do have to follow a pretty strict time regimen, given our schedule.

Are there any questions before we—yes?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Chair, if I could just welcome the committee to the city of Timmins. It's good to have you here. Every four or five years, we end up with the finance committee here, and it's always a pleasure. Welcome.

While you're driving on Algonquin, remember that's a Connecting Links project, of which Timmins has got to pay 90% to fix, which is \$95 million. If the mayor doesn't talk about it, I wanted to let you know.

But the rest of our presenters, I'm sure, are going to be raising issues of interest to all committee members. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you.

CENTRE CULTUREL LA RONDE

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I would like to call the first group for 9 o'clock, the Centre culturel La Ronde. Welcome. If you could just state your names for the record, before you present, and then you can get right into your presentation.

M. Ludger Cloutier: Mon nom est Ludger Cloutier. Je suis en charge du projet de construction et de prélèvement de fonds pour le nouveau centre culturel.

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: Mon nom est Lisa Bertrand, directrice générale du Centre culturel La Ronde.

M. Ludger Cloutier: On est ici aujourd'hui pour vous présenter et vous donner une idée de ce qui se passe dans notre communauté ici à Timmins. C'est un aspect culturel, mais autant que c'est un aspect culturel, c'est aussi un

aspect que nous avons besoin des fonds pour continuer notre programmation.

Vu qu'on n'a pas longtemps, vous avez une présentation devant vous, et je vais en faire un raccourci pour qu'on ne prenne pas plus que cinq minutes.

Ici à Timmins, actuellement, juste de l'autre bord de la rue, nous avons notre Centre culturel La Ronde, un des plus grands centres culturels en Ontario. Lisa va parler un peu de la programmation; moi, je vais plutôt parler de l'édifice physique et puis de la nécessité des fonds.

L'incendie, qui était en 2015—c'était un édifice de 37 000 pieds carrés. Il était grand. Comme vous le savez tous, l'infrastructure à Timmins et en Ontario, ça s'abaisse. Une décision a été prise de démolir et de reconstruire. Dans la nouvelle construction, nous avons pensé vraiment au futur, à nos jeunes. C'est que le futur dans la culture, encore, comme partout, ça diminue, mais notre projet, en faisant la reconstruction—vous voyez, ça, les quatre photos. La première, c'était le premier édifice de 37 000 pieds carrés.

—Le feu.

—Nous sommes stationnés présentement dans une école primaire, temporairement, pour être capable de continuer une programmation artistique pour les francophones.

—Sur la quatrième photo, vous voyez le nouvel édifice. Comme je l'ai dit, je vais faire ça en raccourci. Le nouvel édifice sera de seulement 12 000 pieds carrés, ce qui veut dire qu'on ne perdra certainement pas toute la programmation. C'est un édifice multifonctionnel avec une grande salle, une salle de 300 personnes—à peu près la grandeur de la salle ici—avec une estrade professionnelle. L'idée d'avoir une estrade professionnelle dans une salle, c'est que nous avons beaucoup de programmation.

La direction et le conseil ont présentement probablement 20 spectacles durant l'année. Présentement, on est obligé d'aller emprunter l'école secondaire, le Collège Boréal, et aussi les facilités de la ville de Timmins. En faisant notre propre édifice, comme je l'ai dit, de 12 000 pieds carrés, une grande salle avec une estrade professionnelle, c'est pour offrir—nous avons aussi du théâtre communautaire qui sera avec Les maringouins du Nord. Ensuite, il va y avoir un bar, c'est certain, avec une cuisine professionnelle pour être capable de se trouver des fonds pour continuer à rebâtir.

À l'intérieur de l'édifice, aussi, vont être deux ateliers. En parlant des ateliers, c'est comme deux salles de classe

où on serait capable de continuer notre programmation artistique, comme la peinture. Nous avons des cours de danse. Il y a des cours de yoga. Il y a de la danse, Dansons La Ronde, qui est strictement pour les francophones, en français. Les Amis qui Dansent, c'est pour les plus âgés. Comme vous le savez tous, la population vieillit, et nous avons un club d'âge d'or qui est très, très, très populaire. Dans l'édifice, on a aussi des bingos, parce qu'on sait que le gouvernement demande toujours à toutes les organisations d'essayer de se soutenir elles-mêmes financièrement.

Nos plans, c'est de dire au gouvernement, présentement—je sais que Gilles, notre député, est au courant que nos demandes ont été soumises avec le « northern heritage fund ». Nous avons demandé 1 million de dollars, ça semble être très positif, et on espère avoir les résultats bientôt. Nous avons aussi soumis avec Trillium : 250 000 \$. C'est pour ça qu'on vient de vous dire que c'est important de continuer d'appuyer les centres communautaires—ou toutes autres raisons. Ensuite, nous avons aussi, du côté fédéral, soumis à Patrimoine pour 2 millions de dollars. Il semble qu'ils vont nous avancer, dans le futur, l'argent pour qu'on puisse commencer avec notre projet, pour les plans d'architecture.

On vient vous dire aussi que c'est certain qu'on ne vient pas seulement au gouvernement pour dire de continuer à nous aider. Nous, à La Ronde, on s'est arrangé pour qu'on puisse continuer notre programmation. L'édifice, en le mettant à 12 000 pieds carrés, au lieu de 37 000 pieds carrés, on regarde à sauver environ 70 000 \$ par année en frais de chauffage et d'assurances. So, on a bien pensé à notre affaire.

Une autre chose qu'on a, c'est qu'on a présentement eu un don de la caisse populaire de Timmins de 500 000 \$, ce qui n'a jamais été vu. Vous voyez que la communauté s'est embarquée. Il y a des dons, déjà, de 10 000 \$ de différentes firmes—on ne pourra pas commencer à toutes les nommer. Notre campagne pour continuer de bâtir notre édifice va commencer bientôt. On attendait justement les réponses du niveau gouvernemental—fédéral et provincial. La ville de Timmins a déjà appuyé notre projet en nous donnant toutes les—quand on a fait la démolition, c'était un projet de 325 000 \$ avec lequel ils nous ont appuyé. Pour les permis de construction, ils vont tous être enlevés. La ville—de tous les niveaux, ce ne sont pas les plus riches—s'est embarquée à 100 %. Le maire de la ville, les conseillers et la communauté sont derrière notre projet. Ainsi notre campagne, soit de 500 000—La Ronde a déjà présentement, avec une bonne gérance, 500 000 \$. Le total du projet sera d'environ 6 millions de dollars, puis on demande, du côté provincial ou fédéral—on ne va même pas à 30 %.

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: Allô. Bonjour. Je voulais juste vous parler un peu de notre but puis de notre rôle. Notre mandat, vraiment, c'est de faire rayonner la culture puis la francophonie à Timmins et dans les environs. Essentiellement, on ne veut pas perdre notre langue—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: On ne veut pas perdre notre langue. C'est tellement important pour notre culture. Dans ma jeunesse, La Ronde était là. On avait des activités culturelles francophones. Essentiellement, notre génération, maintenant, on n'a aucune idée de ce qui se passe avec La Ronde, puis nos jeunes ne connaissent pas la culture de La Ronde. Donc moi, mon but est d'organiser une belle programmation, de travailler avec la communauté—non seulement francophone mais aussi anglophone—et de faire rayonner notre programmation.

Je vous ai à tous donné une plume, là; je ne suis pas certaine si vous l'avez. Mais ça c'est, essentiellement, la programmation qu'on a essayé de faire cette année. Depuis que j'ai commencé—ça fait six mois que je suis là—nos spectacles sont complets, et il faut qu'on utilise d'autres salles dans la communauté. C'est très difficile pour nous, le centre communautaire, de faire rayonner notre francophonie dans différentes salles—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you.

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: Donc ça nous manque. Merci.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Merci. We've reached the seven minutes.

We're now going to start questioning. Four minutes: We'll start with the government side today. Mr. Roberts?

M. Jeremy Roberts: Merci beaucoup d'être ici aujourd'hui. C'est fantastique d'avoir la chance de comprendre un peu plus ce centre culturel.

0910

J'ai quelques questions. Monsieur Cloutier, je pense que vous avez parlé un petit peu de ça, mais c'est combien que chaque niveau de gouvernement va contribuer à ce projet?

M. Ludger Cloutier: Présentement—je vais donner les calculs exacts—on a reçu 1,5 million des assurances à cause de l'incendie. Puis, l'incendie, c'était une charge, en anglais, de « arson ». Ensuite, présentement, La Ronde a 500 000 \$ en caisse avec les accumulations de la programmation et puis de la bonne gérance, 500 000 \$ de la caisse populaire, qui est un don. On va aller chercher, on figure, 500 000 \$. Il y a une demande qui a été envoyée déjà à Northern Ontario Heritage Fund pour un million. À Trillium, c'est 250 000 \$. Elles sont toutes soumises et ont toutes passé. On attend juste des décisions.

Du côté fédéral, c'est deux millions avec Patrimoine canadien. Ensuite, il nous reste que—j'ai rencontré le ministre de l'Infrastructure, M. McNaughton. Lui, il va nous revenir. Notre demande avec Infrastructure—ce serait à environ 700 000 \$ qu'arriverait le total. C'est presque comme 33 % à chaque niveau.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Donc 33 %, fantastique.

Deux autres questions : Vous avez parlé qu'il y a quelques programmes pour les personnes âgées. Est-ce que c'est quelque chose que vous faites ici pour essayer de combattre l'isolation des aînés? Ceci, c'est un problème que nous entendons partout dans la province. Donc, si c'est quelque chose que vous faites ici, ça serait—

M. Ludger Cloutier: Oui, je dois dire que notre communauté du club Le Bel Âge est probablement le comité le plus actif dans notre centre. Ils ont des soirées

tous les jeudis. Ils ont des soirées d'amitié et des soupers d'amitié. Ils jouent aux cartes. Ils font des spectacles à Noël, à la—quel autre? Peut-être que Lisa peut répondre.

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: Oui. Donc, on a Le Bel Âge. Ils font des rassemblements à chaque Noël. On a un party Le Bel Âge, et puis cette année on avait 250 personnes de Le Bel Âge. L'âge d'or, c'est 55 ans et plus. Cette année, on a une chorale aussi, puis lors du Bel Âge, il y a eu l'opportunité—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: —de chanter avec un groupe. J'ai fait venir un « band » et puis après ça, ils ont eu la chance de chanter. Donc, ça a vraiment créé des liens avec les artistes et Le Bel Âge. On essaye vraiment d'organiser différentes activités. J'ai beaucoup d'idées. Je suis toute nouvelle dans ce rôle-là. Ça fait six mois, mais déjà j'ai fait bouger, et puis Le Bel Âge est pas mal content avec le travail qu'on a fait à date.

M. Jeremy Roberts: C'est fantastique. De l'autre côté, avec les jeunes, est-ce que vous avez des partenariats avec les écoles?

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: Oui. Donc, avec les écoles, juste pour un petit exemple, au Carnaval d'hiver, je fais un concours de sculptures de neige, et j'ai fait venir des spectacles et des ateliers pour entrer dans les écoles. On fait des ateliers et puis, après, des spectacles communautaires. Donc, les parents et les élèves savent la musique francophone, et puis après ça, ils peuvent venir au centre communautaire.

Après ça, pour la génération au milieu, de 30 à 40—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We have to move to questioning now on the opposition side. We'll start with Mr. Bisson.

M. Gilles Bisson: Écoute, je ne vais rien que faire un commentaire très bref, et puis vous êtes capables de commenter dessus. Dans toutes nos communautés et tous nos comtés à travers la province, des organisations comme La Ronde, c'est le cœur de la communauté. Si ces organisations volontaires ne sont pas là pour organiser les affaires qu'elles font, il n'y aura pas de cœur dans la communauté, autrement que des chemins, des sours et des patinoires. Il n'y aurait aucune instance d'être capable de s'épanouir dans sa langue, dans sa culture, etc.

La question que je vous demande, à vous deux, c'est sur l'importance de l'appui provincial et fédéral au soutien et pour la survie de vos organisations. Comment important est-ce que c'est?

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: Je veux juste dire que c'est tellement important, spécialement dans la culture francophone. On voit, avec les indigènes, que même la langue innue, ça commence à partir. Donc, c'est à nous, vraiment, de préserver cette langue-là. Nos jeunes—c'est tellement important de transmettre notre culture de génération en génération. Je pense que c'est au nouveau centre culturel de rapporter de nouvelles activités. Vraiment, là, La Ronde—vous ne venez pas de Timmins, mais c'est un manque dans la communauté. Pour les francophones et les anglophones, il y a un gros trou. La prochaine fois que vous sortez dehors, juste devant ce stationnement ici, il y a un gros, gros trou. Puis ça, c'est

La Ronde. C'est là où notre édifice est supposé être. Donc, essentiellement, on a besoin de ces fonds-là pour rebâtir notre communauté francophone.

M. Ludger Cloutier: Je veux juste ajouter un peu, Lisa. Moi, j'ai toujours été en affaires. C'est certain que le Centre culturel La Ronde ne pourrait pas, malgré l'aide financière de la communauté et l'aide de nos—nous avons 2 000 membres; c'est super gros. Mais c'est certain, dès le commencement du projet, dès qu'ils m'ont demandé d'être agent du projet, qu'il fallait qu'on aille frapper aux portes des niveaux gouvernementaux. On ne peut pas le faire sans votre aide.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Bourgoïn.

M. Guy Bourgoïn: Bonjour. J'ai eu la chance, moi—je suis resté six ans à Timmins, ce qui fait que j'ai eu la chance d'aller à La Ronde.

M. Gilles Bisson: Finalement, on t'a envoyé la carte.

M. Guy Bourgoïn: Finalement, ils m'ont shippé la carte, oui.

M. Ludger Cloutier: Es-tu allé à l'Armise?

M. Guy Bourgoïn: Oui, je suis allé à l'Armise.

J'ai participé beaucoup à La Ronde—bien, pas « participé », mais j'ai eu la chance d'aller à plusieurs activités à La Ronde et tout ça.

Ma curiosité c'est, combien de francophones êtes-vous à Timmins? Puis aussi, pour revenir à la question un peu, puisque ma question m'a fait aussi—c'est de valeur, parce que je suis resté à Timmins, puis je sais comment vibrant était le centre. Qu'on n'oublie pas que la culture francophone est énorme ici et comment elle prend sa place dans le nord de l'Ontario et combien elle génère pour la ville. On ne réalise pas que La Ronde génère beaucoup d'argent pour la ville, et c'est pour ça que vous avez tout le support communautaire aussi.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

M. Guy Bourgoïn: Pouvez-vous me répondre sur ça?

M. Ludger Cloutier: Oui, je vais te répondre que c'est certain que la communauté de la ville tient à nous. Si je ne me trompe pas, on est 43 % de francophones. Les francophiles, on n'en est pas certain. Je ne sais pas si les stats sont sorties, mais certainement on est 43 %. C'est certain que La Ronde a toujours été—comme j'ai toujours dit, La Ronde était le plus gros centre culturel en Ontario. La Ronde va être le meilleur centre culturel en Ontario. C'est tellement nécessaire, même pour nos anglophones dans la ville. À toutes les fois qu'on a des activités, je me souviens quand j'étais ancien directeur : « My God, you guys seem to have fun. » On attire du monde. On avait notre hockey sur bottes.

Je dois vous dire, les médias anglophones à Timmins nous appuient à 100 %. Ils sont ravis des choses qu'on fait. Ils nous trouvent même chanceux. C'est pour ça que, avec Lisa, on va continuer, avec les conseils. C'est très important pour La Ronde de continuer.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you for your presentation.

M. Ludger Cloutier: Merci.

M^{me} Lisa Bertrand: Merci beaucoup.

MR. JIM BROWN

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move on to our next presenter. It's Mr. Jim Brown.

Mr. Jim Brown: Good morning.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Good morning. If you could just state your name for the record and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Jim Brown: Yes, my name is Jim Brown. I thank you for the opportunity. I submitted already to Mr. Crawford and to Mr. Bryan a summary on lost forest resource development and revenue opportunities, but I received a phone call last night at 4:15, so I do apologize if there are any typos or if there are any mistakes in here, because I did put it together late last evening.

0920

Hello, my name is James Brown, and thank you for allowing me to present today. Understanding that budgets equate to revenue and expenses, I'm here to talk about increasing revenues for our northern Ontario renewable forest resources. I'm from Iroquois Falls, where both sets of grandparents moved there in 1920 to help build a community and a company. That company was Abitibi Power and Paper Company, at one time the largest forest products company in the world. I'm a former mayor of Iroquois Falls and I own a business development and marketing company, the Northern Development Group Inc. I try to build business and develop opportunities.

Sadly, Abitibi mismanaged the company into the ground, but not before selling the power dams attached to those industrial facilities. Regrettably, the government was complicit with the sale of the power facilities and separated them away from the direct advantage they were intended for: industrial development. Danny Williams, the former Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, stood just the opposite and reclaimed the power and wood rates away from Abitibi around the same time, saving opportunities, resources and development potential for their province. At the time, knowing that the separated dams would end with the closure of the once world-leading paper-making facility, it still came to us as a blow to the ribs with its occurrence in 2014. The doors closed on December 22, 2014. Thus our single-industry community based on northern resources is without industry: all of question.

Our current status, as one researches fact and detail while seeking to fill the void: I know there are forestry-related opportunities available. Understanding forestry would replenish itself, it's a long-term, sustainable, renewable and carbon-sequestering product. If we could obtain wood we could create industry, jobs and, obviously, revenue to the province via crown dues or stumpage fees.

Abitibi River Forest Management Inc. is the sustainable forestry licence holder in our area. They manage and control northeastern Ontario, probably the largest in the province, about 35,000 square kilometres. MNR assigned them control of our crown resources. For your information, of the 41 SFLs in the province, only one has community-based oversight: that of Marathon, White River and Hornepayne. All the others are run by industry;

foxes taking care of the henhouses. That's the way I look at it: industry controlling our crown resources, self-serving interest and disallowance of other stakeholders' interests or development.

On December 27, 2014, five days after the mill closure, I requested wood availability from ARFMI and MNR, for our community needed an industry to survive. All I received for the last four years has been resistance.

Wood requests: for months and years after we requested wood, they wanted a business plan. We can't do a business plan without wood availability and acknowledgement of such. No lending institution will allow hope or a prayer without asset commitment, plus you don't give a business plan to a competitor, and believe me, there is no trust with MNR or ARFMI.

I'll move down to fact. In review of the MNR reports and auditor accounts, there is wood availability. ARFMI is underutilizing wood fibre. I will repeat: ARFMI is underutilizing wood fibre, contrary to the crown sustainability act and the MNR minister's responsibility. Additional stumpage fees could be garnered as additional income to the province.

I'll move right down to the criteria of the minister under the crown sustainability act. It should be sustainable and there should be social and economic values. As you'll note, there isn't, as much as there could be. Yes, there is wood availability, which equates to additional investment into industry creation of direct jobs, indirect jobs, taxes and revenues at many levels.

From the 2016-17 annual report, only 50.1% of the annualized harvest area was utilized in the first five years. That same year, 25% of the cut went to facilities in Quebec. From KBM forestry consultants, MNR auditors confirmed the underutilization of the ARFMI: 40% of it sits on the stumps. I have included reports to verify that. In addition, from the Romeo Malette Forest here in Timmins, an additional 200,000 cubic metres flows into Quebec. In total, that's 300,000 cubic metres from ARFMI, 200,000 from here and 400,000 sitting on the stump.

Potential development of a new forest product industry would create a new investment and tax base, 120 full-time jobs and double that in indirect jobs—in total, 360 jobs, a huge boost to the northern Ontario region and taxes that require growth. Phase 2, value-added wood products, would add additional investment and jobs.

With such wood availability in under-harvested conditions, including that of shipment of resources to Quebec, why is Ontario interest being denied? Should a new Ontario operation possibility not have priority to develop a new forest industry for a new tax base, stumpage fees—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Jim Brown: —and the creation of good-paying jobs in Ontario? The forest and natural resources industries should be a priority to help industry and the economy grow.

I'll jump over to the recommendations:

—private interest and control of forest management and SFLs should be of community interest and control. No

more foxes taking care of the henhouse, and that of the public interest and crown assets;

—living up to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. Sustainability to the word of the act and social and economic values are critical in law;

—wood availability to Ontario and communities should supersede that of Quebec. With underutilization of wood fibre and loss of crown stumpage fees, intervention needs to occur, versus MNR bureaucracy and their lack of input.

In closing, and overall for northern Ontario, the reduction of red tape within MNR, MOE and MNDM would go a long way toward additional resource development. Protectionism is over jobs and processes, not the resources, potential development or environment.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you, Mr. Brown.

We have four minutes of questioning from each side. I'll start with the opposition. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to flip right to the back page of your presentation. This is something that I've always thought is problematic. In the municipal council meeting of April 27, 2015, in Iroquois Falls, under number 7, "Delegations and Presentations," David Hayhurst and Al Thorne were there in order to talk to the community about the community trying to reposition itself. The community was trying to reposition itself to get another facility set up there, but you need access to the wood. I think this is a really interesting comment. It says, "Mr. Thorne addressed some questions. In closing, it was recommended that for a new proponent to achieve success in obtaining shares in Abitibi River Forest"—in other words, getting fibre—"it would have to be in a position where it would not compete with the existing shareholders."

That, to me, is completely counter to what a crown forest is about. Maybe you can speak to that. Is it a crown forest, or are we into private fiefdoms these days?

Mr. Jim Brown: We have crown forests being operated with the foxes taking care of the henhouse. I hate to say it, but they are self-serving. They're hoarding wood. The companies that do take care of it—there are five major companies, and for your information, 93.3% of those companies are owned by US interests, not Canadian, okay? There is a little less than 7% Canadian interest in the forests around here.

I have been trying to get to the board to meet with them, and they will disallow any opportunity for any other competitor to enter into the marketplace. This is contrary to the Competition Act of Canada and the Competition Bureau of Canada.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The part that bugs me is that they're crown forests. The Crown Forest Sustainability Act says that if a licence holder doesn't need the wood, it goes back to the MNR, and then the crown throws the process open for somebody else to bid on it. The employer, in this case the forest licence holder, is saying, "No, no, we don't want competition," and it seems to me that competition is what it's all about. If somebody can figure out how to use fibre better and cheaper, that's what we should be striving for.

I know Monsieur Bourgouin has a question.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Bourgouin.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you. I believe it's a co-op SFL, in the Iroquois Falls area. Right?

Mr. Jim Brown: A co-op? No, it's not a co-op, but it's a stand-alone private corporation that operates the sustainable forestry licence, called ARFMI. I have been trying to join that for four years and have not even been allowed to go to a meeting, let alone be a partner. I would be able to put together a business plan—if I was assured some wood availability, I could go to the bank and say, "I can put together an \$80-million to \$100-million project." But I need wood availability. If they're not going to give me any wood, I can't do that.

Why should it be a priority to ship that wood to Quebec versus Ontario? These are Ontario crown resources.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a question. In Dryden yesterday, we heard a lot of testimony about the forest access roads.

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Mr. Jim Brown: Oh, yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. The ministry has cut the funding to that. Can you talk about the importance of that?

Mr. Jim Brown: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I have been dealing with the policy director for the MNR with regard to that, because I have not obtained any results from ARFMI or the local MNR or the region MNR toward crown access.

I also am the president of a group called the Abitibi-Black River Outdoors Association. Some of our roads are washing out to the extent that there's going to be someone hurt and/or killed, because the forest company that is taking care of them only is concerned about forestry roads, not crown access roads, and there is a difference.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's not the norm. That wouldn't be the norm.

Mr. Jim Brown: Gilles, I can send you pictures of washouts. Actually, I have one picture—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I can show you washouts in the city of Timmins here.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. We'll have to move now to the government side for questioning. We have four minutes. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you for your presentation. I'm a real estate lawyer by trade. I did a deal where we bought seven entire townships—unorganized, of course—for wood. Algoma went through their other railway and some water power and some other stuff. So I have a very at-that-level understanding but not a deep understanding.

Can you maybe shed some light on why you think certain parties are, in your words, "complicit" in this arrangement? What's the perceived advantage from the government side—

Mr. Jim Brown: I can't see any, because you're denying yourselves revenue because of the crown stumpage fees. If there's 50% of it sitting on the ground, then you're

losing 50% of that crown stumpage fee, or revenue. I don't see the advantage.

The excuse that I have received from MNR is that, under the current SFL agreement, they have turned over responsibility of management to these private companies. Like I say, out of 41 in the province, there's only one that is of a community interest, which is a multi-stakeholder group interest.

Mr. Doug Downey: When I think about organizations and their behaviour, it's one of a couple of things: It's either intentional, in which case there has to be some sort of motive or driver; or it's incompetence; or it's just lack of resources.

Mr. Jim Brown: I would say that it's self-interest, because they're generating additional income by selling their wood to Quebec associates.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm thinking in terms of your suggesting that the government is assisting this. So I'm trying to figure out: Is it because MNR is strapped, or is there some motive that I don't understand?

Mr. Jim Brown: Right now, Mr. Hayhurst—he is the acting industry development director. There doesn't seem to be any co-operation on MNR's part to do anything. That's from the district level, the regional level and from Toronto.

I don't understand why—when you see—if it's crown resources, then we should have crown access and abilities to harvest on an equal-footing basis. It doesn't appear that we have that equal-footing basis.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you. That's very interesting.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any other questions? Okay, no further questions.

Thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Jim Brown: Thank you very much for allowing me.

If there are any additional questions, I have studied this for years, and I have a lot of other reports, if anybody would like to get additional information.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you.

CITY OF TIMMINS

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll call up our next witness, the city of Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mayor Pirie, somebody stole the snow.

Laughter.

Mr. George Pirie: And that picture looks a lot warmer, too, Gilles.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Good morning, and welcome to the committee. If you could just state your names for the record, and then we can get right into your presentation of seven minutes.

Mr. George Pirie: George Pirie, mayor of Timmins.

Mr. Dave Landers: Dave Landers, chief administrative officer.

Mr. George Pirie: Just to explain, we've handed out a package that is far longer than seven minutes. I'll be

speaking from a summary here that contains all of the information that you have in front of you.

Good morning. Thank you for this opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

So 2019 is the first year for the new municipal government here in Timmins. Only three incumbents of eight councillors and a mayor were re-elected. This was the largest turnover in the history of Timmins and an overwhelming endorsement of a message of fiscal responsibility—a message the new provincial government is familiar with. We're well aware of the challenges that the province faces: \$40 million more spent every day than is taken in. Of course, we know that the province's challenges are our challenges.

We are here today to speak initially and broadly about the transfer payments from the province to the municipalities and then specifically about the challenges facing the communities in this part of northeastern Ontario. It is a fact that municipal governments rely on provincial grants to provide basic local services and infrastructure. Grants—either federal or provincial—can account for up to 20% of municipal revenues. At the provincial level, these transfers of funds to the municipalities—\$4.2 billion—make up only 5.6% of the total transfers—\$133.7 billion—to transfer payment recipients.

To illustrate the magnified effect they have at the local level in Timmins, the \$9.6 million we receive from the \$510-million Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund for equalization, northern and rural support accounts for more than 10% of that portion of our budget which is funded from local taxes. We cannot incur any decrease in the funding from transfer payments to municipalities without increasing our taxes or decreasing services. The quantity and quality of services we provide are largely dictated by the province. Our residential taxes are already the highest in the north in a province that has the highest property taxes in the country.

The ability of our citizens to bear more of this burden is limited. The reasons are clear. Timmins, geographically by area, is the second-largest municipality in the north. Sudbury, by area, is larger. Timmins's population density is 14 per square kilometre; Sudbury's is 51. Sudbury's population is four times our size. Timmins's population is now 41,000, down from a peak of approximately 52,000. Timmins is not alone in this predicament, as all of the municipalities in the region are suffering population decline.

Compounding the decline in the residential tax base is the shrinking of the industrial-commercial base as a result of the consistent success and appeal of the MPAC assessment by these groups, which has seen a 50% reduction in property tax from the large industrial mines in the area. This is a severe problem for Timmins, as we will incur up to a 6% reduction in our tax levy in 2020 resulting from these successful appeals.

The challenge is that, although our population base has decreased, our infrastructure requirements have not. For example, Timmins still bears the burdens of a highway download which saw 86.8 kilometres of roadways

transferred to Timmins. This represents 80% of all highways transferred among the northern regional hubs of Timmins, North Bay, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie saw no highway transfers.

Our capital asset management plan calls for an investment of over \$12 million this year, over \$21 million next year, over \$16 million in 2021, over \$12 million in 2022, over \$10 million in 2023, \$1.2 million in 2024, \$19.125 million in 2025 and over \$7 million in 2026. Preserving or increasing the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund—OCIF—would be a prerequisite for us to meet the challenges of aging infrastructure. Clearly, we cannot fund these expenditures ourselves, nor could we fund them with any cuts to the existing transfer payment structure.

As a solution, we would encourage the province to extend the transfer payments as proposed during the election campaign by extending the transfer resource royalty funds to municipalities to the same extent and the same magnitude that they contemplated extending these resource revenue agreements with the Indigenous community.

Continued funding from the province for infrastructure is critical for the community, and we anxiously await the rollout of the federal-provincial bilateral infrastructure agreement. Also, to ensure that there will be a continuing stream of royalty payments from the mineral sectors—again, as a solution—we encourage the province to enact the same type of tax incentives that are in place in Quebec: namely, super flow-through tax incentives to invest in exploration activities here in northern Ontario. More drills turning will eventually mean more mines, with a resulting increase in the tax base.

The population and industrial tax base decline across the north, as previously mentioned, has placed increased demands on the residential tax base as communities struggle to meet the ever-increasing social service requirements. For many complex reasons, including a transitional population, increasing levels of homelessness and a growing opioid crisis, funding requirements are ever-increasing.

The opioid crisis is best illustrated by the Porcupine Health Unit, which covers an area from just south of here, as far west as Hearst and up to the James Bay coast. It serves a population in this catchment area of 74,000 people, roughly the size of Sault Ste. Marie, and dispensed last year 266,000 needles.

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As stated earlier, Timmins has a large geography and an aging community, and it also represents lower-than-provincial-health-level outcomes. All these things drive calls for service for land ambulances. This is also true for all the communities of the Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board, which is responsible for the provision of these land ambulance services.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. George Pirie: The funding arrangement for land ambulance is 50-50 between the municipality and the province. As a result of the levy process of the DSSAB Act, the city of Timmins finds itself paying over \$1 million

annually for land ambulance services in other communities of the Cochrane district, based on any measure of service. Timmins requests that the province upload the cost of land ambulance or fix the problems with DSSAB funding.

The city of Timmins proudly hangs the flags for the NAN, Mattagami First Nation and the Métis Nation. The city is seeing a demographic change with the steadily growing Indigenous population in the community as individuals choose to come to Timmins from coastal communities for services and to meet family and decide to stay. The city has established an Indigenous Advisory Committee to provide direct advice to council, and work is under way to build relationships with First Nations. Additionally, Timmins has committed to working with these communities by hosting annual evacuations from the coast during the spring break-up.

The city of Timmins established an MOU with the Muskegowuk council to create an economic alliance in 2011 with the opportunity for increasing natural resource development in the north. Support in the development of mining-related activities, resource development and the extension of natural gas services would help this economic alliance to grow and yield benefits to First Nations communities and Timmins together, along with reducing energy costs.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much.

Mr. George Pirie: Thank you to the panel for taking time to listen to this presentation.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll start questioning from the government side. Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning.

Mr. George Pirie: Good morning.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's wonderful to be in Timmins. I grew up in northern Ontario but it's actually my first time in Timmins, and it's lovely to be here.

I worked as a city councillor prior to running provincially and I understand the pressures facing municipalities. I wonder if you could expand a little bit more and explain: What is your residential versus non-residential tax contribution?

Mr. George Pirie: Do you have the specific figures on that one, Dave?

Mr. Dave Landers: The residential tax rate? Sorry. Your question is—

Ms. Donna Skelly: The percentage of—

Mr. Dave Landers: How much is large industrial—

Ms. Donna Skelly: Is it 88% residential contribution to your budget or is it higher than that? I'm just trying to gauge how large your non-residential tax contribution is.

Mr. Dave Landers: Oh, I'm sorry.

Ms. Donna Skelly: You don't know the percentages? That's okay.

In your presentation, you reference the infrastructure challenges, in particular the connecting link. Can you expand on that and also your sources of funding for it?

Mr. Dave Landers: The city of Timmins has received Connecting Links funding in two of the last three years.

The year that we didn't get funding from the province, we funded it ourselves through a debenture. There's a mix of where the funding comes from, from the Connecting Links Program or the residential tax base or the municipal tax base. With that, though, there are some challenges with the funding program itself. It's limited at only \$3 million per year, but the segments of work that we have to do see us only being able to complete about a kilometre or a kilometre and a half of work at a time, and on a 20-kilometre stretch of four-lane highway, we're basically paying the interest on the work that needs to be done.

Ms. Donna Skelly: How crucial is this project?

Mr. George Pirie: It's the main artery across and through the town. It extends from Highway 11 on the east side right through Timmins to Highway 101, and Highway 17, really. Highway 101 is our portion of the connecting link that's within the city of Timmins. It's the only way through Timmins to the other communities. It's the only way that we can get our goods and services across town.

We've seen an ever-increasing burden and heavy industrial truck traffic, as we've got large, efficient mills in the area, and the ore is trucked through the town largely west to east. As you can imagine, it comes right up Algonquin Boulevard. We've got all our city's sewage and water infrastructure there. Literally, the road was never built to take that type of heavy truck traffic.

Ms. Donna Skelly: You opened your comments with recognizing the financial pressures that we are all facing, including our own provincial government. The previous government was spending \$40 million a day more than it took in. If you could leave us with one particular thing, not necessarily an ask but—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Donna Skelly: What can we do, for example, to help grow your non-residential tax base? Is there anything else that we can do as a government to help economic development here in Timmins?

Mr. George Pirie: Economic development is going to key on a few things, and one key thing is lower energy rates. Any project you look at is energy intensive. Timmins also needs to diversify its base.

A real, healthy railroad: The ONR has to be a priority for this government to ensure that it's there to transport any of the heavy bulk materials that we have or hope to have in this area. We're a candidate, with Sault Ste. Marie, for the ferrochrome smelter with the Ring of Fire. The key to that, of course, is good rail infrastructure. That's going to be absolutely critical for us.

Again, I've mentioned flow-through shares. We have been lucky in our history to have—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. Sorry I have to cut you off, but we have to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You can finish your thought on my time.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, go ahead.

Mr. George Pirie: We've been lucky enough to have large industrial and large mines within the boundaries of the city of Timmins. That will be unlikely to be the case for much longer. As a result, we'll have to rely on the

infrastructure that's in the towns, and of course, our ability, then, to survive or to thrive off of the renewed exploration success that we have in the area. From a geology point of view, it's one of the best places in the world to look, and we expect that with the proper incentives—again, the flow-through structures and super flow-through structures that exist in Quebec—with drills churning, there will be a lot more resources found, from the Quebec border across over through to even Chapleau.

I will suggest that in any other jurisdiction in the world, the Borden mine being found in the Kapuskasing structure—we would have had thousands of drills churning. It's a totally unparalleled find and with very little exploration activity because there is very little incentive existing now.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So ditto on that; I agree. However, I want to go back to Connecting Links because I don't think many of us who don't live in places where there are Connecting Links really understand what that means. If you can just go through—what it essentially is is a provincial highway that was downloaded to the city of Timmins. How much is it going to cost to upgrade that highway to the condition it should be at, total?

Mr. George Pirie: I've given those figures in—they are here, and in my verbal presentation I mentioned it, but I can certainly—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's about \$95 million, is my understanding.

Mr. George Pirie: Well, the total project was about \$120 million. I think we've probably spent \$7 million of that—so, huge.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And the problem is, you get \$3 million per year as a maximum that you get from the province.

Mr. George Pirie: Right.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That represents what kind of big trouble for you, financially?

Mr. George Pirie: We can't fund it ourselves. As Dave has mentioned, that's one and a half to maybe two kilometres of roadway a year. It doesn't begin to solve the problem.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How bad is that? I know, because I have to drive it every day, but how bad is that road as far as condition? Maybe you can explain to some of our colleagues here.

Mr. George Pirie: Well, at the risk of sounding alarmist, on portions of it along Riverside Drive, you actually have the curbside collapsing into the sidewalk. If you drive up a block, right in front of city hall you'll see ruts that are upwards of a foot deep. Snowplowing makes it almost impossible to clear the snow efficiently. Dangerous driving conditions exist all along the areas that have not been upgraded.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So the challenges for communities like this and communities up on the James Bay coast—I see the former chief of Fort Albany there, Mike Metatawabini. They would just like to have a road; it's a whole other story. But the importance of supporting communities such as this—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —because they cannot do it on their own. I just leave you with that, if you have any other comments.

Mr. George Pirie: Well, that's exactly the case. I mean, we're a catchment area for all of the traditional territories, and Timmins is the heart of the area. It presents not just a particular challenge but an opportunity in the whole reconciliation process as we move forward, and an agenda.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions? We have about 40 seconds. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Very quickly: I notice that in addition to this you have a very specific ask about the land ambulance costs. I know that in the city of Hamilton, we have code zeroes and they've resulted in a death. Do you want to quickly talk about that? It's a very specific ask, and it's very critical.

Mr. George Pirie: Again, that comes with the size of the territory and the changing nature of the social services. I've talked about the opioid crisis. It's, as I say, 266,000 needles with a population roughly the size of Sault Ste. Marie. That goes from just west of here up to Hearst, up to the James Bay communities—huge challenges that are ever-increasing, and we can't meet them with the same budgets.

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The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you for your time; we appreciate it.

Mr. George Pirie: Thank you very much for listening.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): And thank you for hosting us in your town.

GP NORTH WOODS LP

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I would like to call up the next witness: GP North Woods LP. If you could just state your name for the record, you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Sylvain Lévesque: Bonjour. Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Sylvain Lévesque. I am a forester employed by GP North Woods LP, commonly known as Georgia-Pacific, or GP in its short form.

GP employs approximately 35,000 people and operates over 180 facilities worldwide. We manage our business with a focus on growth. In fact, 90% of our earnings get reinvested back into our business for growth. In the last 12 years we have invested over US\$13.5 billion into our operations. We are the third-largest OSB producer and the fourth-largest lumber producer in North America. We are also one of the world's leading manufacturers and distributors of tissue, pulp and paper.

In Ontario, GP owns an oriented strand board manufacturing facility in Englehart, which is a community located about 200 kilometres north of North Bay—or, as a reference point from Timmins, it's about 200 kilometres southeast of Timmins. At that location, we directly employ

about 220 full-time positions and indirectly support approximately 500 jobs through independent logging contractors as well as mill suppliers and service providers that are located in this region. Our facility operates year-round and has operated continuously throughout the recession.

The major input cost when you're making OSB is basically wood cost. The things that fall within wood cost are things such as forest management, forest renewal, crown stumpage, road construction, logging and trucking costs. Government policies and regulations have a direct impact on many of these cost components.

Our Englehart facility operates in a highly competitive global environment, and it is crucial to our long-term sustainability that we remain competitive. GP continuously strives to improve its competitiveness through investments in innovation and continuous improvement through ongoing capital investments. However, there are areas where the government can play a key role in order to create the environment and certainty for companies to be able to compete on a global scale.

Government can play a role in reducing regulations. Highly regulated jurisdictions tend to expose companies to incremental costs that they cannot recoup. The unnecessary duplication of work of having to deal with conflicting acts such as the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and the Endangered Species Act is an example of that. We strongly support the effort by the provincial government to identify and eliminate redundant and duplicative regulations. GP will be providing suggestions around regulation improvement through our involvement with the Ontario Forest Industries Association; however, we would ask that the next budget prioritize the need to eliminate federal and provincial barriers, starting with addressing this dysfunctional Endangered Species Act.

The second area that the government can play a role in is around the composite sector stumpage competitiveness. Ontario's crown stumpage is sector-specific, and my comments here today will only deal with that sector, the composite sector, specifically for two species of that sector, the poplar and white birch species.

The composite sector base stumpage rates for poplar and white birch were last realigned in 2008. At that time, the base stumpage was reduced by 75% to deal with trying to bring that portion of the composite sector stumpage to a more competitive level with what was getting charged in other Canadian jurisdictions at that time. However, for the last eight years, the government has been requesting an annual extension for that base stumpage adjustment as part of the annual budget submission. From our viewpoint, this is an example of unnecessary red tape but also an area that generates uncertainty for our sector every year.

Furthermore, when we're comparing today's Ontario's composite sector stumpage system for poplar and white birch with other Canadian jurisdictions, our sector stumpage rates still remain totally uncompetitive. The base portion of the stumpage for poplar and white birch that we currently pay is double that of the most competitive Canadian jurisdictions, and the variable stumpage,

which is called the residual value, which only gets triggered when selling prices are above a certain threshold, are the least competitive in Canada.

So our ask is basically twofold: First, eliminate the red tape around the need for an annual extension to the base rate realignment; make it permanent. Secondly, focus on further improving the competitiveness level of both the composite sector base and variable stumpage for poplar and white birch.

The third area that the government can play a role in is around investment in forest access road infrastructure. The provincial government has a detailed infrastructure plan for schools, hospitals, public transit, roads and bridges. However, what I am referring to here is dedicated investment by the province for forest access road infrastructure on crown land. For forest companies operating in Ontario to remain competitive, they require a reliable forest access road infrastructure to be in place. Our ask is that the provincial government dedicate annual funding of \$75 million to forest access road infrastructure on crown land.

A reliable forest access road infrastructure gets used not only by the forest industry, but also by First Nations and the general public at large. Think of hunters, fishermen, trappers, outfitters and recreationists as well as other industry users, such as those that are in mining and exploration, and the hydro developers. It also gets used extensively by the government every year to help with forest fire protection. So dedicated funding would not only benefit forest companies but all Ontarians.

We believe that by addressing overburdening regulations and uncompetitive composite sector stumpage, and by dedicating appropriate funding for forest access road infrastructure, this would help create an environment for making Ontario more attractive for investment and growth. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start with questions from the opposition side. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's an old saying: Be careful what you ask for; you might just get it.

I, like you, come from this area, and I remember well what the condition of the market was when it came to forestry in the 1970s and 1980s. We were starting to lose access as a result of not having proper rules when it came to how we approached our forests and how we planned to make sure that we took into account all of the utilizers of the forest: the species, the cottagers, First Nations and others.

I wouldn't want you to leave Timmins today giving this government an idea that we can make it the Wild West again, and everything is just going to be hunky-dory in the forest industry. I can tell you that we're not going to get access to certain markets if we end up going the other way in a radical way.

Can we do things better? Absolutely, as I would like to say. But the big issue is, as I sit down and talk to forest industry people—and I did that just last week—you can live with the regulation. What you have a hard time with is, there's no staff to process it. You put an application in

at MNR, MOE or MOL, and there isn't the staff, there isn't the capacity, to be able to process that stuff. So I would just say, be careful when it comes to asking for less regulation. You may very well get it, and you may not be happy with the result.

The second thing is on the access road funding, the \$75 million. I wholeheartedly agree. What people need to understand—and I know my good friend Jim Brown may take exception to this. The issue is, this is not just about cutting trees. This is about accessing your cottage. It's about a mining company doing exploration on that road. It's about First Nations using the road for their own purposes; hunters, anglers, tourists—you name it. These roads are public roads; they're not just access roads for forest companies.

I'll let you comment on all that.

Mr. Sylvain Lévesque: On the roads portion, if I can say, surely those are multi-use access roads that are used by the general public and the industry at large.

The reality is that in 2006, the province started to invest in its forest access road infrastructure. The budget was set at \$75 million, and it stayed at that level for a couple of years. If you take that amount and use the CPI, the consumer price index, and bring that to today's dollars, the province should be investing somewhere in the neighbourhood of about \$92 million, to keep up with inflation. We're not asking for that. We understand that the province is strapped for cash and is bleeding red, and we're trying to get the province back into a financial positive. So we're not asking for \$92 million. We think that if the province invests \$75 million in its own assets, to access crown resources, we can actually work with that.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

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Mr. Sylvain Lévesque: On the first part, relating to regulations, we're dealing with the Endangered Species Act versus the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. This is an area where there are a lot of regulations. We're asked under the Endangered Species Act—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But you are exempted.

Mr. Sylvain Lévesque: —to manage species at an individual level versus when you're dealing with the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, which is managing the forest as a whole with consideration for the environment, consideration for the social fabric of Ontario and for the economic fabric of Ontario. Those two don't get along very well. There's a reason why, for the last seven to 10 years, we haven't been able to get the Endangered Species Act to be functional so we can actually—we are protecting species that are at risk, but we're having difficulty because that act would require having to function with a significant amount of permitting, and that permitting, the government is not set up to be able to handle. But we already have a mechanism to protect species at risk, which is the Crown Forest Sustainability Act—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, thank you. Sorry, we're going to have to go to the government side for four minutes of questioning. Mr. Cho?

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Mr. Lévesque, for your presentation. I haven't been able to visit Timmins in 16 years. I'm pretty sad to hear that the city's population is shrinking. I do love Timmins. I think it's beautiful, not just because I love Shania Twain.

I think companies like yours are key to rejuvenating the population growth in the area. You talked about 90% of your earnings going back into the growth. You spoke a lot about the regulatory burdens that your company faces and you've been very specific, and that's great. I'll leave the discussion of the ESA to my colleague.

I'm wondering if there are any other regulatory burdens you want to chat about.

Mr. Sylvain Lévesque: Yes. I mentioned about the CFSA. I think this one would be an easy one to fix. We've been receiving two exemptions to the ESA in the past. I think that by making that a permanent exemption, it would make things quite livable. We're not saying that we're not willing to protect species at risk; we're just saying that we should be protecting species at risk under another piece of legislation that was actually well thought out when it was developed.

In terms of other barriers, we do have a lot of permitting issues. In forestry, we write 10-year forest management plans, which take three years to write, actually, where you have numerous consultations with the public. At numerous stages in the development of the plan we consult with the public at large and First Nations; we get approval by government to operate; and then, after that, we have to write an annual schedule. From the annual schedule, we need to get licences from the government. Each one of those takes time and effort, and any time you need to get a revision, there are delays, which affect operations and affect the livelihood of people working the bush. There needs to be a better system in place that helps streamline these processes. If we take three years to write a forest management plan, why do we have further barriers that bog down into a bureaucratic process? There are some of those processes that could be eliminated and dealt with at a higher level.

Mr. Stan Cho: I don't know if my colleague still wants to question about the ESA. Mr. Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: Do you have another one?

Mr. Stan Cho: Very quickly, then, are there other jurisdictions that we can take an example from, where you see there's a right balance with regulatory burdens?

Mr. Sylvain Lévesque: This is a good question. I think there is—I'm not too sure.

Mr. Stan Cho: Okay. I'll pass it on.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much, Mr. Lévesque, for coming to present to us today. I know that our government is committed to having a healthy environment, a healthy economy and a review of the Endangered Species Act. You called it dysfunctional. Could you just elaborate a little more on that to me and how we can ensure that our made-in-Ontario environment plan includes an appropriate revision of this?

Mr. Sylvain Lévesque: I'm sure that the people who developed the Endangered Species Act—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Sylvain Lévesque:—had good intentions in mind. However, when you look at the way it's implemented, it's species-focused. It only looks at one species and the protection of its habitat, with total disregard for any other species that live around it, with total disregard for the social or economic impact of trying to protect those species.

We can protect species at risk as part of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, which is an act that is holistic in nature. It looks at everything under the environment. It considers all three pillars of sustainability: environment, social and economic. We say that there is already an instrument in place that has been used for over 20 years that is proven to work for forestry. In forestry, we're not managing a little project to build a condo in downtown Toronto that may affect a species at risk; we're dealing with the landscape at large. That act was meant to deal with large landscapes, forest that covers millions of hectares.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We appreciate your presentation.

Mr. Sylvain Lévesque: Thank you for your time.

OPSEU LOCAL 683

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'd now like to call our next witness and presenter, the liquor board employees' union, Local 683. Good morning.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: Good morning.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): If you could just please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: My name is Leslie Gagnon. Hello. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Leslie Gagnon. I live in Smooth Rock Falls, one hour north of Timmins. I work at the LCBO and I'm an active member of my union, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

As a member of my community and also a front-line public service worker, I'm here to demand a new direction of the government. For decades, we've had to endure the endless parade of cuts and privatization. Rich people in Toronto may have benefited from all the budget cuts. But in northern Ontario, it has left us struggling to do more with less, as you can hear. Northern Ontario is just as important as Toronto. It's time for a budget that treats us as equals.

As I said at the start, I work at the LCBO. I'm proud of the work that I do because I know I'm helping keep my community safe and I know that I'm helping to put money back into the province that helps pay for our schools, hospitals and highways.

Last year, the LCBO returned more than \$2 billion to the province in profits. We earned those profits responsibly. We refused service to more than 250,000 people. Underage drinking and alcohol abuse are serious problems that hurt us all. The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction added up the costs of alcohol use in terms

of extra health care and lost productivity. They say that alcohol costs Ontario more than \$5 billion every single year. Imagine what that kind of money could do.

At the LCBO, we take very seriously our social responsibility to keep those costs as low as possible. The same can't be said for the grocery stores that are now allowed to sell alcohol because, at the end of the day, they put their profits before anything else. After all, these are the same people and companies that have admitted to fixing the price of bread for years. So in the strongest possible terms, I'm demanding that you roll back the sale of alcohol in grocery stores and I'm demanding that you abandon any plans to allow convenience stores to start selling alcohol.

The LCBO also collects money for many charities; for example, the United Way. Last year, we collected over \$4.4 million. This Christmas, we asked each and every customer to donate towards MADD and SickKids hospital. Again, the employees came through and collected \$6.5 million. I can only say that people are very generous. In total, for charities through the year—those are my stats from the LCBO—we've collected \$11,250,000 a year, and it keeps going up. Can you tell me who will be collecting for these agencies if you continue to privatize? You'll never see numbers like this again; I guarantee you that.

My community, and the entire province, will suffer if you continue to privatize alcohol sales. The corporations will find ways to maximize their profits, and we'll be left holding the bill for all of the extra health care costs and lost productivity, which I just said, with the charities. On the other hand, we'll all benefit if you bring alcohol sales back under responsible public management.

Timmins certainly has benefited from bringing a privatized service back in-house. Until last year, the city used a private contractor to plow some of its streets. But the costs of the service kept rising, and so did the complaints of poor quality. So the city manager looked at the numbers and realized that he'd save money by returning to a public model, and that's just what they've done. Costs are now back under control, and the streets are plowed more quickly.

What will you do with the money you'll save by ending privatization? I'm sure you've got lots of ideas, but here's one that needs serious attention: the crisis in corrections. Here in the Timmins area, the Monteith Correctional Complex has recently received some important renovations to make it safer for staff and inmates alike, but more investment is needed. In particular, more frontline staff are required to ensure that female inmates have the mental health supports they need. With that investment, there's a much greater chance that they'll be able to return to a peaceful and productive life in our communities. And like any investment in our public services, it will ultimately pay off for all of us because Ontario will be safer, healthier and more prosperous.

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As front-line experts, we know where improvements can be made and where public sector investments are

needed. We are the people, and you should take our advice. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We're going to start with questions from the government side. Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning. It was a good presentation.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: Thank you.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I know you were nervous, but you did a great job. I appreciate you joining us here this morning.

One argument that is made by people who are concerned about allowing alcohol, beer and wine to be sold in non-LCBO outlets—at grocery stores or convenience stores—is the access to underage drinkers. In other words, there's no real assurance that this isn't being sold to people under 19. But we have had it in grocery stores for a while now. I'm just curious about your reaction. Do you believe that that is the case?

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: I believe that's not a very good example, because if you look at the stats, the impaired driving has gone up. I believe that's coming from grocery stores, because grocery stores have individuals who scan it and get it out of the store. I've witnessed that happening in grocery stores, even at Walmart. The cashier just looks at the person and is a little bit intimidated and won't card the person, and the person leaves. I've also seen the kids running around in Walmart with drinks that they shouldn't be having.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To be honest with you, I've never experienced that. I was quite impressed with the way that it was being handled at the grocery stores that I've seen in Ontario.

I come from a riding that has a blend of rural and urban. For many, many, many years, rural Ontario has had outlets, as you know. In fact, in mine it's the berry farm, and they have a vintage wine selection and they've got pies and a lot of their own groceries. They've been selling alcohol for years, and there has never been any sort of real problem.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: You're talking about the wineries that sell—

Ms. Donna Skelly: No, this isn't a winery. This is an actual family-run business that also sells beer and a variety of vintage wine and a variety of spirits. This is in rural Ontario—

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: The clientele that's going in there is probably more substantially—I don't know how to put it—

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's a farm community. It's a rural community. I guess my point is that there hasn't been any sort of real evidence of any abuse of the system and young people having access to it. I'm not sure if you've got any statistics, real quantitative statistics, that you can share with us—

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: I don't have quantitative statistics on me, but I'm sure I can get them for you. I know that the drunk driving has gone up.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Yes, impaired driving statistics.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: I know that we challenge each and every person that we believe to be under the age of 25.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Donna Skelly: But you're not sure if that is the case in other stores?

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: Pardon?

Ms. Donna Skelly: You're not necessarily aware of whether that's the case in other stores.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: In grocery stores?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Yes.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: Well, I've witnessed some that do not.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. I'm going to hand it over to Mr. Piccini.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: In the last election, we made a clear commitment to expand alcohol sales, and Ontarians voted for us with that clear mandate. I find this sort of fear-mongering rhetoric, especially when we see in Quebec, Alberta, Saskatchewan and around the world at this time of year—I spoke to a number of friends who have travelled around the world. They come back and they say, "In so many countries, they have progressive sales and small businesses. Ontario has antiquated laws. It's time for change."

With such a clear mandate as we were given in the election, with so many people calling for this, why is Ontario so different from the other provinces and other countries around the world?

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: From the money that we give back to the province, to the coffers of Ontario, to what we collect for all of the charities: Where is this money going to come from? It's going to come from us poor people—

Mr. David Piccini: So other provinces—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini, sorry, I have to cut you off because we've extended over the four minutes. But we're going to move right to the opposition side. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I also would like to just add to the record that 60% of the voters did not vote for this particular vision of Ontario, so their mandate is not exactly that clear.

What I want to focus on, what I consider the real issue with LCBO, is not whether we're carding people. Apparently, Gilles says, you carded him in the past, so I think that that's—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And I thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think that's happening, and it's clear from the evidence that the LCBO is doing a good job about that.

But we hear a lot about the government talking about their fiscal problem. Someone earlier said that we're spending \$40 million a day less than we're taking in, but let's look at that. That means we have \$40 million a day of revenue that this government is losing out on.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: It's going to lose out on it. Exactly.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Can you tell me what you said that the LCBO contributes annually to the coffers of the province?

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: Over \$2 billion, and that goes up every year.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So, \$2 billion—

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: I started working in the LCBO 32 years ago as a casual. I remember that that was the first year there was ever not a profit made in the LCBO. After that, the profits went up every year. Now we're at \$2.2 billion, which goes up every year.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. I think one of the concerns is—as was in the EY report previous to this pre-budget consultation—the government talked about monetizing our assets. I know there is quite a lot of concern from my constituents about it. That means that we're going to privatize revenue-generating publicly owned assets like the LCBO. I think that some of your concerns are well founded in that regard.

The other thing I want to focus on is corrections. We heard in Dryden a little bit about corrections. You talked about the issue of inmates, the lack of treatment and the lack of mental health awareness. Can you talk a little bit as well about the working conditions for the corrections staff?

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: For that, the guys will be outside today doing a picket, and they'll be happy to answer your questions. I'm not that familiar with the corrections part of it. I am the LCBO part.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You're the LCBO.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: But I just wanted to make sure I spoke for as many agencies as I could.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Back to the LCBO: If you notice now, there seems to be a little bit of an attack on the LCBO—I mean, the idea that there is lost revenue, the idea that you don't card properly. Where do you think that's coming from?

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: I think that's the businesses wanting to get their hands on the sales and selling of the alcohol. That's what I believe it is. Because we do card. We're up to 250,000 that we refused last year. That's a big number.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's not the first time that we've seen something that's a public asset in the beginning, and creating—manufacturing, maybe—a crisis, or looking like it's a publicly run organization that is now not professional and not meeting its goals.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Do you feel like the LCBO is a target now for this government for privatization?

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: Yes, and I don't understand why you would give away the cow. I just don't understand. We make money. If we didn't make money—I don't know how many agencies don't make money. We make lots of money, and we know we could do more, if people would listen to us.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Right. Does it make sense to you that, in order to address the fiscal situation with the

province, they would sell off such a crown jewel, if you will, for a one-time infusion—

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: A cash infusion, and then what's going to happen? The taxes are going to go up. Everything is going to go up after that.

These LCBOs keep small communities going. They are in the north. I would say that every second or third community has an LCBO, which brings taxes to the town and brings people shopping in the town.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Good jobs.

Ms. Leslie Gagnon: What's going to happen when you decide you're going to privatize all of this? There are not going to be any liquor stores around, and if there are, there are going to be two or three bottles in a small corner store. Where is it for us? If we don't live in Toronto, we get nothing?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

MISIWAY MILOPEMAHTESEWIN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move on to our next presenter. It's Rachel Cull. Welcome to our committee. If you could just state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Ms. Rachel Cull: Thank you. My name is Rachel Cull. I'm the executive director of Misiway Milopemahtesewin Community Health Centre, located here in the city of Timmins. We are an urban-based Indigenous service provider with outreach programming that extends throughout our region.

We follow a holistic model of care based on medicine wheel teachings that define wellness as a balance of spirit, emotion, mental and physical health. This was designed by, and is being implemented in, Aboriginal health access centres and Aboriginal community health centres across Ontario.

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Our services include traditional healing practices; child, youth and adult mental health and addiction counselling; diabetes education; and a primary care clinic. We're funded solely by the province and receive monies from the Ministries of Health, Children and Youth Services, and Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Incorporating culture as treatment is an integral part of our holistic model of care, and influences how we approach assessment of needs and options provided to individuals and families to help support their healing journey. Our vision is strengthening the health and well-being of our community through leadership in the reclamation of traditional teachings, integrating Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to wellness. This vision has caused us to critically examine how our programs and services are structured and the environments where they are being delivered.

Access to the land is a critical component of traditional teaching and healing practices, and we're actively

pursuing enhancements to our land-based programming, which includes moving counselling and traditional healing services from an institutional setting where our primary care clinic is located to a rural property we own within the city of Timmins. This rural location provides direct access to therapeutic outdoor spaces for counselling, learning and personal reflection. Cultural activities also provide families with opportunities to heal together in a supportive way as they learn more about traditional approaches to health and well-being that strengthen both family and community support networks.

One of our biggest challenges as an Indigenous community health centre is that our funding agreements do not adequately support our model of care or our efforts to transform delivery of service. Our multi-sector service accountability agreement with the Ministry of Health, our main funding source, is structured for the administration of a medical model of care which focuses on the physical impacts of disease at the individual level. This represents only one dimension of wellness in our holistic model of care and does not extend healing practices to family and community networks that are critical pieces of the healing journey within the Indigenous population.

Funding envelopes are embedded with restrictions on utilization, and performance indicators are pre-assigned by the Ministry of Health. Service targets are determined through formulas that do not factor in complexity of care and that assume resources available within northern communities match those of the south. These are all factors that work against our ability to achieve our vision.

Over the past two years, Misiway has been applying a trauma-informed lens to service provision. The impacts of residential school and intergenerational trauma are significant factors influencing health and well-being of the Indigenous population, with complexities that affect not only the individual but also family and community networks. This requires us to take a broader view of individual needs and look to healing practices that bring individuals, families and communities together to strengthen supportive networks required for success. Through our healing trauma work, we are learning that these supports are required over a long period of time.

Misiway has a vision for family-based therapy at our rural property named Wicihiwew Kamik, meaning "helping lodge." A team of psychologists, elders and traditional healers would support family healing through counselling, and participation in cultural activities designed to bring family members together in a therapeutic way would allow them to apply what is learned. Strengthening family networks with community supports is a key component of this work.

It is well known that there is a high rate of substance abuse and suicide in our region. We are also showing a high incidence of homelessness. An enumeration conducted in May 2018 revealed that 733 homeless individuals were living in the city of Timmins; 68% of these individuals were Indigenous and 95% of patrons currently accessing shelter at our warming centre are Indigenous. These are individuals who are in great need,

many with serious addictions and little to no support to draw upon. Their healing journey is complex, rooted in trauma, with many bridges burned. Our holistic approach to care will help them to find their way, rebuild and repair key relationships for support, and reintegrate them into the community in a good way.

But Misiway needs ministry help to make this happen. Our funding agreements need to recognize us as an Indigenous community health centre and allow flexibility to transform service delivery as needs shift and change. These agreements should be co-created rather than prescribed, while maintaining a full commitment to quality of service. There is an urgency to get this right, and we cannot wait until system change has occurred. The needs before us are significant and require our best efforts to make the changes necessary to ensure success.

I thank you for this opportunity to share our vision and the challenges we face to move it forward. I truly believe that by working together, we can make this happen. Meegwetch.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. Thank you very much. We'll start with questions from the opposition side. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for being here today. Some of the conditions you described we heard as well in Dryden, about the lack of understanding of the outcomes of your program and the multiplicity of the needs. As you said, it's not just about it being a medical model; it's holistic, understanding that these all intersect. People's issues intersect.

In Hamilton, I worked on a project where we talked about—housing first was our approach. If you stabilized housing for people, then you could start to address some of these complex traumatic issues. You talked about the inadequacy of your funding to deliver your programming. Can you talk a little bit about the funding around housing and providing basic shelter for people?

Ms. Rachel Cull: Misiway is one of nine community organizations that have come together to help address the needs of the homeless within our community. We began with the warming shelter, and we're now at the point where we're putting together service hubs where service providers will come to Living Space—our initiative is called Living Space—and deliver services. Right now, Misiway's counsellors are going into the drop-in centre that is currently in place and providing service. Part of the service hub will be providing a primary care clinic within the resources that we have to help make connections, get the addictions better managed, and then they would move into full service within our centre.

We realize that getting people set up in housing is only the first step. Our services need to wrap around—again, these needs are really complex, so you can't just say, "Okay, within two months, everybody pulls out," and expect that that's going to be successful. It's not. This is a work in progress, but we're all working together with addictions organizations and a whole plethora—even our paramedic program is assisting with drop-in services at the warming centre.

Just to give you an example of how we're trying to think outside the box—sorry, I had another thought, but it just popped out.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have another question. My question would be: Have you had recent conversations with the Ministry of Health? Do you feel that they understand the particular needs of the Indigenous community and your particular approach to health and well-being?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Rachel Cull: Yes, we have, through various organizations within this homeless initiative. One of the things that has come to light is that our addiction treatment centres within our region—the funding that they receive doesn't support services 12 months a year. So yes, we are in constant contact with our LHIN. We have submitted reports of need and are working with them.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: As far as your funding agreements, have they expired or are they still ongoing—the current funding agreements?

Ms. Rachel Cull: We're just waiting to receive the MSAA agreement for the next four years. That hasn't been finalized yet, but they're just working on that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll go to the government side. Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much for the work you're doing. It's wonderful to hear about your organization and some of the great work they're doing here.

I had a couple of questions. In my riding in Ottawa, the community health centre there, the Carlington Community Health Centre, has recently partnered with Ottawa Community Housing to build housing units attached to the community health centre. This partnership has worked to benefit both of them by tying in housing with health and being able to access some of the capital that Ottawa Community Housing has.

1030

Have you guys been looking at any innovative partnerships like that, that might be able to help to increase your services?

Ms. Rachel Cull: Not in that specific way, but the city of Timmins and our district social services administration board are strong partners in our living space. We're looking at options.

Housing is an issue for the city itself. In our location, we wouldn't be able to look at that kind of expansion.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It wouldn't be ideal for that.

Ms. Rachel Cull: But for our population, there's a lot of movement between First Nation communities and Timmins. People come here for school, for hockey. There are different reasons why people are moving back and forth. For our population, once people are back on their feet, we would help them go wherever they wished to go, whether it's back to their home community or wherever. We are also taking that into account.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Great. That's fantastic. Another quick question: You spoke a little bit about how one of the things you'd really like to see is a change in how we approach funding agreements, to make sure that they're

more flexible. I think all of us, as we've toured the north so far, have come away with a feeling that we need to make sure that supports take into account regional differences and some of the unique challenges facing the north. What are a couple of examples on how we could do a better job at creating those funding agreements with partners like you in the north that would provide you with a bit more flexibility?

Ms. Rachel Cull: For our centre, it's working along with us, first to create an understanding of what our model of health is and the gaps that currently exist. What I'm suggesting is that we need to co-create that, sitting down together, creating that understanding and then figuring out the best way to approach it—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Rachel Cull: —because right now, it's very prescribed. I understand the desire to standardize care, because we want to continue, and we want to offer quality care. But we want to do it in a different way, under a model that we believe is a better fit to meet the needs that are out there.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Sure.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: We're probably going to be running out of time. I was going to ask you to share with us—I will change focus here. Are you able to track at all the success of certain programs—the holistic, the healing lodge etc.? Can you gauge the success of some programs over others? Is that possible?

Ms. Rachel Cull: This model of care was created in 2016, so we're very much in the beginning. We work very closely, as Aboriginal community health centres within Ontario, and that is just being developed. So we haven't started any evaluation. We're still collecting the information and the data.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We appreciate your presentation. Thank you very much.

MUSHKEGOWUK COUNCIL

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll call up our next presenter. It's Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon. Good morning, and welcome to the committee.

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: Wáciye.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): If you could just state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: *Remarks in Cree.* Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon, Mushkegowuk Council.

Remarks in Cree.

Welcome to northern Ontario. I would acknowledge that we are in the traditional territory of the Mattagami First Nation. I would also like to welcome you to the Treaty 9 area, one of the biggest treaties in Ontario, which covers two thirds of the province of Ontario in northern Ontario. On behalf of my communities, seven First Nations consisting of 13,000 citizens, the Mushkegowuk-

Inuit, I would ask that you give me your undivided attention for a few minutes and let go of your gadgets and listen to my story.

If you look at that logo, you'll see a moose and a goose in that logo. That's our sustenance that has kept us alive since time immemorial. That's how we live off the land. Maybe someday, if you're interested in learning about our culture, I would welcome you to one of our communities.

Let me begin by again stating that, on a good note, so to speak, but in a bittersweet—as you know, January is the anniversary of a jail fire that happened in my community, where we lost two young men in a facility that was inadequate, that didn't meet standards. But over the years, we have engaged with the province of Ontario. We went to the Human Rights Commission, and then what happened there was, we began to have a discussion on the site.

I just wanted to say that because one of the issues is housing for our policemen, bringing them up north to live, to have an adequate place to live. The province of Ontario stepped in, and right now we're building housing units in each of our communities on-reserve—on-reserve. That's historical because the province had said, "We don't want to do any business on the reserve." But this is something that I believe is something that should be worked on for any other issues that we feel that we should work together on.

The other issue that I wanted to bring up: Historically, again, on housing, our First Nation communities are in a state of crisis because of inadequate houses or the availability of houses. Again, it's a jurisdiction issue on the side of the province saying it's a federal responsibility. But I brought up the issue around policing and how we can partner with the First Nations to address the housing issues in our communities.

The other thing I wanted to bring to your attention is the child welfare system in our province. How do I present this issue in a manner that would make anybody feel good? We've heard of the residential schools, how our children were taken away from their families. And then we hear about the Sixties Scoop. Now we're talking about child welfare, which I regard as the millennial scoop. That's still happening today. But I think there's an end of the tunnel, where the federal government are saying that they've got to address this. We've got to draft federal legislation on child welfare where the First Nations create their own family laws. So we're in that mode. But again, the province has a role in this whole process.

1040

About health: You know, living in the north is unique. Most of my communities are isolated. They're remote. There's no road access until now, because of the winter road season. The gaps in regard to the health of our people: In November of last year our First Nations declared a state of emergency because of opioid issues in our communities.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: And this has been an issue across this country, where most major cities are in a crisis because of opioids. I want to tell you, we're not

different from any others. We have issues with opioids in our community. We may be up north, we may be First Nations, but we do have issues in regard to opioids in our community.

I want to bring to your attention, before I close off, that in 1905 the treaties came to our territory. They brought along a document, a treaty document, that was prepared by the province and Canada. All they wanted were the signatures of my great-grandfather, Andrew Wesley, on that document.

I want to say this: In 1995, 90 years after the signing, one of the diaries of the commissioner who travelled with the commissioners to our communities was found. Our ancestors have always said, my elders have always said, “We never surrendered the land.” We agreed to share the land, the resources, the wealth of the land. The diaries confirm that because what the commissioner recorded in that diary is what he saw, what he heard, what he observed when negotiations were happening.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much, Chief Solomon. We’re going to move to questions now. I’ll start with Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Solomon. I’m in the Williams Treaties area, which just recently got settled. It was signed in 1923, but when they actually opened the drawer years later to deal with it, it was entirely blank, but signed, nonetheless. There are stories in history of interactions that aren’t the way that people recollected them. I just want to acknowledge that to be the case.

It’s curious, though—and I’ve never thought of this until I was sitting here right now. The interaction between the feds and the province, as it relates to policing, and why the OPP are the on-reserve police and not the RCMP—do you have any insight into that?

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: I really don’t know what happened, but I heard my elders [*Remarks in Cree*]. That’s how they recognized the RCMP back in the day. Those are the police officers who came to our communities. [*Remarks in Cree*], meaning the RCMP. It means that yellow stripe along the pants. That’s how they recognized them.

But somehow, I don’t know how, that changed, how Ontario—but there was an agreement again, a First Nation policing agreement between the province and the feds. The First Nations are always left out in these negotiations between governments. It’s not until after the fact we got, “This is good for you.” That has to change, that mentality. “We know what’s good for you,” has to change. You’ve got to listen to us. You’ve got to listen to the people and not say, “I know what’s good for you.”

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: You’re very passionate, and I wish we had a lot more time to talk to you because I have a lot of questions for you.

I believe Attawapiskat falls under your jurisdiction. Is that correct? Of course, Attawapiskat came onto the radar for horrific reasons, and that crisis was many years ago. What is the state today? I understand there are still challenges with fresh water. Why is that?

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: The community of Attawapiskat declared a state of emergency in May 2016, I believe. They declared a state of emergency on housing. But, you know, nothing has changed because of the jurisdictional wrangling between the governments—just like Jordan’s Principle, that you have heard of, where the governments were jurisdictionally wrangling about the care of that child.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: That’s the same thing with the social issues in our communities. They’re under-resourced; they’re underfunded federally and provincially. They’re underfunded because the cost of delivering a service in the north is much different than doing business in the south. What has got to change is how the financing is delivered in the north and in the south. Because, like I said, most of my communities are drive-in communities or fly-in communities. Right now, it’s drive-in because it’s winter. They’re remote and they’re isolated.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Which is really what I would love to hear. I’m from the north, but not your north. I’m from Sudbury, and there are different challenges, I’m sure. That’s one of the things that I would love to have heard about: the challenges that First Nations communities in the true north face, versus First Nations across Ontario.

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: Exactly, and—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Sorry. We’re going to move the questions now to the opposition side. Mr. Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you, Grand Chief. I want to let you speak as much as possible. I think they need to hear the reality of the housing. You’ve touched on it. I’ve seen it, but a lot of people have not: the condition of housing, and how many generations are living in one dwelling. Elaborate also on the health issues that you’ve been talking about. So I want to give you as much opportunity to speak, because I think you speak with passion, and I think they will get the message.

You’re absolutely right: The provincial government has a responsibility, and we should stop playing toss-it-back between federal and provincial. We need to step up and we need to listen to you and not tell you how it’s done. So, please elaborate.

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: Thank you very much for that. The housing issue in our communities is just sad. It’s sad. I grew up in a log cabin, back in the 1960s and 1970s. It’s sad when you think about it. We’re in 2018, and people and kids are sharing, taking turns to sleep in overcrowded situations. You see skin diseases because of the condition of the houses, and the families have no choice but to live in those conditions. Eczema, mould, you name it. Is that Ontario? Would the city of Timmins accept that kind of living conditions—or Toronto, by that matter?

Like I said, there’s an opportunity here for the province and for the First Nations to work in partnership to create healthy conditions in our communities.

I talked about the health issues, the gaps. Sadly, the reality is that our people are dying up north, because they don’t get the same service that other people do. If an

individual gets diagnosed with cancer, it's way too late—cancers that can be treated at the early stages. But by the time they know what's wrong with them, they're in stage 4, and you just watch them slipping away. That's not how poor the health care system is in this country; it's the services that are missing in the north.

Like the housing issue—we talk about revenue sharing. That would lead to better communities—not to become filthy rich, but to be able to build your own community by the resources that you get a share of. That hasn't happened yet. We've been giving, giving, but nothing in return. There is something wrong with that picture, when my elders understood the treaty to be a sharing agreement. They haven't got their share yet. It's 2019.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: And you're still prepared to share—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you, Chief Solomon. We've expired past our time, but we appreciate you presenting today.

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Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: I wish I had a day, you know, because there is a lot that I wanted to share.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We appreciate it. Thank you.

Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon: Meegwetch.

NORTHERN COLLEGE

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move to our next presenter, Northern College. Good morning.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: Good morning.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): If you could just state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation, up to seven minutes.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: My name is Fred Gibbons. I'm the president of Northern College. Good morning, committee members, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this morning.

Before we begin, I want to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional territory of Mattagami First Nation.

As many of you will know, Northern College is a major employer in northeastern Ontario. We play a fundamental role in preparing students for many of the most in-demand careers in our local economy. For example, we recently released a report sharing the results of a study of Northern College's economic impact on its surrounding communities. The study, produced by Emsi, showed that our college and its students added more than \$124 million in income to the area economy in 2017, the year in which the study was conducted, supporting the creation of 945 direct and indirect jobs. That's just one example of how our college and our graduates are pivotal to the economic health and social well-being of our communities. And that story can be multiplied by the 24 colleges in Ontario and their more than 200 locations throughout Ontario.

However, for northern Ontario to thrive, our colleges must also thrive. Students in northeastern Ontario and throughout the province must have access to high-quality

programs that provide them with the expertise and the qualifications to find meaningful employment in this rapidly evolving economy.

Ensuring Ontario's workforce has the specialized expertise to succeed in this new age of artificial intelligence and accelerating automation is a significant challenge. This is particularly true in the resource sector, which is fundamental to northern Ontario's economy.

At the same time that new technology is elevating the demands for a more qualified workforce, changing demographics are also putting pressure on local businesses and industries. Many employers are struggling to fill well-paying positions, and this challenge will only get greater in the years ahead.

Business leaders throughout the province have emphasized the importance of producing a more highly skilled workforce. I'm certain members of this committee have heard the same comments from employers from your own ridings.

People seeking employment in this new economy must have the creativity and the technological expertise to make a meaningful difference in this new age of innovation. This is essential for young people who are just starting their careers. It is also important for people who have lost their jobs and are being retrained to pursue new careers. In fact, Ontario's success in the years ahead will depend on providing people at all stages in their careers with ongoing opportunities to enrich their strengths and skills.

The 2019 Ontario budget is our opportunity to position the province as a world leader in the new economy. There are a number of measures Ontario must introduce to produce the workforce of tomorrow.

One area that I want to address today is modernizing the apprenticeship system to produce greater numbers of qualified tradespeople. As many employers and others have stressed, Ontario needs to elevate the status of careers in technology and the trades and put more emphasis on post-secondary education that equips people for those careers. There are a number of significant steps that Ontario can take to help more students enrol in apprenticeship training and complete their programs.

One of the most important areas where colleges can partner with the government to produce more apprentices is streamlining the application process for apprentices. Currently, there is no clear route into apprenticeship training. People wishing to become apprentices have to find a willing employer and navigate a very complex system to enrol as an apprentice.

I have a son who, upon graduating from the electrical engineering technician program at Northern College, advised me that he wanted to become an electrician, so he had to become an electrical apprentice to begin with. Well, as a college president and someone who has worked in the college sector in various capacities for over 25 years, and notwithstanding my insider knowledge, I can tell you that it was a frustrating maze to navigate.

I suspect that members of this committee would be hard-pressed to describe how to apply to become an apprentice. But this can be fixed. Ontario can create an

easy-to-use, one-window application process for apprentices by expanding the provincial application service that already exists for college students.

The Ontario College Application Service, commonly known as OCAS, has the technical expertise to effectively process the applications so that applying to become an apprentice would be as simple as applying to any college or university program. In fact, Ontario's college system is the only stakeholder in the province with the resources to move quickly to a one-window application service for apprentices.

In addition to the technical expertise, we have the ability to test applicants' employability skills as well as interest and aptitude testing to determine where upgrading programs may be required, and to provide those programs. As well, we can match apprentices with willing employers and provide personalized academic support for apprentices when they're needed.

Our colleges are eager to work with the province on other measures, including reforms to help more tradespeople enrich their education with programs that build their strengths as entrepreneurs and business leaders.

We very much welcome the government's commitment to strengthening skills training in Ontario. Working together, Ontario's colleges are confident that we can create world-class apprenticeship training that becomes an essential pillar in Ontario's post-secondary system. For northern Ontario, this would represent a huge win for industry, which I regularly hear from, expressing grave concern for the lack of a highly skilled workforce to allow their businesses to grow and to expand into new markets.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you for your presentation. We'll start with the opposition side. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got two questions, but I want to start with the skilled trades one. You would know, because we've talked about this. I've been meeting, along with my office, with employers that are in the service sector. It's either related to mining or related to forestry. The big problem is that they can't find people, because a lot of the kids who could become the apprentices are choosing not to go in that direction, and many times they're just heading south and not coming back. So I just want to say "ditto" on the work that you're doing.

I was interested, though, in what you said with regard to how difficult it is for apprentices even to register and what suggestions you guys have in order to make it easier for people to actually get into an apprenticeship—because you're right: I served an electrical apprenticeship here in the mines. Unless the mine hired me, I would never have an apprenticeship. There's no value to a new employee who has no skills. So what do you do?

Dr. Fred Gibbons: That's precisely the case. The typical model is that students go to post-secondary education, acquire their knowledge and a bit of experience, and present themselves to an employer with something to offer. What the apprenticeship system asks students to do—young people and otherwise—is to present yourself

to an employer with no formal training in the trade that you would like to get into. The employer is required to take a leap of faith. The student then registers as an apprentice and goes through a—there's still a very lengthy educational and work experience kind of process.

The Ontario college system works very closely with employers. Employers sit on our program advisory committees. We are very closely connected. Our students serve placements with many of these employers, and I think we have the natural connectivity with business and industry to be able to connect apprentices to employers.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You just recently gave a tuition decrease, I hear. Northern College is giving everybody a 10% reduction out of your funds for tuition at your college. What does that mean to the college as far as being able to offer the programs that it needs with that loss of revenue?

The second part is, the changes to OSAP, where a lot of these families that don't have as much money: What is it going to mean for them as far as enrolment?

Dr. Fred Gibbons: I wish I had a crystal ball, because the last time OSAP was reformed, we expected a large increase in student registration. That failed to materialize, not just in our college but generally throughout colleges and universities in Ontario.

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How will we respond to the loss of tuition income? For us, it represents probably something in the range of perhaps half a million to three quarters of a million dollars. That may not seem like a lot of money, but it is. It's 10% of what we budgeted to spend next year.

We've been involved in a process since the new government was elected, anticipating that times were going to change. Part of our budgeting process is looking at all of the programs that we offer, some of which have been marginal to offer in the past. We've been able to break even. With these changes, we won't break even. We know that. We'll lose money and it will be time to suspend some of those programs.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: There would be a smaller offering of programs available to students. I would suspect that that smaller offering is not reflective of the high in-demand need in the local area.

And the second part of that question, Gilles, was—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The OSAP, because if it's harder for kids to get to school, what does that mean to your enrolment?

Dr. Fred Gibbons: It puts a northern Ontario college that's already experiencing the demographic squeeze of fewer students—we've seen that through the elementary schools and high schools; now it's in our colleges—at greater peril. It's going to require us to look further afield and to be actively recruiting for more students in the GTA and offshore, in order to ensure that we can fill these empty seats to ensure that the students from northern Ontario who are sitting in classrooms where all of the seats are not currently occupied—that those programs would be sustainable. We're going to have to become more entrepreneurial.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You have two seconds. Can you talk about the work that you've been doing with the Pakistani students? It's been quite a success.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): You know what—I'm sorry, Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, really?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Yes, I'm sorry. I'll move over to the government side. Mr. Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much for your presentation today. I much appreciate it. I know working at MTCU, we definitely share a commitment to working with you to expand our apprenticeship system, but I just wanted to speak on that, given it was the bulk of your presentation. I really appreciate that.

If we could start with the reduction in ratios of 1 to 1—I know you touched on your personal story with your son. How do you feel that reduction in ratios will impact the supply going forward?

Dr. Fred Gibbons: It's something that the college has been very vocal about—our college and colleges in general throughout Ontario—to see a change in that ratio. For northern Ontario companies in the trades, some trades have required very high ratios: three journeypeople to one apprentice. Journeypeople are very well paid. They're highly sought after; they're in great demand. Tradespeople move from company to company and from geography to geography. If that employer with three journeypeople is employing one apprentice and loses a journeyperson, what happens to that apprentice?

Mr. David Piccini: Gone.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: Right: out the door. With a 1 to 1 ratio, I think it's going to be a lot more equitable. We should see greater flow-through and apprentices completing their programs.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much. Just to build on the one window, I know working actively with colleges and across the board—I'd like you to expand a little more on the OCAS and the one window, because I certainly share in your commitment to making the application process streamlined, making it much easier for people. I think, to build on what Gilles said, we hear this across the board from industry: They need skilled workers. It's a culture shift, too. That's why we've launched the consultation process at the elementary level. It's not just going to be at post-secondary; it's change in that culture at a younger age.

But back to the one window, if you could just expand on that.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: It's ironic that with such a dire need for skilled tradespeople, that the apprenticeship system today in Ontario is probably still a great mystique. It's a great mystique for parents who do not have family members, if not themselves, who have come through the trades system. It's a mystique for guidance counsellors who heavily influence high school students. It's a mystique, really, to everybody except for those who have successfully navigated that system, at the end of the day.

Colleges, on the other hand, have this great working relationship with the Ontario College Application Service.

We do joint marketing of our programs, so we know the audience to reach and we would be able to very easily define a very clear and precise process. It would be very different to the one that is in use today. It would be much more streamlined. And because the colleges are going to be directly involved, we'll take the same responsibility for an apprenticeship student as we do any of our other students: to ensure that they're registered, that supported placement opportunities are provided and, post-graduation, helping them to be successful going forward.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: The province measures colleges through key performance indicators, and one of those indicators is employer satisfaction and graduate satisfaction. We are prepared to stand to be measured against those same indicators for apprenticeship outcomes as well.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): There are 40 seconds left, if you have any questions. No? Okay.

Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: Thank you.

OPSEU LOCAL 684

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll call up our next presentation, OPSEU Local 684. Good morning.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: Good morning.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): If you could just state your name for the record, and you have up to seven minutes.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: Thank you. My name is Tara Maszczakiewicz. I live in Sault Ste. Marie, and I'm a front-line children's mental health therapist at Algoma Family Services. I'm also an active member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. I was elected to serve on OPSEU's executive board as regional vice-president for region 6, which extends east of North Bay, close to Thunder Bay, and up to Moosonee. On behalf of the over 16,000 OPSEU members I represent, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

As front-line public service workers, I believe we offer unique insight into how the government can provide public services more effectively and sustainably. With that in mind, I'd like to spend a couple of minutes talking about my own experience as an OPSEU member providing front-line public services. As I mentioned, I work in child treatment. I am incredibly proud of the work that I and my co-workers do. Every day, we treat children and youth with mental illness and help them live healthier and safer lives.

My job is as a crisis follow-up counsellor. What I do is, I take referrals from the hospital for children who are medically stable after suicide attempts—sometimes homicidal ideation, but generally suicide attempts.

I'm supposed to talk to you a little bit about the statistics for wait-lists. I think you're probably pretty aware of them. More than 12,000 young Ontarians are stuck on wait-lists. The average wait time is 18 months. The majority of the clients I see are already on our wait-list for

services. Every day that they have to wait for treatment, children and their families suffer, and the risks of serious effects of untreated illness increase. Ontario suffers too, because if children and teens don't get the mental treatment they need, there are going to be bigger consequences for all of us. Research tells us that the earlier the intervention, the less impact mental health disorders have on children's lives—impact on their ability to learn, have healthy relationships, secure and maintain employment, stay out of hospital or criminal justice systems, and to live.

Many mental health problems can be life-threatening. The most recent youth to die by suicide in the Soo that I'm aware of was a 15-year-old girl who attended my son's school. He described her as popular, friendly and the last person you would have thought to have mental health problems. She died two weeks before Christmas. Research tells us that, for up to a year, every child who is aware of that girl's death by suicide is at an elevated risk of suicide themselves, regardless of the closeness of the relationship to her.

It's a bit difficult and frustrating for me to have to sit here before you and try to explain why children's treatment needs more funding. The reality is, Ontario invests less in public services than any other province. We're literally in last place, and it's nothing that we can be proud of. What it really speaks to is the values that the government holds when public services are so low on a priority list. Yet I'm being told that our GDP is greater than it has been and our GDP per person is greater than it has been. So I'm confused when I'm being also told in the public that Ontario is facing a financial crisis. To me, I think we can afford to invest more in our public services. We can stop cutting and start investing, and we can invest in children's health. I think the investment would have a great return, because not only are we helping children; it will also be easing the strain on our hospitals, our schools and our social services.

I'd also like to talk a little bit about privatization. Governments in Ontario and around the world have experimented—privatization is a movement; I don't think it's an experiment. But it's not getting the outcomes that we want to see. England right now is trying to figure out how to re-own their own hospitals. They can't afford to maintain them under the private structures. Privatization costs more and delivers less. The hospital in North Bay is a prime example. It was financed and built through a public-private partnership and opened in 2011. Having a private partner was supposed to save Ontario money, but the hospital cost hundreds of millions more than if it had simply been financed by the province. The people of North Bay ended up paying for those cost overruns, because when the hospital opened, it had fewer beds than promised, and dozens of beds have been cut since. To make matters worse, hundreds of front-line health care workers have been laid off from that hospital. In the end, privatization for North Bay has been a disaster.

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If we look at the highways in the Soo, they're now plowed by a company called Ferrovia. It was the MTO,

and that went to Transfield, then went to Broadspectrum, and now it's Ferrovia. Apparently, it's really hard to make money removing snow from highways in northern Ontario. Go figure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, that is a riot.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: The new contract that Ferrovia has—the equipment sucked, so they needed equipment, so the province bought them equipment.

Timmins came up, as Leslie had mentioned, and Timmins had the same sort of issue. They had cost increases to deal with equipment, but instead, what they did was take the plowing back in-house, and they actually can control the costs and ensure that the equipment is properly maintained.

By comparison, the government gave away equipment and control.

The other thing that I struggle with is the income from the sales of alcohol and cannabis that could actually fund services that we need. The government is literally giving those profits away to the private sector. I get that the Westons probably need another yacht, and I don't hold that against them at all. But we need services in northern Ontario more than that, and we need to consider that. It's not about convenience.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: It's about what we need to do to balance a budget that meets everyone's needs. It needs to invest in our public services, and it needs to put an end to privatization. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We're going to start with questions from the government side. Mr. Downey?

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you for your presentation. You covered a lot of ground and a lot of different things. Many of us have children in schools where there are suicides and other extremely tough issues, so thank you for doing what you do. It's not a job that I think I am equipped to do, so thank you for doing that.

You say Ontario invests less than every other province in this area. It's not ironic, but we're also number one in debt in the world. So it makes you wonder where the money went. It's very frustrating when you see areas of need. It's not philosophical; it's personal. They've left us in this position where there is absolutely no money, so we wrestle with these things.

Do you have any ideas, structurally, where we can decrease the use of resources, to redirect them to this area?

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: Do you need to decrease the use of resources, or do you need to change how you're thinking about the resources? Part of the issue is, to me, if we look at the Wynne government's spending of the \$8.2 billion over, the money was there. That could have helped a lot of kids; it could have helped a lot of communities.

I think there has to be careful consideration about the impact, long term, of privatization on certain areas. If you think about it, it doesn't even make sense to me. If you can make money off of something, why can't the government be efficient and produce it as a public service?

I haven't seen models that show that there are a lot of efficiencies—using that term—in the privatization system.

To me, when we look at builds, these P3s, it's like—I don't know. Have you done home renovations? You start with the renovation and you get one cost, and then something happens and something happens and something happens. Right? That's how these systems seem to be working.

Mr. Doug Downey: As we look at what we're doing with our investment of the \$1.9 billion, the \$3.8 billion in total, we have decisions to make on how we get that to the front lines so that it's actually used. I'm really not talking philosophically about privatization or not. It's within the system that we have now. You have a system that needs resources. So I'm asking if you have ideas on how we can better deploy those resources that are to come.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: It's difficult, because if you look at outcomes, for instance, and where you want to impact the most—if we can treat children, then they're less likely to be in the systems that cost money down the road. That's multi-systemic therapies based on that whole process.

Mr. Doug Downey: Right.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: You look at those pieces but then you look at the women who are in the jail system and the recent human rights decision around that. If they're getting treatment, when they go out, they're going to be able to look after their children. They're going to be able to feed their children and they're going to be able to stay out of systems again. So there are impacts there. Each group has significant impacts if you target them.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Anybody else? Okay, we're going to go to the opposition side. Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, very quickly; three of us want to ask questions.

First of all, I agree with you. The Liberals, under both Dalton McGuinty and Wynne—terrible management. The Tories started winter road privatization, and all they did was to say that they're going to hire some private contractors. That was bad enough, but what the Liberals did was, they accelerated it and completely privatized the whole thing, including patrols. We ended up spending more money and getting less in return. So I agree with you that privatization isn't the answer.

The last thing I just want to say before I go to my colleagues: A neighbour of mine—I tell this story over and over again—in the United States, in Florida, in the winter for holidays, gets sick and goes to the hospital for 14 days. The insurance bill at the end of the thing is just over \$500,000. I got his wife to give me a copy of the invoice they got from the hospital. I gave it to the Timmins and District Hospital and said, "How much would that cost you in Ontario if you had the similar stay?" "It's \$27,000." It's \$27,000 in the public system and over \$500,000 in the private system. Don't convince me that privatization works.

With that, I'll cede to my colleagues. I just had to say that.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Arthur?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your presentation. I just want to touch on something that you briefly talked about, and that's that I believe that there's a revenue problem as well as an expenditure problem. This government seems to only want to have one side of that conversation.

You brought up how we are the lowest in terms of expenditures on social programs. I think that we need to talk about needing more money to fund these programs. We need to spend that money better, and I think that's where we actually agree on that—that the Liberals did a terrible job at spending that money. But we need to face the reality.

This government hasn't moved there. They actually gave up revenue streams before balancing the budget, which led to Moody's downgrading our credit rating as a province. That's a huge problem. We are giving up needed revenue before we have dealt with the budget shortfall. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question really is about the state of children's mental health. Your passion is clear, and your frustration—we share that—because it just seems so obvious. One of the things that I found most egregious with this government is that the Ford government eliminated the child and youth advocate position without any consultation. The actual advocate, Irwin Elman, found out through the media that this was being eliminated. In fact, the government themselves have not identified the cost savings—that this is not necessarily going to save any money. This was a lifeline for vulnerable children. Can you talk about that?

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: Yes. I've actually used that service, and encouraged families to use it as a way of, for instance, repatriating children who are being treated outside of the Algoma area. We don't have residential treatment facilities in Algoma and in most of the north.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: These children need to go to southern Ontario. Then, sometimes it's a fight to get them back into our communities because then they say, "Oh, the resources aren't available."

We can create wraparound if we have the time and we have the information that they need. The advocate's office can help with that as far as finding out all the information and encouraging parties to work together. It has been quite successful, and it was very disappointing to see that that venue is no longer available to us.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, it didn't, to me, make any sense at all. It just seemed punitive.

Very quickly: You were talking about funding. You were saying that essentially the only answer is that this is a system that needs to be funded adequately. The announced mental health funding from this government is \$330 million in the previous budget, but it will take a substantial amount of time for this money to come on stream. Can you tell me where you think this money—how

soon you need this and where it would best be deployed? In schools, for example.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: Well, the schools—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Sorry; my apologies. We've exceed the four-minute limit. We'll have to move on. Thank you.

Ms. Tara Maszczakiewicz: Thank you.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll call our next witness, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. Good morning. Please state your name for the record, and get right into your presentation.

Mr. Louis Clausi: Thank you very much. My name is Louis Clausi. I'm president of the northeastern unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. I represent elementary, occasional and secondary teachers from schools from Moosonee to Cobalt. I'm in my 33rd year of education. I spent a year as an acting principal. I've been around for a while.

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I believe this budget needs to invest in public education. I've already witnessed the cuts that have come to the EPO grants. I'm very concerned about that. For my board, Northeastern Catholic, that was about \$200,000 from the \$1.1-million EPO funding. That's a concern.

There's talk of a 4% to 6% cut in the education budget, from \$1 billion to \$2 billion. I'm not sure how the system will be able to tolerate such a cut. We need investments, not cuts.

I'm going to speak on a couple of topics. The first one is mental health. We need to have mental health spending in our schools. That's one of the top issues that my teachers talk to me about. There are a lot of concerns there, and we need the supports to help our kids with their mental health issues.

Violence in the classroom has increased. There have been a number of surveys done by ETFO and Catholic Teachers on the increase of violence in the classroom. In our school board, you will be shocked to hear that the violence is at the elementary level. Even more shocking, kindergarten to grade 3 is where the most violent incidents occur.

We believe full-day kindergarten, now that it has been here for a while, has been working well. I would maintain it in its current form.

With respect to professional development, teachers are always learning. They're lifelong learners. They're always taking courses. There is always new learning. They want that. One example of this was the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program. I cannot understand why the government would end this program. My teachers participated in it. They're working in their schools doing projects that help students. It worked on professional development. They would go and present, and people would share all this learning. I heard only positives. Why end it? I have no idea. I would reinstate that.

There is a critical occasional teacher shortage in the province. It was first felt up in northern Ontario, and we didn't hear much about it until the bigger centres started to feel it too. It's as big an issue in Toronto as it is here in Timmins. I believe one thing that could be done to fix this—the two-year teacher college was a money grab, in my opinion. They took the one program and they extended it over two years. I think they were trying to stop students from going to teachers' college. A lot of them just couldn't do it because you're talking six years of university now, and quite a bill when you're finished. I really think that could have been done in one year. They could have extended it a little longer, into June. I think that would help the students. It would help the shortage of occasional teachers. That should be looked at.

Another great way to save money—I know the government doesn't like bureaucracy. It doesn't like too much waste. EQAO: You can get rid of that any time. You can do random sampling and get the same results. You have everybody preparing for these tests. The stress on the students, the teachers and the whole system, all getting ready for these grade 3 and grade 6 tests, is not necessary. You could do random sampling and come out with the same information. You have a place where retired principals and superintendents get to go to make a few bucks before they eventually call it quits. It's not needed. That's the type of thing the government should be acting on. It's a waste of your money. We could put it into programs and front-line workers instead.

There were cuts to capital. A hundred million dollars was going to come from the Green Energy Act. They cut the Green Energy Act, but we haven't heard anything about the capital spending—crickets, nothing. I watch question period religiously. When the Liberal government was in charge, I remember so many Conservative politicians standing up complaining about the backlog in capital, these Toronto schools with outdated 100-year-old plumbing. But now, when you're in power, we haven't heard anything about capital infrastructure. How are we replacing that \$100 million?

A few issues that are specific to Northeastern Catholic: One is very, very specific, and I would be very pleased if someone could address it. When the Liberals amalgamated Moosonee to Northeastern Catholic—I think everyone's aware there's no road to Moosonee, so when I get there, I fly. We take the train for three days. That's how we get there. It's very hard to service a remote community. But when they amalgamated, somebody forgot to transfer a capital fund to work on the teacher housages. So the board for 10 years now has been trying to maintain teacher housages. If you don't have those, you won't have any teachers.

I'm pretty convinced that not one of you would stay in one of these places. We're not talking very fancy units: water dripping into the basement, everything up on bricks so it doesn't get mouldy. There is no capital money that has been going into these places for 10 years, and that's a problem that needs to be fixed. It's just too much money, with respect, for the school board to deal with.

Our school board has a high number of split classes. Can you believe we had a class with five grades in one class at one point? With the type of curriculum we have now, that is very, very difficult to implement and get good outcomes.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Louis Clausi: It might not be a high number of students. It could be 15 students in the class but five curriculums that you're delivering—very, very difficult.

We also have a problem with board averages and class sizes, because it's an average. An urban area—you might laugh, but we'll use Timmins as the urban area. They might have really, really high classes because we have lots of small schools, so they'll have the small classes. The average will work out well, but the bigger centres will have really, really high classes. That's another problem that we have.

Students on the autism spectrum and not enough supports for these students so that they can excel is another issue.

There need to be more supports because, despite the great efforts of my teachers and the school board—I'll proudly say, all they talk about is getting ready for EQAO and all the things that they do all the time that I hear about—we still have low scores. I think there's another issue that needs to be addressed that's more social to get our students ready for these tests, because we have students coming in—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. I appreciate your—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You can finish your thought on our time.

Mr. Louis Clausi: I'm fine. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, well, we're going to start questions with your side, actually. The opposition side. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Did you want to finish your thought?

Mr. Louis Clausi: I'm just saying that we have students who are so far behind when they start school, it takes so much work just to get them to the level which you think is kindergarten now, with basic common sense. So there is a lot of work that needs to be done, especially at the primary level, if we expect them to be successful later on.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for your presentation. It's hard to know where to begin, but at the top line, you're clearly describing a system that cannot take a 4% cut in funding. In fact, it's the exact opposite; it needs an influx of funding to sustain the services you're providing.

A couple of things I want to focus on: You talked specifically about the \$100-million cuts to the fund to fix the infrastructure in our schools, our crumbling schools. You know, in fact, this government cancelled the cap-and-trade program altogether. That's about \$2.7 billion in revenue. So the government is forgoing revenue. We don't talk a spending problem; we talk about the fact that we

don't know that there is revenue that is being given up. So that \$100 million in the province of Ontario goes to do things like fix schools that are—there's mould in the schools, and kids going to school with their hats and mittens on because it's cold. Can you talk about specifically what that money would have meant for your district?

Mr. Louis Clausi: There are a number of our schools that could use upgrades. My school has been proactive at putting schools together with declining enrolment. We have done that to make sure of the best use of money. But certainly we have a lot of old schools and different capital issues that need to be addressed. If the money is not there, I guess we're going to go without.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. For example, in my district, there are schools in Hamilton that have lead in the water. These are where we're sending our kids—to schools in these conditions.

The other thing I wanted to talk about was the EPO grants. It's my understanding that those are generally targeted to at-risk youth, and as you said, that helps the kids that are already starting so far behind, it's hard to catch up. But when you identify those programs now, you have less ability to address them. Can you talk about specifically the programs you're going to have to cut?

Mr. Louis Clausi: Sure. I was happy to see the mental health money still there, but there is talk that that might end for next year.

This money had a good purpose. Even tutors in the classroom—we found students who had identified issues, and we got to work one-on-one with—university students would come in and work one-on-one with these students and try to bring them up to level. To call those monies out of the minister's office a "slush fund" shocked me. We're helping kids. The money was going to university kids' salaries, at minimum wage, to help these identified students who need extra help.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: One of the things that we hear a lot is that when we talk about budgets, really it's a fiscal initiative, but it's about identifying what the government values and what we value. So that's what we're here to hear: what's important to you.

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The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I know that one of the other things that the government cut, with no apparent reason in terms of the savings, was the truth and reconciliation curriculum writing program that was to happen in the summer. Can you talk about how important that would be, particularly in the north, with the First Nations and Indigenous communities?

Mr. Louis Clausi: Yes. We have a very high number of Indigenous students in our schools. My association does not support the stop of the writing. I know that some people even showed up at the writing curriculums and were told to go back home.

I think we need those Indigenous perspectives in our curriculum, and I cannot understand why that was stopped. I think it was really centring out one group of people, and I don't think it was fair.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll go to the government side for questioning. We'll start with Mr. Cho.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Mr. Clausi, for your presentation today. I just want to point out that my colleague Mr. Downey's wife is a member of OECTA, and my better half is a teacher with the Toronto Catholic board, as a special education teacher.

Mr. Louis Clausi: That's great.

Mr. Stan Cho: The point in saying that is, we certainly hear the challenges that the schools are facing today, and it's something that I'm personally very passionate on. I've signed our Fix Our Schools pledge. Trust me; on a daily basis I hear about the challenges that our schools are facing. So I come at this issue from a place of compassion and understanding.

But I do want to point out that in government spending, after health care, education and social services, number 4 is interest on our debt. It's sandwiched there, right after spending on training, colleges and universities. We spend an outrageous amount on interest on a credit card, essentially, and that's on the backs of taxpayers.

I do want to talk about this revenue that keeps coming up. I don't see that as revenue; I see that as the blood, sweat and tears of the hard-working people of Timmins, of Ontario. That is something that I think we have to really change our lens on, because people are working hard out there. Those opportunities that were there for my parents, who immigrated here, are not the same. The hard work remains; the opportunities seem to be disappearing.

I understand that we are not in the ideal environment. We do want to make sure, as you put it, that we are doing investment and not cuts. I think a big part of investment is looking at the best return on that investment. That's what we are trying to do. We have a very difficult fiscal situation here in government that we are trying to work with. We need to help our children; there's no question about that.

My question to you is, what can we do to make a more sustainable system, given our fiscal challenges, and understanding that we need to get out of this rut so that we can provide a better education for not just this generation of students but for the ones to come?

Mr. Louis Clausi: Sure. I think I identified a few of those. I would also say, while we're talking about cuts—I was here during the Mike Harris years, where I heard all about cuts and fought that as a teacher.

But I certainly see appointments happening left and right—\$150,000 here, \$200,000 here. We don't seem to have a problem with continuing that way of doing things. And we certainly don't have a problem now with starting cash for access to Premier Ford—\$1,000 a plate here, \$800 a plate here.

So, I could buy in to your concern with this, but not everything that happens is synonymous with that, when I see these things happening.

I just hope you didn't give Hazel a 10-year guaranteed contract at \$150,000.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Louis Clausi: Why are we doing those types of things that the government side, when it was the opposition, criticized all the time?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I just wanted to jump in here and ask you—

Mr. Louis Clausi: I was just finishing, for a second—

Ms. Donna Skelly: I just wanted to ask you a question.

Mr. Louis Clausi: They criticized, and now you have your opportunity to fix that. Now I see us going backwards, especially for cash for access. Thank you.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I just wanted to say that you mentioned the Green Energy Act. I was a journalist prior to running for politics, and it was the Green Energy Act that actually prompted me to get into politics.

When I was interviewing this minister, I thought, "We just handed a \$7-billion untendered contract to Samsung, and it's going to destroy this province." Sure enough—fast-forward—we've been speaking to businesses right across northern Ontario in the last couple of days, and they have assured us that the soaring hydro rates are one of the impediments to economic growth in the province, and that it has to be tackled. But unfortunately, under the previous government, we were saddled with the implications and impact of the Green Energy Act.

Quickly: Do you represent both high school and elementary school teachers?

Mr. Louis Clausi: Yes, occasional, elementary and secondary.

Ms. Donna Skelly: One quick question—a huge, huge shortage of tradespeople. One of the issues we find is that they're not being encouraged in the elementary and high school levels. Is there something you could suggest to tweak the programming so that kids would consider the trades moving forward?

Mr. Louis Clausi: I think the issue is that the students aren't opting in to it. I know we have a very vibrant co-op system; we have apprenticeship programs. I know we have students who graduate with Red Seal—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'm sorry. I'm going to have to cut you off. I apologize, but we've well exceeded the four minutes in the questions. But thank you for bringing your presentation to us today. We appreciate it.

Mr. Louis Clausi: Thank you very much.

ONTARIO NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We are a little behind, so I want to keep moving. We have our next two presenters. Our next one is the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. Good morning.

Ms. Kelly Black: Good morning.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Welcome to our committee. If you could just state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Ms. Kelly Black: Kelly Black. Thank you for the opportunity today to provide input toward the 2019

provincial budget. My name is Kelly Black and I am the secretary for the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association board of directors. The association, known as ONPHA, was founded 30 years ago, and today we represent more than 730 non-profit landlords and local housing corporations. As a sector, we own close to \$30 billion in assets. Our members provide safe, affordable and stable housing for close to half a million Ontarians, which means our members make a difference in every community in this province.

Never before has the issue of affordable housing been more front and centre. Never before has there been a stronger need to find housing solutions that are efficient, effective and long-lasting. ONPHA is in an ideal position to help drive these initiatives.

We know this government has committed to create jobs, keep more money in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, restore trust in the government and reduce hospital wait times. ONPHA can help achieve all of these goals. We are a strong and natural partner because our members contribute every day to a strong and healthy Ontario. Strategic investment in the community housing sector is a smart investment, and here is why:

First, our sector creates jobs and puts money back into local communities. Developing just one affordable housing unit creates up to two and a half new jobs. Community housing providers also regularly contract out work to the private sector, putting money into the hands of small business owners and creating skilled trades jobs.

Second, investment in housing ensures public dollars are used more efficiently. We know that every \$10 invested in housing and related supports results in an average savings of about \$3 to \$20 in provincial systems like health care, correctional services and social assistance. This is a pretty good return on investment.

Third, when people can afford their home, their disposable income increases and they contribute to the local economy.

Finally, community housing has the power to improve public health outcomes and reduce burdens on health care systems. Those who are housed are also able to find and keep jobs.

Affordable housing is the foundation for a strong Ontario. With this in mind, ONPHA has five key recommendations for the development of the next provincial budget.

First and foremost, we encourage you to confirm your commitment to the Canada-Ontario bilateral agreement under the National Housing Strategy and consult with ONPHA and our members. Significant federal dollars are on the table for housing over the next decade. Cost-sharing this investment will provide opportunities to increase and regenerate our current housing supply, deliver benefits to low-income households, and keep funding for vital programs that would otherwise shut down. We urge you to consult with ONPHA and our members on the design of these programs and quickly introduce these initiatives. Affordable housing should continue to be a shared priority by all levels of government, especially given the limited tax base of the municipalities.

Number two, prioritize development in the community housing sector. We know that maintaining housing affordability is not the job of government alone. Together with the community housing sector, we can partner with you to help you meet your targets and deliver both short- and long-term gains for Ontario. We urge the province to prioritize non-profit developers in the design of affordable housing programs and incentives. Historically, these have favoured private developers who can quickly provide shovel-ready projects, but this does not always translate into long-lasting investment. Affordable housing projects typically have capped rents for 20 years. After that time, rents in these buildings skyrocket, tenants are in crisis, and communities are scrambling. By investing in our sector, we can help you deliver affordable housing for generations to come. We would also support the province making surplus lands accessible to community housing providers and support getting projects off the ground as quickly as possible. Upfront costs have been routinely identified by members as significant challenges.

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Our third recommendation is to invest housing dollars back into affordable housing. Ontario generates significant revenues through housing-related taxes such as the land transfer tax and the non-resident speculation tax, as well as the sale of surplus lands the government owns, which are typically sold for the purpose of developing affordable housing. These dollars are added to government general revenues. Instead, we encourage you to reinvest housing dollars into housing solutions.

Our fourth is to commit to an Ontario Indigenous housing strategy. Our government has acknowledged its responsibility to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, but true reconciliation cannot happen while Indigenous peoples, more than any other group in our province, are experiencing poverty, lack of acceptable housing and homelessness, or when Indigenous housing providers are struggling to keep their doors open. Indigenous housing leaders have already been working closely with government on solutions. They are the experts. We recommend that the government continue to work with them to co-design solutions and ensure appropriate, easy-to-access funding.

Our final recommendation is to create 30,000 new supportive housing units as part of the forthcoming mental health and addictions strategy. We applaud the government's historic \$3.8-billion commitment to mental health and addictions. Now we are asking you to allocate a significant portion of this investment to creating supportive housing.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Kelly Black: This investment will not only help people living with mental illness take charge of their lives; supportive housing is also a leading solution to ending chronic homelessness and achieving major cost savings in health, justice, human services and shelter systems. Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council has recommended adding at least 30,000 new supportive housing units in the next decade. This call

has been endorsed by many leading mental health organizations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input towards the development of the provincial budget. ONPHA and our members are eager to continue to work with you to ensure that every Ontarian has access to a safe and affordable place to call home.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We're going to start questions this time from the government side. We have four minutes. Mr. Downey?

Mr. Doug Downey: I just wanted to flag the land transfer tax piece as a revenue source. The first-time home buyer exemption still exists, \$2,000 per person up to \$4,000, which allows a couple to buy a home for \$368,000. Anything below that, they don't pay land transfer tax. It's sort of an informal support. I shouldn't say it's informal but it's an indirect support that way.

I do have a question in general. The 30% of income is a consistent measure. It's used for affordability?

Ms. Kelly Black: Correct.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm just curious where that came from or how it developed that 30% is the number.

Ms. Kelly Black: I can't actually answer that question, but I can have ONPHA send out some information to answer that question for you later today, if that's okay.

Mr. Doug Downey: Yes, that would be great.

Ms. Kelly Black: It's the standard measure from CMHC on affordability. Where they came up with the 30% I'm not 100% certain. I can give you some statistics. I believe 46% of Ontario households spend more than 30% of their income on housing, and 44% of all Canadian households living in core housing need reside in Ontario.

Mr. Doug Downey: When I was knocking on doors, I talked to several people who were living in affordable housing and their biggest concern was their other input costs as well—their hydro and of course their food and all these other things that had escalated over time faster than some of the housing stock that they were in. Is that the similar experience here, that those input costs are causing them more grief once they're in housing? I know there's a shortage. How do you deal with those?

Ms. Kelly Black: I think across Ontario everyone is struggling with increased utility costs and the cost of food and other expenses that go along with your actual mortgage or your rent, whatever it is you're paying. It is a real struggle to find suitable, adequate housing to meet your needs and be able to have disposable income that can contribute to the local economy. All of that makes very healthy communities, and it's important to be able to look and put your focus on affordable housing. The rest of that would fall in line, such as your health, your education, your job and being a positive influence in your community.

Mr. Doug Downey: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions? No? Okay. We'll move to the opposition side. Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just a couple of quick questions: We're all trying to figure out how it is that we can deliver services for a better price and get a better result. It has

always occurred to me that in the not-for-profit housing sector—co-op being part of that—we're not aggressive enough when it comes to supportive housing, so that people who have needs physically or developmentally, who sometimes may end up in institutions like long-term-care facilities, could be supported in the home for far less.

Is there anything that you see happening that addresses this? Because it would save you money in the long run, as a province.

Ms. Kelly Black: That's a tough question. We have a recommendation to create 30,000 new supportive housing units. We see the benefits in having those supports, enabling people living with mental health and addictions, or whether it's a physical disability, to allow them to live independently and have that quality of life and be a positive contributor to their local community, rather than spending more dollars for that particular household to live in long-term care. It does cost more money that way, and the quality of life is not the same as if they were living and participating more actively in their community by having those supports—that could be a spectrum; there could be a lot of supports or very minimal supports—that would allow that person to live on their own.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay. That's good.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions? Ms. Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You mentioned the mental health funding that the province has announced, and you said that you think that some of that should be targeted to supportive housing. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

Ms. Kelly Black: Just building on my answer to the previous question: We see a definite benefit in having some of those dollars routed to create supportive housing units for mental health and addictions that would allow people living with mental issues to live independently and have those supports. We just did the enumeration across Ontario. Around 50% of all of the homeless households that were identified did indicate that they suffer from a form of mental illness.

By creating the supportive housing units, we're hoping to have an impact on ending chronic homelessness, have people in homes and not on the streets, and then that will also decrease the burden on our health and justice systems by having people in affordable housing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Is this a concept that you've discussed maybe with the Ministry of Health or perhaps even with other agencies that work in the mental health and addictions sector? Is that a collaboration? Do they support that concept, do you think?

Ms. Kelly Black: It is. It's different depending on where you reside in Ontario. There are fewer resources in more rural and northern areas than there would be in more urban, so that is a struggle to try and balance that. There is a commitment from the associations that we work with. The affordable housing plan that was done in partnership with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada is an aggressive plan, and it outlines what we feel is realistic and attainable with regard to addressing 69,000 affordable housing units, as well as 30,000 supportive housing units, to help address that backlog.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that. I guess, what I'm getting at is that the funding that's announced was \$330 million less than it was in the previous budgets. It's funding that's direly needed. We've been hearing about that. It seems to me that there's going to be a scramble for organizations that are needing this—this critical need to get this much-needed funding. The idea is that if you present to the ministry, as you said, a collaborative approach, that would be something that would be well received. You've done that with your homelessness strategy? Is that what you're saying?

Ms. Kelly Black: Yes. ONPHA and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada are actively working on that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: With other agencies?

Ms. Kelly Black: Yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We've expired with our time, but thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Kelly Black: Thank you.

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EACOM TIMBER CORP.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We have our last presenter before the lunch recess. It's Christine Leduc. Good morning.

Ms. Christine Leduc: Good morning.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): If you could just introduce yourself, state your name for the record and then get right into your presentation.

Ms. Christine Leduc: Christine Leduc. I'm with Eacom Timber Corp. I'm happy to be right before lunch. I'm happy to be here with you today.

My name is Christine. I'm with Eacom. We are a large wood products company. Our business is the production of lumber and wood-based products, and we manage 7.8 million hectares of crown forest in Ontario. That's so much forest, it's hard to put into perspective.

Our company has invested heavily since 2012. We're at \$85 million, and we've almost doubled the size of our company, growing our workforce. In the last years, we've restarted a mill in Ontario, we've rebuilt a mill in Ontario and we've made an acquisition.

It's a pleasure for me to welcome you here today in Timmins. We're about two kilometres away from our closest facility, our 100-year-old sawmill—this year. The mill is producing softwood lumber, about half of which is destined to the greater Toronto market; the other half is going into the US. Because our business is wood products, we are pleased to see an evolving appreciation for the benefits of using wood and some changes to some building codes, even in Ontario in 2015, to allow for six-storey wood.

For us, 2017 kicked off the fifth iteration of the softwood lumber trade war between Canada and the US, and we saw the imposition of duties on our products in April 2017. For us, this represents 50% of our sales that go

into the US to tax. We're currently paying 20.23% tax. Even though Canada has initiated its defence, this is going to be a lengthy process and could take years. We will be paying this tax until a resolution to this trade war is achieved. So for us, at the end of 2018 it's \$60 million tied up at the border that we're not able to access to invest in our mills.

We are still committed to investments and to business in Ontario. We've made numerous investments and plan to continue to do so. We were very pleased in September of last year when Minister Yurek announced that MNRF would initiate a forestry strategy aimed at growing economic activity in our sector. We have lots of challenges to overcome, and I'm sure that this committee will hear from forestry companies across the province. We have lots of challenges to overcome on labour, on competitive costs, access to the resource, access to markets and transportation, so we will be very engaged with the MNRF forestry strategy to support this initiative.

I am here today to talk to you about roads funding. I think that you will hear this consistently from forestry stakeholders that appear before this committee. I am going to use my time to share with you how the program works so that you have an understanding of why this program is so important. Because forestry companies operate over such a large area of the province, we're in a good position to work with the province to invest in roads.

We have a provincial highway system, but the province is very, very large. Because forestry companies are investing in the construction and maintenance of roads to access the resource, in 2005 Ontario announced the forest access roads funding program at \$75 million, which was a way for the province to reimburse industry's work if their roads meet certain criteria. The first one is that the road is identified in a forest management plan. This means that the road would have undergone some environmental review and some consultations with local communities. Next, the road must be classified as primary to receive 100% reimbursement. That means that it's a main access road available year-round for users. The road must be on crown land. These are government-owned roads, built to government standards, and they must not be restricted to the forest industry. These are the roads that are accessed by prospectors, miners, foresters, trapping and tourism, but also by those who live, work and play in northern Ontario. We've seen some announcements from this government looking at growing the access of Ontarians to these resources and some announcements on access to fish and wildlife benefits that the province has to offer. So these are the roads that will get people to their favourite lakes.

I have a lot of examples, but I'm just careful of my time. A good one that some of you will be familiar with if you spend any time driving around northern Ontario is the Sultan road that connects Highway 144 to Highway 127. That is an example of a forest access road.

Eacom's ask for the 2019 budget is a provincial roads funding program at the \$75-million level. I understand budgetary constraints, so I'm happy to make my pitch to

you that this is a cost-effective way for the province to invest in infrastructure, rather than expanding on the provincial highway network, in northern Ontario. For our part, in 2018 we constructed almost 1,000 kilometres of new roads in Ontario and we maintained over 5,000 kilometres of road. So this is an annual activity that goes on.

I'm happy to appear before you with this request. We're definitely prepared to work with the Ontario government to achieve fiscal and environmental objectives. We believe that, both on the forest management side and in the use of our low-carbon products, we're in a good position to help support those objectives.

Thank you very much for your time and thank you for your attention. I'm happy to take questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start questioning from the opposition side. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to thank you guys for having organized the tour that we did last week with Sara Singh and John Vanthof at your mill here in Timmins.

If you ever get a chance, go visit a sawmill or mine. It's really eye-opening. Of course, I've done it a number of times, but I'm fascinated with the facility and the technology that's in that mill. This is cutting-edge stuff that we never saw in the time that I worked in industry. I just wanted to thank you for that.

Ms. Christine Leduc: And thanks for pointing that out. A hundred years is a big deal. That means that the trees going through the mill are younger than the mill itself, a real beacon of sustainability for our sector but also for our province, so thank you very much. We love to showcase our operations. We've got six in Ontario. Come check us out.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And as a journeyman electrician, I've got to admit I probably couldn't work on some of the stuff you've got in there because I've been out of the trade too long.

Ms. Christine Leduc: We're hiring, so—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know; that's why I'm saying.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you for coming. As you know, in a lot of your mills there used to be my former members. I've negotiated many times with your employer or your company.

I do realize that on what you're asking for—roads—people don't realize the cost to employers for the maintenance and building of these roads. Everybody utilizes them. Can you give us a perspective? Just on your company, without these grants or the money that you're asking, how much is it for a cubic metre? How much does it affect you? Because it affects your budgets. Can you give us an idea? I've got another question after, but I'd like to hear from you on that so that we understand how much it reflects on the company.

Ms. Christine Leduc: If you take away all of the other users of those roads, certainly for us, we need to access the resource to be able to operate. So with reduced funding, those are some of the conversations that we're having as

part of a forestry strategy, because it would be difficult to grow a sector if a sector doesn't have access to the resource. We talk about how mines require a lot of prospecting work on the front end. We'll need to be able to access. It's the single most important competitiveness measure for the sector in the budget.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Back to forestry: I know that companies have been managing endangered species for years—and very well, by the way—managing for moose, caribou, marten. People don't understand and don't realize that companies have been managing very well on that aspect, yet asking you to do this—endangered species—what does that mean for your company?

Ms. Christine Leduc: Thanks for the question. The Crown Forest Sustainability Act was introduced in 1994. It had a vision to really look at the forest from an ecosystem base. We're managing for sustainable forest into the future.

When the Endangered Species Act was introduced, it looked at species on a single-species basis. Sometimes what one bird likes is not what another bird likes, and sometimes when you're trying to manage for a healthy habitat in a forest, you may do so at the expense of what one species likes.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Christine Leduc: In 2013, we sought a change to the Endangered Species Act because it didn't fit in with the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. We've been operating under an exemption. It's false to say that we're exempt from having to manage for species at risk, but we're exempt from having to apply for permits under the ESA because we have a forest management plan in place.

We are looking for a resolution to this. It's a conflict and it's a contentious file. The fact that we're eight years after the exemption was introduced and we've still not come to a solution, I hate to say, shows that this is going to be a complicated file. So I'm looking forward to some creative thinking on that.

We were pleased to welcome the 10-year review of the ESA last Friday. We will be bringing up comments, because we do believe that the CFSA is the right tool to manage for species in the commercial forest, rather than the ESA.

Thank you very much for the question.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Good, thank you. We're going to turn to the government side. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: One of the things that's beneficial, moving around the province and hearing from a variety of people, is that you start to hear some things over and over. The roads program is one of them. Having heard it several times, I went back and got some of the data. The roads program spending since 2011 has averaged \$58,000 a year.

Mr. Stan Cho: Million.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm sorry; \$58 million. So, \$75 million was the high point. The ask from everybody that mentions it is to have it at the high point for a long period of time. So, what has changed since 2011 that makes 75 the number?

Ms. Christine Leduc: The program was introduced in 2005 at \$75 million, and we've seen lots of fluctuations to the program. I think I saw it at its lowest in 2014 at \$38 million, and the previous year we had it at \$74 million, and then in 2018 it was \$54 million. Certainly, since 2005 the cost of road building has increased, and so I think some of my other colleagues, like maybe Sylvain Lévesque with Georgia-Pacific, had suggested that if the program was introduced at \$75 million in 2005, if we look at inflation, we could make an economic argument for \$91 million in 2018. But, given some fluctuations, we're making the ask of \$75 million.

We think it's fair, given some constraints, but it would be good to have a conversation with government about this program in terms of how government views access to the resource. It's not just about funding, but also, how do we communicate and work with MNRF to limit less access for people? So there's a conversation beyond MNRF and beyond forestry about how we view access to the resource and how we want to encourage people to get out there.

Mr. Doug Downey: Since you're well educated on it, is the fluctuation correlated with anything? Is it with forestry activity? Or is it just a number that the government—

Ms. Christine Leduc: Probably more political than anything else.

Mr. Doug Downey: Okay.

Ms. Christine Leduc: Sorry.

Mr. Doug Downey: Well, it's a real question and an honest answer.

That's it for me.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): You have two minutes, Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'll just ask a quick question. I asked one of the folks we heard from yesterday the same thing. In my riding in Ottawa, we have the owner of the last remaining lumber mill in Ottawa. He owns a company called WoodSource. He came into my office recently to bring me up to speed on mass timber building. It's an area that he's really geared to look at in terms of opportunities for the sector.

Is this something that you guys are also looking towards? And do you see this as an area of big opportunity for—

Ms. Christine Leduc: It's definitely an area of huge opportunity. The world is changing, and it's almost like a race out there who can build the tallest skyscraper. So when we talk about the lumber that's coming out of the Timmins mill—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Christine Leduc: —we're talking about a two-by-four that would go in framing for your house. When we're talking about these mass timber panels, we're talking about the products that would go into those tall wooden skyscrapers. My company would produce the building blocks for those products that would then be used to build the structures. For example, U of T has a building. It's going to be 14 storeys. You're not going to have a two-by-four that's going 14 storeys, but you will have those mass

timbers. So as builders start to ask more to build with wood, and as codes change to recognize the benefits of building with wood with these new products like mass timber panels, then it is definitely something that will be of interest to our sector—and good for urban areas, good for the forests, and good for the environment.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I think my colleague has—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): You have just 15 or 20 seconds.

Mr. David Piccini: Ratio changes: Positive for the apprenticeship ratio changes? Have they made an impact for you?

Ms. Christine Leduc: I'm sorry. I don't want to say anything off the cuff. I'm not sure if I'm ready yet to answer that question. Maybe I'd have to go back and look a little bit.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. I'm sorry. It was 20 seconds, so—

Ms. Christine Leduc: Sorry.

Mr. David Piccini: No worries.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, thank you.

Ms. Christine Leduc: Thanks, Gilles.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

Ms. Christine Leduc: Thank you. Happy lunch.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): So, with that—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Bisson, one moment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): No, no. I just want to thank everybody for presenting today. I would like to call a recess for lunch until 1 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1202 to 1301.

ETFO LOCAL ONTARIO NORTH EAST

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Good afternoon, everybody. I'd like to welcome you back here in Timmins. We have a very busy afternoon and we'd like to carry on with the witness presentations today.

We'll call up our first presenters, ETFO Local Ontario North East. Good afternoon and welcome to our committee. If you could state your names for the record and you can get right into your presentation of seven minutes. Then we'll have questioning. I'll give you a one-minute warning as well.

Ms. Lori Ridley-Whyte: Thank you. I'm Lori Ridley-Whyte. I'm the president of ETFO Local Ontario North East.

Ms. Shannon Wittmaack: My name is Shannon Wittmaack. I'm the president of the Ontario North East occasional teachers local.

We're here on behalf of ETFO, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. We're honoured to have the opportunity to present some of our research and projections on cost savings and building better schools in

Ontario. We look forward to your questions at the end of our presentation.

To begin with, where do we find the money to keep Ontario's future population healthy, safe and educated? We believe there are numerous avenues of financial fluidity that we could reroute or continue flowing into public education. In our opinion, cuts to public education are not an option.

I have worked as an occasional teacher for the last 10 years in various schools across the province, and my colleague Lori has also worked as a special education resource teacher for the majority of her 24 years. Our top two suggestions for spending smarter would include re-implementing the cap-and-trade program and cancelling the EQAO standardized provincial tests.

The government has stated its intention to achieve 4% cost savings in public spending. If this is applied to the education system, it would mean reducing the grants for student needs by close to \$1 billion. A cut this deep would severely impact the ability of school boards to provide the inclusive, high-quality, publicly funded education that Ontarians expect.

ETFO is calling on the government to instead make investments so that Ontario can continue to benefit from its internationally-renowned public education system.

A second note would be the review of the student assessment otherwise known as EQAO. Both Lori and I have children who have written the test. We have experienced first-hand the anxiety, the sleeplessness and the exhaustion that they experience. Imagine an eight-year-old child writing a complex, multi-paged, multi-booklet test that carries on over the course of three days. My teaching exams in New York were comparable in length—as an adult.

Regardless of if you tell the children that it doesn't reflect on their report card, so don't worry, they're children. The emotional, social and developmental level of eight-year-old children predisposes them to feeling inadequate, depressed and confused, especially when they can't fulfill the expectations placed on them by the adults they trust and admire: their teachers. An experienced, knowledgeable and resourceful teacher would never implement an assessment piece such as this test. It's not and never will be a true portrait of the whole child. The government should cancel the EQAO test and redirect the funding to front-line education support workers.

Ms. Lori Ridley-Whyte: There has been an increase in the number of students who are arriving at school with special needs and mental health challenges. While the needs have increased, the resources and supports are still based on an outdated formula.

It's important that the special-ed model reflect the actual need for program support for students with special needs. When funding is based on an exceptionality category or the demographics of an area, it does not address the specific needs of the child. We know that not every child with a diagnosis of autism has the same abilities or challenges. Funding should be based on their actual needs to ensure that each child has a chance to succeed.

Students with high-risk behaviours end up missing out on learning opportunities when the supports and services are not sufficient or adequate to meet those needs. These challenging behaviours result in the other students missing out on valuable learning opportunities as well. Classes around the province are being evacuated to ensure the safety of all students, but it's disrupting the learning for the class. Children are witnessing their peers acting out violently toward their educators and toward their friends. The deficiency in services to meet their needs causes increased frustration and acting out. These students can end up on modified days or not at school at all. Students have a right to an education, and the funding model should reflect their needs to ensure they have the supports in place to succeed.

Parents of students with either special-ed needs or mental health challenges struggle to get referrals and specialist appointments for their children. While living in the north has many advantages, those trying to access specialists could end up on wait-lists for months. Some families have to travel these highways to go great distances outside of their community in order to access these services. Others may have an option of accessing psychologists or specialists through the telehealth conference program, but they don't have the opportunity to meet in person with the people they need to gather support.

Providing funding necessary to access specialists at the school level will remove the barriers faced by many families and students across this province. All Ontarians should have equal access to mental health supports and services.

To support students with special needs and mental health challenges, this government can revise the model for special education to reflect actual student needs; they can invest in educational assistants, child and youth workers, social workers, school support counsellors, school board psychologists and speech and language pathologists; and they can also provide training for teachers in order to deal with some of these new behaviour challenges that are entering the schools.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Lori Ridley-Whyte: In conclusion, our students—the children of Ontario—are our greatest assets. By investing in the public education system now, we can ensure their success and the success of the future workforce, which will benefit all Ontarians.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start questioning from the government side for four minutes. I'll start with Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much for being here. I have a couple of questions. First, I just want to touch on EQAO. As the youngest member of this committee, it's only been 10 years since I took the grade 10 literacy test, so EQAO is fresh on my mind. Obviously, you hear about a ton of different challenges with standardized testing: teaching to the test, race to the bottom etc. I'm very interested in finding ways that we can do it better, because it seems that for every teacher I talk to, EQAO is a common problem. Of course, the challenge we face as a

government is that parents want to make sure that we have a way of measuring standards across the province.

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I'm just wondering if you guys have any suggestions on different ways we can do that so that we're providing a healthier environment for students and not pushing teachers into an area that they don't feel is helpful for the students, but that still allow us to give parents that knowledge that their students and their school are living up to standards that are set across the province.

Ms. Shannon Wittmaack: I think I can answer that. Some of the opportunist moments that we've had when we speak to our colleagues across the province are that we do understand the need to get that snapshot of Ontario and how our students are comparing against each other and, as well, around the world. We're advocating for potentially what could be either randomized or small sampling, not asking every grade 3 and grade 6 student in Ontario to write this test that takes a phenomenally long time.

What also could be happening is taking the grade 3s right out of the equation. Focus on your grade 6 students and see where they're at. They're getting ready to go into grades 7 and 8, on the cusp of high school. Then the next test, as you mentioned, is the grade 10 literacy test. In between there, we've got a good idea of where they're going, where we need to get them to, and how to get them there.

But to put the stress, the anxiety and that incredible emotional baggage on an eight-year-old who is just happy to play with Pokémon cards—they don't need that.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you. I want to touch, Lori, on some of the comments you made on special education. I have a younger brother who has autism, so this is an area that's particularly important for me.

We've heard mixed things across the province from different school boards about whether or not schools are comfortable having ABA therapists from outside coming into the schools and classrooms to provide support. I'm just wondering if that is a challenge that you guys have faced here, and is it something that generally teachers and schools are comfortable with in this region?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Lori Ridley-Whyte: I can actually answer that very easily. I was a self-contained-classroom teacher with an autism program for over 11 years. I had the opportunity to work with ABA therapists who came in. I also had the opportunity to work with EAs that were trained with ABA. In all honesty, I can see the advantages to both. But the one thing I will say is, when the EAs and the staff, the teachers, who are working with those students every single day throughout the entire day are trained, I think it's an essential component of the program for those students.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure. I think anybody who knows children with autism knows that routine is a key part of it. I think that's why parents are often frustrated—that if the child has an ABA therapist that they have a relationship with, they should be able to work with them continually. I agree completely that seeing some EAs getting the training as well is a big positive.

How much time do I have left?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We're actually done at this point.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Oh, okay. Well, thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll go to the opposition side for questions. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for your presentation. Right off the top, you talked about the cancellation of the cap-and-trade program. The connection, I would say, to what you do would be, for example, the \$100 million that was cut from the program that came from cap-and-trade to fix some of the capital repair backlog in your schools.

I know that in my community of Hamilton, we have kids that go to school in schools that have lead in the water. I know we have kids that go to a school that's cold, so they have to wear mittens and so forth. I know that in northern remote communities—that doesn't even compare to the conditions that the schools are in in our northern communities.

Could you talk a little bit, from your experience, about how the cancellation of that \$100 million that was earmarked to fix our schools—about specific examples of how that would impact your schools?

Ms. Shannon Wittmaack: I'm trying to think of the most poignant points of where that money could go. It's hard to pick and choose.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You've got four minutes.

Ms. Shannon Wittmaack: I've got four minutes?

If that money could funnel back, I know that at the beginning of this year, in our board locally and across the province, there was a timeline where they had to get their approvals in. If they didn't get their approvals in for the bidding process and have those contractors in place, the money was gone. There was crunch time. It was high pressure for the staff and our board locally to decide what was pertinent, what was priority. How do you pick? How do you decide which kid gets to have running water that they can drink in their school? How do you pick which kid isn't going to breathe in asbestos for the year? How do you pick which kid is going to get a clean airflow of CO₂—or not CO₂, sorry—in their building and not go home and have headaches? How do you decide which staff member has to be in the room with the least amount of oxygen?

I'm super passionate about this and where we should put money. It hurts my heart that we have to make those decisions.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We shouldn't have to make those decisions in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Shannon Wittmaack: Right.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It shouldn't have ever gotten to this. That's what I would say, and I think I hear that's what you're saying. We don't want it to get any worse. I think that's what you're here to say, that this is an issue that is critical.

We hear that the government is looking to find 4% in cuts in the budget. You said that this could amount to \$1 billion out of that budget. We've already seen the cuts to fixing our schools. The other thing that we've seen cuts for is the EPO programs. I don't know if you've talked about

those. Their funding is \$25 million to provide additional programming for the most high-risk, vulnerable kids. Can you talk about how that cutting of those special education programs has impacted your region?

Ms. Lori Ridley-Whyte: The thing is, whenever there are any cuts, it's going to impact.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Sure.

Ms. Lori Ridley-Whyte: We have our teachers now that go above and beyond to make sure they are covering with what they have, and they're already doing without. They are already doing without and then they find out that they're getting more cuts, so there is going to be even less for them to work with. I can't remember the exact number, but it works out to human resources, human resources that our students can access in order to get the supports that they need.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Very quickly: Another cut was the Truth and Reconciliation curriculum-writing program. Could you very quickly comment on the First Nations community that you serve and how that's impacted them?

Ms. Shannon Wittmaack: Correct. That was an unbelievable moment in time for us. Our district locally has a huge population of Indigenous students who are sometimes transient and have to move from where they are in their reserves at different times in the year and access our school. To lose those resources and lose that staff is tremendous. It makes their transitions incredibly difficult.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. Our time has expired, but thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

Ms. Lori Ridley-Whyte: Thank you.

Ms. Shannon Wittmaack: Thank you.

PROJECT LOVE

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move on to our next presenter, Project Love. Good afternoon and welcome to our committee. If you could just state your names for the record, please, and you can get right into your presentation.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: Yes, thank you. Firstly, we're not a dating service—

Laughter.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I was really curious.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: —to clear that up.

Thank you very much, though, for inviting us here this afternoon. My name is Lynda Geddes. I'm the volunteer fundraiser for Project Love. Melanie Chartier is one of our co-founders. We haven't come for money today; we've come to ask you to think a little differently. I would hope that you can listen through this, and I hope I don't screw up.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You won't.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: No, I won't.

Project Love is a nondenominational group of volunteers operating in the basement of Mountjoy United Church, which is just a couple of blocks up the street from here. We have just marked our second anniversary from our humble beginnings. Our mission is to ease the hunger

and discouragement of people in our community who are homeless or are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. We believe that caring for people who have lost hope is the first step to recovering that hope.

We serve 400 meals a week and provide school lunches to the children of our guests, all of which is cooked by volunteers and financed by public funds, our donors and lottery revenue. Our overhead is covered 100% by Mountjoy United Church. This happens on an annual budget of under \$40,000. No one draws a salary.

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We come here today to encourage your committee to think about the existing groups and services like us which exist in every community to care for the very vulnerable individuals and families, without the aid of government funding. We encourage you, in your planning, to familiarize yourselves with these groups and appreciate that they grew up out of need, that they exist because of concern and compassion for others, and that they are now skilled and experienced in the art of solving problems efficiently, creatively, inexpensively and effectively. They're knowledgeable and resourceful in the area of fundraising and managing those funds.

We wish to encourage you, in your planning, to recognize and consult with the leaders of these groups, to invite them to your planning tables, to learn what they've learned, to discover how to make things happen without the high costs of feasibility studies and consultations, and to support their efforts and invite them to assist in building a network of services for vulnerable people in their own communities.

We encourage you to see existing not-for-profit groups as a skeleton—a skeleton of what is needed—and to put some meat on those bones, rather than replacing them with expensive bricks-and-mortar, high-paid staff and complicated, often restrictive outcomes.

We suggest to you that in every community, there are churches, service groups, buildings, private landlords and not-for-profit transfer payment agencies who are willing to work together with the government to alleviate the suffering of their fellow citizens.

One of the largest groups of people, often forgotten in our quest to help the homeless, are the children. In our view, if we can help these little people, we have half a chance of ending the vicious cycle of homeless adults.

We would like to bring to your attention a northern example of this kind of thinking in North Bay, where the federal government and the Association for Community Living have come together and collaborated to create a lunch program where the meal is created and delivered to schools where children often come to school empty-handed. A healthy lunch is often the staple of their day. It not only provides important nutrition, but also the message that "I matter." A bolstered self-image and good health are fertile ground for personal growth.

With minor funding, such a preventive measure could happen in any community. Already, salaried employees do the work, planning and organizing the logistics, while people with challenges learn portable food-handling skills

to take out into the workforce. These are win-win situations that need only funding to purchase food.

We suggest to you that you value the groups that have sprung up in response to their community's citizens in trouble. Offer to make them stronger through the provision of financial aid for board training; for conference attendance; for utility costs, maintenance costs and accessibility costs; and for volunteer recognition, or whatever they identify as helpful.

Not-for-profit charities are well run. Not-for-profit charities are much more likely to be trusted and respected and subsequently better able to raise public funds.

We in Timmins are watching our high-paid agency employees attempt to create a not-for-profit organization to address the critical and growing problem of homelessness in Timmins. These individuals are accustomed to being paid a salary, to working in unionized environments and to having pots of money to renovate, train, transport, furnish etc. They have little to no experience in solving problems without all of those resources and conditions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: Subsequently, they are unable to be spontaneous, adventurous, creative, compassionately flexible or focused. When serving people who are in physical and emotional pain and at the end of their tether much of the time, it is vital that those who come to help have the capacity and the freedom to be responsive, inventive, compassionate and spontaneous.

When an opportunity presents itself, such as a food donation is available, somebody needs to go get it, whether it's in the middle of the night or whether it's in the middle of the day. Being responsive is not always convenient but makes the difference between success and failure.

Unionized employees are limited in what they can respond to, and how and when they can respond. Opportunities to engage the community are missed by these limitations.

We believe that employees can learn a great deal from volunteers when it comes to stretching a dollar, whether that be in the kitchen or in the office. They have practical solutions to difficult problems.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We've exceeded our time limit, but hopefully we can still get your message out.

We have questions now from the opposition side. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Do you want to take an extra minute to finish your—

Ms. Lynda Geddes: If that's possible.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, take it on our time.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: Thank you. I would like that.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): It's his decision, so, yes, go ahead.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: We believe that employees can learn from volunteers and their ability to have practical motivation to create responsive environments and the development of policies and procedures that serve the people being supported as well as the organization and the employees, not instead of.

In a nutshell, what we're asking your committee to think about is threefold: (1) build on existing community services and supports that have been created out of a compassionate response to need; (2) support those groups to extend their effectiveness through education, maintenance, consultation and recognition—invite them to your tables, please; and (3) study the elements of these grass-roots organizations run by volunteers, and come to understand and incorporate the principles and values that they are driven by.

Homeless people are not the problem, in our opinion; they are the result of the problems. We have seen remarkable growth in individuals who are invited to be a part of the solution: to volunteer with us, to be viewed as capable and trustworthy of managing a task, to be celebrated for their successes by people who accept them where they are.

People live up to or down to the expectations of others. We suggest that communities are the same. If government invites our participation in planning and respects our skills, knowledge and abilities to contribute, we will blossom and produce greater results. And we don't cost much.

We live in a world governed by insurance companies and liability concerns, driven by unionized work environments that restrict creativity and spontaneity, and the results are often disappointing and expensive systems and institutions that serve themselves and not the people for whom they were created.

We encourage you to build the capacity of existing not-for-profit services and supports, rather than directing financial and economic resources into reinventing the wheel.

Please give our suggestions your consideration as you select your priorities and plan for your responses to the growing issues of homelessness, chronic poverty and food security in northern Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): All right. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've only got a couple of minutes. I just want to say that I hear what you're saying, but to argue that because people are unionized, it detracts from the work that they have to do—I don't accept it.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: That is not our intention here.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But that might be read that way.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: I saw the people out front. I was afraid to come in today.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just so you know, her husband and I worked together. He was a unionized member at the workplace that I worked at.

The point is, though, a lot of organizations that do really good work, such as the Association for Community Living, such as the children's treatment centre—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —operate with volunteers within those organizations as well. They're not just paid staff; they're not just unionized employees. There are plenty of volunteers. As a matter of fact, there's a lack of volunteers, when it comes to that.

I think what you're saying to us—and I'll just put it in your own words, in the last 30 seconds—you're looking for things that would allow you to continue to operate in a way that is recognizing the challenges that you have when it comes to running projects like Project Love. It's not about getting rid of unions.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: Absolutely not.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: As you know, I've been an executive director with agencies. I've worked for the ministry. I've worked for the college. All of those places are unionized and have advantages.

But please don't lose the lesson here. The lesson is, invite us to your planning tables. Help us to solve the problems, whether they're ours or the community's, because I think we, as volunteer organizations, have a great deal to offer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Absolutely.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We're going to go to the government side for questioning. I think Ms. Skelly was first.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you for your presentation. I will expand a little bit on MPP Bisson's comments—

Ms. Lynda Geddes: I'm sorry; I can hardly hear you.
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Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm sorry. I'll expand a bit on the previous comments.

You made some pretty bold statements, walking into a room with a lot of union representation. Why did you specifically raise that? What was the point there?

Ms. Lynda Geddes: Specifically because, in my experience—personally, in my experience—when we work in a unionized environment, we are restricted from being spontaneous. We are restricted from being able to make decisions that need to be made on the spot. We don't have ownership, and therefore it is very difficult to respond to people who are homeless and people who, as I say, are at the end of their tethers all the time.

When we are serving dinner at Project Love and people come in who are upset, who have had too much to drink—for whatever reason—we need to be able to respond to that situation very quickly. It doesn't necessarily mean that we have to have specific training—and we are trained, but it doesn't restrict us from being able to respond. I know from experience that in some situations: "This is not my job. Get the other guy who deals with this. This is not my job. I can't respond to this." That's a very minimal example.

I have nothing but respect for the work that the unions have done to get us to a place where we have excellent labour laws and we have safe work environments. I was involved in building the miners' memorial here. That's not the issue here. The issue here is, please don't underestimate the volunteer sector in your response to problems.

Ms. Donna Skelly: And the flexibility it provides.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: And the flexibility it provides, yes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I know that my colleague wants to ask questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I just want to, first of all, thank you for all of the work you do. I think it's fantastic that you guys are here at this planning table today, because we need to hear from organizations like yours.

Just last week, we actually announced something exciting for the charitable sector. We announced that we're going to allow online 50-50 sales for charities so that they can tap into that potential revenue source as a fundraising tool. I know that a number of charities in my area were quite excited about this. Are there similar things that you guys see, that we could make changes to existing laws that would allow you to raise money easier for your organization?

Ms. Lynda Geddes: We haven't encountered difficulties, no. We've had a wonderful response, actually, from the community. The only hitch we ran into was the fact that we operate under a charitable church.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Okay.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: The United Church of Canada does not endorse bingo. However, we've encouraged our way through that. We now are having considerable new revenue that pays half of our bills, from that.

These kinds of decisions that you're making, I think, are excellent, and they do help. People are going to spend the money. Whether it goes to buildings or people, they're going to spend the money.

I can't give you a specific about fundraising, no. I think that engaging the community—

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: If you think of any, we're always open to hear them, for sure.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: Thank you. I'll keep that in mind.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much for the work you do.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. That wraps up the time there. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Lynda Geddes: We appreciate the opportunity.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We appreciate it, too.

RAYONIER ADVANCED MATERIALS

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'd like to call our next presenter: Mr. Black. Good afternoon, and welcome to the committee. If you can just state your name for the record, and you get right into your presentation.

Mr. Chris Black: It's Chris Black.

Good afternoon, and thank you for allowing Rayonier Advanced Materials to appear before this important committee and support its work advising the government on its 2019 budget.

Again, my name is Chris Black. I'm the president of Canadian operations and senior vice-president for forest products, pulp and paper at Rayonier Advanced Materials, or RYAM, I may call it.

I provided PowerPoint slides, as you see, as well as a presentation that we've made to both the federal and the provincial governments on a trilateral investment.

I know Gilles and Guy quite well through their union work and through their representation in Kapuskasing.

Just to mention: Unions have been a fantastic supporter within the operations within RYAM. We certainly enjoy the work that we have with the unions that we're involved with.

A little bit about RYAM: It purchased Tembec in 2017. Together, we're a leading manufacturer of forest products, lumber, paper and specialty pulp. Our operations in northern Ontario include five sawmills and one newsprint mill.

We employ 1,000 people in the north and over 4,000 people globally. Our operations are integral to the northern Ontario economy, and we have a long history of creating jobs, growth and prosperity for the communities in which we operate. In some cases, we've operated for over 90 years, such as the Kapuskasing newsprint operation.

RYAM's newsprint mill and sawmill forestry operations provide combined intrinsic benefits for the local and regional economies: \$60 million in annual salaries, not including benefits; \$70 million in annual business with local and Ontario trucking companies; and \$30 million in annual business with railway companies, plus an anchor for the Ontario Northland rail.

We also pride ourselves on our relations with our First Nations partnerships. We actively seek to employ local Indigenous peoples, and much of our indirect investments, service needs and other contracts are with Indigenous businesses in the communities in which we operate. RYAM works directly with 12 First Nations and the Métis Nation in northeastern Ontario and has partnerships that support community involvement in forestry plans, business development, employment and community projects. We have agreements with four First Nations timber harvesting companies to provide significant wood volume to Cochrane, Kap and Hearst. In 2018, we purchased \$18.5 million from First Nations businesses.

The town of Kapuskasing has a population of about 8,500 people and is the anchor community in northeastern Ontario. Our Kapuskasing newsprint mill is the town's largest employer and is a cornerstone of the regional economy, as it processes over 200,000 green tons of biomass residuals and 225,000 bone-dry metric tons of wood chips to produce over 200,000 tonnes of newsprint. In short, we are the economic anchor for the region and the Highway 11 corridor.

Looking to the future, we continue to look for ways to diversify our products and create new and innovative material from the world's most renewable and sustainable resource. RYAM plans to spend over \$25 million in capital investment on projects in Ontario by 2020 in addition to our ongoing operation and maintenance budgets. Additionally, RYAM has another potential \$100 million in future projects across our assets in Ontario alone.

Like any industry, we have a host of challenges and opportunities. With regard to those challenges, trained labour and skills in the north are increasingly hard to come by. We are in constant search of qualified individuals to support our business operations, but we are also in direct competition with the mining, oil and gas sectors to attract

these people. We currently have a list of 50 positions in Ontario alone that we need to have filled right now. In addition, we estimate that we'll have another 50 positions over the next two years due to retirements.

It seems that not everyone is convinced that this is the golden age of newsprint, and to be frank, it's clearly not. We don't blame prospective employees for being skeptical. However, we see promise and prosperity for our operations over the longer term, and we know that promise is just around the corner. Newsprint markets are obviously in decline in the digital age, but that same digital and online movement has also created many opportunities for businesses and operations such as RYAM's. The Amazon effect and the need for packaging in specialty products opens doors to a whole new suite of pulp and paper markets. Our facilities and operations are well positioned to leverage these opportunities and new lines of businesses, and we are incredibly excited about our future opportunities.

RYAM's team has been identifying opportunities incorporating the following criteria: We're capitalizing on our existing asset base; we're focusing on specialty paper products with at least 100,000 tonnes of demand; focusing on products with growing demand; and realistic technical transformation. We have done business in Ontario for a long time and we want to continue to operate in Ontario for a long time to come.

The bottom line: These opportunities represent a need for fundamental retooling of our production and facilities. This sounds daunting, complicated and expensive, but in reality, we feel RYAM is best situated to deliver these opportunities and deliver on them for all interested parties. However, we need to ensure we are pointed in the right direction and set up for success before jumping into these new markets.

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The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Chris Black: There is little to no chance we can leverage these opportunities unless we are able to have predictable, affordable and reliable electricity to drive it all. The newsprint mill in Kap has traditionally maintained cost competitiveness, and we have worked with the government of Ontario to ensure continued, sustainable long-term operations. The Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, or NIERP, permanency, and support mechanisms such as the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund are important to this effort.

The industrial conservation initiative, or ICI, is the single largest and most important program to our bottom line and our ability to keep the doors open in Kap.

In short, our sector and business are the number one participants in the ICI program. We can go from a peak load of more than 130 megawatts to less than 3 megawatts in minutes. We do this exceptionally well in order to curb peak demand load and avoid higher-cost power. As a matter of fact, we had a 5CP day yesterday, with the cold weather in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much, Mr. Black. We have to carry on with questions, so I'll go to the government side. Mr. Cho?

Mr. Stan Cho: Mr. Black, if you want to finish that thought, I'm happy to offer you that time.

Mr. Chris Black: Maybe I'll just finish with this: The ICI program is critical. If it goes away, the Kapuskasing newsprint node goes away, and that means four sawmills in Ontario will go away. It's absolutely essential that that remains in place.

We've met with Minister Yakabuski and his committees. We've met with Minister Rickford's staff. We've met with the Premier's staff. We've made this message very clear: If we don't have ICI and NIERP, we'll have 1,000 people out of work in northern Ontario, plus all of the people who support those 1,000 people. It's a fact.

Thank you.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Mr. Black. You mentioned earlier that you have 50 positions currently available.

Mr. Chris Black: Correct.

Mr. Stan Cho: Could you tell me what sorts of positions, though?

Mr. Chris Black: Honestly, it ranges right from janitor to general manager.

Mr. Stan Cho: Oh, wow. That's quite the—and you talked about some of the innovative products that you're working on. Do you want to shed some light on that? I'm also interested in it.

Mr. Chris Black: I don't want to give specifics, for competitive reasons, but we've narrowed it down to five products. They're primarily in the packaging fold. We're actually analyzing those right now with an outside consultant.

Mr. Stan Cho: Wonderful. Other than in terms of risk mitigation, and other than your—how do I say it?—limited dive into it, are there any other safeguards against some of the risks associated with going into a new territory, let's say?

Mr. Chris Black: Sorry, what was the last part?

Mr. Stan Cho: Going into a new product field in innovation.

Mr. Chris Black: Clearly, we're not the only newsprint mill in trouble across North America. A lot of our competitors are looking at the same thing. Kruger has done a number of these in Quebec, and the Quebec government has supported them massively for transforming their mills. That's why we've been talking to, as I mentioned, Yakabuski and other people within government, to ensure that we've got our foot in the door as well.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Mr. Black.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: We know the importance of reliable electricity here. I just was wondering if you could elaborate on the challenges of chasing ICI peak days, given the Liberals' lowering of the threshold. Can you touch on that for me?

Mr. Chris Black: Yes, it is quite a challenge. For people who aren't as familiar, there are 5CP days that you have to try to capture. Last year, we were close to 40 days that we had to go down, to chase those days.

Mr. David Piccini: Wow.

Mr. Chris Black: As I mentioned, yesterday was actually one of those days. The winter is particularly hard, right? You're taking down an asset in minus-40-degree temperatures, a mill that uses a lot of water and a lot of heat. So it definitely is a challenge. But we are better at it. We've learned how to do it over the years. We'd prefer that it's a nice heatwave in Toronto in one week, and get it over with quickly.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. David Piccini: Do you think that's an example of government making it more difficult for you, rather than looking elsewhere? You're now reeling from a decision government made that's making it—

Mr. Chris Black: I guess, David, I don't want to have it both ways. We're trying to play within the rules, and we certainly will continue to do that. But it is a stress and a strain on the operation and on the staff. It definitely is; there's no questioning that.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. We'll go to the opposition side: Mr. Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you, Chris, for coming.

Mr. Chris Black: Thanks, Guy.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: You've said—and of course, I know that also—I want to give you more opportunity to speak about this electricity—the NIERP.

Also, so the committee understands, you said that Kapuskasing is an anchor in the region, and it is. If this plant goes down, that will be devastating for the community and the surrounding communities, and the list goes on. Can you elaborate on that? I want to give you the opportunity to speak. Take the time you need, in the four minutes that we have, to explain why it's important that we maintain this.

Mr. Chris Black: I think one of the important things about the ICI program that a lot of people don't understand is that it's not just the mill that benefits; it's the province that benefits. We estimate that through the ICI program with not only Kapuskasing but other operations, the province saves putting in two new nuclear plants. There are 1,500 megawatts that we've proven as an industry that we can take off the peak. You do your calculation on how much 1,500 megawatts cost to add to the system versus the industry taking down the load for the 5CP days. It's a massive saving for the government, and yes, we do benefit from it, but the province benefits massively from it. Those are verifiable reports done by the government that have shown these 1,500 megs coming out at peak time.

It's absolutely critical for the province and, as I said, we've become quite good at it. It's a program that is one that we've worked on and fine-tuned. Despite what you had to say, David, it's something we continue to work on; we want to work with the government. If there are ways of smoothing that out, obviously that's a benefit.

The NIERP, which was made permanent a few years ago—again, I was actively involved in having the NIERP made permanent. One of the things it allowed us to do when it was made permanent was for me to go to our board and say, "Okay, we've got a program here. We can invest

in our mills.” The \$25 million that I mentioned was because NIERP was made permanent. It may not go directly into the newsprint mill but it has gone into the Kap sawmill, the Cochrane sawmill and the Chapleau sawmill. They’re all modernizing as we speak.

The electricity programs are the lifeblood, Guy. They’ve made a difference in Kapuskasing. I’ve been involved with that mill for 35 years. I’m very proud of the fact that a lot of people think that this mill is going away, and with the unions—the unions also at one point gave 10% reductions in wages at a time when a lot of the unions were opposing that. It has been a mutual effort by all the parties to ensure that that operation stays in place.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Should this go, and the impact on the region—that’s what I believe they need to hear, because it will be a huge impact.

Mr. Chris Black: Yes. And it’s not just the people—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Chris Black: —who work there; it’s the industry around it. It’s the First Nations communities. As I mentioned, alone we have about \$18 million in bringing timber in with two First Nations operations, and they hire First Nations people to work there.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And a lot of people don’t realize: You don’t take a tree and put it in a paper mill. You don’t take a tree and put it in a paper mill. You put it in a sawmill, and the chips and the rest go to the mill. Maybe you could get into that a bit, why that—

Mr. Chris Black: Yes. I think it’s important to know, not just for this group but just for people in general, that we use every part of the tree. When the tree is taken down, we use the bark for fuel, we use the chips for pulp, and obviously we make lumber. Those chips go to the newsprint mill. They can also go to our Timiskaming operation to make pulp there. Every piece of the tree is used, whether it’s biomass, whether it’s chips or whether it’s lumber, and we’re active in all those.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And without the paper mill, the sawmills lose part of their revenue.

Mr. Chris Black: Exactly. If the newsprint mill goes away, the sawmills basically have nowhere to put chips, so they’re gone as well. It’s a rolling effect.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

Mr. Chris Black: Thank you for your time.

MR. MARC LEROUX

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I call on our next presenter. It’s the Realty Networks Inc. brokerage.

Mr. Marc Leroux: Good afternoon, everybody.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Good afternoon. If you could just state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Marc Leroux: My name is Marc Leroux. I’m a broker of record with Realty Networks, but I’m not here on behalf of Realty Networks. I just put that as my business. I’m also the father of a 21-year-old disabled girl. I’m here pretty much on that aspect, on the disabled and

on behalf of people on ODSP, the disabilities defunding, and the cuts that are happening right now with the current government.

As you know, I’m also a representative for the class action against the government with regard to DSO and waiting lists. There are 11,000 families right now on a waiting list for DSO, which is Developmental Services Ontario. The problem is that it leaves a lot of families with no services, no programs, no funding, and nothing for the child to do the minute they turn 18. This is a big budget issue because the government right now is not making anything better.

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I just found out today that they’re also appealing that decision, because we got certified on December 14 for this class action.

Basically, right now, as you know, because of these issues and because of the cutbacks that Ontario is doing right now, a lot of people are going without in their families, especially with kids with disabilities or adults with disabilities within their families. At this point, a lot of people are on the waiting list for maybe three, four or five years before they get any kind of funding or programs for their families, for their kids. With this budget issue, it’s not just throwing money at a problem; it’s giving money to the families who need it the most.

As an example, I’ll get into ODSP. Right now, a person on ODSP who turns 18 gets the maximum of \$1,110 a month. Of that amount, the amount for lodging is \$497. So, through all that, all they receive is \$1,110 a month. They were supposed to get an extra \$30 a month this year, which isn’t much by any means, but basically the government cut that back to only \$15, although they promised and said in the media and everywhere else that they wouldn’t touch ODSP, that they would keep it the same, and they would keep it like that for everybody. The problem with this is, that’s making the poor people even poorer and it’s not helping the right people. They’re taking from the people who need it most and giving it to the people who don’t need it as much.

With this, the funding obviously needs to be increased. ODSP needs to be looked at. The DSO needs to be looked at—how they run it, how they manage it, how they budget it, and how to get these families off these waiting lists. Because there are a lot of families in Timmins or even Toronto—everywhere in the province—where, especially if you’re a single parent and you’re taking care of a child, and that child turns 18, you go from being able to go to work to not being able to do anything, because that child gets cut off immediately. There’s no transition program. There is no transition support. There is no transition funding. It all stops. So, the family has to have one person either stay home or, if you’re a single parent, you have to stay home, and you’ve got to figure out how to put a roof over your head or food in your child’s mouth—or not take care of your child. These things are not acceptable, and they shouldn’t be.

We’re working hard to get all these families the help that they need, but without proper guidance from people

like you guys, who give it to the proper committees for the budget, then nothing will happen, and it will continue going on the same way.

They're still doing cuts today to different programs for the disabled in Ontario. They're still doing those cuts. They're still giving less and less to different places, such as individual supports. It can't continue.

The government budget that is socially responsible—and that's what the government is for; it's for the people of Ontario, no matter who you are. It's not for big business. It's not for kickbacks. It's not for anything like that. So, if it's for the people of Ontario, it should be reflected that way. The people who need it most in society are all these families and the disabled people, because it takes a village to raise a child. A child with disabilities is hard enough on the family, emotionally and physically. It's very, very difficult. When that child turns 18, those difficulties and those stresses go tenfold.

I, myself, in the first couple of years when my daughter turned 18—I'm lucky enough to have my own business, and I was able to take the summers off, because I had nobody and no supports—nothing for my daughter for two years. It took everything and all the fighting in my power for me to find some funding so I could go back to normal work life.

Being in the north, if I worked at the mine, like many people do, and my daughter turned 18, I would have to quit my job. There is no way a mining company would let me take three months off, or more, a year to take care of a child. That's just the reality of it. I'm just lucky. But if it was anybody else, I don't know what they would do, because they wouldn't be able to make the mortgage.

I'm just tired. It sort of gets annoying after a while, seeing all of these cuts and cuts and cuts, and saying one thing and doing something else when it comes to the government. They seem to go on the people who have the smallest voice.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Marc Leroux: For the last thing, because I have a minute left—it goes by really quickly—I'll just quote John Stapleton from the Metcalf Foundation in regard to the ODSP minimum funding formula for clawbacks. He wrote: "According to [the] calculations done ... the increase of the clawback from 50% to 75% means that once a person on ODSP earns more than \$13,200 in wages in a year, they will actually be worse off under the proposed new system than under the current one. For people on OW, the impact occurs even sooner; a person will be worse off" today with the new system if "their annual employment income hits just \$6,000."

These are just little things here that happen where a person on ODSP is trying to make a little bit of extra money—and it's not much; it's \$13,000 a year more—and with the new system, their net is less all around.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, thank you very much. We're going to start with questions from the opposition side first. We have four minutes. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Do you want a few more minutes to finish what you're saying? We could share our time.

Mr. Marc Leroux: I'm good, no. Just go ahead and ask me whatever you want.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. I also would just like to thank you for your testimony, Mr. Leroux. It can't be easy. I appreciate your brave testimony here, coming here and advocating on behalf of your family and all of the families in Ontario that are struggling with this situation. I and my colleagues, believe me, support your concern that the most vulnerable in our community need to be looked after and that that, in fact, is the role of government: that we look after people who are vulnerable and need our help. So I just want you to know that we share your concern in that regard.

With regard to the ODSP and even OW, there was a promised increase that was cut in half by this government. As you said, it's not very much. It wouldn't be much of an increase, but it is a lot for someone living on such a low income. You've talked about the hardship of the percentage cut, but can you talk about how the cut reflected—not so much on the actual money, but how you perceive the government valuing the families that struggle with disabilities? Like, it's not about the money; it's about whether it values—

Mr. Marc Leroux: No. To be honest, it's about respect towards the people with disabilities. It seems that because they don't have a voice—I'll be honest: I'm more of a fighter than most people with families with disabilities. I don't stop. I keep doing the phone calls. But a lot of people who have children with disabilities like my daughter's—they're just tired. They have many hours to spend at home.

As an example, my daughter doesn't speak, she's slightly incontinent, and she doesn't walk well. She has the mind of about a three-year-old. So you've got to imagine what we've gone through for 21 years of this now. You get tired, and when you get tired, you just get fed up and you stop talking and you just quit.

The government seems to take advantage of the fact that it's such a small voice, and that voice isn't heard very loudly. Somebody has got to raise that voice in saying, "Respect these people," because it's a disrespect towards them. It's a slap in the face when you go from hoping to get maybe \$30 more a month—and for the past 10 years, I think it's gone up maybe 100 bucks. But to go \$30 more and to say, "Okay, no, we're not doing that; we can't afford it. We can only go \$15," is just ridiculous.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So, Mr. Leroux, you are raising the voice for families. I want you to know that even though I agree with you that they are small and not very vocal, you're doing your job here.

The other thing I wanted to ask you about in the changes this government has made—you know, the minister stood up in the House and she said, "The best social program is a job," when for some people, they may never be able to work.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Personally, I found that insulting.

The other thing that I think is problematic are the changes to how they're defining a disability and how that will make it even more difficult for people to qualify. Can you talk quickly about that?

Mr. Marc Leroux: That comment, that the easiest way to get out of it is to get a job, shows a lack of understanding, 100%, of what these people go through. It's not that they don't want a job; it's that they can't. Their mind doesn't work like ours do. They can't do a job. A lot of them can't handle the stress or the anxiety of it or can't accomplish simple tasks. They just can't do it. They might be able to be a little self-sufficient with some help from support workers that go to their home or their place, but they can't go and get up and do a 9-to-5 job like everybody else can. That's why they're on disability. That's why they can't do it.

1400

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We're now going to turn to the government side for four minutes of questioning. Mr. Roberts?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Mr. Leroux, I just want to begin by thanking you for coming in today and for sharing your personal story. It certainly resonates with me. I have a younger brother who has autism, and that was sort of what got me involved in politics in the first place, the struggles that my family have gone through fighting for better supports for my younger brother. He has autism, is non-verbal, has a severe developmental delay and epilepsy, so a lot of the compounded challenges that we often see.

One of the things that has made me hopeful, I think, with this recent election is that in our Legislature, on each side of the aisle, we have some really great champions for individuals with disabilities. On the NDP side, MPPs Gretzky and Taylor have been doing a phenomenal job raising these issues. On our side, I have a younger brother who has autism. The MPP for Kitchener, Amy Fee, has two children with autism. The MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence, Robin Martin, has a son with autism; and our health minister, Christine Elliott, has a son with special needs.

I think you're right, 100%, when you say that oftentimes individuals with disabilities are an easy group for governments to pick on because they don't have enough time to raise their voice. It certainly made me hopeful that we have some folks in the Legislature fighting on behalf of these groups on a day-to-day basis. So I just want to highlight that for you, that there are people who are listening to our—

Mr. Marc Leroux: But it's not working. They don't seem to be listening.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Pardon me?

Mr. Marc Leroux: It seems to be falling on deaf ears.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Well, we've got a lot of work to do. That's for sure.

Mr. Marc Leroux: But then why are they already doing cutbacks, if there's work to be done? Why are they doing it in reverse? Why are there cutbacks, right now, going on? They should stay the course and then work on a way to make it better, not cut back and then make it better later. "We'll cut back \$15, but in two years we'll give you \$15. Look at the great raise we gave you."

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Yes, I mean our priority, of course, with the reforms to Ontario Works and ODSP were

to make sure that individuals with severe disabilities who aren't going to be able to work are going to be able to access the supports easier—

Mr. Marc Leroux: Then don't have cutbacks. Do it first. You put your plans in place before you do the cutback.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: A couple of questions in terms of the wait-list: In terms of services your daughter is hoping to access, is it ABA therapy or what is the DSO funding going to be going towards?

Mr. Marc Leroux: The DSO funding is going toward a day program, as an example. In the summer—she's 21 years old now, so she's going to be done school. DSO is there to help you get funding for a personal worker, because you need a worker.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Marc Leroux: The day program is just there from 9 to 3, so if you have a 9-to-5 job, you need a worker. So DSO is supposed to be there to give you funding for the worker, but also they fund the day program you can go to. But the DSO waiting lists are now three or four years. The waiting list is crazy. So we have these people who don't have these programs, don't have the funding and don't have the help that they need.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Now, in terms of DSO funding, when you chat with other families who are struggling to access this, how important is it, once they get the funding, that they have choice and flexibility in terms of how they can spend those dollars?

Mr. Marc Leroux: Well, that's what the Passport Program is for; that is choice and flexibility. The Passport Program: You can choose where you want to put it. You can use it for a personal support worker or you can use it to pay your own day programs. It's very important for those families—extremely important. But it's just so slow-going.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It's certainly something that I'm hearing across the province, that making sure there's that flexibility, once we can figure out how to tackle that wait-list, is going to be essential for sure.

Second question—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Sorry, Mr. Roberts, we have to cut you off. We've exceeded our four-minute limit.

Mr. Marc Leroux: I could keep going.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'm sure we all could, but we do have a schedule. We have a lot of people to present today. So thank you for coming here today and sharing your story.

Mr. Marc Leroux: Okay. Thank you very much. Thanks for listening.

TIMMINS PUBLIC LIBRARY

JAMES TOWNSHIP PUBLIC LIBRARY

TECK CENTENNIAL LIBRARY

COCHRANE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move to the next presenters. It's the Timmins Public Library.

Thank you for coming here today. If you could just state your names for the record and get right into your presentation, please.

Ms. Carole-Ann Churcher: I'm Carole-Ann Churcher, CEO of the Timmins Public Library.

Ms. Cyndi Stockman: Cyndi Stockman, CEO of the Elk Lake public library.

Ms. Cheryl Lafreniere: Cheryl Lafreniere, CEO of the Teck Centennial public library, Kirkland Lake.

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazecka: Christina Noël-Blazecka. I am the CEO of the Cochrane Public Library.

Ms. Carole-Ann Churcher: Good afternoon. Thank you to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the opportunity to participate in your 2019 pre-budget consultations. I'm proud to work alongside passionate librarians and library staff, who make an impact in the lives of Ontarians every day.

Ontario public libraries strengthen local communities by engaging their citizens. We are Ontario's farthest-reaching, most cost-effective public resource. We are local centres of information, making access to knowledge readily available. We help millions of regular people in virtually every community across Ontario, large and small, reach their potential. We are Ontario's original community hubs, with a proven history of responding to and reflecting local priorities.

Public libraries are essential to people and families across Ontario. The demographic we serve spans from infants to seniors. We are an institution providing free, equal access to all Ontarians, regardless of their age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language, education, income or social status.

In addition to books, movies and digital resources such as e-books, e-magazines, databases and audiobooks, public libraries provide the Internet, WiFi, technology training programs, access to health and wellness information, safe spaces for teens, high-quality children's programs focusing on literacy, and multiple opportunities for knowledge sharing and lifelong learning at any age.

We offer stimulating educational, cultural and entertaining programming. We form partnerships with local organizations in order to provide a wider range of resources to our patrons. Teachers rely on our resources now more than ever to supplement and enhance their lessons due to the lack of school libraries and school librarians. We are also a lifeline for seniors, keeping them involved and active in their communities as they move through life. In many northern, rural communities the library is the only place where reliable broadband is available and often the only front-line access point for digital Ontario government services and transactions.

We would like to share a few stories which demonstrate local impact.

Similar to southern Ontario urban centres, Timmins is currently struggling with the issue of homelessness. Libraries are able to support the homeless by providing a welcoming space, access to free books, newspapers and information, as well as referrals to local support services. Free access to WiFi and computers are essential for a

homeless person to access online resources and to keep in contact with their family members in other parts of the province. We witness first-hand the value of our services to those marginalized populations when they are able to find that apartment listing or access funds to help them get a flight back home. The library may be the place where they get the resources and encouragement they need to get back on their feet again.

Ms. Cyndi Stockman: Elk Lake is located at least 40 kilometres from the Highway 11 corridor, but we are the central hub in our vicinity, with four highways coming into our community. James Township Public Library has partnered up with Employment Options to offer space for meetings and appointments to help people look for jobs, make resumés or explore different educational training opportunities for new careers. By offering this service, people do not have to travel so far to get the help required to better their futures.

Ontario public libraries deliver a significant economic impact in communities large and small. Public libraries like ours deliver huge returns on investment. Impact studies done across the province indicate that every dollar invested in public libraries consistently generates over \$5 in direct economic benefits for the local community.

Ms. Cheryl Lafreniere: Debbie is one of many seniors who rely on the Teck Centennial Library in Kirkland Lake for more than just books. When she received an iPad as a Christmas gift, she didn't know what to do with it or even how to turn it on. Like many seniors, Debbie was fearful to learn this new technology.

Library staff encouraged Debbie to sign up for a free 10-week iPad workshop. Now Debbie is able to communicate daily with her daughter and grandchildren, who live in Kitchener, Ontario, using FaceTime.

Public libraries need help. While we have become resourceful at maximizing the value of every dollar, we've reached a critical crossroads. Ontario public libraries are primarily a local responsibility. Municipalities, on average, are responsible for 96% of funding for their public libraries, leaving a heavy burden on the local taxpayer.

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Ms. Christina Noël-Blazecka: Tyler is a 24-year-old young entrepreneur who spent several days a week at the Cochrane Public Library preparing his business plan to open a therapy clinic. He relied on the library's free WiFi, full administrative services and comfortable workspace to do his research and bring his dream to achievement. Today Tyler continues to come to the library to utilize the wide range of services, as before, but for different reasons now, enjoying the coffee bar on his breaks while relaxing in the library's atmosphere.

Ontario should support public libraries. The province's support is essential for the sustainability of public libraries, especially for hundreds of libraries in small towns and rural and northern communities. While we appreciate previous short-term grant opportunities offered by the province, these do not ensure sustainability as our sector transforms itself into the digital 21st century. Provincial support was cut by 50% in the 1990s, and

unlike other transfer payment recipients, the provincial base funding for public libraries has been frozen at that level for over 20 years.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazeka: Many libraries are struggling to keep up with the role of public libraries in this digital age, and demand continues to rise. While we recognize and appreciate the province's fiscal challenges, there is an immediate need to bring stability to many of our public libraries across Ontario, especially in the north. Through a small investment in the province's annual base funding—\$17 million shared across hundreds of libraries—Ontario would ensure the long-term sustainability of our public libraries, especially in smaller towns and rural communities. This is less than a 2.3% increase over the 22 years that the provincial base funding was frozen.

This \$17-million enhanced, predictable funding would allow our public libraries to make immediate and long-term plans that best respond to the needs of our residents and communities. Together we can ensure that all Ontarians would have access to a 21st-century public library and the critical resources and services it provides.

We need to keep our province connected, and libraries are a vital link in that chain.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We're going to start questions from the government side first. Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thanks so much for being here today.

The committee learned something fun and exciting yesterday. In my younger days, I was the Ottawa Public Library mascot. I was Bopl the Fire-Reading Dragon. If I had just stuck with the mascot career, think about where I'd be today.

Certainly, when I was doing a lot of volunteer work with the Ottawa Public Library, I saw a couple of things that I found really encouraging. One was, at the time, the Ottawa Public Library did a big push on "Every Kid a Card," trying to make sure that every single child in the city could get access to a library card so that they could be able to access that portal of knowledge, information and resources.

The other thing I saw at the time was the library beginning to move to a lot more online resources, in terms of offering e-books.

I take out a lot of audiobooks. I seem to spend an awful lot of time on planes these days.

I'm just wondering: in terms of those two areas, how important is it that we make sure that we're increasing knowledge of access for libraries, particularly amongst young people; and how are you guys using technology to reach a new generation of library visitors as well as perhaps reach some of the folks in the more remote communities around Timmins who might fall in your catchment area?

Ms. Carole-Ann Churcher: Although people still want to hold a print book, we're also seeing an increased demand for the electronic resources, and sometimes those are accessed specifically for their accessibility features;

for example, e-books, e-magazines and e-audio. So it becomes a little bit of a challenge in that we need to balance our budgets in order to purchase the physical books as well as e-books. That's a strain on our budgets.

Ms. Cheryl Lafreniere: I was going to say, as well, that it is a huge strain on our budget. When you're thinking that you've already provided e-resources for the past several years and then when the budget is cut or your funding is cut, it's very difficult to weigh in on what we should do, because a lot of the e-resources that we do purchase are extremely expensive.

When the municipality has to pay for your funding, your funding has been strapped there as well. My budget to purchase books has been capped at \$10,000 per year for the past 15 years. Now with the new technology, I'm finding it very stressful on where to spend my money.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Is part of it—I've never quite looked into the details of this. But some of the e-resources—are they purchased on a whole across Ontario for libraries? Is it an economy of scale, or is it the responsibility of each individual library district to purchase that?

Ms. Cyndi Stockman: We still have to pay. We're with SOLS, Southern Ontario Library Service—

Ms. Cheryl Lafreniere: For OverDrive.

Ms. Cyndi Stockman: For OverDrive. There we have to—and it goes by per-capita sort of thing.

Ms. Carole-Ann Churcher: We are part of a consortium through Southern Ontario Library Service. We're saving some dollars, but not nearly as much as we could be, if we really had a province-wide system, such as Alberta, where they purchase e-resources for the entire province. Each of us are doing our own thing, and some small communities are unable to purchase any e-resources. It depends on where you live.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Interesting.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We're now going to move to the opposition side for questions. We have four minutes. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for your presentation. I just wanted to let you know that I completely appreciate the value of libraries. I think that it's really not understood that when you go to the local library, most libraries in the province of Ontario have been dealing with a 20-year funding freeze—not only a funding freeze; you're not keeping up with just the increasing costs. I know that's what you're describing.

Now, there is a lot of talk. People talk about different ways that people can access libraries. I think it's also clear that you are providing technology to libraries—computers and technology, and the cost borne by that. In order for you to be seen as what they call "keeping up with the technology," that's an increased strain on your budget, right?

My question to you is on this 20-year funding freeze. How has that impacted your ability to provide the kind of technology that people expect today?

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazeka: If I can answer to some points: The 20-year freeze has not just cut our budgets but,

like you say, has really hindered us from moving forward in this 21st century in order to be able to afford our e-resources, which we each need to purchase separately, and to be able to keep our computers' hardware and software up to date. Because a lot of government agencies now have gone to online services, the public citizens are looking toward libraries in order to be able to access these forms.

Also, our budget cuts have put a strain on salaries and being able to hire personnel to be able to offer programming. Skill-sharing: It's all about sharing knowledge and making a stronger community with that education.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Is—

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, sorry; go ahead.

Ms. Carole-Ann Churcher: I was going to say that we now offer services that we couldn't even imagine that we were going to offer 15 years ago. We've really transformed ourselves. We try our best to offer services compared to the offerings of public libraries in the south, but we often fall short.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Certainly. I think that's one of the problems that libraries face. Not everyone appreciates the value and the purpose of libraries and the value that you contribute to the community. I just can't help but say that when Premier Doug Ford was Councillor Doug Ford, he actually said he would cut library budgets "in a heartbeat." That's the kind of thing that, to me, raises concern that perhaps this is not a government that understands the extended value of what libraries do, particularly when you talked a little bit about addressing some of those social ills like housing.

Can you just really talk a little more, briefly, about how sometimes libraries are the only warm place of last refuge for people to go? I know that in my community, a lot of people just go there because it's warm.

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazecka: Absolutely.

Ms. Carole-Ann Churcher: That's something we see first-hand here in Timmins. Our mayor probably talked a little bit about that this morning. We are a warm space, a safe space where people who are marginalized can go to. Not only that; they can access information, and our reference people are there to answer.

1420

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just before we run out of time, how many people would walk in on a cold day like today in order to access just the heat etc.?

Ms. Carole-Ann Churcher: Total people?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, just ballpark.

Ms. Carole-Ann Churcher: Maybe 350 to 400; homeless people, probably 50.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow. That's something else.

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazecka: In a small community like Cochrane, we have a people counter, so we count the number of people who come in, because, of course, it's all about the numbers. On a monthly basis, we have between 1,200 and 2,000 who come through the doors.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And if you weren't there, they would not be able to access, or even know where to access, services.

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazecka: Absolutely.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Because you're a point of reference—

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazecka: Because where else in our community can people come to access computers, free WiFi or the washrooms, say, and a warm place?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Or where to go if you need mental health services, where to go if you need whatever.

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazecka: Correct. Yes.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. Our time has expired, but we appreciate your presentation.

Ms. Christina Noël-Blazecka: Thank you very much for this opportunity and for hearing us.

TIMMINS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move along to our next presenters, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Good afternoon. If you could just state your names for the record, and we'll get right into the presentation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We've got to stop meeting like this.

Laughter.

Ms. Nancy Mageau: Welcome, Chair and members of the standing committee. My name is Nancy Mageau, and I'm the president of the Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Here today with me is Cameron Grant, policy and engagement leader. Keitha Robson, chief administrative officer, had to send her regrets.

The chamber is proactive in voicing the concerns of our 650 members with respect to local, provincial and federal government policies, while actively addressing educational, civic, social and economic issues. It is in that role that we present our priorities for the 2019 provincial pre-budget hearing.

Timmins is an established resource community, driven by century-old traditions of mining and forestry. As a result, many of our policy concerns tend to revolve around these particular issues. I am here today to speak to you of the chamber's priorities for the 2019 budget, produced in consultation with our membership.

Permitting delays for mining exploration: Ontario's mineral production is essential to its overall economic success. However, this success story is the result of ongoing diligent efforts by junior firms and major companies alike to conduct exploration, which carries significant risk. The process of developing a single mine can often require 500 to 1,000 grassroots exploration projects.

Given their importance to the economy, and fluctuations in metal markets, it is crucial for mining exploration projects to receive permits in a timely fashion. It is therefore increasingly problematic that Ontario routinely fails to provide these permits within a reasonable time frame.

As part of our resolution, the chamber network is urging the provincial government to dedicate significant resources to streamline and improve the process for reviewing and approving exploration permits and environmental assessments, as well as to work with the federal government to address the duplication of regulatory requirements and processes required for mining exploration, including environmental assessments.

In addition to these recommendations, the chamber network is urging the province to maintain the current mining tax rate for remote and non-remote mining operations. As Ontario's mining sector continues to face regulatory burdens and soaring energy rates, we urge the government to maintain existing mining tax rates for operations as part of its broader strategy to support regional economic development in northern Ontario. For an industry already challenged by rising costs, a heavier tax burden would only serve to further undermine the vitality of Ontario's mining sector.

Municipal accommodation tax: On December 17, the provincial government granted municipalities the authority to impose a municipal accommodation tax on facilities that offer accommodation stays under 30 days. Different from the previous destination marketing program, the newly implemented municipal accommodation tax remains uncapped and non-voluntary, meaning municipalities are free to impose the rate at any level they choose.

What is also concerning is, as little as 50% of the municipal accommodation tax revenues must go towards a non-profit tourism industry association, and businesses that are directly impacted by the tax have little spending oversight over those funds. This reduces the industry's ability to ensure that spending is allocated effectively to address new and ongoing challenges.

On behalf of our members in the tourism industry, the chamber encourages the Ontario government to cap the municipal accommodation tax at 4%. Additionally, we urge you to allow businesses that pay the municipal accommodation tax to participate in the oversight and distribution of the tourism-focused portion of revenues.

Tourism continues to be an important driver of economic activity in northern Ontario, and our recommended changes to the municipal accommodation tax will ensure that the industry remains competitive for our region.

Service skills strategy: One of the biggest concerns of our members is their difficulty in finding skilled workers. The skilled worker shortage is an issue that needs to be addressed by industry and government if northern Ontario businesses are to remain competitive.

To that end, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce requests that the provincial government increase funding to post-secondary institutions in northern Ontario in order for them to accommodate more students in skilled trade courses. In addition, it is imperative that students at the high school level are encouraged to enrol in the trades to help mitigate the rising number of job vacancies within these industries. Many of our members are faced with workforce shortages as a result of low interest, and we

implore the government to seek ways to boost enrolment in the trades.

Additionally, youth out-migration continues to contribute to the labour shortage in northern Ontario, especially the Timmins region. We see students leaving the community to seek education elsewhere. Research has directly linked post-secondary education with community prosperity. Communities with higher numbers of university graduates tend to earn more and have a more stable economic future.

At the same time, the provincial government should recognize the valuable role played by Northern College in Timmins and the surrounding area. For many young people, the college is a springboard for lucrative careers.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Nancy Mageau: Enhancing fiscal capacity for municipalities: The lack of adequate transportation infrastructure in northern Ontario is a significant barrier to economic development. In recent years, mass transit service within northern Ontario has been significantly reduced or cancelled, limiting mobility in a region already underserved compared to the rest of the province. In 2012, the Northlander passenger rail service came to an end, followed in 2018 by the cancellation of intercity Greyhound routes as well as those that link the north to western Canada.

A lack of transit limits access to health care, jobs and business opportunities for northern communities. It also hinders development of the Ring of Fire, which has the potential to generate \$9.4 billion in GDP over 10 years for the province.

This, of course, brings up the topic of energy and rate stability for industry.

In its 2018 fall economic statement, the Ontario government committed to supporting economic development and job creation in the north by investing—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I apologize for cutting you off. Unfortunately, we've exceeded the seven-minute limit.

We're going to go to questions now. Four minutes for the opposition: Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll give you a minute just to finish what you were saying, and then I'll ask the question.

Ms. Nancy Mageau: Okay. I'll just start here: In its 2018 fall economic statement, the Ontario government committed to supporting economic development and job creation in the north by investing in infrastructure. Since the expansion of passenger rail in northern Ontario would generate fare revenue, it can be funded in part by the Canada Infrastructure Bank. By partnering with the infrastructure bank, the Ontario government would take considerable strides towards unlocking economic development opportunities in northern Ontario, including the Ring of Fire, at an acceptable cost to Ontario taxpayers.

1430

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Cool.

I've got a couple of questions. The first one is around permitting. Being a mining community for over 100 years, we have seen the benefits of mining, which are too long to

mention, but we've also seen some of the environmental disasters, such as the Kamiskotia mine and the old tailing stacks that we used to have around here in regard to the Hollinger McIntyre and others that have been quite problematic and have cost the public a lot of money to clean up. The one out in Kamiskotia—if we haven't spent \$50 million there, we haven't spent a dime.

My point here is this: I want to just make it clear, because we've had this conversation before, that the chamber is not saying that you're opposed to having regulations that make sure that mining companies and others do what's good to the environment and the local economy. The issue is how long it takes the permit.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Absolutely, yes. That's correct.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Do you want to expand on that?

Mr. Cameron Grant: Essentially, speaking about the Kam Kotia mine and the tail reclamation project—I think they've been going on for the last 15 years. You and I both know that personally, of course.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes.

Mr. Cameron Grant: The chamber, obviously, does not advocate for abuse of environment or removing regulations that mining should adhere to when going through their closure program.

Essentially, I think what we're trying to raise the issue of is that mining companies don't face duplicatory permitting when it comes to the federal and provincial level. We're asking that the province look to reduce those redundancies when it comes to permitting.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But also turn the permit around in the course of time.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Absolutely, yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Part of the issue—I know, because I deal with the industry when they have a problem—is that the ministries don't have the capacity to process the permits, so it sits on somebody's desk and takes forever to get through. It's not that the regulation is bad; we just don't have the capacity to deal with it.

The other part is the trades side. We had this discussion the other day when we met at the chamber. But maybe just to touch on the opportunities for employment here in our region when it comes to everything from feller buncher operators to machine operators to mechanics to electricians—the lack of manpower. I'll just leave it to you to—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Essentially, if we just look at what's going to be coming within the province in the next five to 10 years, 60,000 jobs are going to be left vacant while people transition into retirement, leaving close to 70,000 jobs. We don't have the capacity to fill those. We have very low enrolment in the trades, and so consequently, these companies, whether it's mining or forestry or their support industries, are screaming for skilled workers, and they're not graduating at the rate that they should be.

So we're perhaps looking to suggest encouraging it at the high school level, but also increasing funding at the college level as well.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We just have 20 seconds. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We've heard from Northern College that the 10% decrease in tuition is going to impact colleges' ability to deliver those services. Would you agree that that's going to make this problem even more difficult?

Mr. Cameron Grant: I would agree, yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We'll move on now to the government side. Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you both very much for presenting today. Just to touch on the importance of skilled trades, the ratio reduction, the ongoing work our government has done with the College of Trades, I know, lauded by the Ontario chamber, supported by a number—there's a lot more work to be done.

To specifically address Sandy's comments there: We know that the 10% reduction in tuition—certainly, our government makes no apologies for putting students first. The correlation to each college is actually substantially less—approximately 2% to 4%. We advised that early on in our mandate, and have been working with them on an ongoing basis on the need across government to tighten our belt.

With respect to investing, it's something I'll take back in my capacity with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, on funding for those spots.

If you could just elaborate—I know there's a cultural shift—we're talking about it in our education consultations—to drive more people into the trades. We can fund those spots, but how do we get more bodies up here? I'll just give you an opportunity to expand a little more on that and what we, as government, can do.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Most definitely. In fact, I can't say that the issue is stemming specifically from this, but if you can recall back to your days in high school—most of your guidance counsellors require a university degree. Consequently, they're slightly out of touch with what it means to enrol in the trades.

I know that myself, personally—this was about 15 years ago—I was not heavily encouraged in enrolling in the trades. While I have a nice arts degree, it certainly doesn't get me \$100,000-plus a year. So there is some enticement that needs to happen. The conversation needs to start at the high school level, not while they're in college.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: As parliamentary assistant to job creation, economic development and trade—the two issues you raised are repeated every time I meet with anybody in the business community: lack of skilled workers, and red tape. I think, as my colleague mentioned, the cultural shift—as parents, we would encourage kids to go to university and then perhaps go to college. But the reality is, the jobs are in the trades. Every sector has a skilled shortage and it's something that we are taking

seriously because we, as a community, have to really rethink what we have about the trades historically.

But I would like you to expand a bit on the red tape. We have, as you are probably aware, struck a committee to acquire feedback from communities and from businesses regarding red tape. Can you give us examples of red tape that we can eliminate, moving forward, to help your industries?

Mr. Cameron Grant: If we're looking at the small to medium-size enterprises, a lot of it has to do with duplication. If we look at the mining exploration and permitting delays, I suppose that the duplication between provincial and federal would be considered something redundant and therefore rather restricting. But I don't know that I have a particular example right now for a small to medium-size—

Ms. Donna Skelly: What I would like to do—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Donna Skelly: —before you leave, is to give you my business card. When you do meet with your members—if they would be very specific on examples that we can look at and eliminate red tape to help them move forward. Because just going through the process of getting permits can be quite long and onerous.

Mr. Cameron Grant: I appreciate that. I do have a long list; unfortunately, it's not coming to me now—

Ms. Donna Skelly: If you could forward it.

Mr. Cameron Grant: —with, in partnership with the Ontario chamber, we are doing a regional economic development committee that is looking to gather feedback from small-to-medium-size enterprises to identify their issues.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would love to have a copy of that directly, and will share it with members of the committee.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Great. Thank you.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We appreciate it.

TIMMINS ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORP.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll call up our next presenter. It's the Timmins Economic Development Corp. Good afternoon and welcome. If you could just state your names for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: Thank you. My name is Fred Gibbons. I'm the chairman of the Timmins Economic Development Corp.

Ms. Christy Marinig: And I'm Christy Marinig, the CEO of the Timmins Economic Development Corp.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: Good afternoon, committee members, ladies and gentlemen. We are the Timmins Economic Development Corp., a non-profit corporation that works to improve the economic climate in the city of Timmins. We would like to focus our presentation on four main points:

infrastructure, energy, workforce development and funding.

In terms of infrastructure, it's imperative that the government work to address infrastructure demands at the local and the provincial level. The province needs to move forward and help development in the Far North with the Ring of Fire project. This is a real economic opportunity of enormous proportion being hampered by a lack of an all-season road to transport the minerals to another—hopefully—northern location for processing.

With this investment in infrastructure, many new jobs will be created. In fact, although my notes say "many new jobs," I would ascertain that we're probably talking about thousands of generational jobs over the life of the mine. These would be jobs created in northern Ontario, both during the construction, but more importantly, during the operation phases for many decades to follow.

Long-term funding commitments for highway works and projects are needed at the local level—as an example, the provincial Connecting Links Program. Instead of a competitive process, there should be, for qualifying communities—to qualify for funding for that particular program—a formula worked out so that these municipalities can plan with assurance knowing what funding they're going to receive from one year to the next.

In terms of energy, the province of Ontario should be seen as a key location for investment; however, the price of electricity is much higher in our province compared to the provinces to the east and immediately west of us. This hampers resource development and large-scale industrial projects, many of which will not proceed without much lower rates than are currently provided by the NIER Program.

In an environment of increasing competition, higher hydro rates in Ontario have already resulted in job losses in northern Ontario in favour of Quebec. The Kidd Creek metallurgical site smelter was closed in 2010. That serves as a prime example, with a loss of over 900 jobs.

The generation, transmission, distribution and pricing of electricity fully falls within the mandate of the province of Ontario. Therefore the province should:

—number one, ensure northern Ontario receives pricing that is conducive to resource development to open the north and to create or sustain jobs. In fact, use energy as a developmental tool for the north;

—secondly, plan for regional electrical generation and transmission as an economic development and revenue-generating opportunity by investing in necessary infrastructure, adjusting legislation to permit investments in large generation projects and establishing incentives for projects that benefit the province as a whole;

—thirdly, help to expand natural gas availability into areas that do not currently have access to this energy source in order to benefit residents throughout Ontario who are disadvantaged by otherwise having to pay for costlier alternative-heating fuel sources.

1440

Ms. Christy Marinig: In terms of workforce development, there is a current and looming crisis in northern

Ontario. Businesses cannot expand because they cannot find staff for the positions they have available. This is at every level. Both skilled and unskilled labour are needed in northern Ontario.

Northern Ontario did see an influx of immigrants in the early part of the 20th century. People came mostly from Europe to work in the mines and the forestry industries. However, immigrants are now choosing to locate in the GTA and very few are coming to northern Ontario. We need to work together to bring newcomers to the north by:

- supporting efforts of the municipalities and other organizations to attract and retain immigrants from the GTA and from their home countries;

- changing the provincial nominee program to become more like the Manitoba program, which allows employers to recruit employees in other countries for the jobs they have available, both skilled and unskilled, and ensuring the list of jobs permitted meets the needs of northern Ontario positions;

- enhancing funding for support programs to increase the retention of immigrants in northern Ontario;

- helping colleges and universities to attract international students to the north; and

- helping communities to attract immigrants.

We also need to work with our Indigenous communities to support and encourage more of their youth to attend post-secondary training facilities so they can participate in the labour force in meaningful capacities.

In terms of funding, it is our hope that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund continues to exist and support economic development initiatives in the north. We would also like to see the business enterprise centres continue to receive enhanced funding to support entrepreneurs at every stage of the business cycle. It would also be nice for the Summer Company and Starter Company programs to continue, as both have been very successful in our region. All of these programs address one of the principal values of the provincial government: job creation.

Timmins should also receive funding as a regional innovation centre. We are currently recognized as a centre, but for the last five years we have been trying to get funding like the other 17 in the province, and all they've said to us is that we're recognized as a centre, we do the work of a centre, but we don't get any funding.

That's the end of our presentation.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

We're going to start with questions from the government side. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Just so that I understand, are you part of the CFDC network?

Ms. Christy Marinig: No, the Timmins Economic Development Corp. hosts the small business enterprise centre. Community Futures is a federal initiative. So we're separate from the Venture Centre.

Mr. Doug Downey: Okay. I was trying to figure out the synergies and if there is a Community Futures in the area and how you integrate with them in terms of services. I used to be the vice-chair of one of those, and so I know

that we constantly tried to find synergies. If you could speak to that—

Ms. Christy Marinig: The Venture Centre is located in Timmins, so we do work with them on a continuous basis. We work with them to offer workshops. We do those together. We also work together to work with clients who are doing succession planning, because they have a matching service. We also work together to provide advice to our clients who are seeking out financial services and loans to go and apply at the Venture Centre.

Mr. Doug Downey: Can I have you speak specifically to the Summer Company—to those two programs? I know some areas are very successful and some aren't. If you could speak to why it's working for you—

Ms. Christy Marinig: We have a large catchment area in a large region, and a lot of students are very interested. We have an allocation of seven students, which is not a lot, but we meet our target every year. Like I said, our catchment area is the size of France, so we have a lot of students to recruit from. They've been quite successful. We've had a number of students who have taken the program and then gone on to make their business a full-time entity once they're finished school.

Mr. Doug Downey: That's interesting.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Quickly: You mentioned the provincial nominee program and compared it to—was it Manitoba?

Ms. Christy Marinig: Correct.

Ms. Donna Skelly: What are the differences and the advantages with the Manitoba program?

Ms. Christy Marinig: Here, in the provincial nominee program, there are certain skill sets that were allowed to be attracted and they're very high-skilled positions. In Manitoba, for example, if an employer needs truck drivers or PSWs, they can apply to attract those types of jobs as well.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Are you at all familiar with the numbers that Manitoba was—the maximum count?

Ms. Christy Marinig: No, I'm not familiar with the numbers; I'm sorry.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions?

Ms. Donna Skelly: No.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. We'll move to the opposition side. We have four minutes. Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Two or three things. First of all, can you explain the funding of Regional Innovation Centres? How much is that and what would it mean if you actually got it?

Ms. Christy Marinig: I think it's several hundred thousand dollars. There are four of them in northern Ontario right now. One is in Sudbury, which is NORCAT, one in Sault Ste. Marie, one in North Bay and one in Thunder Bay. It's probably several hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But you provide the same service that they do but you're not funded?

Ms. Christy Marinig: Correct. We were late in the game and, like I said, now that we're working, we're being pretty much sponsored by FedNor at this point in time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Has there been any attempt in order to get funding for—

Ms. Christy Marinig: Oh, many attempts over the last five years.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You haven't knocked on my door yet. You'd better knock on my door. It's the first I'm hearing of that. I was a bit surprised. I'll follow up. I'll go and see you on that one.

Ms. Christy Marinig: Okay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The other thing is on the issue of having a little bit more control about attracting foreign workers. I think it was said in this one or the other one, but this whole country is made up of immigrants. Timmins was established on the basis of immigration from Europe and the province of Quebec. That's where most of the labour force came from.

Today, my good friend Fred at Northern College has almost 500 students from Pakistan, foreign students who are studying here. Trades or business administration are mostly where they're going.

To what degree would that help employers in our community if we made the changes such as what we have in Manitoba?

Ms. Christy Marinig: I think it will benefit a lot of employers because they're finding difficulty in finding people to fill those positions. For example, when the students came in looking at unskilled labour in the retail industry, all of those students, pretty much, who wanted a job have secured a position. Those positions went unfilled. Businesses are telling us they can't expand. They need welders, they need construction staff, they need PSWs and they need truck drivers. There's a really big shortage, so we need to attract more newcomers.

In Manitoba, what they do is they go to the country of origin and recruit in the country and they ask them if they have any ties to any Canadians and if they say no, then they recruit them. They don't want them to move away; they want them to stay in smaller communities.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Eacom, which operates a mill in the city of Timmins here, has two days of wood in their yard. It's not because there aren't trees in the forest. No truckers. They're just having a hard time trying to get the product into the yard.

The other thing, just so you know, I've talked to Fred about this. We met with the chamber of commerce and we've spoken to a number of—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —local businesses. I'm trying to put something together where we can all work collaboratively at putting forward two or three easy asks in order to deal with that issue. I want to get my friend here, who is the critic responsible for skilled trades and apprentices, set up on that. Simple things like what our member here was mentioning to me just earlier: Maybe what we've got to do is what we used to do at one time, which is, you say, "Okay, we'll help you by offsetting the cost of you going

to school, to do your two-year program to qualify, and then we'll help you with your apprenticeship cost etc., but you have to stay with the employer a certain amount of time." So different ideas or maybe ways of coming at this that would be helpful because certainly there are opportunities out there we need to match with our current workforce and a future workforce.

Dr. Fred Gibbons: New approaches are important. The existing approaches are not working.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We agree.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): With that, we just hit our time. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Christy Marinig: Thank you.

1450

TIMMINS YMCA

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll call up our next presenter. It's the Timmins YMCA.

Good afternoon. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Sheila Dunn.

Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for hearing us. Wayne Bozzer, our CEO, is in Toronto for a YMCA CEO national meeting, so I am taking his position.

YMCAs in Ontario serve 1.2 million people in 125 communities across Ontario. We are one of Ontario's longest-standing charities, dating back 160 years. Last year, we celebrated our 50th year as a child care provider in Ontario. Timmins is the youngest YMCA in the federation. We chartered in 1995. Together, Ontario YMCAs employ nearly 15,000 people.

In Timmins, our staff has doubled in the past 10 years. We now employ 70 staff throughout the year and an additional 20 day camp staff. As I've been listening to the other presentations, I would say that yes, we are continually looking for employees as well.

The YMCA is more than just gym and swim: We are the largest provider of licensed child care in Ontario, we are a top provider of employment training programs, and we are experts when it comes to delivering fitness and leadership programs for young people and families throughout all stages of life.

The two previous groups talked about job creation. The main focus of the YMCA is child care. In order to have those people in our community out and working, parents need reliable child care. We partner with DSBI, District School Board Ontario North East, and the Northeastern Catholic District School Board for before- and after-school care, and we operate out of five schools. We also currently operate three child care centres, with a fourth one opening later this year. We provide day camp for school-aged children during school breaks, and we also provide youth recreation programs. We partner with the municipality in running free summer park programs for kids. And our mobile summer park program goes to all five wards of the city, with over 1,000 sign-ins during a summer.

At our main facility, we're becoming more of a community hub. We have senior and youth programs as well as our child care. Our gymnasium and classrooms are used by community members and groups.

An example of a recent program we are very proud of is the Schumacher kids' club. In partnership with funders, we offer a two-day-a-week after-school physical literacy program at Schumacher Public School. It is in an underserved and low-income area, and it caters to 30 kids at no charge.

We support the government's plan to reduce administrative burden and red tape, yet we also want to ensure that the important programs and services that YMCAs provide continue to thrive. Not only do the programs that we deliver make life easier for hard-working Ontarians, but they also make life better. We help to connect people to each other and to their community. We make Timmins a better place to be.

This year's budget provides the government with an opportunity to advance some important priorities for the people of Timmins and the people of Ontario, the first being child care. To support Ontario's hard-working families, child care must be high-quality, accessible and affordable. Your government can help by providing ongoing funding, including general operating grants and fee subsidies, which in turn help to keep child care fees affordable for families. You can provide ongoing capital expansion funding so YMCAs can expand child care programs in communities where they are needed most. You can remove administrative burden and red tape. Our provincial child care work group has developed a set of recommendations to help streamline funding and reduce administration. Examples include removing the requirements for registered ECEs for after-school programs in light of the ECE shortage, and providing greater flexibility for age mixing. We will share the complete set of recommendations in the coming weeks.

As the financial administrator for the YMCA of Timmins, I know the importance of funding child care in our community. Working parents need quality child care so that they can go to work assured that their children are safe, having fun and learning. The operating grants allow us to run our YMCA child care, employ staff and provide child care at a reasonable daily rate. The \$2-an-hour wage enhancement for our child care workers is greatly appreciated by our staff and allows us to provide them with a more competitive wage. These staff are not just babysitters; they are educators who work hard and are continually being trained to provide better care, following the YMCA Playing to Learn program. The fee subsidy that helps families pay for child care greatly assists getting parents into the workplace. It allows those parents who cannot afford child care the opportunity to go to school, join the workforce and start on careers.

The recent hike in wages increased these parents' wages; it has also increased their costs. We need to ensure that all parents have the ability to access licensed child care. The framework for the fee subsidy needs to be in tune with today's costs. For parents who are just over the

threshold for a child care fee subsidy, it is hard to make ends meet. Helping parents afford child care helps keep these parents working and helps our community to thrive.

The second point is employment services. While the YMCA of Timmins does not have employment services, employment training programs are extremely important to ensure that Ontario remains open for business. Eight YMCAs across Ontario deliver employment training programs at more than 25 sites in all four provincial regions.

Interjection.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: I shouldn't have looked up.

More than 100,000 people participated in our employment programs in 2017. We consistently achieve successful results, yet we believe that more can be done. By consolidating employment training programs at YMCA locations across Ontario—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sheila Dunn:—we could collectively reduce the number of transfer payments the government must manage.

Social infrastructure: Now more than ever, families are calling on YMCAs to deliver important community services. Having accessible and welcoming facilities enables us to deliver programs and services, strengthen communities and promote well-being. That's why we urge the provincial government to prioritize community recreational development in your infrastructure plans, to ensure that Ys can continue to grow and flourish across Ontario.

In partnership with the Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board and local school boards, the YMCA of Timmins has been growing in the past few years. We have added two child care centres and before- and after-school programs. In the last year, we have two new sites that have opened.

Our local plans include the renovation of our 1938 building, which is a decommissioned school that we purchased in 2003. It is our main YMCA building, and while this building is old, it is an excellent facility. The renovations will help us to have a better community.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We've utilized all our time, so we will go to questions and we will start with the opposition side. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Did you want to just finish?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: I had one sentence left that said—now that I've flipped all of my pages—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Do it.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Working within our building, schools and city parks, we are focused on collaborating with other agencies and providing programming for the youth of our city. We want the youth who started in our child care to continue to use our services throughout their lives, and our goal is to create a healthy community.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay, thank you. Just to clear the air—I'm going to ask you questions about child care, but do you provide any housing? Some of the YMCAs in my community provide shelter—

Ms. Sheila Dunn: No, we do not provide housing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. Some of the things that you talked about that are critical to continue to offer—affordable, quality child care, and the subsidies—do you feel that those subsidies are under threat or are they changing? Are they adequate?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: At the present moment, they are adequate. We have been very fortunate, in the last few years, with opening up our new centres with our collaboration with the local DSSAB, which is basically government funding. If the funding goes down, we won't be able to offer the rates that we do right now for child care. The child care rates would go up drastically. If the extra funding that we get for wage enhancement were to disappear, coming up with an extra \$2 an hour for staff is impossible.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. One of the things that you provide is public, quality, affordable child care. It's my understanding, from what I know about child care, that the most difficult and the most expensive to deliver is infant child care. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Infant child care is definitely—it has a ratio of three children to one staff. Staffing goes up with time, so that's the biggest component of it. There's also a lot more stuff in the room, I guess, a lot more of keeping an eye on infants at that age.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Why do you think the ratio is so high? What are the reasons for the ratio in infant care? It seems obvious, but I want you to just say why they are there.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Have you had three infants? That's the ratio that the government has put in place, and it's a ratio of 3 to 1 for children to an adult. Most of the time, it's going really well, and some days you wish it was a one-on-one ratio.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's about keeping kids safe, right?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Yes; sorry. That's probably what you're going with, but yes. It's all about safety, yes.

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Ms. Sandy Shaw: One of the things I wanted to ask—maybe you could help me understand—is that the government has announced in Bill 66 a number of changes. They're talking about cutting red tape, and one of the things they're talking about is the number of children who can be in private home daycares. Can you talk a little bit about if you have any concerns about that?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Possibly some concerns about delivering it.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: I haven't done it in a home child care setting.

It depends on the age of your infants, I would say. It's whether you've got three of them who are sitting there at three months or you've got one at three months and two at 18 months. It's all how it goes, and then when they're looking in the home child care settings, there's definitely a different structure because it's a mixed age grouping.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sandy, I've got a short question. How much time do we have?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Bisson, there's only 30 seconds.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: When you said you were having a problem attracting staff, is it ECEs or all staff?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: It's both. It's a continuous hiring process. We have gone through a lot of hiring because we have opened two new centres in the last year.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How many people are you short now?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: As of today, we have enough ECEs. As of a month from now, we're going to need another one. Whether we find another one, I'm not sure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you for that questioning. Now we'll go over to the government side. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: I have a Y in my area—and of course there are many around, but I'm very involved with it. In addition to their child care, they do some in the schools as well, so I wasn't clear if this was on site in one location or if you have—

Ms. Sheila Dunn: We run with five before- and after-school programs in schools and we have one at our main location as well.

Mr. Doug Downey: Okay, interesting.

You touched on employment and the importance for training and that sort of thing, but you're not quite in that business at the moment—employment services.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: No.

Mr. Doug Downey: In my area, they run the summer company. Coincidentally, the group that was up before you started a summer company. So I guess there are different models around the province for that delivery agent.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Yes, with a subcontract, it would have gone out for the training portion of it. We don't have that.

Mr. Doug Downey: Okay. I caught in passing—you talked about the increasing wages and how that has put a squeeze on parents' ability to afford.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Correct.

Mr. Doug Downey: I just wanted to tease that out a little bit.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: You watch it happen—and I watch it because I see the finances of people. The funding within the fee subsidy program provided by the government in our region is set up so that you go and you say how much income you have. If you don't have much when you're just starting out, you'd be fully subsidized. Some of them start out with—they're in the grocery stores. They're here or there. Some of them start out by going to school. They're fully subsidized. They get that first job. Their parental contribution starts to go up because they're making more money. They finally reach the stage where they're getting into a fairly decent job. Then they're no longer fully subsidized; they're making too much. But they're really not making enough to pay all their bills. So all of a sudden, I have a family that gets behind by one month; they get behind by two months. They just can't afford it.

Now they're no longer looking at child care in our building, or they just decide, "It's not worth my while. I can't work in order to do this right now"—and we have had parents who have said, "I can't afford to work."

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: You can continue. Just how much is daycare?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Here, it is \$39 per day.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Per child?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Per child for a full day. It's \$26 a day for half a day.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Is there a family rate?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: We go with a 10% deduction for two or more children. Infant rates are \$43 a day. They are extremely low for what we are offering the parents. Those that are subsidized—you get paid \$60 a day for them, which is much closer to the going rate for infant care.

Ms. Donna Skelly: But to be very clear, it's also based on income.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: We have our rates that we put out, and then the parents can go to the social services admin board and apply to have a reduction in their wages. That's paid through their fee subsidy.

Ms. Donna Skelly: And you have enough spaces? Is there a demand for—

Ms. Sheila Dunn: We have a fairly long waiting list for infants. We have been working really hard in the past year with opening buildings, but the waiting list is coming down to a much more reasonable wait.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): My apologies. Just 35 seconds left. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Will the change in ratios in Bill 66 help with that waiting list?

Ms. Sheila Dunn: The changes in ratios were just for home—

Mr. Doug Downey: Well, I'm asking if it would affect you.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: Oh. The home issues don't affect us. I'm going to just say, I'm drawing a blank on what the correct answer to that one is.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

Ms. Sheila Dunn: I very much appreciate having the chance.

FORT ALBANY FIRST NATION

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'll call up our next presenter, Fort Albany First Nation. Good afternoon. Welcome. Please state your name for the record, and you'll have up to seven minutes.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: Thank you. Meegwetch. Terry Metatawabin.

Remarks in Cree.

Thank you very much to the standing committee. I'm from Fort Albany First Nation. It's a remote community on the west coast of James Bay.

Just to share a little personal journey: I came on the ice road. The cost of a litre of gas up there is \$3.05, so it cost

me 400 bucks just to fill up my truck. It was an eight-hour drive through rivers, through the lakes, and it was quite a journey to get here.

I just want to get into my presentation. It's actually broken down into three components. One is the consultation. Another component is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action. The third component, which is probably more relevant to our discussion today, is about economic reconciliation and how we can reconcile the commitment.

Chief Leo sends his regrets.

I'm going to do my best to get through this seven minutes—but if you appreciate my eight-hour journey here, I appreciate the time.

I'll start off my presentation by asking: Why does the crown have a duty to consult Indigenous peoples? Well, the crown's duty to consult has its source in the honour of the crown and the constitutional protection accorded Indigenous rights and treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

I thought I'd cite three Supreme Court rulings. One of them is, "Consultation must be meaningful." That was from the Chief Justice, regarding a 2004 ruling. The second one was, "A commitment to the process does not require a duty to agree. But it does require good faith efforts to understand each other's concerns and move to address them." That was a recent court ruling, in 2004. And the other court ruling is, "The principle of consultation in advance of interference with existing treaty rights is a matter of broad general importance to the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples." That was Justice Binnie on the Mikisew decision, back in 2005.

Next, I thought I'd ask the question: When does the crown have a duty to consult Indigenous peoples? It's when the crown has knowledge, real or constructive, of the potential existence of an Indigenous right or treaty right; and when the crown contemplates conduct that might adversely affect the right in question. And it's important to note that "free, prior and informed consent" is the inclusion, participation and consultation of an Indigenous, leadership and citizens' population prior to the beginning of any discussions, meetings and development on our ancestral lands or traditional territory.

Before I go on to the next thing, I just want to acknowledge Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon, who probably touched on that this morning regarding the oral history of treaties.

Secondly, I'm going to get into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report, which was released in 2015. There are 94 recommendations, but I thought I'd just touch on three that are relevant to our discussions today:

Call to action: "(2) We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, to prepare and ... educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians."

Call to action: "(18) We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in

Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools, and to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law, and under the treaties.”

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Call to action: “(43) We call upon federal, provincial, territorial ... governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.”

The other heading is “Professional Development and Training for Public Servants,” and the call to action is number 57: “We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–crown relations.” I just want to make this last sentence really clear here: “This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”

Bear with my English here. I always try my best at translating Cree, but I’m sure I’ll get through this.

On “Education for Reconciliation,” call to action number 62: “We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

“(i) Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary”—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: —“contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for kindergarten to grade 12 students.”

Economic reconciliation requires true commitment. That’s in three areas: capital, land certainty and training. Just a note on the land certainty: Direct foreign investment is 50% of what it was 10 years ago. The uncertainty over Indigenous treaties is beginning to impact Canada’s bottom line. This will only worsen without true equity and business participation.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We’ll start with questions from the government side. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you for your long journey. I have to say, although it’s not our norm, if we wrap up and you’re still here, I’m sure we’ll have more questions.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: Okay.

Mr. Doug Downey: But thank you for coming.

Some of the recommendations out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report talk about the federal duty to consult. If I can have you maybe speak to the provincial role in that duty to consult. I just want to say—I’m a lawyer—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We won’t hold that against you.

Mr. Doug Downey: —you’ve made it as clear as I’ve ever heard it. Please, if you would, speak to the provincial role.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: It’s important to have a parallel relationship. The federal have a treaty obligation to a certain extent, but the provincial government is aware that they’re infringing on our rights because the question is entitlement to the land, right? So when the First Nations stakeholder hears the province exercise rights to permitting in our territory while understanding the feds have an obligation as a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that the treaty rights are protected—that’s where the gaps are. It’s important to have that framework of collaboration between the two parties.

Mr. Doug Downey: Do you have examples, or can you give us some guidance on where the province is on a scale of 1 to 10? How well do they get it, if I can put it that way?

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: If you look at the data we have through census Canada and the reports that the First Nation leaders have been giving, I would say that the measuring stick from 1 to 10 is a 2 out of 10. We have to take ownership, though, of that measuring tool, because if we had true equity, ownership, participation, we wouldn’t be at this table talking about our conditions—our overcrowding and health issues and child welfare. I think there’s a huge equity gap, and that’s how we measure and that’s why I say it’s 2 out of 10.

Mr. Doug Downey: In terms of a pathway to a 10, can you give you us some insights on what I’ll call the low-hanging fruit, some pieces that we can do now as we work towards the harder ones?

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: One of the initial investments we have to do is—in my report, I said there’s a high youth population. I truly believe that if you stimulate our economy through education and innovation through the youth, you would see a huge return in the future for this economic development.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions? No?

Okay, we’ll go to the opposition side. Mr. Bourguin?

Mr. Guy Bourguin: Thank you for coming. Give my regards to the chief. You were talking about the investments in your community that there need to be. Where would you like the government to involve you more? Also, I would like to hear from you about the cancellation in the schools regarding the—what was it?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The curriculum.

Mr. Guy Bourguin: The curriculum—and how the First Nations felt about this program being cancelled.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: When we first heard about it—I’ll answer your last question first. On the curriculum, we’re very disappointed, because we have skilled community members who went to school for this field. When we heard that news, we were very disappointed.

We’re trying to find mechanisms to keep it going, but when you look at the costs of living up there, it’s hard to move money around, right?

Maybe you can just elaborate again on your first question.

Mr. Guy Bourguin: I would probably want to hear more from you, because the Grand Chief touched on

housing and all that. I've seen some communities, and the housing. That's why I would like the panel to hear more. In your community, how much housing is missing? Because I know there are multiple generations living in one house.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: That's a good question because right now, there is major overcrowding. Right now, if we look at the density ratios per unit, they are very high—almost three times higher than the national standard.

I'm going to get back to your question, though, when you say, "Where can we participate?" It's important that when you meet with the northern communities, I would encourage the standing committee just to see the people within the community. I think if Fort Albany had a chance, we would love to host the standing committee and just have that discussion. I think that would go a long way with our community members. I can't bring a team here because it costs us a lot of money, and we're trying to be as responsible as we can with the funds that we have, our limited funds. But you would be more than welcome to have—that would be one answer: Meet with the Far North communities, and I think you would really have an eye-opener of how our existence is what keeps us strong as a community.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can I—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Yes, Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Grand Chief Solomon said—and it's something I'm sure you agree with and have said yourself—it was always the understanding of your forefathers that, in fact, you never gave up title to the land. It was all about sharing.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The question I have for you is to respond to the following: After 100 years of not sharing, on our part, the bounties of the land, you're still prepared to share. What gives you that generosity? What drives you? Because a lot of people would have given up by now.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: I think that's a great question, because what rang through my thought process was my grandfather Abraham Metatawabin. He received the Order of Canada from Adrienne Clarkson. I had a chance to go into the governor's office.

It's that relationship. We protected this land in the best interests for the future of Canada. My understanding is, we're supposed to share in the existence of that wealth. We still stand tall today, and we really want to work forward in getting stronger and healthier as a nation. As an alliance, if we align with each other, I think we can make a difference. I know there is party divide and everything, but the nations are always coming in the middle to make sure that our footprint is acknowledged, and going forward as we participate in the future developments.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: Thank you very much. Meegwetch.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Point of order, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think it's important that we mention that we did move a motion from the NDP side that we do go to these fly-in communities. I think it's important that we will push to correct that, that we need to come and see the Far North before we can begin to make recommendations or decisions.

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Mr. Terry Metatawabin: Like I said, Fort Albany is more than welcome to host you. We'll do our best. We have a very state-of-the-art school there that I think you'll be impressed with.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, thank you very much.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Still in the same condition as when it was built 20 years ago.

Mr. Terry Metatawabin: Exactly, yes.

Okay. Miywasin. Thank you, Chair. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you.

TIMMINS AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move on to our next presenter. It's the Timmins and District Labour Council.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Sorry, Mr. Bisson. Thank you, but we have to move on.

If you could please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: Sure. My name is J.P. Desilets. Would you like me to spell that?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): That's okay. We have it.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: Okay. Good afternoon. As the president of the Timmins and District Labour Council, I would like to focus upon the need to invest where it matters most: the working people of Ontario.

The mantra that this government promotes on a daily basis is that they are intent on governing for the people. I will challenge this panel to review a number of provisions that were contained within the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act and consider how they benefited the people.

Quite frankly, utilizing the terminology "for the people" should represent what is in the best interests of the majority of the population, who are willing to trade their skills and efforts every day of the year in the hopes of earning a fair wage. Thankfully, we live in a society that recognizes the need to establish a baseline. It is incumbent upon government to recognize what a living wage truly is, and establish that as the minimum wage. Re-implementing the \$15-an-hour minimum wage should be viewed by this committee as an important first step to providing dignity in being a member of the workforce that drives the economic engine of this province. It is a sound economic investment, as virtually every dollar invested by these

hard-working people will be spent within their local marketplace.

In keeping with the theme of dignity in the workplace, there are a host of other measures from the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act that should be reconsidered, primarily the personal emergency leave provision. I've heard the Premier himself state that this is not needed because reasonable people can work things out between themselves. I would challenge the Premier to substantiate that statement with concrete examples. Two paid days is a small measure that all too often could mean so much to those caught in a personal emergency. I would gladly welcome questions on that after I'm done with this.

Additionally, respecting those who are willing to fill the most precarious positions in our ever-changing workplace by providing suitable notice of scheduling, proper classification, and a viable opportunity to consider unionization should be returned.

A strong, democratic voice in the workplace is not something that should be diminished. Rather, unions provide an opportunity to work collaboratively towards shared goals.

I truly fear the direction this government may be headed toward, given the unique opportunity we find ourselves in. Once again, I will call upon this government to remain true to its pledge "for the people."

As we are in the north today, I would be remiss if I did not tackle some of the issues that are unique to this area. We have been bestowed with a veritable bevy of resources that should represent a path of shared wealth for all the citizens of this province. Alas, many a community in the surrounding area has been decimated by ill-informed policy directions of past governments. Ideally, our resources will play a vital role in the development of a green economy supported by the appropriate government policies.

I would like to leave you with a concluding thought: Declaring that a province—and by extension, its people—is open for business is inherently wrong. A business model focuses on the mandate concept of money and wealth. If the plan fails, there is an unenviable escape route of claiming bankruptcy. The same cannot be said for people and their respective lives. We should not foolishly focus on a bottom-line mentality when that which is real, the lives and living standards of the people of Ontario, is at stake. This government needs to re-evaluate what proclaiming to be "for the people" actually means.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, thank you very much. We'll start questions from the opposition side. Mr. Bisson?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't have far to go.

Thank you very much for your presentation. Just picking up on the last point that you made in regard to—if all governments do is focus on what's good for business, there's a whole bunch of other people out there, quite frankly, who are going to have some difficulty—kids with special needs; patients in hospitals; the condition of our

highways in the winter. So maybe you can expand on that a bit.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: I couldn't agree with you more on that, because in my role as a union president for the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, a lot of that hits home with me. I visit schools often and I see kids—actually, if I can expand on a story that's personal to me: My sister adopted three children who couldn't be accommodated in one system, so she had no choice but to place them somewhere else to make sure—because they were special-needs kids. That's a failure of the system as a whole. That's just unacceptable in this day and age.

To touch upon living in the north and our highways, it shouldn't be a matter of going 50 kilometres an hour just for your own personal safety.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There was an interesting article written by their favourite journalist, Martin Regg Cohn from the Toronto Star, where he talked about the changes to the tuition system, college funding and all that stuff. But one of the things that he touched on was that the government is making it possible for students to opt out of paying student fees. So it means that a lot of organizations, campus clubs and others, that normally get funding because of the student fees could be in danger of losing funding and not getting it. But he went the next step, which is, this might be an attack on the Rand formula. In other words, maybe you don't have to be part of a union if you choose not to. Are there any fears that this government may go that far?

Mr. J.P. Desilets: I'll go back to the fact that it seemed to be at the forefront of the thinking of Tim Hudak, from what he had said to us. Again, I will use the terminology I use in here. I think that would be inherently wrong because, as I said, there's so much that can be done when you work together to find solutions to issues. By removing that voice in the form of unions, you're setting yourself back.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We just had Rayonier that was here before, and Mr. Black, who is the Canadian head person for Rayonier. One of the things that he went out of the way to say was that it was the collaboration between the union and the employer that allowed that company—and you know well; you lived in Smooth Rock Falls. It was the co-operation from those two parties that allowed that company, first, to restructure in 1993 when we did the first worker ownership, but also that allowed that company to succeed since then. Maybe just comment on the positive aspect that a trade union brings to the workplace.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: Yes, and maybe to get a little technical on that, one of the things that was key to that is being competitive and, in that sense, the EBB trade flex model, where the way things used to be done once upon a time is no longer reflective of a competitive workplace. In that sense, they pushed and found a collaborative solution to that.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Do you want to expand on that?

Mr. J.P. Desilets: Just in terms of what EBB flex trades would be?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: In that sense, if a welder was at a job site with a pipefitter and a millwright, in the past they would get someone over at the labour pool to do the job. In that sense, the union, with the company, negotiates, saying that you can take a more active role in certain jobs. You're not going to do the role of someone else, but everyone is going to have something to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How many locals are part of your labour council now?

Mr. J.P. Desilets: I'll say about two dozen.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Two dozen, and very active, from what I can see outside today.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Congratulations.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll go to the government side for questions: Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much for taking the time to present to us today. I really appreciate it.

My question was around skills training. We inherited a \$3.5-billion skilled trades gap that we were intent, both in the election and now as a government, on reducing in ensuring we get our next generation with the skills set and competencies they need to succeed. Critical to that will be investing in the skilled trades.

I was wondering if you could speak on, obviously, the ratio changes and the roles that unions can play. We've had a number of productive discussions at MTCU with unions on skills retraining and on skills training in a post-College of Trades world. If you could just touch on the importance of skilled trades, where we can head as a government, and the important role unions can play in skills training and retraining.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: It's interesting, because that plays into what I do for a living, and that's working with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Right from the grassroots of that, you're going to have a critical shortage of those types of people to teach in the classroom. It starts right there in terms of teaching the next generation.

If you really want to tackle that issue, you have to look at what you had once upon a time in terms of taking qualified tech people and giving them an opportunity to train over two summers to become a teacher. Somewhere along the line, that fell by the wayside. In tackling that issue from square one, you're not prepared for that group of teachers that is probably going to retire in about 2025, and there's no replacement for them. So if you're not training the kids in the classroom—you have to back it up a little further and look at it from where we are going from high school, let alone once we get to the college route and apprenticeships.

1530

Mr. David Piccini: Do you think guidance counsellors in high school have an important role to play in that?

Mr. J.P. Desilets: Absolutely, and I think we've come a long way in that regard. I'll speak from when I was in high school, when maybe that was looked down upon. But now, in terms of gainful employment within a year or two

out of high school, I think guidance counsellors can be influential in encouraging people to do what they're good at.

Mr. David Piccini: Thanks very much. I appreciate that.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions?

Okay, thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. J.P. Desilets: Thank you.

TIMMINS, COCHRANE
AND TIMISKAMING DISTRICTS
ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'll call up our next presenter. It's the Timmins, Cochrane and Timiskaming Districts Association of Realtors. Good afternoon, and welcome to the finance committee. If you could just please state your names for the record, and get right into your presentation. You have up to seven minutes.

Mr. Michel Blais: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Michel Blais, and I am the president of the Timmins, Cochrane and Timiskaming Districts Association of Realtors. I am also a real estate broker at Realty Networks Inc. brokerage here in Timmins.

To my right with me today is Steve Kotan, sales representative at Royal LePage North Bay, and northern director on the board of the Ontario Real Estate Association.

Our organization covers a vast geographic territory across most of northern Ontario. Our members proudly serve clients from Timiskaming to Kirkland Lake, from Kapuskasing to Hearst, and from New Liskeard to Haileybury, just to name a few. Our 115 members are active in communities right across the northeast.

As this committee travels the province to hear about issues that are important to people in advance of the 2019 Ontario budget, we thought it important to be here today to provide you with the northern context of an issue that has become a problem for people right across Ontario. The issue is the lack of supply of housing, and the affordability of home ownership in Ontario.

I sometimes worry that the lack of housing supply is too often thought of as a problem that only exists in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, known as the GTHA. Members of the committee, we are here today to tell you that this is a problem right here in Timmins and across northern Ontario. The problem is Ontario's housing supply crisis. That's the problem: We have a crisis in housing.

The dream of owning a home is not limited to any specific region in Ontario. Like others, northerners place great importance on home ownership, and we are concerned that it is becoming increasingly difficult for too many of us to find the right home for our families in the north. Today, right here in Timmins, many are searching for their first home. Unfortunately, many will discover that, for them, the Canadian dream is moving further and further away from them.

Currently in our communities, fewer and fewer houses are on the market. In the last two years, the total number of residential units listed was down approximately 10%. In our district in particular, the lack of supply can be seen right across the housing continuum, including condos, housing for seniors, multi-unit housing and single-family units. Across the board, there is a lack of inventory existing on the market.

For us in the north, this means employers cannot find workers because there is nowhere for them to live. Imagine owning a business and wanting to expand, but being unable to do so because prospective employees cannot find a home to live in.

We also know of seniors who are looking to downsize from a large home in which they've spent much of their lives, but there is nothing for them to downsize to. We know of young people who may have moved away for school or other reasons and who want to return to their home in northern Ontario but cannot, because there are no homes for them to return to.

We need to see bold action from this government to help address the housing supply crisis that exists in northern Ontario and right across the province.

In northern Ontario, affordability starts with increasing the supply of homes, which is why we support the government's decision to launch a housing supply action plan. One solution that realtors would like to discuss with the committee is looking at ways to adjust development charges in a way that better incents the building of homes that are desperately needed here in northern Ontario.

Development charges: There are many fees, charges and taxes that contribute significantly to the cost of housing and in some cases may disincent developers from building homes altogether. While development charges are not utilized by every municipality in the north, they can be particularly high in communities that do, and we believe they are contributing significantly to the lack of supply. We encourage the government to work with municipalities and others to examine ways to adjust development charges to incent housing construction to better allow supply to meet the current demand.

Mr. Steve Kotan: We would also like to ask committee members to consider the necessary changes that would allow for realtors to form personal real estate corporations. The Real Estate and Business Brokers Act currently prevents real estate salespeople and brokers from self-incorporating. Other regulated professionals are permitted to form personal corporations, and we believe this tax structure will encourage realtors to reinvest in their companies and ultimately hire more staff.

KPMG has conducted an analysis of the economic impact of permitting real estate professionals to incorporate, and they found that personal real estate corporations will not cause a loss of government tax revenue over time.

I was at Queen's Park last year to support MPP Bob Bailey during the introduction of Bill 38, the Tax Fairness for Real Estate Professionals Act, 2018. The bill received all-party support in the House, which we think speaks to the momentum that is behind this initiative.

Eliminating the impediments to allowing realtors to incorporate would be a great way to cut red tape and create jobs. That's why we encourage the government to make the necessary legislative change, either through the budget bill, another piece of legislation—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Steve Kotan: —or reform of the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, that will allow realtors to form personal real estate corporations.

In conclusion, realtors in northern Ontario want to work with the government to address the housing supply crisis that exists here in the north and right across Ontario as well. A lack of supply of housing and the corresponding effect that this has on the price of homes has put the dream of home ownership at risk for many Ontarians.

Our organization supports the province's housing supply action plan and encourages MPPs to support the thousands of young families who today are struggling to find a home that meets the needs of their family in the community in which they want to live.

We'd be happy to answer any of your questions at this time. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We'll start questioning with the government side. Mr. Cho.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, gentlemen. It's nice to see you again, Steve.

I have a lot of questions. Obviously, I'm not unfamiliar with your world, being a real estate broker for almost two decades, but help me to understand some of the unique challenges here in the north. Michel, you touched on some of them. I didn't hear any discussions about the rental market. What's going on in the north with that?

Mr. Michel Blais: There's a shortage of affordable rental spaces. We are a transient community surrounded by mining activity. A lot of times, workers parachute in and occupy a lot of rental units, leaving a shortage of available units that are affordable to individuals. So there is a shortage in supply; specifically, for two-bedroom units. It's foreseeable that somebody would want to pay \$800 to \$900 for the two-bedroom units, but there's a lack of those units available.

Mr. Stan Cho: Are you aware of a specific reason why two-bedroom units are the more popular choice? We see the same phenomenon in Toronto now, as well.

Mr. Michel Blais: There are different reasons, but some of it is because of subsidies. Some people are limited to a pension that would only afford them \$600 per month per individual, so sharing a two-bedroom unit makes sense to them. A lot of young families will start off in a two-bedroom apartment unit and then eventually stay in this area or move on.

Also, we see an influx of students coming from further north or even sometimes from out of town to enjoy our facilities—because we have good education facilities here—and they share a unit of two bedrooms, which is a cost of about \$400 each.

1540

Mr. Stan Cho: That's interesting.

Has there been a lack of purpose-built apartment product from the development community in the north?

Mr. Michel Blais: Yes, there has been. In the year ending 2018, for multi-family units, there were only 67 permits taken out.

Mr. Stan Cho: Sixty-seven permits. Do you know why that might be?

Mr. Michel Blais: Developmental cost is a prohibiting factor for local developers that I speak to. It is costly; there is not enough incentive for them to break ground.

Mr. Stan Cho: So too much cost, a lack of incentives and a lack of rental products being built contribute to higher rental prices overall?

Mr. Michel Blais: Correct, yes.

Mr. Stan Cho: Okay. And you spoke about DCs earlier, as well. Can you tell me who you think pays eventually? Even if a developer does go through the DCs, who pays for those DCs, in your opinion?

Mr. Michel Blais: Well, the public pays for any incentive, as taxpayers, but at the end, the end user always pays for development costs, right?

Mr. Stan Cho: I see. So the builder rolls in those development—

Mr. Michel Blais: The builder will always factor them into the end price tag, which becomes—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Michel Blais: It puts builders in an area where the house won't resell. The average resale of a house here is under \$200,000. To build a three-bedroom residential unit, you'd have to sell it for \$320,000 to make a \$28,000 profit after taking all the risk.

Mr. Stan Cho: Interesting paradox, then. By increasing development charges to try and increase revenue for the municipalities, you're actually driving up the housing market and exacerbating the problem. Fascinating: similar trends to what we see in Toronto. Thank you so much for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move to questions from the opposition side. Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But the development charges in Timmins aren't \$120,000 per property. You're not suggesting that the entire \$200,000 to \$320,000 is development charges?

Mr. Michel Blais: No, and that's a good point. It depends on—first of all, you have to purchase the lot to build on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's right.

Mr. Michel Blais: Which varies from, in this community, between \$50,000 and \$110,000, depending on the zoning.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So, on average, how much is it per property, let's say, in Timmins? I don't know what it would be.

Mr. Michel Blais: An average property, to build?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, no. For the average property, the percentage of the cost the development charges reflect on the sale of the house.

Mr. Michel Blais: Good question. I don't have the immediate answer but I could get back to you on that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, because part of the problem is that, up here, we tend to build our own houses. At least that's what I did a couple of times. Material costs are higher today than they were. Labour costs are higher than they were. Development charges are part of it, but the larger part is, really, all of that other stuff, and we have a limited market that we're selling into in the city of Timmins. My daughter bought a house—and I don't understand it to this day—in Whitby at \$750,000. Three years later, it's a million bucks. A million bucks for a house? I have a house and a cottage—which is another house—on Kamiskotia Lake. The two of them aren't worth \$500,000. So it's a limited market.

I want to go back to your original point in regard to incorporation. There was all-party support in the previous Parliament when it comes to this particular issue. Are you getting any kind of indication that the government is going to bring forward a government bill or something to finally deal with this? Because we've dealt with it now, I think, two or three times.

Mr. Steve Kotan: Mr. Bisson, I believe that probably the easiest way to deal with this problem is through reform of the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and allowing us to form personal real estate corporations.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Has there been any indication that that might be happening?

Mr. Steve Kotan: I do believe there are consultations in place with the government and with OREA. A task force is discussing those implementations.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I also notice that the federal government—I think it was the Minister of Finance today, because there are by-elections and, of course, now they're interested in housing all of a sudden, who alluded to doing something about home ownership. Did you catch any of that?

Mr. Steve Kotan: No, I didn't catch anything with regard to that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Be wary of any Liberal that offers you something prior to an election. That's all I can tell you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We have a minute and 20 seconds, if there are any further questions. No? Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Keep on trucking, as they say, my friends.

Mr. Steve Kotan: Thank you very much for your time.

MS. AMY MOLAND-OSBORNE

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'll call up our next presenter, Amy Moland-Osborne. Thank you for coming to the committee here. If you could just state your name for the record, and you'll have seven minutes to present.

Ms. Amy Moland-Osborne: Thank you for having me. My name is Amy Moland-Osborne. I work as a registered midwife. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I'm here to address the funding cuts to the College of Midwives of Ontario by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as announced in November 2018 by the

health minister. These cuts will affect me as an individual, and they will affect my family, other midwives like myself, and also child-bearing families in Ontario.

There are currently 956 registered midwives in Ontario. We are autonomous, regulated health care providers, fully funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care since 1994. Midwives are able to provide primary care for up to 40 clients per year. Our level of compensation is determined by the Ministry of Health. This means that the earning potential of a registered midwife is fixed, and it is completely dependent upon the decision-makers at the ministry.

In 2013, the Association of Ontario Midwives filed an application with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario against the government of Ontario. This legal action, brought by the AOM on behalf of close to 800 midwives, alleged that midwives have experienced a gender penalty in their pay, set by the government, for almost two decades. In September 2018, the Human Rights Tribunal declared that midwives have indeed suffered a historical gender-based pay injustice by the Ministry of Health. The tribunal recommended that the government and midwives sit down to collaborate on a resolution to the HRTO finding. However, the government has made it very clear that they have no intention of collaborating with midwives and that they plan to appeal the finding of the tribunal.

It is estimated that midwives currently earn 48% less than the value at which their work has been appraised.

The unique and delicate nature of midwifery work means that it is a profession that is highly regulated in order to assure safe and quality care for child-bearing families. It costs money to ensure that the quality of care that midwives have delivered for 25 years stays that way. Up until now, these costs have been shared between the membership and the ministry.

The ministry understood our unique situation at the onset of regulation in 1994, and agreed that helping to finance the College of Midwives was in the best interests of midwives as well as our clients, and in fact, this could be seen as a pay equity tool. The Ministry of Health kept this commitment for the past 25 years, until the current government decided to cut this funding in November 2018.

It seems more than coincidental that 25 years of funding was cut less than two months after the government was found responsible for pay inequity towards midwives. It certainly feels like the ministry is retaliating against midwives for the HRTO claim, and it is clear that public opinion mirrors this sentiment.

Midwives have been battling for pay equity with the Ministry of Health for over two decades. We are chronically underpaid for the amount and the quality of work that we do.

The demands on midwives are mentally, emotionally and physically enormous. Most midwives work a reduced caseload in order to survive the demands of the job.

Since 2008, I have had to cut my caseload by 25% in order to maintain my mental and physical health, but mostly to ensure that I am providing the quality of care

that my clients deserve and expect. This means that the care my clients receive remains unparalleled, but my quality of life, as well as the quality of life of my family, has suffered. I am on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for most of the year. I have lost 25% of my earning potential over 10 years, my professional fees are skyrocketing, and I have suffered a pay equity penalty of close to 48%.

Every midwife in Ontario pays the same licensing fee, regardless of their caseload. This means that if a midwife earns a part-time wage, it is more difficult for her to offset the cost of licensing than if she were to work full-time. Given that midwives rely on the ministry to determine their rate of pay, a midwife cannot simply charge more for her services in order to make up for the expense of licensing. Given that midwives are capped in the number of clients for whom they can provide care, a midwife cannot simply take on more clients in order to make up for the expense of licensing.

There are over 120 Canadian midwife members of a recently created online group dedicated to those considering leaving the profession. Reasons cited for leaving are the usual stressors of the job, including being on call, being responsible for the lives of mothers and babies, caps on hospital privileges and restrictions to our scope of practice imposed by hospitals, but the straw that is breaking the proverbial camel's back across Ontario is the financial strain of working as a midwife.

1550

The Ministry of Health is aware that clients who are under midwifery care undergo fewer interventions, have shorter or no hospital stays, have higher rates of breastfeeding and lower rates of hospital readmission and, as such, provide a cost savings to the province.

I urge the ministry and the government to look ahead at the implications of downloading the financial demands of the regulation of the midwifery profession onto the backs of individual midwives who are already suffering from an over-two-decades-long pay penalty. Is the \$800,000 per year saved by the province worth pushing midwives out of the profession? What will be the cost to the province when the deliverers of exceptional maternal and neonatal care leave the sector? Who will care for families the way that midwives do? What will be the cost to mothers and babies?

Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We'll start with questions from the opposition side. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for your testimony. I would like to start by saying that I have two children and five grandchildren who are all here thanks to midwives—only one doctor intervention in all of those. So I want to thank you. I understand the importance of the care that you provide in giving women the ability to have control over their delivery experience. I fully respect and appreciate—I don't even want to say your professionalism, but your commitment to women's health and well-being. It goes beyond just delivering babies; it's about empowering

women to make choices in one of the most important moments of their lives and their babies' lives.

What I hear you saying is that, in fact, this government hasn't just failed midwives and their profession; really, they are failing mothers, babies and their families by doing something that is detrimental to the ongoing ability to provide this service that most women would like to see available, if they so choose.

I guess my question specifically is around this government's cuts and eliminating things that seem random in some regard. First of all, was the midwifery association consulted in any way before this funding was cut? Second of all, if you were consulted, was there any rationale given to you on why this has happened?

Ms. Amy Moland-Osborne: When midwifery was established in 1993, the goal was for the profession to become self-sustaining and that, like all other regulated professionals, the membership would be able to sustain the cost of licensing. Midwifery was the only professional body that was still receiving subsidy from the government. The reason for that is because of the small number of midwives and because of the high demand of human resources that are involved in regulating the profession.

The goal was eventually to become self-sustaining and not require funding. That has always been the long-term goal of the College of Midwives, and they've made that very clear. However, we haven't reached that point yet. We haven't reached that sweet spot where there is enough membership to subsidize the cost. But I don't believe that there was any foreshadowing that this would end when it did.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Would it not seem reasonable to you and to me that rather than it being this abrupt cut of important funding for these important professionals, it would be something that would be done in consultation with the experts with 25 years of experience, and also, perhaps, even if the idea was to be self-sustaining, that it would be a graduated approach, rather than this abrupt cut that has clearly destabilized the professionals who want to get into this business or who are in it?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Don't you think that that would be something that would be more reasonable and prudent than just this abrupt cut without any kind of consultation—and really with the shadow over this whole thing that it seems like it's punitive because of the human rights appeal?

Ms. Amy Moland-Osborne: My understanding is that the funding has been gradually being cut since the onset of funding in the early 1990s. But \$800,000 is not close to being the end of it. Also of note, the funding was cut retroactively to April, so the college has been working since April up until now with no funding.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So we would see that as something dragging the province backwards. It's not a good change for the province. Again, I would say that the services you're providing are vital to women's health and well-being.

I support your work, and I hope that you don't leave this industry. I hope that we can weather through this black cloud that we've seen over this important service—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We're going to move to the government side for questioning, Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much for your presentation today. We appreciate it.

All government members here recognize and value the work that midwives do.

I think it's really important that we set the record straight. We just checked in with Treasury Board, and, as government, we've had these ongoing discussions. No funding cuts have been made to the College of Midwives, period, full stop. For that to occur, it has to go through processes in government. We just double-checked with Treasury Board and then cabinet, and it just hasn't happened. I think it's really important, when we have these sorts of discussions, and for the benefit of everyone who has come today and everyone who's watching, that we actually discuss the facts. No funding cuts have been made.

In the context of multi-year planning—and as you alluded to, we know that the College of Midwives is the only regulatory body in Ontario that does receive funding from government, and I think, as you alluded to, the original intent was always down the road. So in the purpose of multi-year planning, I think it's totally normal that government would engage with the college in that discussion. We know that's undergoing, because when we were elected into government—all departments, from mine, health, in my conversations with Christine, are all undergoing multi-year planning.

Of the 38, the College of Midwives is the only one—and I don't know if you're aware, but the ratio of staff members to members of the 38 regulatory bodies is lowest with the College of Midwives. It's a good ratio there; in fact, it's the best in Ontario.

Do you think that in the purpose of multi-year planning, it would be prudent for the ministry to indeed have that conversation?

Ms. Amy Moland-Osborne: That's the conversation that I understand has been taking place for 25 years. This has been an ongoing conversation. My understanding was that on November 8, the ministry did announce that there would be cuts to the funding grant; that this grant would not take place. It was a grant for just under \$800,000; I believe it was a grant for \$790,000. That was actually an announcement that was officially made. It was retroactive to April.

Mr. David Piccini: We have to set the record straight on this: No funding decision regarding the College of Midwives has been made, full stop.

Ms. Amy Moland-Osborne: Do you know when that funding decision should be made, given the announcement that was made?

Mr. David Piccini: I can't—there was no announcement on that.

Interjection.

Mr. David Piccini: Absolutely. The minister mentioned that in question period, Sandy, and I know you were there, so you would have heard that from Minister Elliott as well.

Just in the context of multi-year planning, how much longer would you suggest, then—do you think we should fund more regulatory bodies, fewer regulatory bodies or—

Ms. Amy Moland-Osborne: I'm a clinician. I'm not a financial expert. So I can't make that statement. However, I think what we need to consider is, the dynamic of the midwifery profession has changed quite significantly—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Amy Moland-Osborne: —since 1993. In that time, the scope of practice of midwives has increased significantly. There has been the development of three free-standing birth centres, which has put additional regulatory strain on the College of Midwives. Therefore, the human resource requirements as well as the regulatory requirements have increased significantly. I think if we were still practising the way that we were in 1993, we would have hit our target in terms of being able to fund and self-sustain the profession. However, given the dynamic changes that have happened over the past 25 years, I feel like this is an ongoing—or we haven't really met that balance yet.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

MS. KARLA GAGNON

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'd like to call our next presenter: Karla Gagnon.

Good afternoon. Welcome to the committee. Please state your name for the record, and then you can get into your presentation, up to seven minutes.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: My name is Karla Gagnon. Good afternoon. Thank you for being here and giving me the opportunity to speak for those who cannot, including my son Ben.

I am here before you to speak about the lack of autism and special needs services in the north.

1600

First, let's talk autism. Autismspeaks.ca states, "Autism is a neurobehavioral condition that includes impairments in social interactions, communication and language delays, along with restricted, repetitive behaviours."

Did you know that one in every 66 children is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder? Did you also know that these numbers continue to rise each year? Did you know that children are slipping through the cracks due to the lack of services available to them? I'm sure you are aware of these alarming facts.

Children and adults with autism are affected in varying degrees, some more severe than others, which require more complex services. Regardless of the severity, when these children mature into adulthood, they are left to feel even more isolated, unsure, scared and alone. The reason they feel this way is because at the age of 18, services are no longer provided. This leaves families and the person affected in shambles.

Autism is not a disease. It never goes away. It's for life, their life, and every life should be respected.

OAP, the Ontario Autism Program, states, "Ontario is transforming the way children and youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and their families, receive services through the" OAP. That being said, here is my story.

My husband and I have two children: Audrey, a five-year-old, intuitive, intelligent and compassionate person; and Benjamin, a three-year-old, charming, funny, loving and brilliant little boy who is autistic. In fact, he was just formally and officially diagnosed yesterday. During his second round of speech therapy, his therapist noticed some quirky traits that warranted an assessment for autism. During the time of completing the paperwork, we were informed that the autism assessment clinic in Timmins and district area was cancelled. This sent me into a panic. What now? Do we wait two to three years to be assessed, or come up with the funds to pay for private?

Five weeks after a referral was sent to Hamilton, Ontario, we were off to have Ben assessed. Four weeks post-assessment, Benjamin was diagnosed with moderate autism.

The substantial cost of \$3,000 for the assessment, plus hotel, travel and food, left us feeling defeated and disappointed in our government. It has also left me saddened for the families that simply cannot afford these costs.

I have received letters from families, physicians, therapists and educators, which I have personally assembled into a folder for each of you. This way, you can read each and every single story, as I do not have enough time to present these stories to you in person.

Physicians and nurse practitioners are feeling at a loss, as they cannot provide adequate answers for their patients and families who are struggling with these wait times and lack of services. Mothers and fathers are burning out. Marriages are failing due to stress. Depression is setting in for those feeling defeated. Families are selling their homes and all their assets, to be able to fund their child's needs.

Speech therapists are feeling the effects as they become close with their clients but can no longer provide what the child needs, due to wait times. Social service workers are forced to cut back on therapies with their clients, whom they've spent years building a trusting relationship with.

Do you know how hard it is to gain the trust of an autistic child? It took my son two months to feel comfortable with his Montessori teacher, and she's the best of the best.

Educators are in tears because they see the child sitting in the corner, covering his ears because he cannot handle the 27 other students in the classroom. They are forced to follow a curriculum for an undiagnosed child, who does not thrive because what he really needs is an individualized education plan.

Now, with all that being said, families and caregivers are disheartened as to what to do next. As the wait times are astronomical and can take up to two to three years for an assessment and services, during this time, children are slipping through the cracks, missing critical opportunities

for early intervention such as IBI—intensive behaviour interaction therapy—and ABA—applied behaviour analysis therapy. These children and their families are now in for a challenging journey, one more difficult than originally thought.

There are many children who are struggling deeply because they have not yet been diagnosed. They are being bullied, taunted and made to feel worthless, which creates a recipe for disaster and mental health issues, which is a whole other crisis that we deal with up in the north.

I will end with this: Some of the most famous people who have walked this earth were autistic, paving the way so that you and I could be where we are today. Let's face it: Without Steve Jobs creating Apple, the iPhone which you all have in your hands or in your pockets—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: BlackBerry.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: —or BlackBerry—we'd all be using the Motorola flip-phones. Can you imagine trying to send an email with one of those?

Did you know that Steve Jobs was autistic, along with his friends alike: Einstein, Bill Gates, Emily Dickinson, Jerry Seinfeld, Temple Grandin and my personal favourite, Benjamin? As the great Stephen Shore once said, "If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism."

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We're going to start with questions from the government side. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you for your presentation—very passionate and clear.

We have several members of our caucus who are very aware and engaged in the issue. My law firm did the pro bono work on the Court of Appeal back in the day, when the Wynne government was derelict. I'm working closely with Dr. Howard Bloom, who creates spaces for individuals who are adults with autism. He has two facilities in my riding and a third just outside of the riding—fantastic programs. He employs 200 people in those three facilities. It's really, really cutting-edge stuff.

I just want to ask you, with the geography of the north, what there is, if anything, in terms of respite services.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: It's quite limited. We don't have much up here. In fact, I often say that the north is forgotten, on more than one occasion, especially children with special needs. As you know, NEOFACS has cut services as well, which is limiting respite services within schools, services at home and behavioural therapies. It's leaving people and parents in a panic.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Hi, Ms. Gagnon. Thank you so much for being here today.

I'm not sure if you were here earlier when Mr. Leroux presented, but I was telling Mr. Leroux that I have a younger brother who has autism. As Mr. Downey touched upon, one of the things I mentioned to Marc is that I'm quite hopeful, because we have a lot of people in the Legislature, on both sides of the aisle, who have taken a personal interest in this. I have my younger brother; the MPP from Kitchener has two children with autism; the

MPP from Eglinton–Lawrence has a son with autism; the health minister has a son with special needs. I know sometimes it can be frustrating when you're not seeing it right away, but there are a lot of us who are behind the scenes working on this.

I'm happy to give you my card after. We can have a longer follow-up discussion.

I did a round table up in Sault Ste. Marie two weeks ago on the topic of the OAP and figuring out some of the changes that we can potentially do to work our way through this wait-list. One of the things that a lot of parents were saying at that round table is how important it is, once they get those dollars, to be able to have the flexibility to choose how they use them, whether it's for speech therapy, OT, ABA therapy—whatever it might be. Is that something that you yourself also would support, having that extra choice and flexibility?

Ms. Karla Gagnon: Absolutely. Absolutely. Just receiving the diagnosis yesterday for Benjamin—which we 99% knew he was—when I was speaking to Dr. Sala on the phone, I said, "What do we do now? What do we do?" I made all of my phone calls. I'm still waiting to hear back. But I know he's going to be on a wait-list, so I need to pay out of pocket. I'm going to have to hire someone to come into my home to provide IBI therapy for him, which then takes away from my other child. It takes away from other things with our families.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: And there's a shortage of IBI therapists privately in the DFO system in the north right now, as I understand.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: I'm not even 100% sure if there are any.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Okay.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: So I'm pretty sure that we would have to either—we would likely have to travel.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Sure.

Second quick question—I know we're running out of time. How important is it that we also get the education system right to make sure the OAP is working appropriately?

Ms. Karla Gagnon: It's critical, and it's vital for these children. If we're not giving them what they need in these early intervention years, they're not going to be able to survive when they become adults and become citizens, and be able to just thrive. They're not going to be able to.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure. I appreciate it.

My favourite person with autism is named Dillon.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: That's sweet.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to the opposition side for questions. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't want to be combative here, but I just have to say it: There are reductions that have happened in the system since this government has been elected. I know that the government members care because they have personal experiences that they've had to deal with, but how does it make you feel when you hear that and juxtapose it to what you're experiencing?

1610

Ms. Karla Gagnon: It's heartbreaking. You can't compare the services that are available in the south to the services that are available in the north. There's no comparison, because we have a lack of services. We don't have things readily available at our fingertips, as the south does. Families don't have the funds to be able to pay extra out of their pocket to be able to travel south.

As you can see, if you read any of the emails and the letters that I got from families, there was one touching email in there from a family that lives up the coast of James Bay. It's from grandparents who had to relocate from their community to come to Timmins—which made them feel isolated, unsupported and whatnot—than to receive services in Quebec. They're still waiting; they don't know what to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Have you been given an explanation as to what—they closed the clinic here in Timmins in regard to assessment. I see other people in the back that I know personally that we've dealt together on this issue. What explanation have you been given? And what is being offered as far as hope, for just the testing in itself?

Ms. Karla Gagnon: NEOFACS pulled the funding from the autism assessment clinic because they weren't able to afford to fund it. Speaking to Dr. Sala, the physician who actually ran the autism assessment clinic in Timmins, she and Rachel Pessah, who is the speech therapist—they don't know what to do. They're sitting at the edge of their seats, and they're wondering what's going to be happening with the OAP, what's going to be the plan, what's going to be the next step forward. As they're waiting, all these children are waiting. They're slipping through the cracks. Do you know how many children are walking around undiagnosed? It's staggering.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know. My daughter is a psychometric therapist, so I hear about it on a regular basis.

As far as what it means to our society—we know what it means to the kids. We know what it means to the families. But what it means to society over the long run if we don't intervene at a young age—just speak to that.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: You know what? You have a very short period to be able to, let's say, rewire the brain a little bit so that you're able to teach them coping skills, basic things like being able to go to the washroom and the grocery; and to understand when there is danger and to not walk into the face of it, instead just stepping back and being able to recognize that. You're able to teach those kinds of things at early intervention.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: When you miss that gap, you can't go back. You can't go back. It's very, very hard to teach a child with autism those kinds of things.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm willing to bet that the parents I see here are parents who are doing those early interventions on their own, but there are many parents out there who don't have the capacity.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's happening with them, and how many are there?

Ms. Karla Gagnon: I can't even tell you. I can tell you this: They're sitting at home and they're not knowing what to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And them poor kids.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: Then they develop behavioural issues. Then it just spirals into mental health issues, and then it's a whole other ball game.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Then it costs us a lot more money than if we would have intervened in the beginning.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: A lot more money.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We save money by doing it at the beginning.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: Absolutely.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

Ms. Karla Gagnon: Thank you.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION,
EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT STAFF
BARGAINING UNIT

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'll call on our next presenters, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation educational staff. Welcome to our committee. If you could please state your names for the record. You'll have up to seven minutes to present.

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: I'm Maureen Rintamaki. I am the educational support staff president for the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: My name is Lorraine Laiho. I am the vice-president for the local bargaining unit with the educational support staff for the OSSTF.

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you today for providing us with the opportunity to discuss the standing committee on finance.

The nature of my work and that of many of my colleagues is the same type of profession across the province. While we do not garner much attention in the media or the public at large for the role that we play, we are the front line in the education sector.

This is not to diminish the role that teachers play in the classroom, but I would like to distinguish the role that support staff have in the daily routine of our students while highlighting the undeniable importance we hold as members of the educational team.

Our educational support staff consists of a wide variety of professionals, ranging from educational assistants to designated early childhood educators to speech therapists. As our title implies, we support education as a whole. We are the educational assistants who work with some of the students who have the greatest needs.

Although it may come as a surprise to members of this committee, our daily routine often involves physical and verbal abuse that is said to be the cost of educating our youth, often while not having access to the proper personal protective equipment and having a lack of funding to

purchase the equipment for each staff member in the high-support classes.

Members of our profession are often dismayed with the ongoing issues in schools; however, we consistently do our jobs, day in and day out, to achieve what should be seen as a collective effort: developing the youth into contributing members of our society. Our support staff are among the lowest-paid in the educational team, with limited hours in a day and a 10-month contract. Many school boards are dealing with increased enrolment and more complex student needs. Vulnerable students need an increased number of dedicated support staff, not fewer, to successfully integrate into the school system.

I have decided to address this committee due to my apprehension about what may be coming in the upcoming school year. The current funding model often falls short for those students who require the most support. Therefore, I implore members of this committee to recommend a funding model that reflects the true needs of every student, regardless of where they live. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start questions from the opposition side. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We heard earlier from some of your colleagues at the other boards, speaking to the potential cuts that are believed probably will happen—but we don't know for sure yet—when it comes to education. For this committee and for members of the government and opposition, can you just make clear exactly what that means, if we start reducing education by 4%?

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: Well, the first one that would probably be taken out is the educational support staff. What that would mean: Currently I am a mainstream EA. I support roughly 120 kids. I do math all day long for five different classrooms. I am the only one.

Lorraine is in a high-support classroom.

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: I do work in a high-support classroom; I have for the past 12 years. We've gone from having two educational assistants in a classroom with the classroom teacher, down to one per class. Not only does that pose problems as far as being able to assist the children in their academic achievements, but it also poses problems as far as the safety of all the people in the class. If it comes down to the point where a teacher does have to evacuate the classroom due to a behaviour, it's up to me and only me to be there to get those children out safely and to keep the child that is at risk—their safety has to be of the utmost importance, while trying to maintain safety for myself as well.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And what does this mean for the kids? If you lack the supports that teachers need to be able to support kids in a classroom, what does that mean in the longer run? Describe it.

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: As the lady before us referred to, there are people that are slipping through the cracks. I am working presently in a class where we have five young gentlemen who are getting ready to “graduate,” as you would say. They are coming to the maximum age. The teacher that I work with—we both feel as though we've

failed some of these young men. We don't have the capabilities to be able to prepare them properly to possibly have jobs in the community. We can't do a lot of life skills training, such as transit training or even basic skills that they could learn from perhaps co-op classes that would have been available in the past. Without the manpower, we cannot go out into the community to do these things. With the cutbacks that have happened in other community areas, those members are not able to come in as well.

I've got three boys in my class right now who, once they leave the school in June, are probably going to go home and sit and play video games, because that is all they'll be capable of doing; whereas if we'd had the opportunity, there would have been a lot more chances to be able to train them in other areas so that they could do meaningful jobs in society.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Which brings us to the other issue: the transitioning.

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: Transitioning is just a nightmare.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We were just listening to Mr. Leroux, who was speaking to us earlier.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As soon as his daughter finished high school, they went from having some support to having no support.

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Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: Exactly. And then if they cut the funding even further, it's going to be the kids who are at risk all the way through from JK to grade 12.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And that's not good for anyone.

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: It's not good for anyone, because our youth are our future.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions? No? Okay, we'll go to the government side. We have four minutes. Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you so much for your presentation and taking the time. You did a great job.

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: Thank you. I was so nervous.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I know it's difficult and, as you know, our government ran on a platform that we want to bring more fiscal sanity back to the province. The previous government was spending \$40 million a day more than they brought in. We believe that the massive deficit that the previous government has burdened Ontarians with has been left really for the next generation and the next generation to pay for.

Can you see why we are looking for efficiencies?

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: I can totally understand that as a taxpayer, yes. But as an educator, you have to look at—this is our future; these are our future. Especially with the educational support staff—if we are to go into some of these classrooms, I know that right now I have members of mine who are in high-support needs. There is a lot of frustration in the classroom. Some of the children are not verbal, so in order to get their point across or when they need something, it's physical. But instead of providing them with the right equipment, we have equipment that they use for ball hockey that they have to wear underneath

their shirts, and gloves that they then have to share with the next person coming into the classroom.

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: I can speak to that. I personally have had to wear a catcher's vest and a jill to protect myself from being harmed. The children look at me as though I'm a bit of a fool. It's not equipment that's really truly protecting me properly. If you look at people who are in the prison system, they have equipment that is much more efficient to use. I'll tell you, when I'm sticking a jill on and I'm sticking a catcher's vest on and I'm walking around the hallway looking like that, the kids themselves know that there's something wrong with this picture.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Sorry, may I ask you again what your job is within the school system?

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: I'm an educational assistant. I've been doing it for 20 years. I have worked both in mainstream classes and in high-support classes. I do both right now, actually.

Ms. Donna Skelly: What is the solution to that? I've never heard of this particular situation before. What do other educational institutions do for people in your position who are dealing with perhaps children who are acting out and who become violent and aggressive?

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: It depends on the school board's allocations that are given by government and how the school board can allocate their funds. What it boils down to is, if there were the proper amount of funding that was available, we would be able to assist these children in the proper manner and we would be able to keep ourselves safe while we're doing it.

Ms. Donna Skelly: What I'm asking you is—keeping yourselves safe: Ultimately, what would you need in order to be safe in these situations?

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: More staffing.

Ms. Donna Skelly: More staffing?

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: Absolutely.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay.

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: And that's all we're asking: that there are no cuts to education.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: My wife is a special ed teacher and works closely with EAs, so I understand the value that you bring to the system. Thank you for doing what you do.

If you have other ideas—I know I'm almost out of time—structurally or otherwise on how the system runs, I would love to hear them. Everything from ABA in the classroom, externals and anything like that—we'd love to have you submit those ideas.

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: We definitely will. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it.

Ms. Maureen Rintamaki: Thank you.

Ms. Lorraine Laiho: Thank you.

SEIU HEALTHCARE CANADA

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'll call up our next presenter. It's SEIU Healthcare Canada.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Hello, my name is Darla Fiset. I'm from Schumacher, Ontario, but I work in Timmins. I'm a PSW, a personal support worker. I've been in home care for 11 years. In my 11 years in home care, I have had the pleasure to experience helping many seniors with personal care and everyday living.

I commute every day either by bus or walking, and as you might expect, it becomes complicated at times, especially working in the north—as you might know, experiencing minus-40-degree temperatures this weekend. I climb over snowbanks, rain etc. As you might expect, this becomes difficult at times. But I get through it all because I truly care for my clients.

In my 11 years I've had the pleasure of not only being a worker but also a friend. We don't have enough time as we would like to care for our clients, but I try to do it beyond my care. I wish I could do so much more. I feel like I'm rushed and overwhelmed. I often feel like I'm not appreciated for the work I do.

You might think that tax dollars for health care reach the front line. Most simply do not. As you might well have known, the government wants to cut health care. I'm afraid not only as a worker but also for my clients. I see so many clients just getting by, some living in conditions many of us would see as unfit. Do you think my seniors get enough care on government-allotted care time? No, most certainly not. The government needs to do much more care.

As you might know, there's a shortage of workers and PSWs. PSWs feel burned out and overwhelmed. The government needs to now help seniors and PSWs. If the government continues to cut health care, they might potentially put others at risk. My clients are confused and overwhelmed, and I deal with lots of variety of clients and degrees of ability. You might ask: If it were your mom and dad, would you want to get the utmost care and support for them? Yes, I would expect so.

As a PSW, for my clients, I think the government could do much better for my clients and many hard-working PSWs.

I thank you for your time and hope the government puts seniors in mind when making its decisions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll start with questions from the government side. Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Darla, thank you so much for being here. I want to say that I have such deep respect for your profession, for the work that you do. I don't know how you do it. I can't even imagine how physically and emotionally draining your job must be.

One of the things I'm hearing over and over and over again are the problems with seniors, our most vulnerable in our community, who don't have access to enough PSWs, or sometimes there are just issues in scheduling. Can you walk me through your job? If you're sick, how do you get a replacement and all that kind of thing?

Ms. Darla Fiset: I myself was sick last year.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Can you tell me how it works when—

Ms. Darla Fiset: I had thyroid cancer and—

Ms. Donna Skelly: So when you are ill and you have a responsibility to care for someone—let's say perhaps not something that's long-term, but even on a short-term basis—what is the procedure that you go through? Often we hear that clients could go for hours, perhaps even a day, without a PSW showing up. Is that true?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes, it is true.

Ms. Donna Skelly: So what is the procedure in your job if you have to phone in sick or something like that? What happens?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Well, normally we just call in sick that morning. If we are feeling sick or if we have a cold or something like that, we call in sick that morning, at 6 o'clock that morning.

Ms. Donna Skelly: And what happens with the patients if you're—

Ms. Darla Fiset: They go into rebook—straight into rebook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: And there's not necessarily a person—you can't even guarantee—

M. Darla Fiset: There's not necessarily a person.

Ms. Donna Skelly: No. What are some of the biggest problems that you face on a daily basis with your clients—the challenges, if you could share those with me. Paint a picture of what your day might be like.

1630

Ms. Darla Fiset: It depends on the variety of their abilities and the variety of personal care we have to perform. Some of the clients have dementia, and it's hard to communicate to the clients, you know?

Ms. Donna Skelly: But you have to. And many times you're their only point of contact.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: If you could point out one of the biggest problems right now in providing care to your clients, what would you say that is? Is it a lack of equipment? Is it a lack of funds? Is it a lack of bodies? What is your biggest challenge?

Ms. Darla Fiset: A lack of bodies and lack of equipment. It's hard because our office is only open once a week, so it's hard for us as workers.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Darla Fiset: In Timmins, we sometimes have to wait one week to get supplies.

Ms. Donna Skelly: The other thing I'm hearing, regardless of where I am in Ontario, is that it's very difficult to find people who are interested in becoming a PSW. Is there something that we can do as a government to encourage more people to enter this field, this profession?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Pay a better salary.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Pay a better salary, yes. Scheduling—at times we feel rushed. This Christmas, I had 22 clients in one day.

Ms. Donna Skelly: My goodness.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Twenty-two clients—I had to work morning and night to juggle that schedule.

Ms. Donna Skelly: You're overwhelmed.

Ms. Darla Fiset: I'm overwhelmed. And I commute by walking, so it's 30 minutes here, 30 minutes there, and it's—

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's difficult.

Ms. Darla Fiset: It's difficult, and I was just getting over my operation so—

Ms. Donna Skelly: And very difficult on you.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Very difficult.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you so much. I know that my friends have questions for you as well.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll move it over to your side for questions: Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for coming in and sharing your experience and stories. How often would a day like that happen? Twenty-two clients in one day—even if it's only half an hour per client—

Ms. Darla Fiset: Today I had 10 clients.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay, but still, the idea of travelling in between those clients, as well—you add travel time in between too.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes, it takes about 15 minutes. It depends, because I'm a walker. Sometimes it takes about 15 minutes to travel between the clients.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: For which you're not paid.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Which I'm not paid, yes.

Mr. Ian Arthur: You're not paid for the travel between clients?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Well, we're paid 37 cents per kilometre, which is not really that much, and as a walker—we're not paid as walkers; we're paid as drivers. They don't classify us as walkers. They classify us as drivers.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Wow, okay.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, a couple of questions—first of all, just a little anecdote: I was meeting with the Golden Manor, which is one of the long-term-care facilities here. They were saying that they could hire the entire graduating class of PSWs just at their institution this spring if there were graduates. There's not enough graduates to fill the jobs at one of our institutions, and the biggest issue is that people don't choose to go in because of the pay and things like, "I'm not paid adequately for my travel," etc. It's a pretty tough one.

I just want to go back to the rationing of services, because what I've experienced over the years is that home care has become less and less accessible to patients over the years.

Ms. Darla Fiset: We've got workers going to—actually, we need a worker in Gowganda, and it's been three weeks that they've been requiring a worker in Gowganda.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What I am saying is, when they get assessed it used to be that you would be able to get more services from what was then the CCAC, which is now the LHIN, and they've rationed down the amount of hours you can provide to clients on a regular basis. Tell me what that means to you and, more importantly, what it means to the client?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Well, clients don't want to lose their time, so they—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They phone me.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But my point is, could you describe what it means? For example, I had one client—one of the constituents I had—they wouldn't provide her with laundry services, and because she can't have laundry services she ended up having to make the choice of going into an institution, because she has severe arthritis in her hands so she can't do her dishes—

Ms. Darla Fiset: Nowadays it's only personal care. We don't provide too many home laundry services, unless the client pays for it themselves, separately.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's right. And how many clients can afford to do that?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Exactly.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Anybody else?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): There's one minute.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I guess the other thing is that there are a couple of things going on in your sector, from what I understand, talking to you and to others. If you had the magic wand and you were the government for a day, if you could fix one thing in your system for PSWs, what would that be?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Scheduling concerns and not to rush us so much, you know?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're burnt out?

Ms. Darla Fiset: My times—I do feel burnt out, yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Your colleagues are the same?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How short is your organization when it comes to PSWs?

Ms. Darla Fiset: In Timmins, we have about 40.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, short—that you don't have.

Ms. Darla Fiset: We're short. Usually, we have about 80.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Wow.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, okay. That's worse than I thought.

Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your presentation.

ASSOCIATION OF DAY CARE OPERATORS OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'm going to call up our next witness, Cynthia Gubbels. Please state your name for the record, and you'll have seven minutes to present.

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: My name is Cynthia Gubbels. Can I go ahead?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): You can go ahead, yes.

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Cynthia Gubbels and I am co-president of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario, otherwise known as ADCO. ADCO represents independent licensed child care programs, both commercial and not-for-profit. The majority of our members are small business owners who run child

care centres that are regulated, inspected and licensed by the Ministry of Education under the Child Care and Early Years Act.

Here in Ontario, one in four families who use licensed child care rely on the services of the independent licensed child care program. That is a program that is not run by a school board, a municipality or a national multi-service corporation such as the YMCA.

My personal history with ADCO goes back as far as I can remember. My mother, Georgia Gagnon, was one of its first members. She founded Bambi's Castle Day Care here in Timmins in 1972. Over the years, my parents kept expanding the business because so many families came to them looking for quality affordable licensed child care. My mother is the reason I became involved in child care and continue to be involved with ADCO, an organization that has many members who are like her: enterprising women who own and operate successful small businesses, yet who never forget that they are educators first and business owners second.

I'm here today to talk to you about how we can give Ontario families more licensed child care choices, make licensed child care easier to access, and make it more affordable for families and taxpayers. We can do this without spending more money. Let's begin to look at where we're at today.

In 2018 alone, the province spent over \$3.1 billion on early learning and care. Some \$1.5 billion of that went into the public school system to maintain full-day kindergarten. Roughly \$1.6 billion was pumped into municipalities tasked with ensuring families have affordable access to licensed child care, yet only 20% of children under the age of four have access to licensed child care.

The full-day kindergarten program introduced by the McGuinty government forced the closure of some 1,200 independent commercial and not-for-profit licensed child care centres in the process. What has evolved is a public sector monopoly that isn't actually free for families to access. Only a portion of the day is free. Part of the day, the before- and after-school, which is basically the care that parents need, is subject to additional fees. Across Ontario, some school boards charge as much for that wraparound care as an independent licensed child care centre would charge for a full day which includes a hot meal and two snacks.

We also need to acknowledge that Ontario's school-based full-day kindergarten program isn't really comparable to licensed child care. In fact, the Liberals replaced the Day Nurseries Act with the Child Care and Early Years Act in 2015, and they specifically exempted school boards from having to adhere to the same regulatory standards as licensed child care, and it serves the same age group. McGuinty's full-day kindergarten program also puts the entire cost of service system expansion and maintenance on the backs of Ontario taxpayers.

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According to your government's line-by-line financial review last fall, public education costs have far outstripped the pace of population growth in the past few years. We

need to rethink how we're doing full-day kindergarten to ensure the best value for children, for parents and for taxpayers.

The rest of the taxpayer money, the \$1.6 billion, goes to municipalities to manage Ontario's licensed child care system.

Some of these comments do not reflect all municipalities or children's service departments, but they do reflect what is going on in the province.

The responsibility for leadership, setting child care policy and holding municipalities accountable lies with the provincial government, which has often looked the other way. So we now have 47 different municipalities that have different child care policies and funding, different fee subsidy application processes, different processes for licensed child care to apply to serve these families, and 47 different ways of administering the Wage Enhancement Grant. Is it any surprise that roughly 20% to 25% of that \$1.6 billion given to municipalities for child care is used on management costs?

Some municipalities are running their own quality assurance programs that impose training, documentation and financial reporting requirements above and beyond those that are requested by the Ministry of Education. Don't forget that the ministry requirements are already enforced by the regulatory and licensing system under the Child Care and Early Years Act. So in fact there is the duplication of the province's own quality assurance efforts, and these programs impose tremendous costs on licensed child care centres. For a small, owner-managed child care centre, meeting municipal documentation and financial reporting requirements—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: —can exceed \$2,000 to \$6,000 in accounting fees, in addition to staff hours. It doesn't keep enrolled children any safer, and it only serves to drive costs up.

Another area that municipalities need to be accountable for is the subsidy program. In some municipalities, the families are directed directly to not-for-profit centres, where they don't necessarily have the choice of child care centres that might be closer to home or that are their choice. It's happening because of arbitrary municipal policies that bar families in receipt of fee subsidy from accessing whatever program that they want.

There are many other things that we can talk about where there are some problems. In your handout, ADCO has listed six action items that will enhance parental choice and make licensed child care more affordable and easier to find.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We've exceeded the time now, so we'll start with questions from the opposition side. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much for presenting.

You're not going to be surprised to know that New Democrats don't agree with you. Is there a role for the private sector in certain industries? Absolutely. I wouldn't want to see a mine run by the government; I wouldn't want

to see a corner store run by the government. But there is a role for government when it comes to running services. It's a matter of approach.

In Quebec, for example, there's a model by which the province provides a fairly large subsidy to operators, all of which I think are in the not-for-profit sector—right?—by and large.

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: I think so, yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The idea was to give people access to daycare so that women can participate in the workforce.

Here's an interesting little number that I heard the other day, listening to a program on Radio-Canada on this particular issue: Quebec has the highest participation of women in the workforce in the world—85%—and they brought it directly back to daycare.

The fundamental question that Quebec had to ask itself: "If we're going to make access to daycare available to all parents, how are we going to do it?" There are two different ways of doing it. I agree with you. There's a private model—well, there are actually three. There's a private model, there's a public model and there's a hybrid model. I would certainly not support—and I'm not going to BS you, as your MPP—going strictly to a private system. Do you believe in that, and is that true? Absolutely.

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: Yes. I don't think we encourage a private-only system. I think there's room—it's parent choice. If there's a daycare down the street that provides quality, I should be able to choose that daycare. I shouldn't have to go looking for a government-run system. There should be parent choice, is really what it boils down to. It's my child; I know what's best for my child.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, and depending on what you can afford as well. That's the other side of it.

Anyway, I just wanted to make sure that you had no illusions as to where we stood on this issue. All right, thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions? No? Okay. We'll go to the government side. Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you for your presentation. It wasn't that hard, was it, after all? You did a great a job.

I want you to talk about how some of the points that you raised restrict parental choice in terms of child care opportunity.

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: It doesn't happen here in Timmins. But in some larger centres—as you'll see in the handout; there's the newspaper clip—some municipalities have told parents, "If you qualify for subsidy, you can choose child care A, B and C. You cannot choose D, E and F." So that limits their choice. If child care D happens to be in their neighbourhood, why should they have to travel a certain amount of distance?

I skipped that part because of time, but there are families that are on wait-lists for months and months, even years, yet there are child care centres that have spaces available. They're not being used because that family requires subsidy, and they're being directed only to use the not-for-profit centres.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Clarify for me: Any for-profit child care provider is restricted from being a contender on a municipal list of child care providers that could receive subsidies?

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: In some municipalities.

Ms. Donna Skelly: In some municipalities, but not in Timmins?

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: Not in Timmins, no.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay.

We've made some changes to the child care act, talking about ratios. Can I get your comments on that, on care for children under two—the changes that we've introduced?

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: Are you referring to Bill 66?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Yes. It's three children under the age of two, and two child care providers for six infants. Can I just get your comments on that?

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: That only applies to the unlicensed sector, so I can't really—it's very different. Licensed child care is very different. Most child care owners and operators would not support more children with their ratios, because it's not good for the children. It's also very difficult for the staff, the early childhood educators working with those children. But it's not comparing to apples to apples.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It isn't; okay.

If there's one thing that we could take away—you talk a lot about the kindergarten and child care facilities. Are you even able to provide any sort of child care or get a subsidy or any support from the municipality for after-school programs? Are they off the table as well?

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: Again, it depends on the municipalities. Here in Timmins, we're very fortunate. We do have support from our child care manager. However, all of the before- and after-school programs that are within schools are operated by not-for-profit centres.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: I had a centre in a school for five years, and then, without notice, I was notified that the YMCA would be moving into that program. It really was only because they were not-for-profit and I was running an independent centre.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Do you know if it was cost-effective or more efficient for them in terms of cost? What was the reason? They didn't give you a reason?

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: It's government money, and like Gilles was saying earlier, it has to do with supporting that not-for-profit sector, which is what we're arguing is so unfair.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions? Okay. With that, we'd like to thank you for your presentation.

Ms. Cynthia Gubbels: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): That concludes our presentations for today, so we will adjourn our meeting—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Oh, sorry. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To members of the committee: Thank you for coming to Timmins. I think you've heard some interesting presentations on the part of a lot of people. We just want to thank you here in the city for having come and listened to what people have to say. I think that half of the battle in a democracy is hearing what the other side has to say, and this is the other side. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you, Mr. Bisson.

We'll adjourn this meeting until tomorrow at 9 a.m. in Ottawa. This meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1648.

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