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des débats
(Hansard)**

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**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Protect, Support and Recover
from COVID-19 Act
(Budget Measures), 2020

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Wednesday 2 December 2020

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

Loi de 2020 sur la protection,
le soutien et la relance
face à la COVID-19
(mesures budgétaires)

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Mercredi 2 décembre 2020

Chair: Amarjot Sandhu
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Amarjot Sandhu
Greffière : Julia Douglas

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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES**

Wednesday 2 December 2020

Mercredi 2 décembre 2020

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1 and by video conference.

**PROTECT, SUPPORT AND RECOVER
FROM COVID-19 ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2020
LOI DE 2020 SUR LA PROTECTION,
LE SOUTIEN ET LA RELANCE
FACE À LA COVID-19
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 229, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 229, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good morning, everyone. We're meeting today for public hearings on Bill 229, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes.

We have MPP Stan Cho with us in the committee room, and the following members participating remotely: MPP Pang, MPP Arthur, MPP Roberts, MPP Smith, MPP Shaw, MPP Thanigasalam, MPP Park and MPP Mamakwa.

As a reminder, I ask that everyone speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Are there any questions or business before we begin?

Seeing none, pursuant to the order of the House dated November 23, 2020, each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation. After we have heard from all presenters, there will be time for questions from members of the committee. This time will be broken down into two rounds of seven and a half minutes each for both of the recognized parties and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent members.

ONTARIO NATURE
ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE
EMPLOYEES UNION
CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS
AND EXPORTERS

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I would now like to call upon our first witness of the day, Ontario Nature. If

you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Dr. Anne Bell: Good morning, everyone. I'm going to share my screen now with my presentation.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to make this presentation this morning. My name is Anne Bell, and I'm the director of conservation and education at Ontario Nature. I'm joining you today from my home in Toronto. I would like to acknowledge that this place is in the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Wendat peoples, and it's in the current territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, under the Toronto Purchase Treaty 13 signed in 1805.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Ontario Nature, we are a charitable conservation organization that protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. We represent over 30,000 members and supporters and over 150 member groups across the province.

My comments today will focus on two schedules in Bill 229: schedule 6, pertaining to the Conservation Authorities Act, and schedule 8, pertaining to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. In both cases, I urge you to remove these schedules from Bill 229.

Like many other organizations that the committee has already heard from, Ontario Nature is deeply concerned about the proposed amendments in schedule 6 that would significantly constrain and reduce the critical role that conservation authorities play in protecting the lands, waters and wildlife, which benefit communities across Ontario. It would do this by narrowing the scope and powers of conservation authorities, by restricting the duties of conservation authority board members and by reducing the involvement of conservation authorities in land use planning and permitting.

Why does this matter? In a nutshell, it has to do with the unique mandate of conservation authorities to seek and act with the health of watersheds in mind. It's not hard to understand that when we are talking about flood prevention or about drinking water quality, we need to look beyond political boundaries. We need to consider how water moves across the landscape and what activities might impact it positively or negatively. The beauty of conservation authorities is that they provide that watershed perspective and bring science and evidence to bear on land use planning and decisions.

To do their work properly to protect the health of our watersheds, conservation authorities are involved in a broad suite of important endeavours, many, if not most, of which are jeopardized by schedule 6. The monitoring carried out by conservation authorities, for example, is necessary for the effective delivery of flood mitigation and drinking water protection, as well as biodiversity conservation and ecological restoration efforts. Conservation authorities bring a vital watershed perspective to planning and development decisions so the development does not put communities at risk from flooding and other climate change impacts through the loss of wetlands, woodlands and farmland.

With regard specifically to their role in regulating and permitting land use activities, Ontario's special adviser on flooding said that it is a "critical component of Ontario's broader natural hazard management framework." It's critical to preventing loss of life and property, to reducing public and private expenditures and to controlling the negative impacts of development.

One of the reasons that we've seen such fierce public outcry against the proposed changes in schedule 6 is that conservation authorities have strong ties with their communities.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Dr. Anne Bell: They protect important places and in fact are the second-largest landowner in Ontario. They own and operate almost 300 publicly accessible conservation areas, which millions of us visit on a regular basis. These places matter to people.

People also value conservation authorities as partners in community projects, partners who bring expertise and resources to the table to initiate important stewardship and education efforts.

Reducing and constraining the mandate of conservation authorities is contrary to the interests of the people of Ontario. People have a stake in this, and that's exactly why they're speaking up. Tens of thousands of individuals have written to or phoned their MPPs to express their concern. Ontario's Big City Mayors, representing 29 major cities, have called for schedule 6 to be removed. At least 20 municipalities, urban, rural and suburban, have passed resolutions likewise calling for schedule 6 to be removed.

The opposition is coming from all directions, even politically. Here is what Hamilton councillor Brad Clark had to say when Hamilton passed its resolution last week, asking for the removal of schedule 6:

"I am struggling to find words that are diplomatic and respectful of a provincial government that, in a ham-fisted manner, would literally gut what a conservation authority is because developers in Toronto are suggesting that conservation authorities are in the way of economic growth. If you think this is about the special interest groups that are upset, you are mistaken." Brad Clark, by the way, was a former transportation minister in the Mike Harris government and labour minister in the Ernie Eves administration.

Now, just a couple of slides on schedule 8: Proposed amendments to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act would permanently exempt—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute left.

Dr. Anne Bell:—forestry operators from the requirements of the Endangered Species Act to protect and recover species at risk. It would also remove the ability of the minister to issue habitat protection orders to stop activities that could have a significant adverse effect on species at risk. These changes are not in the public interest and they have nothing to do with COVID recovery.

These amendments are part of a suite of government rollbacks on environmental protection with respect to forestry. Under the guise of eliminating duplication or so-called red tape, the government is proceeding on the false assumption advanced by some within the forest industry that the Crown Forest Sustainability Act adequately provides for species at risk and that the protections offered under the Endangered Species Act are redundant and unnecessary. This is simply not true. A fundamental difference between the two pieces of legislation is that the Endangered Species Act is designed to advance species recovery and prohibits harm to species—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move to our next presenter, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. Please state your name for the record and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Hi. My name is Smokey Thomas. I'm president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. As many of you might know, our union represents more than 170,000 front-line public sector workers in communities across the province. We are one of the few unions in the country that has been growing during the pandemic. That's because front-line workers know they can count on us to forcefully and faithfully represent their interests.

What are the vast majority of them interested in? They're interested in improving the care and services they deliver. They just want to give better help to more people. That's why I call them our front-line heroes, especially during this pandemic. They're not in this to get rich; they're in it to help, and many of them risk their own lives and safety to do so.

That's why I was so genuinely pleased with the budget the government tabled last month. I have been OPSEU/SEFPO's president since 2007 and was active in the union and politics for a long time before that, but this year's budget is the first one I can remember that didn't try to paint front-line public sector workers as the villains. For years—in fact, decades—budget after budget has made our members feel more like they're on the firing lines than the front lines. They've been blamed for deficits, accused of being ineffective and inefficient, and shamed for their salaries—which, by the way, aren't nearly as high as most people think.

It was a real relief to finally hear a finance minister treat our members with respect instead of ridicule—no cuts, no clawbacks, finally. I even liked the title of this year's budget: Protect, Support, Recover. It's one of the most concise and precise descriptions of public services I've ever heard. It's like government is finally starting to get it:

Public services are indeed the great equalizer. So I offer congratulations to the government. This is truly one of the most encouraging budgets I've seen in a long time.

But nothing in life is perfect, this budget included. While I consider it a good first step, it must not be the only step. Let me suggest the next steps this government must take.

0910

The first step has to do with the wage restraint legislated in Bill 124. For a variety of very good reasons, Bill 124 has to go, and the sooner the better. For one thing, it's unconstitutional, and I think you know that. I do know that you know my union and many others are going to fight it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, and we like our chances of being victorious. Why waste millions on lawyers' fees that you don't have to spend and that you'll never get back?

For another thing, Bill 124 does a lot more damage than good. Across the public sector, recruitment and retention is a huge problem, especially in long-term care but in many other sectors as well. You're simply not going to attract as many workers to the public sector when you're offering them three years of pay cuts. That's essentially what Bill 124 does because of inflation. It looks especially bad when compared to increases workers are getting in the private sector. As the government itself acknowledges, private sector increases are averaging more than 2%, but you're sticking public sector workers with increases that are half that—not exactly a hero's welcome. So please, repeal Bill 124.

The second step I'd like to see the government take is to make a serious commitment to building up the capacity of our public services. It's good that there were few cuts in the budget, but there weren't many significant long-term investments either. Now is the time for investment, major investment, and not just in physical infrastructure, but in social infrastructure as well. We need major investment in a health care system that can't handle this pandemic, and future ones, so we don't have to endure so many lockdowns

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Even before the pandemic, our health care was hurting, but COVID-19 has truly exposed the cracks, especially in long-term care, where roughly 2,000 people have sadly died. The majority of those deaths have come in private homes. Clearly, more investment is needed.

More investment is also needed in our colleges and universities. They need to be strong and agile enough to quickly develop and fully field credential programs to help with skills shortages like those in long-term care. For all you MPPs, we are working with long-term care and the colleges and our union-represented academics to actually make some of that stuff happen, especially for long-term care. Students need to be able to afford these programs. Tuition should be low or, better yet, free.

We need more investment in social services, like universal child care, that ensure everybody can live decent lives and contribute positively to their communities and the economy.

Yes, I'm making big demands here, but the appetite for investment is strong, and public services is also big. I'm sure you've seen the polls. My union conducted one, and many others have too. They're all showing the same thing: The pandemic has opened people's eyes to the incredible value of public services, and now the vast majority say that public service investment is much more important than reducing the deficit. The vast majority are saying create, don't cut.

This budget and the ones to follow are an incredible opportunity for this government and all of Ontario. We're in a moment when we can throw out the dusty old rule book and the obsolete road map. The pandemic is forcing us to make new rules and draw new maps and forge a new normal. Imagine the legacy we could start creating now together: stronger health care, stronger education, stronger social services. These are the things that will get us safely through the pandemic and safely through the ones that we know are going to follow.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: I urge this government, don't let this opportunity slip past. Now is the time for bold leadership, driven by self-confidence and optimism. Ontarians have proven themselves throughout this pandemic, and now is the time for the government to prove to the people of Ontario that it can build on our successes and to continue building for the future.

If I could just make a comment on Ontario Nature's presentation, I agree with much of what you said. My members actually work in the Ministry of the Environment and we do represent a lot of workers and conservation authorities. So I would like to add my support for that submission as well. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Moving along to our next presenter—just to inform the members that one of the presenters, Mathew Wilson, will not be presenting. Alex Greco will be the only one presenting. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Alex Greco: Alex Greco, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for inviting me here today on behalf of our association's 2,500 direct members and 780,000 manufacturers across Ontario to discuss Bill 229 and additional measures that need to be taken to provide growth and output for the manufacturing sector in the 2021 budget.

CME has been proud to partner with the government on the deployment of Ontario Made, a program to identify, celebrate and promote locally manufactured products to Ontarians. To date, over 6,700 products and 1,700 manufacturers have been registered on supportontariomade.ca. Earlier this week, we launched our holiday gift guide to assist Ontarians with purchasing gifts for their friends, family and significant others this holiday season.

We want to thank the government for their ongoing support of the program and for including the Ontario Made

logo on the cover of the budget document. We encourage all members of provincial Parliament on this committee and within the Legislature to share the details of the program with your constituents.

Over the last several months, we've been thinking about the COVID-19 crisis and about Ontario's economic recovery and prosperity. In June, CME issued a report that outlined what we believed was the foundation for economic recovery and prosperity, called Manufacturing Our Future.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ontario economy and the manufacturing sector were showing signs of strain. Years of underinvestment in capital equipment and technology left many companies too small and uncompetitive in an increasingly globalized economy. While manufacturers in Ontario have survived the pandemic largely intact, they are in a much weaker state today.

With the second wave of COVID-19 infections, combined with uncertainty around the timing and efficiency of a vaccine, business investment will remain restrained. The data supports this. In CME's 2020 Management Issues Survey report, over 42% of manufacturers reported that their current level of production was lower today than one year ago. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of our members are anticipating a more drawn-out recovery, have a negative view of business conditions and are concerned about the future of the sector.

To that end, this budget needs to introduce two objectives: support investment and support economic growth. In our view, this budget began to address these two objectives, and we would like to highlight five reasons as to why we support this budget.

First, the measures to make industrial electricity rates more competitive with other US jurisdictions will lower electricity costs for manufacturers. Such a measure is necessary, as before the pandemic Ontario manufacturers were paying up to 75% more in electricity rates compared to major US jurisdictions. Lower cost equals more investment. With the Independent Electricity System Operator estimating that electricity demand will not reach pre-COVID-19 levels until 2024, timing was of the essence.

Second, the reduction of the Business Education Tax to 0.88% in the most expensive Ontario jurisdictions is a long-overdue and welcome step. Ontario manufacturers are paying among the highest industrial property taxes across North America. In recent years, adjustments have been made to a wide range of taxes, but little attention has been made to property taxes. These measures will begin to lower property taxes for manufacturers and introduce more fairness in the property tax system.

Third, we welcome the creation of a skilled trades strategy and funding for micro-credentialing and training. The manufacturing sector still faces struggles with labour and skills shortages. Simply put, they are limiting manufacturers' ability to innovate and invest in technology. As advanced manufacturing technologies become more commonplace and as production processes become more sophisticated, the skill sets that businesses need are

changing rapidly. Not only do new entrants need up-to-date specialized training but also the ability to adapt and evolve with future technological advancements. These measures will start to help address these challenges.

Fourth, the introduction of Supply Ontario is an important step to modernize Ontario's procurement system. For years, the system needed to be modernized to ensure more goods to market, new innovation of emerging technologies—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Alex Greco: —and a connection between businesses and its customers and the government. We look forward to working with the government in the weeks to come on the launch of this agency and to begin to implement new initiatives that modernize Ontario's procurement system.

Fifth and finally, we were pleased that the government took the step to make the \$1-million threshold on the Employer Health Tax permanent. Many manufacturers suffered a simultaneous fall in demand and rise in supply chain disruptions in the early weeks of the pandemic. While the overall industry experienced a strong rebound coming out of the first lockdown, activity has scaled markedly in line with exhaustive pent-up demand in a second wave of infections. This measure allows manufacturers to have more liquidity on hand for their businesses. The more liquidity manufacturers have on hand, the better positioned they will be to recover from the crisis.

0920

As we look ahead to the 2021 spring budget, we must take additional steps to drive growth and manufacturing output in our sector. To that end, CME is calling for a broad-based industrial strategy. The strategy needs to leverage the strength of the manufacturing sector and focus on the growth and scale-up of companies, the creation and adoption of new technology, and the leveraging of our natural resources and natural advantages.

We also need to modernize Ontario's tax and regulatory system by introducing new investment support measures that support capital expansion and help de-risk technology adoption, implement new measures to protect employment lands and zones, and undertake additional reforms to Ontario's property tax system. These measures are needed to create even more manufacturing jobs, promote domestic manufacturing and further reduce business costs.

Now is not the time to be complacent. Once the current crisis has passed, Ontario has an enormous opportunity to win back manufacturing investment.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Alex Greco: Due to the disruptions in supply at the beginning of the pandemic, many manufacturers are looking to diversify their supply chains to avoid overreliance on a limited range of markets. This should elicit a strong support from Ontario to step up its global [*inaudible*] so it can attract the best [*inaudible*] firms looking to re-shore manufacturing.

But to stand any chance of success, attention must turn quickly to addressing the main issues hindering our sector: labour and skill shortages, an uncompetitive tax and

regulatory environment, new technology adoption and export growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to present here today. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll start with the questions now. We'll start the first round of questions with the opposition. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Good morning, Chair. I would like to start by thanking everyone for being here this morning, but I would like to start my questioning with Ontario Nature, please.

You know, this schedule 6 that was slipped into a budget bill is something that I'm hearing a huge outcry about from my constituents, from people all across the riding and also all across the province. As you said, this outcry is coming from all kinds of people.

I wanted to mention specifically—and I appreciate you bringing up—Brad Clark, because Brad Clark is a councillor who I believe is the chair of the Hamilton Conservation Authority. That conservation authority has done some remarkable work in preventing flooding. His comments, that this is not a special interest group, really come from MPP Donna Skelly, who represents part of that area and who said this is “just a lot of noise from special interest groups.”

Can you comment a little bit further on how this is not special interest groups? This is people from all walks of life who think that this attack on conservation authorities is unwarranted and unwise.

Dr. Anne Bell: Thank you very much for the question. I think it's really interesting that, for example, the municipalities that have passed resolutions are from across the province geographically. So geographically, we're seeing this opposition. We're seeing opposition, again, across the political spectrum. We're seeing it from people in cities, people in the countryside and people in suburban areas, so it really is quite diverse. That's really no surprise because the good work that is done by conservation authorities benefits all of us, in all of these diverse places.

For example, there's one program that I love that's offered by the Credit Valley Conservation Authority. It brings together landowners, people who need hay for their cattle and people who grow hay to try to find solutions to benefit endangered birds. In that one program, they're bringing together farmers, landowners, conservationists and environmentalists and trying to find a solution to a problem that we all face. I think this is quite typical of the work that conservation authorities do.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, thank you for that. Absolutely. I think I've mentioned that I had a town hall on this last week and I had over 1,000 people participate, which was a huge number of people to join a Zoom meeting. They're really outraged by this.

I think they've awoken to this government's tactics. It's trying to slip major changes that affect and impact our environment into budget bills. This is a budget bill. They're still sitting on \$9.3 billion worth of spending, according to the FAO, but instead, their priority seems to be to attack the environment.

Bill 66: They slipped something in there that would have opened up the greenbelt to development, and the outcry then was huge. With Bill 66, that outcry resulted in the government removing the schedule that was going to open up the greenbelt for development.

My question to you is, do you think that the outrage over this schedule and the related outrage over the use of ministerial zoning orders to allow development on provincially significant and protected wetlands, like in Ajax—do you have confidence that the government is listening and that they will do the right thing and remove this schedule from the bill?

Dr. Anne Bell: I have hope; I hope that that's the case. They listened in the case of Bill 66 and they removed the problematic schedule. I'm hoping it's the same in this case, because I would say that the outcry is equal.

You mentioned your Zoom meeting. We had the same thing. We co-hosted a Zoom meeting with the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Environmental Defence, and we had over 2,000 people register for it.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Dr. Anne Bell: We've never seen anything like it. People are really concerned.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I agree. I absolutely agree. Thank you for your presentation.

I'm going to turn my attention to Smokey Thomas, please, if you don't mind. I'm actually going to continue on with the issue of the changes to the environmental protections. You mentioned that your staff—you represent members who work in the Ministry of the Environment and perhaps in the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Auditor General just issued a scathing report on this government's performance on the environment. One of the things, among many things, she identified was that there is insufficient staffing in these ministries. Staff are trying to do their jobs as best they can, but they don't have, for example, ecologists and leading scientists. The staffing is reduced and it's impacting their ability to do their job correctly. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Yes, I do, actually. The cuts in the ministry and the cuts to conservation authorities, frankly, were the result of 15 years of Liberal austerity and Mike Harris before that. The government didn't do anything or, to the best of my knowledge, didn't do much to fix it in the short term when they were first elected, but this budget does present an opportunity to rebuild public services, to put the specialists that the Liberals got rid of back into the ministry. I'd be really encouraging to hire them back.

Some of those conservation authorities are problematic. We've had all kinds of trouble down in Niagara with the conservation authority as an employer. They could turn their minds to accountability in some of the conservation authorities.

I don't really know all the changes because my focus on this budget was public services, but yes, they've got a chance here in that bill. If there's something in there that should come out, they should take it out. But they should put stuff back in there to rebuild the capacity to protect the environment, to protect our species.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: We're stewards of the land, so they've got an opportunity here, I think, to put back into that and be stewards of the land.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much.

In the time that we have left, I'm going to get you to comment on the FAO's most recent report and what's before the estimates committee of this Legislature, that there is \$9.3 billion of unspent COVID-19 relief. We heard yesterday testimony that in this new budget, there's possibly up to \$11 billion of unallocated dollars, in what were described as phantom expenditures. This government is giving itself the ability to spend billions and billions of dollars that they put into contingency funds to reduce the debt and deficit. And you know this is a government that likes to manipulate what the debt or the deficit is in the public.

How do you feel about this government setting aside contingency funds that they can then use to reduce the debt and the deficit to show some good numbers, when they're still not investing in public services?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll go to the independent members now, but before we do that, we'll do an attendance check for MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Hi, Chair. Yes, it's MPP Hunter, and I am in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: So I do want to speak to the conservation authorities. Ontario Nature has certainly made the clear case for the importance of them.

In terms of the original cuts that were made under the guise of red tape reduction under the Harris government, this drastically reduced provincial funding for the conservation authorities. They were receiving \$50 million annually divided amongst all of the conservation authorities, and as a result of the Harris cuts, it was reduced from \$50 million to \$8 million.

0930

Then the conservation authorities had to, of course, re-establish their model where they work very, very closely with municipalities for their approved budget. We've heard from many conservation authorities throughout the time of the witness testimonies about that important relationship that they have with municipalities.

I'm wondering if you can speak to the changes in the governance where each municipality that is on the board, by legislation, will now have to represent their municipality rather than the duty of care of the conservation authority itself and its mandate. If I could hear from Anne about any concerns on the governance side in terms of the work that the conservation authorities do.

Dr. Anne Bell: That's a chief concern, in fact, because as I tried to explain in my presentation, it's the watershed perspective that makes our conservation authority so unique and so highly regarded among many, many jurisdictions. So to actually direct board members to represent only the interests of their municipalities directly rubs up

against this notion of a watershed perspective and getting beyond those political limitations to consider what makes sense in terms of the landscape.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: And we all know that the watershed areas go beyond jurisdictional boundaries that have been drawn and it's that co-operation that is really, really needed.

Another aspect that has surfaced is the expertise that is required on those boards. There are some boards that came forward saying they are represented mostly by municipalities, but other boards said that they rely on scientists and the work of those experts who serve on the board to help inform the work of the conservation authorities. By restricting and limiting the composition of the board just to municipal councillors, how do you believe that will hinder the work?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Dr. Anne Bell: Again, what you want in a board, a functioning board, is exactly the expertise you need to make your decisions properly. If you don't have that expertise among your municipal representatives, you need it elsewhere. And if that's scientific expertise, then you need to bring it on to your board. It's that simple. Anybody who has been on a board understands that. When you're forming your board, you bring the people on that you need to carry out your business. If you don't have them, you can't carry out your business properly.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Fundamentally, schedule 6 and schedule 8 have been shown to be an attack on our environment and long-term sustainability of our natural wetlands and forests, and it should be removed. I would agree with those witnesses who have put that argument forward. I think it is a strong case for the government to reconsider and to remove those two schedules to protect our environment. The AG has also affirmed the need for more focus on the environment from this government as well. Thank you so much.

Dr. Anne Bell: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move to the government side now. MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thanks, Chair. I appreciate that.

I'd like to correct some phantom numbers that MPP Shaw has put out. When she's talking to the report from the Attorney General, that report was done based on first quarter numbers. So, yes, we had \$9.3 billion in contingency, but most of that has actually been spent on things. It allowed us the ability to be flexible and do a number of things. Just for example—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Shaw, do you have a point of order?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Chair. While I appreciate MPP Smith's attempts to correct my record, I did not say the Auditor General reported those numbers. If you would take the time to read the report, it was the Financial Accountability Officer, so you're conflating two reports. But thank you for your effort to set it straight.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Shaw, that's not a valid point of order.

MPP Smith, you may continue.

Mr. Dave Smith: Sorry about that. It was the Financial Accountability Officer that I was talking about—my mistake on that—and it was the first quarter that they were talking about. We are now in the third quarter. When they do that report, they do it as a snapshot in time at that time. It would really be beneficial if we were talking about today's numbers, not something from two quarters ago.

My question, though, is for Alex Greco. Alex, it's good to see you. You talked a little bit about electricity rates. I'm going to touch on that because you and I have had a number of conversations about the global adjustments and the effect on that.

A couple of statistics I'd like to throw out: In class B, or commercial electrical users, we've seen a 118% increase in electricity over the decade. In class A, or industrial users, we've seen almost a 40% increase over that same period of time. We went from, at one point, the lowest electrical rates in North America—and here's a staggering thought: In industrial rates, we are 60th out of 65 jurisdictions, and in commercial rates, we're now 64th out of 65. That's not really a great thing. The changes that we have made, though, will bring our industrial rates down into the top 10 and commercial rates into the top 12 in terms of what our rate will be moving forward.

There seems to be a misconception from some people about what electricity rates mean in terms of jobs and business being viable in this province. We saw more than 350,000 manufacturing jobs leave the province as a result of some of the policies of previous governments. How does this help level the playing field? And what does it mean for the average person when there are companies that are here to employ them?

Mr. Alex Greco: Thank you for the question, MPP Smith. The global adjustment, as you and I have talked about, is one of the most expensive parts of an electricity bill for an industrial user. To be able to shrink that GA, when it was getting up to—and hearing the fact that it's up to \$6 billion in terms of a collective cost to the whole electricity system, it's significant. Manufacturers need to be able to have cash flow and liquidity on hand to purchase new machinery, equipment and technology. The changes are a start to be able to get more cash in the hands of manufacturers to be able to make new investments.

I think that for the average Ontarian, it allows them to be able to be employed in the sector. The more jobs and the more growth we have in this sector, it strengthens communities, it strengthens companies and it allows us to be able to build for the future, which I think is positive.

Having said that, though, our work isn't done on that. I mean, some of the statistics that you've cited, especially for class B—moving forward for the 2021 budget, looking at an industrial rate program option, what's been done in New York, Florida and Quebec is very important, because right now there's only one program option, really, for large industrials, and that's the ICI program. We need something for class B, because if we want to bring those numbers down further, we won't get them all by just shrinking the GA. So it's a start, but more has to be done.

Mr. Dave Smith: Mr. Chair, how much time do we have left?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Dave Smith: Sticking with you, Alex, I want to talk a little bit about micro-credentials. It's something that I think a lot of people are a little bit confused on, what it actually means and what it can do. You represent, obviously, manufacturers and exporters. There would have to be some type of qualifications that they're looking for specifically—not necessarily just a general bachelor of arts or bachelor of science degree, but specific to the industry. How do you think the investments in micro-credential training are going to help in finding jobs for people?

Mr. Alex Greco: In our latest Management Issues Survey, 80% of our members still voice labour shortages as their primary issue. So the funding allows for employers to be able to help invest in their employees, and it allows employees to be able to pursue a career in manufacturing.

I think one of the challenges is, in the past, there hasn't been a proper balance between the academic side and the practical side, trying to get employees to upgrade their skills, especially at a time where equipment in manufacturing plants is becoming more complicated and more technologically advanced than ever before. Being able to bridge that gap and get folks introduced into a career in manufacturing, I think, is significant.

As we move forward, though, how it's implemented and being very clear in terms of those guidelines is going to be important. That's where I think the colleges and universities have a role to play, the local economic development agencies have a role to play and the government itself. It all has to be connected and not in silos.

0940

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you. I'm going to pivot over to Smokey Thomas, if possible.

Smokey, you represent a very large number of people who are unionized, obviously, since you're a union head, and a lot of the positions that your people have are higher-paying positions than someone who is not a skilled labourer, for example. We're making an investment in skilled trades, and those tend to be higher-paying jobs than others. I've made the comment a number of times and I stand by it: I pay as much per hour for a plumber as I do for a lawyer.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Dave Smith: Do you think that our focus on skilled trades and getting people that type of an education, rather than having a singular focus on university degrees, is going to be beneficial in the job market for people that you also represent?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: I'm not agreeing, pretty much, with what you said there, but I would like to elaborate a bit, though. To go back to Alex's point on micro-credentials, I have some folks who work in the community college system who are very concerned about micro-credentialism. But I think there is a way for business, government and the colleges to come together to actually train that workforce that we need.

I'll give you an example: My grandson wanted to get into a welding program. Well, he didn't have the right

English. I'm sorry, but as a granddad, I don't quite understand why he would have to have some sort of advanced English to be a welder. So there are some things there that I think—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll have to move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank our presenters. I want to say to Smokey, thank you so much for the work that your members have done for the province throughout the pandemic. I know that it hasn't been easy and they have stepped up. I want to recognize and acknowledge their good work to keep Ontario's people and population as safe as possible, and to roll out the programs to respond to that.

I do want to just spend a little bit of time with the manufacturers, given the fact that we are in a recession that has been caused by the response to COVID. When we look back at the 2008-09 recession, there were over 800,000 jobs that were lost as a result of that recession. All of those jobs were brought back and Ontario enjoyed historic records in terms of low unemployment rates and a strong GDP relative to other OECD countries.

As we look at this recession, there are concerns in terms of the recovery and what type of recovery it will be. Will the whole economy recover or will parts of it recover and split into what they're calling a K-shaped recovery, where certain groups don't participate in that recovery at the same rate as others? I'm wondering if you could speak to what is next for your members and what they are seeing, and how you can be supported in terms of seeing a strong total recovery for Ontario's economy.

Mr. Alex Greco: Thank you, MPP Hunter. It's good to see you.

I think that, first and foremost, we really have to look at our tax and regulatory system. That's really what is next for us, because right now, for years, federally, the small business tax threshold has been stuck at \$500,000. There's not been an incentive for companies to be able to grow. At a time right now when the Canadian real GDP is set to decline by 5.6% this year, that's concerning. Right now, more than ever, we have to be able to make those investments. So looking at a reduction of the M and P rate is one thing; looking at an investment tax credit, rooted in the tax code, to provide support for company training and purchasing machinery, equipment and technology, as a couple of examples, is something that's very important going forward.

If we're going to be able to grow and get more companies here, we can't be afraid to invest and spend. Just doing cuts is not going to get us to where we need to go. In all the different areas I touched on, whether it's on skills, whether it's on training, whether it's on electricity costs, we have to be able to spend. The more companies we have, the more jobs we'll be able to have, and we'll be able to bring down the deficit as a whole.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Alex Greco: I think, as we go forward, the other thing we also have to do is we have to provide supports to

diversify our supply chains. That procurement piece is important. It's not just about health care products and about PPE; it's about food products and all types of manufacturing goods. If we do that, that will encourage more tech adoption, more innovation and more success overall to win back manufacturing investments.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm glad you touched on that, Alex, because the export part of your membership is extremely important for us to see that bounce-back.

Mr. Alex Greco: Yes, I know, absolutely. I think the other thing, though, is—what's happening right now is we have different funding programs in Ontario, but there's not one centralized source to be able to find out supports, where people can apply for funding, where to look at in terms of getting assistance. The government has talked about Invest Ontario, but it has to go beyond that. It has to be a concierge service to help companies: "What can we do to get you to invest in Ontario?" If we don't make it easy and seamless, like what's happened in Ohio—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move back to the government side now for their second round. MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Hi. Good morning, everyone. Thank you to all the presenters for giving us your presentations. I think a lot of your concerns are being brought to the attention of the government.

My first question is for Mr. Greco again. Through the 2020 budget, the government announced that it will level the playing field by lowering the Business Education Tax rates for over 200,000 employers, or 94% of the businesses in Ontario, starting next year, January 1. This will create \$450 million in immediate annual savings and represents a reduction of 30% for many businesses currently subject to the highest BET rates in the province.

How would this proposed Business Education Tax reduction—and also another one, which is the Employer Health Tax exemption—impact the business of your members? Also, could they use the savings to invest in other areas to adapt their business to current circumstances?

Mr. Alex Greco: Thank you for the question. Simply put, these measures do help give manufacturers more cash flow and liquidity at a time where—while manufacturing sales were up at the start, after the lockdown manufacturing sales have stagnated. We've heard from a number of our companies right now that they're really worried in terms of being able to keep up with sales in the first quarter of 2021. So the more cash they have to be able to invest to keep employees, to be able to make new investments, to look at expansion plans is important. But I want to stress, Mr. Pang, I think this is only a start.

For example, for property taxes right now, in certain regions it will help, like in Pembroke and some of the GTA regions. But in some jurisdictions in Ontario, we're still uncompetitive in terms of property tax rates between industrial, commercial and residential. We need to be able to implement more fairness in the system. That includes looking at lowering property tax rates down the line, by

ensuring more fairness across the entire system and looking at property tax assessments, so to streamline and then reduce red tape, especially when we look at 2019 valuation levels. I think that's one part of it.

With the Employer Health Tax and BET tax, I think that's important because 30,000 businesses—at the start of the pandemic, if actions weren't done quickly, companies would have shut doors. They would have gone out of business. So it helps, and I think having that extended long-term allows companies to be able to plan for the future and think about what their overall outlook is over the next three to five years.

Mr. Billy Pang: Okay. That's a great response for us. I think that, in the future, we don't want to give more burden to businesses so that we can move forward to have a better economy, especially regarding our government's goal to help business recover after the pandemic. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): About four minutes.

Mr. Billy Pang: Okay. The next question is for Ms. Bell. I appreciate your concerns on the environment. The government has recently announced several investments that aim to preserve Ontario's natural spaces and protect our environment. That includes investment in new and innovative waste water and stormwater programs, such as \$50 million over two years to improve the management of Lake Ontario waste water discharge, \$10 million to provide support for waste water monitoring and public reports to improve transparency, and \$7.5 million to contribute to the health of the Great Lakes and watersheds.

Can you explain how this investment could contribute to protect the health of Ontarians now and in the future?

0950

Dr. Anne Bell: Sure. I'm not that familiar with these investments, but obviously any investments that help to protect water and clean up pollution are more than welcome. It's important to all communities and important to all of the species and all of the wildlife that depend on these watersheds.

Mr. Billy Pang: So you think it's okay for us that we put in this investment in the budget to protect the environment, right?

Dr. Anne Bell: I think it's good that we're investing in water protection and water cleanup, absolutely. I think a lot more needs to be done. For example, there are many Indigenous communities in Ontario that are still on drinking water advisories, so maybe there could be some investment there. There are lots of places for investment and every little bit is welcome, but a lot is needed.

Mr. Billy Pang: Yes, okay. Thank you for your answer.

My third question is for Warren. As you mentioned, you're representing 170,000 members across Ontario. The budget includes \$52 million to recruit, retain and support over 3,700 front-line health workers, including nurses and personal support workers, to ensure that Ontario's health care system can meet any surge in demand.

How would this investment help provide safe, high-quality care for patients and long-term residents as we move through this pandemic and beyond?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: That's certainly a very welcome investment. The problem becomes that you have, frankly, a lot of critics saying that you're not doing enough. You just don't start recruiting on Tuesday—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: —and hire on Wednesday. Even PSWs have to go through the training course. They need to be trained adequately and come out at the other end competent in the duties they're going to perform, same as RPNs, same as RNs. So it's a very welcome investment, but in long-term care, the staffing crunch is going to take a little while to fix.

One of the things that would be good is if the wage rates were the same across the board and they were full-time jobs, those sorts of things. I've had conversations with the Premier about this. So I think that's a very welcome addition to the budget, I have to say.

Again, we have our college academics working in long-term care, working with health to actually get PSWs properly trained up, credentialized, and out and into the workforce. There's a \$5,000 bonus if you sign up and agree to stay for a while. All of these things are really, really good to recruit—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Sorry to cut you off.

We'll move to the opposition side now. Opposition? MPP Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for the presentation, to Warren and Alex and also Anne.

I want to do a quick question to Ontario Nature. I know it's been a while since we met, about a year and a half or so. We met a couple of times. I come from a riding, Kiiwetinoong, in northwestern Ontario that is 294,000 square kilometres, so it's a very big riding. When we talk about the environment, when we talk about the resources that are there, the access to the waters, our people have always been concerned about the environment. We've been here for thousands of years, and me coming down to Toronto to do Queen's Park work in this Legislature—sometimes people refer to the Far North as remote, but it's Toronto that's remote for me, just because we've been here thousands of years but I don't know how long Toronto has been here. I just wanted to say that.

I know when we talk about traditional territories, when we talk about treaty territories—without the treaties, the lands that exist as Ontario would not be there. What I'm getting at is that I think sometimes when we talk about engagement with the First Nations people as a province, as a government—and sometimes they do not talk to us.

I can say that I have this one community that has had 25 years of a boil-water advisory in the community. I just saw a clip there this morning whereby this young nine-year-old girl, Bedahbun Moonias, was saying, "We're not animals." They're not goats. They want clean drinking water. They want to go home, and right now it's not happening. Yes, I know this budget is about protect, support and recover from COVID-19, but right now they're staying in a hotel in Thunder Bay. What's Ontario doing about it?

But I think what I want to get at is I know there is quite a bit of discussion with respect to schedule 6, regarding some of the zoning orders and not recognizing the treaty rights, Aboriginal rights. I know there's a derogation clause in there. Can you talk a little bit about Indigenous issues and Indigenous lands versus this specific schedule 6, and how you see it aligning or not aligning?

Dr. Anne Bell: Sure. First, this schedule affects a huge portion of the province, not the place where you're from, but still, places in northern Ontario and right across southern Ontario—and these are all in the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples. You have to wonder, when something comes forward at the speed with which this bill came forward, with this schedule tucked inside of that bill, was there any consultation with Indigenous communities? None that I've heard of. I would be happy to know if there was, but none that I've heard of.

So it's a violation of their constitutional rights, their treaty rights and their inherent rights as Indigenous people, not to be consulted on something that is going to definitely affect their communities, because there are many Indigenous communities that work with their conservation authorities to address issues like water quality, wildlife habitat, restoration and all of these things. They are going to be affected by this schedule unless it's removed.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for that. In the last few days we've been hearing about the removal of this schedule 6, so I understand that.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'm going to pass it off to my colleague Sandy Shaw.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much. I'm going to go back to Mr. Thomas. I thought my question before was an excellent question; it was just too long. As quickly as possible, can you maybe comment on what I asked earlier, which is that this government is sitting on billions and billions of dollars of contingency funding, particularly at a time when front-line public services—especially health care, education workers and PSWs working in long-term care—are understaffed and underpaid? The government calls this prudence, but we think this money would be prudently spent to keep people safe. If you could comment on that, that would be great.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: I agree; the money needs to go out the door. But I also understand, having been around a long, long time, with all three parties in government, that it takes a while to get the money out the door. Some of that money from the feds didn't actually show up. Politicians make the announcements and the money takes two or three months to come. I think in the Ministry of Finance they need to find a way to get the money out the door quicker. That would be very welcome. So if it's there to be spent, let's spend it, and let's get things fixed up real quick.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. What do you think about how they've given themselves the wiggle room to spend that contingency funding to reduce the deficit?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Well, they're politicians. I guess they can give themselves whatever they like. They have a majority, so what can I say?

You do need a contingency fund; it's just what it's used for. I think that's something the Legislature would need to address, but it should be spent on real public services and real people and not on deficit reduction.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. This is all the time we have for this morning. The committee is now in recess until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The committee recessed from 1000 to 1300.

FEDERATION OF ONTARIO
COTTAGERS' ASSOCIATIONS

NATURE LONDON

CAREER COLLEGES ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good afternoon, and welcome back. We'll be continuing public hearings on Bill 229, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes.

We'll go to our next presenter this afternoon, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations. If you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Terry Rees: Thank you. It's Terry Rees. I'm the executive director of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations. I'd like to thank Chair Sandhu and members of the standing committee today for the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about budget bill 229 and specifically our concerns with the proposed amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act and schedule 6 of Bill 229. FOCA believes that schedule 6 in its entirety should be removed from this bill.

As representatives of Ontario's 250,000 waterfront property owners, we have a 55-plus-year tradition of supporting sustainable and affordable communities. Collectively, these property owners contribute a conservative \$800 million annually in local property taxes, and we recognize that a portion of these are directed via local levies to various conservation authorities. Our member associations are located in six different Ontario municipalities served by a conservation authority.

What our residents and our communities get in return for our investment is expert advice on managing our local resources; guidance that protects public safety and private property; and independent, apolitical oversight for local land use planning; environmental monitoring; and significant amounts of leveraged community stewardship for our water resources and other natural resources.

We were pleased to be invited to Minister Yurek's consultations on conservation authorities in early 2020, both in Colborne in MPP Piccini's riding and also in London. On both these occasions, we presented a focused position that managing on a watershed level is essential to protecting our families, our communities, our infrastructure and our economy. We asked then, and would still like to know, if not the conservation authorities, then who?

Conservation authorities have many important responsibilities delegated to them by the province. They're also governed by a board that consists of their primary funders and their clients, who are local municipalities. Local CAs staff up with local expertise and have access to the kind of local information, resources and conditions that inform prudent decisions.

We believe that allowing the routine appeal of conservation authority land use planning decisions to the Minister of Natural Resources will have poorer outcomes for our communities and the natural assets they need to be livable and sustainable. Integrated watershed management necessitates the need for an approach that operates across municipal jurisdictions while still considering local priorities, as identified by member municipalities. Integrated watershed management has been advocated by the province's Special Advisor on Flooding and was a leading recommendation in the provincially appointed Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group interim report.

What we didn't hear at the consultations earlier this year, nor have we seen in practice, was a compelling rationale for the broad changes being proposed in schedule 6 of Bill 229. FOCA believes that any revisions to delegated responsibilities and related authority should come through a commitment to reforms and through consultations between Conservation Ontario, local municipalities, AMO and the province, along with the appropriate public consultation and posting under the Environmental Bill of Rights.

Under the Environmental Bill of Rights, Ontario citizens have a right to participate in government decisions affecting the environment. It's intended to allow the public the opportunity to participate in decisions that could impact Ontario's air, water, land and wildlife. Conservation authorities play a significant role in these areas and, as such, these decisions about reform deserve and should be afforded the appropriate public oversight and transparency.

We believe in an effective and affordable system to deliver sound and sustainable land use planning, and good land use management equates to good water management and to the protection of water quality and quantity so essential to all of us. Ontario's conservation authorities are uniquely positioned to do just that, but they need the regulatory breadth and authority to discharge these duties.

Conservation authorities currently are empowered to ensure proposals meet hazard lands and source water protection objectives. The minister simply doesn't have the breadth of local knowledge and context to make these decisions on their own, and an appeal to the office of the minister as part of the normal course of land use planning will put us more at risk and will cost us all more. When carrying out source protection and natural hazard functions, CAs apply science-based information, tools and decision-making to inform their decisions. We believe our communities deserve that standard of care.

In conclusion, FOCA strongly encourages the province to remove schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229 and to commit to a genuine consultation with the parties affected,

and that's conservation authorities, municipalities and, on our behalf, the public. Any resulting fine-tuning of this system, including greater clarity between CAs from both the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, will allow this unique and highly celebrated model of watershed management to serve the economy of Ontario well and will ensure that the goals of the government continue to be supported.

I appreciate your attention today, and that concludes my remarks. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Before we move to our next presenter, I would like to do an attendance check. MPP Kusendova?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Yes, hi. Good afternoon, Chair. This is MPP Kusendova. I'm calling in from my office here at the Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

Our next presenter is Nature London, McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London, Ontario Inc. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Muriel Andreae: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today. I'm Muriel Andreae, past president of, and speaking on behalf of, Nature London, a 156-year-old natural history organization in southwestern Ontario with over 400 members. Our motto is to preserve and enjoy nature.

We are concerned that schedule 8 of Bill 229 will permanently affect species at risk and their habitats. It would give authorized logging operations a permanent exemption from prohibitions against killing species at risk and destroying their habitats. This damaging amendment does not even have public consultation under the Environmental Bill of Rights because it has been introduced in a budget bill.

We are concerned that schedule 6 of Bill 229 will undermine the ability of conservation authorities to do their job. It has also been introduced without the opportunity for public review. Schedule 6 would reduce the mandated objectives of conservation authorities and reduce their programs and services.

We need CAs to bridge municipal boundaries. They use watershed-based planning and permitting to protect wetlands, woodlands and flood plains. Programs such as their decades-old water monitoring program reflect the health of our region. This information inspires many landowners, farmers and urbanites to implement water quality protection programs that reduce soil erosion to prevent nutrients or toxins like oil and herbicides from entering drains, streams and rivers.

Conservation authorities have a history of working well with funding agencies and landowners in providing water quality protection programs. The proposed changes to the CA act would leave many Ontario watersheds at risk of an uncoordinated approach to flood control and water quality, and we may be unable to meet our commitment under international agreements to reduce nutrient loading into Lake Erie.

In the 2019 report on flooding, Ontario's special adviser Doug McNeil recommended that the province consult and collaborate with CAs on flood management. He indicated it was a priority to support CAs to protect our wetlands and green infrastructure and reduce the impacts of flooding. Water and flooding do not recognize or respect political municipal boundaries. The proposed amendments to the CA act will undermine CAs' flood management abilities by limiting their planning abilities, and we need those wetlands and green infrastructures for flood management and for biodiversity.

The proposed amendments on the duties of members also undermine the governance responsibility of members. Members cannot oversee the conservation authority in the whole watershed if the legislation has directed them to only consider the interests of one municipality. CAs currently make authorities and deliver programs based on watershed-scale considerations.

The programs and services which benefit Ontario citizens and our natural areas locally include tree-planting and woodlot management; biodiversity conservation and restoration with native shrubs, nettle and prairie species; environmental education programs, which help youth make informed decisions on their actions and their future; wetland creation and restoration on public and private properties; outdoor trail development and management, which provides recreation and health benefits; and support for stewardship organizations like Friends of Medway Creek, which spur local interest in protection of healthy, diverse watersheds.

Many of the programs and services that we most appreciate will be severely undermined if they're classified in the future as non-mandatory. The new system of patchwork programs and services, with a possibility of ministerial-level permit decisions, would undermine watershed science, reduce watershed health and increase hazards to public safety. CAs can make non-political technical decisions based on natural hazard science; schedule 6 would allow the minister to overrule these decisions.

The proposed changes would increase red tape, with new requirements of municipal service agreements.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Muriel Andrae: We do not see why the province feels this is valuable as it will increase administration costs without program benefits. There would be additional significant delays and costs for CA regulation enforcement and planning and permitting processes. Appeals to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal and direct appeals to the minister will add to municipal costs as CA admin and legal costs will increase.

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Schedule 6 sets back watershed planning by decades just when we need it more than ever because of climate change. We need more green space, more consideration of water quality and quantity, not less. We recommend that schedule 6 be withdrawn entirely from Bill 229.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you for your presentation.

We'll move to our next presenter, Career Colleges Ontario. If you can please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Chris Conway: Good afternoon. My name is Chris Conway—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sorry. Just to inform the members as well, Adrian Sharma, one of the presenters, will not be presenting. Thank you. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Chris Conway: Thank you very much. We appreciate the opportunity to be here today. My name is Chris Conway. I'm the CEO of Career Colleges Ontario.

We're a not-for-profit organization and we're seeking equitable treatment of career college students on a level playing field for our member institutions. We represent over 240 career colleges and 80% of students in the sector. Our members graduate over 30,000 students a year in essential skilled jobs, in fields such as PSWs, applied arts, business, health care, human services, information technology and pre-apprenticeship training. We're the largest trainers of PSWs in Ontario, with over 4,000 graduates annually.

It's becoming clearer during COVID-19 that many of our institutions are becoming the trainer of choice for displaced workers. In recent months, we've seen an increase of enrolment of up to 25% over and above record enrolment levels. Given the high rate of employment in many of these fields, we are very encouraged by this trend.

First and foremost, we're not here to ask for money in the budget. We submit that by levelling the playing field and implementing requests that we made in our budget submission, the number of students enrolled and subsequent placed in skilled jobs will continue to grow.

We would like to tell you a bit about a typical college student. More than half are over 30 years old; nearly 70% of career college students are women; 12% are single parents; and half of career college students are first-generation Canadians who are upgrading their credentials, or earning a new credential, to excel in the workforce. Put simply, career college students are laid-off workers, sole-support parents, injured workers, newcomers to the province and persons with disabilities. We support Ontario's hard-to-train students and give them the one-on-one education resources they need to fulfill the jobs of today and tomorrow. We're the bridge to their workforce.

We often say it's difficult to go more than two weeks in Ontario without meeting one of our graduates. For example, we train PSWs, medical office assistants, dental assistants, lab technicians, truck drivers, heavy equipment operators, welders, security guards, pilots, chefs, paramedics and pharmacy assistants, among others.

One of our asks relates to apprenticeship training. Currently, career college students can enrol in one of the hundreds of pre-apprenticeship courses offered at career colleges in the province, but they have to attend a community college for full apprenticeship training. We submit that career colleges should be able to offer apprenticeship training. Many of these students chose career colleges because of the smaller class sizes, older student

demographic, proximity to their residence and the one-on-one support they get from instructors. They also have financial and familial responsibilities that require flexible course schedules, and they may find it difficult to commute outside of their communities due to these obligations.

It's our position that any student in Ontario pursuing a post-secondary education deserves fair access to programs and financial support. For example, when it comes to second-career funding, a community college student can be awarded more than double the amount than if they attended a career college.

Community college students enrolled in online training are eligible for full OSAP funding. Our colleges have only been allowed to offer online and blended learning temporarily during COVID. We request that this should be made permanent. This offering is already successfully in place, and third-party accreditation goes along with it in many cases. Frankly, it goes against all the trends in education to not offer online or blended learning.

Unfortunately, international students are not eligible for post-graduation work permits, which are available to international students attending public institutions. They're also available for students attending private institutions in Quebec, so they can study in Ontario or they can come into Quebec to get access to the Canadian market in a private institution. Then, in our case, our graduates cannot contribute to the province's workforce simply because they've attended a private college.

Training to supply businesses with in-demand workers is what we do best. Our member programs quickly adjust to market needs, and our students who otherwise would struggle to enter the workforce are given the attention and supports they need to excel in their chosen fields.

There is a misconception that our students are interchangeable with the students of public colleges. In fact, as I explained, our demographic is actually quite different. Our students tend to be older and have a different set of characteristics, in terms of work experience and so on, than your average community college student. Therefore, they're often referred to as the invisible sector. For these students, institutions have to be flexible to their needs and not the other way around. Our members are able to offer this flexibility, if allowed.

In addition, we submit that a delegated authority model to sector regulation has shown to be really successful in the past. There are 14 delegated authorities in Ontario, and one only needs to look at similar organizations, such as the Real Estate Council of Ontario or the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council, for assurance that this model works. In addition, mandatory membership to Career Colleges Ontario would allow institutions to report the bad actors in the sector—although there are very few, but still—for immediate correction and eliminate the environment of fear imposed on operators.

Career Colleges Ontario is a mature organization that has informed and organized the sector since 1972. I would add that we actually handle in our office the OSAP processing for over 23,000 students here. We've done that

for 30 years with all the levels of compliance that are required for that.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Chris Conway: In conclusion, we submit that by levelling the playing field by implementing the requests in our pre-budget submission, the number of students enrolled in career colleges and subsequently placed in skilled jobs will continue to grow. We believe this is of crucial importance given the demand we're seeing from students seeking to improve their skill set to gain a meaningful career. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll start with the questions, but before we do that, MPP Babikian, can you please confirm your attendance?

Mr. Aris Babikian: Yes, this is MPP Aris Babikian in Queen's Park in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start the questions with the government. MPP Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: To all of our witnesses, thank you for your presentations—very much appreciated.

I want to start my questions with Terry, if I can. Terry, I proudly count myself amongst your membership. My family has been very fortunate to have a cottage up in the Lanark area outside of Ottawa for a number of years now. I've got to say it's one of my favourite places to get away, not least of all because no one can reach me on my cellphone when I'm there, which is a nice getaway.

I wanted to ask you about two of our tax credits that we've included in this budget. The first one is the staycation tax credit that we're going to be rolling out in 2021 to encourage folks to spend money in the tourism sector in Ontario. Of course, I know a lot of cottage owners also rent their cottages out, so I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit about that.

And then the second one is our Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit. I know a lot of cottage owners are retirees, are seniors. I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit on how that tax credit can benefit some of your members in doing some upgrades to their cottages, to make them a little bit more accessible and safe for them.

Mr. Terry Rees: Thank you for the question. Lanark is one of our favourite areas, of course, as a water-filled jurisdiction, and I'm sure that your government's work on broadband will either exacerbate or solve your problem about cell access. Thank you for the question. I won't be able to speak, I'm afraid, to the seniors' tax credit, although many of our members are aged. Certainly, any help for seniors is surely helpful, but I frankly can't speak to that one.

I know as a member of the Muskoka Economic Recovery Task Force that we're very big proponents of shopping locally. Supporting our local rural communities is very important. Realizing none of us can really go anywhere and we should be staying in our wonderful province of Ontario anyway, I think that will be a progressive and positive contribution to help people realize what's in their own neighbourhood and continue to support their local service providers and merchants. So I think that's terrific.

Hopefully that will be able to continue, to have a legacy of the wonderful water that we've been blessed with and we hopefully will continue to steward responsibly.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Yes, for sure. As we moved into this, we had heard from so many folks in the tourism sector that two of the things they wanted to see were (1) marketing support and (2) some tax incentives. As we move into marketing 2021 as the year of the staycation, I think we have so many opportunities to highlight the beautiful cottage countries we have all over the province, whether it's in Lanark, Rideau Lakes, the Kawarthas, the Muskokas, up north in northern Ontario. I'm sure my colleague MPP Smith from Peterborough-Kawartha might have a few comments on that as well, but thank you again for your presentation.

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I'm going to pivot now to Career Colleges Ontario. Chris, thanks for your presentation. In this budget, for us, there were three key pillars that we wanted to focus on, the first being protecting our health care, the second being supporting families and businesses and the third—this is where I think you guys fit in beautifully—is laying the foundation for recovery and making sure that as we eventually move out of this pandemic, we've laid the right groundwork to allow businesses to flourish. Of course, making sure that we have a skilled workforce available is a huge part of that, and career colleges will be an incredibly important partner.

I want to talk a little bit about the \$59.5 million to support Ontario's first micro-credential strategy. Of course, this investment is going to go to create a fund to incent the development of new micro-credentials that respond to regional labour market needs and strengthen partnerships between post-secondary institutions to help people retrain and upgrade their skills. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about this. How will this investment benefit students, and help students, from your perspective, acquire the relevant expertise to enter the workforce?

Mr. Chris Conway: Thank you very much for that. I appreciate it. Actually, yes, there were several things in the budget we were very pleased to see. Generally, some of the support we're receiving from the government—the temporary approval of online learning and blended learning has been very helpful and essential under the circumstances, and this relates to the question about micro-credentials. We're hoping that that gets extended indefinitely, given that in particular a lot of micro-credential training is done online. We believe that the theory portion of these courses—when it's offered in that format, you're able to reach some of the isolated communities within the province. We have locations all over the province. We have 240 members. So just to say that we're very keen on micro-credentialing.

A key part of this is ensuring that the Ministry of Colleges and Universities is aware. In the past, micro-credentialing was frowned upon. The inspectors deemed it—the term they used, I believe, was “stacking.” They were not in favour of micro-credentialing. So we've actually requested to the ministry that the inspectors be

informed that this is going to be permitted going ahead, ensuring that we can do this. But we think we're ideally positioned given the short training durations, that we can really help with the micro-credentialing aspect.

Also, a couple of other things that we were very pleased with are the announcement of the consultations taking place on the Second Career program—that's great news—and also the consultations taking place on apprenticeship training. We did participate and talked to the skilled trades panel. There were several things there, in addition to the micro-credentials, that we were very pleased to see. So thank you for that.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Absolutely. Just to touch on one of those other things as well, there was also the \$100 million in funding for 2020-21, through Employment Ontario—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts:—for skills training for workers most affected by COVID-19. Are you able to perhaps describe a little bit what kind of services Employment Ontario can provide to those who have been affected and how this funding could be best used to fill that skilled trades gap that we have in Ontario?

Mr. Chris Conway: Yes, absolutely. First and foremost, we've actually had some discussions recently with the various ministries about ensuring that when people come in to Employment Ontario offices, they're given the full picture of what's available out there, which includes not just the public institutions but also the private ones. We, in fact, became aware that there was a memorandum issued a couple of years ago stating that in all circumstances it should be done as a level playing field, which we are very encouraged to see.

Employment Ontario is a key resource across the province for a lot of people looking to make a change in their career or someone who is a displaced worker, particularly right now with what's going on with COVID. They can get information about the Second Career program, for example, through Employment Ontario. So it's a really crucial part of how we come in contact with people initially—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll go to the opposition now. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the presenters this afternoon.

I'm going to focus my first round of questioning to the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations. We were also surprised to see this in a budget bill. Really, we feel that the government should have been spending their priority time looking at how they were going to spend the billions of dollars that they're still sitting on instead of looking at changes to the conservation authorities that nobody asked for. So we were surprised.

The opposition that you mentioned is coming from all sides. It's the big city mayors. We had the Ontario Federation of Agriculture speak out against this. It's just another of this government's what would seem to be a pro-developer, anti-environment attack. It weakens environmental protections, and we know that.

You asked the question, which I think is so important, if not CAs, then who? Who is going to be doing this? Because we know that the conservation authorities have been in place—I heard they’ve been through 11 Premiers, so they’ve been doing this work for years and years and years. Why now, without significant consultation, would this government be throwing conservation authorities under the bus?

Mr. Terry Rees: I think there was a question there. Without presupposing the rationale for putting it into an omnibus bill with 98 other acts, we agree that it is worthy of its own specific consultations. It’s such a matter of public interest, and the Environmental Bill of Rights is meant to provide those kinds of important decisions with the kind of public oversight and transparency that we think it deserves.

We’ve seen low and high water in the same regions in some years. The only way that gets managed is on a watershed level, and that happens with local information, local science, and with the guidance and oversight of local governments. I know that our partners in municipal government rely on those resources very heavily. If the conservation authorities aren’t empowered and authorized to discharge that duty then, frankly, it’s not going to happen. It’s going to be more expensive and it’s going to put our communities more at risk.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that. I want to focus on that area of the impact that this will have on communities. We know municipalities across the province, pre-COVID, were struggling with their infrastructure deficits. I’ve seen shoreline erosion, bridge washouts, road washouts, and these have huge economic consequences. And that was before we hit this instance where we’re seeing this mandate of conservation authorities to protect infrastructure and property eroded.

Can you talk a little bit about how this will impact residential taxpayers? Essentially, these costs will be borne by municipalities. How will it impact residential taxpayers? And also insurance companies—will some of your members struggle to find insurance coverage, or affordable insurance coverage, if these protections are taken away?

Mr. Terry Rees: That’s a great question. I’m not an environmentalist; I’m an economist by formal training. We can’t afford not to be planning ahead and having the kind of proactive planning on managing our natural assets, our natural heritage and our natural infrastructure in a responsible way. We know that insurance costs and claims have gone through the roof from flooding. Low and high water are an issue. We can’t afford to make decisions in excluding the kind of watershed-based thought process that conservation authorities apply. As a residential property taxpayer, I’m very much concerned about what our long-term costs are of not protecting our infrastructure and our private property appropriately.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that. You did mention the obligation this government has under the Environmental Bill of Rights. You will know—or if you don’t know—the Auditor General just released a scathing report

on this government’s performance when it comes to the environment. They said that multiple government ministries are non-compliant with their responsibilities under the Environmental Bill of Rights and that this prevented its effective operation. They said that some ministers are still not posting environmentally significant proposals on the environmental registry.

You and your organization and folks were consulted, and out of good faith you participated in that. But this leads to the kind of cynicism that we see, when people think that they are talking to the government, but the government just turns around and does something that makes no sense.

I will say the city of Hamilton passed a unanimous motion to call for the repeal of this. The mayor said that this province’s attempt to expedite development is “filled with error and filled with hazard” for flood plains and water courses. “And it just makes absolutely no sense.”

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So the question is, if the government was taking consultation seriously or had taken the opportunity to put this in the Environmental Bill of Rights, do you think this would have improved the legislation or would have led them to not include it in the first place?

Mr. Terry Rees: The environmental registry has been in place since the early 1990s. It provides a forum for people of agencies, municipalities and the public in general to weigh in on decisions and provide—these are very complex issues. These are things that are going to be our kids’ and grandkids’ costs. I think that platform affords the kind of consultation input and sophisticated input that will help the government achieve some of the longer-term goals, including fiscally managing ourselves appropriately. Because if we don’t look at this stuff in a serious, complex and comprehensive way, then we’re going to have expeditious decisions that, in the long term, cost us more.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. In the short time we have left, are you familiar with the ministerial zoning orders that are taking place across the province that also short-circuit the good planning and land use planning that you talked about?

Mr. Terry Rees: I believe the MZOs maybe fall into the same category of giving, in schedule 6, ministerial authority which both tromps on local decision-making and also—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Terry Rees: —does not take into account some of the technical and sophisticated local information that’s important to consider.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Mr. Terry Rees: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We’ll move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank all of the presenters today for your testimony. I wondered if I could start with the conversation with the career colleges around Second Career. That was something that you mentioned. It was brought in by the former government with the recovery from the recession.

I'm wondering about what we're experiencing right now and if you believe that greater investment in programs like Second Career is needed to help people transition as they are facing many, many changes when it comes to the labour market, specifically for women and for those who have been hardest impacted by the recession in terms of employment loss. That includes Black, Indigenous and people of colour. I know that we're starting to track some of those trends through Stats Canada data.

I wanted you to speak to the need for greater investments in skills training as part of the economic recovery planning.

Mr. Chris Conway: Thank you very much for the question. I really appreciate it. We think it's absolutely essential. The advantage with programs like Second Career is that they're already in place. One of the things we said to the government was rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, it would be better to take existing programs and ensure that they're functioning correctly and adequately so that we can get people into these programs and get them retrained.

I might have mentioned in my presentation that what we're seeing in the last four months in particular—because we process OSAP applications through our office—is that we're at over 20%, and in some cases 25%, above record levels of registration. We believe that this is what's starting to happen: People are being displaced due to COVID. They're looking for options. In many cases, you take someone who is working in a retail role or a front-line role and they've been affected by this. They may not, for various reasons, be going back to university to train. They want something short-term, under one year. In many cases, some of these programs have nearly 100% job placement. So they're going in and looking at something that they can get done fairly quickly, that's close to home, and get back out in the workforce.

We think those types of programs that provide support for people going back to work—as I mentioned, 70% of our students are women, 50% are new Canadians. We think it's absolutely crucial for providing support for these people who are probably the hardest hit by COVID.

As I mentioned, our students are often referred to as the invisible sector, because people tend to confuse us with community college students and so on. It's a very different demographic. It's a group that's highly susceptible to these types of economic shifts. What we're seeing now is people are already electing to do this training. It would be great to provide them with as much support as possible to get them back in the workforce in meaningful roles that will continue to provide them with a source of income and a career going forward.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I really appreciate that explanation. I think it's very important that the government hear about some of the proactive ways in which they can expand existing programs to meet the scale of the need right now.

One of the areas that has high, high need is in long-term care. You did speak about the contributions that you make

in training personal support workers. In our few seconds remaining, maybe you can talk about why you believe that is essential, that we ramp that up now, even ahead of the funding for the four hours of average care, because it will take time to train people to fill those positions.

Mr. Chris Conway: That's an excellent question. As I mentioned, we're the largest trainer of PSWs in Ontario. As a result of what I mentioned earlier about our demographic, our students tend to stay in PSW roles when they take it on. They're often, in some cases, foreign-trained medical professionals. Take a foreign-trained nurse, for example: They're people who want to work in roles like this—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move to the opposition now for their second round. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Mr. Rees, I'm going to begin questioning with you. You are yet another voice in opposition to schedule 6. I think it bears noting that it spans every possible sector in Ontario right now: criticism from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, from countless environmental organizations and now from a property owners' association, which is what you represent.

I thought your presentation was fantastic. It was very clear, it was concise and it brought very excellent points. Given how widespread the opposition to this is, what would be a better way of going about this? You began talking about it a little bit: being a willing partner with conservation authorities, the scope of what they do and how important they are to the properties that you represent. How should we look at reviews of conservation authorities if it does need to be done?

Mr. Terry Rees: I think there is important work to be done on a lot of important provincial objectives we want to collectively be sure that we're managing in a prudent way, including managing for water quantity and quality. Flooding has been an emerging concern, not just for big municipalities but for rural areas and landowners as well.

The conservation authorities work for two different ministries and, I think, should be engaged in a productive, collaborative-type dialogue, which I'm not sure has happened over the last 18 months or so, about how we're going to deliver against our collective interest. Provincial policy statements set a lot of objectives. The Clean Water Act sets a lot of objectives. Managing for hazard lands—they're all very important, broad public objectives that we're trying to deliver. CAs are uniquely positioned to do that.

If the senior level of government would like to do that in a more effective or a slightly different way, that's a matter for those folks to work on in a collaborative way together and do that in a collaborative manner, so that we can work through some of the issues. Unfortunately, I think doing this expeditiously, as this is intended to do through this budget bill, may not have considered all of the wrinkles that it implicates for delivering against important public goals.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I hope government MPPs are listening. Huge swaths of cottage country are in Conservative ridings, and the folks who are going to be voting on that are in Conservative ridings, so I hope that is noted.

Second question: Will that \$1,000 rebate for staycations have any sort of meaningful impact if there's large-scale flooding in cottages across Ontario?

Mr. Terry Rees: Again, our focus here today has been on schedule 6. We've got some very serious concerns that are front and top of mind, which are about how our lands and our resources are going to be managed in the long term. That has been the focus of our interests here today, and our ongoing and abiding interest as an organization is the stewardship of our lands and our waters in a sustainable way for the long term.

Supporting our local economies is very important to us. Certainly, it's something that's always front and top of mind for our local communities. We pay most of the taxes as residential property taxpayers in rural Ontario, so we're always mindful of the fact that a thriving commercial sector is important. I'm not certain, to be fair, whether this scheme that's been proposed around staycations is going to be effective or not, but we would be supportive of supporting local. We do that on a regular basis.

1340

Mr. Ian Arthur: Honestly, I think you said it best in the first sentence, which is that you came here to talk about schedule 6 of this bill, not a tax rebate program that the government might be instituting on the side.

I'm going to move over to you, Ms. Andreae. You mentioned again the scope and the lack of boundaries.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Ian Arthur: This point has been made before, but I think it's really important to kind of hammer this home. They have a unique perspective that cannot be replicated by any other existing institution in Ontario right now. Why is it so important for us to respect that and to not come with top-down redirection or top-down decisions for these agencies? Why is it important to maintain their independence and why is their scope unique here in Ontario?

Ms. Muriel Andreae: I think it's because the conservation authorities were formed on a watershed basis, so in some cases they might even go across three counties and might be represented at the board of directors at any one point in time. Although the individual counties might have a difference of economic histories or agricultural management practices, when they come together over an issue such as the water quality and the water flow quantity and quality, then I think they are all looking at the same issue. It's because the boundaries are geographic rather than political. That is really the strength of the authorities.

Then you'll have people who are living in that watershed, which equally are very familiar with the local landowners and the farming issues which are very specific to the soil of that region. And just as the cottages on Lake Huron aren't the same as the ones on the Rideau, likewise the soil and the drainage issues in Essex county are not the same as the ones in Lanark county. That's why I think the conservation authorities are local. The provincial ministry

officials and employees and, honestly, the MPPs sitting at Queen's Park, they're trying to present their local issues. The local authorities know it better than the ministry officials who are in their ministry offices.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I think that's really important, because yesterday there was a point raised by one of the government MPPs—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Ian Arthur:—which singled out the percentage of a conservation authority's budget being focused on flood management versus other activities. But flood management and the operations of one conservation authority, like you said, are very different. The soil erosion that's happening in Essex is not the same as the flooding happening along the Ottawa River. If you were running a province-wide business and you tried to address problems in different parts of the province with the same universal outcome, no one would recommend doing that. No one would mandate that a percentage of the budget had to go to, for instance, rent, which changes from city to city to city across Ontario, so a bit of a false thing.

What are some of the consequences if this goes through? We politicize the process. We have a top-down, mandated approach. We severely limit the scope of what a conservation authority is allowed to do. What are going to be the repercussions of this? Ms. Andreae first, and then if there's a bit—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll go back to the independent members for their second round. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Perhaps I could start my second round with Mr. Rees. In terms of the risks that you see for schedule 6, if it goes through as written, what are the concerns? You and the members you represent are stewards of our natural environment, and we want to see that protected for future generations. It's not just about the here and now. Go ahead.

Mr. Terry Rees: Thank you for the question. For our part, we try to encourage individual stewardship and that's up to all of us to do our part on the lands. But we rely on the province and our municipal government, in particular, which is in charge of land use planning in our communities, to allow the right kinds of things to be built in the right kinds of places.

Again, conservation authorities have very local, specific information that ensures that when they're providing advice to planning decisions at the municipal level—again, under the stewardship of their board, which are municipally appointed representatives—they take into account the important public priorities, which include managing for hazard lands, managing for the protection of source water, so that they can make those kinds of informed decisions with the information that they have at hand about their intake protection zones for drinking water, for managing around hazard flows and in flood plains. Those are important decisions that contribute to the long-term liveability and affordability of our communities.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Do you believe that the authorities are working on fighting those very—you know, those are complex, multi-jurisdictional challenges. Do you think that they're working well to do that now?

Mr. Terry Rees: I think that you can't tackle such complex, multi-jurisdictional issues if you don't look at things on a watershed basis, because the changing climate and just the over-building, or the continued building in our communities—I shouldn't say over-building; we're a growing economy. Those things really need to be looked at in sophisticated and complicated ways, because the issues are getting complicated. If we don't look at things on a watershed basis, which includes across municipalities, we're going to miss out on important things, because someone is downstream from somebody else, always. So you have to manage the upstream if you're going to manage the whole system in a way that's going to be affordable and reasonable for all concerned.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Even for me—my riding is Scarborough-Guildwood, which of course borders at the south on Lake Ontario and the Scarborough Bluffs. As gorgeous as the bluffs are, the conservation authority is constantly doing efforts to mitigate the bluffs going into the lake.

I'm wondering if I could just, with the time remaining, ask Muriel about the governance side of things and how much more challenging it will become if schedule 6 is not removed.

Ms. Muriel Andreae: I think it's largely changing so many of the responsibilities of the authorities, to having these specific to your municipality. If you're only able to offer a specific program within the boundaries—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Muriel Andreae: —in our case, of the city of London, then what about the needs of Stratford or what about the needs of Ingersoll? The same would be in—I'm sorry, I don't know the Toronto area well. But in eastern Ontario—I mean the issues along the lakefront and the St. Lawrence River are very different from the ones in the height of land in the Rideau Canal system. A lot of the programs would just not be happening, which is where I feel that the water quantity and quality will suffer.

Also, the natural area management will suffer, and the lands. The authorities own significant parcels of land across the province, and again, the management of that land will—they'll have to sell or close a lot of properties. I feel Ontario will suffer for not being able to appreciate and enjoy those parcels that are part of our green space and have been protected historically.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: We heard from Indigenous commenters as well. They're the original stewards of the land, and great concern—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll go back to the government for their second round. MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Terry, it's good to see you. It's been a while since you've been into my office; COVID is one of those challenges.

I will admit I'm a little bit surprised because we've had a few conversations about things, and one of the things that you had pointed out to me was that there was no ability to appeal a conservation authority decision on something. When you talked to me about it, it was with respect to adding docks and decks on some of those recreational properties, that that could be denied to cottage owners and they had no appeal mechanism on it. So I will freely admit I'm a little bit surprised in the change in direction from you on that.

In your deposition earlier—I think it was when MPP Arthur was discussing with you—you talked about having that local input more than what the province is giving. I'd like to point out that Cavan Monaghan, which is probably less than 10 minutes from your house, have put forward a motion in support of what we're doing with schedule 6. So I'm curious, with respect to all of the cottage owners that you represent—this is their secondary residence on it. Should the local municipalities not have some more say in what goes on in their communities with their principal residences?

1350

Mr. Terry Rees: Thanks, Dave. It's nice to see you again, virtually, as everything is these days. I'd like to point out I don't think we've reversed any sort of position, and I regret that that might have been the message that you had received. I think clarity and having clear rules about what is permitted and why those kinds of things are permitted—in this case of land-use planning decisions and conservation authorities weighing into those decisions, I think that's based on keeping people out of harm's way and building things that are going to be sustainable and not be at risk from high water etc.

Cavan Monaghan aside—it's not one of our main jurisdictions. Everyone is entitled to their opinion. It might be related to their relationship with their local conservation authority, and that's their right to say so.

Municipalities are represented under local conservation authority boards; that's the way they're designed. That means municipalities are at those decision-making tables, so they're not happening at the exclusion of municipalities' interests. In fact, they are the ones who are paying the freight. The vast majority of the freight for conservation authorities comes from the municipal levy. So I think, in fact, that municipalities have very much a say, because they are the board members of their respective conservation authorities.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to switch and I'm going to go over to Chris Conway, if I could, please. Thanks very much, Terry.

Chris, I would think that with the micro-credentials that we are putting significant investment in, this would be tailor-made for your members. You're able to pivot and pull in market needs much more quickly than traditional colleges and universities. Could you expand a little bit more for us on the value of micro-credentials and how you see that as being a really good fit for some of your members?

Mr. Chris Conway: Absolutely, thank you for that. Yes, we think we're an ideal fit for that. We are geared

towards short-term training like this, and you very accurately mentioned the ability to pivot quickly. Because these programs are very often—well, they're market-driven, ultimately, so you can take a scenario where someone completes a program, gets a job and they tell one of their friends, "You should do this. I did this program and just got employment."

The micro-credentials are great because you can build on those, you can do a full credential. I think most of us have seen them in the format of Coursera, edX. LinkedIn actually offers some as well. Again, the online piece is absolutely crucial for that, because that's very convenient. It's a great way to do that sort of training.

But we are really geared towards that. We can pivot quickly. We tend to focus on short-term training for people, and we have hundreds of programs available. We really think that this could be a great tool. In some cases, people might just do a couple of courses to get a micro-credential and then they could build on that and potentially do some type of more rigorous training around something in a particular area. So we're very keen on this.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you. Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to stick with you then on this, Chris, as well. You had talked a little bit about some of the foreign students who don't have the ability once they come out of your courses then to legally work in Ontario. I will freely admit, I'm not 100% sure on where that falls. Is that a provincial jurisdictional issue, or is that something that we need to be going to the federal government on and trying to find a way to get some of these, for lack of a better term, potential immigrants who are being trained in our jurisdiction into the marketplace where we need them here in Ontario?

Mr. Chris Conway: That's a great point. We're actually looking at it now to get more PSWs in. We're actually pitching that that may be a way to draw people into that field in particular where there's a high demand there right now, obviously. We do think it's absolutely crucial to get this, particularly given that they have it in Quebec for private institutions. So right now, it's very much in Quebec's favour. People are doing the training there and they're not doing it in Ontario. We think, within the same country—they obviously have a separate immigration agreement.

It is partly federal, partly provincial. What we're hoping to get, and what we've been working on, is a recommendation from the provincial government to the federal government that this should be looked at. We think there are many areas where this could benefit vacancies in high-demand areas. I mentioned PSWs as one, but there are others.

Again, it just seems very unfair that Quebec is able to offer this—I know why they're able to do it—but that Ontario is not. Particularly, when you think about someone who lives in Ottawa, someone who is across the water in Gatineau would be able to do this, or a school

would be able to, and then on the Ottawa side, they wouldn't. So it doesn't make a lot of sense to have it in the current structure it's in.

Mr. Dave Smith: I can't agree with you more on that, and I'm going to take a northern development lens to it. I know that with the mining industry right now—I'm the parliamentary assistant to energy, northern development and mines—we're having a little bit of trouble getting some of the skilled labour up in mines, specifically when it comes to repairing some of the equipment up there. Those mining companies are very much looking for people with a specific skill set to do that.

We're looking at bringing in immigrants to Ontario in order to fill that skills gap that we currently have. I see your partners as being the perfect avenue for us where we could have somebody who has that base level skill that we need, a desire to go to northern Ontario for some of these good-paying jobs, and give them the opportunity—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

That concludes our time. Thank you to all three presenters for coming and for your presentations.

WILDERNESS COMMITTEE

FILMONTARIO

DR. JENNIFER DRAKE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Moving along to our next group of presenters, first I would like to call upon the Wilderness Committee. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Katie Krelove: Thank you. My name is Katie Krelove. I'm the Ontario campaigner for the Wilderness Committee, a national registered charity that works for people-powered protections for wilderness, wildlife and public resources, with over 14,000 supporters in Ontario.

I'm here today because the Wilderness Committee strongly objects to the proposals under schedule 8 in Bill 229 to permanently exempt forestry operations from legal prohibitions and protections under the Endangered Species Act. We call for it to be removed.

The Wilderness Committee is also opposed to the proposals under schedule 6. We have read the submissions by Environmental Defence, CELA and representatives from various conservation authorities, and would like to register our support for the call for schedule 6 to be removed from Bill 229 as well.

But today I will focus my comments on objections to schedule 8. I know you've heard from several other organizations with arguments against the proposals in schedule 8, so I hope my arguments will be considered in conjunction with those, and not as comprehensive.

Schedule 8, if enacted, would represent a failure to fulfill the original intent of 12 years of temporary exemptions for forestry operations from the ESA, which was to find resolution between the two mandates. When

the ESA was brought into force in 2008, forestry operations authorized under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act were granted a temporary exemption, to allow time for industry to transition practices to meet the new legal mandates for protection and recovery enshrined in the ESA given that the CFSA mandate to minimize harm to species at risk did not do so. Indeed, the reforms made to the ESA in 2007 were required because efforts to minimize harm to at-risk species across many land uses, including forest operations, have been unsuccessful, resulting in alarming threats to biodiversity.

Subsequent extensions to the exemption granted in 2013 and 2018 cited the complexity of the transition endeavour as well as ongoing consultations with stakeholders as the reasons for further temporary exemption.

Schedule 8's proposal to permanently exempt forestry from legal protections for endangered species, and from the prohibitions against killing and destroying species at risk and their habitat, offers nothing to demonstrate achievement of the intent to close the gap or resolve the conflicts between the two mandates. No comprehensive summary of 12 years of consultation or other evidence is presented to justify the permanent exemption. It appears to be an abandonment of those efforts rather than a resolution and, as such, represents a waste of 12 years of time and public resources.

Perhaps even more alarmingly, schedule 8 proposes to remove the ability of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to issue orders in circumstances where there is imminent danger to an at-risk species. This, along with the recent exemption for forestry from the province's Environmental Assessment Act, would remove the last-resort tools for public intervention in forestry operations when and where species at risk are threatened.

1400

As I have alluded to and as you have heard from other organizations, the claim used to justify schedule 8, that of removing duplication between the ESA and the CFSA legislation, is unfounded. The requirements under the CFSA to mitigate harm to species at risk are not equivalent to protections and recovery provisions under the ESA and cannot replace them.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Katie Krelove: I'll refer you back to the chart submitted by the Wildlands League to demonstrate the fundamental differences between the two acts rather than repeating them here. Instead, I will offer just a couple of examples from the Wilderness Committee's experience participating as a stakeholder in public consultation on forest management plans that I hope help to illustrate, on some small scale, some ways in which the current mandates under the CFSA fail to meet ESA standards for protection and recovery.

In my experience reading through proposed long-term management directions undertaken by sustainable forestry licence holders under CFSA requirements, the identification of areas of concern—that is, species at risk habitats—is often referred to as a potential risk to forest management objectives in so much as they are a constraint on timber harvesting. Provisions for a species at risk under the CFSA

constantly come up against economic priorities and there is consequentially limited incentive to invest resources into the identification of species at risk populations and habitats.

In addition, the only evaluation of forestry objectives to maintain habitat for species at risk is a measure of basic non-compliance or compliance, as determined by inspections by MNRF. Unfortunately, we have read multiple independent audit reports that identify ineffective processes for the identification of areas of concern or species at risk habitat and instances where compliance inspections come too late to actually achieve protection or even minimization of harm.

Schedule 8, if enacted, would be a blow to attempts to halt the decline of forest-dependent species, even though this is precisely the issue which ought to garner the government's urgent and utmost attention. The Auditor General's recent 2020 report notes, "Biodiversity loss has been ranked as a top-five risk—by likelihood and impact—to economies over the next decade."

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Katie Krelove: If Ontario's forestry industry cannot find a way to reconcile ESA mandates into practice, then it will lose credibility as a sustainable industry and therefore risk economic losses. As long as forest-dependent species such as woodland caribou, wood turtle, Blanding's turtle and songbirds continue to decline, Ontario's reputation for sustainable forestry will continue to be challenged.

The Wilderness Committee's recommendation is that schedule 8 be withdrawn from Bill 229 and Ontario recommit, with clear timelines and a transparent process, to the original goals of reconciliation between the ESA and CFSA mandates regarding species at risk protection and recovery. Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

Our next presenter is FilmOntario. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Ms. Cynthia Lynch: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I'm Cynthia Lynch, managing director at FilmOntario, an industry association representing the province's film and television sector, including unions, production companies, equipment suppliers and studios. Our members create their own intellectual property for TV and movie screens around the world and work on the best foreign productions that choose to bring their shows to Ontario.

Prior to the pandemic, the film and television industry in Ontario was thriving, generating almost \$2.2 billion in direct spending in 2019 and supporting almost 45,000 jobs. When nearly all industry activity stopped in mid-March, the majority of those jobs were put on hold. We estimate that the first three and a half months of the production shutdown cost the industry over \$700 million.

Over to Scott Garvie.

Mr. Scott Garvie: [*Inaudible*] film production company in Toronto that creates shows like Murdoch Mysteries, Departure and Hudson & Rex. I'm also the past chair of the Canadian Media Producers Association, the

national organization representing independent production companies in Canada.

Since the summer, the industry has returned to work with rigorous health and safety standards in place. We're optimistic that we will be able to return to the prior levels of spending and employment as quickly as possible. In fact, the very nature of our production industry allows us to pivot and ramp up production rapidly once it is safe to do so. And that's the important thing: It has to be safe to do so.

The government's commitment to stable and effective tax credits is a much-appreciated and essential piece of maintaining Ontario's position as a competitive jurisdiction for film and television production for both the domestic and the service production parts of the sector. The tax credits that the government has kindly provided are a very important business tool, driving production to this province.

The fall 2020 budget contains regulatory changes to both the Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit and the Ontario Production Services Tax Credit that allow for longer time frames to meet certain eligibility milestones. This is an important acknowledgement that the pandemic has made it much more difficult for producers to meet the usual production and delivery timelines for our shows. That acknowledgement was part of a suite of changes that FilmOntario proposed in our budget submission. We support these changes, and we hope that they are only the first step in the government's plan to provide relief for some of the disruptive impact of COVID-19 on the film and television industries.

Ms. Sue Milling: Thank you. Hi, I'm Sue Milling. I'm the executive director of ACTRA Toronto, the union representing 15,000 performers in the film, television and digital media industry across Ontario. I'm also the co-chair of the FilmOntario board of directors.

As Scott said, the much-appreciated commitment to stability of tax credits is key to our continued competitiveness. The industry, in turn, wanted to ensure that coming out of this pandemic, Ontario would be able to offer stability and the safest production environment possible. So we got to work together.

Through the Section 21 Film and Television Health and Safety Advisory Committee, which includes representation from industry and the Ministry of Labour, we developed a comprehensive set of guidelines to provide best practices for a safe return to work. Implementing these guidelines has meant instituting things like daily screening and regular COVID-19 testing, organizing the workplace in pods to limit interactions and facilitate physical distancing, the use of PPE when physical distancing isn't possible, limiting the use of shared equipment, enhanced cleaning procedures and new practices for hair, makeup and costumes.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Sue Milling: There is training for everyone on set and designated personnel to ensure protocols are followed.

These protocols are working. There has not been a single instance of COVID-19 transmission on set since we

returned to work. Performers, some of the most exposed as they appear on camera without PPE, report that they feel totally safe on set.

We're very proud of how the industry has come together, and we are grateful that the government has recognized the success of the protocols by permitting the industry to continue working throughout the province. Keeping our workplaces and communities safe while employing thousands of film and television workers is our number one priority, but it is also expensive.

Back to Scott.

Mr. Scott Garvie: Health and safety protocols vary depending on the needs of each production, but on a dramatic Canadian show like *Murdoch Mysteries*, it can range between 3% and 5% of a production's budget, or around \$750,000 to \$1 million per season. On some higher-budgeted US studio shows, we understand that direct health and safety costs can be as high as \$1 million per episode. Since our planning timelines are so long in advance, these costs were not included in the financing or budgets for current shows that have been delayed in 2020 or are slated to start in early 2021, forcing producers to either find new sources of financing, which unfortunately is usually producers having to invest their fees, or having to cut back in other areas of production, such as reducing shooting days, impacting the production values of the show.

While all productions faced increased costs, the impact is felt the most by domestic production and those with smaller budgets, which are generally produced by SME companies. In Ontario, we have always been very proud that our industry is almost evenly split between domestic production by Ontario-based content creators and foreign companies that could choose our province for their productions. We at FilmOntario often refer to the robust ecosystem in Ontario that benefits the combination of domestic and service work.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Scott Garvie: It builds our infrastructure and provides jobs across that slate of production. Our maxim has always been to do no harm to either production stream, as both are integral to continue to build this province's capacity and scale. We truly hope that one of the next steps of the government's plan for recovery will ensure that all parts of this ecosystem have an equal opportunity to participate in that recovery.

We are proposing that the government provide support for these new health and safety protocol costs through an enhancement amendment to the current film and television tax credits. Some of these health and safety costs are already eligible costs in one or the other of the tax credits, but there is a complete disconnect, and labour and PPE costs are not both eligible under the current regime. We would ask that the province consider making this treatment consistent across both credits, so that domestic and foreign producers receive the same treatment and these vital health and safety costs are partly financed by this province due to a very effective tax credit mechanism that we have in place.

1410

We would also ask that the province consider increasing the tax credit rate associated with—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move to our next presenter, Jennifer Drake. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Dr. Jennifer Drake: Hello, my name is Jennifer Drake. Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm here regarding schedule 6 and the amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act and the Planning Act.

I trust the committee has reviewed my written submission, but briefly, I am an associate professor in the department of civil and mineral engineering at the University of Toronto. I am an expert in water resources engineering, urban flooding and green infrastructure. I grew up along the Mississippi River in Carleton Place, Lanark county, and I'm proud to have completed all of my academic training here in Ontario at McMaster and Guelph.

My research group has developed regional flood equations for the Ministry of Transportation. We study things like the behaviour of permeable pavements in winter and develop new, greener technologies for the Toronto climate. I also teach water resource engineering, stormwater design, flood plain mapping, hydrology and hydraulics.

While preparing for this meeting, I tried to look up how many Ontario residents live in special policy areas. I didn't have a lot of time, so I wasn't able to find the number, but I don't think we actually know. If we do, it is certainly not well communicated by MNR. I know that TRCA, the Toronto region, has 15 SPAs, and I believe there are 60 province-wide. In the Toronto region alone, over 40,000 people live in a flood-vulnerable community. How many Ontario residents live and work in high-risk flood zones? How many First Nations communities also live in flood areas? And, more pressingly, how much do we spend as taxpayers annually on disaster assistance, infrastructure replacements, upgrades etc. to make these communities safe?

Special policy areas are communities that predate the CA act. These are communities that were established long before we had strong planning policy, land-based water resource management and local, science-driven decision-making. They do not have the benefit of good planning and regulated development, and we as a society are left with the cost.

It is my recommendation that the government's planning, permitting and enforcement provisions of schedule 6 be removed from Bill 229 or immediately amended to address the numerous concerns that have been raised by members of the public, like myself, a growing list of rural and urban municipalities, and Conservation Ontario.

These amendments, if passed as is, will drastically inhibit conservation authorities' ability to deliver on our core mandate of protecting Ontario residents and property from flooding and natural hazards. Limiting or removing

CAs from full and independent participation on planning appeals will result in poorer planning decisions that are uninformed of local watershed levels, science and knowledge.

Similarly, authorizing the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to issue an order to take over or decide an application or a permit in place of a CA, or allowing applicants to request the minister to review the CA's decision, nullifies the authority of the CA, again preventing them from fulfilling their core mandate.

I suspect it will also ultimately slow down development growth as the approval process becomes more litigious and less collaborative. The long-term consequences of these poor planning and permitting decisions will be more Ontarians living and working at risk to both flooding and natural hazards.

I'll remind the committee that water resource systems are actually water and land. Land changes whenever urbanization, agricultural development, forest fires, hydrotechnical projects and natural resource development alter the water cycle and flow path within a watershed. When land changes are poorly executed, they exacerbate existing or even create new hazards associated with our watercourses, river valleys, water bodies and shorelines.

Forward-thinking public policy has a great capacity—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Dr. Jennifer Drake: —to create new economies, drive innovation and generally improve our society. The CA act is a shining example of this. It is the best example of enacted, integrated water resource management that I'm aware of in the world, and I tell my students this every year. Ontario is a leader in living infrastructure and green infrastructure. We boast the third-largest green roof industry right here in Toronto. Science-driven technical documents produced by our CAs are used nationally by experts like myself and even internationally.

Integrated water resource management is universally accepted as the most efficient, equitable and sustainable means of developing and managing our limited water resources, ensuring a maximum benefit to our economy, society and environment. Development objectives for our province's water resources cannot be achieved without enabling environments, institutional structures and management instruments, like enforcement. CAs, empowered by the government, have done this for almost 70 years, and schedule 6 in its current form undermines it.

We regularly hear about exciting, stimulus-spending, job-creating, big, engineered solutions to address flooding in Ontario: the new mouth of the Don River, the new bridge on Jane Street for Rockcliffe, the Brampton Riverwalk, the Coxwell bypass. I'm a civil engineer; these are amazing and they're all great and they address long-standing flooding issues, but we lose sight of the fact that this investment, billions of dollars, could be avoided entirely. With science-informed, watershed-based decisions and strong enforcement, we can avoid these costs entirely by ensuring our communities of tomorrow leave space for flood waters and hazards. To do this, CAs need strong policy that allows for inclusive government;

science-informed, watershed-based planning and permitting; and strong enforcement.

Thank you very much for your attention and, again, the opportunity to speak.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll start with the questions now. I will start the first round of questions with the independent members. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I do want to thank all of the presenters. You definitely have researched your presentations.

I'd like to start maybe with the Wilderness Committee. If Katie could tell us, what are the consequences if schedule 8 goes forward? What are the risks to the province?

Ms. Katie Krelove: The risks are to biodiversity in Ontario. They need to be considered within a larger picture of this government's actions to remove environmental regulations, including the exemption for forestry from the Environmental Assessment Act. That removes opportunities for the public to ask for an independent environmental assessment for a particular forest. Changes to the Endangered Species Act allow for pay-to-slay options, where instead of actually protecting and recovering species habitat, industry can pay into a vague conservation fund.

The Auditor General's recent report on the state of the environment, put out just a couple of weeks ago, pointed to drastic problems within the ministries charged with taking care of endangered species in the province. It pointed to a lack of staff, a lack of funding, a lack of process for monitoring and tracking those species.

Schedule 8, on top of all of those other things, just demonstrates a lack of commitment to our legal commitments under the ESA that require protection and recovery for Ontario's endangered species. We're seeing those species decline. The Auditor General has also pointed out that they're still declining, and the world is in a biodiversity crisis. Ontario needs to play its part, and it's not.

As I mentioned as well, the consequence could be impacts in the forestry industry's economics, because more and more purchasers of forestry products are looking for that stamp of sustainability.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you so much. It seems, on the heels of the Auditor General's really harsh criticism, that the government has not listened, not taken corrective action, and in fact is doubling down on an unfortunate lack of focus on endangered species and species at risk and biodiversity. This schedule 8 clearly shows that.

1420

Ms. Katie Krelove: Yes, and it's also taken in conjunction—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Katie Krelove: —with the forest sector strategy of this government, which proposes to double logging in the province and also proposes to tap into a market for those environmentally sensitive customers who are looking for

sustainable products. Again, this just undermines our credibility for sustainable forestry.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I appreciate that.

I do have questions for Jennifer regarding—you talked about living in flood zones. The only reason we can live in flood zones is because of the work of the conservation authorities. Would you agree with that?

Dr. Jennifer Drake: Yes, absolutely. Conservation authorities' role in terms of flood preparation and flood forecasting and emergency warning is critical for making these communities safe and allowing them—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move to the government side now. MPP Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you to all of our presenters today.

My question is going to be for our team from FilmOntario. Thank you so much for being with us today. I have the privilege of representing a riding in Ottawa, where of course we have a burgeoning film industry. I've had the pleasure to connect with a number of them, who testified as part of our finance committee hearings over the summer about how we can best position ourselves for recovery.

I think that when we talk about this budget, we always talk about the three pillars in this budget. There was protecting our health care, supporting our individuals and businesses, and laying the foundation for recovery. I think the film industry falls into two of those buckets: the support of our businesses, making sure that the film industry has the tools and resources necessary to get through these difficult times, but then when we talk about recovery, I think it's the piece on how we can continue to grow our film industry in Ontario and allow it to continue to flourish and grow in the years to come.

I've got a couple of questions for you. The first is, I just want to touch on the \$25 million in the budget for Ontario's arts institutions to help them cover operating losses incurred as a result of COVID-19 and, on top of that, the flexibility in grants that's being provided by the Ontario Arts Council and the Ontario Trillium Foundation in terms of flexibility to grant recipients to allow them to help rebuild and reposition. Could you perhaps touch on how these investments help your member organizations during this pandemic and prepare for the day when they can fully reopen their facilities, which of course we all hope is a day soon to come?

Ms. Cynthia Lynch: Thank you, MPP Roberts. Maybe I can start on that. Most of our members don't actually benefit from Ontario Arts Council or Trillium Foundation grants. Most of our members have, if I can use the word, graduated from those programs. The Arts Council is a fabulous granting body for experimental film and people who are starting out in the industry, maybe trying to make a short film to get off the ground, but most of our members have moved on to the bigger-budget shows and feature-length films that are the kind of things that Scott does at Shaftesbury. But I know that some active Toronto members sometimes benefit from arts council funding, so maybe Sue can add some colour to that.

Ms. Sue Milling: Thank you, Cynthia. It's true; just at a start-out level, the grants and the support from the provincial government are very helpful. But I also want to recognize the work that Minister MacLeod has done through the advisory committee through this pandemic in bringing the industry partners together to talk about recovery, to talk about some of the short-term and the longer-term steps that will help in terms of growing the business as well as recovering, because I think that that's obviously a priority for all of us.

Some of the recommendations that we've made through the advisory committee, in addition to looking at a made-in-Ontario insurance solution and covering some of the health and safety costs that Scott Garvie spoke about in the presentation, also include some targeted support for the domestic industry in terms of workforce development and how we can increase the amount of diversity and inclusion we have in the industry, and the support that we can provide through other regions like Ottawa and eastern Ontario as well as southwestern Ontario, which is turning into quite a hub, as some of the live production pivots into that streaming recorded area.

So I think there is lots of work we can do, and we really look forward to working with Minister MacLeod and the government on recovery, but also on building opportunities.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure. Pivoting a little bit, I know one thing that we've heard about from folks in this industry before is making sure that we have the skilled workers to be able to help produce and do all the incredible work that goes into a lot of these films. I'm fortunate; right in the heart of my riding is Algonquin College. I'm wondering if, perhaps, any of you might be able to touch a little bit on how we can work together, both through Minister MacLeod's ministry, but also the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the ministry for training, to get people trained to fill these gaps and make it all the more attractive for more filming opportunities to come here to Ontario.

Ms. Cynthia Lynch: I will let Scott drill down on this, but I would just say that you've described it perfectly, because another of the recommendations that came out of Minister MacLeod's advisory panel was to make sure that some of those programs that training, colleges and universities and that the Ministry of Labour have for apprenticeships and training that haven't traditionally been available to the film and television industry—and Scott can go into why, but we really would like to have our sector benefit from those industries and train the next generation of film and TV workers.

Mr. Scott Garvie: Thanks, Cynthia. I think that's a really good question and a good response.

We have an amount of capacity. We have the ability to do a certain amount of scale. We're looking to train and bring young people into this industry. We're looking to diversify the types of people who are coming into the industry as well, so looking at giving everybody opportunities and transparency to hit a lot of the social targets.

It's great work. It's good work for people right out of university or colleges—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Scott Garvie:—who can come in and are getting trained on our sets with our various guilds, whether they want to be in front of or behind the camera.

I think the only thing that will hold us back from increasing the volumes in Ontario is the lack of infrastructure once we hit certain amounts. We've spent a lot of time with the government in the last few years working on studio space and making sure that we had that capacity to do the shows when they come. I think the human resources side is a really important one that we're really focused on at FilmOntario, to make sure that we're giving everybody a chance to train up and get involved in this industry.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: That's great. I know we have a phenomenal program. In fact, my father was a graduate of the television and radio arts program at Algonquin, so that's a great program.

Sorry, I see Sue. You want to jump in as well.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you, MPP Roberts. We'll come back to you in the second round.

We'll go to the opposition. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you to the presenters for coming in today.

Ms. Drake, I'm going to start with you. One of the interesting things that has come out of the pandemic is a universal appreciation by almost everyone for experts in their field, for listening to the science and for appreciating what scientists actually contribute in terms of their areas of expertise.

You're here today to say that you are an expert in the area of flood management and that this is short-sighted legislation.

Dr. Jennifer Drake: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay—

Dr. Jennifer Drake: Yes, our—

Mr. Ian Arthur: Sorry. Yes, continue if you want to.

Dr. Jennifer Drake: I don't think I have too much more to add. The main issue—there have been several issues in the amendment they are currently presenting. But the removal of full and independent participation in planning appeals and then the ability for a minister to supersede a decision that's been informed based on technical, science-driven and, in many cases, very expensive and complicated and sophisticated hydro-technical modelling is quite troubling.

1430

Mr. Ian Arthur: And it is science-driven. I think that's something that has been glossed over by the government so far in this. They talk about the conflicts in relation to schedule 6 and the people who have problems with how conservation authorities were functioning, but really, they are there to execute expert advice in a detailed and diligent manner. All I would say is I hope that the same appreciation is afforded to folks such as yourself and the other people in that area as is afforded to our health experts currently.

I'm going to ask a quick question of FilmOntario. I did not know a lot about film in Canada coming into this job,

and it's been a very interesting thing to learn a lot more about. Kingston and the Islands, which is the riding I represent, has had a flourishing film industry in recent years. That's been absolutely fantastic. Some of my very good friends have been extras in various shows that have been filmed in Kingston and had a blast. Apart from that, in terms of film as an economic driver, would you just talk a little bit about the growth potential of your industry in Ontario? We will be coming out the other side of COVID in the next year. How much can you add to the growth of this province moving forward if you are set up now to be able to do that as we come out of the pandemic?

Mr. Scott Garvie: Can I jump on that one? I think the biggest issue that we have and that we're laser-focused on is ensuring that there are health and safety protocols so that people can come to work and people can be safe. As Sue mentioned in her opening comments, we've been very lucky—I don't think it's that lucky; I think it's really the hard work everyone has put in to making sure that we can be safe. I think as long as people are safe, they will come to work.

We have a huge capacity and we have shows coming—my company alone has done five one-hour shows since June. We actually shot in Kingston—I think that was last year—Murdoch Mysteries. We were lucky enough to have insurance in place, and we worked really hard on the health and safety protocols. Once we got those down, we could start production up.

I think there's a huge amount of work that can be done. We always count Toronto and Ontario among the leaders in production, with New York, Los Angeles. We believe that Toronto has the ability, has the skilled workforce, has the infrastructure to actually get up to the number one, number two behind Los Angeles. We've been given great business tools by the province that help, with the tax credits.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Scott Garvie: That gives people incentive to come shoot here rather than somewhere else.

I think that once we get through to the other side—even with the pandemic, we're able to get back to very close to where we were on our production levels. We think there's a lot of growth to be done, and we have a lot of people investing a lot of money in Ontario for studios and equipment who also believe the same thing. In our mind, it's a really good news story. It's youth, training, exports.

At my company, we deal with Canadian content stories. We're also aware of the culture flag telling Canadian stories, so people can be aspirational looking at our stories rather than just foreign stories.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That's very cool. That's all the questions I have, Chair. I'm not sure if MPP Shaw—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions, MPP Shaw? Two minutes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: What is the time left, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'll just follow up with FilmOntario. Everyone wants to compete on how much filming happens in their riding. I represent Hamilton, so we're looking

forward to having Guillermo del Toro here, who I saw recently. It's a very cool town, and he's making it cooler.

Also Murdoch Mysteries, you filmed at Queen's Park about the Queen's Park ghost. There are real stories about the Queen's Park ghost we can share another time.

Maybe if you can speak a little bit, in the time that we have, about the impact of COVID on your members, perhaps, that would be ensuing. People are out of work and people have lost hours, and they're struggling to pay their rent and so forth. We'd love to hear about the challenges that your members are facing with the challenges you've been having in putting on productions and filming during this time.

Ms. Sue Milling: Early on in the pandemic, one of the first things that FilmOntario did was an assessment of what the impact of COVID was across the industry. As Cynthia was saying, it was huge, and Minister MacLeod has talked about that sort of triple impact in terms of the bottom line as well.

For performers, they're the most precarious workers, I will say, in the industry. They go from gig to gig. Unlike some of our technicians behind the camera, they don't have that full year or full run of the show, when it comes to employment. We worked very hard with FilmOntario and our government partners to make sure that there were supports in place for people in this gig economy, and we very much appreciate the work that this government did, with the federal government, to make sure that that safety net was in place.

The other thing we did was, we said it's so important for us to recover as quickly as we can and so we came together with industry partners to develop health and safety protocols. Implementing those has required a kind of social contract—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move back to the government side. MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to all our presenters today.

I would like to start by asking a question to the presenters from FilmOntario. I think Sue wanted to comment on something as well, so maybe I'll start with her. In terms of the film industry [*inaudible*] what economic and operational impacts will that have for the film industry here in Ontario, and what concerns or risks does it raise for the workers in the film industry? That's my question to the film industry, but I think Sue wanted to comment on something my colleague asked previously, so I'll start with her.

Ms. Sue Milling: I just think that one of the ways for us to recover is the assistance that we've been talking about in terms of the health and safety cost that productions have and the work that we can do in enhancing the tax credits.

I think the other thing that Scott referred to were some of the business tools that this government has provided, and I just want to give some credit to Ontario Creates and the work that they do with the government in helping to

promote the industry, because that helps us to grow. So just in terms of where we can go and attracting people into this industry and to help it to be competitive globally, it takes a lot of work, and we very much appreciate the work that's being done by Ontario Creates and the government to do that.

I think I'll leave that there. Cynthia, if you want to pick that up?

Ms. Cynthia Lynch: I had a little bit of interference at the beginning of the question, but I think that you were asking about the financial impacts of the shutdown and how that affected people. As we said, we looked at the dollar costs right at the beginning. The first three and a half months resulted in a \$700-million spending loss by the industry, and almost all the 45,000 workers in the province were out of work at that time. Production levels now are returning, but as Scott mentioned, it's much more expensive just to produce a single hour of television now, not to mention feature films.

The other barrier that's preventing some of our domestic producers from getting back to work, particularly our domestic producers, is the lack of an insurance solution and their inability to obtain production insurance that would protect them in the event of another COVID shutdown. The federal government has put in place a temporary measure to assist with addressing this that expires at the end of March. Unless that's extended or unless that's enhanced and supplemented by the province, we'll be right back where we were in July when many of those productions couldn't get back up and running.

So those are just a few of the things, and I think that, again, to emphasize what Scott said, it's the extreme expense of our very effective health and safety measures.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Cynthia. I think, Scott, you have to unmute yourself.

1440

Mr. Scott Garvie: I think it's really important to stress that there's a high level of anxiety in our society now because of the pandemic. We've been working hard with all the guilds and all the stakeholders to try to show that we are taking these things really seriously. We're doing a lot of wellness, anti-harassment and educational things on set so people understand how—as Sue mentioned, a social contract—we're only going to be as safe as people taking these things seriously. If you're reckless and bring it onto our set, then we're going to have to shut down.

One of the things about the ask that we have about increasing the tax credit to help cover some of these costs is we don't want people skimping on health and safety because they can't afford it. So if there is a way the government can come in and help out to make sure that we are doing as much as we can and connecting the health and safety, then we're going to have people working, which is a good thing, and we'll have people less stressed and less anxious, as much as you can be during a pandemic. We have found the anxiety level really high on our sets, and we've been trying to find as many ways as possible to reduce the tension.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Scott, Cynthia and Sue.

My next question is to the Wilderness Committee. Katie, thank you for your presentation. In terms of your presentation, I want to just highlight a couple of things. The government has recently announced several investments that aim to preserve Ontario's natural spaces and protect our environment, including our investments in new and innovative waste water and stormwater programs, such as \$15 million over two years to improve the management of Lake Ontario waste water discharge, \$10 million to provide support for waste water monitoring and public reporting to improve transparency and \$7.5 million to contribute to the health of Great Lakes watersheds.

Can you please explain how these investments could contribute to protecting the wildlife in our lakes?

Ms. Katie Krelove: Certainly any efforts to clean water and to build up natural infrastructure on our Great Lakes and our watersheds is going to contribute to the health of the species dependent on those.

I think what the Ontario government needs to do is invest the same in protecting land-based and forest-based species as well, by investing in resources—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Katie Krelove: —for the Ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources to have the ability to do that monitoring and do that identification of species at risk habitat on the land as well. We know that there are at least 50 different species at risk that are forestry-dependent in this province of the more than 2,000 endangered species on the species at risk list. So I think you can't just look at the water and ignore the land. You've got to do both if we really want to meet commitments to protecting endangered species.

I would say another investment that the Auditor General has shone a light on that is lacking is investment in increasing Ontario's protected places. Ontario is falling behind all the other provinces, and Canada as a whole, in commitments to add to protected areas, which do contribute to the safety and protection of endangered species—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move to the opposition side now. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I don't have time to do another round of questioning for FilmOntario, but what I would like to say is we hear and we support your calls for additional support for costs—what you're doing responsibly—to keep your productions safe. We know that it's expensive. I will tell you, for example, small businesses in my riding have been offered \$1,000 by this government for cleaning and PPE. One small business in my riding, it cost him \$4,000 for one thorough cleaning. So we understand the costs. We understand that you're doing everything that you can to be responsible. The government has billions and billions of dollars in contingency funding that they're sitting on, and we think that they should be putting it into the field to support responsible operators like yourself, to keep people safe. So that's my commentary. If there was longer, we could talk some more.

Now I want to direct my questioning, if I could, to—I'm going to start with Jennifer. You talked about all the

people who are speaking out against schedule 6. I have to say whoever asked for this, whoever supported it is not showing up, because almost 100% of the people—99% of the people—who have come to this committee have been speaking out against schedule 6. The outrage is incredible.

I had a virtual town hall in my riding of Hamilton and 1,000 people joined, which is a phenomenal amount of people who could have just spent their evening binge-watching *Murdoch Mysteries*, for example, instead of being there. People are outraged by this.

You said that it is something that just continues to weaken environmental protections. To us, it's a pro-developer, anti-environment measure. We've seen from this government—this government has tried to open up the greenbelt not once but twice. This would be the third time.

Conservation authorities do all kinds of things that you've described: protecting the environment, flooding and all those types of things. What I want to pick up on—here I go; here's the question—is the role that conservation authorities play in innovating good green infrastructure. In my riding in Hamilton, for example, the conservation authority, in conjunction with Environment Hamilton, is creating something at the salt marsh. They're creating a naturalized marshland to prevent flooding down the escarpment. We have a lot of flooding problems in Hamilton.

This government's basically cutting off conservation authorities at the knees will also impede our ability to innovate when we need it most. Can you comment on that, please? Thank you.

Dr. Jennifer Drake: Conservation authorities—I think this is why there has been so much reaction to these amendments—have been incredibly successful, because they are integrated management systems that integrate the entire watershed. They've been set up intending to be science-driven.

They do a great deal of innovation and driving—because the issues that we have with flooding, it's a progression of knowledge. What we thought the best engineering practice was in the 1950s and 1960s when conservation authorities were established—and conservation authorities are adaptive management structures. So as we've learned that certain approaches we thought were the best knowledge and technology at the time have not necessarily had the desired impacts, we advance and we adapt. This is why you see conservation authorities leading low-impact development and green infrastructure.

The technical manuals: As I mentioned, there is no equivalent at the federal level for the guidance documents that they produce. Technical guidelines that are produced here in Ontario are regularly used in other provincial jurisdictions because they're that good—globally, as well.

It's a management and organizational structure that is fantastic and quite envied by many others who don't have this holistic, land-based management structure that allows this better, more collaborative integration between all of the different sectors. I think people do lose sight of the fact that the goal of conservation authorities really isn't the environment; it's the people.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That's right.

Dr. Jennifer Drake: The purpose of conservation authorities is making sure that our resources are used to maximize our society and our people.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Dr. Jennifer Drake: That involves protecting them, keeping them safe and making sure the resources are available for essential services as well as for economic services. You can't manufacture a single item without water as a source product. Balancing these conflicting needs is what a conservation authority does.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I couldn't agree with you more. "Water is life" is something that everyone is starting to understand. It's not just our water protectors and our Indigenous communities; we all understand that.

I'm going to turn now to Katie. You brought up the Auditor General's report. It was a scathing report that this government has failed not only in the area of protecting biodiversity, but that they are not compliant with our own Environmental Bill of Rights, people's rights to be able to weigh in on the environment—and also maybe coupled with this government's use now of ministerial zoning orders, which essentially short-circuit, again, good planning and that short-circuit science-based, collaborative decision-making, which we just heard from Jennifer.

Can you just talk a little bit on how you see the Auditor General's report and this increased use of ministerial zoning orders, particularly, for example, in Duffins Creek, where they're going to build a warehouse on an environmentally significant wetland through an MZO?

1450

Ms. Katie Krelove: Yes, I think it's becoming clear that all environmental regulations or policies—or laws, even—are considered by this government as red tape and as standing in the way of development.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Katie Krelove: I don't think anyone in Ontario sees it that way other than perhaps big developers who want to get their hands on land and water that was formerly unavailable because of environmental regulations. But I think most Ontarians understand that those environmental regulations and policies and laws are there for a really good reason. As Jennifer said, it's not just the environment, but the environment that protects people. Those are there to protect the environment that protects us.

It just seems like this government will go to any length to find a way to strip those environmental regulations and avoid that public knowledge that they know is out there. They know that people value those green spaces and value that environmental infrastructure. Some of these ways of getting around the Environmental Bill of Rights by putting proposals in omnibus bills like Bill 229—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. The time has come up.

We'll move to the independent members for their second round. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Perhaps I could go back, because we were cut off just before, to get Jennifer to respond to the question I had around living in flood zones and the fact

that it actually makes them coexist with the realities of the environment. In a way, it actually is safe development—

Dr. Jennifer Drake: Sorry, I wouldn't call this—"safe development" is very—

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Generous?

Dr. Jennifer Drake: Yes. We have homes that are in communities that predate where the regulated flood plain is. We have people that live in, even, frequent flood zones. As a result of that, people can't get certain types of insurance, people deal with the effects and we deal as a society with the costs of making it work. So we make it work, because many of our areas were established long before we had the understanding of hydrologic processes that we do today. We're not going to go to Brampton and say, "You know what, downtown Brampton? Let's move you," or the financial district, "Let's move you."

Instead, what we do is we invest huge amounts of capital in very sophisticated flood warning and protection systems and emergency response measures and then in billion-dollar projects, like land-forming projects, that we have examples of here in Toronto, like the Corktown Common. They're amazing feats of engineering and I love them, but they are incredibly expensive and would not be necessary if we had planned and regulated the growth of our communities. Today, in 2020, where we have a modern technical and scientific understanding, we can eliminate these types of very expensive and ongoing systemic infrastructure costs by leaving the space.

The reason we have conservation authorities in this province is because in the 1950s we had Hurricane Hazel and we had tens of thousands of Ontarians left homeless. Hundreds of people died. An entire road of houses was bulldozed by a bridge in the middle of the night, and people died and drowned. We learned from that. We even embarked on a land buyback effort to buy it back and put it into the public domain so that we could protect people from the worst of the worst outcomes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Well, these are very costly lessons, indeed. I really thank you for your presentation today, along with Katie.

I do want to just touch on FilmOntario. I'm really pleased to hear your confidence in the future of film and television in this province, given our leadership as a destination in North America.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I noted that you requested some changes to—first of all, you wanted to see the film and television tax credit as something that remains. I know that's something that we supported as well, as part of the consultations we did over the summer, and we heard from many, many of your members.

This time around, you want to see enhancements that really incorporate the realities of COVID and the PPE and the other costs that you have to endure to operate safely. That's definitely something that we would support and [inaudible] as well, so I just wanted you to know that.

If there's anything else that you want to add—I know an ACTRA representative is here, as well, who represents the talent side of it. I'm pleased to hear the lengths

everyone is going to keep everybody safe. What about mental health and well-being? How is that going? Maybe, Sue, you can talk to us about that.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize, MPP Hunter. The time has come up.

That concludes our time for the presentations. Thank you to all three presenters. We appreciate your presentations.

LIUNA LOCAL 183 TRAINING CENTRE

MR. DAVID LAING

NORTH GWILLIMBURY FOREST
ALLIANCE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Moving along to our next group of presenters, first I would like to call upon LIUNA 183 Training Centre. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: Good afternoon, everybody. Sorry, I'm not on camera. I've had some connectivity issues in my earlier meetings this morning.

My name is Sandro Pinto. I'm the executive director with LIUNA Local 183's training fund. I am pleased to be here with everyone and looking forward to the afternoon here.

At LIUNA Local 183, we have a long and storied track record of working with government and private sector employers to deliver infrastructure projects such as highways and hospitals. In Ontario, LIUNA members have anchored construction of major government undertakings such as subways, water mains, roadwork and bridges. We also work with the private sector to build apartment buildings, office towers and residential homes.

We take a positive, proactive and progressive approach to ensuring a safe workplace for our members and providing them with well-paying jobs. We're proud to lead initiatives that aim to increase diversity and inclusivity in the construction industry, and we're continuing to develop strategies to remove racism, sexism and other forms of workplace violence from the job site.

LIUNA understands the importance that the skilled trades have to community building, meaningful employment and supporting thousands of families. Historically, the trades were inaccessible to many young people due to the cost required to get started or were considered undesirable career paths, and apprenticeships were hard to come by. Ontario's Skilled Trades Strategy offers a multi-faceted approach to removing those barriers, which traditionally keep young people from prosperous and fulfilling careers.

The Ontario Tools Grant helps apprentices purchase the tools that they need to succeed on a job site. The additional financial support that Ontario is offering to apprentices ensures that young people won't have to choose between a job now and training for a lifelong career. Ontario's funding for training provides the means so that apprentices can train on safe and current equipment. Like many

industries, our sector changes at a rapid pace. We need to ensure our apprentices learn innovative techniques and up-to-date skills. Training is critical to the safety and development of apprentices. The government's investment into modernizing training will keep our job sites safer and better prepare young people for a successful career ahead.

The government's proposed partnerships with employers, the new Achievement Incentive and other support programs will create the positions which apprentices previously struggled to find. In turn, employers will have the financial capacity to recruit talented young people who will become skilled employees. Hiring apprentices is a cost that many small and medium-sized businesses cannot take on. The apprenticeship strategy removes that burden and creates more opportunities for young people.

According to the Toronto board of trade, 147,000 construction-related jobs will be created by 2031. We need to make smart investments today to prepare our young generation to meet the demands of tomorrow's job market. We know that new infrastructure projects are key to reigniting the economy. We need to bring in more skilled tradespeople to build the highways, subways and hospitals that our growing province will rely on.

As our province prepares to restart its economy, the skilled trades strategy is an opportunity to have our young people at the centre of our future. LIUNA believes in the importance of inclusion, both on the job site and in our communities. We're proud to offer training programs that encourage more women to enter the trades, and we believe in breaking down the barriers that have historically limited diversity on jobs. At LIUNA Local 183, as an example, we partnered with Aecon construction and their women in the trades program recently, and had a number of success stories through that program. We look to expand it and have had discussions about expanding it into our Ottawa sister local in the near future.

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LIUNA created mobile units to offer training to underserved and remote communities through our Indigenous partnerships. This has created new opportunities for young people in remote communities and First Nations. The government's skilled trades strategy will allow our organization to offer more programs and create new opportunities across Ontario.

Union employment offers apprentices and their families well-paying jobs, medical benefits and best-in-class pensions upon retirement. Investing \$24 million in the Apprentice Development Benefit to supplement EI benefits for eligible apprentices attending full-time, in-class training and investing \$4.7 million for the development of a new, user-friendly digital portal are just some of the items that are important to us.

Committing a total of \$211 million to the In-Class Enhancement Fund over the next two years to support training providers to deliver higher-quality training and investing an additional \$10 million in the Apprenticeship Capital Grant are all important to the positive things that are going to be necessary for us to move forward with filling that skills shortage. Establishing a new Skills

Development Fund, which will provide \$30 million over two years to assist non-college training providers, businesses and associations, is another example of what is coming and what is important to the skilled trades.

Back in 2002, when I started with LIUNA as their apprenticeship coordinator for Local 183, shortly thereafter, I remember hearing how there was going to be this skills shortage and the skills shortage was coming, and we were all getting ready for it. A number of years and many governments later, we had tried different things to tackle the skills shortage. Different programs had come up and different ways of attacking apprenticeships in the Ontario College of Trades and a number of other different things had popped up.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: I believe that this current government, their proposal and their budget, has allowed for the most comprehensive, the most aggressive and wide, broadening approach when it comes to attacking the skills shortages and investing in our youth, women and Indigenous partnerships.

That's it for my opening statement. I'm prepared to answer any questions that the panel may have. Thank you for your attention too.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

We'll go to our next presenter, David Laing. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. David Laing: Great. Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is David Laing. I was born in Ontario and currently live in Brampton, Ontario. I have a history with this province that spans almost seven decades. This is the first time that I have presented to the committee, and it is distressing that I feel compelled to do so now in response to Bill 229, and specifically schedule 6 and schedule 8 of this bill.

For me, this is about balance and public trust. As you know, conservation authorities were created by provincial legislation in 1946 to address flood risk, soil erosion and deteriorating water quality due to decades of poor, often politically-driven, land use decisions. They were given the ability to purchase property and they took management control over much of the land in the flood plains of the province's watersheds. They were given the mandate and authority to stop environmentally damaging development projects and to negotiate with landowners to secure better environmental outcomes. They were asked to increase public awareness of the importance of watershed health by providing educational and recreational opportunities.

Over the decades, conservation authorities have largely succeeded in reducing soil erosion and flood risk and preventing a disastrous decline in water quality and biodiversity. Their mandate, authority and science-based analysis have brought much-needed balance to the pressure for urban and suburban development and contributed a wealth of understanding and experience for sustainable development practices.

For residents like me, the conservation authorities have proven to be trusted environmental custodians, providing a reasoned, balanced and long-term view. Until now, they were backed by legislation and had the authority and resources to stand up to both private and public landowners when their situational assessment concluded that the development interests of the few were trumping the environmental interests of the larger Ontario population. As a member of the public concerned about environmental issues yet lacking in the time, resources and expertise to understand the environmental complexities of individual development applications, the conservation authorities have been and continue to be a source of comfort well worth the tax dollars they receive.

Today population increases, particularly in the southern part of the province and especially in the GTHA, mean that there is mounting pressure for affordable housing. Coupled with this, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing a major rethink of densification. There has never been more pressure to release land for greenfield development. In addition, food consumption habits increasingly favour local production that is driving agricultural intensification. All of these trends are exacerbating the environmental threat to our watersheds and local ecosystems. The balance point between development and environmental sustainability has become razor thin. We have little wiggle room for the future even while we continue fixing past mistakes. With the global warming crisis and the biodiversity crisis looming, we cannot afford to create new mistakes, because we don't have the luxury of time for repair.

Reducing red tape is a fine objective, but as far as I'm concerned, that's not what Bill 229 is about. Schedule 6 of this bill would make it far more difficult and far more expensive for the conservation authorities to protect our properties from flood damage and ensure the quality of water in our watersheds. They will be more restricted in their ability to stop unauthorized work, they won't have party status at the LPAT table and they will have no tools to ensure that the science will be considered in the face of ministerial zoning orders.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. David Laing: And schedule 8 reduces the province's responsibility to protect species at risk, thereby endangering the province's biodiversity.

Cloaking these reductions in omnibus budget bills which limit public discourse creates public mistrust about this government's environmental priorities. Economic recovery from COVID-19 cannot be accomplished by reducing environmental protections and oversight. As was proven prior to 1946, this short-term thinking will only result in continued environmental degradation, leading to both economic loss and reduced quality of life for most Ontarians.

So pass Bill 229 if you must, but please keep environmental protections out of legislation primarily designed for economic recovery. I request respectfully that you please remove schedule 6 and schedule 8 from Bill 229. Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

We'll go to our next presenter, North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance. Please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation as well.

Mr. Jack Gibbons: Thank you, Mr. Sandhu and members of the committee. I'm Jack Gibbons from the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance. Thank you very much for the opportunity to talk with you today about schedule 6 of Bill 229. Before I give you our thoughts about schedule 6, I'd like to give you a bit of background information about the North Gwillimbury Forest.

The North Gwillimbury Forest is one of the 10 largest forests in the Lake Simcoe watershed. In fact, it is more than three times larger than Vancouver's Stanley Park. It stretches all the way from the north end of Keswick to Jacksons Point in the town of Georgina. At the centre of the North Gwillimbury Forest is a 500-acre provincially significant wetland and woodland that is owned by the DG Group, which is a large developer. In 2011, we learned that the DG Group wanted to build a large subdivision on this provincially significant wetland. So we created the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance to Protect our forest and its wetland.

We have worked very hard over the last nine years to protect the forest and save the wetland. I am pleased to note that in response to our request last year, the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal amended the town of Georgina's official plan to prohibit development on this provincially significant wetland. So it would appear that our campaign to save the wetland and the forest has been successful.

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Why are we here today to talk about schedule 6? The answer to that question is very simple: If schedule 6 is passed by the Legislature, then the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, with a simple stroke of the pen, will be able to give the DG Group permission to build a large subdivision on the wetland in the North Gwillimbury Forest. This is simply not right. It is simply not right to give a politician, who sits in an office in downtown Toronto, the ability to undo the hard work of citizens' groups who have fought for years and years to protect our provincially significant wetland.

Mr. Sandhu and members of the committee, Ontario is a very large province. As a result, we do not need to destroy our provincially significant wetlands to create homes for our people or to grow our economy. Southern Ontario has already lost more than 70% of its wetlands. We can't afford to lose any more.

There's one other concern we have with respect to schedule 6 that I'd like to talk to you about. Schedule 6 proposes to give developers many options to appeal decisions that protect our natural heritage, but schedule 6 does not give citizens' groups the right to appeal decisions that would harm our natural heritage. This is asymmetrical and unfair. If developers are going to be allowed to appeal decisions that protect our natural heritage, then surely citizens' groups should also be allowed to appeal decisions that harm our natural heritage.

In conclusion, Mr. Sandhu and members of the committee, we believe that schedule 6 is fundamentally flawed and should be withdrawn from Bill 229. Thank you very much for your attention. If you have any questions, I'll be pleased to answer them.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for your presentation.

We'll go to the questions now. We'll start the first round of questions with the opposition. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, everyone, for your presentations. Let me start with you, Mr. Gibbons. The outcry to schedule 6 and schedule 8 in this budget bill has been remarkable. Almost 99% of the people who have come to this committee are asking for this to be withdrawn, and it's all kinds of people. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture opposes this. All sorts of people are opposing this. And so it's distressing for me to let you know that, for example, the MPP from Flamborough–Glanbrook characterized this opposition as “just a lot of noise from special interest groups.” To me, that's very disrespectful and unfortunate, because clearly these are not special interest groups; these are people who have a deep-seated love and concern for our environment.

What I would like to ask you very specifically about—not just in schedule 6, but in general—this government's seemingly endless attack on the environment and environmental protections: Schedule 6 will give the minister direct ability to oversee good planning, good decision-making, scientific evidence. What we also see now is a minister that is moving with ministerial zoning orders. So the changes to the conservation authority, coupled with this unusual excessive use of ministerial zonings, is continuing to erode this loss of our wetlands that you described, which is disastrous. It's absolutely disastrous.

I will get to my question, but if you can speak to the loss of wetlands when it comes to Duffins Creek, for example, in Ajax; that's the Minister of Finance's own riding. In fact, the ministerial zoning orders that have been imposed on communities—we as Ontario's official opposition NDP are asking the Integrity Commissioner to investigate the Premier allowing a ministerial zoning order to be issued in Stratford, Ontario.

So my real question is—the significance of this can't be understated. The loss of our significant wetlands is huge. Do you see this as a pattern of behaviour and are these tools that this government is amassing to just run over—pave over, if you will—our environmental lands?

Mr. Jack Gibbons: Yes, there are too many ministerial zoning orders. These planning decisions are very complex and it's important for the local citizens to have input. MZOs eliminate that.

Also, our provincially significant wetlands are just so essential. They help prevent flooding. They clean our water. In terms of Lake Simcoe, they will help reduce phosphorus pollution. We have a very serious phosphorus pollution problem in Lake Simcoe. We need to actually reduce our phosphorus pollution by 55%. The government does not have a plan to do that.

Wetlands also, of course, sequester carbon to help prevent dangerous climate change. They provide habitats for species. They help us protect biodiversity. So the MZOs and schedule 6 are very short-sighted.

The people of Ontario want growth. They want homes. They want jobs. But, as I said in my introductory remarks, we are a large province. There's lots of land in the GTA that's available for development that is not wetlands or natural heritage.

What the government seems to be promoting is stupid growth, but we need smart growth. That's growth that grows our economy without jeopardizing our environment and our natural resources.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Jack Gibbons: The North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance is based in the town of Georgina. That's Caroline Mulroney's riding. The vast majority of the people in the town of Georgina support our campaign to save the North Gwillimbury Forest. Every single member of the Georgina council supports our campaign to save the North Gwillimbury Forest. People up there love Lake Simcoe. They love the natural heritage. That's why they moved up there. They elected a Progressive Conservative representative, but the people who elected Caroline Mulroney also want this government to protect our natural heritage. They want this government to protect Lake Simcoe's watershed.

As an economist, what they're proposing to do just baffles me, because it doesn't really make economic sense. We don't need to trade off our environment to have a growing economy and to provide homes for people.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for that. I would agree with you completely. This seems to be a government that doesn't believe in the science of climate change or doesn't understand how to respond. I think that if we just talk about the language they do understand, which is, theoretically, what's good for business—I mean, this is not good for business.

We hear about the shore erosion, flooding basements. People and municipalities are struggling with their infrastructure deficit. People are struggling to get insurance for their businesses or for their homes. As an economist, can you talk about how this would make sense and maybe how we can teach this government to walk and chew gum at the same time? You can protect the environment and you can recover the economy. That would be something that maybe you could advise on.

Mr. Jack Gibbons: Certainly. If we have smart growth and smart infrastructure, that means lower taxes. There is a more rational approach that's better for taxpayers, better for the economy and better for the environment.

But what these short-sighted policies do is they do benefit certain developers who own certain parcels of land. Unfortunately, the government seems to be more concerned about increasing the profits of certain developers than doing what is in the best interests of the province as a whole. That's very short-sighted. I hope they'll change direction, because what they're doing is not what the people of Ontario want and it's certainly not what most of their voters want.

1520

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I agree. Chair, how—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We're out of time. Thank you.

We'll move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you so much to all the presenters today. I want to start with Sandro Pinto. I know we can't see each other, but it's nice to hear you and to hear that your members are doing well and that you support the investments in skilled trades and in workers. Indeed, coming out of COVID, we're going to need more of that investment as we move forward.

I'm wondering if you can speak to some of the work that you have been doing to bring a broader group of people into the skilled trades, particularly if you could speak to women, Black, Indigenous and people of colour.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: Sure, thank you for the question. I'll highlight our most recent program, which we did out of our Vaughan campus. It was together with Aecon. For those of you who don't know, Aecon is a very large contractor in Canada. They work in pipeline and utilities and a lot of heavy civil projects, so a very, very large employer.

They came to us and said, "We're building this internal program within Aecon called Women in Trades, so we're looking for a training partner." We immediately jumped at the opportunity, thinking that this is in line with what we want to do at LIUNA. It's in line with what we've been trying to do. Shortly, maybe about a year or a year and a half, before that, we had hired our own outreach coordinator to do just that and visit schools and do tours of our campuses for a number of groups to showcase the trades. So it was a natural fit for us.

Aecon went and recruited 75 women. They went through a recruiting process that was established by them. We developed the program. We developed about three different options of programs that we could tackle with them, but the one that they wanted us to focus on in the end was the Construction Craft Worker, a registered apprenticeship program. We began delivering our first program about three years ago, so very successful. All of the women who took the program were hired on by Aecon and have become members of Local 183.

That has resulted in two additional programs since then with Aecon and an establishment of a partnership with our Ottawa local to hopefully start sometime in late 2021, depending on COVID and everything else that's happening, obviously.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That's really terrific. It would be great to get some of their stories out, particularly women who are in the trades for the first time and their experiences and encouraging other women to do the same, because these are excellent jobs. We can really support women's full participation in the labour market and economic opportunity by creating more pathways into the skilled trades.

I know that you also do a lot of work on the community benefits side, so really looking at marginalized communities and looking at pre-apprentice opportunities into those as well.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Can you speak to that?

Mr. Sandro Pinto: Yes. Community benefits: We work very closely with Rosemarie Powell and her group, so you nailed it, actually. You nailed it with your question. We're very engaged with the TCBN. We have a member of LIUNA who sits on the board of TCBN and we attend a number of their outreach events. We have continued to put people through our training programs, whether it was just something where we needed to give them the basic health and safety training that they were requiring, because they did have some initial skills—but there needs to be more with that, and we look forward to expanding that.

There's also the PCBN, the Peel arm of the TCBN that's coming out. We've already engaged in discussions with them and are looking to hopefully run two programs with them in the new year at some point.

These are things that—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll have to move to the government side. MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to all the presenters for your presentations today. I'll ask Sandro Pinto to finish his comments, and then I have a question to ask him as well.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: Thank you. As I was saying, we're engaged in a number of those discussions and partnerships. One of the things that we're hoping to do—a lot of things that the government has laid out in their budget when it comes to skills training are being addressed, and we're looking forward to it—is doing more partnerships and expanding our campus in Vaughan, our headquarters for training.

We actually invested \$8 million of our own resources to build a tunnel rescue training facility that's currently being built there to tackle the shortages, and the upcoming work and recruitment in the tunnel industry. We look forward to working with the government on expanding that particular site, if possible, and opportunities that may come up.

We look forward to working with the TCBN in expanding our programs there. We've had a number of groups like the TCBN. Our OYAP partners at the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the Peel District School Board have all wanted to expand their programs with us. It's one of those problems we want to have, because you want to have more people come through the trades, but our building is getting quite busy, and of course everybody is facing the challenges of COVID right now to making all of that work safely. So we continue to move forward and work with everybody who wants to work with us, absolutely.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Great. Thank you, Sandro.

In terms of reopening after COVID, as in reopening our economy, obviously building infrastructure and subways and opening skilled trades jobs is one of the main ways to boost the economy. In terms of reopening and training in skilled trades, can you please speak on the modernizing of the training? What is the role of modernizing training as we move forward?

Mr. Sandro Pinto: It's integral to how we're going to move forward when it comes to reopening the economy and getting people back to work, and stimulating the economy with projects such as infrastructure projects. With the Modernizing the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Act and the establishment of—I'll give you an example—the skilled trades panel, all of the things that are going to be put in front of that skilled trades panel, the decisions that they're going to have to come to and the recommendations they're going to make are going to steer how we are going to build this workforce that needs to be built.

There is going to be an unbelievable amount of opportunity in the construction industry, more than there has ever been, when we begin to get past COVID and reopen the economy. We want to be in a position of strength, in a position of being encouraging and having opportunities that are attainable, opportunities that provide support when apprentices are taking apprenticeship programs and going through their in-class training, opportunities for tools and the opportunity to have income while they're in training. All of these things are going to be important for us to move forward, and we need the government's support to do that. A lot of the items that are being put forward by the government, in fact, will do that.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Sandro. You spoke about the skills shortage as well. As I mentioned, there's going to be a huge demand for our skilled trades, more than ever before, because of all the subways and infrastructure projects that our government is planning to do in the upcoming future. How critical is it to encourage the young people in our communities? As we see, there's a skills shortage in the last decade. Moving forward, why is it so important to encourage young folks so that we can balance between our skills shortage and the demand, the highest demand ever?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: How can we balance that, and how come it's very important at this moment?

Mr. Sandro Pinto: It's never been more important to get young people, young men and young women of all races, of all colours, everywhere to understand that there is an opportunity in the skilled trades now, that there has never been an opportunity like now. We need to do that with programs such as outreach initiatives into our high schools and things like the youth adviser council that has been set up.

1530

I have the privilege of sitting on the prevention council. These discussions at the prevention council are ongoing, about how do we engage youth, how do we engage women, how do we engage underrepresented groups to get

into the construction industry and see the viable opportunities that are there and the career opportunities that are there—not just a passing fleet of work, but an opportunity for a career. These are important things and we need the resources to do that.

LIUNA is very proud of what they've been able to do so far, but we have a lot of work to do with a number of our employer partners and all of the other partners that we have in the industry currently. We're another big supporter of Skills Ontario and we're working with them. We've established a women's department that deals with women in the trades at our provincial office. Our training network is right across the province of Ontario. That meets frequently and regularly to deal with all of these issues and establish as many partnerships as we possibly can. Absolutely, the main focus of that is to attract young people to the trades.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Sandro.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My riding is Scarborough—Rouge Park. We have Centennial College and U of T Scarborough, and we have one of the highest numbers in youth population as well. Again, our government is trying to encourage both young people and women to get involved and get this training.

I really liked the comments you made about how you are visiting the high schools and youth councils and how you are encouraging young folks. I think that is critical as we move forward. As you mentioned in your opening remarks, it is definitely a rewarding industry as well. Once they learn the training, it will definitely be helpful throughout their life. So I just want to thank LIUNA for the work that you've been doing. We're also looking forward to seeing more improvement with young folks, both—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you, MPP Vijay.

We'll move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Hi, Chair. Let me just get my video going here.

I want to ask the representative from the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance—you really, I felt, spoke in very strong terms about what is at risk and the fact that we have a large area in our province. Of course, we know that Indigenous people are the original stewards of the land. They've come forward to say that this might even contravene established law because there hasn't been consultation with Indigenous communities for some of the changes that are being proposed in both schedule 6 and schedule 8.

I wondered if you could speak to what would happen if we get this very wrong. What are some of the risks and the consequences that could happen here?

Mr. Jack Gibbons: The traditional role of conservation authorities has been to prevent flooding. Certainly, there's increased risk of flooding now with climate change. All the models say that the rainfall levels will increase in Canada and Ontario due to climate change, and

there will be more extreme precipitation events. So there is risk of flooding. It's just short-sighted to restrict the ability of conservation authorities to fulfill that mandate.

Also, like in Lake Simcoe, we've got a very serious phosphorus problem, and wetlands are so important for reducing phosphorus pollution. These proposals to sacrifice the wetlands and the forest to increase the short-term profits of developers just don't make any sense. If we destroy the natural protectors of our society—wetlands and forests can reduce flooding and phosphorus pollution. That means we don't have to spend so many tax dollars for corrective actions. Failing to protect the natural environment is very short-sighted, because we lose the natural heritage which provides so many benefits to us, but also because we'll have to raise taxes to correct the problem, to deal with the problem of flooding, to deal with the problem of phosphorus pollution.

We've had a phosphorus pollution problem in Lake Simcoe for years. We've got ambitious targets to reduce the phosphorus pollution levels by 55%, but the government—despite the fact that Lake Simcoe has five MPPs, all who are members of the Progressive Conservative Party—hasn't developed a plan yet to reduce Lake Simcoe's phosphorus pollution.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Jack Gibbons: These policies are so short-sighted and they're not giving the voters, including the people who elect Tory MPPs, what they really want. The people up in the Lake Simcoe watershed want to protect it. Hundreds of our members have sent in emails to their local MPPs asking them to rescind schedule 6. It just baffles me that the government is proposing to do this, because the only beneficiaries are certain developers. It's so short-sighted.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Yes, I agree it is short-sighted. I have received thousands of those emails myself in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood. We border onto Lake Ontario and the Scarborough Bluffs, as I'm sure you know, famously. They are there, but they're also eroding.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off, MPP Hunter. The time has come up.

We'll move to the government side. MPP Kusendova.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you very much to all of our presenters.

I'd like to address my questions to Sandro Pinto from LIUNA. I'm a skilled worker myself—I'm a registered nurse—and so I applaud your members and all the efforts that you have been doing, especially in light of COVID-19 and this pandemic. I know that in the recovery and as we slowly reopen the economy, your members will be critical in helping Ontario thrive once again.

I'm glad that we're focusing the discussion today on women in skilled trades, as well as on attracting young people into the skilled trades, because since I became an MPP I've learned quite a bit that there's a huge disconnect. We have a lot of great-paying jobs, thousands of skilled trade jobs, but we don't have people to fill them. One of the reasons why I became a nurse is because it requires a skilled set of trades. You can't automate a nurse. You can't

robotize a nurse. I think it applies to your sector as well. You can't automate or robotize a plumber or a welder.

I think there's a great future for our young people, but in my community of Mississauga Centre—I'm an immigrant myself, and I grew up in this community—there is a certain level of stigma attached to skilled trades, where some parents might not be encouraging their children to go into education and to take up a skilled trade because there is a greater influence on being a doctor or a lawyer. So I think it's really important for us to change the culture and to address that stigma. I know that we've been doing that together with our Ministry of Education, where we're introducing skilled trades as viable careers early on, in earlier grades. So it's great to hear that you are working with different school boards, including in Peel in my community.

Can you tell us a little bit more or give us some suggestions of what we can do to encourage more young people and certainly also women to take up skilled trades? Because right now we only have a 5% participation of women in the skilled trades. Hopefully, that could change in the very near future.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: Sure, thank you for your question. It's interesting to note that parents, for those of us who are parents, are probably the largest obstacle we face when recruiting young people into the skilled trades. We face it all the time. You nailed it with your question and your comment that we all want our sons or daughters to potentially be doctors and lawyers—and maybe politicians—but the reality is it's not going to happen.

To pull them away or to understand or to get them to see that their son or daughter can build a career in the construction industry, a very profitable career in the construction industry, is a significant challenge for us. At LIUNA, we decided to put resources forward and have, as I mentioned before, our own outreach person who just promotes the trades for us, who just goes out and finds partnerships within school boards, within communities. We have a partnership with the Peel Regional Police. We have a Make Your Future event that we do every year with them.

1540

Before COVID, we had an event at our campus where we invited guidance counsellors from all of the different school boards that we partner with, and it was a real eye-opener for us because we realized that—not their fault—the guidance counsellors were only aware of the poster children of the trades: electrician, plumber, welder, carpenter. That's what they thought. The skilled trades are so much larger than that. So we decided that we would do that as an annual event, and then this thing COVID came about and ruined everything.

We realized at that point that we needed to expand that and really tackle and somehow get to parents and have them come out to our campus and get them on our site to show them what a construction school looks like, because a construction school in a unionized environment looks very different than at a college such as Sheridan or Humber.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: We need them to see that and we need them to see that we have a pretty good grasp on what we're doing. We have a pretty good understanding of what it will take for people to get into the trades—

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you. Sorry, we only have two minutes left, so I wanted to touch upon this idea of micro-credentials, because this budget is including \$180.5 million over the next three years. I'm really excited about this idea of micro-credentialing for my industry. For health care, definitely, this will help to build capacity within the health care system, especially in light of COVID-19. Can you tell us which sectors you think would benefit the most from this investment and focus on micro-credentials?

Mr. Sandro Pinto: I think that when you're looking at micro-credentialing, you could look at the heavy civil, absolutely, because there are so many different skill sets within a specific traditional apprenticeship program, when you're breaking it down and realizing that people have had careers on one aspect of a thing or you can build a career in one area of one particular set of skills or one particular trade. When you're looking at the apprenticeship system and what it was and what we're trying to change it into, the flexibility has to be there to identify what is the need. What do we need right now? What is something that people can begin a viable career in and young people can get involved with now, and not have to be burdened with things that are not necessarily as critical at this particular time that they need to do, that they can just focus on this one thing or three things, and that's going to allow them to be successful?

Part of the skilled trades panel and other areas that are being looked at within the government and with unionized trades and employers and everybody involved is really zeroing in on things that can be done that assist and target specific areas of required need.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: There are a lot of skills that are transferable between similar professions, and that certainly applies in health care. I know that Ontario is leading the way when it comes to micro-credentials, so it certainly is an exciting time, and we're working across ministries on this specific aspect.

Thank you so much. It's really great to have you. And thank you again to all of your members, who are truly critical, especially at this time as we slowly reopen and recover from the pandemic.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the opposition for their second round. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. Sandro, don't turn your camera off yet. Now that you're on your feet, I'm going to keep you there. I just wanted to let you know that I have actually worked with LIUNA. I actually was at the LIUNA 837 training centre in Stoney Creek. In the day, I worked with Riccardo Persi, and I don't know if you remember Mitch Holt—it may be before your time.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: No, I do. I do know Mitch, yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think it needs to be understood by everyone in Ontario the amazing training that takes place in unionized workplaces across Ontario and the sophistication of your training centres. It's pretty remarkable.

But this age-old problem of trying to get kids into skilled trades, it's not new. Back in the day, again, in the 1990s, I worked with the Ontario training advisory board. LIUNA was a part of that. We also participated in something called the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, the OYAP program. So, it's not a new problem. It's something we still collectively need to crack, this problem.

I want to address one of the issues, which is around people wanting to have stable, secure and predictable work. Some of the evidence we found is that when people go into the skilled trades, when there is a recession, when there are big layoffs and when there's a downturn, people don't come back to that, necessarily, back to those skills, or for example, they don't finish their ticket because of those downturns. That, I think, is a problem. I'm going to get you to speak to that.

And I would just say, in Hamilton, we were severely disappointed, and I know that LIUNA was also disappointed, by the sudden cancellation of the LRT. That was a promise to provide lots of good-paying jobs, good construction jobs, for your members and for the people of Hamilton. I'm trying to make the connection between the predictability, the idea that this is stable work and that people can build a career on it, but even though it's well-paying at the time, if they end up in a position where these jobs are taken away from them, they might never return to the job. Sandro, if you wanted to comment on that? Thank you.

Mr. Sandro Pinto: Sure. I will say that on the transferability of construction skill sets, what we at LIUNA have done to tackle some of those issues is—I'll give an example. We have a residential house framing program where we have people come in and they build a home at our facility in Vaughan. At some point, if the residential sector were to slow down in framing, we built a two-week program that could transfer a carpenter's skill in the residential framing into the high-rise or into heavy civil and bridge work.

When you're talking about sustainability, if you have those core foundation skills or if you have that particular skill set in one sector and construction slows down, if you are able to establish yourself in a training program that allows you to take a different program but it's still very similar within your wheelhouse of skill sets, you can transfer into a related sector that is on the uprise. Sometimes you have the heavy civil where it's busy and residential is slow, and then vice versa. You can transfer back and forth. We've done that successfully at our training centres, including in Hamilton, where I know you said you were. Yes, and I did know Mitch.

On the issue of the LRT, it's not my realm. It's more of a Joe Mancinelli question, but yes, I know that did happen and I know that Joe is in discussions.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thanks for that, Sandro. Neither you nor I want to speak with Joe Mancinelli. How's that? We'll leave it at that.

I would like to end my questioning with the time I have left with Mr. Laing. Mr. Laing, I want to thank you for being here, that you felt compelled to speak before this committee. You represent, what I would say, is a groundswell of—dare I call you a regular Ontarian, if I may, who has been outraged by this decision, who didn't see it coming, who sees that it makes absolutely no sense in terms of the process or science-based decisions.

We hear the government talking a lot about red tape. It's like catnip for this government to talk about red tape.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: But really, when they talk about red tape, what they're doing is reducing protections in workplaces that keep people safe, in child care that keep babies safe or in public services. Let's think Walkerton. Those are examples of when we've looked at reducing the government's involvement, and they have resulted in tragic consequences.

If you want to comment on this idea that this government thinks everything that is impeding their way to get their will is red tape, I'd appreciate that, and maybe even just talk about how this, under the cover of red tape, taking away protections and taking away conservation authorities that people love is eroding the public trust that you talked about.

Mr. David Laing: Okay. Thank you, MPP Shaw. First of all, I want to give you my background: As a management consultant over a number of years, I was in change management and looking at how companies can make process efficiencies and reduce red tape. So I am certainly one who has some experience and expertise in understanding the necessity to eliminate dual steps and unneeded processes.

1550

However, as I found in business, it's a balancing act. You have to be very careful about how you cut and what items you cut in order to maintain the integrity of the process itself and to prevent chaos from occurring. In this particular case, I along with a number of other people all feel that this particular piece of the legislation goes way too far in its implementation of trying to streamline processes for developers. Mr. Gibbons has made some excellent points in terms of saying that that balancing act is now weighted heavily in favour of the developers and less so in favour of the citizens of this province who are interested in environmental protections. So that's an area of concern for me.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. David Laing: Your second question was with regard to the public trust. It's the way that the government has introduced this legislation, putting it inside of omnibus bills that are budget-based bills which basically limit public discourse, do not get the visibility on the Environmental Registry and don't really allow for the kinds of discussion and debate that is really necessary to make these kinds of changes. The conservation authorities, over a number of decades—and I've had some personal interaction with the conservation authorities over the past five years. They have built up, over time, an element of trust that I can count on them to—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

That concludes our time. Thank you to all three presenters. We appreciate your presentations.

DAVID SUZUKI FOUNDATION

CITY OF BRAMPTON

MS. DARLA FISET

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Moving along to our next group of presenters, first I would like to call upon the David Suzuki Foundation. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, committee members, for providing this opportunity today. My name is Dr. Yannick Beaudoin. I'm a senior economist and director general for Ontario and northern Canada with the David Suzuki Foundation. I can see that in these unusual times, my kitchen will now be part of the public record.

Mr. Chair, esteemed committee members, I'm here today thanks to and on behalf of the nearly 10,000 Ontarian voices who, over the past week, have accessed the David Suzuki Foundation platform to write to their MPPs to express serious concerns with key aspects of Bill 229. The foundation is also here today in solidarity with NGO partners across the charitable non-profit sector who together seek to work constructively towards an Ontario that is truly thriving today and for all tomorrows; an Ontario that is equitable, just, fair; an Ontario with an economy that delivers true well-being for people and planet.

We also stand firmly in support of the voices and rights of all Indigenous peoples with respect to all activities and actions in their traditional territories. Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have exemplified a harmony and interconnection with nature, a harmony and interdependence which a colonial, extractive and oppressive economic model has all but erased.

As an organization with so much privilege, we also strive, and still have much to learn, to improve how we can walk in solidarity with all equity-deserving communities that continue to be let down by an economic mindset and policy framework that favour some above others. This has been made clearly visible by the socially concentrated impacts of the COVID pandemic.

Mr. Chair and esteemed committee members, Bill 229 is entitled Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act, leading Ontarians to think that its contents are focused on immediate and longer-term needs specifically related to dealing with the present crisis and presenting first key steps to get us on a good path beyond the crisis. Yet a number of sections, schedules 6 and 8 in particular, cannot be argued as relating to protecting or supporting Ontarians during the pandemic, nor do they offer any help to Ontarians with respect to recovery. Bill 229 continues a pattern by this government to dismiss the intergenerational

value of Ontario's intact natural assets, to undermine the few safeguards that are in place to prevent their wholesale exploitation and conversion to profit for a few, and to employ procedural tactics that erode democratic principles and trust in government itself.

As an economist, I argue that applying the same pre-COVID economic thinking that has resulted in a global climate and biodiversity crisis, that has exacerbated social and cultural injustices and inequities, and is inflating intergenerational fiscal liabilities that governments are already scrambling to address is not a sound pathway forward.

A core promise made by this government with Bill 229 is job creation—not necessarily good or fulfilling jobs, just jobs. And yet, paradoxically, sections like schedule 8, which includes a permanent exemption to the forestry industry from the Endangered Species Act, mislead Ontarians to believe forestry is a job-creation engine. However, according to StatsCan, nationally, between 1997 and 2016, even as the total value of the sector in monetary terms remained relatively consistent, total employment decreased by 42%. It's important to note that this was not due to conservation or good stewardship measures. This is basic conventional economics.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: In mature extractor sectors like forestry, or mining where I was from for a while, mechanization and efficiencies of scale de-incentivize any push to increase employment. Further eroding the already basic safeguards aimed at protecting the quality and integrity of Ontario's forests and many species at risk they are home to does not result in more jobs, and merely selling the natural capital of the province to external markets and interests is old school economic thinking. Good quality, fulfilling job creation in Ontario comes from innovative, bold and agile sectors where the creativity and ingenuity of all Ontarians is fully valued.

For example, as direct private sector forestry job numbers have remained roughly the same in Ontario between 2015 and 2019, according to StatsCan, employment in the clean tech sector has essentially doubled in the same period. This sectoral expansion doesn't require the degradation of nature or the weakening of environmental safeguards and doesn't put at risk the possibility for all Ontarians to live in a healthy environment today and tomorrow. Such desirable careers, with proper planning and sound government strategies, can be distributed across the province and especially in places that would benefit the most.

A second core premise that lies at the heart of Bill 229 is that growth will lead us to an era of milk-and-honey prosperity for all. Respectfully, I would ask this government, what is it that Ontarians actually want to see grow? Have you asked them? Does the pre-COVID notion of growth defined as how quickly we can convert nature to money using the cheapest possible labour, also known as gross domestic product, still apply? Economists have known for decades that GDP alone does not inform governments on any progress towards achieving the qualitative aspirations people expect and desire or, if given the

chance, would define as a successful economy. Ontario could lead the way in a bold reimagining of fit-for-purpose economic policy drivers—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin:—that align with the values of Ontarians and that don't thrive on exploitation, extraction and inequities but rather on connection, participation, dignity and the acknowledgement of our interdependence with nature.

One thing this old economic thinking and related policies are really growing these days is ecological debt. That's a real debt that we are passing on to future Ontarians. We are already failing, and this government continues to fail. Financial debt can be paid off; climate and ecological debt in human time scales cannot. At a fundamental level, if we all agree with the laws of physics, the only economic entity that's actually too big to let fail is, in fact, the planet.

As the medical professionals and biologists would note, there is only one thing in nature that tries to physically grow forever: cancer. For those of us like myself who have had loved ones afflicted with that disease, that kind of growth is not welcomed and it should no longer be what defines the purpose and outcomes of Ontario's economy. It is safe to say our economy has grown enough; it's now time for it to grow up—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move to our next presenter. Our next presenter is the city of Brampton. Please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation as well.

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: Good afternoon. My name is Gurdeep Kaur. I'm the director of corporate projects and policy at the city of Brampton. I would like to start off by saying good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee.

Today, I'm joined by some of my colleagues at the city of Brampton: Paul Aldunate, who is an expeditor in planning, building and economic development, and Rick Conard, director of building and chief building officer at the city of Brampton. Also on the line we have Clare Barnett, who is the director of economic development.

1600

On behalf of the city of Brampton, thank you for the opportunity to present to you with the city's comments on Bill 229, Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, municipalities are the first line of support for our residents and businesses. Municipal governments have an immense responsibility in shaping the future of our communities as we recover from this health crisis.

I would like to focus a little bit on the Conservation Authorities Act at this time. The city would like to raise its concerns with proposed significant changes to the Conservation Authorities Act that Bill 229 makes and with the impact that these changes will have on the role that the conservation authorities have in land use planning. The proposed changes have a direct impact on how city staff

evaluate development proposals and work with the conservation authorities to protect natural systems in Brampton.

The city is concerned about how the proposed amendments will be implemented and how these changes would impact conservation authority effectiveness and efficiencies while providing the potential to bypass the local development approval process, resulting in the loss of local scientific analysis, which is a critical function of the conservation authorities for managing natural hazards, such as flooding.

Narrowing the powers of conservation authorities is counter to the watershed approach required by the Conservation Authorities Act. The proposed amendment would curb the city's existing relationship with conservation authorities and would have an impact on long-term planning, especially the cumulative impacts of development that consider the connectivity of natural features in an area and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems.

Having declared a climate change emergency and a robust suite of incentives to ensure sustainable development and a healthy environment, the city would welcome further opportunity to work with the government to ensure that the changes to the Conservation Authorities Act are a positive step forward without unintended negative consequences.

The city was pleased with the provincial announcement regarding the new rapid test to provide faster COVID-19 results in regions of high transmission. The region of Peel, and especially the city of Brampton, is at the heart of goods movement in Ontario and Canada. Approximately \$1.8 billion worth of goods move through the region every day. Goods-movement-related industries account for 43% of jobs in Peel. Brampton employs many essential workers who keep our grocery stores stocked with food and play an integral part in ensuring essential goods are available to the entire country during this very pandemic.

It's critical that we work together to quickly identify and manage outbreaks to stop the spread of COVID-19 in key sectors, including these. As the province moves ahead with implementation of the 2020 budget, the city of Brampton requests that these essential workers receive access to the new rapid test as soon as possible to ensure the continued provision of the essential services that they provide.

I will now ask Paul to speak regarding patios and outdoor dining. Thank you.

Mr. Paul Aldunate: Thank you, Gurdeep.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. For your consideration, we have some items to raise related to the AGCO and the Ontario building code. Brampton city council unanimously voted to extend the city's patio permit program to September 7, 2021.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Paul Aldunate: It allows restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments to continue offering expanded outdoor dining spaces. Although indoor dining and patio services are not currently permitted in Peel during the grey lockdown level, this extension will support

these businesses when they are permitted to resume patio service by providing additional opportunity for expanded seating areas throughout the winter and beyond.

On June 5, 2020, the province amended the liquor licence act to permit the temporary physical expansion of liquor-licensed premises until January 1, 2021. The city would support the extension of the liquor licences for those establishments to align with the Brampton patio program extension date of September 7, 2021. Extending liquor licence permissions beyond January 1, 2021 would provide restaurants with flexibility to temporarily extend the physical size of their existing licensed patio or to temporarily add a new licensed patio in order to minimize the administrative burden for licensees.

With that, I would like to hand it over to Rick Conard to speak to you about potential relief to the Ontario building code. Thank you.

Mr. Rick Conard: Thank you, Paul.

In addition, in order to provide the outdoor dining options to mitigate the financial losses of these indoor dining restrictions, most restaurants in Brampton have been erecting tents and canopies with the benefit of a building permit. The Ontario building code requires a permit for tents that are greater than 60 square metres or closer than three metres to a building. Compliance with the Planning Act, such as site plan approval or zoning bylaw restrictions, may also add to the red tape that restaurants must go through in order to accomplish this. Most of the tents and canopies that are available on the market today do not meet the building code requirements, such as environmental loading, for all-four-season use.

Just in the interests of time, I stand here before you as the chief building official for the city of Brampton—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Rick Conard: —requesting that the province introduce measures that will allow restaurants and bars, or other food and drink establishments, to safely operate. Moreover, once the region is out of the grey lockdown level, the city would support further measures that would allow restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments to partially enclose existing extended patios to assist these establishments with operating through the winter months and until outdoor dining is permitted without restrictions. This may mean a partial or permanent relaxation of building code requirements to allow these tents and canopies to be erected.

I'll hand it back to Gurdeep to conclude.

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: Thank you, Paul and Rick.

In closing, the city of Brampton is looking to be a partner with the province as we navigate through the pandemic and work towards a strong and sustained recovery. With a robust workforce and endless potential, Brampton is a key contributor to the provincial economy and a willing partner to ensure the city and the province emerge stronger and more prosperous from this challenging time.

At this time, I would like to thank everyone. We would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have for us.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Our next presenter is Darla Fiset. If you can please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation as well.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Hello. My name is Darla Fiset. Good afternoon. I'm a PSW from Timmins and I would like to tell you about my vision story of being a PSW. After 12 years, I decided to become a PSW after raising my family. I used to help out my grandmother when I was younger. In high school, I graduated with a 90% honours in helping out the co-op class with mentally handicapped kids.

I enjoy and love my job with home care and helping my clients with everyday living. As it may sound, it's very demanding, just trying to walk from client to client and keep on schedule. Yes, I walk from client to client in all kinds of weather, with as many as 10 or more clients a day. I work in central Timmins and I've worked from one side of Timmins to the other side of Timmins, which can be very challenging, trying to keep up with the schedule. I enjoy my clients. I want to make a difference for our seniors and our PSWs in home care.

Home care, in general, is in dire need of repair. The system is so broken even now, more than ever. We can't forget home care. It starts with keeping people in their homes, even more now than ever, especially with COVID. PSWs are the backbone of health care, and you must change it, not only for us, but for our clients.

PSWs need sick days. We don't have any sick days. There are no sick days for PSWs, and with the times, with COVID, we need sick days.

Retirement pension: Believe it or not, we don't have a retirement pension.

There is a major shortage of PSWs. Right now, where I am working, we have only 14 PSWs to cover all of Timmins.

More stability with wages: The wage enhancement that they gave us is nice, but it's not permanent—and full-time hours.

At this moment, I'll welcome any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start the questions now.

We'll start the first set of questions with the government. MPP Kusendova.

1610

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Yes, hi. Good afternoon. Thank you to all of our presenters. I represent Mississauga Centre. It is our neighbouring city. Of course, together with Caledon, we form the region of Peel, so I work very closely with my colleagues, including our chair, when it comes to things that affect all of us at the region of Peel. I know that, especially now, it's a very difficult time with many challenges for our community, as we are in the grey lockdown zone. Each and every day, these are discussions that we're having within caucus with our Premier and Minister of Health, because we know that businesses, people, families, seniors—everyone is greatly impacted. Everyone is in our thoughts and prayers every single day as we make these very challenging and tough decisions.

Thank you for bringing some of your ideas to the table. Just to respond to some of the things that were mentioned: In this budget, we did provide funding for 161 assessment centres. I know that in Brampton, at the Peel Memorial Centre—I've been there myself actually, twice, to get tested, and it's a seamless process. It's great to see our front-line workers really stepping up to the plate and serving our communities.

There was also mention in our budget about 110 PCR-based rapid test analyzers, so that's something that is coming through the grapevine. I know that at Humber River Hospital these rapid tests are being utilized, so this will be an essential tool to help us in the fight against COVID-19.

Of course, we're also building capacity within our health care system. We have invested in an additional 3,100 beds to build capacity, and some of these beds are including investments in William Osler. Brampton Civic Hospital, I believe, received funding for an additional 89 beds. So we're doing everything we can, especially in light of this COVID-19 pandemic.

But my question is to Mr. Conard. Can you expand a little bit more about this idea or suggestion to alter the building code requirements to allow restaurants and bars to have these partial outdoor structures, to help restaurants operate, especially in the winter season? Can you expand a little bit more? This is a great suggestion. There is no monopoly on a good idea, and so we're always willing to take things into consideration.

Mr. Rick Conard: Thank you for the opportunity. One of the challenges we face is that these tents that are being erected in the expanded dining areas for restaurants really are not able to meet the Ontario building code compliance requirements for environmental loading. Tents were never intended to be a four-season type of structure. Primarily, what we have difficulty with is getting any sort of design or certification that they can withstand the snow loads that are anticipated over the winter.

In addition to that, there are flame-spread rating requirements, which I don't think would be a wise thing to overlook, but that requirement is easily achieved. There are several tent companies that do provide NFPA ratings that do meet the building code requirements. The challenge that we have is that the Ontario building code requires a building permit for any tent that is erected closer than three metres to a building or another tent or is greater than 60 metres squared in area.

Once the requirement for a permit is there, the requirement to meet the standards of the building code are applied. So notwithstanding the idea that a flame-spread rating is certainly, from an occupant safety perspective, a good thing to have, the snow-loading requirements that are there in the building code are almost impossible to meet.

What we need is some way for the building divisions throughout Ontario to be able to successfully issue permits for these tents or for the province to say, notwithstanding something similar to what they did for the expansion of temporary areas for hospitals, that they will overlook the requirement for building permits—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Rick Conard:—for the time being, provided that you meet a minimum standard, such as the flame-spread rating for the tent fabric, keeping in mind that we have to balance occupant safety with the legal aspects of actually complying with the building code.

I think what we're suggesting as a chief building official group—and I can represent a large majority; we had a discussion with 40 other building officials just yesterday on this issue—is that what we need is for the ministry to either enact some temporary measure to waive the snow-loading requirements that are in the building code to allow us to issue permits or to, say, permit smoking requirements for tents for a period of time, provided that there's not an unsafe condition created. So I think those are two options that maybe we can explore a little bit to facilitate these enclosures and allow these restaurants to continue to operate with safe distancing.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you very much. We're certainly happy to bring this forward to the government and to the appropriate minister for consideration.

I wanted to spend a little bit of time with Darla, the PSW. First of all, I want to say a huge thank you for everything that you're doing supporting our seniors, supporting our most vulnerable. When I was in nursing school, I learned a great deal, a lot from our PSWs. You are part of the team. We couldn't do our work without you. The PSWs we have in my emergency room where I work, they're instrumental in helping me work with my patients. You're truly part of the team and you have invaluable skills and knowledge. Thank you for everything that you're doing.

We know that PSWs are the backbone of our health care system. That's why during this pandemic, our government has endeavoured to support PSWs with things like a temporary wage increase, pandemic pay, also access to personal protective equipment etc.

We know that health care in Ontario exists like an ecosystem, so if there is a part—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova:—in the health care system that's not functioning, it's like a domino effect. That's why we've endeavoured, with the Minister of Health, to transform our health care system and to embed all industries together under one team, which is Ontario Health—this will include home care—and that's why we're building Ontario health teams across Ontario.

Do you think that's a good idea for our patients and families, that we'll have one Ontario health team responsible for a patient, whether they are at home or in the hospital? Do you think this health care transformation will be beneficial for PSWs and patients?

Ms. Darla Fiset: [*Inaudible*].

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Ms. Fiset, we can't hear you properly. Your voice is breaking up.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): No, we can barely hear you.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: We can't hear you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Can you please speak closer to the mike or the phone?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): No, sorry, we can't hear you. Unfortunately, the time is up too, so we'll have to come back to you in the second round, maybe.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Sorry about that.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the opposition now. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Chair, has Darla resolved her audio yet? Darla, are you there?

Ms. Darla Fiset: I'm trying to resolve my audio.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. When you get that fixed, we'll come back to you. In the interim, I'd like to—

Ms. Darla Fiset: [*Inaudible*].

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh? Right. I'm going to address my questions to the city of Brampton.

Thank you very much for your presentation and also thank you for your presentation at the finance committee hearings. I'm going to pick up on your comments with regard to schedule 6. Essentially, almost 99% of the people who have come before this committee are opposed to this. There are people from all walks of life who are opposed to it: big city mayors, mayors from small communities. The city of Hamilton issued a unanimous resolution opposing these schedules. Monsieur Beaudoin talked about 10,000 of his members that are opposed to this. The outcry is huge. These are from people who are just opposed to a government meddling in environmental protections.

I want to ask you, from a good policy perspective, from good land use planning—you spent a lot of time, money and effort to build networks with the conservation authorities that have the expertise in keeping the infrastructure that cities rely on safe. I mean, we know there's flooding. There's shore erosion. Municipalities all across the province struggle to try and keep their infrastructure in good working order, good working repair.

Can you just speak to how this sudden schedule embedded in a budget bill—has it upended or put into risk all of the work that you do, to do science-based, evidence-based collaborative planning? Gurdeep, perhaps? You mentioned the land use planning.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Does anyone want to respond?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Anybody? My question is to the city of Brampton, if anybody wants to—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You have to unmute from your end.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Bueller? Bueller?

1620

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Rick, do you want to answer? Whoever wants to answer, please unmute from your end.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm going to go to Darla now, I think. What is going on, city of Brampton?

Ms. Clare Burnett: I think Rick is trying to unmute himself to be able to respond to your questions. Sorry, please move past us and we'll get someone—

Mr. Rick Conard: There. I'm unmuted.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You're unmuted now; we can hear you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You're up. Hit it, Rick. Hit it hard.

Mr. Rick Conard: I apologize. Clearly, technology is not my forte. I'm going to take a stab at responding to this. I am not a planner, but I do work in concert with planning on a regular basis, and I'm heavily involved in their processes.

We do have a very strong partnership with all of the conservation authorities in the city of Brampton. In particular, I know Brampton has been subject to some serious flooding in the past. Right now, we have very extensive environmental assessments under way that involve rerouting and expansion of floodways within Brampton, particularly within the downtown core and out towards the Bramalea City Centre, to allow some significant economic investment and development of our city. Those partnerships are founded, as you've noted, on very heavy investment in scientific studies, flood mapping and running modelling of what the effects will be throughout the city. A lot of our land has been tied up from investment because of those reasons.

So we really respect the relationship that we have with our conservation authorities. They have been nothing but partners in looking for solutions to allow development in a responsible fashion. I think that's the important side of it. They are not currently a barrier to where we want to go; they're a partner. We work together to find solutions that will allow economic investment and development within the city, but do it in a responsible manner that won't affect in an ill manner ourselves or anybody who happens to be downstream of us.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you—I see mine was muted now as well, so it's the audio gremlin today.

I'm just going to move very quickly in the short time that I have left—although, Chair, I would plead for a little more time given all those audio difficulties. Put some more time on the clock.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To the David Suzuki Foundation, I would like to get you to weigh in, following up with what the city of Brampton has just said on ways that good planning decisions are made.

In addition to schedule 6, I would just like to say to all municipalities: Look out, because an MZO is coming to a community near you any time. The government is using MZOs, for example, in Duffins Creek in Ajax, on a provincially significant wetland, and in Stratford, on environmentally sensitive lands. We think the Integrity Commissioner should be examining how this decision was made.

Can you just talk about how, with schedule 6 and MZOs, this government is steamrolling over our environmental planning and protections?

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: I think I would just bring it down to the fact that local knows best, right? The closer you are to an issue, the closer you are to a problem, the more exponential the increase in the amount of local knowledge and experience that comes into that. If you start

to strip away, centralize and really send up, more and more problems will arise. More blind spots will come forward.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: So having those integrated relationships is really, really important at a local level.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I know my constituents are outraged and irate by this. How are your members feeling about the sense of confidence and trust that this government even understands climate?

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: The fact that we could get 10,000 in one week is already pretty unusual, even for us. On this issue, whether it's climate or biodiversity, there seems to constantly be this interesting antagonism that you can't have both, but you can. It's not about trying to strip away those safeguards we have; it's about how you tie them together. How do you, again, find the right balance? Right now, we do not have the right balance in Ontario, especially when it comes to not just nature as an essential utility, but nature—because we used to have a tag line, "Yours to Discover," right?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We got rid of that.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: What do we have to discover if it's all gone? That's not today it's all gone; it's tomorrow, the next tomorrow, the seven generations.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. I apologize to cut you off.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think this government got rid of that tag line as well.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sorry, the time has come up. We'll have to move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to start with Darla, if we could just bring her back. Hi, Darla. We're going to unmute you, and if you could just say hello.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Hello.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Okay, so I can hear you. I'm hoping that we can proceed, maybe slowly. I really want to thank you and your colleagues, the 14 of you who are working as PSWs in Timmins and servicing the whole area all on your own. I know that you're working with some of the most vulnerable people and you're working with them in the most personal way, so I want to thank you for choosing this as your career and the excellent way that you and your colleagues conduct yourselves. I know it's been difficult with the threat always there of COVID-19 and it's been very challenging in the home care space. I agree with you; I believe that it has to be a continuum of care that includes all of the care settings, including home care, that need greater investment, funding and support.

The government had an opportunity in the budget, which we are thinking about with Bill 229, to make greater investments in training for PSWs and in improving the numbers of PSWs that we have in this province. Can you speak to us from a northern perspective in terms of the skills shortage in that area and the demand that you see, being a practitioner on the ground every day?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Well, as for the shortage, if somebody is away, missing for a day, then clients right now in our area get missed. They get missed. This [*inaudible*] with

clients can't be missed, can't be left alone. We need more qualified workers, not workers that are half-formed, half-assed and rushed in to order, because now what they're doing is they're getting workers that are half-formed, half-assed and rushed to order, and they don't know what to do. We need workers who know what to do and need to problem-think.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: And do you agree that perhaps improving the level of training and qualifications and pay for PSWs is needed in the province?

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes, certainly.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Okay. That's something that I support as well, and I know that it was something that was being worked on. Our hope is that we will continue to see investments in PSWs.

I just want to confirm my agreement with your call for sick days for people right now, especially during the pandemic, for those who have none—

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes, we have none.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Yes—to make permanent the hero pay, because you're on the front line of care.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That increase should not be temporary; it should be permanent. I just want to make sure I catch all of your terrific ideas here: the full-time hours, making more full-time hours so you are able to have a more stable income.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes. Being a PSW, our hours are sometimes choppy. We're not always permanent, especially in home care, because our clients pass away and they die. Sometimes, it's hard to get our hours back up. In times of COVID, sometimes it's hard to get hours back up, especially now with COVID, because we can't have two jobs. Some of the retirement homes are closed right now, so getting the hours is a struggle right now.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's hard to make ends meet.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes, it's very hard to make ends meet, especially with a family of four children, which I have.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thanks, Darla.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): The time has come up.

We'll go back to the opposition for the second round. MPP Arthur.

1630

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much. Yannick, I'm going to start with you. You talked a little bit about the seven generations of thinking. But some of the consequences of schedule 6 could be far more immediate than that. As we see in flood plain maps being updated across Canada, there are entire swaths of houses that will no longer be able to receive flood insurance right now. Would you just elaborate on the short-sightedness of that while I have a quick sip of water?

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: Again, I think it still comes down to how by having schedule 6, you're eroding the knowledge. You're eroding the local experience. You're eroding—figuratively eroding and literally eroding—

decades of that kind of relationship coming onto the front lines of climate change.

I'm pretty sure we all agree around this room that there are the effects of climate change. We're now living in them. They're not avoidable anymore. So if we want to plan these things properly, both in the short term and long term, really centralizing that is going to be a way to do it? Obviously not. Evidence is all over the world of what happens when you start to put climate change pieces at a very far, distant and a very quantitative aspect to it when you're trying to do adaptation planning in particular.

Resilience is also not just the hard infrastructure when it comes to climate change. Resilience is local community. Resilience is culture. Resilience is being able to adapt to the different shocks that come from weathering a storm. It's not just the science. It's not just the technology. Really, it is about local community. Who is better set to do that? The relationships between the conservation authorities and local municipalities—they are the best equipped to do this.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you. I appreciate that. I want to talk a little bit as well about when you were mentioning growth and how growth plays out and the need for more nuanced understanding of that. Do you read Mariana Mazzucato, her work on how to stimulate economic activity, from a government's perspective, with targeted investments and the more nuanced relationship that she finds exists? This is a little bit outside of the scope of this committee, but I wonder if the Chair will allow me to ask that question.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: I think in a way it actually is within the scope of the committee, when you look at a very macro sense of what you're trying to achieve in a government budget bill, right? What is the responsibility of government? Is it to grow things more or to grow things better? I think that's a lot of the work that Mazzucato, but I also work a lot with Kate Raworth, on different types of—and these are not anti-growth people, right? It's redefining what is growth.

To me, it's not just about the environment. Darla is a great example of value in this disequilibrium of how we value the things that are meaningful in our economy. At the moment, the valued are a lot of these things that generate more income and bigger revenues and big profits, but the meaningful is literally front-line workers like Darla, who still have to fight for a small increase in pay. Or for us allowing forestry companies to have free rein in our forests, that's actually the non-value; the non-meaningful parts of our economy are doing those things, right? How do you recalibrate, basically, our economic thinking to help realize that those things that are most meaningful in our lives should be the things the economy values most? That is not happening, and it hasn't happened, really, ever.

So it's not an anti thing; I don't want to leave that impression, that it's anti-growth or anti-neo-liberalism. It has nothing to do with that. It's if we can imagine an economy today and we redesigned it altogether, would we still have the same basic rules? Probably not. We'd be able

to come up with something a lot better that would actually value people like Darla, that would value the natural assets and the nature that we have in Ontario at a very high level.

Then the destructive pieces that we still need—I was in mining for 10 years; I know we need mining.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: It's not about mining or forestry; it's over-mining and over-forestry. That's the problem we're trying to recalibrate.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much. That's very interesting.

I don't have any more questions, Chair. I don't know if MPP Shaw had a question for Darla but couldn't get it out?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to just say to Darla, again, absolutely you are the backbone of this system. I love when I hear PSWs say they love their work because what they love are the residents that they serve. That is so heartwarming. And, yes, you're absolutely the backbone of the system, but in COVID, the first wave highlighted the circumstances in which you work. You're underpaid; you're overworked. We know that, and we're very disappointed that this government did not take an opportunity in this budget to provide you not just with a temporary pay adjustment, but permanent.

The most current independent, verified figures are that this government is still sitting on \$9.3 billion. This is a government that voted in favour of our opposition day motion to fund four hours of hands-on care. Their own independent commission urgently said that they needed to fund four hours of hands-on care, and this government doesn't do that. Essentially, this government is saying to people like you that you're on your own and that you need to wait longer for help. How does that make you feel, Darla?

Ms. Darla Fiset: You mean waiting on my own for help?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes, most times, our clients—we can't service them all. We were given a choice, but sorry, I can't do everything. I've been doing eight, nine or 10 hours a day, and I can't do everything.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Everyone was hoping, knowing that we call you “front-line heroes,” which you absolutely are, that this government would understand the lessons that we learned. The Canadian Armed Forces, for heaven's sakes, went in and documented atrocious conditions, and atrocious conditions for PSWs who are doing their best. Really, I would plead with this government to listen to folks like you, Darla, who are on the front line, who are the backbone. You need help and you need it now, not somewhere down the road, not in the—

Ms. Darla Fiset: Yes, we are very short on workers.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. You work short all the time.

Ms. Darla Fiset: We have 14 workers in Timmins. That's not good enough to cover all of Timmins.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Why do you think the government isn't listening?

Ms. Darla Fiset: I don't know if they're not listening. It's just that they're stalling.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: At the end of the day, whether they're not listening or they're stalling, it makes no difference to you because you're not getting the help you need. You're not getting—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Listen, we've been advocating for years—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you, MPP Shaw. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll go to the independent members now for their second round. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzi Hunter: I'm going to go straight to Yannick, if I can. I wanted to hear your perspective on removing the current appeals process, which was the Mining and Lands Tribunal. There was already a built-in appeals process within the ministry, and circumventing that now, ascribing to the minister—and even being able to permit, bypassing conservation authorities and going directly for permit to the minister.

Also, the introduction of local planning tribunals: I was curious as to your thoughts on that, and tying the duty of members explicitly towards the municipality in which they are appointed rather than to the board as a whole, which is the normal duty of care and fiduciary responsibilities of good governance. Go ahead.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: Thank you, MPP Hunter, for that. Some of them I might not be able to get too deeply into detail, but let's say on the centralization of those authorities to the provincial level, when it comes especially to anything extractive—and again, to me it comes down to, we're always stuck in this ideological kind of antagonism. Sometimes, you'll get a lot of local influence and ability to make local democratic decisions on what kind of activities happen in a certain area, and then suddenly it flips back to, “Oh, no, we have to take away the red tape. We have to make it easier for business.”

Business is great. Like I said, I was in the private sector for 10 years; I was in mining. I know that experience and I loved every minute of it. I thought we did a pretty good job. But if ever we were given an inch, we would take that inch. If we were given two inches, we would take the two inches—not because it was a desire to wake up in the morning and put big holes wherever we could and make as much money. It was much more of, “Well, it's there, we're allowed. It's legal. It's no problem, right? So it's all good; it must be good. Somebody must be watching over this.”

I think, in the end, if we cannot find some kind of a common ground, regardless of ideologies, to say, “Look, for the last couple hundred years, we have not done a good job”—I would not be here talking to this panel today about climate change, biodiversity loss, over-extraction of forests and over-mining etc. if we had found the right balance. Clearly we haven't.

1640

So rather than say, “Okay, well, one person can now make this decision or can override”—why would that one person have better knowledge or experience? They don't.

Right? Whereas if you have a plurality of voices that understand their local realities and communities, whether it's the conservation authorities working with cities on climate adaptation issues or whether it's some kind of a local participation in deciding whether a mining activity or a forestry activity goes forward, there's a lot more long-term value in that localization.

COVID was an interesting piece. Before COVID, anything to do with localization was considered anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist. Globalization is good. Everything else was protectionism.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin: Suddenly, COVID hits and now we're hearing from all kinds of government sides about how it's important to have local capacity, local manufacturing, localization. It's amazing what one crisis did to suddenly change that definition a little bit, that something that used to be called protectionism is now localization.

This applies across all of these things. Take advantage of this moment that suddenly has helped us realize it's not okay to centralize and it is a very anti-democratic process. But more than that, it puts a lot of liability on one person's shoulders. Are they really going to take that responsibility? Probably not.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That's really great. I think one of the things that COVID has shown is the valuing of people like Darla who are the front-line health care workers, the truck drivers, the grocery store clerks—all of these front-line people who kept our society going. While the rest of us worked from home and kind of huddled, they braved all of the elements to keep society going. We need to value that. I strongly agree with that sentiment and—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you, MPP Hunter. The time has come up.

We'll move to the government side. MPP Cho.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you to all the presenters for coming this afternoon. I just have a comment for Darla, and then my questions will be for the city of Brampton.

Darla, let me start by thanking you for your tireless efforts. Certainly, our government believes that actions speak louder than words. While the members opposite are criticizing the current system, let's remember that they had almost two decades to help you and to help your industry, and they didn't. There are pages in this budget, which the members opposite are not talking about, which outline record spending to improve your working conditions, to make sure that we are committed to that nation-leading four hours of care per resident in our long-term-care homes. There is funding attached to this.

We just had the member from Scarborough–Guildwood speaking to this issue, and I want to remind everyone she was the former Associate Minister of Finance. Certainly, she would understand the complexities of government financing. I've gone through the records. There was no funding attached in the previous government's commitment to actually helping your industry through real dollars, through real support.

That funding is in this budget. If you need those resources, I am happy to point you to them. Just reach out

to the committee. We'll be happy to show you the commitment of \$7.5 billion in new funding, \$1.75 billion in new funding for the long-term-care sector. This is on top of the record spending that—year over year, we have increases in every out year on the funding for the long-term-care sector on the macro level. So the relief is coming, and I just wanted to take this moment to thank you for the hard work that you do every single day.

Moving to the city of Brampton: It's nice to see some familiar faces. It seems like a decade ago that we were having our pre-budget consultations, in January of this year. I really do appreciate the hard work you are going through now with the front lines in our municipality just above Mississauga.

I'm wondering if maybe some of our friends from the economic development branch could speak to some of the recent measures we've announced in the budget. This is crucial. Obviously, the priority now, as we're going through the second wave, is to protect and support, but there will be a time, and I hope really soon, when COVID-19 is in our rear-view mirror. When that time comes, every jurisdiction on this planet will be competing for an edge.

There are some permanent measures in this budget. I speak to the BET in particular, which will save businesses in Brampton alone, commercial properties, over \$17 million, and then we've got some industrial businesses that will save something like \$27 million. Of course, these are permanent measures, which I believe will help small businesses in Brampton.

But I'm wondering if we could talk about the small business tax class. What sort of conversations have you had around this? I know Mayor Tory was asking for this measure to be introduced to provide the municipality with more tools to provide relief to small businesses. And if you haven't had conversations on that particular act, I'm wondering if you've had discussions about other measures that might be helpful for businesses in Brampton.

Ms. Clare Burnett: Thank you very much for the question. It's Clare Burnett. I will answer first and then pass it over to my colleague Paul who works on more of the industrial projects.

We have been receiving very good feedback from small businesses in the city very grateful for the work that the government has been doing for small businesses, in particular the recent funding: the main street funding, the funding for PPE. There are some challenges, especially with the restaurant sector or for micro-sized businesses, that continue to exist, but overall I would say that the funding for small businesses has been very well received, and businesses are very grateful for that.

On the act that was, I believe, passed today, the Supporting Local Restaurants Act, that will offer a fair bit of relief for restaurants as well with the cap on service delivery and fines that were in the act. We're absolutely looking to advocate for help. The sick days continue to be an issue for our larger employers, the rapid testing for our larger employers.

The business tax question: We have not had conversations on that as of yet but I'd be very, very happy to, and then follow up with you afterwards to let you know some

of the feedback. We have round table conversations with our small businesses often, so that is certainly something we could bring forward.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Stan Cho: Paul, did you want to add to that before I move on?

Mr. Paul Aldunate: Yes. Thank you, Clare. Through the Chair, just on the industrial side of things, one of the things we're really noticing in Brampton are that vacancy rates are so, so low these days. It's incredible how much of the industrial space has been taken up and is being sought after. They're being bid on, and then there are some landowners who are being pursued on many, many fronts by industrial developers who are looking for space.

A lot of them are in e-commerce and the e-commerce area, which is—again, being situated where it is, close to the airport, close to the GTA and with such a large population to take advantage of it, e-commerce has really, really taken off, even during the pandemic. I mean, everyone was ordering online. You're going to see it during Christmas, during the holidays, that a lot of people are ordering online rather than doing shopping because that's basically the only choice they have. That's not going to stop. I think we see the signs of how healthy the e-commerce sector is. I think the pandemic is something that really shows that and really makes that come through.

Mr. Stan Cho: That's great, Paul. Realizing we're limited on time here, I'd like to extend an offer to you. I come from the small business world, a small mom-and-pop shop. I watched my parents toil with everything they had to try and make a living for me and my siblings. So I know running a business is hard at the best of times, let alone during a globally uncertain pandemic.

Some of the best ideas we've been able to come up with throughout COVID-19 have literally come from the grassroots, from the very businesses, and you have that direct contact with them. So, Paul, what I'm hoping for—and I heard an idea I hadn't heard before from your colleague Rick—is please, through the Ministry of Finance—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sorry, MPP Cho. I apologize to cut you off.

MPP Hunter, do you have a point of order?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I do, Chair. I have a point of order. MPP Cho brought my record forward as part of the former government. I want to have the opportunity to correct that record, because I don't think that the people on the—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Hunter, this is not a valid point of order.

MPP Cho, you may continue.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you. Just to finish that thought, Paul and Clare, if there are ideas on the micro level, those specifics—I mean, the takeout of alcohol literally came from the finance committee to the AGCO—I would appreciate those ideas. Certainly, in the limited time we have left, I'm not expecting—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You have 30 seconds. MPP Shaw has a point of order too, it looks like.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I guess it's a point of information. Can you clarify, Chair, if an MPP can attempt to correct

another MPP's erroneous statements or records? Because that's happened to me a number of times, including comments that were made by MPP Smith. So I'm just curious if you could clarify what the order is, what the rule would be.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Disagreement on the facts is not a valid point of order, but you can definitely correct your record or correct someone's record in your time, whatever time is allocated to you.

1650

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Cho, you have 30 seconds.

Mr. Stan Cho: Yes, I'll conclude—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Hunter, do you have another point of order?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Sorry, Chair. MPP Cho attributed certain statements directly to me and I would like to have the opportunity to correct that record, particularly because Darla is here and he attributed certain statements that were incorrect—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Hunter, as I mentioned, this is not a valid point of order. You will have the opportunity when the time comes. When you have the time for questions, you can correct that, but not at the moment. Thank you.

Mr. Stan Cho: I believe we're almost out of time, so I'd like to thank everyone for appearing today. To the city of Brampton, we appreciate all the hard work. We look forward to your ideas to help your small businesses and, one day, for Ontario to thrive once again. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): That concludes our time as well. I want to thank all three presenters for appearing before the committee and for your presentations.

MR. GARY HUGGINS
ONTARIO COALITION
FOR SMOKE-FREE MOVIES
MS. PEGGY HUTCHISON

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): For the 5 p.m. slot, we will start with Gary Huggins first. If you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Gary Huggins: Thank you. Can everyone hear me?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, we can.

Mr. Gary Huggins: Okay, thank you. My name is Gary Huggins. I live in Etobicoke. I am retired; I am a senior. In the past, I've used many forms of insurance to support me and my family both personally and professionally, either as insurance that would pay off for life insurance or key man insurance and company. So I view the insurance thing as very critical.

My concern today is that in the current budget, in schedule 22, clauses 4 and 5, I think there is a little jump ahead of what would be prudent in terms of examining the actual legislation and instead jumping ahead and basically

taking away the rights of the life-insured to use certain facilities that they bought with their insurance policies.

I know there have been a couple of other people talking, but I would like to argue that this matter should be properly studied. All parties should look at it. You're basically taking away contractual rights from individuals who were sold these policies on the basis of having those capabilities and rights. I think we should study that in more detail, make sure that is being done more.

This is a proposal to amend the Insurance Act, a consumer protection statute. While it may not be obvious, these proposed amendments actually take away the rights of close to a million Ontario policyholders who purchased these policies.

The proposal will limit seniors' rights to invest in a universal life policy, which was sold as an investment and an insurance vehicle, and now it's being limited. In some cases, it's being limited, I believe, because some of these policies provide interest rates of anywhere from 3%, 4% or 5%, which makes them quite attractive for the people who have the policies but unattractive for the companies that have sold them. I'm not sure how this is presented as something that goes against the rights and it protects seniors. The statutes are intended to protect the consumer, not the insurance companies.

The language revokes existing contractual rights, benefits which enable Ontario seniors to prudently invest their money in Ontario insurance companies. I implore members of all parties to take a close look at the language. I'm not questioning whether it should be looked at. I'm simply saying that jumping to it and making changes right away without adequate study is a problem. I think the public needs to get more involved in this and the members need to study this more.

It's not a party issue. Your constituents all have insurance policies. There are a lot of these policies out here. I'm concerned that we're going to take away all the rights that were provided by these contracts.

This is a matter of public interest, in principle. A million Ontario voters are affected by the proposal. The proposal, which needs to be removed from the budget and studied by experts effectively, prevents insurance companies from honouring existing contracts. I never like to see contracts being quashed when, somewhere along the way, they've been accepted and people have based their purchase on it.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Gary Huggins: So far, I see no evidence that will prevent predatory practices by companies or individuals. Have you seen any evidence to support this assertion? There are strict measures in the Insurance Act that prohibit predatory behaviour, like trafficking of life settlements. There is no evidence available at this time.

I sincerely hope that the government members, who represent a majority of this committee, will see that this is not a party issue. I certainly share your values. This matter does not go to anything other than common sense. It does, though, need your support to send it back for further study. Why would any government want to take away insurance

benefits for over one million Ontarians, transfer the value of those benefits to shareholders of insurance companies and offer no compensation?

My ask to all parties is to remove clauses 4 and 5 from schedule 22 and refer them for further study. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Next, I will call upon the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies. If you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Michael Perley: Thank you. I'm Michael Perley. I am not officially representing the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies because I'm retired, but before I retired, I was co-chair of the coalition.

I'd like to speak today about serious concerns that I have about the public health impact of the proposed Film Content Information Act, which is contained in schedule 12 of the budget bill. This new act is intended to replace the former provincial Film Classification Act, which required that ratings and film content information had to be provided to moviegoers.

From years of research by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit at the University of Toronto, we know that movies are a powerful tool for promoting tobacco use. A substantial body of scientific evidence indicates that exposure to smoking in movies is a cause of smoking initiation and progression to regular smoking among youth. We also know that the tobacco industry has spent millions of dollars over the past several decades to develop and maintain the portrayal of smoking in movies. Tobacco companies have paid film producers to feature specific tobacco brands and have funded advertising campaigns for film studios' latest films and their top stars.

The proposed legislation, called the Film Content Information Act, will almost certainly allow more young Ontarians to see more tobacco use, but also see more graphic violence, more illegal substance use and other risky behaviours without any qualifiers.

I have some specific concerns about the bill itself. In subsection 4(1)(1), there appears to be a statement that it is the exhibitor of films—that is, whoever is running the chain or the individual movie theatre or the chain of theatres—that, and the phrase is, “reasonably determines” what information about the film and its contents “would be relevant to persons who may intend to view the film.” Information about the risks of tobacco use, graphic violence, drug use or other high-risk behaviours may thus be provided, but only through a decision by the exhibitor—and I want to emphasize that—rather than by any impartial public health authority with relevant expertise. This means that movies with smoking or drug use and/or any number of behaviours damaging to public health, and especially to young people's public health, may be shown with no warnings and no qualification. Further compounding this risk is the use of the word “reasonably,” which excuses any failure to provide the information.

Further on in the legislation, subsection 4(2)(2) only provides “examples”—that’s the term used in the legislation—of information that could be included in content information. Disclosure of these items is not mandatory. They are offered merely as examples of the kind of information the exhibitor might “reasonably determine” is relevant. Leaving the disclosure of film content up to the exhibitors and providing no details about content that must be disclosed will lead to inconsistencies in the information provided about films. There will be no admission limits to theatres through ratings, and parents will be unable to rely on film labelling to make informed viewing decisions either for themselves or for their kids.

1700

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Michael Perley: This approach does not serve the public interest and right to know if a film contains imagery that has scientifically been proven to increase the risk of a young person emulating a behaviour or using a product that has serious implications for their health and that may lead to premature death.

Now, in section 4(2)(1) under the soon-to-be-repealed Ontario Film Classification Act, age classifications were applied to films based on content. For example, excessive use of coarse language would mean a film would not be rated for children or youth. The age rating system disappears with repeal of the Film Classification Act and implementation of the Film Content Information Act. This means that films with adult content, such as tobacco use or graphic violence, will not receive a rating and will not be restricted to adult audiences. This change eliminates the incentive the film industry has to ensure adult content, like tobacco use, is left out of movies intended for children or youth viewers.

I recommend that the government consider the following: that the Film Content Information Act be amended to require that, at a minimum, film content information be provided to the public consistently, using all the current indicators under the FCA, such as coarse language and violence, but also including tobacco product use and vaping. I also recommend that the appropriate ministry immediately convene a group of scientific and public health experts to develop a comprehensive and evidence-based list of content that would be required to be disclosed to the public about every film and, finally, that the appropriate ministry immediately establish a consultation process to evaluate the effectiveness of an age-based rating system for films depicting tobacco use and other high-risk behaviour.

In summary, there are very large public health implications in repealing the Film Classification Act of 2005 and replacing it with the Film Content Information Act. The public and especially parents deserve to be consistently and accurately informed about movie content like tobacco use so they can make informed viewing choices for themselves and their children. Movies are a clear influencer on youth and can lead to dangerous and life-threatening addictions and behaviours. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

All right, we’re running ahead of time. We are missing the first presenter for the 5 p.m. slot, so we’ll be taking three minutes’ recess. We’ll be back in three minutes.

The committee recessed from 1704 to 1707.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you, and welcome back. We’ll go to our next presenter, Peggy Hutchison. If you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Peggy Hutchison: Hello. Have I unmuted myself? Is that correct?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, we can hear you.

Ms. Peggy Hutchison: Oh, good. I was going to say that I’m not used to doing this very often, so thank you for letting me address you today.

I live at the headwaters of the Nottawasaga River. I’m on the Mad River; my farm is Mad Ness Farm—I did not name the river. I live in what used to be Osprey township, which is actually the headwaters of four major rivers in southern Ontario—the Nottawasaga, the Grand, the Saugeen and the Grey Sauble—and others. What I am addressing you about today, as part of this Bill 229, is schedule 6—and also schedule 8, to do with forestry, but focusing on schedule 6, which is really discontinuing conservation authorities, as far as I can see.

I just came back from Collingwood. I picked up a copy of the most recent *On The Bay*, which goes to residents in the Georgian Triangle, which goes from Wasaga Beach all the way over to Meaford. The headline is “High Water”: Can we hold back the flood? Georgian Bay is part of the Great Lakes. All these main rivers flow into the Great Lakes.

Our municipality, last year, got wind that the Ontario government was thinking of discontinuing conservation authorities. As I say, our little township would have a representative on each of those. It’s not on the Grand, because there are no houses where the headwaters of the Grand River are, but the Grand River headwaters are right next to me. Their letter, dated October 2, 2020, was addressed to our local MPP, Bill Walker, as well as to the Honourable Jeff Yurek, Premier Doug Ford and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and then these four conservation authorities.

I just briefly was checking, and the town of Collingwood and other municipalities have all expressed the same complete horror that somebody would think of discontinuing the role of conservation authorities. I want to highlight their resolution. It says:

“Whereas each CA provides the municipality of Grey Highlands with expert advice on the environmental impact of land use planning proposals and that the municipality does not have staff with comparable expertise or experience;...

“Therefore be it resolved that the municipality of Grey Highlands supports continuation of the programs and services of the three CAs, both mandatory and non-

mandatory, and that no programs or services of” Grey Sauble, Nottawasaga Valley, Saugeen Valley “or of other CAs in Ontario be ‘wound down’ at this time.”

1710

I should say that in—oh, I forget; it’s a long time ago—1990, perhaps, I was a provincial member of the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority. My farm is at the headwaters of it; Wasaga Beach is at the bottom. I would meet people who would say, “We count on what you people do or do not do up at the top.” We’re about 1,500 feet higher than Wasaga Beach.

On my farm, I have a gate that goes into my barnyard that’s rails. One year, there was something wrong with it. I put in a different gate that was more solid. You can’t imagine the difference that made, just in one little piece of property, to the water.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Peggy Hutchison: People would look at this property and think, “What water?” Well, come back in January and February when the water table is high, when we have a ton of snow like we do today—which was why I was late getting back to be part of this meeting—and maybe it rains. You have water. You just can’t even believe where there is water. There is a virtual river that cattle have drowned in between my house and barn. In July, you would say, “What river?” You would never even know it. Multiply this all across southern Ontario.

I grew up in Richmond Hill. I remember 1954 when Hurricane Hazel happened. Ever since after that, my dad—we would drive by the Humber River in Etobicoke, and he’d say, “Yep, the water came right up to here.” You would look at this ravine and think, “Holy smoke.”

Last year, when I was talking to Bill Walker, he assured me the government is just concerned about all these programs and unnecessary things that conservation authorities do, but he had confidence that the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of the Environment and the Premier—that the basic science to protect Ontario was in place. When I say protect Ontario, there of course are wetlands—I mean, they’re protecting species at risk, forestry and all kinds of things.

But the real outcome, if any of this happens, is it costs all taxpayers money, because my farm gate—if I change it one year, it doesn’t impact my neighbour or me or whatever. Where that impact is, we can’t even calculate. I drive down to Collingwood, which is 1,000 feet down the hill, and you see this water rushing and people dealing with it and culverts that aren’t big enough and the erosion. We’ve seen in the last couple of years, we’ve had some extraordinary water. I know in Caledon they’re just replacing all the culverts; they’re not big enough.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Peggy Hutchison: Somebody at some point will say, “Oh well, it doesn’t very often happen.” Well, it has happened, like, three years in a row that we’ve had high water tables, lots of snow, rain, cold—all at once—and there is no place for that water to go.

If it’s developers who—I’m talking about the lower Duffins Creek, the ministerial zoning order, recently, that

lifted the hazard land on the lower Duffins Creek. That’s part of the Great Lakes, and that’s why I say the headline in this magazine: What can we do about the high waters? Well, if we don’t have scientific people in every conservation authority across southern Ontario, we’re in a lot worse trouble. I mean, it’s hard enough dealing with what we have.

When somebody buys a piece of land that’s cheap: “Great, I want to develop it.” Well, you can’t because it’s zoned hazard. “Oh, well, we’ll just take the hazard zoning off.” Excuse me? That cost is not going to get picked up by the developer down the road. It’s going to get picked up by municipal taxpayers, provincial taxpayers, and I’m surprised Quebec hasn’t said something—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We’ll start with the questions now. We’ll start the first round with the independent members. MPP Hunter, are you there?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I am, Chair. I am here.

I just wanted to use this opportunity—and sadly, it has to come out of my allotted time for the witness hearings. I really felt that, according to the standing orders and the rules that govern this House, which are the same for committees, the member was making allegations that were false, that did not reflect facts, and also addressed me directly. That’s against the standing orders and the rules that govern this Legislature and the conduct of members in whatever proceedings we are in. So I have to speak to it, because I have to seek to correct the record.

I would also respectfully ask the Chair that should another member make allegations against a member while in committee, they be ruled out of order and addressed. I don’t believe that’s the conduct that is correct, and it’s against the standing orders as they are stated.

Sadly, Darla, who was part of the previous panel, is not here, so she is not able to hear the information that is correct. I would—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I apologize to cut you off, MPP Hunter. As I mentioned earlier, this is a dispute over the facts. I would like to remind the committee that a point of order should be used to draw the Chair’s attention to any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language. I would suggest that you please use your time to ask the question to our witnesses. You have already made your point, I think. But please, if you want to utilize your time to ask the question to the witnesses.

MPP Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Chair, I would also like to—I’m looking for clarification, because it seems to me that a member’s privilege and MPP Hunter’s privilege is to exercise her duty as an MPP as she sees fit. If she chooses to use her time to address an issue that personally was disrespectful to her, it was disrespectful to the witnesses—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Shaw, I think MPP Hunter has already made her point. As I clearly

said, it is a dispute over the facts. So she has already made her point.

MPP Hunter, do you want to continue? It's your time. You have a minute left.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Okay. Well, I want to state the fact that in the Ontario budget 2018, on page 27, on the chapter for better care for seniors, there is a paragraph which speaks directly to personal support workers. It actually names them as a profession and enhances the amount that was stated. It enhances important services, such as caregiver respite. In 2017, Ontario invested an additional \$140 million in home care. An estimated 15,000 more people received that care. Also, the previous government enhanced the wages of home care workers to raise the standard of work and of care.

I do want to put that on record, because the member from Willowdale erred in his accusations and in his personally naming me. I think that was wrong.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We're almost out of time. You have five seconds. We'll come back to you in the second round, MPP Hunter.

We'll go to the government now. MPP Babikian.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you very much to all our presenters. I will start with Mr. Perley and his comments: smoke-free in the movies.

I am quite interested with this question, because previously, I have been a member of the film classification board for four years. I know how important a role the board has done in working on the classification and how important it was to our civil society. The board members were proud with their work, and they have worked in a dedicated manner to address some of the issues that Mr. Perley raised in movies and classification about coarse language, violence, nudity etc.

1720

Of course, protecting the health of our youth remains a priority for this government. A 2013 survey by Canadian tobacco, alcohol and drugs revealed that the smoking rate among Canadians older than 14 is at an all-time low at 15%, but research suggests that a significant percentage of younger smokers pick up the habit after seeing tobacco use in movies. Other than your suggestion to remove the tobacco imagery in youth films, what else can the government consider to bring down the rate of youth smoking?

Mr. Michael Perley: Thank you, Judge Babikian. I appreciate your comments, and I appreciate your interest in the issue and your past experience.

There are a number of things. I think one thing is on the matter of the financing of the film industry. I think we're all aware that the film industry makes a lot of movies in Ontario. I'm not sure that everyone is aware, though, that the total in tax breaks and subsidies to the film industry in Ontario is a little bit over \$625 million a year. I think one thing that the government could do right away is to attach a condition to any tax breaks or subsidies to the movie industry, that any film producer or movie studio making a film in Ontario must certify that there is no tobacco use in that film in order to get subsidies or tax breaks here. The film industry is important to Ontario, we all understand

that, but right now they can get very substantial tax breaks and subsidies without any conditions on them. I think making sure that there's no tobacco use in any film that's funded in Ontario would be a terrific way for the government to act on this.

Another thing that the government can do is to—and I know this is difficult because the legislation is about to move forward. But to entirely remove the rating system, which this bill does, the new Film Content Information Act, is really problematic because parents have no way now of knowing how a film is rated, not just for tobacco use, but for graphic violence, drug use and other risky behaviours. They don't have any way of knowing which films their kids, teenagers, whatever the age, should be going to or should not be going to. To wipe out this rating system the way this legislation does—and, of course, the Film Classification Act is being rescinded in about six months apparently, so there will be no way where parents and younger folks can be sure of getting objective information.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Michael Perley: If exhibitors attach information to film advertisements or whatever, they'll get some information. If they don't, the parents and kids won't.

I know it's very difficult to reverse course. When I was working on the vaping issue—and I think you and I have talked about this—we were very pleased that the government reversed course on allowing promotion of vaping products in convenience stores. Minister Elliott changed her mind and reversed course, and that's been very helpful in terms of reducing exposure of kids to vaping products at retail. So it's not unheard of to reverse course, and this is an instance where I think it really should happen.

Also, finally, just quickly, I think the government could be in touch with the various streaming services, because I'm sure some folks listening to me are saying, "Well, wait a minute. Most kids see their films online now through streaming services." It's true that there is a great deal of that, but there is still plenty of viewing in cinemas, so it's worth having a rating system. The only streaming service that now has any kind of content advisory is Netflix. All the others don't. And I think the government could urge the streaming services that are available in Ontario to add content advisories, just as Netflix has done. So those are some suggestions that I hope are helpful.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you very much. Coming back to your first suggestion about the tax incentive, what about the movies produced outside of Canada? We don't have any leverage on them through the tax incentive. What can we do about those movies? There are lots of European, Middle Eastern, South Asian and South American movies where smoking is a popular item.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Michael Perley: It's very complicated, there's no question about it. We have a big international market, as you've described. I think, again, how do kids get access to these films? They get access much less so on DVDs now; it's much more streaming services when the movies are from out of Canada. Impinging on the streaming services

that there is a strong need to put content advisories, as Netflix has done, is not enough really, but it's a step forward. Another possibility is if the films are going to be on streaming services in Ontario, the government—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up for the government.

We'll go to the opposition now. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just want to explain, or apologize, to the deputants who are here. They may not understand what MPP Hunter was discussing, but it was something that occurred earlier in one of the deputations. While MPP Hunter and I do not represent the same parties, I would say that what we do share and what we do represent is a respect for integrity and a respect for truthful discourse. So I would just like to explain why—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Shaw, I would request that you please utilize your time in asking questions to the witnesses. We have already wasted enough time on this, so I would request that you please utilize your time asking questions to the witnesses, to respect them as well.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Respectfully, Chair, I would say that it is not a waste of time to talk about integrity and truthfulness, but I will put my question. Thank you very much.

I would like to address my first question, if I could, to Mr. Huggins. Mr. Huggins, you're not the first deputant who has come and brought this to our attention. It's really an important thing that you found in this bill, that's been snuck into this bill—that's the government's MO. They like to see if they can sneak things in and get away with it. But what you have really brought to us is an important schedule that essentially pulls the rug out from underneath small investors and average investors in the province of Ontario.

What I would like to say is that this is not the first time that the government has shown themselves unwilling to respect a contract. I'm the finance critic. As Ontario's official opposition NDP finance critic, I received the most remarkable letter from the US Chamber of Commerce that was discussing this government's disrespect for the rule of contract law in the province. Really, the sanctity of existing contracts should be honoured by a government.

I'm going to quote what the US Chamber of Commerce said: "Our strong concern is that terminating an existing contract, and doing so without compensation ... risks sending a negative signal to US and other international investors about the business and investment climate in Ontario."

So what you have unearthed is a pattern of this government to tear up duly signed contracts. My question to you is, what does this mean for investor confidence, for retail, small investors? And an insurance contract is an investment. What does that say about their confidence and their trust in this government?

Mr. Gary Huggins: Once you start having the government modify contracts that have either been negotiated on good terms and in good faith—it's a slippery slope. I don't like to see anything done along these lines, particularly

with insurance policies. Insurance policies, very simply, are one-sided contracts. They propose a contract to you. If you like the terms, you accept the contract. So you don't get to negotiate that contract. You look at it, you decide whether it's advantageous to you, your family, your future, and then you sign up for it. When you sign up for it, you start making plans according to what that contract is.

1730

To break that sanctity is an absolute slippery slope into chaos as far as I'm concerned. Let people run businesses. I've been on both sides of contracts. I've benefited from contracts. I've lost because of contracts. That's tough. That's business, and please, government, don't interfere in it.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I couldn't agree with you more. Individuals who sign up for an insurance policy, these are our parents, our grandparents, they're us. We signed a contract and a deal is a deal. We understand that a deal is a deal.

Mr. Gary Huggins: Totally.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. Institutional investors are one thing and the government is another. Really, if you look at it, the small investors, individual investors, don't have a chance. They don't have a chance to get a fair shake, especially with this government.

I just want to refer you to the fact that this government is the only jurisdiction in the country that is still sticking with deferred sales charges. Every security regulator in the country has said deferred sales charges are bad deals for individual investors and they're banned in every other province, but this government has stuck to it. So my question to you is, what does this say about investor protection for individual investors in this province, who have spent their hard-earned dollars with the promise that this won't be pulled out from under them when they need it?

Mr. Gary Huggins: It's terrible. You can't do this, and you certainly can't do it hidden inside a major, huge omnibus bill. If you're going to look at this thing—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Gary Huggins:—this takes study to see the validity of the claim that it harms people. It does not harm people. We're protecting corporations here. They see this; they don't like the contracts they wrote, and so they're trying to just sweep them up. I hate to see the government co-operate.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This government came into power saying they're open for business, which is one thing, and that they are going to put money in the pockets of—I forget what the expression is; I can't believe I forget, but money in the pockets of the little guy. But it's the little guy that's being taken advantage of by this change that has been surreptitiously slipped into a budget bill. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Gary Huggins: I'm not sure what the motivation is. I don't know how this thing ended up in there. I think it's a sham. I think all members of government should be wary of ticking off seniors. There are more of us all the time—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Gary Huggins:—and we have most of the money, apparently. I haven't found mine, but apparently we have a huge chunk of the money. So don't piss us off, if I can use that language.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Mr. Huggins, yes, you absolutely can use that. And I would say particularly don't piss off old ladies, because we actually end up with all the money.

Mr. Gary Huggins: Totally. Exactly. You outlive us, so there you go. I'm looking out for you guys.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I remind many times, and I'll remind once again, to just be careful when you—it has to be parliamentary language. Please don't use unparliamentary language.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Sorry, Mr. Huggins. We're in trouble. We're going to have to go to parliamentary jail, but that'll be okay I think.

Mr. Gary Huggins: Okay, that's good. What's the food like?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Not good.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. All right, so we'll move to the government side now for their second round. MPP Cho.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you to all the presenters this afternoon. I appreciate your time, certainly here at the end of the day.

I'm going to start my questioning with Mr. Perley. I have to admit, this is a subject I don't know too much about, so I have a lot of basic questions. I hope you'll forgive if I'm a little simple in these questions.

Technology has really changed every aspect of our lives, and that includes the way our youth are smoking. When I grew up, I remember there were still smoking sections on planes and in malls. Now we've started to see the "no vaping," but vaping certainly for a while was progressing faster in terms of technology than maybe our laws were able to keep up with. So I'm curious: How, then, does your organization or do you feel about the vaping issue? Should these be equally enforced? Should we have some of the same cautionary measures around that vaping, and how do we enforce this? This will lead into my next line of questioning. Maybe you can start with that.

Mr. Michael Perley: If we're speaking just on the movies issue for a moment, I think all controls and information requirements and ratings and so on should equally apply to vaping products as they would to tobacco products. We used to have a content advisory about tobacco use required under the soon-to-be-repealed Film Classification Act. This content advisory would appear on websites. When somebody looked up a movie to get times in a theatre, you'd see the content advisory. It's not great.

We have always supported an 18A rating for movies depicting tobacco use. The government, no matter who was in office, has not seen fit to put that in place, despite the huge—and I use that word advisedly—amount of evidence showing how influential seeing smoking in movies is on kids in terms of them moving forward to go to smoking and eventually addiction.

In the US, the projection is that 37% of recruitment of new smokers happens through seeing smoking in movies. That's 6.4 million kids. I think it was mentioned earlier that we've done reasonably well with adult smokers in terms of getting those rates down, and we have, and we've done even better with kids. Wouldn't it be a disaster if, because there are no or fewer controls and information about smoking in movies, we reverse that trend and start seeing rates among young people go up because they're seeing a lot of smoking in movies, because moviemakers have no incentive through ratings or content advisories that could be in place in Ontario or elsewhere? They have no incentive not to have smoking in movies. The tobacco industry has had a long history of promoting this, as I mentioned in my presentation.

In terms of vaping, most vaping products that are in use today, the vast majority, have nicotine in them, which is the active addictive ingredient. There's no reason why the same controls in movies, and elsewhere for that matter, that are in place on tobacco shouldn't be in place on vaping products. That doesn't prevent a smoker who actually wants to use vaping products to quit from accessing a product. It just keeps them away from kids and makes it a lot more difficult for kids to get ahold of them.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you for that. You touched on a very important word. You said the influence that these movies have, and that word "influence," if you ask the youth of today, means something entirely different. There's a whole noun that I had never heard of called "influencer" on social media that really is driving the behaviours of our youth today.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Stan Cho: I'm wondering how do we rein this in, because it would be a disaster, as you put it, if our youth smoking rates were to tick up. I get the business case you've made around movies themselves, but should we be looking broader? Should your organization and our government be looking broader to the impacts that social media and influencers are having, recognizing that, as I said in my opening, the technology continues to evolve, not just with the technology of smoking but the way that our youth are accessing information?

Mr. Michael Perley: I couldn't agree with you more. I'm delighted you brought that up, because there are influencers for virtually every behaviour and every product online these days in social media on Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc. It certainly would serve us all very well if some of the lead organizations that are concerned about this, perhaps in partnership with the provincial government, would identify leading influencers who don't smoke—there are many out there who don't, of course—and engage and enlist them in a campaign to encourage their followers not to smoke. And if they see smoking in movies, don't pay any attention to it. If you see smoking in movies, don't be fooled that it's cool or it's harmless, or you want to do it because such and such an actor or whatever is smoking. There are lots of creative ways that creative minds far greater than mine could come up with very good campaigns, exactly as you said, to be used and

rolled out by influencers across the spectrum of social media. That's a great idea, and it should be pursued.

1740

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you for that, Mr. Perley. Obviously, we won't have enough time here to have the fulsome discussion, but I believe in a carrot-and-stick approach for better outcomes—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Stan Cho:—so what I'm hoping to hear, maybe, are those broader discussions around the problem from a macro level, because we're not going to keep up with the advances in technology.

You forgot TikTok, by the way. I think the kids today would laugh at Facebook and Twitter, from what I know from my niece.

As we move forward, we won't be able to keep pace. Certainly government won't be able to keep pace with how technology moves and how influence moves in the data-driven society we have today. My offer to you is to have these fulsome discussions, and I'm looking forward to your ideas. I think, together, we can make sure that youth smoking rates continue to decline in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll move to the opposition now for the second round. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to address my final question to Peggy Hutchison. Thank you so much for being here and for your deputation. I would just like to let you know that my parents are in Wasaga and so On The Bay Magazine is like gospel in their home.

You've really done a great job of representing why schedule 6, which is being slipped into a budget bill, has been so upsetting to average folks all across Ontario—and not just average folks. We have the big city mayors; we have AMO. The city of Hamilton, where I'm from, passed a resolution to rescind schedule 6.

The thing you said that I think is most important for people to understand is that it's all connected. We're all connected in this. For this government to cut off conservation authorities at the knees and the work that they do impacts not just you at the headwaters, my parents in Wasaga—you're downstream from there—it impacts all of Ontario.

Can you explain a little bit how, for example, when there are high waters in Georgian Bay, as happened before—what is some of the work that conservation authorities have done to address high water and the impact that it has not only on businesses, but on farms like yours all the way down the watershed?

Ms. Peggy Hutchison: There are 36 conservation authorities in southern Ontario, maybe 34, and two are on the Canadian Shield. There are other rivers that go into the Great Lakes, so there are other agencies that should be involved in ensuring that not too much water is going in.

Now, conservation authorities ensure that—wetlands are a natural sponge. You cannot even contemplate how they operate. So making sure that there's no development in wetlands and making sure that any time a development is proposed—and I say, even I have a shed that I could

pick up with my tractor and move, but I was told, "No, there are certain areas you can't put that." And it's not just one person. When this gets magnified across all the watersheds, the result for the people downstream is almost unfathomable. Last year, there was a woman driving to Barrie—and I went by the same road, the same day. It was flooded. She opened the door to try to get her four-year-old out of the car, who was washed away and drowned. I mean, this is not funny.

The levels in the Great Lakes: The conservation authorities play a big component in that because a lot of our major rivers go there, but there are other people involved.

Universally, people look at Ontario, who created the conservation authority watershed management across municipal boundaries. They are based on science and water—nobody can control water. The world looks at them. Consider what's happening in Venice. That's because they get wiped out regularly, and it's getting worse.

Climate change: I don't know if people—whether it's climate change or whatever. I've lived on this farm for 45 years, and I said, "Well, some years it's fine, and three or four years go by and nothing." Then all of a sudden, you'll get the worst something in 100 years.

The cost of remediation: We shouldn't be blowing money on that. We should be using our money to fight this pandemic and doing all kinds of other things besides blowing it on remediating decisions that have been made, ignoring the scientific input of the conservation authorities and anyone else who has knowledge about what we should or should not be doing.

There are some lakes, apparently, that are being siddled into Lake Superior. That water should be going somewhere else. Conservationist authorities can only do what they can. But within our municipalities across southern Ontario—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Peggy Hutchison:—somebody might say, "Oh, well, I can build over there." You can't, and you just need somebody who has no political stake in it to just say, "No."

I know that the Nottawasaga Valley, years ago, said the authority could help developers by being the point person: "Okay, what permits do you need? Who do you need to talk to?" and whatever. And how can you work out—maybe a building gets redesigned or moved a little bit. There may be some way to make it happen.

But when you look at that Duffins Creek ministerial zoning order, I don't know what planet that decision came from. It's just unfathomable. I'm surprised that Quebec doesn't say, "Wait a minute, we're downstream."

I gather that the committee has heard from David Crombie. David Crombie headed the Headwaters Conference in the early 1990s. It was held in Orangeville—or actually at the Hockley Valley Conference Centre. The Humber River, the Credit, the Nottawasaga and I think the Grand all rise there. Of course, with the Grand and the Humber, there is so much development and so many houses and people. There are other watersheds where there is nobody really living downstream or they're living in a houseboat, but anywhere where there's major development downstream—I have friends who live in Steeles and

Sheppard in Toronto; I forget what that's called. It used to be called—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: North York. It's called North York. It's Willowdale, actually.

Ms. Peggy Hutchison:—and their basement has been flooded. That shouldn't have happened.

I beg your pardon.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That's actually Willowdale. The MPP from Willowdale is here.

Ms. Peggy Hutchison: Willowdale, okay. Their house was flooded a couple of years ago.

I know I've driven on Jane Street one day, and there the road goes under the bridges, through four feet of water. You're just wondering, "Who authorized this?" So, it isn't just developers; it's also municipalities.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Peggy Hutchison: We're living with a lot of bad decisions that were made before 1945. When they invented the authority system in 1946—it's going to be the 75th anniversary year next year—that was a brainwave. It has served well.

I have a friend in Toronto whose neighbour's house shouldn't have been built where it is. It is falling into the ravine. Again, who's going to pay for that? Their insurance won't cover it. If it's enough of a natural disaster, like all the housing—the whole of Scarborough Bluffs is eroding, because people aren't paying attention. Ultimately, provincial taxpayers and federal—I mean, when it's enough of a disaster everybody pays for it. The bottom line is, don't do it. Just don't go there.

There are all kinds of alternatives. It's not like there is no place else to build. And it's not as though you're saying, "Oh, well, I think we should only have one-storey housing—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll go to the independents now. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzi Hunter: I want to thank all of the presenters. You've just been terrific in making your individual cases.

I just want to touch on—I want to have a comment and then I have a specific question for Mr. Huggins. But definitely, Ms. Hutchison, schedule 6 is problematic. Everyone has said that, from all sides. Hopefully the government will listen and remove it. My riding is Scarborough-Guildwood. The bluffs are on the southern boundary, right at the lake. Of course, the erosion is happening directly to personal property.

In terms of, Mr. Perley, the work that you're doing, I just want to encourage you to keep that advocacy up for the protection of future generations. The former government implemented Smoke-Free Ontario, which saw a drastic decline in tobacco use in Ontario, and more needs to be done. This is an excellent idea to protect young people as they are consuming film and television.

Mr. Huggins, I wanted to ask you about schedule 22, because even though this is a budget bill, Bill 229, we've spent most of our time really talking about the environment and how schedules 6 and 8 are going to ruin species at risk and, really, the future. Peggy just outlined the caution around wetlands and what they do in terms of absorbing stormwater runoff and keeping our ecology going. Very little has been talked about in terms of the budget itself and how it impacts people.

You are bringing forward a risk area that's been snuck into this bill, that affects insurance policyholders and their investments that they signed on in good faith with a contract, and now that contract is being legislated away and impacted. I want you to just maybe tell us how you believe Ontarians will be disadvantaged, those who hold these policies and, in particular, seniors, who—many of them signed these contracts decades ago.

Mr. Gary Huggins: I'm sorry. I can't understand why they would be disadvantaged. I just don't see the logic there. I think it's very convenient to ride on the coattails of seniors: "Oh, by the way, we're going to protect them with our greatest skills," and all of that. That's one way of selling it. But I'm at a loss to understand why they think this is going to affect the seniors. I mean, these people signed up for these contracts—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Gary Huggins: I've had insurance, all kinds of insurance. I did not sign up for this particular kind. It didn't fit what I was doing, but I understood what they were doing. They were selling it on the basis of it's an investment that would pay for your insurance.

Nevertheless, along the way, they came along and they said, "You know what? We need to sell more insurance, so instead of guaranteeing 1% interest, we're going to guarantee 3%, maybe 4%, maybe 5% interest." And understand, a lot of these particular policies with side interests originated back in the 1980s, when interest rates were just astronomical. They went to 22%. So for them to promise that back then was a bit of a joke, a marketing ploy.

Now, in this environment where interest rates on bonds are paying 1% or less, and we're looking at negative interest rates in the Fed, for 3%, 4%, 5%—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

That concludes our time. I want to thank all the presenters for presenting today and the committee staff for their assistance. As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 7 p.m. today, Wednesday, December 2, 2020. The deadline to file amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee is 12 noon on Thursday, December 3.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Friday, December 4, when we will meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 229. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 1754.

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