

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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## Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

F-44

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

F-44

**Standing Committee on  
Finance and Economic Affairs**

COVID-19 study

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

Étude sur la COVID-19

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament  
Tuesday 4 August 2020

1<sup>re</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature  
Mardi 4 août 2020

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Chair: Amarjot Sandhu  
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Amarjot Sandhu  
Greffière : Julia Douglas

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Tuesday 4 August 2020

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES  
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Mardi 4 août 2020

*The committee met at 0901 in room 151 and by video conference.*

## COVID-19 STUDY

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order. We are meeting for hearings on the infrastructure sector, for the study of the recommendations related to the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020, and the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on certain sectors of the economy.

I'm delighted to be joined in the chamber today by two of my colleagues, MPP Cho and MPP French, and we also have the following members appearing remotely today: MPP Barrett; MPP Blais; MPP Crawford; MPP Khanjin; MPP Lindo; MPP Monteith-Farrell; MPP Piccini, whom I'll do an attendance check on in a moment; MPP Rasheed; and MPP Skelly.

If I can just quickly get MPP Piccini to confirm that you are with us and that you are in Ontario.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thank you, Chair. Good to see you in the chair. It's MPP Piccini and I'm calling in from my riding of Northumberland–Peterborough South.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent. Thank you so much.

We are also joined today by staff from legislative research, Hansard, interpretation and broadcast and recording.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak, and make sure that your microphone is unmuted when you're ready to go. Are there any questions before we begin?

Seeing none, our presenters have been grouped into threes for each one-hour time slot. Each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation. After we have heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee. This time for questions will be broken down into two rotations of six minutes and 30 seconds—very precise—for each of the government, the opposition and the independent members as a group.

OUR GREENWAY CONSERVANCY  
JANE FINCH ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES  
ACTION GROUPCAMECO CORP.-CAMECO  
FUEL SERVICES

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I will now call on our first presenter, and that is Daniel Harris from Our Greenway Conservancy. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

**Mr. Darnel Harris:** Good morning, Chair. Thank you very much. My name is Darnel Harris, D-A-R-N-E-L H-A-R-R-I-S. It is a pleasure to address the committee this morning.

In terms of our needs for infrastructure post-COVID-19, certainly the last couple of months have proven the great wellspring of interest and demand that there is for active mobility options for people, not just for recreation, but also to get around to accomplish business, to really just live their lives on a day-to-day basis.

Specifically, some of the opportunities that exist now relate to cargo cycles, which are capable of carrying hundreds of kilograms. These sorts of cargo cycles have been increasingly used by businesses, and used not only in the US and Europe, but also increasingly used here. Currently, Our Greenway is going to be launching a pilot that allows heavy cargo cycles that can carry all sorts of packages to be used to allow much easier movement.

In terms of infrastructure, certainly there are many relations to the need to be able to use electrically assisted cargo cycles and infrastructure across Ontario. Most of our infrastructure in Ontario is built with recreation in mind. Instead, if you use an e-cycle, which is much cheaper to insure, cheaper to operate and maintain, and is a zero-emission vehicle capable of handling serious day-to-day challenges, having infrastructure that, for example, is in the picture that I have here which employs rain gardens on either side of the road makes a lot of sense, because what you're able to have is you're able to manage stormwater, you're able to reduce costs for Ontarians and reduce taxpayer costs as well. Mainly because when you have a green infrastructure arrangement, what you have is you are managing flooding and you're also allowing trees and plants to create ecosystem services, those ecosystem services being a reduction in the urban heat-island effect,

a reduction in flooding costs which would otherwise have to be paid out, and also ancillary reductions in health costs, for example, because otherwise the government would be paying those if people are unable to be active and unable to meet their daily needs in the most efficient and practical way possible.

In terms of the recommendations that we would have that would come from implementing an infrastructure package with a focus with green infrastructure—that certainly also, by the way, increases property values and encourages economic development while protecting the planet. We would certainly recommend that requirements to include living green infrastructure become a major part of any further package, but also that the province commit to specifically looking at changed standards so that when it puts in active infrastructure routes, it wasn't just limited to recreational cycling—"Single file, please"—but also an actual modelling perspective and understanding that you can have businesses, and you do have businesses, transporting hundreds of kilograms of goods. It's not useful, frankly, for people on provincial highways to be simply just using this for recreation. So long as you have a wider range of micromobility able to use these lanes, that's better for businesses, better for the government and better for people at large as well. I yield my time to the Chair. Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you very much. Excellent. Now we are going to move to questions. As I said, we'll have—

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** My apologies. We'll do another quick attendance check. MPP Hunter, if you can confirm you're with us and that you are in Ontario.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Yes, Chair, I am with you and I'm in Ontario.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Perfect. Thank you so much.

Forgive me. We'll now move to our second witness; that is, Jane Finch Economic Opportunities Action Group. If you can state your name clearly for Hansard and you'll have seven minutes.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** Okay, so my name is Troy Budhu. I'm the co-chair of the Jane Finch Economic Opportunities Action Group.

I caution against any infrastructure projects related to COVID that are solely driven by the market without looking at the long-term consequences or without keeping in mind long-term economic sustainability. I think it's important for us to leverage infrastructure spending to address current and future problems that we will see in Ontario.

Some of those things that we've been looking at and we're interested in is stuff like workforce development. I think we all know that the construction sector has an aging population and everybody is concerned, particularly in the construction sector, about the sustainability of that and where the future workers are going to come from. I think it was in a question period where an MP was talking about one in five jobs before COVID would be in construction and we don't necessarily have the workforce to supply it.

I think we should be looking at infrastructure spending in conjunction with workforce development spending that we have and figure out mechanisms to pair the two. An interesting way would be looking at our RFP process and having some weight into conversations about community benefits or how developers will work to increase the hiring in the sector.

**0910**

I think doing that would need to tie in some of the resources that are already spent in workforce development and having that weight allows developers to be innovative in their partnerships, and partnering with non-profits and other workforce development agencies to achieve that goal. We see examples of that that are interesting, that could help us solve that problem.

Infrastructure spending on the ground, so what's happening at Jane and Finch: I think we need to reinvest in our schools. The infrastructure there is falling apart. It would be forward-thinking. We know in our neighbourhood particularly, and I think in a lot of racialized neighbourhoods like Finch, there are a lot of people working in manufacturing and retail. Those are two sectors that are going to be hit hard by automation, the Internet and other things. There's a lot of research talking about the future of work in that sector.

We need to re-skill and upskill residents to make our workforce competitive. Yet we don't have an infrastructure and we don't have a mechanism to do that for workers or for people of a particular socio-economic class. I think reinvesting in our schools, rethinking how schools operate and opening it up to evenings where it could be adult education and re-skilling and upskilling people, allows our workforce to be more competitive and makes sure that we have a place, an inclusive economy, moving forward.

We also need to look at things like child care, because a lot of people are concerned about making a decision to either work or raise children because of the expense. If we're looking at infrastructure, if we could create affordable child care spaces, it would allow people to be in labour, increase our labour participation rates and also enable the innovation of those workers to make our workforce more competitive.

We also need to think about seniors. We have an aging population, and we don't necessarily have the infrastructure to make it accessible when that population rears its head. How do we create infrastructure that is accessible for seniors?

Lastly, we need to really look at deeply affordable housing. For a lot of immigrants and a lot of racialized people in our neighbourhoods, housing is one of the biggest reasons why people are not moving up in their economic circumstances, because they're so focused on paying their rent that they have no time to re-skill or to make economic decisions to move themselves up. This is not only affecting them, but this is affecting their children, who see themselves at a young age having to work or not pursuing different career paths because they just need to make ends meet.

I think, also, it is very important for us to have a conversation about infrastructure spending as it relates to

COVID and the previous way things have been done. We all know that economic development is uneven. It usually benefits a few and marginalizes others. This has always been impacted on racialized communities like Jane and Finch. Particularly in this case, where our neighbourhood in Toronto has the highest or one of the highest COVID cases in the city, we're heavily marginalized; we're heavily racialized. We have one of the lowest equity scores.

Infrastructure projects have always pushed this community's—it hasn't really thought of it. If you look at the LRT projects, there are a lot of studies on the real estate market, the environmental impacts, but no real conversation about displacement—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute remaining.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** Perfect—no real conversation about displacement and no way of mitigating that risk. We see this in a lot of racialized neighbourhoods, where it's an afterthought of what happens to this community, and I think we could do this better. We could think about infrastructure that helps our economy, but also make sure that that's more evenly distributed and that racialized people, particularly those currently being affected by COVID the most, are included in those developments. So that's what I've got to say. Thank you, guys, for having me.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll move to our final presenter today and that is Cameco Corp., the Cameco fuel services division. If you can start by stating your name for Hansard, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

**Mr. Dale Clark:** Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'm Dale Clark, vice-president of fuel services division at Cameco Corp., and I'm responsible for our Ontario operations. This morning, my opening remarks will provide a brief overview of Cameco and our operations, outline our response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic while being designated as an essential sector in Ontario, and also highlight the significant role that the nuclear sector and Cameco can play in our province's response to the pandemic and economic recovery.

Cameco is headquartered in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and is one of the world's largest producers of uranium for nuclear energy, the vast majority of which comes from our extensive mining and milling operations in northern Saskatchewan. Cameco is also a leading supplier of uranium processing services required to produce fuel for nuclear power. Cameco operates uranium refining, conversion and fuel fabrication facilities in Blind River, Port Hope and Cobourg, Ontario, that together employ about 740 people.

Our fuel services division here operates the world's largest commercial uranium refinery. We control about 25% of the world's primary UF<sub>6</sub> conversion capacity and are a leading manufacturer of fuel assemblies and reactor components for Candu reactors. Cameco supplies all of the uranium used in Bruce Power and Ontario Power Generation's nuclear power plants. Our uranium powers one in every 10 homes in Canada and one in every 23 homes

in the United States. It also plays a significant part in the energy equations of many other countries around the globe.

Like many other industries and businesses, Cameco was certainly impacted by the pandemic. Our response was guided by ongoing dialogue with public health officials, with community leaders and with our employees. Our focus continues to be on the safety and well-being of our employees, their families and the communities where we operate.

It became clear to us early in the pandemic that our partner communities in Ontario really required immediate assistance. So in April, Cameco established a \$250,000 COVID-19 relief fund for Northumberland county and the Blind River area. We granted money with this program to 35 different projects in several different communities. This relief fund provided some very valuable assistance, but it did not come close to meeting the full need. The applications that we received more than quadrupled the capacity of the relief fund.

The pandemic's impact on our operations was also significant. In March, we suspended production at our Cigar Lake uranium mine in northern Saskatchewan to protect our workers and our partner communities. We only recently announced plans to resume production at this site starting in September, provided that conditions remain safe to do so, going forward.

Our Ontario facilities have been deemed essential services and I am proud to say have continued to deliver the uranium needed to power all of Ontario's nuclear reactors without interruption. A portion of our Ontario operations were placed in a safe shutdown state for four weeks beginning in April as we adjusted to the challenges posed by new workplace screening protocols. All of our Ontario operations are now back to operating at full capacity, thanks in no small part to our dedicated and professional Ontario workforce.

Despite these incredibly difficult operational decisions, Cameco did not lay off any employees during this shutdown. In some cases, employees were asked to remain home with 75% salary, paid by Cameco. Those Cameco employees who continued to work at site during this time received their full regular wage along with an additional 10% recognition pay until the end of June. And as Cameco and the nuclear sector have demonstrated throughout the pandemic, our commitment to a culture of safety positioned us well to continue to deliver these essential services and maintain a reliable electricity system that's needed to support a full economic recovery.

## 0920

As the Ontario government considers how the province's economic recovery will unfold, Ontario's nuclear sector can play a significant role in underpinning this recovery by providing highly skilled, well-paying jobs, engaging suppliers in a wide range of skilled trades and expertise, and also stimulating innovation in a variety of disciplines.

One specific way that governments can help to ensure that Ontario's nuclear industry remains active is by investing in ongoing nuclear projects that engage nuclear

suppliers like Cameco. Cameco's partner Bruce Power, through their retooling and recovery council, has identified project opportunities to accelerate work for their reactor life-extension program to assist in economic recovery efforts. This life-extension program will provide reliable, low-cost, emissions-free electricity for Ontario consumers and businesses for decades to come, along with a supply of life-saving medical isotopes for use in Canada and around the world. Support from the government of Ontario for projects that accelerate this life-extension program is an opportunity to spur economic recovery beginning as early as Q4 2020 here.

Bruce Power's proposal would support an estimated 3,700 direct and indirect jobs, and an estimated \$1.2 billion to \$2 billion in economic activity out to the 2025 time frame.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute remaining.

**Mr. Dale Clark:** Okay. In addition to the support for nuclear refurbishments, opportunities exist for the nuclear supply chain as small modular reactors, or SMRs, inch closer to deployment. Cameco views SMRs as an exciting evolution in nuclear technology, and given Ontario's long history with nuclear generation, the province is an ideal place to foster the development and deployment of these technologies. SMRs are an opportunity for Ontario to refocus its nuclear supply chain on the future, so that economic recovery can turn into long-term economic prosperity.

In conclusion, we're making three recommendations to this committee: (1) that the committee recognize and support opportunities for Ontario's nuclear energy sector and supply chain to play a significant role in the province's economic recovery and ongoing economic strength; (2) that the government invests in projects that accelerate work associated with Bruce Power's reactor life-extension program in order to capitalize on both immediate and long-term economic recovery—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I'll have to cut you off, I'm afraid. That's all your time.

We're going to move into questions now and we're going to start with the opposition. We'll go to MPP Monteith-Farrell to start.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Thank you, Chair, and thanks to the presenters. I very much enjoyed listening to what you had to say.

This morning I would like to ask Darnel a few questions about his presentation. Darnel, I would like you to tell us: Do you have any examples of how your roadways and the rain-ways are being deployed in other parts of the world?

**Mr. Darnel Harris:** Sure, I do. I'll speak about the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, which is in fact what you see behind me, but then I'll speak about Ontario as well. The Indianapolis Cultural Trail is this effectively a 17- to 20-kilometre trail, depending on how you count it, that has bioswales, so rain gardens, on both sides of some sections, but on one side of most sections. It moves all throughout Indianapolis and also moves into their suburbs. The effect of having these rain gardens has been massive for the city,

in that people feel safe in terms of being able to move easily from one section to the other. There is certainly a high approval from the city, which worked very closely with the conservancy that they have there to install this, because it has decreased the risk of flooding.

A rain garden protects from flooding by effectively acting like a sponge. It absorbs water and as a result releases, if necessary, its water into the soil, but also into the sewer system at a much lower rate. For that reason, they hardly have any issues now in Indianapolis regarding water at all. Some 95% of storm events don't actually leave the rain garden at all.

This is certainly one of the major advantages, but also, fundamentally people feel safe; it's protecting customers, protecting residents getting back and forth. Also, it has led to—for the businesses in the area, they have seen their customer base grow up and go up. It certainly would make a lot of difference throughout the suburbs and throughout even cities and towns in Ontario, because what it does is it allows people to use, as I mentioned, cargo cycles, like heavy duty ones, even the ones that can carry several hundred kilograms. It makes it a practical choice for businesses, and that's why we're going to be running a pilot like that.

In terms of Ontario, these bioswales, even though such an extensive instalment has not happened yet, the region and conservation authorities across Ontario—Toronto, but also certainly within the GTHA—are specialists in knowing how to use these pieces of infrastructure. They're in Mississauga along our roads, they're in some parts of Toronto; they're in some parts of Ontario that go north as well. Certainly, it would be a great boon to Ontarians to include this as a normal way of designing our streets and our roads. For one, it would reduce costs directly to both the municipality and the province, but it would also simply be better for residents.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Thank you. I'm going to share my time with MPP French.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you to all of the presenters. Good morning. Darnel, thank you for the example. It's kind of an exciting time to imagine what our cities and communities could look like, going forward. And thank you, Troy. I know that my colleague MPP Lindo has some questions for you.

I'm going to invite Dale to further share some of his thoughts. I'm interested in hearing a little bit more, please, about that relief fund. It sounds like you guys really innovated with that and recognized the need. I wondered if you did that in partnership with the government, if there was some learning from that that you could impart to the government—a little bit more about the relief fund, please, the specifics.

**Mr. Dale Clark:** Sure. Thank you for the chance. I'm happy to speak to that. Cameco created this COVID-19 relief fund in the two main areas where we operate. I mentioned that we're headquartered—our main operations are actually in Saskatchewan. We started with a \$1-million COVID relief fund program in Saskatchewan primarily

aimed at support for northern communities, where our operations reside, which were very significantly hit—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute remaining.

**Mr. Dale Clark:** —by the pandemic but then also by the shutdown of operations. Here locally, we created a \$250,000 relief fund to cover not-for-profits and charities in our Port Hope and Cobourg area, and also in the Blind River area.

One of the things that I'll highlight actually was that we found a very significant need in the area of mental health. We've recognized that for some time. We started a mental health program specifically in our communities for the last couple of years, and we certainly saw that need increase, not decrease during these times. There was a wide range of programs that we supported, but I would say a significant portion, and we saw a very significant need in the area of mental health.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Perfect. That's all the time for this round. We'll have to move on to the independent members. MPP Blais.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you, everyone, for your presentations this morning. I had a quick question to start for Darnel. I had the opportunity to actually go on the Indianapolis Cultural Trail a couple of years ago, and in my previous role, we did some subdivisions in Orléans that used bioswales adjacent to sidewalks and pathways and it reduced the need for very costly stormwater management ponds and other infrastructure control for stormwater. One of the challenges we experienced was educating residents as to what the bioswales were so they didn't go in with their lawn mower and cut things and disrupt them and then try to otherwise maintain it in a way where it reduces its effectiveness.

0930

I'm wondering if you can speak a little about the programs that need to be put in place for maintenance and education after we actually build these things.

**Mr. Darnel Harris:** Sure. Actually, I'll speak to both the cultural trail and what we're seeking to do in northwest Toronto. One of the great successes in what they've done in Indianapolis is that they've created a conservancy model, so it's not a simple matter of it being installed and then it's totally the government's job to do it. What they have with the conservancy is that it effectively becomes a community asset. So they have specific staff arranged to both raise funds and also invite businesses, neighbours and homeowners to be a major part of the maintenance of their trail. They help with the weeding, for example, of sections relating to them. They specifically hold and are part of educational sessions about how certain plants and trees operate, and they're part of the selecting to some degree in that. The horticultural manager that they have working with them will specifically come in and say, "Which of these do you think would work best?" That way, they're involved in it. Really, the key thing is having community involvement.

Certainly, within the northwest, what we're trying to do is have an extensive pathway and extensive conservancy,

and one of the major reasons we're doing that is to allow it to be a community asset for the people of northwest Toronto. We also think that this is the sort of opportunity that would extend very well outside to communities across the province. Not only does it reduce costs, but it gets around that crucial community engagement piece, because that way, you're able to have communities involved. They feel additional ownership, but also, they're not doing unhelpful things such as, say, taking the weed whacker to the plants and trees that are there.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I appreciate that, so thank you very much. I look forward to looking more into the project in northwest Toronto.

I also have a question for Troy. Thank you very much for your presentation—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes remaining.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** You articulated some big challenges that are experienced in your neighbourhood. You talked about the need for affordable child care. Thinking about it, is the affordability or the access related more to physical infrastructure that's needed to support child care spaces? Or is it funding to provide the educators and child care providers to be able to offer child care at a more affordable price in the community?

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** I think it's both. Definitely funding to operate it, but if there isn't space dedicated for child care, particularly affordable child care, there isn't an incentive—market-driven economy—for that space. It's not profitable and it would be hard for somebody to start out something affordable in a community, particularly speaking to my community, Jane and Finch, that is being revitalized. It would be very difficult for that owner and operator to maintain a facility like that. So we do need a space that's affordable, so that asset or that business or that non-profit will be able to thrive.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. You talked about needing to have a conversation about displacement after economic development. I'm wondering if you had any ideas on how to help manage that particular challenge.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** Ideas—there are a lot. This is a conversation going back to the 1970s. Community developments corporations, back in the 1990s, were a big thing. Understanding how we could re-envision that, I think working with communities directly is extremely important. In our neighbourhoods, we followed the lead of the Parkdale People's Economy where we created a community benefit framework so we could work with government and developers—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** —on thinking more holistically about development. But working with community is important, and concepts like community development corporations—rethinking that structure will be very interesting.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Lastly, for Dale: I had never heard of a small modular reactor before, and I just googled it very quickly. I

understand they're not yet commercially available in Ontario. How close is this to being something that's real?

**Mr. Dale Clark:** Thank you. They are certainly real. They are inching toward full commercialization, I'll say. But there's no question that they're real, and there are advancements in Canada; there are developments in Canada.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I'm not disputing the fact that it exists. I'm wondering how close is it to actually being something that can be done?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** That's all the time we've got. We'll have to move on to the government side, and start with MPP Piccini.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thank you to all the presenters for your presentations today. I'm going to start with my fellow Port Hoper, Dale Clark. Dale, thank you very much for the presentation today, and thank you, on behalf of the government and I think all members here, for your commitment to the community.

As these unprecedented times hit, it's important to know that we have community partners like Cameco, who stepped up with \$250,000. Of course, Cameco's commitment to mental health is no stranger to me, having been involved in the runs with you and others in our community, but for everyone else here, Cameco has been a real leader in terms of a corporate partner in funding mental health and in ending the stigma. So I really appreciate you and Cameco and the work you're doing, Dale.

The small modular nuclear reactors: Let's start there. I'll just build on my colleague MPP Blais's comments. I am aware of SMRs, and I know when Premier Ford, Premier Higgs, and Premier Moe signed the joint agreement—you and I spoke about this a number of months back with other members from Cameco's team. I'm wondering if you can speak to us just about the opportunity here, Dale. If we don't seize on it and this goes to China or elsewhere, what's the reality then? So if you could just put that in context for all of us, please.

**Mr. Dale Clark:** Yes, thank you very much. To finish that thought, they certainly are coming. They're close. There's development and there's work to construct in plans, at least in Chalk River as initial test facilities, but there are opportunities certainly throughout the country and throughout the world. There are significant opportunities—perhaps ideally suited in some more remote locations.

Ontario has and Canada has—and Ontario, in particular—a unique opportunity to really support this field, this innovation, this future of nuclear technology and the nuclear industry. We have an incredible history of support and success in nuclear power generation. We have the infrastructure. We have the supply chain. We have the people, the skills. We have an incredible opportunity to really lead in this area.

It is coming. It's advancing around the world in the not-too-distant future. I don't have a time frame exactly, but we know it's not too far away. It's an incredible opportunity. In particular, where the industry has in the past maybe been focused on the largely populated areas, the high-

density areas, this is a real opportunity to expand that and to maybe use some of the infrastructure that we have, but to target different areas. It is a real opportunity for Ontario to be a leader. There's a lot of opportunity in that technology and innovation. It's coming, and I think it's a wonderful opportunity for Canada and Ontario to take the lead.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thanks very much for unmuting me, Chair. Could you just leave me unmuted, please, Chair?

I would say that I agree that this low-cost energy for both on- and off-grid communities—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes remaining.

0940

**Mr. David Piccini:** I just don't want to lose this, though, Dale. If we don't seize this opportunity in Ontario and we see this technology unlocking the potential for off-grid communities, let's say, in northern Ontario—if we don't seize this in Ontario, where will we then be dependent for this type of technology? Who will we be dependent upon if we don't take the leadership role?

**Mr. Dale Clark:** That's a great question. There are a lot of companies—and I should more say countries—that are really progressing, and progressing very quickly. You mentioned China before; certainly they have had significant advancements in this technology.

There are a number of companies and countries pursuing it. Frankly, we're still at the stage where there are a lot of different designs. As the field narrows and as the technology zeroes in, we'll maybe have a better view of that. But all that is to say, again, that it is advancing; it's coming. There is a large, large number of opportunities and potential designs in small modular reactors that are likely to come, so now is the opportunity to get in and take a lead position. Canada really does [inaudible] infrastructure, the potential to be a leader in that area, before we miss out.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Yes, thank you. I certainly want to go on record as saying I think we should be a leader. I think players like Cameco and others can play a real leadership role, benefiting Ontario communities and Ontarians alike.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Just with the last minute, if you could elaborate on the Bruce Power project—and if you wouldn't mind sending that to me offline, I would love to support with that. If you just could touch on the Bruce Power project, that key to COVID recovery you mentioned earlier.

**Mr. Dale Clark:** Yes, thank you. Bruce Power has a reactor life-extension program to refurbish and to continue producing that low-cost, reliable electricity for decades to come. Bruce Power, Cameco and the supply chain we're working with—asking both the federal government and the Ontario government to support and to collaborate and to co-operate, so together to advance some of those projects that are already under way that have the potential to generate an enormous number of jobs and revenue as part of the economic recovery. As I said earlier—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll have to move on.

We'll go to the second round now with the opposition.  
MPP Lindo.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you, everyone, for your presentations. I'm actually going to focus my questions on Troy.

Thank you, Troy, for joining us and speaking about the importance of centring community as we rebuild. There were two big pieces that you touched on. You may not know, but we've heard the same thing in the culture hearings, we've heard the same thing in tourism: that when we're talking about economic recovery and rebuilds, we have to think long term. We can't just throw a bunch of band-aids on there.

One of the big pieces, when you said that developers should be finding ways to give back to community—I think that's integral to the way that we start to think about what economic recovery looks like. In an area like Jane and Finch, I know how important that is. I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit more about what you would imagine for that, what that could look like, so that we have that on record as well.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** Yes. Developers working with community on developing stuff that has larger community benefits in the neighbourhood: I think that looks different depending on the mechanisms. Once again, going through that RFP process, where you add a weight into a social return on investment kind of scenario—so in competing for things, particularly publicly funded projects, there is an incentive for them to work with non-profits and work with communities to develop things that make sense from their budget perspective, but that also have a longer impact on communities.

There are a lot of initiatives where, while they're flawed in their own particular way, I think it's an iterative process. The Regent Park Daniels Spectrum Artscape scenario works, to a degree, working with a non-profit to provide community space. Currently, our struggles with the community hub in Jane and Finch—that idea is important. The idea of developing in what areas that could benefit communities makes sense. I think it's important for us to look at a wider scope and enable partnerships with communities and developers so we can develop in tandem. I think it's 100% feasible. It's just that we need to provide incentives for developers to think this way. We, as government and public figures, are sort of in control of that, and we could manage how development does benefit both and mitigate the risk of development happening at the benefit of others instead of the long-time residents who struggled in these communities for long periods of time.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much for that response, Troy, because I have to agree: It is the government's responsibility. When we're talking about procurement strategies, when we're talking about which developers we want to work with, government does have the power to ensure that there's weight given to return in-community for the way that we decide who does get these government contracts. That's also something that we've heard a lot about.

The other piece that you touched on that I thought was really, really important, actually—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you.

It's interesting because Darnel also brought something like that up, that investment from community in the solution to rebuild our economy is super important. So the other piece that I would love for you to speak a little bit more about is the re-skilling and upskilling. I do think, as we're trying to rethink what's going to stimulate our local economies, we do have to think about those needs. If you can speak a little more about what that looks like—and, in fact, with the community hub, something like that, that would be a space, an infrastructural space for that reskilling.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** Yes. Re-skilling is particularly important, particularly in our neighbourhoods, because we're heavily in the manufacturing and retail industries and they're both being disrupted as we speak. All literature and every scholar on this is talking about that the future of work is not the current workforce; it needs to be re-skilling and retooling. But we don't have infrastructure to help these workers, who have been working there for a long period of time, to be in those spaces.

So we definitely need to figure out ways to make sure the future of work doesn't leave or displace the current population, which are heavily racialized groups. Systemically, if you look at how things were structured, it put racialized people and new immigrants in these pockets of areas and pushed them into these workplaces. We definitely need spaces for re-skilling and retraining. The community has the knowledge on how to do this; it just needs the support and infrastructure to allow them to generate and help their communities be a part of the solution and be a part of the future of work and be a part of the future of the Ontario economy. I agree with—

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much—oh, sorry. Thank you so much for that.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** In the last minute, I just wanted to flip over to Dale very quickly, because I think, Troy, what you're talking about is also that mental health support that's needed, right? That displacement can cause a whole ton of issues.

Dale, in the last minute, would you be able to speak a little more about what investment from government you think needs to go in to mental health support during this pandemic?

**Mr. Dale Clark:** Yes, thanks for the question. There's a need for more services, for sure. In particular, we see more services—I mean, more people to serve: more experts, more counsellors, more doctors, more available services. In particular, remote access, whether that be over the phone or Internet-provided solutions: We see a growing need and demand for that. But we see too many examples of very, very long—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid we'll have to move on now to a second round of questions from the independents. MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I want to say thank you to all of the presenters—very interesting perspectives you've brought forward to committee today.

**0950**

I want to continue on with Dale. I know my colleague MPP Blais asked you about the stage of the technology, and you did continue to expand on that response. My question is around the potential in northern and remote communities—we certainly have many of those areas—and how you see this solving some of the generating capability that we need. We have Far North, remote Indigenous communities, for instance, who currently are not connected to the grid. Do you see this as a solution for some of Ontario's remote communities?

**Mr. Dale Clark:** Yes, certainly it can be. That's part of the vision and potential for this new industry or new aspect of the industry with SMRs, for sure. It's intended to be able to get to remote communities that don't have a need for the very large facilities that we've seen in the last several decades. It's aimed at smaller demands, smaller needs, and potentially in more remote areas, in places where Ontario, again, has the infrastructure, has the ability.

To finish one of those last thoughts, to the time frame: Canada has made progress and is in development. I think current estimates are in and around the late 2020s, where we could start to see some of that technology and some of those SMR reactors in use.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Okay, so you've answered MPP Blais's question in terms of small modular reactors: late 2020s.

I want to jump over to Darnel just to talk a little bit more about the partnership with the conservation authorities. In my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, we have a very small bioswale as part of the East Scarborough Storefront project, and it's more of an educational tool for children in the community, really, to see the importance of rainwater—that water is collected, it waters the garden and that continuum—but it does really have environmental impacts. You talked about 90% no flooding in the areas where this has been built into the design.

I was wondering about some of the changes that could be made to signal that this is something that we should be thinking about in our planning and in our design, and what the province could do to make that more prevalent.

**Mr. Darnel Harris:** Sure. I will say, by the way, that it's even better than that. In Indianapolis, the city has said that 95% of storm events don't even reach their sewers. The rain garden is built so that it is actually able to contain it. Only 5% goes into the sewer, so there's a much lower sewer load, certainly, and no flooding at all. So the potential certainly is there.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Darnel Harris:** Definitely, across Ontario, it needs to go beyond just being there for education to being something that's built in, on a regular basis.

Actually, speaking of red tape, for example, one of the key things about that pathway is that it's wide, and the biggest challenge that we're having, for example, with that

cargo cycle pilot that we're going to be running is that it's very difficult and challenging to have large cargo cycles—practical devices, in more words—in lanes that are simply mostly built for recreation. So I would urge the government to keep the focus on building some wider, more practical infrastructure that would allow for reduction of flooding and other benefits, but also, frankly, increase practical commerce within communities, which only really benefits Ontarians.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Okay. Thank you so much.

Troy, I'm going to jump over to you with the remaining time that we have. I'd like you to speak to the cultural hub that was promised and then something happened. Now there seems to be a commitment, but the community wants more assurances. I think that building it in with those assurances allows the community to do the necessary planning ahead of time, before these projects come on stream. I think that you've learned a lot in your work on community benefits to prepare communities for the opportunities, the investments and how to take advantage of those to break cycles of poverty, to reduce things like violence in the community and, more importantly, to really allow children and young people to see that there is a path that they can follow.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** The hub is currently a sore topic for many of us. I've worked on the hub for the last—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute remaining.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** —two or three years. The assurances that we got, while informal, were based on trust. From our understanding, it was going to happen, and because of that we mobilized the community around it. It went out to 1,400 people to design the hub collectively, and then finding out that the hub was up for debate or that it was not going to be designed by the community, but by other people, was troubling for us, because what's needed is a community-centred developed space so we could address some of the concerns that have been neglected since the 1980s. The same problems continue to exist and there are no systemic solutions, so the community came together to design something. That's what is needed, is partnerships with community who have lived experience and are really the experts on the problems that are—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you very much. We'll have to move on to the government side now. MPP Skelly.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Good morning, everyone, and thank you for your presentations. I'd like to start with Troy. Troy, I wanted to continue along the path of community benefits. I worked as a city councillor prior to entering provincial politics and many, if not all, of the development projects that were put forward by private developers included community benefits. I'm hearing from you that you think that there could be some changes, or there are challenges with the current process. Can you expand on that, on how you think it could be more inclusive and perhaps even more beneficial for communities such as your own?

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** It's complicated, but I think community benefits need to work with community. Once

again, going back to this idea of lived experience and people who know the solutions, I think we need to recognize that people have comparative advantages. Developers understand a lot about developments, they're experts in that field, but then when they get into social spaces, while we have great intentions, there are a lot of learning curves that need to be addressed.

I think working with community makes a lot of sense. I think accountability is huge, and structured agreements so things like the hubs are planned out from the get-go, so people know clearly what's happening. We need to have that partnership so things can happen. For example, there's a lot of conversation about hiring for infrastructure projects, but those things are not normally monitored, or there's not really the infrastructure on how the supply side and demand side will work together. I think this is where you have open RFPs, where at the beginning there is a partnership with people that can do that work. It makes it easier for everybody and it doesn't put all the burden on developers. It's also working with community and with organizations that have been doing this for a while, to make sure those things work together, because it's difficult.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Do you work closely with your municipal representatives? Because that's really the level, I think, when it comes to a lot of the community benefits. The interaction and relationships that you have with the municipal councillors can carry a lot of weight.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** Yes, we do. I do personally work closely with our municipal level of government, but there is a higher level of understanding of these things, the stuff that Ontario could do, the larger structures allowing for things like this to happen. I think it has to be together. Particularly when we talk about the hub, a lot of that conversation is the Ontario side of things. I think we all need to work in unison when we're talking about these things, but I do recognize that some of these conversations, a majority of these conversations at the municipal level would all need to be working together to make sure the structure is in place for these things.

**1000**

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** One of the other things that you raised, and I'm so glad that you did raise it—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes remaining.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** When we first were elected and went on the road with this committee, we spoke a lot about the lack of people in the trades, the growing need for more and more people in skilled trades and, of course, the tremendous challenges to attract people to the trades. I think a lot of people on committee and perhaps even my colleagues across the aisle in opposition were really surprised that there was such a demand for the trades. These are good jobs. These are good jobs that provide great opportunities for young people; maybe Dale can even weigh in on this. It's a tough, tough problem to try to address. While we believe that the trades provide tremendous opportunity for young people, it's difficult to encourage them and to attract them to enter the trades.

Do you have any advice that you could share today that would help us build that base and attract more young people, regardless of where they live and regardless of sector, to enter these jobs or this profession?

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** I can, but I think I want to focus directly on the lived experience I know. While it may be difficult overall to get people attracted to the trades, racialized people, particularly people from the Caribbean—this is what they do. A large portion is already in the trades. If you actually look at it, that's the work they've been in.

If you look at the pre-apprenticeship programs, it's disproportionately racialized people who are not finding that pathway through. When we talk about infrastructure spending, we also need to talk about workforce development spending and having partnerships between those training and those putting people to work.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute remaining.

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** Because my knowledge is that racialized people, particularly people from the Caribbean, are interested in the trades. They're motivated to work in the trades, but that pipeline is not working for some reason.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Do you think that it's introducing them at even a younger age, at an elementary school level or early in secondary school, so that those links and connections are made so that they have the network that's already being established, or is it something else? Are there other barriers?

**Mr. Troy Budhu:** Yes, we do need to introduce people to the trades at an earlier level. Our education system puts people towards post-secondary university pathways, not in the trades. But when we talk about immigrants and racialized people, particularly from the Caribbean, they're interested in the trades to begin with, but because of financial circumstances and because they can't find work, they end up working in factories and other spaces.

So there are dual realities. There's the reality of, overall, people are not—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'll have to cut you off now. That concludes our first round of presenters. Thank you so much to everyone for presenting.

We'll do an attendance check. MPP Bell? Excellent. If you can confirm you're with us and that you are indeed in Ontario. You need to unmute first.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I'm here, and I'm in Ontario. Thanks for having me.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Perfect. Thank you so much.

CYCLE TORONTO  
FUTURE OF INFRASTRUCTURE GROUP  
MS. LORI CAMPBELL

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We'll move to our next round of presenters. You'll each have seven minutes, and I'll give you a one-minute notification at the end. We'll start with Cycle Toronto. If you can please state your name for Hansard, you may begin.

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** Sure, my name is Michael Longfield and I am the interim executive director of Cycle Toronto. I will begin.

Dear members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, as I said, my name is Michael Longfield and I am the interim executive director of Cycle Toronto, a member-supported non-profit working to make Toronto a safe, healthy and vibrant cycling city for all. As Ontario moves towards recovery and rebuild, more people are discovering that riding a bike can be a safe, efficient mode of transportation and recreation. We humbly suggest that the bicycle is a 19th-century solution to a 21st-century problem.

Municipalities across the province are creating more space to walk, roll and ride as part of their pandemic response, including Barrie, Brampton, Guelph, Hamilton, London, Mississauga, Markham, Ottawa, North Bay and Waterloo. Toronto, through its ActiveTO program, is completing 40 kilometres of new bike lanes, including new bike lanes hugging Queen's Park along University Avenue as a new north-south spine through the city's core. This is only a start. A robust active transportation network will make cycling a more attractive option to more people and families. More Ontarians choosing to ride a bike will make our communities more livable and sustainable.

Even before the pandemic, Torontonians promoted safe streets and more mobility options. Protected bike lanes, in particular, are met with widespread approval: 79% of Torontonians support more protected bike lanes, and although support varies by primary mode of transportation, even 75% among those who drive support protected bike lanes. Our friends at Share the Road will note that pre-pandemic support existed across the province: 41% of Ontarians would like to cycle more, and 67% indicated they would cycle more if there were cycling infrastructure and trails; 84% of Ontarians support the province making it more convenient to walk from home to public transit, and 81% support making it more convenient to cycle to transit.

Bike lanes and cycling infrastructure are good for business. Our economic success runs through our main streets. In Toronto, despite concerns from businesses and BIAs, studies consistently show bike lane projects are good for business as the number of customers increases and customers spend more after the bike lanes go in.

Building bike lanes itself is a more effective job booster than other road infrastructure projects. A study at the University of Massachusetts showed that cycling infrastructure projects can create up to 11.4 jobs for every \$1 million invested, or 46% more than car-only road projects.

The challenges facing Ontario are not unique. Supporting active transportation doesn't need to be a partisan issue along tired left-right divides. Governments around the world are taking action. In the UK, Boris Johnson's Conservative government announced a £2-billion plan to build over 1,500 kilometres of protected cycle ways and adjust the Highway Code to better protect pedestrians and cyclists.

Now it is the time for Ontario to think big. We are committed to working with you to ensure our provincial

COVID-19 recovery includes a sufficiently rapid and ambitious active transportation response for Ontario. This should include securing investment for public transit first and foremost. Active transportation and transit are complementary. We are very encouraged by a recent New York Times article suggesting that, around the world, riding transit may not be a significant source of COVID-19 transmission, as long as riders wear masks and vehicles aren't overcrowded like pre-pandemic rush hours. On this, of course, we defer to the experts in public health.

In Toronto, we ask for a commitment to funding projects like new bus-only lanes, the Eglinton LRT, the Finch LRT—including the community centre promised by Metrolinx for the residents of Jane and Finch—and the Ontario Line, and include protected bike lanes and cycling infrastructure along the routes in parallel with these openings. We understand it may be out of the scope of this committee, but we would also want to stress the importance of provincial support for operational transit funding—also, ensuring municipalities are well-positioned to build and fast-track cycling infrastructure projects and have resources and staff capacity to meet the demand; closing gaps in recreational trails and paths like the motion put forward in Toronto by Councillor McKelvie on the Meadoway; and committing to building active transportation infrastructure on provincial roadways and overpasses.

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted racialized communities. Analysis further shows that low-income residents have higher rates of pedestrian and cyclist collisions. Our active transportation strategy needs to prioritize the most vulnerable.

To answer a few potential objections in advance: Yes, not every trip is bikeable. Supporting active transportation provides more options for more people. One person on a bike is one less person in a car or on transit.

Yes, not everyone can bike or will choose to, but protected bike lanes can support other micromobility devices, including kick-style e-scooters and mobility scooters.

Yes, riding a bike for transportation is possible even in the winter months. Montreal sees cycling year-round. For many people, the choice beats waiting outside in the cold for 15-20 minutes for a bus when they could already be at their destination by bike.

Some additional financial incentives we'd urgently like to see from the province:

- creating rebates for people purchasing bikes and e-cycles as green transportation options, like recently announced in British Columbia;

- subsidizing bike shops to perform repairs and servicing, possibly in the form of vouchers; and

- helping provide regulatory clarity to facilitate urban freight shipping by e-cargo cyclists.

We encourage the government to form a provincial advisory committee on active transportation and micromobility to address these and other issues related to safety and the Highway Traffic Act, with the goal of creating an active transportation provincial strategy. Thank you for your consideration.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent; thank you so much.

We'll move on to our next presenter. It is the Future of Infrastructure Group. We have several presenters from this group, so before you speak, if you can just state your name clearly for Hansard. Our first presenter from this group may begin now.

**Mr. Gareth Newlands:** Thank you, Chair Sandhu, Vice-Chair Roberts and members of the committee, for inviting us here today for this important discussion. Thank you for the work you've done and continue to do locally and across the province to protect people's health and well-being and mapping our path to recovery.

**1010**

Good morning. My name is Gareth Newlands. I'm the national vice-president of WSP, and I'm here with my colleagues Angela Clayton, group head, Plenary, and Rowan Mills, advisory practice leader at Arup. We're here today representing the Future of Infrastructure Group, whose numbered companies employ approximately 10,000 Ontarians.

The Future of Infrastructure Group is made up of leading companies in the infrastructure sector, representing planning, design, engineering, construction, equipment, finance, and operations and maintenance. Our aim is to provide a coordinated, collaborative oasis for the infrastructure sector across Canada and promote best practices for better value for public investment and a healthy market that creates jobs, enables innovation and builds greater communities.

I understand the aim of the standing committee is to study the impact of COVID-19 on specific sectors of the provincial economy, including infrastructure, but also municipalities, construction and building, small and medium enterprise, tourism, culture and heritage, and to look at measures which will contribute to their recovery. Infrastructure touches all of the factors and will play an important role in economic recovery.

We'd like to focus our comments on three areas in particular: (1) the impact on the infrastructure sector and immediate relief, (2) the need for certainty moving forward, and (3) the long-term opportunity.

I'll pass it to my colleague Angela.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Hi. Good morning. My name is Angela Clayton. I'm here in my capacity as a board member with the Future of Infrastructure Group. I will speak to the impact of COVID-19 on the sector and immediate relief.

We recognize it has been a difficult balancing act and appreciate the way different parties and levels of government have worked together to keep people safe and working. As I'm sure this committee can appreciate, the impact on the infrastructure sector has been hard. Talking to our members, for a typical construction site we saw most operations experience productivity drops in the range of 40% to 70%. The reduction in productivity was primarily driven by people being absent from work and new safety measures on-site, which include physical distancing and enhanced site conditions.

Our members have also incurred significant direct costs, such as the cost to secure sites during shutdown,

costs to ensure safety and security, and increased material costs due to unavailability and delays.

For planning and engineering firms, we've seen a marked slowdown in the work in the private sector. There have been some prominent project cancellations and delays due to COVID-19, which has further increased uncertainty in the market. It's important to point out that a slowdown in the planning, design and engineering has a knock-on effect, as it will delay and impact the pipeline of work at every stage. We believe there needs to be a continued focus on ensuring that planning, design and procurement for projects continue to move forward.

Our recommendations to address the immediate impact of COVID-19 focus on two areas: dealing with claims for costs and schedule delays, and maintaining progress on planning and design work.

First, with regard to dealing with claims for costs and schedule delays, we need a policy decision around the treatment of claims that have caused delays and additional costs for projects. Failing to take a policy-based approach will result in the province being in a position where every claim is determined individually through legal channels. A policy approach would provide immediate certainty to the sector and help stabilize companies that are struggling with cash flow issues. We've seen other provinces, such as British Columbia, Quebec and Newfoundland, take this approach. The construction sector is unique because it has a large proportion of small and medium-sized contractors, many with specialist skills. The faster we can resolve claims, the quicker funds will flow through the supply chain.

The second recommendation is to maintain progress on planning and design work. In order to maintain the momentum in the infrastructure sector, the government should continue to progress projects in the planning and design stages. The majority of this critical work can be done remotely. It will keep people working and it will make sure there are no knock-on delays later.

I will now hand it over to my colleague Rowan.

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** Hello, and thank you. It's a pleasure to be here today. The next section I'd like to speak with everyone about is certainty in the short term. As members of FIG, we certainly appreciate all of the statements that all levels of government have made that investment infrastructure remains a priority for government and will be sustained, as this provides confidence and maintains jobs in our industries. We are also certainly appreciative that the provincial and federal governments have come together to provide funding for municipalities and transit systems so that capital budgets are not prematurely spent, which avoids the shortfalls of having to come up with money later on, which inevitably costs more in the future.

The government has implemented positive changes to ensure that money flows faster to get people to work and to build projects faster, focusing on low-risk, important work that needs to be done in the short term, specifically maintenance and repair and maintaining progress on the existing pipeline of projects. Now is a good time to get the school and highway repairs done, which we believe have

already been undertaken. It's positive for the government's work to—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute remaining.

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** Okay. I'm just going to skip to essentially a summary of what we'd like to see. We think the government has done a good job of striking a balance between keeping people working with companies and ensuring that they're kept safe. The crisis has exposed a lot of us now to new ways of thinking with government. We wish to ensure that the bill addresses some of the ingrained approaches that have held the sector back in areas like procurement planning and the paper process. Infrastructure will play an important part not just in our economic recovery but also in the long-term economic success as a province. Thank you, and I'll finish there.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Great. Thank you so much. We'll move on to our final presenter in this group, and that is Lori Campbell. If you can state your name again for the Hansard record, and you will have seven minutes.

**Ms. Lori Campbell:** Good morning. I'm Lori Campbell. I'm a two-spirit Cree Métis and active community member in the Indigenous and broader community of the Waterloo region. I work in the post-secondary education sector as a researcher, educator, administrator, and with Indigenous students.

My concerns come to you today from this lived experiential community and professional lens. I am concerned because Indigenous communities, rural and urban, throughout the province were already marginalized and struggling and had infrastructure gaps prior to COVID-19. These gaps have grown exponentially since COVID-19, and this means that Indigenous peoples, and indeed our province, will suffer even more.

Research presented by Tabatha Bull, president and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, CCAB, reflects that Indigenous businesses on-reserve face unique barriers at this time because of the lack of broadband and infrastructure that enables e-commerce. Four in 10 either have no Internet connection or a connection on which they cannot fully rely. This issue is more on-reserve than within the region in which I live, but this is very real, even in a community like Six Nations, the largest First Nation in all of Canada and one that is only 50 kilometres away from our region. CCAB documents Six Nations as facing these barriers prior to COVID-19 as well. As a post-secondary educator, I can also only imagine how this will affect Indigenous post-secondary students who will be required to take up online learning through post-secondary institutions this fall.

Indigenous businesses in Canada and Indigenous peoples are creating business at nine times the rate of non-Indigenous Canadians. We are in all sectors, but 99% are in small and medium-sized enterprise. Indigenous businesses tend to focus primarily on local markets and within their own province, territory and community. This means stronger recovery for Ontario as a whole. Some \$207.6 million is leaked from the Six Nations economy annually.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has found that 25% of small and medium-sized enterprises will not be able to sustain a closure of 30 days. If we look at the high number of small and medium enterprises in the Indigenous business sector, that's going to disproportionately negatively impact Indigenous peoples. Corporate Ontario and the Aboriginal Procurement Program must ensure that Indigenous businesses remain part of their supply chains during the COVID-19 crisis and after the crisis. These measures will help to close the economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses and communities during COVID-19 and will assist with the provincial economic recovery.

I recognize that there is a lot of responsibility on the federal government to adjust these issues because of on-reserve First Nation federal relations, but provincial, municipal and city governments have a role to play as well. Indigenous peoples and communities should not suffer because of interjurisdictional ambiguity. Ontario has a responsibility to ensure the safety of their communities, and all communities, regardless of whether they are First Nation, Indigenous, rural or urban. We are already having conversations here in our region. Municipal government is aware, but they are already under the gun and need additional support.

Access to equity, capital and to financing is a constant issue and is particularly cited as a challenge by start-ups and growth-focused firms. A key bottleneck is locating potential sources, with over 50% of Indigenous entrepreneurs finding it extremely difficult. The patchwork of funding was evident as shown through research conducted by the CCAB.

## 1020

The provincial government must ensure funding is made available for Indigenous-specific business. Indigenous business owners face several barriers, including locating funding opportunities, meeting lending requirements—for example, the need to have capital in order to access matching funds when Indigenous peoples on-reserve cannot own their homes or the land their homes reside on—and knowing how to complete difficult and complex application forms.

The National Indigenous Economic Development Board 2019 progress report showed that Indigenous peoples are lagging in the skills development that allows us to move into higher-paying occupational roles, youth-focused educational supports, and to build infrastructure. The provincial government must continue and even increase funding to Indigenous-specific skills and training supports. This needs to be available for various levels, such as the development of business plans and how to access financing and develop leadership skills, but there is also a substantial need for investment in skills training for Indigenous peoples more broadly to expand the pool of skilled labour that Indigenous businesses need to grow and succeed.

The government of Canada's youth employment panel recently recognized the barriers that Indigenous youth in particular face, including the intergenerational effects of colonization; a lack of education; infrastructure; and discrimination and barriers to accessing education,

employment and training. The panel recommended that governments work together to create urban Indigenous healing and employment hubs, invest in infrastructure, develop distance education, enable mentorship, and invest in entrepreneurial Indigenous youth. A hub such as this is something that was already missing, but much-needed within our own region prior to the onset of COVID.

Indigenous economic development offers the potential to improve lives, fuel provincial economic growth, further reconciliation and provide a growing young workforce to fulfill the growing need for a labour population. Investing in Indigenous economic development is an investment in a socially and economically prosperous province of the future.

Currently, the Indigenous economy contributes \$31 billion to Canada's GDP. Closing the significant opportunity gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians would boost the national economy by \$27.7 billion annually. Given that we have the highest Indigenous population, representing over 21% of Canada's Indigenous population, and the highest number of self-employed Indigenous peoples at 24%, Ontario could be a champion for Indigenous business. Ontario has the largest overall provincial population, Ontario is the economic hub of Canada, and Waterloo, in particular, is the start-up, tech development and innovation hub of Ontario.

I ask that the province consider the individual needs of both urban and rural Indigenous communities and go further to assess, region by region and centre by centre, for infrastructure needs. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent. We will now move to questions. We're going to start with the independent members this round. We'll go to MPP Hunter. And just a note: I'll give our questioners the three-minute and one-minute mark during their questions.

MPP Hunter, we'll start with you.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you, Chair. I want to thank all of the presenters for presenting to the standing committee today and for your valuable insights and input.

I'd like to ask the folks from Cycle Toronto about the rapid buildup of cycling infrastructure and the flexible use of roadways during the time of the pandemic lockdown. What do you believe is required to sustain this beyond the recovery, when demand for road space becomes more apparent?

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** That's a fantastic question. I'm really glad you asked. If I answer truthfully, it's a bit of an unknown. I think a lot of municipalities are still weighing between their immediate pandemic response and then, for lack of a better word, business as usual. In the case specifically of Toronto, a lot of the issue just comes down to capacity. In Toronto, we've seen a bit of a change, where there's more political will to get things done. Staff are doing an amazing job in working overtime, but they're running out of capacity to meet that demand.

In some ways, I think it will require a bit of a culture shift in terms of how municipalities prioritize these types of projects. Ensuring there's strong financial support from the provincial government and, frankly, the federal

government as well, to know that money and resources are there for them to keep building, will be key.

The other piece will obviously be consultation. These projects are consistently more successful when the community feels like they've had a say in them, when it's not just a bike lane that gets plopped down in their neighbourhood and they haven't had a chance to give any feedback on it. Communities often know their neighbourhoods better than city planners, and ensuring that feedback is part of the process, even in a rapid install, is crucial for their success, and the more successful each project is, the easier it is to get the next one and to move forward.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Great, and I'm very happy to see that Scarborough is included in that rapid buildout, so thanks very much to Councillor McKelvie and everyone who got that done.

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** Exactly, yes.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I'm going to ask the Future of Infrastructure Group to talk about—and whomever wants to answer—two things I want to know are on the social, community, affordable housing and if you see that as an important part of the federal, provincial and municipal projects so that these projects are considered along with everything else. Oftentimes, they're sort of jockeying for support even though they are critical to the community. And because we have limited time, if you can also speak to broadband as a core need for the future in terms of how we work, how we learn, and the importance to communities broadly.

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** Thank you, and an excellent question. To tackle the first part, I think when it comes to affordable housing and really the development and the integration in the urban fabric of more affordable choices for Ontarians, I think there's an opportunity through the transit-oriented communities development program, which has just been created.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes remaining.

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** I think, absolutely, affordable housing should be included. And some of the land value that's being created around the up-rising of Toronto should be capitalized on. We see that as very important.

In terms of broadband, I think what we're seeing with a lot of our constituents is that it's becoming more of a core infrastructure piece. It's not necessarily a "nice to have" anymore; it's becoming more of a "have to have." I think that, in itself, makes it a priority for the constituents and the clients that we work for.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Would you support, for that core infrastructure, just as how we carve out and plan other types of core infrastructure, we do that with broadband to basically give people an understanding of what the road map and the time frame is going to be for them to get this?

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** Yes, I think people will make investment decisions—where they buy homes, where they send their kids to school, where they choose to live across Ontario. Increasingly, it's becoming a factor of what my access to Internet is going to be looking like. Forward planning and a pipeline that is evidence-based and reliable will be key to helping people make those decisions.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Excellent. Thank you so much.

I would like to go to Ms. Campbell. Lori, you really articulated the case for Indigenous economic development and more support for businesses, and also the tremendous contribution to the province's prosperity. What more do you see that needs to be done? I know you've outlined changing eligibility that sometimes excludes Indigenous people from those types of supports. So, if you could just talk to what more needs to be done.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Lori Campbell:** Sure. Thank you for your question. A lot of my work is local and within our region. Some of the things we've been fighting and struggling for is a kind of Indigenous hub where we can provide culturally appropriate training and invest in young people who are here and community members who are also here, and help to build leaders, help to develop some employment services and help them navigate through application processes. A lot of that I do at the university in my capacity, but I don't necessarily see the people who aren't in the university, right? Although, some do come to the university to ask for support on things like that.

What we're really lacking, in particular, in our community is a hub where we can provide all of those things to Indigenous peoples in the community—and so closely to Six Nations—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll have to move on to the government round of questioning. We'll start with MPP Crawford.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to all the presenters here today. I listened intently to all three and I have questions for all three of you. I hope to get through them all.

I'll start with Future of Infrastructure Group. I'm personally the PA at infrastructure. I'm very passionate about infrastructure in this province. I know our government has made a major commitment over the next decade to invest in infrastructure, the largest investment in Ontario's history, and we're working with municipal governments and the federal government in collaboration. We've got big plans, such as \$28.5 billion in transit infrastructure, obviously, with the subways.

**1030**

I just want to get your perspective on where the greatest need for infrastructure in this province is. Is it schools? Roads? Are you looking at broadband? Is it transit? Where do you see the biggest need that will create jobs, but also propel economic growth?

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** I'll take a stab at that one. Thank you, Minister. That's an important question. I would like to say that all infrastructure across Ontario is important. In terms of what's important right now in terms of the short-term recovery, it's the types of infrastructure that engage the broadest sections of communities that can benefit from spending in that kind of infrastructure.

Longer term, I think it's around the core elements of infrastructure that support a growing economy and support the needs of the people going forward, and so, as I said previously, that's why we see infrastructure like broadband

Internet moving away from less prioritized infrastructure—good to have; not necessarily have to have—into truly becoming core.

I'll probably turn to my colleague Gareth to share his thoughts as well. No? Okay.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Okay, thank you. With that theme back, Chair, I'd like to move on to Lori. Actually, you touched on broadband, and broadband, I think, is particularly important. In terms of equity for people across the province, I think it's one of the great needs that we need to see, to have access to proper broadband. Whether you're rural, Indigenous—even some in the suburban areas don't have great access. For family reasons, staying in touch with your loved ones, obviously we know the benefits. We know for education, particularly through the pandemic that we've been through, how important broadband is.

But I wanted to get Lori's perspective. You mentioned about the growth of Indigenous businesses and the lack of proper broadband on many reserves in particular. I want to get your thoughts on proper broadband, what kind of economic impact that would have with Indigenous businesses—which would, of course, have a spillover to the greater economy—and how that would really benefit the communities.

**Ms. Lori Campbell:** Thank you for your question. A couple of the main documents of research and bodies of research that I focused on were coming from the—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Lori Campbell:** —Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business and the National Indigenous Economic Board's economic progress report. They have a lot of research that has gone into this, looking to the economic benefit not just provincially, but nationally as well. There is also a contribution, like I noted here, where 25% of Indigenous businesses have clients over in the US, and 17% overseas.

When I think about the economic recovery plan and growth, even for our province, given that we also have, out of all the provinces, the most self-employed Indigenous people, it makes sense that this would be something that will help us provincially prosper, and also nationally. We know that when communities are thriving and Indigenous peoples or economically disparaged communities are doing well, that will benefit everybody. It will take resources off our health system, education system, all these other kinds of things and social services. I think there are a lot of those hidden sorts of benefits will also occur.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Okay. Thank you very much. How much time left, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute and 40 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Okay, thank you. I'll move to Cycle Toronto, so to Michael. In terms of bike lanes and biking, obviously, I don't think there's anyone who wouldn't want to see more bikes on the road and more bikes. With that, I know it's difficult to even buy a bicycle right now. I've actually tried to buy some. I've got twin daughters. I was able to get one for one of them; I'm still

on a waiting list for the other, so if you know a place where I can get a 24-inch youth's or girl's bike, let me know.

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** We'll chat after this.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Yes. But I think you mentioned something about a tax credit for bikes, and I'm wondering why that would be required if there's such demand for bikes. Maybe I misunderstood. I just want to clarify. Maybe you could comment on that.

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** Sure, yes. The main focus would be for e-cycles. The federal government has provided subsidies for electric cars, for instance, and what we're seeing is that you actually get better bang for your buck by subsidizing e-cycles, that they're more efficient and enable people to travel faster. For a lot of people, e-cycles can open up riding a bike in a way that just a conventional bike cannot.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Okay, so you're proposing for e-cycles, not conventional bikes. Is that—

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** Yes, our focus would be on e-cycles, but we'd also consider regular pedal-powered bikes as well.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Okay. With that—I know we have limited time left. I represent the riding of Oakville, and in downtown Oakville recently—I guess it was maybe a year or two ago, 18 months ago—they put in some bike lanes in downtown Oakville. There has been concern from a lot of the merchants there. There was very little parking before—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid we'll have to move on to the opposition questions now. We'll start with MPP Bell.

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** There we go. You're live.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay. Thank you so much. Thank you also to all the presenters who came in and spoke to us today.

My first question is to Cycle Toronto. I have also noticed the increase in bike lanes, including dedicated bike lanes, across the city of Toronto as part of this broader push that we need to have to make active transportation safer and a good choice for more people. I also know that it's relatively cheap to move forward with dedicated cycling lanes or safer infrastructure. I was wondering—this is to Cycle Toronto—if you have done any kind of estimate on what it costs to implement some of these projects and what are some of the additional benefits that come with these projects.

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** The city of Toronto did release its numbers on the ActiveTO program. I'm hesitant to say out loud, just because I don't want it part of the official record going from my memory, but relative to other projects, you're correct: It's not that much money.

I think we're seeing that as part of the city's pandemic response, giving people more transportation options will help our economy move forward. The point about transit, for instance—like I said, it's very encouraging to hear that initial studies suggest that transit itself is not a source of COVID-19 spread, but that's dependent on people wearing masks and transit not getting back to overcapacity

levels. Bike lanes can be a really effective, efficient way of helping people move around the city, especially short trips of around five kilometres, which in the city of Toronto is about one third of all trips.

People have this idea sometimes where they look at their commute, which might be an hour, and sort of think to themselves, "Oh, I couldn't do that by bike." We're not necessarily suggesting that bikes will replace all trips all the time, but more of those shorter trips are very bikeable with protected infrastructure and can just help our economy overall, and especially really support local businesses so that people can dine and shop and eat by doing local trips around their neighbourhoods. And that's not just the downtown core; that's also in the suburbs and across the province.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you, Michael. I remember when the study came out looking at the benefits of the cycling lanes on Bloor Street and the amount that businesses' cash flow and revenue were impacted, and it did show that the majority of businesses did see an uptick in business as a result of the bikes, partly because it's very easy for people to stop, get off, shop and then get back on their bike and go on their way.

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** Yes—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes—I have one more question. I only have three minutes.

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** Sorry. I was just saying that yes, I agree.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I thought you would.

The second question I have is to the Future of Infrastructure Group. I also share some of the recommendations that you have raised around the value of moving forward with infrastructure projects such as transit in order to kick-start the economy, create good jobs for people and help people acquire a career in the trades. It also leads to real growth long term, because we'll be using these transit projects for years.

**1040**

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is around what your position is on binding community benefits agreements, so when we are building these transit projects, we're also providing real tangible benefits to local residents, marginalized communities and so on. Could you speak to your position on community benefits agreements?

**Ms. Lori Campbell:** Who was that question for? Was it for me?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** No, it's for FIG, the Future of Infrastructure Group.

**Ms. Lori Campbell:** That's what I thought.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Are any representatives from Future of Infrastructure Group able to jump in there? There we go. If you're able to unmute yourself.

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** Thank you. We were just given access to unmute there.

Thank you, and a good question. We believe that community consultation and engagement is important not just

at the beginning of infrastructure projects, but continuously all the way through a project, all the way to the end of its life cycle. The issue of binding community benefits is tricky for a lot of people because it requires clear definition: What is actually anticipated by the ultimate owner of the project? In many cases, it's a government that still owns the infrastructure. I think people will do what is asked through procurement processes and through agreements, but often the definition is what's required—

*Failure of sound system.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We're losing you to some technical difficulties here. Is Ms. Clayton still with us? I'm not sure if you're able to fill in. We also have one minute remaining.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Sure. My apologies, we were just trying to get off mute earlier. Just to pick up on what Rowan was saying: Yes, we do acknowledge the importance of community benefits and the need to work with the community and the local interested parties. But again, a lot of that is driven primarily through the procurement process and what is required as articulated through the process. That generally has been how we approach that requirement.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent. Any further questions? We've got 10 seconds remaining, so I think that might be a bit too short. We'll move on now to the independent members for the second round of questioning. MPP Blais.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you, everyone, for your presentations this morning. I just wanted to follow up with the Future of Infrastructure Group. When MPP Hunter asked about support for affordable housing as part of federal-provincial infrastructure rounds, you talked about the potential for capitalizing land values. I was wondering if you had a particular mechanism or tool or framework in mind to do that, or if it was just notionally the idea of capitalizing the land value.

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** Thank you, and a good question. I think there are a number of tools and instruments available to government [*inaudible*] think about the definition of what that land value is, and then how that can be captured and monetized. In cases where it's relatively simple, where the government owns the land, it would have a value and that value is attached to what can be built upon it. The development potential can then be appraised and then that can be either traded in terms of you can have somebody buy the property from you and write you a cheque, or it can be sort of exchanged so you will build pieces of infrastructure.

There are other tools that can be used to create and capture that land value. For example, development approvals processes can be expedited. Certainties or government backstops and guarantees can be provided. They all create value, which then can be exchanged for pieces of infrastructure being built or contributions towards the community.

Affordable housing is obviously desirable in the urban development that we see today, and I think our opinion is that it costs money to build affordable housing, because,

obviously, if I could sell it at a market rate and I would like to have something that is below a market rate to create the affordability, that has to eat into the land value somehow. In terms of very technical things, there are forgivable mortgages and there are government guarantees that can be put into project agreements.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Based on your experience, would you say that the upfront cost of building affordable housing is a bigger hindrance, or is it the lost opportunity of the lower rents over time and the kind of cash flow over time that is the bigger consideration?

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** I think it's the lost revenue over time. We've seen affordable housing projects done for terms of 30 and 40 years, but to do it on an indefinite basis or even very, very long term is starting to talk about very large amounts of money.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. Something that we explored in Ottawa to encourage economic development was the community improvement plan where, effectively, for re-developments that we wanted—and we defined what those were—we offered tax-incremental financing for a period of 10 years, to not collect the tax on the delta of the land value increase. Is that kind of longer-term stretched-out approach something you think the industry would be more welcome to in terms of financing affordable housing?

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** Absolutely—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes remaining.

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** —and it's something that's already being done here in Ontario. Under the Provincial Affordable Housing Lands Program that was done a few years ago, the city of Toronto waived property taxes on the affordable portions of the development for a period of 40 years. We've seen the Open Door program at the city of Toronto, which essentially goes into similar types of financing help and support.

I would encourage the minister, though, to think about all of that value that can be created and added together to create a package that would create the most affordable housing possible, because the longer you want it or the more you want, the more it costs.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Yes, sure. That's perfectly fair. Thank you very much.

I think there are only a couple of minutes left, but quickly, for the cycling group from Toronto: One of the things we've had a challenge with in Ottawa as we build out our cycling infrastructure is the complete connectivity of the network. You build a cycle lane over here, over here and over here, and none of it links together and you can never do your full trip—or not the trip that necessarily would get the most number of people. How do we—while trying to give cycling to everyone, which is tough—make sure that we have full, comprehensive networks and that the pieces link together properly so we're not going from a segregated lane to a complete street, like from an elevated platform to a bi-directional type of situation where you're not getting all these different pieces not working together?

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** That's a really great question, and—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** —in some ways, facing that question can be a hindrance: “Well, how do we even start? Is it worth even doing this one lane?”

One of the things that we have seen, though, very much so, is that putting in a piece of infrastructure, even if it doesn’t yet have the connectivity everyone needs, does become the focal point for where the next bike lane goes, and where the next bike lane goes too. Getting as much on the ground as possible, as long as it makes sense for the streetscape and the community support, still in itself has value, because it does start creating that culture shift and does become the basis for future networks. I’d agree that a bike lane floating in the middle of nowhere only has so much value; building out a network—and in Toronto that’s the downtown and the suburbs, as well—is just really crucial.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I appreciate that. Where’s the best place to start? Is it starting on master-planning your network or is it experimenting with a bike lane in communities down centrally somewhere and working out from there?

**Mr. Michael Longfield:** I think it depends. One of the reasons why the city of Toronto was able to—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I’m afraid that’s all of our time. We’ll have to move on to the government now. We’ll go to MPP Barrett.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Thank you, Chair. Am I being heard okay?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Yes, you are. You may continue.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Yes, coming through, with perhaps a question directed to Angela with the Future of Infrastructure Group. You threw out an idea, or perhaps a bit of a challenge, for the committee to do some thinking with respect to government policy with respect to these claims and with respect to delay and meeting scheduling, if you could expand on that a bit.

**1050**

Obviously contracts are signed for a price and a certain completion date, with all kinds of dates incrementally as you get to the end date. Because of the impact of coronavirus, I’m assuming the delays have caused an awful lot of turmoil as far as these contracts. Is that what you’re referring to? As far as the need—I think you would request that the province of Ontario develop policy or assistance, as a few other jurisdictions have done. I think you mentioned Newfoundland and a few other provinces. Could you maybe explain to me and to the committee a bit more on what’s needed with respect to that?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Hi. I would be happy to. Thank you for the question. You are absolutely right. The nature of the concern is addressing the additional costs and schedule impacts related as a result of COVID-19. Plenary Group, as a developer, builds public sector infrastructure all across Canada and North America. We’ve had a number of projects that were under construction that were impacted by COVID-19, anything from complete shutdowns, which is what we experienced in Quebec on a

number of sites when they shut down the construction sector completely, to impacts that are a little bit harder to quantify: reduced productivity, additional material costs, the impact of social distancing and other safety practices.

What we’re looking for from Ontario is a policy approach on how to deal with those impacts. If I were to contrast the response that we’ve seen from some of the other jurisdictions—I’ll use BC as an example. Their response was, “We understand there’s been impact. We’re willing to work with you to address those. Please quantify them.” We’ve already been able to come to agreements to make sure that contractors and their trades are being paid in a timely manner. In that case, we were able to completely mitigate the schedule impacts. It’s a great news story on both sides.

To contrast that with our experience in Ontario, it’s been very project-specific. The immediate response was, “We’re not convinced that you’re entitled to a claim, but tell us what the impact has been.” There’s been a lot of information provided to quantify those impacts, but there that hasn’t been a very strong response with regard to how they’re going to be dealt with.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** We work closely with Infrastructure Ontario, who I understand you’re hearing from later today. They’ve been a very good partner, but it feels like there is some policy lacking to help move some of these items forward.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Within the industry—and I know it can range from drafting or design right through to maintenance, but by and large I would hope there’s somewhat of a, I don’t know, gentlemen’s agreement where there’s an understanding, and companies that have been working together for many, many years would give each other a break, a kind of understanding. Or do the lawyers get involved? Is anything going to court? Do any of the contracts have small print that covered this? Sometimes you see that: “in lieu of a riot or a typhoon” or something like that.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Again, comparing our experience in Newfoundland, it very much has been an amicable resolution approach. They wanted to make sure that there was no long-term impact to the sector, so they stepped up and said, “The contract is one thing. We recognize you’re entitled, but let’s see if we can come to an amicable resolution outside of the contract and outside of the courts.”

We just haven’t seen that same type of response in Ontario. Ultimately, if we aren’t able to resolve the claims amicably, yes they will end up in court. That’s what we’re trying to avoid.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I know in the deputation—perhaps this will be directed at Gareth, if he’s available. It was kicked off by describing the impact of coronavirus on several sectors of the industry—construction, obviously, and we all heard about that, the concerns around, I’m thinking maybe, downtown high-rise construction, the concerns around a lack of sanitation and issues like that. But I am somewhat taken aback to hear of around a 40% to 70% drop in productivity.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I'm wondering, does that refer back to absenteeism last March, for example? Have people lost the will to work? Is it fear? Just a few comments on that and how that reflects on the rest of our economy.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Actually, that was my comment, so maybe I will just address that one as well.

Yes, certainly the immediate impact that we noticed as far as drops in productivity was in the early onset of COVID-19, when there was a lot of uncertainty. Some sites got shut down completely. In others, people were just afraid to show up to work, not sure what to expect. We've seen those productivity levels rise back to almost normal levels now, except some sites have a little bit of an impact due to the safety precautions—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'll have to cut you off. We'll go to our final round of questioning from the opposition. We'll start with MPP Lindo.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you to everybody for your presentations. My question is actually going to be focused on Lori.

Lori, it is lovely to see you here. Hopefully, we'll get to see each other in person soon. There are a couple of threads from what you said that I'd like to weave together. You had spoken about Indigenous communities in a number of reports. They typically focus on local economies. So we know that if we invest in Indigenous communities, we're actually doing the work that we keep hearing has to happen in all of the hearings and all of the sectors: to start to think about long-term community stimulation of the economy as one way to get us back on track.

But you also brought up something about skills training and an urban Indigenous healing and employment hub. I actually wrote it down because we heard in the last session that for a lot of marginalized communities—they were marginalized prior to COVID, and now that we're talking about economic recovery, we have to make sure that we don't leave them behind.

In both of these instances, I think that part of what you, as well as some of the other folks who have presented to us before, are actually alluding to is what we often hear as culturally responsive investments or culturally responsive work with community. I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit more about that so that the government can understand what culturally responsive investments—reskilling, for instance, for urban Indigenous people or skilling up or making sure they've got what they need for employment—what that looks like when we say "culturally responsive." Over to you.

**Ms. Lori Campbell:** Thank you. In my statement, I spoke about the government of Canada's youth employment panel, which reflected that Indigenous youth are suffering from the intergenerational effects of colonization, a lack of education infrastructure, discrimination, and barriers to accessing education, employment and training. Within one of these hubs—there are just so many gaps, so where to start? Even access to technology, being able to have a space where Indigenous peoples can come to access

the technology, because they don't always necessarily have the technology within their home or their private space to actually focus to do education or training or to access the things that they need there.

Also—and I find this in my work with the university—to prepare Indigenous students or youth to go into employment situations and understand the culture of going into the workplace: Often at times, we're still working with Indigenous youth who are first-generation students, so they're not as familiar with those circumstances. But there's also work to be done within the employer and outward education on preparing organizations to bring in Indigenous employees so that we can have an equitable success rate as other employees would have.

Buildings things like mentorship: Indigenous peoples need to see Indigenous peoples in positions of leadership and success in the job market. That helps to build confidence and helps them recover from—seeing others who have recovered—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Lori Campbell:** —from the intergenerational effects of colonization and are excelling. It means access to people who understand this history and how it's playing out temporarily in our society right now with employment education and all of those sorts of things. So we need elders, we need knowledge keepers, we need decolonized counsellor access and all of those sorts of things.

1100

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much, Lori. That's what I imagine is why that investment in an Indigenous hub is so important.

I'm going to throw it back over to my colleague MPP French.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I, of course, appreciate everyone's presentations.

As the critic for infrastructure for the official opposition, I'd like to speak to the folks from Future of Infrastructure Group. We're hearing much of what you have said about that need for immediate relief—we're hearing it in this sector and across the province—but also the need for certainty.

What I would ask specifically: Shovel-ready versus shovel-worthy has been a conversation that people are having. It's one thing to get to work, but it's also another to imagine projects and design and build them that keep people working and are reshaping our communities. Can you speak a little bit to that and what some of our municipalities and communities would need to get the shovels in the ground to be able to start these projects, whether it's ICIP approvals—what is affecting the industry?

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** Gareth?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I think Gareth might still be having some technical difficulties. I can answer that question. Thank you.

I appreciate that you are recognizing the difference between shovel-ready and shovel-worthy, because they are two very, very different things. From our perspective, we think it's important. Often, what we've seen happen

before when infrastructure has been used for economic stimulus is the abandoning of projects that are in the planning or development stages that truly are meeting a legitimate social need, in exchange for projects that are perceived to be shovel-ready.

Our ask is that the government take into—and the knock-on effect of that is that those projects that were in the planning and development stage then get pushed down years down the road. It's sticking with the commitment to continue to invest and build in the infrastructure that's already in the pipeline, that's already under way, as well as recognizing that there are ways to get those projects to the market a bit faster.

I'm not sure, Rowan, if you have anything else you want to add to that.

**Mr. Rowan Mills:** I'd also add that in places like in the UK and Australia, they've actually set up evidence-based pipeline approaches—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid I'll have to cut you off there. Thank you so much to all of our presenters from this round.

We'll move on to the next round, but before I do, I'm going to do a quick attendance check. MPP West, if you can confirm that you're with us and that you are in Ontario?

**Mr. Jamie West:** Thank you, Chair. I am with you. I'm in my riding office in Sudbury.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent. Good stuff.

JANE/FINCH COMMUNITY  
AND FAMILY CENTRE  
TORONTO COMMUNITY BENEFITS  
NETWORK  
ONTARIO GENERAL  
CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We'll get started with our first presenter. You will have seven minutes to present, and I'll give you a one-minute mark before the end. Our first presenter is the Jane/Finch Centre. If you can start by stating your name for Hansard, then you may begin.

**Mr. Pablo Vivanco:** Good morning. My name is Pablo Vivanco, and I'm speaking on behalf of the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre, also known as the Jane/Finch Centre, a multi-service community-based organization with a strong focus on poverty reduction through resident engagement, capacity building and anti-oppression work. We're the largest multi-service agency based in the Black Creek area and have 46 years of history in direct services to the residents of northwest Toronto, playing a leading role in numerous initiatives, including one specific project that I will be referencing today.

It's probably no surprise for you to hear me say that I work in a high-needs community, one that has the lowest equity scores in the city of Toronto, among the highest unemployment and poverty rates, lowest median income

etc. I could go on. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these issues have been exacerbated, and the vulnerability many in our community experience has been reflected not only in the much higher rates of infection but in the increased hardships and anxiety that aren't entirely part of the discussion and certainly difficult to quantify.

What we have seen also won't surprise you: a need for food security—many folks in the community needing food and supplies throughout all this time—as well as income supports, because many people work in sectors where working from home isn't an option and also many are precariously employed.

We have also seen a lot of need for technology. There's a technology and connectivity gap which is very present in our community: lots of folks don't have access to mobile devices or computers, and then also another significant number of people don't have access to the Internet at all. As well, there's a lack of access to opportunities. This is something obviously related to income and a historic issue that has been present in the community even before the pandemic.

What we've been doing, like many of our other partners and service providers, is trying to respond to all of this, providing and delivering food and supplies to hundreds of families in the area, supporting applications to CERB and EI, helping people file taxes in order that they can get these supports, as well as trying to continue some of our online activities and supports, helping people with isolation, providing information etc.

What is needed: This committee is obviously focused on infrastructure and looking at the recovery, so I want to mention two areas specifically. One that I'm sure many of you are familiar with—it has garnered a lot of attention over the last couple of weeks—is the community hub that the province and the community have been working on on the north side of Finch, adjacent to the Finch LRT maintenance yard. Our centre believes that the provincial government needs to engage the community on how the province can become a partner to ensure the community hub gets built. I say "partner" because the community has also invested a considerable amount of time and energy, and while there are still ideas being debated, the input of at least 1,500 people that went into the feasibility study that we commissioned needs to absolutely be respected and needs to be recognized as the baseline for this project moving forward.

We, like many in the community, are glad to hear the desire of the Premier and others to ensure that something gets built, and we think it's important to work with the community to ensure that what is built honours the vision that people from the area have worked so hard on and invested so much in. This is obviously precisely related to infrastructure and also an opportunity to address some of the most pressing needs in the community that could be met, including jobs related to the building of a hub, as well as the operations thereafter.

The other bit is something where I don't exactly have something more precise to recommend, but something I feel that I want to put out there that the government should

be working on. The province should be working together with the city and other stakeholders, including housing providers like Toronto Community Housing, among others, to ensure and work on connectivity, to address that gap that we've seen that we've been trying to help with, especially for vulnerable populations, seniors, newcomers etc., folks who can't exactly do what we're doing right now in terms of being able to connect virtually because they don't have the devices, don't have access to the Internet and, for many of those folks, not necessarily having that orientation and know-how in order to do so.

That's it. Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll move on to our next presenter, the Toronto Community Benefits Network. If you can state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** Hello. Good morning. Thank you for the invitation. My name is Rosemarie Powell, and I'm joined by my colleague Kumsa Baker, representing the Toronto Community Benefits Network. We are here today to encourage the provincial government to remain steadfast in its commitment to integrate community benefits expectations and provincially funded infrastructure projects. With COVID-19 recovery planning under way, we recognize that infrastructure is a key component to Ontario's economic recovery from COVID-19.

The Toronto Community Benefits Network is a 120-members-and-growing coalition of community organizations, grassroots groups and social enterprises, unions, construction trades training centres and workforce development agencies. TCBN has centred itself at the forefront of the economic justice movement in Canada by negotiating community benefits agreements into public infrastructure and urban development projects. In so doing, TCBN is addressing the challenges of access to good jobs, local economic development and neighbourhood revitalization, particularly as they impact on historically disadvantaged communities and equity-seeking groups in Toronto: women, newcomers, Indigenous and racialized individuals, as well as youth and veterans.

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TCBN's efforts have led to Ontario's first community benefits framework with Metrolinx that includes a community benefits apprenticeship plan, a community benefits liaison plan and a declaration on hiring targets for the Eglinton Crosstown, along with subsequent agreements for the Finch West LRT, the West Park Healthcare Centre, the Macdonald Block reconstruction project and the Woodbine Casino. Community benefits initiatives provide an opportunity for government and other institutions to support social and economic development policy priorities with their procurement processes and incentive programs, while also addressing labour supply shortages in some employment sectors.

In the fall of 2017, TCBN undertook a labour market analysis, funded by the Ontario government, to identify strategies to address the workforce development needs of employers and employees in sectors supporting access to

underrepresented groups to trade jobs and procurement opportunities in the construction industry. Our analysis included both secondary and primary research. First, an environmental scan and a document review were undertaken to ground the research and to learn about transit opportunities, challenges and best practices, and contextual information to interpret the needs of the industry in this area.

The construction industry is booming, as you know, fuelled in large part by hundreds of billions of dollars of investment of taxpayer dollars into infrastructure projects over the next 10 years. The industry is one of the largest employers and, within the unionized sector, it provides good-paying jobs with benefits and pensions. The sector has been described by researchers, though, as one of the most complex and problematic arenas within which to manage people. The structure of construction workplaces, outsourcing, subcontracting and start-up of flexible firms leads to the employment relationship being characterized by separation, conflict, informality and reluctance to embrace change. Structural and cultural impediments to equality, diversity and inclusion and work-life balance exist in the sector, leading to discriminatory cultures, outmoded procurement processes and informal networks. Just in the last five months, five nooses were found on construction sites across the city of Toronto.

All lines of evidence throughout TCBN's consultation process confirm that indeed, there is a skills gap in the construction industry. This skills gap was identified at all levels of the industry, from entry-level positions as apprentices to project management experience. There is an untapped labour pool of people from diverse communities who have been historically overlooked in the construction industry and who could meet this need.

Toronto is 51% visible minority; Ontario is 32%. In our society, women make up at least 50% of the possible labour force. This reality is not reflected in the industry at all. The government of Ontario, in its report on the need to modernize the apprenticeship system, identified that only 4.4% of women, 1.9% of Aboriginals and 1.2% of racialized apprentices are registered with the Ontario College of Trades. Meanwhile, recent data has cautioned of the looming skilled trades shortage in the construction sector. Over the next 10 years, at least 100,000 additional construction workers are needed in Ontario due to the increasing demand in the construction industry and attrition through retirements.

Time? I'm okay?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Still two minutes remaining.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** Excellent. This is why it's imperative that government leaders leverage community benefits agreements to create local workforce and business opportunities for Black and Indigenous peoples, women, people of colour, persons with disabilities, veterans, youth and newcomers. A commitment to infrastructure, training, employment and improved outcomes for diverse communities must go hand in hand.

The initial Metrolinx Crosstown LRT project is starting to show good outcomes, with over 162 apprentices and 200

professional administrative and technical workers hired. Despite the initial results, it did not meet the 10% goal. Now, we celebrate the achievement of each individual.

In conclusion, I encourage—we encourage—that the provincial government remain steadfast in its commitment to integrate community benefits expectations into upcoming provincially funded infrastructure projects. There is at least—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** Thank you. There is at least \$28 billion being spent in transit right now. We would like to see the provincial government ensure that there is a community benefits agreement on each and every single one of these projects. In the Jane and Finch community, like my colleague from the Jane/Finch Community Centre spoke to earlier, we would like to see the government remain steadfast in its commitment to the Jane and Finch community, to the Finch West LRT and the expected hub by the community.

TCBN alone has over 600 people in our database and numerous program participants who expressed a keen interest in jobs and opportunities created through community benefits. We have a vast partnership of 120 organizations who are ready to help fulfill this need. Work with us. Let's get more historically under-represented groups in the trades, because they're experiencing unprecedented levels of unemployment—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent. I'll have to cut you off. That's all of your time. We'll move on now to the final presenter for this round, and that is the Ontario General Contractors Association. If you can begin by stating your name for Hansard, and then you may begin.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Good morning. My name is Giovanni Cautillo. Can you all hear me? I am the new president of the Ontario General Contractors Association.

Our members account for approximately \$12 billion of construction each year in Ontario in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors, generally referred to as ICI. We are focused on supplying the infrastructure needed to support Ontario's growing communities. Our 190 members include small, medium and large firms representing both union and open-shop contractors.

In my presentation today, I will address the impacts of COVID-19, the effect of the subsequent closing of most of the ICI industry on our businesses and its impact generally on infrastructure contracts. I will also explain how our sector requires a quick response from this government to deal with the financial and contractual crises we're facing.

In general, due to the existing safety culture, our ICI segment of the construction industry has managed the challenge of COVID-19 very well. The biggest hit to our industry was the government-mandated shutdown when ICI construction was deemed non-essential from April 3 to May 17. Since reopening, we have been focused on worker safety that much more. To illustrate, as of last week the WSIB has accepted over 4,340 workplace claims, with only 18 from construction. We have invested heavily in training, sanitation, cleaning, physical distancing and PPE.

In a survey of over 200 contractors done by the Ontario Construction Secretariat, the cost of new safety initiatives was shown to have increased project costs by 13%. This same survey determined that the pandemic has also caused supply chain interruptions which continue to impact most projects today.

The crisis now facing us is that the standard force majeure clauses used in contractual agreements do not allow for a pandemic or a mandatory closure of the industry. Unless the owner agrees to the cost, the contractor is legally liable for all cost and delayed penalties. When the Ontario Construction Secretary asked about this in the survey I referenced, 18% of owners said they are somewhat or very inflexible in accommodating new costs for any delays. This crisis is soon to be compounded over the next few months by a cash flow shortage caused by the six-week gap in billings. The timing literally cannot get any worse as contractors are presenting second-quarter statements to banks and bonding companies.

Last week alone, one of Canada's largest general contractors rescued a similar-sized firm which was no longer financially sustainable. We are fortunate that bankruptcy was avoided, but experts in the industry are convinced that without intervention, many companies will soon fail. This is the start of a financial crisis that requires the government's immediate response.

As we enter stage 3 recovery, contractors are bearing even more of the actual costs associated with delays, and the problem is getting worse, with 41% of the scheduled work that was to start this year remaining delayed. To solve this, labour lawyers across the province have suggested solutions including a separate standardized clause addressing cost induced by COVID-19. Another solution is to include "pandemic" as a component to the force majeure section in contracts. By taking this action, the government would be able to protect the parties while allowing them to continue to build under challenging and uncertain conditions.

However, being able to build infrastructure only works if there is something to build. When the economy is suffering, the government turns to our construction industry to be the engine that drives the growth that will keep our economy thriving. Shovel-ready infrastructure projects, whether they be large or small, are critical to the success of our industry and our province.

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However, public infrastructure projects are only part of the ICI construction industry, a sector that contributes just under \$9 billion to our province's GDP. It is important to remember that, like the rest of the economy, the vast majority of those employed in the construction industry work for small to medium-size firms. Some of the smaller projects have been vital to Ontario's COVID recovery, like the retrofit of health care centres with barriers to keep employees safe.

I do want to give credit to the government for their announcement of the Accelerated Build Pilot Program. Still, I also want to tell you that now more than ever our economy is dependent on the Infrastructure Ontario pipeline. The pandemic has stopped much of the planning and

approvals for the construction in 2021. The only way to fix this is by providing a long-term infrastructure pipeline that will encourage investment. It will serve as an incentive to train those who have lost jobs due to the pandemic.

Infrastructure investment has been shown throughout our province's history to put billions of dollars back into our economy. Our sector, and the people of Ontario, will need this when the full impact of the pandemic is known.

As I am sure you all know, it takes billions of dollars of investment to build the critical infrastructure that we rely on every day. For every ICI project that gets built, every contractor must calculate the project costs. Delays caused by the shutdown, increased safety standards, supply chain issues and reduced productivity have all been felt by the general contractors. The principal issue here is the difference between being busy and being at full capacity.

Many trade contractors have reported being busy in May, but they are finishing off jobs that had been taking longer than anticipated or starting new work with fewer workers on-site. The result is that not much work is being completed, and therefore, the billings are less.

Stepping up and establishing a relief provision that allows banks and bonding companies to support contractors financially while they are dealing with contractual and payment delays will be critical to our economic recovery.

In summary, here are our recommendations:

- (1) apply pandemic-related costs to the force majeure clauses of contracts;
- (2) remove regulatory impediments to the planning and delivery of all construction projects, including the removal of exclusion clauses from procurement policies; and
- (3) establish a relief provision that allows banks and bonding companies to financially support contractors while they deal with contractual and payment delays.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** We are very grateful to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the Attorney General's office, and the Ministry of Infrastructure for the ongoing support of Ontario's construction industry. I want to personally give special thanks to Minister McNaughton for his unwavering support for this sector and his commitment towards ensuring that all workers are kept safe during the crisis.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent. Thank you so much.

We're going to now move to questions. Each party will have two rounds of six and a half minutes, and I'll give you three-minute and one-minute warnings.

We'll start with government side. MPP Rasheed.

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you to all the presenters this morning. I would love to start with Mr. Giovanni. Thank you for your presentation and some of the things that you have highlighted that we are facing due to COVID-19, some of the challenges and difficulties.

Let's talk about the red tape. Just help me understand some of the red tape that you briefly talked about that you have experienced or are facing and that we, as a government, can help you eliminate to the best of our abilities so

that things can be back to normal as much as possible post-COVID.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Thank you very much. With regard to red tape, a specific example would be municipal class EAs, or environmental assessments. You've heard a lot about this, and articles have been written, so I'm going to put it into context that you can understand.

Most recently, there has been an article stating that the reduction in municipal class EAs would be from six years to three years. That's a bit of a misnomer, seeing as how they used to be 24 months and then they crept up to 36 months. Now they're at six years, and you're reducing them back to three. So that's in essence what we're looking at. We want them back to a state where you can actually get through the analysis, through the inquiry process with regard to establishing all the necessary regulatory means to ensure that the project moves forward without the secondary bump-ups that really lag the system.

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Chair, sorry, can you just leave my mike unmuted? Thank you so much.

Post-COVID now, and during COVID as well—I represent the riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville and I see a lot of development happening. I have visited sites during COVID to see how the development is happening, but also following the provincial guidelines—proper masks, sanitization and all these things. Would you say that the industry has been pretty good in terms of following the provincial guidelines of making sure that the health and safety of the workers is the utmost priority?

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Absolutely. I've got to tell you that in the ICI sector, there was a safety culture to begin with, so we were above and beyond other sectors when it came down to our level of safety and our level of commitment to the workers. We were very well placed when it came to ensuring that our workers are kept safe. We have had stringent protocols and procedures enacted on all sites when it came to checking in, temperature checks, sanitation, safety, and the scheduling of work to ensure that social distancing is kept to a maximum. So yes, we have been—when it comes down to safety, we don't joke around. We are 100% committed to our workers and the ICI sector, as the WSIB has demonstrated. With only 18 claims being put forward out of 4,340, you can be assured that we are 100% on this.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you, Chair. Again, I have spoken to many developments that are happening here, especially in Mississauga. When we talk about inspections, I know first-hand that they have seen, especially during COVID-19, that the number of inspections has gone up, sometimes to the point where it's becoming—we want to make sure that the safety and health of the workers are well taken care of. When we talk about the inspections, would you say that during this pandemic—you had briefly mentioned it during your presentation as well. What's your thought on the inspections from the government perspective?

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Let me clarify that. Are you asking—is it the Ministry of Labour inspections that—

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Ministry of Labour inspections, yes.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Once again, this is routine for us when it comes down to Ministry of Labour inspections. We welcome the Ministry of Labour on all of our sites. We have never once impeded them. They have been able to visualize and see first-hand the level that we have advanced to when it comes to the safety of the worker, especially under the COVID regime. We do want to make sure that everyone goes home safe.

That is the contractor's main driving goal to start with in the ICI sector, and that's under normal circumstances.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Now, with the added basis of COVID, again, we're taking all the steps necessary to ensure that all workers are safe and that they do get to go home to their families every single night.

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** And is it safe to say that the Ministry of Labour, under Minister Monte McNaughton, has gone above and beyond to make sure that the health and safety of the workers is taken care of to the best? Would you say that's correct?

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Yes, 100%. As I noted, I gave a special shout-out to Monte McNaughton specifically because the minister is vested in the industry. He understands the importance of construction to the economy and the importance of having our workers go home safe.

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Yes, and I believe that this industry plays a vital role in us coming out of this crisis, because this industry creates a lot of job opportunities—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'll have to cut you off now. We're going to have to move to the opposition members for questioning. We'll start with MPP Lindo.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you to all of you for your presentations. My question is actually going to be focused to Pablo, but I can't do that without acknowledging what Rosemarie told us about the nooses that are found on construction sites. The need for community hubs is critical, because in moments like that where we've had a number of people say that trade jobs, construction jobs are high-paying good jobs, we also have to make sure that we don't disregard or ignore the reality that's been happening right now with those nooses and what that does to marginalized communities who are even considering going into those jobs.

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With that, I want to pivot to Pablo, because a community hub is typically the kind of space that would provide you with the support to navigate that level of racism on a job site, whether it's in construction or within the government. It really doesn't matter where you're working. When racism arises, these hubs are the spaces in community where you can freely speak to the impact of that and then find ways to build those opportunities.

My question for you is actually around just that. When you said that it's important for us to have access to opportunities as part of the way that we're imagining financial and economic recovery in the province, I'd like you to

speak a little bit about why the investment in a community hub like the one at Jane and Finch is so critical to that in terms of the support for communities that were already negatively impacted by the realities of racism, poverty, homelessness etc. prior to COVID, and what they would need in order to be able to be part of this solution and the opportunities that the government is trying to create.

**Mr. Pablo Vivanco:** Sure. Thanks for that question. I think it's precisely how you framed it: as an investment. That's how it needs to be viewed. When we're talking about what contribution, what resources the provincial government can contribute to realizing that vision, it's precisely in that way of framing it: It's an investment into something that will yield opportunities.

There are lots of visions, lots of things that could be done and could be housed in the sort of community hub that the community had been developing the idea for over the last few years. It's not just about arts and recreation, although those are important themselves and also are things which aren't just about activities but are also things which will have economic spinoffs. The Jane and Finch community already has contributed and has historically contributed to the cultural fabric of the city of Toronto, which is also something that generates money and generates economies for the entire city. So the Jane and Finch community has been doing that already without the infrastructure. Now what we're saying is that the community needs the infrastructure in order to continue doing that.

But as you said, there are other things.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Pablo Vivanco:** With regard to the job training component as a result of community benefits, as a result of the other investments that are being made, my colleagues Kumsa and Rosemarie can speak a lot more to that, since they've been working on that on a city-wide level and beyond just our community. But, definitely, those are things that we're looking at: that the community hub is not just something that's going to house activities, but in and of itself is something that can facilitate jobs in the construction of it, jobs afterwards in the operation, entrepreneurship opportunities, all kinds of things that the community needs. That's why we consider it an investment, not just like a program expense.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you very much for that, and I'll hand it off to my colleague MPP Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Bell.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you very much. Thank you also to the speakers, Pablo, Rosemarie, Kumsa and Giovanni, for your presentations on this extremely important issue. My question is to Rosemarie Powell. Rosemarie, I also agree with you that investment in infrastructure is critical to kick-starting the economy and it's also critical to addressing some of the racial inequities and class inequities that exist in Toronto by helping people who have been left out get access to good career jobs to give them a life with dignity.

I also share your interest in ensuring that the government's new transit projects have strong community benefits agreements affiliated with them. My question to you is

around the Eglinton Crosstown. Can you explain or share what the community benefit agreement is with the Eglinton Crosstown, and then also what progress has been made to ensure those benefits are realized with the Eglinton Crosstown?

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** Thank you very much for that important question, MPP Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** The Eglinton Crosstown project is the first project that TCBN negotiated a community benefits agreement on in Toronto and Ontario. We're seeing a lot of learning coming out of that project. We have a 10% aspirational target on the jobs and opportunities, so looking at apprenticeship jobs while the project is being built. Now, we haven't reached the 10% goal as yet, but we have still some time to go and we've been learning a lot as we build out the program. And to say that over 350 people have already been hired on that project is absolutely incredible because it wouldn't have happened without the community benefits agreement in place, and just the organizations and support coming together and putting all of our resources to really move that project forward. We now see that on the other projects as well, like the Finch West LRT. Seven million dollars has been spent on local businesses so far. Social enterprises—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'll have to cut you off, I'm afraid.

We're going to move to the independent members for their round of questioning. MPP Blais.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Rosemarie, I would love it if you took a couple of minutes to finish answering the last question.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** Thank you very much. We're seeing really good outcomes from the Eglinton Crosstown project that we are applying to new projects—employment being had, social procurement. There's the Kodak building that was revitalized and being set aside by Metrolinx for the community's purpose.

Community organizations and pre-apprenticeship programs have been training and developing the next generation of builders and really supporting them to get assets into those opportunities. Again, those are just incredible opportunities that wouldn't happen without a community benefits agreement in place, because we know that the contractor community is not going to do this out of the goodness of their heart. They need this in policy, they need this in procurement language, way before the project is actually built, so everyone knows what's at stake, they know what the goals are, and all the stakeholders can put all their resources and wraparound supports and reach deep into the community to find the qualified people who are a good fit for those jobs and opportunities.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you, and I agree. We've heard a lot about community benefits, both at this committee, at this round of these hearings, but also earlier in the summer. I think you hit the nail on the head that it has to be included in the language of the procurement.

One of the things I've heard quite a lot in Ottawa is that even if it is included in the language, there is often a

difference in expectations between one project to another, one community to other, and that creates a lot of uncertainty when bidding and for coming up with budgets for projects. So are there ways that we can standardize it better in such a way that it creates more predictability for the industry and for government and it can just be built into the economics of a program or a particular project?

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** I would invite my colleague Kumsa Baker to speak to this issue. But yes, we want to see community benefits integrated in government policy so that we have a blueprint that everyone can work from. That's been our goal since day one with Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, and why we need to see regulations in place that are going to guide the contractors, guide the unions, guide the community for how we all come together and really make these outcomes possible.

Kumsa?

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** Thank you so much, MPP Blais, for that question. In terms of the projects and making sure there's consistency from project to project in terms of what the expectations for community benefits are, I think that was the initial goal when we had identified the five pilot projects. Currently in Ontario, we have five provincial pilot projects: the Eglinton LRT, the Finch West LRT, the West Park Healthcare Centre, as well as the Macdonald Block reconstruction project. So all of these projects have gone through procurement and are actually now in construction.

What we're actually getting from these projects is a lot of best practices and learning, and I think it's a really incredible opportunity, now that some of the projects are in implementation, to really draw on some of those best practices from these pilot projects and actually come forward with a new infrastructure plan that really pulls on some of these key—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes. 1140

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** —best practices and learnings that we're getting from these current projects.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** That's wonderful. Are you planning to put out a paper summarizing the best practices with recommendations yourself? How are we going to learn about what you're learning?

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** TCBN does an annual stakeholder evaluation of community benefits. We're working on finalizing that and we will put something out. As well, the government of Ontario's Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development has given TCBN funding to actually conduct research. We started this in January; we will complete it by March of 2021, and it is recommendations that we will be recommending to the Ontario government. We have Prism consulting as the contractor, who are well recognized within the industry and who are helping us to build out that research project.

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** If I could add one additional resource, the Ontario Construction Secretariat has put out a report on community benefits last year, which is pretty in-depth and highlights the wide range of projects across the

province that include community benefits, as well as best practices. We continue to work with the industry, as well as government, like Rosemarie said, to pull on some of those best practices and learnings and be able to put it forward in a report.

Some of the things that we're talking about in terms of labour shortages in the industry over the next 10 years—I think there are also similar things that we're hearing from the contractor community. The OCS has a contractor survey for 2020, and the biggest concern amongst contractors has been the need for employees and workers in the sector and the upcoming shortage, and the least of their worries was actually community benefits.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Quickly, to Giovanni from the Ontario General Contractors Association: I think in response to one of the questions about red tape and how it could be reduced you really only mentioned the municipal-class EAs getting down to 24 months. I'm wondering if, other than trying to find ways to fast-track environmental studies, there is any other red tape that you think can be eliminated to facilitate construction.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Absolutely. I just gave that example because it's one that's near and dear to my heart and easily understandable by a lot of people. There are a lot of municipal permits, provincial permits, and the permitting takes quite a length of time to go through. They're seen as hurdles or encumbrances in order to get the project under way before the shovel even hits the ground. In essence, there's a slew of municipal and provincial—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'm afraid we'll have to move back to the government for questioning now. MPP Skelly?

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** I would like to go back to either Rosemarie or Kumsa. Perhaps I'm not understanding exactly what you're saying, but the community benefits—you're saying that these community benefits can address the labour shortage. Is that accurate?

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** That's exactly what we're saying, because what happens when we have a community benefits agreement is that it tells us what percentage of the workforce should be coming from the community. So now, with a number in our hand—like on the Eglinton Crosstown, we knew that we were working to get 350 apprentices in.

With our network of 120 community organizations, groups and employment services—which, by the way, are funded by all three levels of government—we're able to go out into those communities, because these are people who never expected or had an opportunity in the trades before. What we do is, we do the marketing and outreach in the community, and we bring them in and we support them in whatever way that they need to actually get into those jobs and opportunities. We provide pre-apprenticeship training. We help to pay for a hard hat, boots etc. We do training. We help them to get their certificates. There are a lot of hoops that they have to jump through, especially

to get into the unionized construction trades, the ICI sector, and our community organizations do double duty to make sure that they're supported to get into those opportunities.

Without these targets, without these commitments, then we won't have the mandate to be able to go out to and to do that deep work that is needed to bring people in. We have a huge talent pool from our communities that are being totally overlooked. Sometimes even when they get in, they have a really hard time. That's another issue that we're dealing with through mentorship and connecting them with people in the industry who are journeypeople and who have experience, who can help them to navigate this very complex environment to go through the certification in Red Seal trades.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** It is very complex.

Kumsa, you were nodding your head like you wanted to jump in. Did you want to add to that?

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** No, I think Rosemarie was very clear on that.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** So if I'm hearing you correctly—and I love what you're saying, because, as we have said so many times in these committee hearings, we have a significant and critical problem with a labour shortage in the trades—you are suggesting that the reason for the success of the community benefits program, when you tie it to addressing the labour shortage, is the fact that you have the network in place, you can do the marketing almost internally and you're providing wraparound services. Would you say that those are three of the critical components?

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Now, Kumsa, you talked about best practices and learnings. Can you share: Beyond those three examples, is there anything else that you would suggest is something that you identify as one of the challenges that you were able to overcome, or perhaps something that you would like to see changed, moving forward?

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** Yes. I think we've been talking a lot about the workforce development component, which I think is very important. I think the other—

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Sorry, I didn't hear that part. Which development?

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** Workforce development.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Workforce development. Okay.

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** I also think that social procurement is something that has been a best practice that has also emerged, and recognizing that with some of these billions of dollars of large contracts, there really is an opportunity for smaller and medium-sized enterprises to also benefit—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** —from the subcontracts on these projects. We like the targets to ensure that minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, Indigenous-owned businesses and contractors can also benefit from some of these large public infrastructure projects, and we would like to see continued work on ways where we can ensure that that type of language is inserted into these project

agreements, to ensure that there's a diversity of contractors who are also benefiting from these investments.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Rosemarie, were women interested in joining the trades as well, or is it still predominantly male-oriented? It is, yes?

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** It's definitely still predominantly male-oriented. We actually have a program from the federal government to put direct money, investment and promotion into bringing more women out and providing support, maybe even developing cohort-based groups for women alone, just to get them sensitized and supported in their unique way. We address issues like barriers like child care, for example. We deal with issues like that. We bring in women who are experienced journeypeople, who have been there, done that, and who can speak to them. We do career talks and, through the mentoring program, link them with other women who can help them.

Another important part is that we work directly in partnership with the unions and with the contractors. Aecon has invested \$20,000 in supporting our NexGen Builders Mentoring Program. We're developing partnerships with EllisDon, Daniels and all the different contractor and union partners, and the Ontario Construction Secretariat provincial building trades unions, for example.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** These community, labour and industry partnerships are absolutely crucial.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Thank you, and I look forward to the report.

With less than a minute left, Giovanni, maybe you can respond to me. I wanted to ask you: What can we do about the EA process? We've got to get it shortened.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** I think that if you look at it from a holistic term, it's the stage 2 bump-ups. It's not the initial research that's done; it's the stage 2 bump-ups where anybody can submit an objection to the project moving forward, regardless of where in the province they live. If the project is in downtown Toronto and someone from, MPP West, up in Sudbury says, "I don't like that," and puts in an argument for it, it gets delayed that much more. It has to make sense. If you have—

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Are there examples of best practices elsewhere in the world where we could learn?

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** I think Manitoba has a very good example of it, where they've reduced the—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I'm afraid we'll have to move on to the opposition members now. We'll go to MPP West.

**1150**

**Mr. Jamie West:** I always forget to unmute. Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank everybody. I think this is a great conversation and very connected between the importance of construction in trades—my background is that I worked as a labourer going through college and university, and when I finished I ended up being an apprentice, because that was what interested me more.

My questions are for Giovanni Cautillo—I'm sorry if I'm butchering your name. I'll be brief. I'll let you finish

what you were saying just ahead, but the question I have for you is: You had the three recommendations. The one about the force majeure—I didn't know that you couldn't apply a pandemic to it. Could you repeat the other two? Because I was writing them down and I couldn't keep up to your notes.

If you want to finish MPP Skelly's answer, and what were the other two recommendations outside of applying pandemic-related costs to the force majeure clause.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** Not to worry. To finish off, when it comes down to proper environmental assessments, again we look to Manitoba. They have been very good at the reduction of permits. To get environmental approvals in Ontario, we have to walk with all kinds of binders through the consultants to get a sign-off, and we have to get 100 permits in Ontario. But in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, it's four. I think that's the kind of model that we should work towards, as opposed to adding more layers on what we currently have.

I hope that that gives you some sort of a comparison factor when it comes down to what we are up against, as opposed to other provinces.

**Mr. Jamie West:** Okay.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** And to finish off, my recommendations that I put forward: In regard to the pandemic-related force majeure clause of the contract, that was number one, and it would be a simple fix to do.

Number two would be to remove all regulatory impediments to the planning and delivery of all construction projects, including the removal of exclusion clauses from procurement policies. This ties into what we were talking about with the provincial EA, the municipal class EA. It's the regulation, the red tape: Reduce it down, and get projects out the door. Don't put limitations on projects right now. Between the next 18 to 24 months, get as many projects as you can—small, medium and large—out the door to stimulate the economy. People want to work. I think in this discussion that we're having here, giving them a project that they can bid on and actually go to work on is very fulfilling. That's key to the success of not only the construction industry but the province as a whole.

The last one would be to establish a relief provision that allows banks and bonding companies to financially support contractors while they deal with contractual and payment delays, backstopping lines of credit, ensuring that they're not overly burdened on the financial side, because we're trying to avoid bankruptcy here. We're trying to make sure that companies are viable, that they move forward, that they have the wherewithal to carry the burden of the six-week shutdown that we had. But now we have the project costs that have come up with the sanitary and increased PPE through COVID. We just want to make sure that companies are viable; hence why we put the recommendations forward.

**Mr. Jamie West:** Thank you very much, Giovanni. I'm going to hand off to MPP French.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We're at the three-minute mark. MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I would like to continue what my colleague from Sudbury was asking of Giovanni from

the General Contractors Association to your point about getting projects out the door. We're hearing it, as members of the Legislature, from across communities and municipalities, that there are a number of pieces that have to fall in place for projects to move forward. Some are still waiting for those approvals, whether it's ICIP—the feds blame the province; the province blames the feds. We have a bit of back and forth with not really sure why those approvals take so long or those projects to get—we need them to get to the point that the minute they can get under way, they get under way.

I would like to know if you could speak a little bit more about shovel-ready or shovel-worthy projects, what is needed from this provincial government so that you can hit the ground running the minute that that's an opportunity.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** I'm actually going to speak to all projects. Shovel-ready is something that is in the planning stages and ready to go, where barring the actual proper approvals, you can get going on the job: You've got in the queue, per se.

Shovel-worthy is more the 85,000-foot level, looking down and saying, "Is this worth something to us?" Like, say, the Ontario relief line, it adds value to you because it adds transit. You've got the Metrolinx Eglinton Crosstown: It adds value at the end because it has transit and whatnot as a component into it. I think that both are necessary at this point in time. I think all jobs, all projects—be it small, medium or large—need to be looked at and released without encumbrances, which means without having specific conditions or provisions on them tied in, like exclusion clauses or whatnot on the procurement side of things, to just get the stimulus out the door. We're not looking for a handout here. We're not looking for the government to pay for anything—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Giovanni Cautillo:** —in the sense of just giving money out. We're looking for projects so that we can actually stimulate the economy in that way. Make it so that people are back to work, people are investing their money, getting paid for it and then reinvesting into the economy.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. We won't have enough time now, but I serve as the province's critic for infrastructure on behalf of the official opposition. Some of the recommendations and specifics around banks, bonds, the backstopping lines of credit, the various pieces—I know that the committee would appreciate if you would share maybe an outline of that more specifically, because we won't have the time today. But I think that that is something the government would value knowing; I certainly would.

I thank all of the presenters for their time today. How am I for time, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three seconds. Right on time.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thanks. Bye.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much.

We'll move to our final round of questions from the independent members. MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you, Chair, and I want to say thank you to all the presenters. It's been very useful for us as a standing committee to hear your testimony today.

I'm going to start with either Kumsa or Rosemarie, whoever would like to answer. What else do you require or do employers require that may not be as well supported in the community benefits pipeline? For instance, what about for job development, so that once someone does secure that position, they retain it and there are still supports there? Because life circumstances don't just stop happening. If you could speak to what else you see to really strengthen this as a model—I know my colleague MPP Blais had said to create more standards, so that particularly the construction community can actually have more predictability and can see this as a pipeline to solve the big skills gap that we have in some of the projects.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** I'll start with a prototype that we're actually developing, which is something that we realized: Employers just don't have the networks to find people from diverse communities, from equity-seeking groups. What we've started is what we call employerportal.ca, just basically creating a space where employers can go and learn about all the supports and the benefits that they have available to them in order to hire from under-represented groups. What we're developing is a listing of all the members of our programs who are ready to work, basically a ready-to-hire list, so that unions and employers can go and check it out, as long as they are registered with TCBN, and they can see a listing of people who are ready and available in the trade that they're interested in. Whether it's a carpenter or an ironworker or an electrician, they can see that.

Oftentimes what we hear is, "Oh, we can't find people," and we're like, "We have 600 people in our database right now who want these opportunities. Why can't you find them?" What we're thinking of doing is building out this employer portal and also looking at building diversity awards where we recognize employers who are doing the heavy lifting that is needed to actually reach into the community and find people from diverse communities.

Kumsa?

**Mr. Kumsa Baker:** Yes. I'd say some of the incidents with the nooses on the sites have really brought up the importance of looking at equity and diversity training in the industry and to think about, in the same way that we have health and safety standards, ways where we can have proper equity and diversity training for people who are coming onto these sites.

And then, also, I think we've seen incredible results from our mentorship program that we have at TCBN. Initially, it was focused on Black youth, but now we've expanded to include newcomers, as well as women. Having someone who is new in the industry being able to connect with someone who is a journeyperson, who looks like them, who potentially has similar experiences as them, to help them and to guide them through that journey, I think, is really important. We look to continue to see ways where we can work with both unions as well as the

industry to broaden mentorship programs so that all construction sites have that opportunity for people who may need that support.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** What we've also found as a sticky problem is the subcontractor situation. The larger general contractors are doing pretty well, like Aecon and EllisDon, but their subcontractors, who hire the majority of the people—like on the Eglinton Crosstown, they hire 80% of the workers. Unless the contractor hires all 20% from historically disadvantaged communities, they'll never be able to reach the target, so how you get the supply chain diversity pieces in there as well?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** That's certainly great. I want to just affirm the stance against hate. Those five nooses on those five different job sites, many of them actually provincial projects, are just completely reprehensible. The entire construction community and all of us as a society should stand together against those symbols of hatred that are really meant to intimidate and to create that sense of fear. We stand strongly against that. Thank you for all the work that you are doing to make our construction projects more inclusive.

I do have another question around the role of the provincial government in mandating community benefits for its \$140-billion infrastructure plan over the next 10 years. Rosemarie?

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** Yes, this is what we would like to see: community benefits as an added value to the industry. What it means is that it pulls everybody together around the same goals and objectives. It brings clarity for the contractors. It brings clarity for the subcontractors and for the community organizations who are supporting people.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Rosemarie Powell:** What we need are clear policies and regulations that help everybody to get onto the same pathway to reach the expected outcomes of basically reflecting the diversity of our city, our province, our beautiful country.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you.

Giovanni, I'm not going to get to you today, but I think it's clear, the message you've sent about reducing red tape and making the process more streamlined. So we definitely hear you.

Pablo, I want to give you the last word regarding the community hub and the value to community, and why those assurances from Metrolinx and the province are essential.

**Mr. Pablo Vivanco:** Well, obviously, folks were quite distressed to get word through our councillor that the working understanding they had over the last few years around the commitment from Metrolinx to hand over that land was no longer going to be the case. Obviously, since then—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut you off. That concludes this round of presentations. Thank you to all of our presenters for appearing today.

We're now going to take a short one-hour recess. We will resume here at 1 p.m. Thank you, everyone.

*The committee recessed from 1203 to 1300.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Good afternoon, everyone. We are resuming our hearings on the infrastructure sector.

Before we get started, I'll do a quick attendance check. I believe we have two new MPPs joining us. I'll start with MPP Pang. Can you confirm you're with us and that you are in Ontario?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** I'm in Ontario. I'm MPP Billy Pang from Markham–Unionville.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Perfect. Thank you so much.

MPP Sabawy, can you confirm you are with us and in Ontario?

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Hi, Mr. Chair. Yes, my name is Sheref Sabawy. I'm in Ontario, in Mississauga.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent. That's fantastic. We'll dive right in. Our first round—

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Hello, can you hear me?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Do we have somebody else with us?

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Hello?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Yes, MPP Sabawy, we heard you. Thank you. You're good.

ONTARIO HOME BUILDERS'  
ASSOCIATION  
INFRASTRUCTURE ONTARIO  
ASSET MANAGEMENT ONTARIO

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Okay. For our first round of witnesses, we'll start with the Ontario Home Builders' Association. If you could start by stating your name for Hansard, you'll have seven minutes to present and I'll give you a one-minute warning before the end. Over to you.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Mike Collins-Williams and I am the director of policy at the Ontario Home Builders' Association. I am also a registered professional planner.

OHBA is the voice of the building, land development and professional renovation industry in Ontario, with 4,000 member companies organized into a network of 27 local home builders' associations across Ontario. Through new home construction and residential renovations, our sector generated approximately \$66 billion in economic development and \$32 billion in wages, along with generating over half a million jobs last year. We create well-paying, highly skilled jobs in professions as diverse as concrete formwork to biologists to urban planners like myself.

I want to thank the committee for providing this opportunity to make a deputation on behalf of our membership and to share our perspectives on economic jobs and

recovery, specifically related to the advancement of infrastructure in our province and how this can be a catalyst for economic recovery and growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impact on the new housing and professional renovation industry right across Ontario. I want to begin by acknowledging the provincial government for declaring residential construction an essential workplace on March 23 as part of the state of emergency orders responding to COVID-19. Our members took this responsibility seriously and have worked diligently to implement enhanced health, safety and sanitation measures, as well as put proactive screening measures in place to track all the individuals coming on-site. To the best of my knowledge, not a single COVID-19 case has been linked to a residential construction job site in Ontario. I'm very proud of our members' response and our ability to keep job sites safe. The health and safety of our workers who are building new communities is our absolute priority. Put simply, it is not business as usual.

That being said, going forward, housing can lead the recovery and generate tens of thousands of jobs in our sector. Infrastructure can be a strong catalyst for this growth. After all, it was our sector that led Ontario, and for that matter, Canada, out of the 2008-09 financial crisis.

Prior to commenting on infrastructure specifically, I want to address the elephant in the room that is very much directly related to building infrastructure, building transit and building transit-oriented communities. I think we all know and understand Ontario is growing, but the real elephant in the room that we just aren't talking about enough is the magnitude of this growth. The Ministry of Finance projects that there will be 2.6 million more people living in Ontario by 2031. In order to welcome all these new neighbours, we will need to build one million new homes across the province over the next decade or so.

On the subject of the elephant in the room, I'd like to quote from a January 3 *Globe and Mail* editorial about this coming growth that cites Ministry of Finance and Stats Canada data: "According to Ontario's projections, the greater Toronto area will grow from nearly seven-million people to 10.2-million by 2046. Add the horseshoe of growing communities around the GTA, from Niagara to Kitchener-Waterloo to Barrie and, by 2046" this area "will have 14.6-million people, up from 10 million today."

That is a lot of growth that will need new housing, and that is a lot of growth that is going to require a lot of new transit to move around the city efficiently, as well as roads, highways, water and wastewater infrastructure. That is why the importance of infrastructure renewal certainly cannot be understated.

Infrastructure is a vital prerequisite that our sector relies on to support new communities and revitalize existing ones, while helping to ensure that we can deliver the housing supply and choice that Ontarians will need. As part of a sustainable economic recovery plan, the province should therefore accelerate major infrastructure projects. OHBA supports coordinated infrastructure investment towards strategic projects based on clearly defined priorities. These targeted stimulus investments should support

other provincial objectives such as the efficient movement of goods and people. OHBA believes that the expansion of core infrastructure, such as roads, transit, water and wastewater in support of delivering much-needed housing supply to a growing homebeliever population should be a key priority for the government.

The provincial government should also advance shovel-ready and shovel-worthy core infrastructure projects to be jointly funded with the federal government, such as the Upper York sewage solutions project in North York, the Highbury Avenue reconstruction project in London, the south Niagara Falls wastewater solutions project and future stages of the Ottawa LRT. These are just a couple of examples of significant infrastructure projects that would set in motion private sector investment and housing. When all three levels of government work together and fund critical core infrastructure projects, putting pipes and rails in the ground, my members—all of those public dollars with their own significant private sector investments measure in the billions of dollars.

Critical transportation infrastructure is also key to help unlock the housing supply that Ontario will need for the next 10 years. OHBA has been encouraged by the significant investment in transportation-related infrastructure that the provincial government has already committed to. No stone should be left unturned as to how these priority projects can be accelerated into the construction phase post-COVID-19. These transportation projects should include not only the four priority transit projects identified in Bill 171, but transit projects beyond the GTA and provincial highway infrastructure.

We would also note that advancing the GTA west corridor EA would have the added benefit of clearly defining the detailed route of that corridor and thus allowing the release of significant strategic located lands for housing and employment that are currently frozen. OHBA supports rapidly advancing these corridors and releasing strategically located lands as part of the COVID-19 recovery plan. Now is the opportunity to advance these projects that will create jobs immediately and support long-term economic prosperity.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** The new housing and land development industry is also a key partner to the province in creating transit-oriented communities that will support provincial transportation plans and investments over the long term. Our members look forward to seeing shovels in the ground for critical projects that should also be fast-tracked as part of the post-pandemic stimulus, economic jobs and recovery response.

Furthermore, there are opportunities for partnerships in joint investments in mixed-use developments as part of the new or upgraded transit stations. The new housing and development industry will continue to contribute its fair share of resources to support the necessary expansion and improvement of transportation infrastructure.

Thank you all for the opportunity to speak here today. I look forward to any questions you may have.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much.

We'll move on to our next presenter, Infrastructure Ontario. If you can state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Michael Lindsay. I'm Infrastructure Ontario's divisional president of project delivery. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the committee today.

I'd like to share an update on the work that IO has been doing to support the government's response to COVID-19 while continuing to deliver on the province's historic investment in public infrastructure. In the past five months, we have supported the Ontario public service's successful transition to working remotely: the recent reopening of our court systems, the expansion of emergency health facilities, the new initiative for rapid deployment of long-term-care beds, and much more.

Before I expand on that work, let me provide a 30-second overview of IO and the various ways we foster partnerships to build, finance and enhance the value of Ontario's vital public assets. We execute hundreds of local, regional and provincial infrastructure projects throughout Ontario each year. We manage, preserve and maintain a portfolio of thousands of provincial assets. We develop commercial solutions for government. We have provided almost \$11 billion in capital financing to municipalities and other qualified organizations to enable investment in their infrastructure.

Since March, we've been applying that collective expertise in as many ways as possible to meet the challenges of COVID-19. As the agency responsible for the government's general real estate portfolio, the immediate challenge of COVID-19 was to support individual ministries, to enhance cleaning services in their office. We then supported the OPS by adjusting services as staff began to work from home. Our partnering contractor, CBRE, should be commended for its exceptional response and ongoing support. Having a partner with global experience and resourcing at its disposal was extremely beneficial.

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Beyond offices, we supported the safe, continued delivery of essential front-line services. Plexiglas shields were installed at ServiceOntario locations, for example, to allow for safe interaction of both public and public servants.

As COVID-19 cases began to appear and rise across Ontario, the government and individual hospitals quickly considered the need for expanded capacity. Our relationships with individual hospitals and our procurement in project delivery capabilities enabled us to support their efforts quickly. We supported, for example, the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority to deliver a 22-bed COVID clinic within Northern College in Moosonee, and we worked with Barrie's Royal Victoria Hospital on the rapid construction of a 93-bed pandemic response unit in its parking lot.

Beyond these types of immediate opportunities for support, the majority of our largest ongoing construction projects were deemed essential work that never stopped moving forward. Hundreds of smaller projects that were initially stopped this spring have resumed. Our planning

and procurement for future projects continued unabated throughout this time. As COVID-19 began to impact Ontario, we looked at these central projects under way and considered how we could best continue to deliver on the government's public infrastructure program.

First, we looked at how we could maintain and even accelerate progress on critical health projects in our pipeline. Tomorrow, we'll be marking the grand opening of the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Elora. Brockville General Hospital is tracking to be substantially completed in the coming weeks, with a grand opening celebration this fall. Phase 1C of the redevelopment of CAMH is also set for substantial completion this fall. The new Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital is expected to be completed very shortly and open to patient care early next year. St. Michael's Hospital has opened five floors of its new tower in downtown Toronto. And we're now working with the Ministry of Long-Term Care and individual hospitals on the rapid construction of additional long-term-care beds. We're asking our construction partners to provide solutions, such as modular construction, that will allow us to build this capacity in months, rather than years.

Secondly, we looked at how we could maintain the momentum of critical transit projects. Procurement for the Ontario Line subway has been launched. Procurement is progressing toward requests for proposals on tunnelling partners on both Eglinton Crosstown West and the Scarborough subway extension. Our broader procurement work with Metrolinx also continues on several projects within its ambitious GO expansion program.

The third prong in our approach was to push forward with projects that will help the government optimize its real estate footprint in the post-pandemic world. The most notable examples of this work include the redevelopment of the Ontario public service's largest office complex, Macdonald Block, and crucial building upgrades, such as HVAC and other energy efficiency enhancements, at the neighbouring Whitney Block.

An important reason these large projects have been able to progress through such challenging times is due to the nature of our contracting relationship. Our P3 contracts provide the tools that we, our project owners such as hospitals, and our construction partners needed to find constructive solutions and a common path through an unprecedented situation. Rather than seeing work stall amidst contract disputes and unforeseen costs, our contracts ensured all parties share the same motivation to complete our projects as quickly and as safely as possible. Using our fixed-price contracts, our contractors don't get paid until the work is completed, and it's a very strong tool in ensuring that all of us are working towards the same end goal, even in the midst of unforeseen circumstances such as a pandemic.

I would like to thank these companies for their commitment to working so collaboratively over the past several months. Our partners really have raised the bar on worksite safety by adopting screening, hygiene and distancing measures in compliance with updated labour and public health guidelines. COVID-19 obviously continues to have

a profound impact on businesses around the world, and our partners in the infrastructure sector are no exception.

Under the government's direction, we're now working with our contractors to more clearly identify COVID-19-related impacts on our current P3 projects. We're seeking to better understand and quantify impacts such as supply chain delays, costs related to enhanced health and safety measures and others.

In June, I think we sent an important and reassuring signal to the industry as a whole regarding Ontario's historic commitment to modernizing public infrastructure. Our spring market update, also called a project pipeline, includes a total of 37 P3 projects valued at more than \$60 billion. All of these projects represent significant employment and economic opportunity for the communities in which these investments are being made, and in the province generally. We at IO look forward to continuing to deliver this important work with the Ministry of Infrastructure, other ministries and agency partners such as Metrolinx.

Finally, I can say that we are now supporting a controlled reopening of various government workplaces. On July 6, for example, the Ministry of the Attorney General—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** —reopened courthouses and other justice facilities under strict conditions. Advice from a number of different entities ultimately helped inform the return-to-work strategy that includes enhanced cleaning, installation of hand sanitizer stations, installation of Plexiglas shields, physical distancing markers and posters. This process will be repeated for each government office as the province gradually reopens its buildings to workers and the public.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide you with some insight into how we have adapted to COVID-19 to continue our work on behalf of the government and the people of Ontario. Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll move on to our final presenter this round, Asset Management Ontario. Their acronym is AMONTario, I believe. If you can state your name for Hansard, and then you may begin.

**Mr. Chris Chen:** Thank you very much, Vice-Chair and members. My name is Chris Chen, from Asset Management Ontario, AMONTario. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs about the impact of COVID-19 on Ontario's infrastructure sector. I represent, as I mentioned, Asset Management Ontario. That's a multidisciplinary community of practice, comprised of public infrastructure professionals. Many of our members are from municipalities, but our representation and mandate encompass the public sector more broadly.

The impact of COVID-19 has been disruptive on Ontario's economy. At the same time, it also presents opportunities, and part of the government's economic response to COVID-19 has been to accelerate highway construction and transit projects and get shovels in the ground faster on

other projects across the province. These actions recognize that infrastructure activity underpins the foundation of Ontario's economic recovery.

The government's infrastructure investments have also included expanding broadband capacity in rural Ontario, and it's investments like these that help to realize the promise of a more inclusive economy that benefits everyday Ontarians. Asset Management Ontario's support for these investments is consonant with those of our colleagues at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Municipal Finance Officers' Association and other organizations.

The opportunities I want to emphasize are other levers in the government's tool kit to strengthen taxpayer value and to promote accountability and trust. The three themes that I would like to emphasize relate to the prioritization of the infrastructure projects, the alignment of infrastructure funding programs, and enhanced community engagement.

First, for projects to be shovel-ready, there should be tangible and quantifiable benefits to every project against common and transparent criteria. Furthermore, the assumptions in assessing the proposed benefits should be rigorously verified. All ministries and government agencies already follow prioritization processes to help determine funding decisions. The opportunity is to make these processes more rigorous and transparent. When investment decisions follow rigorous and transparent evaluation processes, it can lead to more effective, sustainable investments and increase public confidence in the way that infrastructure funds are allocated.

There's a model for this approach. As a condition to receive provincial infrastructure funding, the province requires municipalities to show that the investment decisions they are proposing have been informed by comprehensive asset management plans. This is catalyzing a shift among Ontario municipalities whereby detailed and effective risk assessment processes are being adopted so that investment decisions are being considered against weighted, enterprise-wide criteria. This has resulted in better and more integrated investment planning compared to the way that those decisions were previously decided in functional silos. It has also contributed to improved efficiencies and quantifiably reduced risk.

Just to illustrate, when project prioritization and risk assessments are conducted rigorously, cost-benefit analyses of projects are evaluated using whole-life-cycle cost analyses, which provide more comprehensive insights into the actual cost of major, multi-year projects. Adopting a more rigorous process for evaluating projects and making these criteria transparent will lead to better business cases for investment.

The asset management model being required in municipalities is something that can be considered for other sectors that receive infrastructure funding. This model also facilitates more responsive scenario planning, the importance of which COVID-19 has brought to the forefront.

The second point that I'd like to make relates to the alignment of infrastructure funding programs. As we know,

the Ontario government has numerous infrastructure funding programs administered by different ministries. Although interministerial consultation on funding programs is common, there's an opportunity to achieve a deeper level of integration and coordination, one that ensures that funding programs are more aligned in their application, review and reporting requirements. This could help reduce red tape.

Another benefit associated with better alignment and coordination of infrastructure funding relates to taking advantage of potential network effects. What this means is that the impact of making infrastructure investments can be amplified when they are designed to be compatible with existing infrastructure and other economic strengths of a particular region.

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Only the government has a bird's-eye view about different funding opportunities across sectors and regions of the province, so by improving the coordination and alignment of infrastructure programs, the province increases the chance of identifying and capitalizing on potential synergies of clusters of investments in a particular region—say northern Ontario or southwestern Ontario—that local decision makers may not be able to recognize. The experience of COVID-19 underscores the critical nature of co-ordinating and aligning infrastructure funding across regions for maximum benefit.

My third and final point relates to engagement. Some of the investments that the province has committed to or will be making will be transformative, and consultations for major projects are typically done in the early stages of a project, while funding decisions are often promoted through news releases and political events. These are all important channels of communication, but to supplement this, there's an opportunity to engage communities more fully after infrastructure funding has been announced. This could have pronounced salience, because it would enable taxpayers to gain a concrete sense about the possibilities facing them.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Chris Chen:** By committing to more extensive engagement related to infrastructure, the government could facilitate a groundswell of awareness, support and local pride related to upcoming projects. This could positively influence local conversations about what people want their communities to be and help taxpayers see what is made possible by various infrastructure investments.

COVID-19 has re-emphasized the importance of rallying communities behind a forward-looking vision, and the government's major infrastructure investments provide such an opportunity. To recap, the points I've emphasized include: (1) implementing a more rigorous and transparent process for the prioritizing of infrastructure projects through an asset management process; (2) aligning infrastructure funding opportunities to maximize network effects; and (3) engaging communities to raise awareness and galvanize support for infrastructure projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I welcome your questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much for your presentation. We'll now start with questions from the opposition. You'll have six and a half minutes, and we'll give a notice at three minutes and one minute. I think we're starting with MPP West.

**Mr. Jamie West:** My question is for Mr. Collins-Williams from the Ontario Home Builders' Association. First, I want to say I was looking at your website over lunchtime and I want to compliment on how easy it is for your members to find information on your website. It's laid out really well. That is a frustration that many people contact my office about, about how much information was out there and how easy it was to sort. So thank you for that.

I have a really simple question. I have a background in safety and working on construction sites. The question we've asked all the time is, what is one simple thing that we can do to make your life easier? Is there a single thing that you're thinking about that just doesn't make sense that we can't do as the government to make your industry a lot easier and more effective that seems relatively simple to do?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Well, first of all, thank you for visiting our website. You would have seen that we have a whole section specific to COVID-19. We've had fairly concentrated efforts, not just with ourselves but with other construction associations and health and safety experts, to try to provide as much information, best practices and guidance for our members to get through this crisis and to ensure that our workplaces are as safe as possible. Thank you for visiting. I would certainly encourage others to check out ohba.ca as well.

In terms of one thing to help improve things or make life easier going forward, on the subject of today, on the infrastructure approvals, try to come to political decisions as quickly as possible and make improvements and efficiencies in the environmental assessment process. Bill 197, which was passed last week, has a couple of components to help facilitate faster environmental assessments. The ministry has posted to the Environmental Registry a number of potential improvements that they are looking at for municipal-class environmental assessments and other types of environmental assessments that are posted for comments until August 22. I think it's critical that we maintain strong environmental protections, but it is possible to improve processes and have faster processes that still maintain the integrity of those processes. That's one area of improvement that we're certainly looking to for government, not necessarily for the private sector projects, but to have those public sector projects and public sector priorities, be it new LRTs, subways or things as simple as bike lanes to get those moving faster.

**Mr. Jamie West:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Collins-Williams.

I'm going to hand it off my colleague MPP Jessica Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Bell?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you for coming in and speaking today. My question is to Michael Lindsay from Infrastructure Ontario. We had a presenter come in earlier, Rosemarie Powell from the Toronto Community Benefits

Network. She spoke at length about the need to have community benefits fully implemented, with not just the Eglinton Crosstown, but also other publicly funded delivery projects, including the \$28.5-billion four priority transit projects that Infrastructure Ontario is taking a lead on.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question to you is: Is Infrastructure Ontario committed to ensuring there are community benefits agreements with these new transit projects?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Thank you, MPP Bell. It's good to see you.

Our projects create quite a few community benefits in respect of not only the direct benefit to communities associated with services provided to users, but also that the disproportionate majority of the projects, when delivered, employ local constructors, local contractors etc.

It had been the policy of the previous government, with a select set of pilot projects, to think about embedding at the heart of the actual agreements themselves community benefits agreements. We are working right now with this government to understand the best mechanisms that ultimately would allow us to ensure that the community benefits which are already manifest on our projects are ultimately optimized to the extent that they should be. We are working with the Ministry of Labour and our counterparties to understand whether the traditional approach of trying to do that through agreements that are quotas to the project agreement or some other mechanism is the right way to go. But I would just repeat again that we think that all of the projects that we do have huge community benefits, both provincially and locally.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you. I really appreciate that answer. Communities have been very clear they do want legally binding community benefits agreements enshrined in the contracts because when they're not enshrined in the contract, they don't happen. We've had the situation with the Jane and Finch community losing a Metrolinx promise of a community hub. Now, they're very upset and they want to see those commitments in writing. So, I do urge you to look into that, especially when it comes to addressing racial equities within the trades, because that is not happening as quickly as it should.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My second question is around the many comments that have been raised around, not just building shovel-ready projects, but also building shovel-worthy projects. And shovel-worthy projects do include moving forward on projects that have the support of all three levels of government. The city of Toronto did request very clearly that they wanted these four priority projects to respect their recommendations. That makes a lot of sense, given that they are a player at the table here.

Can Infrastructure Ontario commit to including the city of Toronto's recommendations in the procurement process?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** I'm sorry, MPP Bell. Just to clarify, you're talking about the four priority subway projects in particular?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, that is correct. As you well know, the city of Toronto issued a series of motions saying that they will support these four priority projects in return for the province agreeing to some of their conditions, such as affordable fares, mitigation of vibration and noise during the original relief line route—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'll have to cut you off there, I'm afraid. We're going to have to move to the independents now for questioning.

MPP Blais? Perfect. Over to you.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the presenters for joining us this afternoon.

I wanted to start very quickly with the Ontario Home Builders' Association. You mentioned the need for investment in shovel-ready, but you also mentioned shovel-worthy projects. I appreciate that you articulated some of the transportation-related projects in the GTA, which I assume you consider to be shovel-worthy. I'm wondering if there's anything outside of those particular transportation projects that you also feel is shovel-worthy, whether it's specific projects or a category of project?

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**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Our focus is primarily on what we call core infrastructure, which is sort of the foundation, in our view, for prosperous and inclusive growth. That would be road projects, transit projects, water and wastewater projects, really the building blocks of building new communities and the efficient movement of goods and people.

There are a couple of very large-scale projects that probably wouldn't just be the provincial government on its own, but working with partners, be it at the municipal or federal level. The Upper York Sewage Solutions project has been on the books for well over a decade. It's moving its way through the environmental assessments process, and once that is completed, that can unlock the door for potentially 80,000 new housing units in York region. The London Home Builders' Association has submitted to us the Highbury Avenue reconstruction project in London as being a critical project. There's the South Niagara Falls Wastewater Solutions project and, of course, the Ottawa LRT. We also think it's critical that Hamilton move on with transit and transportation projects. There are a lot of projects province-wide that would improve the lives of people by being able to make it from home to work faster—

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. I get where you're coming from. You're looking for projects that facilitate subdivision and community building in terms of building the houses. But—

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** High-rise and mid-rise too.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** For sure. But a community is more than just houses and apartment buildings. In addition to roads and transit and water and sewer, you need to have community centres and arenas and parks and places for people to gather, and social infrastructure as well. In working with the developers in Ottawa, they have always

been very keen to promote those things, because it helps them sell their homes. I'm wondering why, as an industry, there haven't been—at least today so far you haven't talked about some of those other pieces that can obviously support the community. But just brass tacks, it will help you and your colleagues sell more units.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Absolutely. From our perspective, a lot of those projects are much more of a municipal responsibility, and the development charges that our members pay into municipal coffers help to bring things like community centres. We're looking for—

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Oh, 100%, but I was speaking to my city councillor today, and as a result of the pandemic and as a result of the dire financial situation that most municipalities are in, they're not putting contracts out the door even for design, let alone for construction. The entire cycle is going to be delayed for a year or two, or maybe even three or four. And so—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** —I think there needs to be a focus not just on important projects like roads and highways and transit and water, to be sure, but how are communities going to not just simply be an accumulation of houses and apartments, but fully a community without those other aspects of infrastructure to bring people together?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** In advocating for an emphasis on core infrastructure, it was not intended to dismiss the needs for community infrastructure, community centres, parks etc. But when we're looking at the province potentially working with the federal government to invest billions of dollars, we don't want to miss this opportunity to build those generational-change type of projects, such as the proposed Ontario Line or major expansions to the Ottawa LRT. These types of projects can take over a decade in terms of design, procurements, environmental assessments. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been terrible for many reasons, I don't think we should waste the potential opportunity to advance some of these projects that could have significant positive generational changes, going forward.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. Would you agree, though, that getting money to municipalities faster will facilitate design and construction of those more community-oriented and, as you put it, more municipally related pieces of infrastructure that actually make communities great places to live?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** I'll give you a short, concise answer: Yes, I agree.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Okay. You mentioned Ottawa's LRT. Stage 2 of the LRT is funded; I presume you're talking about stage 3?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Getting the wheels turning on future stages, moving towards stage 3 and improving the environmental assessment process towards that. I think it is an opportunity right now to have very forward-looking policies and have the province start turning their minds to the next generation of projects to help facilitate growth and the efficient movement of goods and people across communities throughout the province.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Perfect. Earlier today we heard a presentation about capturing the land value uplift, essentially, from redevelopment. I'm wondering what the industry's view on that would be and how they might work with government to do that.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Land value capture has been a tool used in a number of different jurisdictions. The—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I'm going to have to cut you off. My apologies.

We're going to move to the government now. MPP Khanjin.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you to all three presenters for your opening remarks—informative, as always. Some of it I feel like you've been repeating for quite some time, but we still hear you full, loud and clear.

My first few questions are for Michael Lindsay. Thanks for all your great work you're doing at Infrastructure Ontario. I wanted to ask you if you could talk about how modular construction can not only save time and money, but the economic impacts that that's going to have on our province.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you for the question. In a number of places and spaces in particular asset classes, the design of facilities like an LTC facility or a college dormitory has become so predictable as to allow for constructors to actually fit out a construction line, to knock out these types of designs on a modular basis. Indeed, in many different geographies around the world, the process has become sufficiently advanced that actual furniture fit-out and the placing of equipment within those modularly constructed facilities is now part of an integrated service that's offered by constructors to owners, like the government of Ontario.

We're very excited that we have announced that, as part of the accelerated LTC rapid build pilot, it is our intention to try to create, on as rapid a basis as we can, 320-bed LTC facilities leveraging this type of construction approach. We've seen a very rigorous and robust response from the market. They're very interested in talking to us about their capabilities. They're running a competitive procurement right now to figure out who is the best partner to us in respect to building those facilities as fast as possible.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you. That's going to pay dividends for our community here in Barrie–Innisfil when it comes to LTC construction.

You mentioned in your opening remarks the project you worked on with Barrie's Royal Victoria hospital. Could you maybe talk about the impacts, how quick the turn-around time was for that and some of the lessons learned?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Yes, absolutely. Look, I would want to give almost all of the credit, frankly, to our colleagues over at the Ministry of Health and the people who have run the LHINs. When COVID-19 first took hold, one of the things that had to be done quite quickly was a projection of what capacity ultimately existed across the province. There was a facilitated process by which IO was able to talk to almost every hospital in the province of Ontario about their own projections for the kinds of bed

needs that they would have. It led to the identification of certain places—Barrie was one of them—where swing capacity, surplus capacity, was desperately needed to deal with the first wave of COVID-19.

So leveraging our existing project management service provider contracts, we had two counterparties that worked with us on a zonal basis. We were able to quickly catalyze the building of a temporary structure over the course of just a couple of months and then to get it fit out, working with our hospital partners, so that it was ready, effectively, for operations integrated with the rest of the hospitals—again, as fast as possible. So a great team effort as between not only our hospital partners and IO, but also, frankly, with private sector PMSP service providers, who were helpful in bringing together the solutions that we needed as fast as possible.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** And can you speak to vertically integrated systems and how important it is to make those types of policy changes across the scale in different ministries and different departments you've got to work with to get infrastructure projects off the ground?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Yes. MPP, I take your question in two ways, the first of which is that we are very thoughtful with our partners about planning, for lack of a better term, districts or campuses, so taking an average hospital project.

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I think another benefit that we are going to see from the rapid build LTC pilot is the greater integration of these LTC facilities built on a modular basis with existing hospital operations. Whether it's something like that or it's thinking about the benefit of transit-oriented communities integrated with subway stations, making sure that the planning of various types of assets fits with one another is very important.

And then to your point—and Mike made reference to some of this earlier on—making sure that once we are in the process of trying to deliver something to the greatest extent possible, regulation and approvals are optimized to a reasonable extent. We'd never want to move too fast, but we want to move as fast as we can. It's where we spend a lot of our time as well, again, in partnership with ministries like the Ministry of the Environment, MMAH, Ministry of Transportation etc. So that kind of integration and thinking happens along two dimensions.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Wonderful. Thank you. That actually pivots quite well to the questions I wanted to pose to Mike Collins-Williams. One of the things the Ontario Home Builders' Association obviously talks about is housing supply and attainable housing. Can you speak to when it comes to clearing some of the red tape hurdles or any sort of things that could be streamlined, again to keep the strength of the process without damaging the integrity kind of thing, and what impacts any sort of delay in timeline would have to creating more attainable housing throughout the province?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Thank you for the question. Throughout the planning process, holding land is very expensive. The length of time it takes to navigate the

planning approvals process, sometimes it seems like a means to itself rather than a means to an end. I think this government has made some very positive—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** —and important steps towards improving the planning process through the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan and through the Housing Supply Action Plan. Bill 108, in particular, passed last year and there were some recent changes in Bill 197. Just last week there were changes made to the Planning Act and the Development Charges Act to ensure that growth pays for growth and providing greater certainty in terms of parkland dedication.

Looking forward, the Ministry of the Environment has a number of consultations that are currently active on the environmental assessment process. Specifically, one area that impacts our industry is environmental compliance approvals for stormwater management ponds. This is getting highly technical, but a stormwater management pond is not exactly rocket science. It is something created by engineers. They've been done hundreds, if not thousands and thousands, of times over in Ontario—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'll have to cut you off there.

We'll move back to the opposition for the second round. MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I would like to thank, and virtually welcome, all of the presenters. I won't ask a question of the Ontario Home Builders' Association. My colleague did, but I will say I am a homebeliever. I very much, as a resident of the Durham region, appreciate the need to release strategic lands. We've got our employment lands that are—we're waiting for that opportunity.

But I have a question for Infrastructure Ontario. Mr. Lindsay, welcome. I actually got a couple of notes from the FAO report that came out recently that suggested how the cuts that had happened pre-pandemic may or may not have set us up for the best success. Some of the numbers as reported in the FAO report: \$65 million under budget for hospitals, long-term-care homes, community programs, and \$314 million under budget for hospital infrastructure projects.

I've appreciated that you talked about partnerships and the positives. Have there been challenges? Do we need to see more investment to get things on solid footing as we continue through this pandemic?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Thank you very much for the question. From IO's perspective, I can speak to how our contracts are structured and payouts are made under the terms of those contracts. At the time of financial close, an agreement is signed between the province and the P3 consortium that stipulates cost, when the project will be complete, as well as when payments are going to be made associated with certain milestones. For example, there's usually a large portion of the contract paid at the time of substantial completion, when the building is effectively done. It's one of the final steps in the process before the building is turned over and they can prepare for final preparations, for operations such as a hospital moving in beds or equipment that aren't part of the P3 contract.

We're assigned projects from the government for various ministries, such as health, transportation and the Attorney General. In the structure of the way in which we sign agreements, with so much of the payments back-loaded to the moment of substantial completion and the realization there are no residual risks that remain for the government, we do bear a little bit upon the spending profile of government. But more broadly how ministries allocate funding by order is somewhat outside of the area that we can speak to. I hope I can give you a certain amount of confidence, though, that as you might imagine, throughout this summer, as we think about the impacts of COVID-19 upon our capital pipeline, we're in deep conversation with all of our capital ministry partners about shovel-worthy and shovel-ready investment and hope in the fall to be able to reconfirm the IO pipeline and, indeed, government expenditure more broadly in respect of capital plans and projects.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** We've definitely been hearing from folks that they want to see things continue to move in that pipeline and keep going. We'll ask for that to be the case with you and the government.

How am I for time? Have I hit that three minutes?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes and 20 seconds.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Very quickly, because I definitely want to make time for the asset management folks, we had heard some challenges—a local example: Lakeridge Health had been working out an early partnership with Durham College, and then they got a surprise insurance call, kind of a middle-of-the-night rider. There have been some unexpected, unanticipated challenges. Is there anything that you would flag that continues to be an unexpected challenge that we need to be aware of and work to solve?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** None of which that I am aware of at Lakeridge Health.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. It's specifically Lakeridge that I know about, but I was just wondering if there was anything else province-wide. If there is, flag it for the government.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Okay.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm going to shift then to Asset Management Ontario. Chris, thank you. Nice to have you here. Your remarks about transparency and there being a model, talking about the need for comprehensive management plans—I would like to know how that process is working, especially as we're facing a changed landscape. What could it look like with the new landscape? How could planning be more responsive? All of that.

**Mr. Chris Chen:** Thank you for that question. It's a very good question. The regulation I was talking about is Ontario Regulation 588/17. It's the asset management planning regulation for municipalities. The way it's structured is that there are a series of milestones that said municipalities have to meet in terms of their asset management planning.

In terms of where municipalities are with that, I think that COVID-19 has probably pressured a lot of municipalities in terms of really re-evaluating some of their risks, some of their priority projects and what levels of service they can sustainably deliver. Some of the feedback we're getting is to—the first deadline, actually, for core asset management plans is July 1, 2021. There have been some requests to see whether that can be postponed by about six months.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm going to try and squeeze in one more question. The Chair hasn't cut me off yet. You spoke clearly and comprehensively about the need for—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** —extensive engagement. Rather than continuing that line—because I agree, there is a need for that—how do we ensure that it happens? Not just the why should it happen, but how does this government, how do we make sure it happens?

**Mr. Chris Chen:** That's a very good question. One of the ideas that I floated was to do some of the consultation after an award has been made. It's just a suggestion and it's not necessarily feasible in all cases, but it is something where—and part of the idea there is to really drive some local excitement about a project that's going to be coming into their community and then getting feedback there about what people want to see from that. I think that connects, frankly, to some of the comments that MPP Bell made previously.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Yes, I see a natural connect there with community benefits.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid I'll have to cut you off there. My apologies. We will move back to the independents for their second round. MPP Blais.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Just going back to the home builders for a second: I'd asked you before about capitalizing property and land value uplift and I'm wondering if you could maybe continue your answer on that.

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**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Sure. Thank you again for the question. What I was about to say was that it has been used successfully in a number of jurisdictions, I think most successfully in London, England, along the Crossrail project, which is a multi-billion-dollar project with two major lines criss-crossing London, England, most notably going to the Canary Wharf area. There was significant involvement from the private sector in terms of building transit-oriented development and transit-oriented communities directly integrated with those stations.

Metrolinx has opened a division and is working now more with the private sector, looking at integrating stations and at opportunities utilizing both private sector land directly adjacent to stations and the stations themselves. I think there's significant opportunity here for direct dollar investments from the private sector in exchange for development permissions, and it doesn't always have to be dollars. I think transit stations are a perfect opportunity to build affordable housing. The most expensive aspect of building new housing is typically the land itself, rather

than the labour or the actual materials, so when you have situations like Metrolinx or GO Transit—and Metrolinx is actually the largest owner and operator of parking spaces in North America, which is an odd distinction for a transit agency—there are opportunities to leverage their assets and the land assets, perhaps to build affordable housing directly above stations.

We're starting to see some of the fruits of this labour. Mimico GO Station in Toronto is incorporating private sector developments, and I think that going forward, as we look at the four priority lines in Toronto, such as the Ontario Line, there are significant land assets owned by the private sector directly adjacent to or directly above stations, for which the province should be working with the private sector to build those transit-oriented communities and to capture back some of that value for the land. I think there's an opportunity for a quid pro quo in terms of approvals and in terms of incorporating and integrating stations, and for the government to realize some of that land value in terms of the asset that they are producing.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** So that's a land swap to get what the government wants, basically, whether it's affordable housing or some other form of development. What about for privately held lands, whether it's along the transit lines or other locations? Have you looked at tax-incremental financing or other ways to capture the value of that?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Tax-incremental financing is a tool that has been talked about with transit funding. It hasn't really been used successfully in other jurisdictions to realize that type of magnitude of dollars to completely make sense. Tax-increment financing is best used, at least in my view and in other jurisdictions' views, in terms of brownfield redevelopment. It has been used very successfully to allow for greater investments in terms of remediating land and then capturing that value back afterwards.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** The actual land value capture tool has probably been best used for transit in the past. I would be wary of extending it well beyond the station areas, but for private sector lands directly above subway stations, directly adjacent to subway stations, it's really all about partnerships and whether that partnership yields a dollar value or whether it yields another public benefit, such as affordable housing. I think there's an opportunity for the private sector and the public sector to work together to ultimately produce more housing supply and to invest in transit.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. I appreciate that.

MPP Hunter has some questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you, Chair. I'm now unmuted.

I would like to direct my question to Michael Lindsay, if you could just speak to what your agency sees as the benefit for working with communities on massive public sector projects under your purview. Community benefits has come out as a theme today in terms of helping with the pipeline of talent in an area where there is a clear skills

shortage and we're bringing in people from elsewhere, but we can look at how we build our own capacity in underserved areas and populations. I'm just wondering about what IO can do to help strengthen this, whether it's from a procurement perspective or signaling to the subtrades that this is something that you look very favourably upon.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Thank you, MPP Hunter. I appreciate the question. I think it's a three-part answer, the first of which, as I was saying earlier, is that the vast majority of labour and matériel associated with Infrastructure Ontario procurements continues to be very, very local.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** Even international players who participate in our market are often doing it with domestic partners and with domestic labour, so we feel confident that that continues to be one of the benefits of our approach. In thinking about procurement evaluation, we're very much in the mindset of making sure that we're mindful of that as we go.

Number two: As I was saying to MPP Bell earlier on, we're trying to work as closely as we can with the Ministry of Labour and with industry more generally on what mechanisms will ultimately create the right availability of trades and skilled trades in the province. One of the big things that I think we do to try to help that is to make as transparent as we possibly can the pipeline of works that the province has, so that industry has the ability to ultimately form around these sorts of needs.

Third, if you'll permit me: Again, even in the characteristic of the type of development that happens—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I'm sorry. I'll have to cut you off there. We're going to have to go to the government for their last round.

But before we do that, I'm just going to do a quick attendance check. MPP Schreiner, can you confirm that you're with us and that you're in Ontario?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Hi, Chair. Yes, I'll confirm: This is MPP Schreiner, and I am in Guelph, Ontario.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent. Thank you.

I'll turn it over to MPP Skelly.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** I have a number of questions for a number of the presenters. Thank you all for your presentations.

I think I'll start with Mike Collins. I think, Mike, that you were the one who referenced the efficiencies and improvements you would love to see in the environmental assessment process. Maybe you could expand on that for me.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Thank you. I ran out of time with that question. I was citing a specific example that I think displays a lot of the redundancies in our current system. I've mentioned stormwater management ponds, which are something that engineers create and our builders produce. These aren't one-offs; these are done thousands and thousands of times over. The experts really know what they're doing in terms of dealing with stormwater runoff and producing stormwater management ponds, yet they typically require a municipal approval at the local level.

They typically require conservation authorities to look at it. If it's a two-tier level of government, sometimes the upper tier also has an approval. Then, once all of these approvals have been granted, the documents are then sent to downtown Toronto, to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Typically, it's a six-to-eight-month process for them to approve a stormwater management pond in any given municipality in Ontario that has already received three approvals. The approvals are all done by engineers who are all wearing the ring, and the designs are done by engineers who have an ethical responsibility to their profession in terms of designing appropriate stormwater management facilities.

This is an area that the Ministry of the Environment is currently looking at in terms of, "Do these need that many levels of approvals? Is there an opportunity for the ministry, through a consolidated linear infrastructure approach, to have one approval for an entire stormwater management system, or perhaps to have those approvals granted at the local level?" Again, we are not in any way, shape or form trying to not have an appropriate environmental lens. We are not trying to take away from the integrity of the process. But does it really need four sets of eyes to approve a stormwater management facility?

That's one example. Another—

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Mike, if I could stop you there: Would you suggest, then, that if the application is submitted with the proper documentation, including an engineer-stamped drawing, and that if the engineer is truly an engineer and has the credentials to go with it, then the municipality and the Ministry of the Environment should accept those at face value?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Maybe not at face value. I think it's important that the municipal engineers take a look at it, because ultimately it is a piece of infrastructure that is transferred from the private sector and it will become a municipal asset. But I think we sincerely question the value of the ministry taking another look at it once the municipality has had the opportunity to review it. Again, this is not trying to get our way out of having the appropriate environmental oversight, but let's have one set of eyes and one approval, versus multiple approvals.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Okay. Keep going.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Another thing that the ministry is looking at is the environmental assessment process. The area that affects our industry is municipal-class environmental assessments. The ministry is proposing a number of what we call schedule shifting, so that some aspects require a full review and other aspects that have less of an environmental risk could be a rules-and-regulation approach, whereby the government has a set of standards and the engineers follow those standards.

1400

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** I think that is a positive way of being able to move through infrastructure approvals faster. The example I would share is that a collector road in a subdivision has to go through Planning Act

approvals as part of a plan of subdivision or an official plan amendment. Does it really need to go through another set of environmental assessments if it is a low-risk project? The Ministry of the Environment's focus should be dedicating all of their resources towards higher-risk projects, higher-risk things that could impact the environment, versus low-risk projects such as a collector road on table land or a bike lane etc. Let's focus our resources where they should be focused.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** I will be following up with you afterwards. I'll have one of my staff reach out to you to get any of those suggestions. I'm very interested in expediting the process, having worked on city council and understanding how difficult it is, often, to get things done and projects approved.

Michael Lindsay, I wanted to chat with you a little bit about—perhaps we can start with the LRT in Ottawa, which is probably something not many of us want to talk about, considering all of the challenges that have been presented in Ottawa. But has the COVID situation impacted the rollout of—are we on stage 2 now of the LRT in Ottawa? How has that impacted the process in Ottawa?

**Mr. Michael Lindsay:** MPP Skelly, I'm afraid I don't have direct visibility into how that's going, but if you'll permit me, I can extrapolate a little bit from what we've seen in respect of the in-delivery projects that we are involved in. Here again, I would commend our counterparties. Take, for example, CTS; it's presently building the Eglinton Crosstown right now. Very early in the piece, there were great discussions between that private sector consortium and the owners' authority about what needed to be done to be able to continue to make progress. They're to be commended for putting in place not only things that help them assure their workers that proper public health and safety guidance are being followed, but to also do things like double-shifting etc. and adapting new social distancing rules at the site in order to continue to make progress.

So there will definitely have been some impacts. I think we're still sorting through with our counterparties what precisely those have been, but in the main, I would observe that these essential construction projects have been continuing, and then, by and large, our counterparties have done well to think about how they would continue to keep productivity up.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Finally, and I'm not sure who can speak to this, but again, in terms of the delivery of material, have the delays in the supply chain impacted the timelines?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut you off there. But thank you to all of our presenters from this round.

CITY OF KITCHENER  
SHARE THE ROAD CYCLING COALITION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We'll now move on to our next round of presenters. Just a quick note:

There's been a change on the agenda here. The mayor of Kitchener sends his regrets and in his place, representing the city of Kitchener, will be Jonathan Lautenbach, the CFO.

We will start with the city of Kitchener. If you can state your name for Hansard, and then you'll have seven minutes for your presentation.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Thank you. I'm Jonathan Lautenbach, the chief financial officer for the city of Kitchener. Good afternoon, Chair and members of committee. Thank you for inviting us to participate in the infrastructure consultation process today.

As the city of Kitchener's chief financial officer, allow me to extend our mayor's regrets. He was going to appear today but got called away due to a community visit from Finance Minister Phillips at the exact same time.

COVID-19 has profoundly impacted the city of Kitchener, our region and the province, and that includes impacts on our infrastructure and tackling our infrastructure deficit. Municipalities have substantial infrastructure assets, with 60% of all government infrastructure at the municipal level. As a city, we have developed an asset management plan which helps us manage over \$7.5 billion in infrastructure assets, as well as our infrastructure deficit of \$341 million.

COVID-19 has created a situation whereby only the most critical life, safety and environmental activities are maintained. Other maintenance activities were delayed because of shutdown of some construction activities, physical distancing requirements for staff working in crews, and some citizens not feeling comfortable with staff entering properties to perform work. All of this adds up to less regular maintenance work being completed in 2020. Pausing on preventive maintenance activities has shown to contribute to a more rapid degradation of the assets. Also, several rehabilitation or replacement projects have been deferred or cancelled for the foreseeable future. This has a potential to lead to higher operational costs, due to reactive and urgent work for things such as water main and service breaks, additional reactive asphalt repairs due to a higher-than-normal number of potholes, and claims against the city. Without implementing additional stormwater enhancements and assets, we might see an increase in localized flooding.

Like the municipalities in Ontario, the city of Kitchener has not been immune to the negative financial impacts as a result of COVID-19. Prior to this pandemic, Kitchener embarked on a multi-year plan to address our water and facilities infrastructure deficits in a way that was responsible to property taxpayers, ratepayers and asset management principles.

Planned funding and rate increases to the city's water infrastructure program and facilities infrastructure program have been paused for 2021, in an effort to keep rate increases as low as reasonably possible for citizens who have been hard hit by the economic impacts of COVID-19. While we are doing our part to help citizens get through this pandemic, it is having a negative impact on infrastructure. Also, the city's tax-supported operating deficit is

projected to be at \$5.8 million for 2020. This has resulted in some difficult decisions by our council. In addition to declaring an emergency leave for over 900 staff, which represents over 40% of our workforce, we have also deferred \$21 million in capital spending to 2021. While we have tried to safely move forward with some major projects like RBJ Schlegel Park and some full road reconstruction projects, other major projects, such as the Old Mill pumping station and our LED streetlight conversion, have been deferred.

In addition to the financial considerations associated with deferring capital projects to 2021, we have considered the ability to effectively deliver on 2020 projects and beyond, based on our available staffing resources. Given the declared emergency leave of 40% of our workforce and the redeployment of some of the remaining staff to support critical services, the capacity to deliver on capital projects based on original timelines has been impacted.

I know all of this information paints a bleak picture, and I wish I could give you better news. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has only magnified the situation faced by infrastructure deficits. If there is a silver lining, it's that we have many shovel-ready infrastructure projects which are ready and can be used for economic stimulus and recovery. As much as we'd be looking to boost the economy through infrastructure projects, we must do so strategically and cautiously, as during the 2008 financial crisis, we saw some instances where stimulus created some negative impacts resulting from construction inflation. This is because everyone went out for tender at the same time and there just weren't enough companies, tradespeople, engineers etc. to do all of the work.

We recommend a staged approach to infrastructure funding. To that end, we need commitments and predictable allocation of funding, and we need it as early as possible, so that both municipalities and the construction industry can plan resources for several years of projects. Also, to help ensure that the economic stimulus and recovery goes as efficiently as possible, we recommend an allocation-based approach to dispersing the funding, like the federal gas tax model. An allocation-based model has the transparency and accountability we all want, but with minimal red tape. Conversely, we don't recommend an application-based funding program, as it has too much red tape and administration, which works against economic stimulus and recovery.

Finally, we need to allow our staff costs to be eligible for infrastructure projects. We know that governments have been hesitant to do this in the past and those costs have been outsourced to third parties to do the work, but as I have noted earlier, municipalities are currently running deficits and are short-staffed. We will need the operating funding for municipalities that was recently announced as well as access to infrastructure funding in order to have the staff available to support this economic recovery. We recommend allowing our staff costs as part of the funding formula, as it will achieve our collective goal of kick-starting our economy coming out of the pandemic.

In conclusion, infrastructure projects take care of two problems at once: reducing the infrastructure deficit and giving the economy a boost at exactly the same time that it is needed. I believe that our goals are aligned, and as a city we want to do our part to support this government with Ontario's and Kitchener's economic recovery, but we'll need the province to help us, as we simply can't do it on our own. We hope that you will take these recommendations into consideration. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you very much. We'll move on to our next presenter, the Share the Road Cycling Coalition. If you can begin by stating your name for Hansard, and then you may begin.

1410

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Good morning. My name is Jamie Stuckless. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you today. I'm here as the executive director of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, a not-for-profit advocacy organization that has been working since 2008 to build a more bicycle-friendly Ontario. Our vision is that everyone in Ontario feels safe riding a bicycle, if they want to.

For the past decade, we have worked in partnership with the provincial government, road safety stakeholders and over 100 municipalities to build infrastructure, advocate for policy changes and host events that help to make it safer and more convenient to ride a bicycle. We do this work because we know that there is demand for more transportation options in this province, including a demand for safer cycling.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 41% of Ontario residents wanted to cycle more, 67% indicated that they would be encouraged to cycle more if there were cycling infrastructure or trails nearby, and over one third would cycle if they had access to a bike share program. We also heard that over 80% of Ontario residents would support provincial efforts to make it safer to walk and cycle to transit stations. Although not every trip is bikeable, many Ontario residents have some trips that they would prefer to make by bike during their week. Providing more options for more people to choose how they can get around will reduce household transportation costs, reduce traffic congestion and increase access to local goods and services, amongst other benefits.

As Ontario looks to move towards recovery and efforts to rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic, even more people are now turning to cycling as an efficient, affordable and fun mode of transportation, recreation and tourism. Municipalities are making changes, as well, to accommodate this growing demand for cycling. As part of their pandemic responses, we've seen communities including, but not limited to, Barrie, Brampton, Guelph, Waterloo region, Mississauga, Hamilton, Markham, Toronto, North Bay and Ottawa all make more space for people in their communities to walk, roll and ride for their essential trips, to help support local business and for recreation and tourism.

We've also seen bold actions around the world to make more space for people walking and cycling in almost 400

municipalities, as well as the recent announcement in the United Kingdom, where Boris Johnson's government has announced a £2-billion plan to build over 1,500 kilometres of protected cycling infrastructure to help people get around post-pandemic.

We know that there is a growing demand and need for safe cycling options. Across Ontario, municipal governments, residents and businesses have all been taking steps to make this possible, but they need support from the provincial government as well, both to roll out more safe infrastructure and to work with communities to address the gaps and implementation that have too frequently left low-income residents at the greatest risk for pedestrian and cycling collisions.

Share the Road is committed to working with you to ensure that our provincial COVID-19 recovery includes plans for cycling and active transportation in order to help meet the changing mobility needs of Ontario residents. In terms of our recommendations to this committee, we support and encourage investments in public transit and in efforts to make it safer to cycle and walk to transit stations. Cycling, walking and public transit are complementary modes of transportation in communities across this province. Many residents who walk and cycle for some trips also rely on public transit, as do many of Ontario's essential workers. It is essential that we invest in improving and operating our public transit system.

Municipalities are also in need of financial support to help implement their pandemic mobility plans and to accelerate the implementation of cycling and active transportation master plans that they have. Many communities have struggled to build more safe spaces to walk and cycle due to a lack of consistent funding. We've recently seen the sizeable impact that provincial support can have, and we encourage you to provide support for municipalities in their pandemic mobility planning as well.

Although a lot of cycling and walking occurs on municipal roadways and municipal trails, provincial highways and overpasses also comprise key segments of local cycling networks, particularly in northern and rural Ontario. We're asking that the province commit to building active transportation infrastructure on roadways and overpasses under its jurisdiction, especially in locations along the identified provincial cycling network and in areas that connect to planned or existing municipal cycling infrastructure, to avoid gaps along provincial roadways.

We also believe that the province can play a key role in helping residents and visitors explore Ontario by ensuring that there's active transportation access to popular local tourism hubs and attractions. Driving and parking a motor vehicle should not be the only option available for tourism.

Lastly, we see a growing demand for e-mobility and micromobility, including e-bikes, e-scooters, e-cargo cycles and bike share. The province plays a key role in providing regulatory clarity on the use of these forms of transportation, and we encourage you to form a provincial advisory committee to address these vehicles and their impacts on infrastructure, businesses and residents across the province.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. I look forward to any questions you may have.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you very much. We'll move now to questions, starting with the independent members. There will be two rounds of six and a half minutes, and we'll give a notice at three minutes and one minute. Starting with the independents—who is starting? MPP Schreiner.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thank you, Chair, and thanks to both presenters for bringing excellent information. I'm going to direct my first question to Kitchener and then shift to cycling. Jonathan, you had talked about the importance of allocation-based funding and not project-based funding, in terms of red tape. But it also seems to me that it is potentially more financially sustainable and accountable as well, because you can pre-project-plan better. Is that accurate in why you would ask for that approach?

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Through the Chair, what we have found through the federal gas tax funding model, which is an allocation-based approach, is that it has allowed us to budget projects and allocate that funding in a very predictable manner. That's why we would ask for a similar approach as we look to economic recovery in capital spending. It certainly would help us to move forward much quicker, as well, compared to other ways, in terms of seeing that kind of funding roll out.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Great. Thanks for that.

I'm just going to shift quickly over to Share the Road. Jamie, you had mentioned e-bike regulations. I know I've met with you on this issue, because I have an e-bike manufacturing company in my riding and they've identified some regulatory barriers to rolling out electric bikes. Could you talk about that and how we could remove those regulatory barriers? Because I think that would benefit both manufacturers, like the one in my riding, to create jobs, but also get more people on bikes who maybe don't have the pedal power that some folks have.

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Through the Chair, thank you very much for the question. As you allude to, there are several regulations in Ontario right now that do restrict the use of e-cargo cycles specifically for families and for business use. A few of the regulations that have been highlighted, first of all in terms of families using e-cargo cycles for transportation and getting around their communities: Right now, Ontario is the only province in Canada that has an age limit on passengers. Both the operator and the passengers on an e-bike must all be 16 years of age, so this means that a family that purchases a cargo cycle with an electric motor is not allowed to bring their young children on that bike, even if there is a seat and a seat belt for them. As I mentioned, Ontario is currently the only province with this type of age restriction, and it really does limit family use of e-cycles.

I would also highlight one restriction that has been highlighted by the business community, and that is around where e-bikes are allowed to travel. The province currently allows municipalities to have varying rules on what types of e-powered bicycles can travel where. If you're

trying to run a business and do deliveries via cargo bike, first of all, those restrictions can vary across jurisdictions, which can be quite confusing, so there's a role for the provincial governments to help provide some standardized communications and information. But also there's been some restrictions on the weight and size of e-cargo bikes. That often means that they can't be used on trails or on cycle tracks, which we're seeing more of in communities, and that can really limit the—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** —safe spaces that they have to operate.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Great. Just in the limited time I have available, I wanted to—I hope I'm not putting you on the spot here, but I know that Quebec is invested much more heavily in cycling infrastructure as compared to Ontario and has seen huge economic benefits from that, both supporting small businesses and also supporting tourism. Could you maybe talk a little bit about that? I know you didn't bring it up in your presentation, so I hope I'm not putting you on the spot, but I think it would be a useful comparison.

1420

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Yes, Quebec has invested quite heavily in their provincial cycling network, also known as la Route verte, which attracts a significant number of cycle tourists each year. I don't have the exact financial impact figure with me now, so I won't quote that figure. But it's what Ontario has modelled the provincial cycling network on, and that is a network of thousands of kilometres of roads and trails that has been identified for construction here in Ontario. I believe construction is under way, but we're not leveraging the full tourism impacts yet because we haven't built the full connected network that gets you from community to community and business to business. But la Route verte in Quebec has been a real leader, both in Canada and around the world in terms of building safe, separated infrastructure for attracting tourists from around the world.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** According to the research you cited, probably one of the biggest barriers to taking advantage of those opportunities is people's feeling of safety on the road due to lack of infrastructure. Would that be correct?

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Absolutely. Our provincial polling, done as recently as 2018, shows that almost 70% of people who want to cycle more feel that a lack of safe space to do so is their main reason why they choose—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** —or cannot cycle.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'm also assuming that cycling infrastructure on a per-kilometre basis is substantially less expensive than most other forms of transportation infrastructure. Would that be correct?

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Yes. It is both cheaper to build, per kilometre, than other types of road infrastructure, but there's also a recent study out of Minnesota that shows that, per dollar, it also employs more people and often results in purchasing more equipment locally. So there is

a double economic effect: It can be cheaper to build but also has a stronger employment impact on the community.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Great. Chair, do I have much more time?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Ten seconds, I'm afraid.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Okay. There's probably not time. Thank you to both presenters.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you very much. We'll move now to the government side for questioning. MPP Mr. Crawford.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to both the presenters for your participation here today. I have questions for both of you. I'll start off with the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, if I could.

We have many things in common for sure in terms of your interest in public transit, and the ability to get people safer, quicker to work, home, families is very important. I think that's a worthy goal. Our government, just last week actually, announced a \$4-billion investment with municipalities along with the federal government, and a lot of that money will be going to the public transit facilities that have been really impacted very negatively, obviously, by COVID-19.

My question is related a little bit to—I want to get your thoughts on an issue that is in my community, just to get your perspective on it. In the town of Oakville, about 18 to 24 months ago, there were some bike lanes put into downtown Oakville, on Lakeshore. I guess there's been a lot of concern. All the merchants in town are very displeased with what's happening because it's taken away very valuable parking spaces. One of the problems that you hear in our community in downtown Oakville—and we want a thriving downtown community. It's very important. It's a central part of the community. We want that, and taking away a lot of those parking spots, which were already in short supply—a lot of the merchants are concerned because their revenues have actually gone down. They're saying that, yes, there's maybe a little increase in bike traffic, but the bikers aren't spending any money. They're buying maybe a water or a coffee, where before people were browsing in shops and spending more money. So it's actually been detrimental in our case. My question is, what would you say to those business owners?

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Thank you for the question. Through the Chair, we haven't done a study specifically on the Lakeshore lanes in Oakville, so I can only speak to information that has been collected in other communities, particularly in Ottawa, Toronto and in North America, in communities like Portland and New York. What many communities will find is that, over time, cyclists may spend less per trip but they often make more trips, spending more money at local businesses over the course of a month. So no, I can't speak specifically to what's happening in Oakville, and certainly oftentimes there is this competition between space for pedestrians and cyclists and space for vehicle parking. Ultimately, we want to be able to provide both.

I would be open and happy to work with the community on encouragement and education campaigns. It's really

great when the BIA oftentimes can get out there to actually interview people to understand what their travel patterns are and what their needs are. But several communities, including Toronto and Ottawa, have found that oftentimes those parking spaces are used by the employees of the business more so than by customers of the business and that, over time, the revenues do go up because, as I mentioned, cyclists usually spend more per month but less per trip.

If there is an opportunity to do a localized study with the BIA and engage with residents and customers to understand what their needs are, perhaps a solution could be found there. But of course, every context is different and I don't want to make assumptions about your specific area.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Okay, thank you. It's definitely impacted our downtown and our community, so we're a little concerned about that. Having said that, we all of course do support and want to see increased bicycle usage. We're not against that, but I guess we have to balance it.

My next question is for the city of Kitchener. We're going to have three minutes, so I just want to get your thoughts on, what are the most important infrastructure projects your community needs, number one; and my second question would be, if the federal and provincial governments were to engage in any new programs similar to the ICIP, Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, where we have that tri-government involvement, is that something your city would be interested in participating in more of? I'll throw it over to you. Thank you.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Thank you for the questions. Through the Chair, in terms of the first question about priorities for the city of Kitchener, one of the things that we had recently accomplished prior to the pandemic was establishing a strategic plan for the city. That did touch on certain infrastructure elements that we are looking to advance, but in terms of the most critical need that we identified recently, it was our facility infrastructure gap. We have a number of facilities that are aging. Certainly the pandemic has highlighted the fact that programming in those facilities can be challenging, at least right now, and some consideration is needed as a result of that as well. That certainly would be one of the highest priorities in terms of what we projected in terms of our infrastructure gap that we haven't fully addressed yet.

In terms of your second question about a three-party funding model in terms of funding that was produced and provided, I certainly think we would be open to any funding that the government would otherwise be willing to provide to assist with economic recovery and our capital infrastructure needs. One of the challenges, particularly within the pandemic—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** —is providing the municipal contribution. We welcome the operating funding that was recently announced, but we also know we're going to have challenges in 2021 and beyond as well. We certainly would prefer funding that would continue to just flow

directly to municipalities to assist with the economic recovery.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Okay. We may only have a couple of seconds left, but how is broadband in your region? Is there pretty good coverage or are there areas where there are issues?

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Through the Chair, I can't speak to that issue in particular in terms of the entire region. Certainly, it seems to be that it's been working okay at this point. The rural areas I couldn't speak to. In terms of townships, they would have a different perspective to [*inaudible*].

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. We'll move now to the opposition for questions. MPP Lindo.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thanks to everybody for presenting etc. I'm going to start with Jonathan. Hey, Jonathan. Nice to see you there. I have two quick questions, really. I'm wondering—earlier in some of the sessions today, there were a lot of community members who talked about community benefit metrics when the government is going to partner with—whether it's developers etc. They've been talking about the importance of that, especially—we heard from folks at Jane and Finch, for instance, who are trying to do better for racialized community members there. I know that in the city of Kitchener, for instance, we've got the Land Back Camp that is in Victoria Park right now. The possibility of moving beyond the infrastructure projects that you already had planned prior to COVID—since those, because of the pandemic, are already going to be delayed, some of the new stuff that we're now seeing or the reprioritizing that has to happen, in my estimation, would require more of an investment and partnership with the government, like the provincial government, to be able to meet some of those needs.

1430

With that as the backdrop, I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit about the importance of making sure that whatever long-term plan the government develops based on thinking about financial recovery and economic development, thinking about the needs in particular of communities like ours, for instance, should be central in that. I hope that made some kind of sense, but I'm throwing it over to you to speak to it.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Thanks for the question. Through the Chair, what I would say is I do believe that our infrastructure priorities—we know we have a number of sizeable issues that we were trying to address prior to COVID. Certainly those would still remain, and are potentially getting bigger with deferred projects. We have seen certain emerging priorities come forward in recent months, so we would essentially welcome any type of funding with fewer conditions attached to it to allow us to prioritize how that funding might be needed in various communities.

We do know that even from an infrastructure point of view, what we may be dealing with across Ontario is a central issue that everyone is facing. There are pockets

where different assets have different conditions, and so the priorities might be different. Very similarly, other issues that have come up recently in terms of addressing those issues in various communities—different communities might be dealing with different issues, so our call would be to provide for funding that has fewer conditions put to it. Certainly, you can prioritize different areas to see certain action on them, but we would welcome any type of funding that would address either operating-related items or capital.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much for that. Before I hand it over to MPP French, I just wanted to follow up, because I think that part of what I was hearing from the earlier sessions was that if you have metrics in that funding model that allow, say, in our case, the municipality to argue for community, to argue that this particular infrastructure investment would actually help these community members, and if that was weighed a little bit more than some of the other ways that they've weighed these projects—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** —that might actually help with ensuring that we are able to invest in some of those high-priority areas as that changes. Does that make some sense?

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Through the Chair, I understand what argument you're putting forward. Certainly, priorities that the government would wish to see could potentially be something that, obviously, we would welcome. There are a number of areas that we would like to see addressed, but again, I think I would go back to my earlier comment, where fewer conditions and more flexibility would be preferred. That would be something, as we all recognize various issues and priorities within our communities, that we can then take action on quickly, if there is more flexibility.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much. I'll put it back over to my colleague.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you both for your presentations today. I'm going to continue with the city of Kitchener.

I'm sure that, like the economic development folks and decision makers in the region of Durham, you guys are very busy. Certainly in Oshawa and the region of Durham, they're having to be nimble and innovative. I definitely hear you about the need for operational costs to be factored in by the government and those making decisions with funding.

I would like to ask a little bit more—I take your points about the need for the flexibility to make choices for the community, so what you were just saying about the funding and allowing you, basically, to make those decisions for yourself. Fewer conditions: well heard. But if we find ourselves on this pandemic path for a long time, or if just around the corner it's all a distant memory, things have to happen today so municipalities can have more and more success stories.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** What would you add that you have not already said that is something you don't want to trip over, which would actually allow you to continue on a successful path?

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Thanks for the question. Through the Chair, essentially I think municipalities are just looking for financial support, and certainly the recent announcement was welcome news, as I had mentioned before. As I said in previous comments, we know there will be impacts still in 2021 and potentially beyond, depending on how long the pandemic lasts. That will create further challenges for municipalities from an operating point of view. From a capital side of things, the challenges in staffing and moving projects forward has been a bit of an issue during the pandemic and something that if we were provided with capital funding, we could see some of those things proceed if certain costs are eligible and allow us to push projects forward.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'm afraid I'll have to cut you off. We're going to go to our second round, starting with the independents. MPP Blais.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you, everyone, for your presentations. Jonathan, I took note of your point you made about construction inflation during the last major round of infrastructure, and it's something that we experienced in Ottawa. I'm wondering if in Kitchener you've ever calculated either what the inflation was or what you maybe lost as a result of how the program was rolled out.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Thanks for the question. Through the Chair, I don't know if we actually did do a specific calculation on that. I certainly could look back in terms of 2008 and what that looked like. But I think what we did see was that prices were going up with announcements of funding. Depending on how quickly municipalities got out the gate in terms of their tendering process, fewer contractors available would obviously increase pricing. So that is one of our asks: As we look at the longer-term recovery, potentially one approach would be a phased approach where funding would be staggered and spread out over time to allow us to both move forward with priority projects and accomplish work that needs to be done and manage it effectively, but also try to prevent that inflation factor from appearing.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. The other thing we came across in Ottawa is that when you do project-specific funding, there's typically a dollar figure attached to that project and then, of course, the bids come in at that dollar figure or even above because you've already announced that it's a priority. Is that something that you've experienced in Kitchener, and what do you think of block grants basically avoiding that particular problem?

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Thanks for the question. Through the Chair, I don't believe it's a widespread issue with competitive tendering that does take place. Certainly the budget for a project can sometimes tip the hand of [inaudible] in terms of the bids that are coming in. But I do think that, depending on the number of bids, that competitive environment does control that to a certain extent.

But again, that does speak to our ask again that as economic stimulus is provided, there is that potential that costs could increase just on the basis of fewer available contractors and then those kind of factors that would factor into it, which would also impact—if there are fewer and knowing the budget, it could impact prices.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. Thank you. Finally, on eligible costs: Is it only your staff time that you would like to see as eligible costs? Or would you prefer to get rid of the notion altogether of eligible costs, or at least like to see the provincial and federal governments have the same listing of what is eligible or not? I know, in Ottawa, we had a staff member whose job was to maximize funding from the two by moving things around to ensure that more of the project became eligible, and that's just completely a waste of time and added to the overall cost of the project.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Through the Chair, certainly we would welcome less restrictions, as I mentioned before. In terms of staff costs in particular, we know that projects, and large projects in particular, which would be helpful for our economic recovery require project management and staff time associated with managing those projects.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** It becomes challenging when some of those costs are not eligible and where the municipality has to decide to fund those themselves, which can be challenging particularly during these times. That's why I wouldn't say that there doesn't need to be any conditions. There might need to be some eligibility criteria, but certainly the fewer the better.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. Thank you very much. I think MPP Schreiner had—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Schreiner? 1440

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I just wanted to ask Jamie from Share the Road another question about vulnerable road users. You brought that up a bit in your presentation, but also an earlier question was also suggesting this contest between cars and other road users. Can you maybe just talk about innovative ways of building infrastructure that protects cyclists, pedestrians and people with wheeled mobility devices but still accommodates cars?

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Absolutely. Thank you for the question. Through the Chair: What we're seeing in communities and in countries that have been successful in lowering their pedestrian, bicycle and overall death-on-the-roads rate is that they are looking at designs that provide space and clarity for all road users. When we ask everyone to mix in the same space and don't take into account the speed and the volume of traffic, the size of different vehicles and the damage that that can cause, we're creating a situation that can lead to serious injury and death on our roadways.

We're really starting to see a prioritization of separated infrastructure, so that there are very clear barriers as to where motor vehicles can go, and then where people on e-scooters, bikes and e-bikes can go. We're also seeing a real increase in multi-use paths—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** —so that we're creating spaces that are not just restricted to people on bicycles, but also allow for people on mobility devices and other various wheeled modes of transportation to share the space with people who are going about their same speed, to reduce the injury and death likelihood of any collisions that occur.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** And I'm assuming that often-times that has significant benefits to non-active-transportation road users as well, just because of levels of clarity. Could you talk about that in the remaining 20 seconds that we have?

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Yes. As someone who also drives, it's a lot clearer when I'm driving my vehicle and I know where pedestrians and cyclists are also going to be. It reduces the likelihood that you're going to have to figure out how to interact with that person.

I would also note that roadways that provide space for people cycling and walking can actually move more people per hour, so not only does it provide—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I'm afraid I've got to cut you off there. We're moving on to the government's second round, and we'll start with MPP Piccini.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thank you to the two presenters today. I'm going to start with the city of Kitchener. Thank you very much for your presentation. You spoke about fewer conditions and deferrals, and utility support was another thing I wanted to touch on, but I'll start with the fewer conditions and the importance of funding.

My question to you is: The ICIP program, which my colleague MPP Crawford brought up—I know, for example, that the community culture and rec stream was 10 times oversubscribed provincially. Would you be supportive of potentially looking at pre-existing programs like that and getting off-the-shelf project proposals ready, rather than new, separate intake streams? Would that not be something you'd be supportive of, to get shovels in the ground faster should new dollars become available in the fall?

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Thanks for the question. Through the Chair: I think we'd be supportive of any funding that flows fairly quickly, and so we're open to any model where funding would roll out. If that's through existing structures that are already in place and projects to see those proceed, that would be one area that we would welcome.

But certainly I think the projects that we do have that have been deferred are ready to go, and so they are shovel-ready. The sooner that funding can flow—that's why we're recommending funding without conditions or funding that has an allocation-based model in terms of how it rolls out, which would support more quickly distributing those funds and providing municipalities with the needed certainty to allow those projects to proceed quickly.

**Mr. David Piccini:** And just in follow-up: I saw that you shared a Twitter post from the mayor of Kitchener on deferrals and the economic stimulus. Obviously, in your financial capacity, you had a role in that, so I'd like to

compliment you and the municipality for the role that you've played in rolling out quick financial economic supports. Just if you could touch on the importance of that, the \$10-billion action plan out the door from the province—I note that in that video you talked about deferrals and the importance of predictable utility prices. If you wouldn't mind sharing a little more, that would be great.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Through the Chair: Certainly we have tried to adapt as much as we can as a municipality to the ever-changing conditions that the pandemic has brought on. Some of the support that we did provide was deferral of property taxes and utilities. That did put us in a position where municipalities were facing potential cash flow concerns. That was one of the reasons why we brought a recommendation forward to defer capital projects. It was less about dealing with our operating challenges, which we still do have; it was more about the concern of the cash flow.

I know that's a concern of many municipalities, in terms of the impacts that they have been facing. As we've rolled out and tried to be flexible with our residents and ratepayers in terms of providing the economic support, it has put the municipalities in a tough spot to try to show that local economic support that's needed, at the same time ensuring that we can still—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** —deliver on the services and capital needs for the community.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Piccini, any further questions? Oh, you're—

**Mr. David Piccini:** You guys just muted me. Thanks, Chair. I appreciate the unmute.

Thanks very much for that, Jonathan, and for your presentation.

Jamie, I'm just wondering if you could share a little more. Just a quick question on some of that perennial conflict that my colleague MPP Crawford touched on: It is a debate that exists here. In the riding I represent in rural Ontario, we don't have some of the same unique concerns as in downtown Toronto, but one of the common threads is when our small downtowns appeal to people on the 401 as a large base to draw from, to take a few minutes to come south of the 401—to Port Hope, let's say, Cobourg, Brighton or the Big Apple, which is also in my riding—and spend an afternoon.

The business owners talk about the importance of that parking ability, to park right in front, pop out, grab something, get back in and go. I think there are creative ways with adequate parking. We've really tried to create pedestrian-friendly—obviously cyclist-friendly, as well—routes through the downtown cores. But talk to me: Are there any studies or anything you can point to? You mentioned just that economic piece as businesses grapple in a post-COVID recovery lens to make money to support their employees and customer base. Are there any cities you can point to on reducing parking or reducing that ability to get our cars through?

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Thank you for the question. Through the Chair, I think the first thing to highlight,

especially from the rural perspective that you mentioned is—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** —to look at the tourism potential, as well. When you look at a parking space, if you think of the number of customers per space, a bike corral that fits in one parking space can fit up to 20 customers, as compared to the potential number of customers in a vehicle, so it's looking at innovative ways to increase the number of customers.

With tourism, particularly in rural Ontario and destinations like the Big Apple, we know that Ontario cycle tourists account for over \$400 million in spending every year. It's about looking at every single person as a tourist and as a customer and as a person getting around to the community, and as you said, finding those ways to make sure that we're able to provide both for people who need the parking space, but also there are lots of people who need and would use bike parking and pedestrian access as well to be a customer.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Definitely, I take your point. We grapple in rural Ontario as the tourists coming from Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm sorry, I'm going to have to cut you off. We're going to go to the opposition for a final round of questioning. We'll go to MPP Bell.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you very much, Jamie and Jonathan, for attending this committee. I have a question for each of you. My first question, Jamie—hello again—is around cycling infrastructure. The city of Toronto has moved fairly rapidly to create separated cycling infrastructure during the pandemic, which has been a real boon for many people who do not feel comfortable at this point taking the TTC and don't have a car. I'd love it if you could speak to the broad benefits of cycling infrastructure and how it can help people in cities survive the pandemic.

1450

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Thank you for the question. Through the Chair, I think one important point to highlight right off the beginning—building on a question that was asked previously about road safety—not only is building cycling infrastructure safer for the people cycling and using it, there have also been studies both in Toronto and Ottawa that show that it's also safer for pedestrians. On a bike lane that was installed in Ottawa, they saw a 50% decrease in pedestrian collisions, and in Toronto, the installation of the Bloor Street bike lane had, I believe, a 44% decrease in overall collisions. So we're really looking at opportunities to create more clarity and safer roads by installing infrastructure that works for everyone.

I also touched briefly on the ability to get to local business. I think we're seeing a lot of local businesses right now be creative about providing deliveries and outdoor access. Particularly as businesses are trying to encourage their neighbourhood to come out and support them, finding ways to make sure that people can walk and bike to access those businesses and services is very important, but also an opportunity for businesses to make those local deliveries by walking and biking, and maybe using a cargo

bike. It could be really important to the economic recovery.

I think another really important element is, as MPP Bell mentioned, helping people choose options to free up capacity on transit to make sure that our transit is not overcrowded and passing people on the street. For people who can or want to be cycling, providing those safe spaces can give them an option and create more space on transit for people for whom that is their most important mode of transportation. So there's a real mobility element there as well.

Lastly, I would just indicate the affordability element of it as well: as households and businesses are looking to save money, being able to cut down on the use of a car in a daily or weekly fashion, even if it's just for one or two trips. For the trip to school or the trip out to dinner, being able to walk or cycle for that trip because you know there's going to be bike parking or a bike lane to help you get there can really make a difference in household affordability and the day-to-day costs of maintaining your household and your family.

So a myriad of benefits, I think, as well as it being something that we're just hearing from people that they've always wanted to try and would like to be able to do.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you.

I have one more question. This is to Jonathan. Jonathan, I've been following the rollout of emergency operating funding for transit fairly closely.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** The federal government has committed to a significant amount of money to the transit agencies across Ontario, up to \$2 billion. But the catch, of course, is that the province needs to match that funding in order for that transit operations funding to be fully realized.

Have you heard anything from the feds or the province around what amount of funding Kitchener could receive? I know that the city of Toronto has not heard anything yet. York has not heard anything yet. Have you heard anything yet about how much money you could receive to shore up transit in Kitchener?

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Thanks for the question. Through the Chair, Kitchener is obviously part of the region of Waterloo, and transit is at the regional level. But in terms of the details about the funding for both the transit piece and the municipal operations, we're all still waiting on details. We haven't received any specific allocation amounts that will be coming. Certainly, we could try to guess based on the magnitude of the funding announced, but we're anxiously awaiting those announcements to take place.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** And I can imagine that it would be your preference to have the province fully match the federal government's up-to-\$2-billion commitment?

**Mr. Jonathan Lautenbach:** Through the Chair, I would say that, certainly, with the impacts for municipalities and understanding what they are, that magnitude of funding would be welcome to municipalities to address transit-related impacts that they have faced through the pandemic and potentially will continue to face as they try to continue

to provide that service with the pandemic not being fully over at this point.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you. There are all my questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Perfect. MPP French, we have one minute remaining.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, thank you. My question is for Jamie with Share the Road Cycling Coalition. I appreciated your presentation. But the conversation around tourism and what that could look like across communities is actually very exciting. We just finished those hearings with the tourism folks. What are some ideas that could happen in this province?

**Ms. Jamie Stuckless:** Thank you for the question. Through the Chair, we recently conducted a survey of people who cycle in Ontario with the Waterfront Regeneration Trust and Ontario By Bike. Not surprisingly, 92% of the 1,000 respondents indicated that they were planning to cycle more this summer, and almost 70% more looking for local options both in their community and in their region to be cycling more. Many were cancelling trips out of province and out of country and looking to rebook here in Ontario—so a big potential cycling tourism market to take advantage of. We did ask them, “What kinds of things could be done to help you do cycling tourism in the community?” In addition to the provision of safe cycling infrastructure—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I’m afraid I need to cut you off. That’s all the time we have. I’d like to thank our two presenters from this time period, and we’ll move on to our next round now.

#### CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN ALLIANCE OF ONTARIO

#### MUNICIPALITY OF CHATHAM-KENT

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Our first presenter will be the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario. If you can start by please stating your name for Hansard, and then you’ll have seven minutes for your presentation. We’ll give you a one-minute mark near the ending. Over to you.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Okay, thank you. My name is Sandro Perruzza, and I am the chair of the board of the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario, or CDAO. I’m pleased to introduce my colleague and co-presenter, Andy Manahan, the vice-chair of the CDAO board. It is our privilege to represent our members here today, and we wish to express our gratitude to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the opportunity to share the collective knowledge, expertise and experience of the CDAO membership and our recommendations on how to build infrastructure effectively and efficiently so it serves the citizens of this great province.

The 16 member organizations of CDAO represent the various provincial industry associations which plan, design, build, operate and maintain the vast majority of public and private infrastructure in Ontario, including the supply

chain. Collectively, our member companies employ hundreds of thousands of workers in this province and account for billions of dollars of local economic development and growth. Quite simply, we are the respected and trusted collective voice of the infrastructure sector.

This group of organizations had come together early on during the onset of COVID-19. We worked alongside our labour and industry partners to co-develop new health and safety protocols that were eventually adopted by the province as the gold standard in our industry. This demonstrates our highest priority, which is the health, safety and wellness of our collective workforce. Our member organizations also collected and donated personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer for front-line workers, including our health care practitioners. We are an industry that not only builds Ontario but cares about the future of Ontario.

One of the most important components of economic recovery will be the restoration of government investment in public infrastructure. These investments have the dual effect of generating jobs and enhancing prospects for future economic growth, both of which will be critical to the economic recovery at both the municipal and provincial levels.

It is our pleasure to share the following recommendations:

(1) Implement COVID-19 contract provisions. A legislative provision for accommodation in both time and compensation should be inserted into all construction and professional services contracts where the effects of COVID-19 might result in failure to perform or delay, including workforce and supply chain considerations. This could be performed under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

(2) The government should develop a comprehensive project investment pipeline document, similar to that of Infrastructure Ontario’s P3 market forecast. This would allow proper sequencing, scheduling and preparation of market resources, which can be sufficiently marshalled and coordinated to maximize and streamline industry’s response to the province’s needs.

I’ll hand over the rest of the presentation to my colleague, Andy.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Thank you, Sandro.

(3) Ensure that infrastructure stimulus funding is allocated to priority projects based on evidence-based business-case approaches, supported by asset management plans for municipal projects. I should highlight that the municipal sector, unlike about 10 years ago, has identified priority projects through its asset management planning initiatives.

(4) Place more emphasis on the role of organizations such as Infrastructure Ontario and the Canada Infrastructure Bank in assisting the municipal sector to deliver worthwhile projects. For example, they can seek out opportunities for regionalizing the management of infrastructure in small and medium-size communities. In addition, the Ministry of Infrastructure has an unsolicited proposal framework, and this will leverage the expertise

of the private sector to develop innovative infrastructure solutions.

**1500**

(5) Continue investing in and supporting training and education programs in the construction industry, as the skilled trade shortages will continue to be a factor. Governments should also begin investigating and addressing the skills leakage that is occurring in the engineering and design sectors, as there is a growing shortage of professionals needed to design the infrastructure we need for the future.

(6) Utilize our COVID-19 response to achieve climate stability and build our province's capacity to build sustainably. As we look to develop an economic response to COVID-19 and beyond, there is an excellent opportunity to expand and create new jobs and business opportunities by promoting research and local manufacturing of these building materials needed for the construction industry as it transitions to greater sustainability.

Building products and regulations that support sustainability and resiliency efforts such as engineered mass timber, which sequesters carbon, should be considered. Many building-related products are currently imported from abroad, slowing down timelines, impacting efficiencies and costs. This would create new jobs and business opportunities. An Ontario that invests in new-build projects would have the additional benefit of ensuring that we are resilient to the increasing likelihood of more severe climate events on the horizon. Providing a supportive business climate including appropriate incentives will help to usher in a low-carbon future. For example, encouraging the renovation of the province's existing building stock will result in the reduction of emissions and operational energy costs.

(7) Streamline the regulatory and development approvals process in Ontario. Recent changes to the municipal-class environmental assessment process are welcome, but there is still much more work to do. Ontario's development, planning and building approvals processes are much slower and less innovation-focused than in many other advanced jurisdictions. Research shows that site plan amendment approvals—I should mention this was one of the members at CDAO; the Ontario Association of Architects demonstrated that it takes one month rather than nine months in the approval target timelines for a complex official plan or zoning bylaw amendment application that should take no more than—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** —[inaudible] to be approved.

(8) Work with the federal government to upgrade and modernize the digital infrastructure that will ensure that businesses and workers succeed. The pandemic has shown the disparities in access to broadband Internet across the province. In a knowledge-based economy, this is simply unacceptable and must be addressed.

(9) The last one on this list: Invest in Ontario's mining industry in building access corridors in northern Ontario communities for resources, including the development of the Ring of Fire.

Thank you for your consideration. In the question-and-answer phase, we will both answer your questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much.

We'll move on to the next presenter, the municipality of Chatham-Kent. If you can state your name for Hansard and then you may begin. I understand that our presenter is going to be presenting just via audio today, just for everyone watching at home to be aware.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Yes, hi. It's Thomas Kelly. I'm the general manager of infrastructure and engineering services for Chatham-Kent. I apologize; my video is not working.

I also sent a presentation. Do you have access to the presentation?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We'll make sure the presentation is sent to the committee.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Okay, very good. I was just going to walk through the presentation itself, just slide by slide, very quickly.

In Chatham-Kent, we certainly have our share of challenges, like every other municipality. One that's unique for us is that we're a very large area. We're 2,500 square kilometres of area to cover, with a very low population density. We're also surrounded on two sides—we have Lake St. Clair on one side and Lake Erie on the other. I'm going to talk about some of the challenges we have with those two bodies of water.

But when you go through and create policy, we ask you to consider that we have two main cities, Chatham in the centre and Wallaceburg to the north, with a population—I'd show a map here—of 102,000 in total. If you started to insert some of the larger areas like Toronto, Pickering, Brampton and so on, that population density would be 5.6 million, so we are less than 2% of the population you would typically see in some of the areas that you're dealing with.

The COVID impact to Chatham-Kent has been significant: up to \$5 million. We also have had a significant infrastructure funding deficit. One of the challenges, again, is that, with this low population, we still have our fair share of infrastructure. Every year, we've convinced our council to put away 1% of taxes, increasing them so that we can help fund our asset management plan.

The impact on local business, like others, has been significant, so much so that the public themselves have formed the Chatham-Kent Economic Recovery Task Force. The main message from this group is survival and creative ways that we can get there.

It's one of our recommendations, certainly, that in order to stimulate the economy, we continue to invest in infrastructure, and we have many projects that we would like to take on. There were four projects I listed in the presentation. One is some of the infrastructure damage caused by Lake Erie. There are three main areas. We are looking at green energy investment. We have a major municipal building which needs to be upgraded; it has not been upgraded since 1977. One interesting one is that we have a company who wants to move jobs from the south to Chatham-Kent, but in order to do so, we have a public

works facility that needs to move out of the existing building, and that presents some challenges. Lastly, because we are so rural, fibre installation is very weak here in Chatham-Kent, and we see a road to recovery, certainly, is to try to improve that.

Along with Lake Erie, we've been studying the shoreline over the past three years. We have just come out with a report to council, which they've endorsed. Essentially because of the high water levels but also based on climate change, we have an eroding and a flooding shoreline that's wreaking havoc on our infrastructure, along with the residences along Lake Erie. We've had three road closures now in place. We've had four states of emergency since 2018, as well.

Those areas are Rose Beach Line—and to give you some of the impact, I've included some pictures that show you the devastation. We're looking at \$20 million for Rose Beach Line to correct the situation, \$50 million for Erie Shore Drive, and then Talbot Trail, which interestingly is a former provincial highway, is close to \$100 million. All of these figures are beyond the scope of the taxpayers here. It's going to be a big challenge for us, and we're really talking about some type of movement of these residents away from that area, as well.

The civic centre is an \$18-million upgrade to make it to a point where it's accessible and it's age-friendly and we have the right security, but we improve our energy efficiency. That's something that is very difficult for our council to approve because, typically, that investment is really based on employees. The council could like to see that type of investment go more toward roads and bridges. It's an aging building and we're really struggling with it, struggling to get moving forward into the year 2020.

We also have the public works garage. We have this company from the south that is prepared to move 253 jobs. We currently occupy the space in an old manufacturing facility, and we would like to get out of there and find a way to make this work. That's certainly a great news story. Again, we have all of the pressures of COVID, we have all of the pressures of infrastructure, and we have a model here that just isn't sustainable, so we're looking for some creative ways to make that happen, and if possible, some support from the government.

Lastly is the rural fibre installation. I've shown a map of some of the areas where we have high-speed connection. Most of them are completely deficient, with limited access. We have a lack of a backbone. Residential fibre is typically running at about 10 MB, and it's been a real challenge for us. This fibre installation we see as really critical to not only getting us to where we need to be long-term, but also in the future as well.

I am sorry you couldn't see some of the pictures, but that's the extent of my presentation and summary. The COVID has had a big impact on us.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** We were already faced with a lot of challenges financially, and this has certainly put us behind the eight ball. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll start with the government for questions. We will start with MPP Barrett.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to lead off with some questions to the municipality of Chatham-Kent and the very serious problems down there with road closures and roads washing out. They mentioned damage to municipal property. I'm on this call from Port Dover actually; I'm just down the lake from you, of course. You mentioned Infrastructure Ontario—and I should know this: In your area, did you declare a disaster designation or any special designation? Would that better enable you to qualify for assistance? I'm thinking that designation is probably through municipal affairs. Has there been any action on the part of the municipality or any progress on that?

**1510**

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Well, yes, there was. We've had four emergencies. Each time it's been looked at, and there is a certain percentage—I think it's 3% to 5% of our entire budget that must qualify. These floods are occurring on a regular basis, and we have never got to the point where we've met the threshold that we would qualify for that type of funding.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I see. With respect to private property, are there any programs available or is the taxpayer willing to help out people who have a cottage, for example, on the lake?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Yes. I can tell you that the people on the lake certainly are looking for programs like that. The general taxpayer, who is interior, feels very strongly that they made a decision to live on the lake and, therefore, they need to take the risk. That's a real point of contention that has been a big challenge for us certainly. We do need to do something.

We have two aspects of lost investment: First is the overall property, and secondly is the infrastructure. We have a number of roads that are severely impacted, one being the Talbot Trail. That used to be a provincial road back in 1998, and it was transferred to the municipality for a total amount of all provincial highways of \$13 million. We would like to give that road back to the province now, and you can take care of it. That's a big disaster for us and completely unaffordable for us as well.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** It sounds like Lake Erie would like to take it back as well.

Chair, if I have time, just a quick question to Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario: They made mention of some of their concerns with problems in fulfilling contracts, delays related to coronavirus and who bears the cost. I just wondered if the group there would want to expand a bit further what kind of policy direction they are looking at from the province of Ontario. I think you made mention of the emergency management act.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Go ahead, Andy.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** I'll start out, and Sandro can join as needed.

We have had discussions with the province and some of its agencies with respect to recognizing in contracts that it is difficult to meet certain timelines because of COVID. We're trying to ensure that our workplace is a safe one, and that means things like physical distancing and now we're talking about wearing apps for the workers so we can find out where they are and who they're in contact with. But at the same time, these measures will result in not necessarily hitting the deadlines for the projects. We don't want to be penalized as the construction industry for doing what we think is the right thing, and that is keeping construction workers and others who visit the site as safe as possible.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Of course, safety is uppermost. I used to work in construction. It's an industry where you're so used to wearing hard hats, maybe ear protectors and, of course, steel-toed work boots. Is everybody amenable to changing compliance, perhaps wearing a mask? I mean, we're used to wearing masks if you're grinding or sanding or insulating, but are people buying into this and accepting of wearing masks or face shields relating to coronavirus?

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** I think so, and I'll let Sandro jump in as well. Although I have to admit that I've heard that on really hot days, it's quite uncomfortable to wear a mask, so the two-metre distance is a preferable thing. I should mention that both Sandro and I are supporting a University of Toronto study about health and safety in the construction industry during the pandemic. The survey that U of T is going to be doing will be launched fairly soon. We're looking to get more feedback from the broader construction sector as to what's been working so far, what hasn't worked and what improvements can be made. That's through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and that was a grant that was provided to the university.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Just further on that, people are wearing masks for the most part. Again, physical distancing is preferred, but they understand the consequences of the virus, of contracting it. But I think what we're really looking at is that if there are things outside of the control of the contractor, the subcontractor or the designer that are causing a delay, we're asking for it not to go to some sort of penalty for the people involved. The province, as a bigger procurer of infrastructure, could set the tone for the rest of the industry, so we'd like those contract provisions put in.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll move on now to the opposition for questions. MPP West.

**Mr. Jamie West:** My question is also for the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario, Andy or Sandro—I don't know who wants to take it. First, I want to compliment you and construction in general on your commitment to health and safety. There has been a real turnaround. You were given some tough odds at the beginning of COVID, and consistently, construction has been doing a good job

of taking care of improving safety, along with everything else in construction, with what's going on with COVID.

In the presentation, you had nine points, and point 9 was about northern mining. I just want to give you the opportunity to expand on that. Being from Sudbury and a mining town, that really caught my ear.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Sure. This is something similar to a deposition I gave on Thursday. The north—when infrastructure is being invested in, the focus seems to be on southern Ontario, but we don't want to underestimate the value of investing in northern Ontario. We think that the Ring of Fire is a great investment opportunity, but of course, the problem is access to that community.

Building these access corridors isn't just about road access to the community. It's really about broadband Internet access. It's around the infrastructure of clean water, transmission lines, energy—all those things that will open up the north to more than just mineral deposits. It will open it up to transportation and it will open up to education. One of the things we strongly believe in is that it's an untapped skill network we should be creating the opportunity to take advantage of, so that they can get good-paying jobs and they can build themselves up as well.

**Mr. Jamie West:** I just think it was worth repeating. I agree with what you're saying, that as you bring, broadly, the infrastructure, as you bring good-paying jobs, it really builds those communities and they build themselves beyond that.

I'm going to hand off—I lost my count—I think to MPP Jennifer French.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP French. You have four minutes remaining.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Four whole minutes. Okay, awesome.

Welcome. It's nice to see you both again. I appreciate the opportunity to actually engage this time. Sandro, I just got to wave last time, so I will look forward to asking some questions.

You had mentioned as one of your points the training and education. We've heard from a number of other presentations the need to attract youth, to not just invite them into the skilled trades and into construction, but to keep them there, and also to support them on that journey. We had heard from the Jane-Finch folks that were talking about community benefits, about programs that would support youth and support community members as they do get into more of these great jobs—supporting them whether it comes to helmets or work boots or what have you. So if you could expand a little bit—we've got a lot of building to do as we continue through this pandemic, and hopefully, one day, out the other side. So how do we attract new talent that otherwise wouldn't find these jobs?

1520

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I'll speak to the design side and then Andy will speak to the construction side. From the design side, one of the things that we recognize is there are a lot of under-represented groups that aren't getting into engineering and architecture and the other design professions. So there's a lot of outreach going on to not only

encourage them to get into the right schools to get trained, but also to get into the industry upon graduation.

There are a lot of unforced biases in industry, unconscious biases. We're working hard as an industry to remove those, to find leadership positions for women and other under-represented groups, visible leadership positions, so that they see themselves in that as a long-term opportunity. We referenced the leakage. What we find is there are a lot of, again, under-represented groups that go into engineering or architecture and then quickly upon graduation go into other industries, and it's a lost, untapped market. We need to do more to do that. I'll let Andy talk to the skilled trades.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Sure. Thank you, Sandro. I'll mention an initiative that was started a little over a year ago called Job Talks. What we've done is create a study that looks at what the motivators are that attract young people into various jobs, not just construction. What we found out was, although the financial aspect is certainly a driver in construction, there are many other pieces of the puzzle that result in a high level of satisfaction, and that's seeing, for example, an end product at the end of the project. You see a finished result—the building or transit project or the sewer and the water main—at the end of that. Working in a team was also another factor that came out as a high satisfaction level, and the change on the job site. Although it's not necessarily changing a lot between different sectors, there is change as the project progresses from P1 until project completion.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** We have created so far 43 videos, and we're aiming to produce 50. They're about a minute and a half, two minutes maximum, and it shows young men and young women explaining the types of jobs they do and why they love what they do. I think this will be something that will really capture young people to consider a career in construction.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Just a final point: I think it would be interesting to build some of the partnerships amongst your members and other groups that we've seen to get into racialized and marginalized communities, to introduce those videos and these different strategies and reach further than we have in the past. I think there are some real opportunities there. Thank you very much for the work you're doing.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. Perfect. We'll move on to independent members now. MPP Schreiner.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thanks to both groups of presenters for bringing valuable information today. My first question is actually going to be directed at both of you, but I think I'll start with Mr. Kelly first and then move over to the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario.

Both of your presentations talked about the importance of broadband. We've had many presenters come to committee talking about the importance of broadband infrastructure. I know both the provincial and federal government have made funding announcements but, Mr. Kelly, do you think that the funding that's been put on the table

by both levels of government is enough to actually build out the kind of broadband infrastructure we need—urban, rural, remote, north, south, east, west—all across the province?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Thank you for the question. For us, we put in the presentation that we needed about \$100 million or more in investment dollars. The challenge we have, again, is that we are a very rural community, so the typical providers are not interested in moving forward. It's difficult for them to have a business case when you're really just trying to connect a few users. They have good business cases both Chatham-centric and also in Wallaceburg and maybe in some of the smaller communities. We are a rural community, but one that has business models moving—for example, with farmers—very quickly.

We feel that for our own sustainability long-term we need to connect those rural areas. In order to do that, the providers need to have some help to do that. Our own municipality has put forward \$6.5 million just to try to get them to move forward. In return for that, we're looking for some enhanced service and maybe some service for the municipalities. It's a very important initiative and certainly the way that all business is moving, and it's critical for Chatham-Kent. Thank you.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Just before I go to Sandro or Andy, to deliver in Chatham-Kent totals \$100 million, whether it's public or private investment. Is that correct, from your statement?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Yes, we're looking at at least \$100 million just to service Chatham-Kent, and that's just the main tracks.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Gotcha. I just want to go over to either Sandro or Andy. Does either one of you want to talk about whether you think there's enough money on the table to actually connect up the province?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I'll speak to it. It's something we've studied. The short answer is no, but I don't know if you will ever have enough money to really understand how much we need to invest in broadband Internet. A similar project of this scale and nature is what the federal government did to build the CBC across the country. That was an opportunity to connect communities, but that was one-way communication. Broadband is two-way communication, and it's not just communication; it's an opportunity for education. It's an opportunity to—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** —create new opportunities, new educational opportunities, new economic opportunities in these regions. The challenge, similar to—you talk about the electrical autonomous vehicle network. It's not the last mile; it's the last 20 miles. You can build these trunks, and then it's the 20 miles to the various communities and the outreach communities. It's going to be a huge investment, and it's not something you can do overnight, but certainly it's something that requires investment of a huge proportion, so a three-way partnership between private, province and federal governments.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Great. Thanks for that. The question directed back at you is around climate resiliency.

Again, our friend from Chatham-Kent talked about the challenges they're facing with climate resiliency. Can you maybe just give us a bit of what kind of infrastructure investments the province needs to make, whether it's shoreline erosion or flooding etc., that it's going to take to protect our communities and individual households as well?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Again, I'll speak to the design side. Maybe Andy wants to speak to the construction side of things. I think communities and infrastructure need to be designed to be resilient to the ongoing changes of climate. You have more severe weather patterns, which is causing more erosion, not just along the shorelines, but in buildings. You need buildings that can withstand a 100-year storm every 25 years instead of every 100 years. Again, I'll speak to the engineering side. I know that it's not being taught in the schools, and Ontario engineers don't have mandatory professional development. So very few of them are actually learning this as well, as an ongoing skill. Our organization joined the Canada green building alliance to really start to understand what—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** —the challenges are for the design community so that we can start to re-skill them to start to build more resilience. Andy?

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Thank you for that question, MPP Schreiner. What we're seeing compared to even 10 years ago is that the use of sensors within municipal and other types of infrastructure is really growing. If we're looking at a flex on a bridge or if a stormwater pond is getting too full or a sediment is rising in it or there are leak detection sensors, there are drones that are going by utility corridors—I think that will be a good way for us to measure what's happening with our infrastructure and to keep on top of it. It's an asset management approach and an ongoing approach to remaining more resilient. There's lots we could talk about on that but I know I have no more time.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** You can use the rest of it until he cuts you off.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid I'm going to step in and cut you off right now.

We'll move to the government side for a second round. Mr. Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here today and for your presentations. I think investing in infrastructure is important to the economy overall, but it's particularly important when it comes to talk of economic recovery. Certainly infrastructure doesn't get built without the skilled trades to do that. You touched on some interesting ideas on how we can narrow that skills gap.

**1530**

It was very interesting to hear you, Mr. Manahan, talk about that completed project look first, to influence others to get into the trade. Last time you presented, I think you mentioned how getting rid of streaming in our education system should also help. What are some of the other measures that we can take to narrow that skilled trades

gap? This is a question for anybody from the CDAO, whether it's Mr. Perruzza or—

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Andy, go ahead.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Unfortunately, I couldn't hear the question very well, so—

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Let me try that again. How do we narrow the skilled trades gap? I was a little far from the mike.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** On the skilled trades gap, I should say that our particular organization works very closely with the labour sector, with construction unions. We have joint labour-management training facilities to ensure that the skill level is kept up to date.

I'll give you an example again—I've used it before—going back to the early 1990s, when the housing sector was basically in a recessionary period, but there was the building of the Highway 407 corridor. Some of those workers in residential were retrained and re-skilled to be able to do road-building-type work, and so that type of flexibility and ability for this sort of workforce to adapt to the situation, I think, is really important, so that we are nimble and ready to move wherever the sector is busiest.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I'm going to add to that, as well. In addition, a lot of education is done at the student and at the worker or potential worker, but I think a lot of education also has to go to the parents. A skilled trades job is actually a very lucrative job. It's a well-respected job. I'm telling anyone who's interested in skilled trades to become an elevator technician. Within three years of graduating and getting your licence, you'll be making about \$100,000 as an elevator technician. It's a place where you can actually make a really good living—not a good living, a really good living.

But I also want to address the engineering side, the design side. There is a talent gap, as well, a skills gap on the engineering side. I spoke about it as well on Thursday. Again, I'm going to re-emphasize the point I made there: Without engineers designing the infrastructure, it doesn't matter how many skilled trades you have; without the design side, you can't build it. Not just this government, but all governments always ignore the engineering side and the design side, but there is a significant need that needs to be addressed there, as well.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Well, thank you, gentlemen. That's very insightful, and I appreciate that talk about quick adaptability to the changing circumstances, as well as the education side. Certainly that stigma that exists with the skilled trades is something that we absolutely have to work on breaking down. As we know, the times have changed since the early 1990s here in Ontario. For example, in Willowdale, which is 53% visible minorities in my constituents, that stigma is something that we have to tackle.

But there's also another challenge that I'm hoping you can discuss with me here today. I can't tell you how many times I've had a taxi driver, Uber driver or pizza delivery guy tell me that back in Iran they were in fact a mechanical engineer, or they were in an industry that we really desperately need serviced here. I'm wondering what the appetite would be amongst your members about looking at

the foreign accreditation piece here in the province of Ontario as a solution to narrowing that gap, as well.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** The organization I'm CEO of, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, is a member organization for engineers, and one of the programs that we have, which is funded by the province and the federal government, is a bridging program to help internationally trained engineers get the experience to apply for their licence. We also have a licensing process for internationally educated engineers. It's something that we support out of our offices at Yonge and Sheppard in Willowdale. We've helped hundreds of engineers from foreign countries get trained and get licensed here in Ontario. We'll continue to do so, and I'll reach out to you directly to share the program and where it can be improved.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Please do. My office is just a few hundred metres from Yonge and Sheppard, so I'm looking forward to that.

How much time do I have there, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute and 30.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** One minute—and then also in our offline conversations maybe eventually we can have that discussion around the safety piece as well, when it comes to accreditation. I know that you work with, as you said, many organizations in various sectors as well, so that will be a very important piece to these as we move forward.

Thank you for appearing. I know a minute is not enough time to expand on that, but looking forward to further conversations.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** If I can just add one thing on that, construction workers from foreign countries often don't meet the points criteria; for example, they may not have completed high school. I think we need to recognize that if someone has a certain skilled trade set—they're a mason or a plumber or a carpenter—there should be allowances, especially when there are shortages. We found, for the most part, other than right now and maybe it's not as busy as it used to be, that we can absorb these workers very quickly. That's another important thing to work with the federal government on.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. We'll move now to the opposition for questions. MPP Lindo.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** I have one question for Mr. Kelly and another question for the CDAO. I'm actually going to start with the CDAO, because I just said it. One of the interesting things about the skills gap that I'm hearing locally—I'm out in Kitchener Centre—is that engineers and architects also design safety hubs for people, and people don't realize that sometimes it's in the design of communities that you can actually address the root cause of safety, belonging—things that have actually been called for in the broader community. I'm wondering if you can just speak a little bit about the importance of investing in that, because I actually think that that's another piece that will probably—when you folks are putting out your videos and such, trying to get more people

engaged, that will speak to marginalized communities who are trying to find alternative ways to stay safe in the community.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** One of the things that we do to attract more people to the profession is that we don't talk about the technical side of engineering; we talk about the community side of engineering and the social side of engineering; how engineers build communities, but safe communities. When we talk about a bridge, for example, we don't talk about the stability of a bridge; we talk about how bridges connect communities and bring people together. We found that that has been a tremendous opportunity to encourage people to come into the profession.

One thing too that this pandemic has demonstrated is what engineers, architects and skilled tradespeople do in providing pandemic-proof communities. The way we build communities, moving forward, is going to be much, much different, because this pandemic won't be the last pandemic that we face in our lifetime.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much for that, because I know in some of the earlier conversations that we've had today—we've been talking to folks at Jane and Finch, for instance, who have been saying that they want to find ways to better engage with the professionals so that they can ensure that the needs of their particular communities are taken into consideration. We know from some of the mapping of how the pandemic has impacted communities, that Jane and Finch has a high COVID rate because a lot of their homes are much closer and you can't isolate. All of that kind of stuff needs to be taken into consideration moving forward. So thank you for that.

I'm going to switch gears over to Mr. Kelly. You had mentioned the need for renovations of the civic centre. You were saying that one of the bigger issues is that it's an older building, and trying to meet the accessibility needs is something that you are now having to grapple with, while you're dealing with some of the emergency situations that are coming your way during the pandemic etc.

I've been sitting on the committee for a couple of months now, and we keep hearing it, no matter which sector we hear from, that these sectors aren't separate; they are interconnected. It's like a web of investments that needs to happen in order to provide the supports that municipalities, for instance, are needing. So I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit about the importance of the province stepping up with financial support for the AODA—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** —the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and whether or not, if there was actually funding available on that side of the government, that would be able to address some of the needs that you're finding with something as important as renovating the civic centre.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question. First of all, it was built in 1977. It was built based on the building code of 1977. Any type of renovation that we would like to do is all deemed to be termed an extensive or a major renovation. As a result, we have to bring it

up to 2020 accessibility standards, which are quite different from 1977. When you look at the cost to do that, it's something that everybody would like to do but the cost is significant in order to do that. It's some major reconstructions. As a result, I have now presented to our council three times to get this work done, and it's been declined. They're all very supportive of AODA, accessibility and age-friendliness, but the nature of the work and the scope—and the bottom line is the expense; it's just unaffordable. As a result, it doesn't get done.

**1540**

Something along those lines would be extremely beneficial to us. It not only would make our building more accessible for all; it would also help us with overall green energy and efficiency of the building. That would be a very wise investment for everyone moving forward. I really appreciate the question. Thank you.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much.

Chair, how much time do we have?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** You have one minute remaining.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Oh, one minute. I'm actually going to pass it over to MPP French. I can't see if they are still there. Are they there?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP French is here. She's giving the thumbs up. MPP French, over to you.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Perfect.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you very much. My question is for Mr. Kelly. You had talked about the importance of broadband. That's definitely something that I don't think you need to explain the importance of. We have been hearing that for years. The government did leave almost \$32 million in broadband spending basically on the table, according to the FAO report, and the Minister of Infrastructure talked about that a lot of the spending will depend on partnerships in business and whatnot. What do you need from this government, and would you be able to wait for business investment in your community for broadband?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** We would like to see some type of funding assistance. Certainly, we're very fortunate in Chatham-Kent, where we have actually a provider here that's local. They want to invest in Chatham-Kent. They're willing to make that investment. But again—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I'm afraid I have to cut you off.

We're going to our last round of questions from our independent members. Our first question goes to MPP Schreiner.

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Oh, MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Yes.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Okay.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thanks, Chair. MPP Schreiner, I will pass it off to you.

I actually would like you to just continue your sentence there that you were speaking to with MPP French's question.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Thank you. The situation even lies with our local provider here. They're called TekSavvy. They're not as big as Bell, but they do offer competition. I think that's very much needed in the market for broadband. They're prepared to make some of these investments into the rural areas, but they can't get the business case either, so they're looking at some type of subsidy as well.

As I said, we, as a municipality, stepped up. We took taxpayer dollars and put it aside to help them with it. It would be just a monumental feat if we could get something similar from the government as well to help with this. This will allow us with improved connectivity across and all the benefits we've talked about previously. It just comes down to investment and a business case and return on the investment.

This is a case where I think it's government's role to step in. As a municipality, we have. We're just looking for some support as well from the province to do that. Thank you.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Okay, that's great. I'm wondering if you could just talk a little bit about how—you've got a particular expertise in large-scale fabrication and that semi-skilled area, which is actually, in terms of quality and output, amongst the best in North America. How can we continue to support the great work that's happening there, considering the proximity, as well, to some of that deep-water port access, once those types of markets open up again? That's for Thomas Kelly.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Yes, I'm just trying to focus on where exactly you could help us the most. We do have a lot of expertise here, particularly. The construction industry talked about the shortages. That's my job, really. We spend close to \$70 million per year in construction projects. We know that it's becoming more and more of an issue for the construction companies to get people engaged. I fully agree with the construction industry: It would be extremely beneficial to invest in training and encouragement of young people to get in that market, because for me, what it does is that it gives us greater flexibility, more competition in the construction industry, and when we do that, we get better prices as well.

Right now, the demand is exceeding the supply, so we're all accomplishing less as a result. So anything the government could do in that regard would be very helpful.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Let's move over to Sandro and Andy to talk about how to attract more people to those amazing jobs and opportunities, because I think that when it comes to women, under-represented groups, Indigenous people, Black people, people of colour, there seems to be—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** —the need, but the match isn't as strong. What more can we do in those areas?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I'll speak to it. This is something that our organization, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, focuses a lot of our energies on, trying to get under-represented groups into engineering, and in leadership positions as well. We hold a conference every year in Ottawa and we get upwards of 800 people

involved, and what we find works best is, again, having representatives from these groups who are in the industry share what they're doing.

For example, my chair this year is a young Black woman. She's up there talking about her struggles coming over from Trinidad and going into the profession, but how people stepped up and helped her, and to look for those allies and mentors. So she talked about it, but then that follows up by having a business owner who then says, "And we want people like you in our company," so here's what we're doing in our company to remove these barriers that we talked about.

She talks about the barriers that exist, so it's an education of the employers to understand what barriers exist and the employers' responsibility to remove those. Then we have business leaders who do that and say, "Here's what we've done." They do it because they want to attract the best talent available. That's something that has worked for us, that kind of progression, and Andy will talk around the skilled trades and what we're doing to get more people from under-represented groups in skilled trades.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Good to see you, Andy.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Good to see you. Just so everyone knows, there might be some favouritism here; MPP Hunter is my local MPP in the Guildwood riding.

I should just add that when I was talking about the Job Talks videos earlier, when we're complete, we will have about 50% from women in construction and 50% young men in construction telling their stories. We did our darnedest to make sure everyone—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** —was equally represented. I think women in particular have a certain aptitude. They're great team players and they will be very helpful on the construction site.

I hate to raise it, but I was reading this media piece last Friday, and I won't say which sector, but let's just say a certain dinosaur was talking about the multiplier effects of construction and used this very unfortunate quote that said, "And then their wives will be able to afford to go to the salon." A lot of us were just knocking our heads against the brick wall, saying, "Get with the 21st century. That's not what we're about." Sometimes we do have these challenges out there.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Definitely.

I don't know, MPP Schreiner, if there is any time to—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid not. We've got two seconds remaining.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Andy answered it.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Okay. That's great. Thank you.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much to all of our presenters from this round. We're going to have to take a short recess, perhaps two minutes, as none of our next witnesses have arrived as yet.

**The Clerk pro tem (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** We'll need five, at least.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Okay. We'll make it a five-minute recess. We'll be back shortly. Thanks, everyone.

*The committee recessed from 1549 to 1600.*

**GUELPH COALITION  
FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION  
ACB NETWORK WATERLOO REGION  
COUNTY OF RENFREW, PEMBROKE**

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Okay. Hi, everyone. We're going to get started again. Some of our witnesses have joined us, so we're going to start with the Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation. If you can start by stating your name for Hansard, you will then have seven minutes to present. We'll give you a one-minute warning. Over to you.

Oh, we just need you to unmute.

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Thanks.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** There we go, perfect. We've got you now.

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Thanks. I am Mike Darmon. Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am vice-president of the Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation, or as we like to call it, GCAT. GCAT is a non-profit volunteer organization with 300 members and a great deal more subscribers to our newsletter. GCAT's mission is to increase the quantity, quality and safety of active transportation.

I'm sure you will hear many great arguments today from active transportation advocates on why you should recommend funding for active transportation infrastructure to help stimulate the economy in Ontario. I will try to put a more city-of-Guelph emphasis on why this makes sense with a local example, and also include a broader international example.

You may have heard through the media about the success of our downtown dining district. Our mayor, Cam Guthrie, who is also the chair of LUMCO, the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, introduced a motion to city council to close a large area of our downtown to traffic and create an amazing people-friendly area to dine and shop in safely while also allowing much more physical distancing. This allowed businesses to expand onto the sidewalks and streets and create larger spaces for patios, much like you see in successful, desirable destinations all over the world. I also know that our MPP, Mike Schreiner, was a participant in the mayor's table for COVID economic recovery and is a big supporter of this initiative.

The pilot was supposed to be just one weekend and was approved by city council and quickly implemented with little red tape for businesses. City staff also played an important role in rolling out the plan very quickly. It was so successful that the downtown business association recommended it to be kept open all week until the end of summer. It's wonderful seeing families finally being able to enjoy a meal and drink safely outside.

This initiative helps our local small businesses survive, especially those hardest hit by COVID-19. Although it can

be relatively inexpensive to implement, support from government for infrastructure like signage and separators, including planters to make the area attractive, could also boost local tourism. This will help that industry with an emphasis on local rather than international tourism, but hopefully international post-COVID, too. We were one of the first large cities in Ontario implementing the plan and many others have followed suit.

I have another story to relate to you which drives home this point. I met a young couple from London, Ontario, while I was biking near our downtown recently. They had come to Guelph to ride from Guelph to Goderich on the Guelph-to-Goderich rail trail. This former CP railway is now a 127-kilometer linear active transportation trail and includes the ridings of Guelph, Wellington-Halton Hills, Kitchener-Conestoga, Perth-Wellington and Huron-Bruce. This is how this couple spends their spare time and holidays: looking for destinations that support active transportation and have attractive downtowns with great local food, drink and accommodations. I encountered them riding through our dining district, and they were very excited and so impressed that they wanted me to join them for a meal at a local craft brewery on their return. GCAT supports pedestrian and bike-friendly destinations like this. Studies show that those active transportation users shop and support local at least as and more often than those travelling by car. But a great destination needs more protected infrastructure connecting it to be truly desirable and successful.

I continued our bike ride with my guests, showing them the way to enter the finished section of the trail near the outskirts of Guelph. Some of the ride included safe infrastructure from the official starting point in downtown Guelph, but we reached points where they were missing the important protected sections to truly enjoy the experience and be safe from vehicles. For example, we have a very busy main arterial road at a river bridge that must be crossed to continue on the trail, and a bridge underpass is the solution. Another part of the route was very rough and the paved section needed proper infrastructure. Funding these connections will create employment through infrastructure stimulus funding, support local businesses and build safer communities.

I said goodbye to our guests, reminding them that these sections of the trail further north of Guelph were not passable without detouring onto roads because of missing bridges. Upon returning to Guelph late that next evening, partially due to five flat tire repairs, they loved the experience, although admitting it would be a challenge for those less prepared due to rough sections and missing bridges, making the journey difficult.

Investing in making the Guelph trail a complete, safe experience could have enormous benefits to our economy locally, as more people are looking for biking and walking destinations in Ontario during COVID, but post-COVID, the international travel potential is actually huge. If the infrastructure is in place, small businesses will follow with accommodations and food and drink establishments along the route. I've provided you with some supporting data in your package materials.

COVID has presented an enormous challenge to public health, including physical and mental health. Safe, enjoyable active transportation is a big part of the solution and is recognized as such by many political leaders in the world. In the United Kingdom, the Conservative government of Boris Johnson announced, on July 28 this year, a plan to install thousands of miles of protected bike lanes, which are physical barriers to vehicles instead of the painted line. But he also included other parts of the £2.6-billion plan, including bike riding training, bike repair vouchers to get people on their bikes in good condition, and re-experiencing the joy and benefits of cycling once again. The plan is so comprehensive, in my opinion, we should simply copy it.

There are many references to the enormous savings to the health care system. This is a quote from Boris:

"From helping people get fit and healthy and lowering their risk of illness, to improving air quality and cutting congestion, cycling and walking have a huge role to play in tackling some of the biggest health and environmental challenges that we face."

"But to build a healthier, more active nation, we need the right infrastructure, training and support in place to give people the confidence to travel on two wheels."

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Members of the committee, I hope the ideas I have provided today to improve active transportation will be seriously considered. In conclusion, you are making extremely important recommendations to our government, which will hopefully lead us down the path out of the devastating effects of COVID-19. The path I have suggested will hopefully help more of us be on a protected active transportation path to a more prosperous, safe, healthy and sustainable future while also addressing our government's climate change goals. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll move on next to—

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Well, we seem to be missing our other presenter, so I think we'll move straight into questioning. We will start with the opposition side for questioning. I will go to MPP Lindo.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much, Chair. I wasn't sure who was supposed to go first.

Thank you so much for your presentation. I'm also the MPP for Kitchener Centre, and we've been hearing a lot of the support for infrastructure for cycling etc. and more active living spaces.

One of the pieces that I think is really important—I've been on this committee for the last few months, so I find myself making connections between sectors and some of the broader conversations that we're having in the committee around what you need to stimulate the economy long-term—it's the investment in innovation. And so, as you were talking about some of the investments that you have out your way and the focus on local tourism, but knowing that there's this possibility of global tourists, of having a broader tourist and becoming more attractive to the broader community—I'm wondering if you can

speak a little bit more about that. The government will have to weigh pros and cons of every investment that they have, but I keep hearing the same thing: that we've got to think more innovatively, we've got to think more green, and that that's actually bringing a lot of people out. So I'd just like to hear your comments on some of that,

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Yes, I hear you, exactly. When I travel myself, for instance, I always look for the same sorts of destinations. For instance, I've always wanted to travel to France and Italy and other great places—to go on the Camino, for instance; you may have heard about it. It's an extremely long walkway, but it has all these accommodations. I think it's roughly every five kilometres. So no matter where you stop or you run out of energy, for instance, there will be a beautiful place to stay and have food and drink waiting for you, basically. The tourism is huge there. It's actually crowded, sometimes, it's so popular.

**1610**

Our Guelph to Goderich trail, the potential there is enormous, because right now, they actually are finishing the trail from Goderich on towards Guelph, but Guelph, for instance, has some pretty bad connections [*inaudible*] bridges off in this trail, kind of in the centre of it, which have been taken out over the years because it was an old railroad bridge. It will take a fair amount of money to actually put these bridges back in, but once it's complete, then all of a sudden you'll see these other businesses start to go in there that can see the potential. So this is the whole big-picture thing. It will take time, but the investment will be a very smart investment.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** I'd like to sort of carry on with that idea. I think, as we're talking about infrastructure projects, we're often thinking about what we need immediately, but we've had a lot of people come and speak to us today and say that we've got to start thinking long-term. We've got to start thinking about ways to invest in infrastructure projects that will take advantage of what we need to do to stimulate the local economy, but they'll have that opportunity to do more than that. One of the other pieces that you've just brought up that I think is really important for us to put together is the possibility for new, smaller businesses like little restaurants etc. that can creep up, that can pop up there.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** We're hearing that there are a lot of businesses that are having to close due to COVID, but this becomes this opportunity for them to rethink and reimagine where their location might be. I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit more to that for me.

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Well, for instance, we don't have to go to a different country. I've been in Montreal, where they have the Lachine Canal trail system. I remember, even years ago, it was very popular there. They had a little local brewery, for instance, just right off the trail. I've been in Picton township recently too. There's a rail trail there where they have wineries just off the trail. In fact, the trail is connected to these things. It's really pleasant. Then you can find bed and breakfasts that are close. Unfortunately,

the Guelph to Goderich one, for instance, has a severe lack of that sort of small business. That's why the potential is huge. But people are hearing about it more, like that couple I was telling you about from London; they came here just for that. They heard about this thing and really wanted to do it.

I spent some time near Algonquin a couple of years ago, going to an eco lodge. Again, it was the same sort of thing: People were coming from all over the world to get this Canadian experience of the fall colours and everything like that, and they paid a lot of money for it. I got a big discount, actually, on the room, but they were paying mega-bucks just to see that sort of thing. People in the world look for different experiences, and Canada has huge amounts of opportunity for that.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** I think that that's one of those moments where you realize that we can think local, but our local lens sort of starts to grow. I know people out in Kitchener, if they start to hear that there are more of these bike trails and the infrastructure is there and present in Guelph, then you'll all of a sudden have them and whoever they have visiting with them wanting to go to Guelph to do some of that, and vice versa. I keep looking at Mike because we're neighbours. But I just think that it's really, really important for the committee to be hearing that and see the possibility in all of this.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** I would like to send it over to MPP French, if she'd like to jump in.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I would like to jump in. I'll just continue with that, about the potential being huge. We're seeing all sorts of neat changes around the province and on our roadways, whether it's downtown Toronto or in communities like your example, creating patio space, shopping space, closing streets and whatnot. How do we ensure that some of these temporary changes can continue? Is there data being kept by anyone that you're aware of to help make the case that this should continue, going forward—the ones that can?

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Well, I know, the downtown business association is actually looking very closely at this situation in Guelph, for instance, the downtown thing. There was some concern, of course—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid I'll have to cut you off. Perhaps you can finish in the next round.

Just a heads-up, folks: We're playing fast and nimble today at finance committee. We're going to finish this round of questioning with the independents and the government, and then our next two presenters have arrived, so we'll hear from them before the second round of questioning. I'll go now to our independent members, and I imagine that MPP Schreiner might have a few questions.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thank you, Chair, and thanks, Mike and Ted, for coming in today. I want to pick up where MPP French left off, because I know that there was some initial concern from the downtown business association that cutting off parts of downtown to cars would hurt

businesses, particularly those outside of restaurants, bars, pubs and that type of thing. But after a couple of weekends, that completely shifted and now this has been made permanent. Mike, can you talk a bit about how closing off the downtown to cars has affected the businesses in general, and how the Downtown Guelph Business Association has responded?

I think you're on mute.

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** I've heard that earlier on in the pilot, there were some complaints from some business owners who were relying totally on takeout. But I was just down there again last week, actually, getting a meal, and I talked to the server. All of a sudden, these people who were complaining and wanting to go back to cars running through the centre of downtown just had their best week ever. This is anecdotal, of course. I can't confirm that number yet. But again, you give a pilot enough time and then it proves out, usually, working better for the local business. I think if we had gone right back to opening up to cars again, it would have ruined this experience; there's a lot of noise from cars.

I was just in Elora recently and actually had an experience exactly like that. Elora in Ontario has their downtown closed on weekends. The first time I went it was pure joy. There were kids playing in the streets and there was lots of people-watching going on. I went back a second time during a weekday, the exact same restaurant, great meal, but the experience was ruined by cars and trucks racing by. Business, you could see, was far less. So I think that's the kind of point we need to make, that we need to keep these areas pedestrian-only. It just works.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Go ahead, Ted, if you want to add to that.

**Mr. Ted Bangay:** I'm Ted Bangay. I'm also on the board of GCAT. What I wanted to add is that this is a new program—I mean, it's being described as a pilot—and in its newness, this means there's not a great deal of experience with it, and so of course there are going to be some problems—I'm going to call them micro-problems—that arise. We need to give these things time, and we need to tackle these problems with good, creative solutions without throwing out the whole concept. I think that's a process that Guelph is going through. Indeed, other communities, I'm sure, are going through the same kind of thing. We need to solve the problems as they come up. I think it's good practice, at the municipal level, particularly, to have some experience of being agile in this way. That's it. Thank you.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thanks. I just wanted to go back to Mike for a bit about the UK example, because it's an incredibly ambitious proposal that you talked about. What's motivating the UK government to make such a substantial infrastructure investment in active transportation?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** There we go. I think it's mainly health. Health costs are skyrocketing, and during COVID, especially, people have been inactive. We've got to get people moving around more. I think they see the enormous

benefits to their health care system by getting people back on bikes and walking to places instead of taking their cars everywhere. I think that's their biggest factor.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Go ahead, Ted.

**Mr. Ted Bangay:** Yes, thanks. When I was preparing for this, I came across a study from 2006 in Toronto that said, given the level of walking and cycling in the city at that time, the estimate was that 120 fewer deaths took place just from general health improvement from cycling and walking. Of course, that's a health care cost avoidance when you're not losing 120 people a year, and it was estimated to be between \$110 million and \$160 million for that year.

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**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** In the remaining time we have, I just want to talk a bit about equity issues, because not everyone can afford to own a car. I've been seeing people access downtown who maybe normally wouldn't be able to access downtown, because more opportunities—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** —have opened for them. Can you maybe just speak to some of the equity issues around active transportation in our community?

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Can you hear me?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Yes.

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Well, I think it's mainly a cost thing. The cost of owning a bicycle—you can practically pick a bicycle up almost free. In fact, there are some places that actually do offer them free to people who are on low incomes. Compared to owning a car, there's absolutely no comparison. It's even cheaper than using transit. I think that's a big part of the equity thing: It's accessible to anybody, really.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** One of the biggest barriers a lot of people cite with cycling is just safety, so can you maybe talk about infrastructure investments to address safety concerns?

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Well, I think we have to make sure everybody understands the difference between a painted line and a protected—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. I'm sorry, I'm going to have to cut you off. We're going to move to the government, now, for questions. MPP Piccini?

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to our presenters here today. For my first question, I'm going to speak to Ted and Mike. I know we've spoken at length on the benefits from an equity perspective of people biking—certainly, no doubt. You'll have to forgive me; I represent a rural riding where it's less frequent than the downtown cores. Nonetheless, we've had pedestrian-friendly days in Cobourg. Last weekend we had people out on patios and walking the downtown core, and I saw many bikers.

But I think that in any conversation, we also benefit from really strong parking policy so folks can come off the 401 and park. Can you speak to any strategy for pedestrian-friendly needs to be met with an equally strong strategy for parking? In my area, it's not just a question of getting

people from the suburbs to downtown; we take people off the 401. We have got thousands of people every day we can draw from to spend a day by the Ganaraska River or by the lake, so we need to have parking-friendly areas. If someone's taking the Highway 2 route and they can't pull over, then they're just not going to shop. That's been met with local studies by our chambers and our DBIAs, hence sometimes the skepticism we see here for pushes to remove that.

Speak to me about, in your experience, what we can do that's car-friendly, that gets people to park and then gets them on foot and gets them spending, and is all within an easy-to-understand plan.

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Go ahead, Ted.

**Mr. Ted Bangay:** With respect, we're kind of out of our expertise area there. We're representing the Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation, and we advocate for people to try and use their vehicles less. I mean, I have two cars parked in my driveway and I drive—there are times when I need to drive, because I have things to carry or distances are too great—but we're really here to advocate for active transportation.

Now, having said that, in Guelph, our mayor, Cam Guthrie, floated the possibility of a car-free downtown at his annual state of the city address. Of course, there was the big question about how people are going to get downtown for it to be enjoyed by pedestrians and so on. The model that he's suggesting is to take advantage of perimeter parking garages that the city invested in some years ago, one of them fairly recently, actually. They're in a triangular arrangement surrounding the core of the downtown. So the model is those people would drive to the edges of the downtown, get out of their cars and then enjoy a pedestrian experience.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Yes, and I understand you're here for Guelph; I get that and respect it. It won't be too long before some areas of my community are approaching the size of Guelph, hence why I'm asking you these questions. I humbly would say, we're speaking here before the finance committee for the province of Ontario.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Mr. David Piccini:** I'm a member, as are many, from a rural area. A presenter earlier had suggested, "Well, if you're biking"—people just can't bike from Ottawa to Toronto to Port Hope and Cobourg. I mean, we do have cyclist groups, and they're very much welcome, but it's not an either/or. I think it has got to be met with an active conversation. We cannot have this conversation without car-friendly measures for parking, and easily, for communities like mine, that get them off the highway in a car and into an area where they can park and then get on foot and spend, spend, spend, and buy local out here. That's just what I'm trying to flesh out there.

Mike?

**Mr. Mike Darmon:** Yes, I can also add a little bit to Ted's mention of our brand new parkade. It also has secure bike parking inside as well. So if anybody is actually able to get to Guelph—on a train for instance, and we're lucky again in Guelph to have GO and Via service right in downtown Guelph. I mean, what better way to do it?

Now, if you had increased capacity on some of these trains to carry more bikes—as you know in Holland and other places where it gets so popular, they have carloads or box loads of these bicyclists moving everywhere and monster bike parkades. The latest one that opened up in Holland was, I think, a 12,500 capacity for bikes alone.

But again, back to your point about the parkades, we're just lucky. I'm not sure in a city like yours how long it will take to get a parkade, and I totally understand you need a parking space somewhere when you get into town.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Okay. Thank you both. I appreciate the presentation.

Chair, I believe I'll turn things over to my colleague MPP Skelly.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Okay. MPP Skelly, there's a minute remaining.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Sorry, Chair. I think I will just wait. I will just wait until the next round—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Sounds good. Thank you.

Now what we're going to do: We're going to hear from our next two presenters, and then we'll do our second round of questioning.

I'll go back now to the ACB Network Waterloo Region. If you can please state your name for Hansard, then you will have seven minutes to present. I'll give you a one-minute warning before the end. Over to you.

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** Thank you. Can everyone hear me?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Yes.

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** All right, then. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. Good afternoon. I'm Ruth Cameron. I'm the executive director of ACCKWA, which is the AIDS committee in the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo area, where I provide health and social services to communities that are living with or vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections, as well as doing harm reduction work.

In addition to that, I'm an advisory committee member for the African, Caribbean and Black Network of Waterloo Region. So I'm here to speak on needs identified for Black, African and Caribbean communities in Waterloo region, as well as to speak to some requests that the network has made with regard to a reinvestment in strategic investments that will help our communities.

Where I would like to start off today is with talking about some of the inequalities that were already occurring within African, Caribbean and Black communities prior to the COVID pandemic starting. Our ongoing reality within Black communities involves situations where Black children are overrepresented at five times their representation in Toronto's population with regard to our children's aid or child welfare system.

It involves an economic reality where the unemployment rate for Black women prior to COVID was 11%, 4% higher than the general population, as well as the fact that Black women earn 37% less than white men and 15% less than white women in the Canadian economy. We have a quarter of African Canadian women living below the

poverty line, compared to 6% of their white counterparts, and a third of Canadian children of Caribbean heritage and almost half of continental African children living in poverty, compared to 18% of white Canadian children.

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Now, you can understand that, all of this, in addition to other disparities in our incarceration and justice systems, other disparities such as carding at three to four times the rate of the general public, there were already significant social and health disparities happening for African, Caribbean and Black communities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data that we have out of Toronto says that, at this point, 83% of those infected within Toronto when it comes to COVID are Black, Indigenous and people of colour and 51% are lower-income individuals. We can see that we have real disparities happening at this time that were pre-existing to the pandemic and have now become further exacerbated during the pandemic.

Here in Waterloo region, some preliminary analysis done by public health by geographic area, by census tract within the region, is suggesting that despite the concentrated outbreaks that did happen in our long-term-care system, we also have disparities happening along these same lines with regard to income, race and ethnicity when we look at how COVID occurred across our region.

What I think all of this does is to build the case that we really need to look at a just recovery that involves strategic investment in our communities with regard to infrastructure and with regard to a reinvestment and reallocation of funds into social and health services to ensure a more equitable outcome, as far as people being able to survive during this pandemic, as well as recovery out of this pandemic.

What I would like to further touch on today are some requests made by the African, Caribbean and Black Network. Rather recently, in the early part of June, we were part of organizing one of the largest Black Lives Matter solidarity marches within Canada. Out of that march there were specific requests made for reinvestment and reallocation of funding through taking \$29.3 million, which are the increases that have happened to policing budgets over the past three years, and reinvesting into community and social services; as well as investment directly into communities, looking at things such as community-led organizing, community-led services for disproportionately marginalized and affected communities to make sure that people were receiving equitable access to health care, to social services, and able to access the supports they need during this time of isolation and underemployment and unemployment being exacerbated.

We have asked specifically that there be a concerted effort to reinvest in initiatives that are led by disproportionately impacted communities for those same communities when it comes to delivery of community supports, of health care, of ensuring equitable access to primary care and ensuring that people have the social services and mental health supports they need during this time. When we are talking about this, we are not just talking about one-time strategic investments—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): One minute.

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** —but that there's going to need to be multi-year funding into these disproportionately impacted communities to ensure that they can survive during this time and come out equitably during this period of change and transition and challenge that is affecting their communities more adversely than other communities across the province.

What I'm asking at this time is what the plans are for formalized, structured, multi-year investments that are there not only to stimulate economies but to ensure the cohesion and survival of these disproportionately impacted communities during this time, as we roll into stages of recovery from COVID-19 and the disparities that existed prior to the pandemic.

Thank you very much for your time.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. We'll have to move on to our next presenter now. We have the county of Renfrew. If our presenter could state your name for Hansard before you begin, you will have seven minutes, with a one-minute warning.

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Thank you very much. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Debbie Robinson. I'm the warden of the county of Renfrew. I am going to ask that the CAO be allowed to share his screen. Thank you very much.

A little bit about us: The county of Renfrew is a municipal government, stretching west from Ottawa to the northern tip of historic Algonquin Park. We were founded in 1861. The county of Renfrew is the largest geographical county in Ontario and is made up of 17 municipalities and the city of Pembroke. Renfrew county provides municipal service to approximately 107,000 residents.

Some of the key business sectors that are in our county—a largely rural area, but we do have some business sectors and we have some urban areas: farming, forestry, wood processing, metal manufacturing, aerospace, nuclear science and technology, tourism and, of course, Garrison Petawawa and a number of spinoffs there. Again, the county of Renfrew has a population of approximately 107,000 people, which includes the separated city of Pembroke.

I want to talk about some economic opportunities. COVID has certainly created some opportunities for rural Ontario. The virtual triage and assessment centre that we created—I will talk about that a little bit later on. Active transportation—certainly we're drawing more and more people from the cities and the urban areas. Physical activity and physical distancing are definitely possible through the number of trails that we have, including the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail.

The rural business community: The forestry and lumber industry continued throughout the pandemic. It is an essential service, and it is something that we can certainly continue to grow on as we move forward.

Our goal is to create opportunities as we recover from COVID-19 and create a community that is resilient to future economic disruption. At the county of Renfrew, we are doing a service delivery review. We are doing our part to try to find efficiencies and growth. There are also

opportunities in a number of sectors for economic development. Last year, our growth in the county of Renfrew was 0.1%. Even though we have been traditionally a slow growth area, we are seeing growth from residents wanting to move out of the urban areas and into rural Renfrew county and, I suspect, rural Ontario in general.

Again, we, like most of rural Ontario, are lacking in some areas. We're lacking in infrastructure to continue to attract newcomers to the area and maintain the sustainability. We lack broadband. We lack infrastructure funding. We lack health infrastructure, and we will talk about that in greater detail later on.

The county of Renfrew created an economic task force early on. It was part of our development of property committee. We had representatives from numerous sectors throughout Renfrew county, and we heard from them loud and clear. They wanted us to encourage additional municipal infrastructure projects that were not only funded, but that started sooner rather than later.

We continued and supported a buy-local campaign. We developed a funding program for small businesses. They weren't looking to go into any more debt; they were looking at grants. They wanted debt-free assistance and the development of a regional promotion program. All of those were funded by the county of Renfrew and the city of Pembroke from our unallocated funding of approximately \$250,000, between the county and the city of Pembroke. It tapped us out, but we needed to do what we could to help our business community.

They also were very strong in asking for us to please continue to advocate for broadband expansion opportunities. Buying online, being able to access their customers online and to sell their products online is essential now more than ever. Again, we have a big discrepancy here across the area concerning broadband access. This is information that we really think is important here.

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There has been a significant GTA migration. The sales of cottages in our area are unprecedented right now. We welcome this growth, but we need to improve our infrastructure. The growth is going to put a significant demand on our health care system and on broadband access and reliability.

The next slide just talks again about people fleeing the GTA area. We want people to come here. This is an opportunity for us to grow. We have a wonderful place to live, work and play, but we're going to need some assistance.

I'm just going to move on a little bit quicker here, because I'm aware of my time limit. Broadband demand, broadband service, dependable service is now critical infrastructure, just as roads and bridges were years ago.

I also want to talk a little bit about the infrastructure projects. Again, if you want to get your economy moving, construction is going to do that. I bring your attention to the fact that in the county of Renfrew, there are 17 municipalities plus the county. We applied for \$73 million in ICIP funding. To date, we've received \$0. In fact, this afternoon we found out that under the green stream, we

were unsuccessful in our request for \$325,000. Again, these are projects that need to happen. We can't afford to do them on our own, but if they're happening, we're going to see some growth.

I'm going to bring your attention to the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre. I'll just call it Renfrew County VTAC for short. As everyone knows, in March, Premier Ford announced that the province wanted municipalities—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** —to set up COVID-19 assessment and testing centres, so we facilitated a group of health care providers to get together. We created Renfrew County VTAC. The idea was for people with COVID symptoms or suspected COVID to call an 800 number and get assistance, but we also had concerns about hospital surge capacity.

Our ERs are clogged with people who do not have a family doctor. Of a population of 107,000, we have 77 primary care physicians who roster approximately 82,500 people, leaving 24,500 people in the county of Renfrew without a doctor. To ensure that hospitals could deal with a possible influx of COVID-19, the VTAC mandate was changed to allow people who did not have a doctor, who could not access a doctor, to call for episodic care. Within days, people who hadn't had access to a primary care physician for years suddenly were getting help. Emergency departments experienced a dramatic drop—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'm sorry. I'm going to have to cut you off. We're going to move back to questioning now, and we'll start with the opposition. I'll go to MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. MPP Lindo won the coin toss last time, so I'm going to start.

Debbie, I'm going to give you the opportunity just to put finishing touches on what you were going to say. That was what I was going to ask you about. I had made a note about the virtual triage and assessment centre that you had wanted to highlight. My question to you will be, what can this government learn from the successes of that, and what do you need to be able to continue with that going forward? And then I will hand the rest of the time to MPP Lindo.

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** All right. Thank you very much for that opportunity.

Just to conclude, VTAC is providing access to patients or people who haven't had access to primary care in years. Anybody who is involved with physician recruitment will know that when a community needs physicians, you're competing with hundreds of communities across the province of Ontario for a very limited number of people.

Right now we have no walk-in clinics in the county of Renfrew and we have very limited transportation opportunities, so what is happening is that you have two choices right now: Either you're sick and you suck it up and hope that you'll get better, or you sit in an emergency room for five, six, seven hours waiting for someone to see you, because there are real emergencies and you don't happen to be one of them.

The other thing is that if you don't get care, you just get sicker. Eventually you get sicker, you call 911, you get a ride to the hospital and you may be to the extent where now you have to be hospitalized, where had you had somebody helping you earlier on, you wouldn't be in hospital. Again, that just makes it hallway medicine. That's another issue. There are people sitting there who, had they had opportunities to have a doctor, could have done much better at that point.

VTAC is really a very efficient, cost-effective health care service. It can be duplicated anywhere that there is a phone system. Anyone involved in family physician recruitment knows that VTAC may not be the answer to physician recruitment, but it is certainly an opportunity to provide primary care for people who do not have it.

Essentially, what has to happen is that the province has to be willing to allow for virtual billing codes. There are physicians and nurse practitioners. Right now, what happens is they get a sessional fee of \$160 an hour during the day, whether they have one patient call them or 10 patients call them, but at least they're guaranteed that they're going to get that funding. There's no problem finding physicians to do this work. There's lots of them out there.

It's providing primary care. It's keeping people out of hospital. It's an opportunity, as well: If you have a loved one at home who needs some care and you're waiting to get into long-term care, for instance, VTAC is an option for you. You call VTAC, you get some advice over the phone and if the physician or the nurse practitioner is not comfortable with it, we send out a community paramedic to go to assess that person right on-site. So it has significant opportunities.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Debbie, I appreciate that. I suppose you wouldn't mind sending the learning from that to the committee and the folks involved in health.

I'm going to hand it over now to MPP Lindo.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Lindo. We have three minutes remaining.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Beautiful. Thank you for all of the presentations. My question is for Ruth. Ruth, it's lovely to see you, and thank you for your presentation. Earlier today, we had folks from Jane and Finch, for instance, who were speaking about the importance of strategic investments—I loved your language around that—for people who were already, pre-COVID, marginalized in a variety of ways, whether it was in education, health care etc.

One of the things that kept coming up—and there have been a couple of presentations that have spoken about this—is the need to strategically invest in community hubs, so that marginalized folks have a place to go where they feel safe, where they can speak about their experiences of racism, for instance, at work and any of that kind of stuff. I know that's a conversation that has been happening within the region as well, not only for Black community members, but also for Indigenous communities. I'm wondering if you can take the time to speak to us about the importance of strategically investing in community hubs and community spaces.

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** Yes, I'd be happy to speak to that. Thank you very much. I think that what we were talking about here when we're talking about these types of strategic investments into community hubs and into community-led services is not only investments in infrastructure that will have a benefit immediately and a clear impact on those communities, but strategic investments that will have a positive economic impact not only for the short-term, but over several years and, quite frankly, generations.

What we're seeing here when we're looking at the statistics that I put forward in the first part of my presentation is structurally and strategically disadvantaged communities, communities that have—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** —experienced disinvestment and were already behind the eight ball prior to this pandemic. Those disparities have increased. Through strategic investments and hubs, we can ensure that a recovery happens across our communities, not just in pockets of our communities, which means that people will then be able to contribute to economic recovery as well. I hope that through an equitable strategy, we could actually speed the recovery that is going to happen out of this current hardship.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Beautiful. Thank you so much for that. I know we're near the end of the time, but I think it's important to have on record the just recovery, the idea that we cannot leave people behind who were marginalized prior as we're starting to look forward and think about ways to better stimulate the economy. So I really do appreciate that.

Chair, how much time do we have?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** A whole seven seconds.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Seven seconds? I'm going to say thank you to Ruth in seven seconds. I'll say it seven times: Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you,

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** There we go. Thank you so much. We'll move on now to the independent members.

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Oh, forgive me. We're going to do a quick attendance check. Could MPP Vanthof please confirm that you're with us and that you are in Ontario?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes, Chair. John Vanthof in Temiskaming Shores, Ontario.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Excellent.

We'll now move on to the independent members, and I see MPP Hunter is ready. Over to you.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I want to say thank you to all of the presenters this afternoon. To the Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation: I really appreciated your presentation and have noted your recommendations that we look to the UK model for a complete system.

**1650**

My question is going to be focused on the ACB Network Waterloo Region. I want to congratulate you on

your efforts on the march. I thought it was a really powerful demonstration of why Black lives do matter, and the concerns systemically that we have to pay attention to at this time and really use this moment to make the changes that we need to make. We can't go back to a pre-COVID reality for people who are Black and Indigenous and who do face these systems that have held back members of the community. I think that your statements are very clearly heard this afternoon.

I represent Scarborough-Guildwood, and it is one of the continued COVID hot spots in Ontario, particularly because we do have inequities that exist in the community. There are simple things like everybody needs to wear a mask. Well, not everybody can access that protective equipment that is needed. We should be funding public health to supply masks to people who are in need of them.

At the same time, we say to self-isolate when you're ill with COVID. There are people who live in very small apartments or accommodations that have zero option of self-isolating when sick and, therefore, the risk is that the virus just continues to circulate. Wherever the virus exists in any part of Ontario, it is a risk for all Ontarians, and it's something that we have to take seriously. So I do appreciate everything that you have brought forward today.

One of the things that I wanted you to expand on was the requirement for investments in social infrastructure and in other types of infrastructure that would really reach into communities that have that need. I have to say, one of the announcements that was made recently by the current government in the midst of the pandemic was a \$500-million investment into prisons and jails. It was surprising to me and it stood out because of the large amount that was invested. But it was also not really something that was being demanded, given that Black and Indigenous people oftentimes are overrepresented in prison populations and are asking for other types of investments in young people, in things like legal aid and in areas that actually break cycles of poverty and marginalization. That's where I would have liked to have seen historic investments being made at this time when there's so much conversation happening around anti-Black racism and the need to invest in groups that have been historically denied.

If you could please just talk a bit about where you see it—I know, there's a \$23-million ask coming out of the march and the coalition, but where do you see those investments being most impactful?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** Thank you. I think that some impactful investments would speak to our current short-term reality, as well as longer legacies of inequality as well. I myself am a health care provider. I run an HIV/AIDS organization that runs five separate, completely unfunded clinics through very creative partnerships in Waterloo region, where these are the only clinics that I would say specifically target Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities that are at heightened risk for HIV, hepatitis C, and other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections.

I'm currently running a primary care clinic, an HIV care clinic, a psychiatric clinic, as well as an STI-testing clinic—and in addition to that, other services—without any operational funding. Something that I like to point out to people is that for every dollar invested in prevention, we save \$15 in care when it comes to HIV alone. For what it costs me to run one staff person is the cost of one person's hepatitis C treatment in Ontario. I can run one of my prevention programs, and I have seven of them—I can probably run one for around four years for the lifetime cost of one person's HIV treatment. My staff interact with over 5,000 unique individuals in over 18,000 interactions annually. We're well worth investing in.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** We are from the same communities that we're serving. Community investments when it comes to COVID and doing strategic investment for recovery—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Ruth Cameron:** —if we invest in those same communities, we invest in Black, Indigenous and other racialized people leading community initiatives for their own communities. You are sponsoring generations of leadership within those communities, who know what their communities need for community safety, health and well-being, and allowing people to move substantially out of poverty. This is the barrier that our communities face because they don't have intergenerational wealth. Those investments will be investments for the future that play out over several generations and have substantial impact on a rapid recovery.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you, Ruth. MPP Blais, I don't know if there's time remaining. I know you wanted to speak to the Renfrew group.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Unfortunately, we only have seven seconds remaining, so we'll have to move on. We'll move to the government for our final round of questioning. I believe we're going to MPP Skelly.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is for Debbie Robinson. Debbie, I know at least one of my colleagues would argue differently, but I still believe that Renfrew county and the Ottawa Valley is God's country. I think it's probably the most beautiful. You talked about the cottage industry starting to really boom in that area, and I can see why. It is truly just a beautiful, beautiful area. I worked there years ago when I was a journalist, and I understand you were a journalist, so we have a little bit in common.

I wanted to talk to you, though, about a few things, beginning with broadband. It is an issue across Ontario, it really is, and especially in rural parts of Ontario. Even though my riding is really just outside of Toronto, it's in the GTHA, we have pockets that are also struggling with decent broadband. Can you talk about the need and where it stands today and if you've made any progress at all in bringing reliable broadband to parts of Renfrew county?

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Thank you very much for that. Yes, we do live in God's country, for sure. At this point, we're making some applications. We have an RFP out

right now, looking to see if we can get something going with one of the telecom groups. But at this point, we haven't seen anything positive coming past us. Definitely, we've also been supportive of EORN over the past little while and their project that they're trying to move forward as well. We have a lot of haves and have-nots in the county of Renfrew. The built-up urban areas have fairly decent high-speed Internet, but you can drive two kilometres down the road and have absolutely none. So it really depends on the area, for sure.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** I was going to say, which parts of your area are struggling for access to broadband?

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Well, there is a map. I believe it was—

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Yes, [inaudible] brought it up.

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Yes. Most of that area is struggling, unfortunately. We have a gap analysis happening as well. We were expecting a report back to the county of Renfrew, I believe, in our August meeting.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Okay. I am going to challenge you, or maybe it's just correct you. You mentioned that you hadn't received any money, the ICIP funding. In reality, I think it was \$220,000 last August for—I'm not sure what the project was for, but I just wanted to share. It was via the [inaudible] streams. Renfrew county did receive some funding for that.

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Okay. I'm just getting a very blank look on the face of the CAO, so I'm not sure where that is. But we'll check that out, if somehow we—

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Okay. I did want to ask you to expand on—you did have a list; I was trying to look at it and it was difficult to read—the infrastructure projects. If you could focus on one particular thing—maybe give me three. What are you highlighting? What are the needs in your area?

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Okay. Roads for sure.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Which roads? Whereabouts? When you say roads, are you talking about widening or—

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Rehab and maintenance of roads. A big issue for us is bridges. For example, we have a bridge project that we've been putting off for some time that's come over budget by, I believe, about \$400,000. We just need to do it. We can't ignore those anymore. So the \$73 million that we applied for, it was county-wide. Some of those are from the county—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Three minutes.

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** —but many of them are from individual municipalities. So unfortunately, I don't have the details at this point as to exactly what some of those projects were. I can certainly get them for you.

**1700**

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Okay. It was interesting; you talked about the need for doctors, and you said, I think, that there's a significant number of residents who don't have access to a family doctor. On the other hand, you said that it isn't difficult to attract family doctors.

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** No, no. It is very difficult.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** It's very difficult to attract—

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Very difficult, yes. One of the hats that I wear is that I am a physician recruiter as well. I've been doing that on and off for about 14 years. There was a gap of about four years when we weren't doing any recruiting in the area, but when I went back to a recruitment fair, I was shocked to see all those communities that were there. In the last 10 years, they're still there, still trying to attract physicians. It is just not possible.

Right now, we know for a fact that we have five physicians who are going to retire in the next two years. That's approximately another 15,000 people who will be added to that unattached patient list. They have no options except showing up at emerg departments, and it's just not a way—they don't get primary care there. They get short-term care, taking nothing away—emergency docs know their stuff, but they're not primary care physicians.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** I see my colleague Dave Piccini wants to ask a question, so I'll let David jump in.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Piccini.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thanks, MPP Skelly. Thank you, Warden Robinson. I appreciate you bringing this up. This rings true infrastructure to my heart. We have similar communities. I'm Northumberland–Peterborough South.

I know you received \$1.3 million in OCIF funding, and the province is now committed to having that discussion in advance. I know many of my CEOs have spoken to me, appreciating the province having those discussions historically much earlier than in previous years.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Mr. David Piccini:** That \$1.3 million—what have you allocated that for for infrastructure and where is the shortfall?

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** Roads and bridges. That's where it was. That's where all of the money went to.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Okay, and specifically what? The asset management plan that the province is now mandating you complete—I'm sure you have a couple of projects. Maybe if you could touch on a few of them that you'd like to see increased funding for or—

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** I just had to get some information from the CAO. This year alone, we have \$20 million going towards our asset management—road and bridge issues, for sure.

**Mr. David Piccini:** No, it's good. I know how important it is to be able to predictably manage assets into the future and hopefully prudently allocate resources and save for that.

**Ms. Debbie Robinson:** We're definitely trying, but we're falling behind. There's no doubt about it. We are falling behind, and we have a very limited tax base to try to bring those funds up to where they're needed.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid that is all of our time for this round. Thank you to our presenters who joined us for this round.

#### MUNICIPALITY OF WEST GREY

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We'll now move into our final round. We only have one presenter this

round, so in consultation with the members of the committee here in the room, what we're going to do is just do one round of questions, 10 minutes each. We don't think we need to do two rounds of questions with one presenter with us.

We will start with a presentation from our stakeholder, the municipality of West Grey. If you can begin by stating your name or names for Hansard, and then you'll have seven minutes for your presentation.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair. My name is Christine Robinson. I am the mayor of the municipality of West Grey.

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Good afternoon, committee. My name is Laura Johnston. I am the chief administrative officer of the municipality of West Grey, and I will be turning it over to Mayor Robinson. Thank you.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Well, good afternoon, Vice-Chair and members of the committee. I'm Christine Robinson, the mayor of West Grey, and as already indicated, with me today is Laura Johnston, our chief administrative officer.

It is an honour to speak with you regarding the state of infrastructure in West Grey and the impacts of COVID-19. The municipality of West Grey declared a state of emergency on March 23 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Operating under a pandemic in a rural community comes with unique challenges. I know you've heard from many municipalities about the impacts of not having reliable broadband.

This pandemic has certainly placed a spotlight on just how essential Internet is for economic continuity, for the social development and education of our youth and for the mental health of our homebound and isolated residents, including our seniors. Broadband is vital to connecting rural Ontario and creating a healthy, vibrant province.

There are pockets of West Grey that lack reliable broadband, so our online council meetings are audio-only. Video is simply not possible. Documents and agendas are shown on the screen, but we do not have consistent bandwidth to use video. What this means is we must simply continually do audio confirmation of who is speaking and how council members are voting. This is a manageable workaround, but of course we would prefer using cameras for our council meetings.

Rural Ontario needs the same quality of Internet that other Ontarians have come to expect. I've had many conversations with MPP Bill Walker, and in March of this year I wrote to Minister Scott on this very subject. I look forward to continuing the dialogue and celebrating the day when broadband is equally province-wide. I'd like to share that Grey county has supported my motions asking for Premier Ford, Minister Scott and MPP Walker to champion the implementation of broadband throughout Grey county. We are proud to lend our voice to resolving this gap in essential infrastructure, a gap that COVID-19 has highlighted as an urgent need.

West Grey is committed to managing our physical infrastructure. Because of COVID-19, we need more fleet vehicles to achieve social distancing of our roads crew.

We are spending more on PPE and cleaning supplies, and we've lost revenue from cancelled programs and waived fees. All of this compounds and affects our infrastructure management plans.

Now that we are in stage 3, we are seeing the return of our seasonal residents, day trippers and tourists. We welcome our visitors who enjoy the natural beauty of West Grey and who rely on a safe road network. To keep that part of our economy growing, we need to maintain our roads and concessions, and we have over 700 kilometres that meander throughout West Grey. One strategy that West Grey has been advocating for at both the AMO and ROMA conferences is a maintenance grant program. We know that taking care of our assets is more affordable and responsible than replacing essential infrastructure. Imagine how much more we could leverage if municipalities were encouraged to participate in a proactive grant program specific to extending the lifespan of infrastructure.

When I speak with farmers, producers and leaders in agriculture, they tell me agriculture depends on infrastructure. It simply cannot exist without a safe and maintained road network.

A big part of West Grey's travelled network is our 101 bridges that we have, which are aging quicker than we can maintain them. In the last two months, for example, West Grey temporarily closed three bridges. In fact, on July 8, while I was participating in the webcast with Premier Ford and Minister Clark, our director of infrastructure and public works was on-site, temporarily closing a bridge. We have a repair and maintenance plan; what we need is a funding plan. West Grey's tax base can afford to do many things, but our taxpayers alone simply cannot fund the bridge and road program. Because of COVID-19, this will be a summer of more and more vacationers exploring locally and driving on West Grey's roads and bridges. When you consider the travelling public who rely on safe roads, funding must be a combination of local taxes and assistance from outside of our borders.

I recently hosted a COVID-19 round table with Dr. Arra, who is the Grey Bruce medical officer of health, MP Ruff, MPP Walker and Grey county Warden McQueen. It was remarkably successful because it was a focused, informative conversation. I would like to propose a provincial-municipal round table focused on funding of rural infrastructure and being prepared for a rainy day. The rural issues are very different from the issues cities and urban communities face—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute remaining.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Thank you. Honoured members, may we explore an infrastructure round table as a way of bringing rural matters to the forefront and solutions to the table?

In closing, COVID-19 has affected West Grey. We had to take a second look at our budget to make difficult decisions. We waived fees and penalties. We've lost revenue and increased expenses. Our small businesses are hanging in, but it's just not easy for them to do it alone.

One of the best ways to help our businesses is to ensure that our infrastructure is in place to attract visitors and customers. Now, more than ever, the dollars count. I look forward to exploring how all orders of government can contribute to rebuilding a vibrant Ontario post-pandemic. Thank you.

1710

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you very much, Mayor Robinson. We'll start with the independent members. Reminder: You have one round of 10 minutes here. We'll start with MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you so much, Mayor, for your wonderful presentation. It's great to see that strong vision you have, and I would support your call for a municipal infrastructure round table that could really get into the commonalities of the types of investments that are needed for rural communities.

I do note that you spoke quite a bit about the benefits of broadband, particularly given the need to work from home, to learn from home and all of these new standards in a pandemic environment. We want to make sure that access to this service is there. Can you speak, from your perspective, to the economic benefits of making that type of investment in your community in rural Ontario?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Certainly I can, and thank you very much for the question. We're finding that broadband is essential for our businesses. They are relying on the ability to connect with customers and just keep up with their business. Broadband is incredibly essential to that. Our economic development committee is also working and supporting the broadband initiative as well. We're seeing this as an essential service, something that should be an everyday occurrence where we just have a complete reliance on broadband. Definitely our businesses, retail and services alike, and our light industry depend on it.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Excellent. Thank you, Mayor. I'm going to pass it on to MPP Blais, who has questions.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Blais.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you for your presentation. I really appreciated it. I missed something that you said. You were talking about the need for increased social distancing for some of your staff who are doing repairs, I think. I wasn't sure what that was relating to. I think I missed a sentence there.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Well, certainly we will provide more detail, but I'm going to defer to our CAO, who has the direct management of this. Thank you.

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Good afternoon. Thank you for the question. What we tried to implement to ensure social distancing for our road crews—because public works was an essential service—is we would have two crew people to a cab, to one truck. Because of the social distancing and just the logistics of working the way they need to, we've had to secure extra fleet vehicles to make sure that they're working safely. In addition to that, of course, is the cleaning regimen that you need to implement for all of our equipment.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure, yes. Thank you for clarifying that. Have you done a calculation yet as to what your revenue loss is and what your additional costs have been?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Thank you for that question as well. On a monthly basis, we are taking reports to council that show the financial implications. Right now it's difficult to quantify because we haven't tallied everything up, but we are in the thousands of dollars that we hadn't predicted.

Our budgets are extremely tight, as everyone's are, so this is—what we're doing, though, to be perfectly clear, is we are looking at revenues that we've lost, in addition to additional expenses. Those numbers are coming in in the low thousands, approaching about \$10,000 already, just on that component. We haven't done any analysis on staff overtime, but that's been an impact as well. There are a few other factors that we haven't quite got to yet. Just the hard cash out the door is what we're looking at.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** That's fair. And just to provide some context, how big is West Grey in terms of number of employees and maybe geographical size?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Thank you for that. We are about 700 square kilometres. We have three urban centres. Our most populated is the former town of Durham, and that's about 3,000 people. Our population overall is 13,000 and our staff complement of full-time employees is 35.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Perfect. Thank you. From an operational perspective, as the province has opened up in phases, have you had to keep any services closed, or are you close to being fully open yet?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** I know Mayor Robinson would like to chime in on the public perspective. We are slowly phasing back to regular services as much as we can. Our municipal office, for example, is still closed, but we've opened up some opportunities for parks, recreation and healthy living.

Mayor Robinson, did you want to expand on that a little bit?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Sure.

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Okay. Thank you. I'll just swing over. There we go.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Five minutes remaining.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Thank you. I just want to say that we've been keeping up with business continuity, so all of our services have been maintained throughout our emergency declaration. Certainly we have not had the public in our meetings, and our council meetings have been held virtually.

Our citizens have not experienced a lag, I would say, with the services, and I'm very appreciative to staff for that matter. Certainly our recreation programs have not been followed through to the full extent, because we absolutely follow the provincial protocol and our doctor of public health here—to follow his protocols as well.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** So has that meant that your parks and your community centres remain closed, or have you started to open those up yet?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Sure. Our community centres are not open yet. Our playgrounds are open, but as we open

them, we are also doing an assessment of the equipment to make sure that they're safe so that our residents can utilize them. We also have one arena open for ice.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** One arena for ice? That's brilliant.

In West Grey, are your parks co-located with school facilities, or does the school facility add an additional park here and there as you have them?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Our parks, I would say, on the whole, are not connected with the schools. We do not have a high school here in West Grey, which is unfortunate; our youth go to schools in adjoining municipalities. But our parks are maintained and have the ownership of the municipality.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Obviously broadband has been a point of great discussion, and you mentioned it yourself. How close would the nearest high-speed node be to where you are? Are we talking about hundreds of kilometres or tens of kilometres? An estimate is fine.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** I'm going to defer to our CAO, just for that clarity of it, please.

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Sure, and thank you for the question. In the town of Durham, we do have some high-speed Internet installation that's just starting to occur. That is the centre of West Grey, but that's the smallest portion of our municipality. As we span out, it's really becoming more difficult.

In the other urban centres where we do have some commercial core, I could share with the committee that we launched the Digital Main Street initiative and we were only able to have about four companies participate because of the lack of connectivity. So that was an unfortunate loss for them, that they weren't able to participate in that social media opportunity.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** I just want to say, if I might, that we don't have a major node here in West Grey. We'd certainly welcome that and advocate on that behalf.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Sure. And in your discussions with the telecom agencies, have you gotten the sense that they're eager and serious, or has it been more to be friendly and polite?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Yes, I'd say—

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Yes, they're absolutely friendly and polite. They're anxious to have the conversation, but I can share that the big players are not beating a path to my door. It's really a local independent that is making the biggest investments in West Grey. So any way that we can assist that and encourage the bigger providers to join that, that partnership would be really helpful.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** How much time is there, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute exactly.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** One minute. Do you know, is the local player exploring fibre or is it some kind of WiFi or through-the-air solution?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** I'm not aware if they're exploring fibre per se; they're really just concentrating on getting high-speed here in Durham, and then in our other commercial core of Neustadt. They're focusing local right now, which is fine; that's a start. We're grateful for the start.

1720

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Yes, I appreciate that.

I don't have any other questions, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll move on to the government members for questions. MPP Piccini.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thanks, Chair. I'm going to be splitting my time with my colleague MPP Khanjin, so I'm just going to be brief. Thank you both for your presentation. I know it's important that we all work closely at all levels of government.

If we could first talk, in the collaborative spirit, about the importance of quickly getting approvals, I know the province last July nominated the Lantz Bridge replacement and committed funding towards that, and then, just about a year later, the feds went through their approval. In the context of COVID recovery, how important is it going to be that we get projects out the door quickly and that we review projects?

My second question is with respect to the ICIP program. We know the community, culture and rec stream was oversubscribed tenfold. For off-the-shelf projects, for any new dollars that the feds are able to bring to bear and that we work collaboratively with the feds on, how important will it be to take existing projects, and perhaps looking at that rather than opening new intakes, getting new proposals and re-examining existing proposals? Those are my two quick questions there.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Thank you very much for the question. I will start, and then certainly I would also defer to our CAO for that.

Quickness, I would say—we're looking at funding opportunities, and we look to our provincial government for that. Thank you very much for your contribution to our Lantz Bridge. It's most helpful, for sure.

We've done three bridge studies. We look at options for: Does it have to be a full-out rehabilitation? Can the bridge be addressed through a culvert? Are there different modern techniques that we can use? Do we need to go to that 100-year lifespan of a bridge, or is there something in between that would be more effective and more cost-effective for the citizens? Definitely, funding availability is extremely essential. We have a number of bridges and culverts that we would like to address. We identify that infrastructure equals vitality of a community. So I would say that that is of utmost importance.

Madam CAO, would you like to add into that, please?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Thank you. Really, all that I would like to add is that we did have a couple of projects that are shovel-ready, right up to the engineering drawings being completed and the environment assessments. They're just waiting to go, because we try to be as proactive as we can on some of our high-priority bridges, and this bridge is in the top 10 of what we need to address.

**Mr. David Piccini:** I appreciate the work you're doing on that. Definitely, I hear you loud and clear in terms of quick, and we'll certainly relay that to the federal government. I know Minister Scott has been working diligently. I think if you were nominated in July, if I do my math

correctly, that was about two months after the intake closed, and I know in my riding we had the same. So to get projects out the door in two months is certainly very important, and I appreciate the work our ministry has been doing on that.

Just one quick addition: Again, as we work together, if you could just reiterate for us the importance of broadband. You're talking to someone who goes a couple of minutes north of the 401 through Roseneath and I'm done, both cell and broadband. I know we contributed to the SWIFT project, as we did with EORN, the ones that you've led and identified, so I appreciate your leadership on that. If you could send a message to the feds about the \$1.7-billion investment that I know Minister Scott and our ministers across the federation have been asking for, if you could ask them to invest that, would you say now, or do we have time?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** I'll start. I'll say now, more than ever, it's essential to have broadband here in our rural communities, and certainly in Grey county. COVID-19 just amplified the need for broadband, but the need already existed. In West Grey alone, we have underserviced as well as unserviced areas. It's hard to explain to a young family who is trying to connect to broadband so that their children can do homework or just watch a movie being streamed, where they're not able to have broadband, but their neighbour in the concession over has partial broadband. So we would like to equalize that whole broadband infrastructure. I can't voice enough how it is a daily asset that citizens have grown to rely on, whether it's just in their daily lives or through academics or through business.

So yes, that is—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Five minutes remaining.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** —a truly important initiative. I believe that the provincial government and certainly the federal government should take hold of my motion at Grey county, which was supported unanimously by Grey county council, for the call to action to have Grey county have broadband throughout. I would celebrate the day with our residents and colleagues that we have broadband.

I know other municipalities are saying the same thing and I echo their support as well.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Yes, thank you very much. I agree. I know the minister and our team are watching this, and they've been strong advocates. I'm glad we got ICON out the door, but certainly, we need all levels of government. We need the feds to come to bear with that \$1.7 billion committed. So I appreciate you speaking to that importance as someone from rural Ontario. Thank you for being a champion for that. We hear you loud and clear.

I'll turn it over to MPP Khanjin.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP Khanjin.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you, MPP Piccini. I actually want to piggyback off of some of those questions. One of the things our provincial government partnered on with the feds to roll out was the Digital Main Street program, which helped a lot of businesses go digital, as you know. Just a question for you on how the uptake was

for your community—that the need to have access to broadband to then access these programs is so necessary; you can't really have one without the other. If you could just speak to how that's impacted your community.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** I'm going to defer to our CAO, because she was instrumental in bringing Digital Main Street to the mainstream, and certainly in connection with our West Grey Chamber of Commerce.

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Thank you, Madam Mayor. The Digital Main Street project that West Grey launched: We did it in partnership with Wellington North, so a sister municipality, because we were of the opinion that partnerships—you can leverage more the wider you cast your net. Having said that, our Digital Main Street specialist—we retained her from a project that she had just completed in Minto township.

So lots of collaboration—everything was aligned. We had eight businesses that were able to participate. Our reach was quite far, all the way from Fergus straight up to Owen Sound, really. The West Grey component was three businesses. There was one that was out of our borders, but we thought, "That's great. We will help you," and then the remaining were from Wellington North. The biggest stumbling block was that people were interested in enhancing their digital presence, but they just didn't have the infrastructure to do anything with all of the lessons they could learn.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Right. Okay. With the RFP out for the SWIFT program, is that going to be part of your application, working with some of your BIAs or your chamber there, too?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Thank you for that question. Absolutely. We partner with our chamber of commerce, and then the BIA helps promote the opportunities. Grey county economic development does some wonderful work county-wide and supports the local municipalities, but together, one voice is stronger, and there are just a few more people in that choir, right? So we're excited about having that opportunity to expand it and have more businesses take advantage of this technology. It's not new; they need it.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Yes. If you were to make a recommendation that we could include in our report, would you say that the continued emphasis on SWIFT and asking the feds for maybe more funding for that program would be mission critical for other programs to succeed, like Digital Main Street?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** Absolutely. I think SWIFT has done some wonderful—it's gaining momentum. It's time to wrap that up, and let's go.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** No, I hear you. On the flip side of that, when we're talking about digital infrastructure—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** —are there recommendations you would make on how we could shorten the timeline for both the digital infrastructure and just general bricks and mortar, bridges and roads, that type of thing?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** I'd like to pass this to the mayor. I know she does an awful lot of work with the other orders

of government. Perhaps, Mayor Robinson, you'd like to take this question on.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** I think the easiest way is that we can certainly provide information to you in terms of what we're looking for from West Grey, our path forward to improve our infrastructure on behalf of our citizens, and also combine that with broadband as well. We could put a package together for the committee that we could provide by, I don't know, a deadline of a couple of weeks, just to ensure that you have all the information, including correspondence that I sent to Minister Scott with regard to broadband. Having that comprehensive package, I think, will provide a pathway in terms of seeing the light at the end of the tunnel—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. I'm afraid I have to cut you off.

1730

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Fair enough.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We're going to our final round of questions. Over to the opposition: MPP Vanthof.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Good afternoon. Thank you very much for coming to the committee and making your presentation. As someone who also comes from rural Ontario, I feel a lot of your pain.

Something on the broadband, Mayor, that you said about the frustration of one concession having it and one concession not—could you imagine if that was 60 years ago and it was the same thing with hydro and how much would that have hurt the general economy? The same thing is happening now. I would like you to expand a bit. It's great to make advances and have some people get—you know, you hear about 5G. But until we actually treat broadband like an essential service and that everyone needs usable, affordable broadband—how that's going to hold back, quite frankly, all of rural Ontario, but specifically your part of rural Ontario.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Thank you for the question, and I couldn't agree more in how you are equating another portion of essential infrastructure for rural municipalities. I see broadband as an essential service, a day-to-day necessity, that is being used throughout the municipality in terms of just getting your news or taking a course, Zooming in for a council meeting, participating in a council meeting. I must say—and I want to put this in right now—our council just approved a youth advisory committee, and we know broadband is going to be essential to that civic dialogue. So it's something that I need to shout as loud as I can, how important broadband is in a rural setting. To equalize it or have broadband available for all of Ontario, I think, is extremely important, but to have a focus on rural Ontario and rural municipalities is the focus that should be right now.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'd just like to commend you on making a motion to get it across Grey county. My last private member's motion was to come up with a billion-dollar strategy to bring broadband to rural Ontario. It was passed unanimously, and we're still waiting to get that done.

I can feel for you. When this committee process started, I had satellite broadband, and the only way I could participate in a Zoom meeting was to drive to town, Temiskaming Shores, and bum it off the chamber of commerce WiFi. Since then, a small operator has put up a tower within sight of my rural home, and as a result I can do it at home.

Something that your CAO brought up about how the small operator, the independents, were the ones doing it—I've heard complaints from other areas that the small operators are having trouble getting access to the backbone of the system, access to broadband, and that if there was a way they could get more access, they could bring it much quicker. Have you heard the same kind of complaints from your operators?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** I'll defer to Madam CAO with regard to that. However, I do want to say that you are extremely resourceful in obtaining broadband.

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** I've seen our library parking lots full of people getting WiFi that way as well, so it's a very common thing. With regard to your question about the challenges for the independent operators, we only have a couple here. We have a wonderful working relationship with them. They use our infrastructure to provide that. So I haven't heard a lot of their frustrations, but truly they would only come to me for the continuation of our partnership.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'd like to switch just for a second—something else that you brought up, that there should be a program for maintenance of infrastructure, particularly roads and bridges, as opposed to the Hail Mary pass once in a while to build a new one, right? Because that's basically what that is: It's the Hail Mary.

We've also heard the comment once in a while—and I'm going to include all levels of government—that it's easier to do the ribbon-cutting on building a new building, as opposed to doing the ribbon-cutting on putting new shingles on the roof. Is that part of the problem, that a maintenance program just isn't flashy enough for the upper levels of government?

**Ms. Laura Johnston:** I hadn't actually thought of it that way. I think that at least at the local level, we're looking at things a little bit more proactively, because we have to. Our budgets are so limited in what we'd like to do, and building community is what we'd really like to do. So if we can protect what we have, then we can allocate budget to doing other initiatives. I think that's our view on it.

Mayor Robinson, anything to add on this?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Five minutes.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Just to add to that: Certainly there is some infrastructure that we need to deal with, like a full rebuild of our bridges and our culverts, but there are other opportunities where we can simply look at maintenance, if it's just the deck of a bridge, and what the costs would be. Obviously, that is a smaller cost than what it would be to put a new culvert in, or a rebuild of that particular bridge.

Again, what our CAO has just mentioned is that we're trying to look at innovative ideas and come up with

different approaches to really maximize our taxpayers' money that is put into infrastructure. As well, we're extremely grateful to the provincial government and federal government for funding availability and approval.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** You also mentioned about having to close bridges. When I was a municipal councillor, we had to close the bridge in our municipality. There's nothing that is harder to do than to make people go a ways around.

The one thing that frustrated me a lot when I was in municipal council is that we were asked, and still are now, to develop asset management plans. And yet, sometimes governments say, "Well, our focus is on X, but your asset management plan really says that the thing, the asset that needs to be fixed is this bridge or this culvert complex," and yet you're being asked, "But the money, it has to go to this." Would it be better if municipalities were actually given some more latitude, so that now that they've developed credible asset management plans, they actually use them?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Well, certainly. The asset management plan is essential. Bridge studies are also essential. We look to our director of infrastructure and public works, as well as our CAO, to provide recommendations. We look at bridges in terms of volume, vehicular volume. Is it a throughway? What's the contribution to the road network within the municipality? So there are all those given criteria.

We also want to keep a, I want to say, robust transportation network here, because we are not only dealing with businesses here, but we have active tourism, and then certainly for our residents. We are a growing municipality. We are a lovely rural municipality, but that doesn't mean that our infrastructure should not be top-quality for residents and people that travel through.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** You also mentioned something else near and dear to my heart: agriculture. I had an honest job before I became a politician; I was a dairy farmer for a long time. One thing I noticed in my own municipalities is that, basically, farm equipment is also getting a lot bigger and some of our rural infrastructure—quite frankly, there might not be as many farmers, but the farm equipment is getting much bigger, and that's actually putting some strain on the size of bridges and on rural municipalities as well. Are you experiencing the same issue in West Grey?

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Well, what we definitely want to ensure is that our agricultural equipment does not

necessarily need to go on a highway, a very busy, heavily-travelled portion of roadway. What I've been hearing from agricultural representatives is agriculture equals bridges, and certainly bridges are often on side roads and concessions. It's just an important aspect of agriculture. So for the tonnage and length of the—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** —bridge and whether or not it's a double-lane bridge, we would absolutely follow all of the engineering, structural requirements for that and defer to our director of infrastructure and public works. But I can tell you that our agricultural community is very dependent on infrastructure overall.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** And broadband.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Yes, I include that within infrastructure. But thank you.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Did you say we're on our last minute, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We have 20 seconds remaining.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'd like to use that 20 seconds to thank you very much for representing West Grey—you're doing a very good job—and representing rural Ontario and being the final presenter today. We'd like to thank you very much. Your issues were to the point, and we will work hard to actually get good roads and bridges and broadband to everyone. Thank you.

**Ms. Christine Robinson:** Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much for your presentation. That concludes our business today.

I'd like everyone to join me in giving a virtual thank-you to our wonderful legislative staff here with us today, who are the real champions who make this happen every day. Thank you for everything you do.

I would also like to offer, on behalf of all my colleagues here on finance committee, our condolences to the people of Beirut and Lebanon on what's going on there today. Our thoughts, of course, are with the many Lebanese Ontarians who call Ontario home. Our thoughts are with them.

As a reminder, the deadline to send in a written submission for this sector study will be 6 p.m. on August 11. This committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on August 12, when we will meet for report writing on the municipalities, construction and building sector. Thank you, everyone. Meeting adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 1742.*



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