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**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Pre-budget consultations

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Wednesday 22 January 2020

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

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Mercredi 22 janvier 2020

Chair: Amarjot Sandhu
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Président : Amarjot Sandhu
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

Wednesday 22 January 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Mercredi 22 janvier 2020

The committee met at 0900 in the Banquet Centre, Belleville.

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. We are meeting today in Belleville for the purpose of pre-budget consultations.

Each witness will receive up to seven minutes for his or her presentation, followed by eight minutes of questioning from the committee, divided equally amongst the recognized parties. Are there any questions before we begin?

CONSERVATION ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Seeing none, I would like to call on the first witness, from Conservation Ontario. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record. You have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Kim Gavine: Good morning, Mr. Chair and respected members. My name is Kim Gavine. I'm the general manager with Conservation Ontario. Conservation Ontario is the association that supports Ontario's 36 conservation authorities.

CAs deliver natural resource programs in communities all across the province. Their mandate is to undertake watershed-based programs to protect people and property from flooding and other natural hazards, and to conserve natural resources for economic, social and environmental benefits.

Flooding and erosion impacts are devastating. They threaten lives, damage property and create costly and inconvenient business disruptions, which affect Ontario's economy. Public Safety Canada tracks the costs of flooding and says they are the most costly natural disasters in the country.

I'm here today to show you how conservation authorities should continue to be an integral part of a successful flood management approach for Ontario, and how it makes good business sense to support their work.

Last year was a very tough year for Ontario residents and businesses in terms of flooding. Instead of subsiding after the spring melt, it grew worse, with new flood events occurring in the summer and well into the fall. It has been apparent for a few years now that flooding is not just a spring problem any longer; it occurs year-round.

We would like to commend the province for releasing the special adviser's report on flooding so quickly last November. Right off the top, he points out three reasons why Ontario has led the country in reducing the costs of flooding:

(1) He said that the development and use of the modern floodplain policy has been very effective in protecting people and property.

(2) He praised Ontario for using a watershed-based approach. Conservation authorities undertake watershed-wide monitoring, flood modelling and watershed technical studies, which help to identify problems early and also support an important flood warning system.

(3) He praised Ontario for developing and using the conservation authority model.

Our 36 conservation authorities offer a wide variety of programs and services that directly and indirectly help to prevent and reduce the impacts of flooding and erosion. Conservation authorities monitor and measure precipitation, streamflow and snow levels. They track weather radar and forecasts, and generate potential flood models. Based on this information, they issue flood messages to municipalities, emergency management personnel, the province and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Conservation authorities also use a combination of structural and non-structural measures to prevent and reduce flooding. They operate \$3.8 billion in flood and erosion control infrastructure such as dams and dikes. They also deliver a number of watershed-wide programs, including stewardship, green infrastructure and storm-water management, which capture and slow down flood waters.

I could mention a number of other programs, but I think this gives you a sense of the scope of work.

Unfortunately, more floods, higher damage costs and increased business and utility disruptions are in our future. Our provincial flood strategy cannot be just to repair damage. This isn't a sustainable or cost-effective way to manage the impacts of flooding.

Instead, we need to continue to support an approach that combines prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response-and-recovery measures. This requires a collaboration of agencies, including all levels of government, emergency management and conservation authorities, and the costs of preventing flooding have to be shared. We need to develop a funding formula which enables a mix of

risk planning, watershed management, infrastructure updating and emergency response. The costs of preventing, reducing and responding to flood events cannot be shouldered primarily by just one level of government such as local municipalities.

With the terrible flooding last year, municipalities, residents and businesses need to be assured that the province is doing all that it can to prevent and reduce the impacts of flooding. A piece of that strategy should be funding the natural hazard work of conservation authorities. Reinstating and increasing funding to conservation authorities for flood management signals that the province recognizes the seriousness of flooding and the hardships it creates, as well as the threat it poses to the provincial budget.

It makes good business sense to continue to rely on the conservation authorities' extensive experience, expertise and cost-effective programs. Now is the time to reinvest in conservation authorities' flood management programs and services, before the spring flooding season begins. This will require reinstating the previous conservation authority funding reduced in 2019 and, ideally, increasing the funding to address the real and escalating costs of managing flooding.

I'm going to end with some key points that you can take away. The partnership between the province and conservation authorities protects 95% of Ontario's population in some of the most densely populated areas of the province. Fewer people have experienced riverine flooding as a result of the conservation authority model and provincial flood plain mapping policy, and there are lower damage costs than there might have been. If they do experience flooding because they live in older developments located in flood plains, they can ask the conservation authorities for flood-proofing advice, or at least have the advantage of an early warning from the conservation authority flood message system.

To be effective, conservation authorities and other partners need the province to continue to do these four important things: ensure that Ontario policies protect the watershed approach; update technical guidelines that support effective hazard policy; ensure adequate, sustainable funding for conservation authorities to deliver their natural hazard programs and services; and continue to fund critical flood and erosion control infrastructure.

Conservation authorities' natural hazard programs can help the province to build healthier and safer communities.

Thank you very much for your time this morning.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start with the opposition side for questioning. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good morning. Thank you for coming in and for your presentation. I have a couple of questions. While I appreciate the results of the report, as well—I was there when Minister Yakabuski tabled the report and then did the press conference with it, and remarkably, in his entire presentation, he didn't say the word "climate" once. There was absolutely no acknowledgement that the flooding was going to continue to

exaggerate as years go by and that it's going to become increasingly worse. Of the glaring hypocrisies of this government, frankly, to cut funding to the agency best suited for dealing with flooding, but then to fund a study at the same time—do you see the hypocrisy that I do?

Ms. Kim Gavine: Conservation authorities have been doing this for a long time. We were created in 1946. Our flooding responsibility didn't happen until after Hurricane Hazel in 1954, when there were so many lives devastated. Since that time, we have been playing that critical role in addressing flooding and hazard. We want to continue to work with the province to do that. If anything, what that third-party report did for us was an outside individual saying, "You guys have it right in Ontario. With the partnership between the province, municipalities and conservation authorities, and that watershed-based model, you can continue to do good work." So it reinforced, I think, the good work of conservation authorities.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I think it did, too, yes. Absolutely.

Ms. Kim Gavine: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Ian Arthur: In terms of talking about mitigation and the need to put more money into flood prevention, it is going to continue to get worse. We're expecting eight inches higher just in Lake Ontario next summer compared to last summer, and that was devastatingly high, and it had a dramatic effect on businesses that operate in this area, and that's just one area. We know the Muskokas and many other areas were affected by it.

When you look down at southern Ontario, we're talking about 3% forest and wetland coverage. The safe percentage is around 18%. Would you speak to what we actually need to do, looking at the growing amount of extreme weather events that are going to happen with the escalating climate crisis, what we actually need to do beyond just maintaining what currently exists?

Ms. Kim Gavine: One of the critical pieces that is in our submission and in this report is the need to maintain that foundational watershed management approach. Flood management isn't just about dikes and dams and things of that nature. It is about planting trees. It's about ensuring there's green space along riparian areas or streams, to reduce the flow in the event of a flood.

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We need to look at it holistically. It's really important that we don't lose sight of those foundational watershed management activities.

Another one is the water quality and quantity monitoring. It's important that we continue to do those activities as part of our mandatory responsibilities.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you. My associate has a question.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for your presentation, Kim. You talked about 1946, and that your organization has been doing it for a long time. I'm just wondering if there has been any work with First Nations people with conservation, because we've been here for thousands of years. Something we dealt with in the fall of 2019, in November, was a flood in the north, and that's unusual. Do you have any comments on that?

Ms. Kim Gavine: I do. In fact, recently we've been working with Cambium, a group who is working with First Nations groups. They have submitted an application whereby conservation authorities will be sharing their experience with flood plain mapping with First Nations groups. I believe—do not quote me—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We'll have to move to the government side now. MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much for coming today, and for your remarks.

Ms. Kim Gavine: You're welcome.

Mr. David Piccini: I appreciate your emphasis on flooding; as an Ontario MPP along a shoreline, I know it devastated a number of families in Brighton and all the way through Cramahe and Grafton in my riding.

I was wondering if you could speak to the role that we can play, and specifically your recommendations for what we at the provincial level can do, to the federal government. I know that one of the paramount concerns of many in my community is the outflow levels and the International Joint Commission, which regrettably did not accept the meeting requests of a number of shoreline MPPs and MPs. I was wondering if you could speak to your thoughts on the International Joint Commission and the role that all three governments can play.

Ms. Kim Gavine: I think it's absolutely important that you have the role of all three governments. Previously, there was a federal/provincial/municipal cost-share program. It's not just a case of pointing at any one agency. You need to determine what got you to this point and what are the potential solutions moving forward. I think that's where you have the expertise of the conservation authorities, particularly in their role around their hazard program, dealing with those high water levels and what we can do to reduce those hazards.

I do think it's very important that all levels of government work together on finding solutions for what you've been dealing with on Lake Ontario.

Mr. David Piccini: Also, when it comes to the mandate of conservation authorities, I know that has been an item under discussion a lot over the last year. I think I'd be the first to say that the mandates differ. The mandate of Toronto is not—I think that the challenges they face are very different from those of Ganaraska or Lower Trent.

Speak to me about, going forward in the year ahead, what you'd really like to see—the core mandate, or what your interpretation of the core mandate is, going forward into 2020.

Ms. Kim Gavine: I think it's very important—again, I go back to 1946: It was to protect, to restore, to rehabilitate. Long before our flood management role came along, we were looking at things like soil erosion.

The characteristics of the watershed basically determine what activities the conservation authorities will be doing. In rural areas, you'll be working with soil stabilization, for instance, whereas in the urban areas, you'll be looking perhaps at stormwater management solutions.

You're absolutely right, MPP: There's a difference between those watershed characteristics. I think the role of those conservation authorities is to look at what those needs are, to support it as best they can.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions?

Mr. David Piccini: If none, then I have just one more.

Ms. Kim Gavine: Sure.

Mr. David Piccini: I'm in an agricultural community. I think, as an elected member, one of my roles is to bring all sides together. Certainly, we've heard a lot of concern from our agriculture community over some of the challenges they faced in dealing with conservation authorities over the past number of years. I think we're going to hear from another presenter later today on that. I was just wondering if you could talk to me about what role you see us playing at the provincial government, and that I could play as a local MPP, to really bring both sides together and deal with some of those challenges.

Ms. Kim Gavine: Absolutely. The agricultural community has been a long-standing partner with conservation authorities over the years. I understand that there are a lot of concerns with our permitting role, our regulatory role; that's currently being reviewed by Minister Yakabuski right now, and I think there's an opportunity to work with groups like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to express those concerns.

The other thing is, Conservation Ontario is developing a client service and streamlining initiative to start to look at, perhaps, reducing the timelines in which we can—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. That concludes our time.

Ms. Kim Gavine: Thank you very much.

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

LOYALIST COLLEGE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Next, I would like to call on Loyalist College. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record. You have seven minutes for your presentation.

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: Thank you. I'm Ann Marie Vaughan. I'm president and CEO of Loyalist College, Ontario's destination college, located in Belleville. My comments will focus on areas around modernizing college education along government priorities essential for the new economy.

As an entrepreneurial college, we are committed to establishing new revenue streams that will allow us to support our core programming. An excellent example is Loyalist's Applied Research Centre for Natural Products and Medical Cannabis, which has a queue of more than 25 companies interested in research and pay-for-fee services. A successful 16-year track record in applied research of natural products, combined with the rapid growth of the cannabis and hops sectors and our recognition as the first college in Canada approved by Health Canada to do research on cannabis, position us to uniquely address the

needs of industry in these new and exciting areas. Last year, Loyalist College was awarded Canada's only technology access centre in this area through a \$1.75-million investment from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.

On behalf of Loyalist College, I would like to thank the Ontario government for its recent initiatives to cut red tape and improve efficiencies across the college system. We are very pleased with the new policy on public-private partnerships, which will allow us to train more international students, who will contribute to the provincial workforce. As well, the streamlined program approval process will enable us to respond more quickly to regional labour market needs through a program approval process of less than six months as compared to a previous timeline of up to 24 months. This will enable us to be more responsive to the skills required and the jobs available in our region.

These types of changes are helping to offset our declining domestic student population and bolster the economy in the Bay of Quinte region, where we serve a growing population of 250,000 and we contribute 5.8% to the gross regional product. As the only post-secondary institution in the region, Loyalist is a vital engine for labour force capacity, industry training and applied research. Local employers rely on Loyalist to offer essential skills training and a pipeline of skilled employees to fill vacancies in our regional labour market. With the government's help, we are becoming more entrepreneurial and financially competitive, which will provide socio-economic benefit in our local communities.

To promote skills required for job growth in the Bay of Quinte region and across the province, I strongly encourage you to support the following investments and policy proposals.

Stand-alone baccalaureate nursing degrees: Amend the Nursing Act to permit colleges to offer stand-alone baccalaureate nursing degrees in order to further reduce red tape and allow Loyalist to better meet the significant health care needs in the Bay of Quinte region.

The current model requires colleges to collaborate with universities, which is costly and burdensome to both students and colleges. To complete their degree program, Loyalist nursing students must transfer to another Ontario university a three-hour drive away. This means that they must relocate. As such, the majority of our Loyalist nursing graduates who avail of this opportunity do not return to the Bay of Quinte region, which is a loss to our local health care workforce. In 2017, only 15% returned, compared to 61% of our nursing diploma graduates who stayed in the region.

While there is a provincial need for nurses, the shortfall in the Bay of Quinte region is particularly high. Allowing our students to train as bachelor-prepared nurses in local areas will allow them to save on the cost of their education while retaining more students in the local area to meet regional health care needs, contributing to the regional economy and fulfilling good, critical jobs.

Apprenticeship equipment funding and modernization: We recommend doubling the funding for the Apprenticeship Enhancement Fund to \$30 million per year so that

rural colleges like Loyalist can meet local businesses' needs for new high-technology equipment to compete internationally. Loyalist understands the innovation requirement of small businesses in our region as it relates to local economic development. In addition to attracting partnerships with local industry, advanced equipment is necessary to effectively prepare our skilled trades apprentices for the work they will do when they enter the workplace. Offering more skilled trades programs is costly in equipment as well as large-scale infrastructure requirements, including ventilation.

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We're pleased with the government's initiatives to modernize apprenticeship and would like to ensure our facilities, including our Bay of Quinte Skills Centre, keep pace with technological breakthroughs, including robotics, artificial intelligence and features of the new economy.

Invest an additional \$75 million over the next three years to strengthen mental health services and supports at college campuses. This is particularly important for Loyalist, which has a high percentage of students at risk. A study conducted by the Mowat Centre in 2014 showed low median household income and relatively high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and reliance on social assistance.

Finally, we recommend investing \$45 million over five years to enable colleges to create industry-specific small business innovation centres across the province to provide more businesses with an essential advantage: market-responsive applied research. Particularly in rural eastern Ontario, small businesses need our help to strengthen their innovation capacity so they can cut their costs, take improved products to market and create jobs. This proposal suggests that small businesses would be required to match or exceed government funding with a cash or in-kind contribution for applied research and/or development projects, technical assistance and customized micro-credentials.

Colleges continue to need government support, particularly in light of uncertainty around the sustainability of international activity over the longer term. Loyalist is committed to fulfilling its performance targets as outlined in our 2020-25 strategic mandate agreement with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, as provincial funding is critical for the health and well-being of our college and communities. The policy changes and investments requested will empower us to be more competitive and entrepreneurial.

Thank you for considering these ideas to support regional development through advancements in post-secondary education, as you develop the 2020 Ontario budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start off with questions from the government side this time. MPP Kramp.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Dr. Vaughan, welcome. It's a pleasure to have you here, particularly given the critical

importance of Loyalist not only to the Quinte region but to this entire part of this province. You play a pivotal role in so many ways. The bottom line is, you prepare our young people for the jobs of tomorrow. Without that, we have a serious, serious problem, as we all recognize—everything from apprentice programs to investment to dollars.

I can recall, I was involved many years ago with the skills development program—some of your R&D right now is particularly cutting edge. I would like to ask, do you see the cutting-edge R&D that you're doing now—you mentioned the cannabis line; obviously, I'm well familiar with that—between that and the application of potential jobs for tomorrow, where do you see that research and development? The dollars that we've been able to provide collectively, from the various levels of government: Do you see that as being a good investment?

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: Absolutely. Thank you very much, MPP Kramp, for your dedication and time that you give to Loyalist, as well.

The advantage of applied research in colleges is that it's all working on real-world problems of today. Industry comes in with a solution or a question that they have and they need solutions. Our students end up being involved in those projects. In those 25 companies, where they're looking for assistance in cannabis, our students are all engaged in those.

We have an advanced program now that we offer—the only program in Canada on the science level of cannabis and quality assurance in that industry, and natural products.

We're also looking at how we expand cannabis, hops and natural products into our culinary and aesthetics lines of our college. That will allow our culinary students and our aesthetics students to be involved in product development in those two unique areas as well.

Applied research naturally extends itself from the wonderful work that happens in our programs and from the tremendous capacity that comes from our faculty members. We have some exceptional faculty members involved in the bioscience research.

It gives us an ability to build partnerships. We've just built one with Northeastern University in Boston that allows us to build our reputation, build capacity and then have a direct impact on the local economy.

If I can give one example before my time might run out, we worked with Entomo Farms that was developing cricket powder. Entomo Farms had a specific question about extending the product life cycle and timeline—the best-before date for when they put them in supermarkets—and they worked with Loyalist. Now, that product is sold under the President's Choice brand. It's a wonderful example of working with local industry that face specific problems, and we assist them in developing viable business solutions.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. David Piccini: President Vaughan, I have a quick question for you on the program approval process. Can you speak to measures our government has taken over the

past year, and what you would continue to like to see on the program approval process?

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: It's absolutely a wonderful change that we've seen, a real streamlining in terms of the time that's involved within the ministry as well as time involved in program quality assurances. What I'm seeing is that the time and program quality assurance is certainly maintained, but it has really been streamlined now with the ministry.

We have new programs in the IT sector that we need to get up and running for September. We don't have 24 months. We have needs in the local economy for programs in cloud computing, in AI, in supply chain management. The changes in this process mean that we can be up and running for September, and not have to wait two more academic years in which businesses in the local community don't get the grads to advance their businesses.

So it's core to what we do, and it's a wonderful change.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We have to move to the opposition side now. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for coming in. The tuition freeze and the reduction in tuition: What did that do to the books for the college?

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: It did reduce the investment that we would have, because it was a 10% reduction in fees. It is being offset with the increase of international students.

Mr. Ian Arthur: So you've gained the equivalent in revenue from an increase in international—

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: Well, we have surpassed in international.

The other thing is, the tuition freeze is one thing, but the bigger issue is the decline in the direct-entry students in this area, with the declining K-to-12 enrolment. The international student surge in enrolment is allowing us to offset any costs that we would have lost on the other side.

Mr. Ian Arthur: In terms of graduation rates for international students versus domestic students, is there any difference?

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: They're actually higher. Many of our international students come here with the sole purpose of immigration, and they come here with a two-year work-study permit. They also come with degrees and advanced credentials before they come into the college system, so they have a high degree of motivation to succeed. Part of it is that they're coming with an advanced degree before they start, so to compare them to our domestic students is actually not a good comparison to make.

We do also have one of the highest graduation rates for domestic students.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Yes, that's great. Actually, I'm kind of interested in that. Would you speak about the need to recognize international qualifications? If they're arriving with advanced degrees—I know a big issue for new Canadians arriving here is that they don't have the ability to have those qualifications recognized. Would you speak to that?

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: Absolutely. Part of that comes from the professional associations. I think the more that we can get professional associations to recognize the credentials that our immigrants are coming with, and that the post-secondary system is filling gaps for them to be able to get eased into employment—that would be a really good opportunity for colleges and universities in Ontario to fulfill.

Mr. Ian Arthur: How much have you been consulted on the performance metrics and how they're tied to funding? Has the government consulted with you on that?

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: Absolutely—a series of technical consultations with us individually, as well as the system. We were able to influence some of the definitions of the metrics, and we were able to define where we want to put our weights amongst those 10 metrics.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That's interesting.

Did anyone else have any questions?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions?

Mr. Ian Arthur: No, that's fine.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Seeing none, thank you so much for your presentation.

Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan: Thank you for your time today.

YMCA OF CENTRAL EAST ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from the YMCA of Central East Ontario. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and then you can proceed with your presentation. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. David Allen: Thank you. My name is David Allen, and I'm the president and chief executive officer of the YMCA of Central East Ontario. I would like to open by saying it is my pleasure and privilege to present to you this morning, and I thank you for this opportunity.

The YMCA of Central East Ontario is a charity. We provide services to communities in this region, including Belleville, Quinte West, Napanee, Tweed, Peterborough, Hiawatha, Lakefield and Curve Lake, among others. In 2019, we served more than 26,000 people by way of YMCA membership; 12,000 of those were part of a family membership, 9,400 were children and youth members, and over 5,000 were senior members.

In our day camp programs, we had more than 5,800 registrations, serving more than 1,700 different children. More than 120 youth participated in our youth leadership development program. We taught 4,300 children and youth how to swim, and we cared for more than 600 children a day in our child care and our before- and after-school programs. Lastly, we are one of the largest employers of young people in our communities.

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Our YMCA, with our partners, provides over \$1.7 million in financial assistance and subsidy annually to individuals and families without the financial means to

access these programs that many in our community may take for granted.

Today, I would like to focus my presentation on the need for social infrastructure. When I think back to a different time, people found a sense of community and belonging in so many ways, whether it was through sports or arts and cultural organizations, drop-in centres and churches within the very neighbourhood in which they lived.

Today, sports and arts and culture programs tend to be expensive, so access is a challenge for many working or struggling families today. Drop-in evenings were deemed too expensive for municipalities, while community centres tend to be used for rentals. Just last week, I met with leaders of a local church who find themselves doing fundraising as members have dwindled and their costs have increased. Even in our neighbourhoods, with their busy lifestyles, people working to make ends meet are even challenged to get to know the people next door.

I was born and raised in Peterborough, and on our little street, Glengarry Avenue, we knew everybody in all 22 homes. The adults knew the children by name. The children of your neighbours were your children. Those relationships and that sense of community on our street are wonderful memories of days gone by.

Our YMCA core values of caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and inclusiveness are the cornerstone of our organization and an integral part of our planning and program and service delivery. Our YMCA recently submitted an application for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. Our application is to construct a \$22.5-million YMCA Centre for Life with partners Quinte Vocational Support Services, an organization delivering day programs to adults with disabilities, and Volunteer and Information Quinte, an organization connecting 1,600 individuals annually to volunteer opportunities throughout the region. We have the support of our mayor, Mitch Panciuk, and the city of Belleville by way of land and \$1 million in services. We have received letters of support from our MPPs, Minister Todd Smith and MPP Daryl Kramp, and from Tyendinaga reeve Rick Phillips on behalf of Hastings county.

Our objectives are to improve access and support inclusion, connect services and build community, impact community health and well-being, and support health care services to alleviate the stress on our current system. A recent report by the Wellesley Institute on socio-economic inclusion provided evidence of the benefits of YCMA Centres of Community to the public. It found that the use of YMCA programs and services in general have a strong relationship to well-being and is associated with better health and mental health and a strong sense of belonging. Having Y programs or facilities in the neighbourhood appears to provide a lift to everyone, regardless of whether they use Y programs or services, and YMCA participants are likely to have greater longevity, reduced risks of disease and illness, better future incomes and productivity, and greater community contributions. If we consider a conceptual model of well-being, the indicators include physical health, mental health and sense of belonging.

Our current Centre for Life will be a coordinated planning approach, leveraging the strengths of all partner organizations to deliver services and improve social, economic and health outcomes for our residents. Our Centre for Life will be a client-focused service delivery model that will build on our extensive knowledge of the social determinants of health and work collaboratively to identify and support the needs of our community. Centre for Life services will improve our clients' mental, emotional and physical health within a supportive environment. According to StatsCan, one third of Canadians do not feel like they are part of a community. We will be that place where everyone is welcome: those who have the financial means and those who do not.

Some 29% of our youth aged 12 to 17 years are overweight or obese. Currently, 59% of adult Canadians are either overweight or obese. If the current trends continue, by 2040, up to 70% of adults aged 40 years will be either overweight or obese. Adults who have unhealthy weights are at an increased risk for heart disease, cancer, strokes and type 2 diabetes. In 2005, the total cost of obesity to Canadians was \$4.3 billion: \$1.8 billion in direct health care costs and \$2.5 billion in indirect costs. Affected adults may die up to three to seven years earlier than their counterparts with a healthy weight.

The resulting total in dollar cost and lives lost is a call for action. Obesity is difficult to reverse, and public health measures must include effective prevention, beginning in childhood. Investing in social infrastructure is part of a long-term strategy and will have an impact on our current health care, or, as I call them, "sick care" costs.

We at the YMCA and organizations like our partners are part of health care. I urge the government and future governments to continue down the path of investing in social infrastructure. Don't wait another 10 years. Encourage communities and organizations to work together.

This is our call to action: strong, healthy YMCA centres for life, and partners committed to building a healthy, vibrant community, committed to being a place that is welcoming to everyone, where people and families of all backgrounds can come together, where children and youth can grow in a healthy, caring and safe environment. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start with the opposition side this time. MPP Arthur?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good morning, and thank you so much for coming in. I know that the YMCAs across Ontario, and YWCAs, do tremendous work in communities. I'm always very proud to get to work with the eastern Ontario one and work with them.

Your ask today, is it Infrastructure Ontario funding the project? Is that what you're looking for in terms of—

Mr. David Allen: That is correct. We have applied for that. I know that the last round of infrastructure applications was back in 2008 or 2009.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay, so it's a pretty straightforward ask: The application is in; you're looking for the government to put that into your budget.

Mr. David Allen: Yes, sir.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay. That's one of the simplest, most straightforward asks that we've had so far.

Mr. David Allen: Thank you very much for asking.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Can we talk a little bit about the health care costs associated with obesity, among other things in the world, and the role that the YMCA and YWCA can play in that? A huge portion of health care costs in Canada are actually caused by a very small percentage of the population who have very high needs, and they absolutely need all the health care they get. But how can we offset some of those costs, and what's the role that you can play in that?

Mr. David Allen: I think if we can have people get involved in health programs at a young age—if we have that ability to have families, regardless of their background or ability to pay, to become involved in programs and participate as families, subsequently, the parents will teach the children about healthy lifestyles. They will participate in programs together. As the children grow older, then they will adopt a healthy lifestyle. I think it's part of that long-term piece.

Even people who have health issues themselves, we have a prescription to health program where we work with our local medical practitioners. They can write a prescription that brings somebody to the Y for up to 60 days to get them started down that path. And because of our financial assistance program, nobody will be turned away because of an inability to pay. That will not be a barrier.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That's really interesting. While I sat on Kingston's Food Policy Council, we launched a program to actually promote drinking water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages in schools, much to the same effect.

Can you talk about the role that YMCA daycares play?

Mr. David Allen: Sure.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Particularly for families who cannot possibly afford child care otherwise, and what that means in terms of getting them back into the workforce and that sort of thing.

Mr. David Allen: In order for people to work—we talked about those better times; when I was growing up, my mother stayed at home. Today, you don't see that; most parents are working. So there is a need for people to have those services available.

We are at capacity in our full-day centres. We serve more than 600 children in our before- and after-school programs.

Again, it comes down to: nobody will be turned away. The challenge that we're having with our before- and after-school programs is with staffing: qualified staff with their ECE who can come in and look after a program. It's a doughnut, right? So, you work in the morning and then you're off, and then you come back. It's a real challenge keeping staff.

Mr. Ian Arthur: For those before- and after-school programs—

Mr. David Allen: Exactly. We seem to be doing interviews all the time.

Mr. Ian Arthur: What can we do to fix that? What sort of incentives or what sort of structures would have to be brought in to fix that?

Mr. David Allen: I think it would be to take a look at what qualifications are required for before and after school. There are some. You can request a supervisory exemption based on a certain diploma or something that somebody may have that they're bringing from a education background. It's not always ECEs—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We'll have to move to the government side for their time. MPP Kramp?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Chair, and welcome, Mr. Allen.

Mr. David Allen: Thank you.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: We're pleased to have you here. I know I can speak on behalf of my colleague Minister Smith when we both well recognize the tremendous, tremendous asset that the Y has been, not just to our local community, but tremendously effective across the entire region, in particular, areas that a lot of people wouldn't think. It's not just a place to go and exercise.

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The track record that you have with social assistance is absolutely outstanding. Who are we but humans? When people need help, you reach out.

One particular issue that I have—I'm wondering if you could maybe offer some suggestions as to a role the Y could have. On the Highway 401 corridor here we literally are at a crossroads for human trafficking. We see it all the time. Our young people are victimized and taken advantage of, a lot of times because they just don't have a place of refuge. Do you have any ideas or suggestions as to the role the Y could play in helping us address that serious challenge?

Mr. David Allen: Sure. One of our mandates nationally is to work in underserved communities. YMCAs do not have to be big buildings. We can work with local municipalities, smaller municipalities, to provide our programs and services within some of those community centres that I had mentioned, which tend to be used for rental services and whatnot.

We are certainly prepared to come and work with smaller municipalities, to bring our services and work in partnership to do that. We recognize—that's part of our piece moving forward with our own plan here—that we need to work together with organizations and bring expertise from different worlds together so that we can have a greater impact. Part of it is with young people in smaller communities, and in some larger communities, they don't have anything to do, so they're put at risk. How can we get them in and get them off the street and get them involved in healthy programs and to make friends?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Okay. You mentioned another key word. We have a lot of newcomers in every region in Ontario. We are a source for immigrants. In a lot of cases, when immigrants come to our communities, sometimes they feel resourceless; they don't feel that they have a sense of direction. And there are a number of ways that

you believe the Y can play an effective role in helping integrate?

Mr. David Allen: Sure. In Peterborough, for example, we have an agreement with the New Canadians Centre. We actually have an agreement here with Quinte United Immigrant Services. Any new immigrants or new Canadians who come to our city are welcomed to the Y. They are given a pass to the Y for up to three months, for them and their families, to get involved in the community and become part of the community, to meet people. I think that's a challenge for any of us when we move anywhere. I can imagine, if you're new—

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

Mr. David Allen: We open those doors to welcome people in, to give them that opportunity to become involved in programs and, again, meet their neighbours, meet new friends.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Okay. Then very, very briefly—I only have a short period of time. We all recognize that there's a huge skills gap, in trades particularly, for a lot of our young people moving forward. Is there any role that the Y can play in either introducing young people to and/or preparing them for a vocational direction?

Mr. David Allen: A number of YMCAs in Ontario and across Canada are involved in work and employment training. We just happen to be, because of our size and when a number of those programs were introduced—because of our size at the time, we weren't in a position nor had the capacity or ability to deliver those services. But a number of YMCAs are, and do. The YMCA of Greater Toronto is an excellent example of that; it's probably one of the largest Ys in the world.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: And hopefully, if you're successful in this application, we can branch in that direction.

Mr. David Allen: That would be wonderful. Thank you, sir.

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

Mr. David Allen: Thank you.

ASSEMBLÉE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE DE L'ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Moving along to our next presenter from Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario: Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you have seven minutes for your presentation.

M. Carol Jolin: Carol Jolin, président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. Et avec moi aujourd'hui, Bryan Michaud, notre analyste politique.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

M. Carol Jolin: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Messieurs-dames, bonjour. Avant de commencer, j'aimerais remercier votre comité d'avoir accepté d'entendre l'assemblée de la francophonie dans le cadre de ces consultations prébudgétaires.

Les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens sont fiers de leur participation à l'essor économique, social et

culturel de la province au cours des 400 dernières années, et ils continueront de le faire.

C'est avec grand plaisir aujourd'hui que je suis accompagné de notre analyste politique pour vous faire part de cinq recommandations que notre organisme et nos membres vous proposent dans notre mémoire en vue du dépôt du prochain budget de l'Ontario. Avec ce budget, le gouvernement de l'Ontario et la communauté franco-ontarienne ont l'occasion d'atteindre certains objectifs allant dans le sens des priorités gouvernementales et qui permettront de contribuer à la vitalité de la francophonie ontarienne.

Amélioration de l'efficacité et du service gouvernemental à la clientèle, économie, et investissements pour nos aînés, les arts et la culture : ce sont quelques thèmes qui sont présents dans ma présentation aujourd'hui.

La francophonie est un atout pour le gouvernement de l'Ontario, un atout social, un atout culturel et un atout économique. Development within the francosphere is a way to diversify and bolster Ontario's economy. French is good for business. In New Brunswick, a province with a francophone population that is less than one third of Ontario's, bilingualism brings \$1.4 billion in revenue from interprovincial and international exports, in large part thanks to industries such as call centres and administrative services.

A study by the Conference Board of Canada, sponsored by l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, indicates that Ontario's francophone community generates \$1.4 billion in imports, but a paltry \$58 million in exports. Moreover, data studied by AFO indicates that Ontario as a whole exports almost \$3 billion in its trade with member countries of l'Organisation internationale de la francophonie, but Ontario's imports from these countries are much higher, at \$14 billion.

Au cours de la dernière année, le gouvernement de l'Ontario a nommé Glenn O'Farrell à titre de conseiller du gouvernement en matière d'économie francophone, et la ministre aux Affaires francophones a entamé une série de consultations avec les gens d'affaires offrant des services en français. Nous croyons que le prochain budget devrait donner un mandat au ministère du commerce international et au ministère des Affaires francophones de travailler en partenariat à un plan d'action visant à stimuler l'économie des entreprises offrant des services en français, tout en se servant de son adhésion à l'Organisation internationale de la francophonie comme génératrice d'occasions d'affaires pour l'Ontario.

Notre mémoire propose deux recommandations visant des investissements du gouvernement de l'Ontario dans l'épanouissement de notre population.

First, we recommend that the government of Ontario invest in the health of our seniors by using its investments in long-term-care beds to meet the need for designated French-language-services beds. Our briefs contain several statistics which show that the Franco-Ontarian community is lagging behind the general population in terms of access to long-term-care beds.

We have welcomed the announcement that the Ministry of Health will add 15,000 new beds over the next five

years, bringing the total to 30,000 beds in the coming decade. The upcoming budget is an opportunity to indicate what this measure will mean for access to designated French-language-services beds.

En deuxième lieu, nous recommandons au gouvernement d'investir dans les arts et la culture francophones, un moyen par lequel la communauté franco-ontarienne contribue à la vitalité économique de la province. Cela pourrait se faire via des investissements dans des projets d'infrastructure artistique et culturelle, ou par un réinvestissement dans le Conseil des arts de l'Ontario. Par ailleurs, je tiens à remercier l'engagement public de la ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture pour tenter de hausser le financement de l'agence.

Capter la variable linguistique sur la carte Santé est une initiative appuyée par l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario depuis 2014. Initialement confirmé lors de l'adoption du budget de 2017-2018 et ayant été adopté à l'unanimité par Queen's Park le 4 octobre 2018, ce projet tarde à se concrétiser.

The AFO and its members reiterate that the completion of that project would help to improve the performance, quality and efficiency of the health care system. Capturing the language variable on the health card will help to support efficient planning of access to health care services, seeing as the availability of solid data is crucial to good decision-making. It will greatly help the health care system to better provide the active offer of French-language services through access to language information and help the government of Ontario to better identify needs in the area of training for health care professionals who are able to communicate in French. Nous recommandons que le prochain budget fasse mention d'un engagement à capter la variable linguistique sur la carte Santé d'ici les 12 prochains mois.

Finalement, nous recommandons que le budget de cette année soit dans la continuité du précédent sur la reconnaissance de l'importance des institutions francophones.

Afin d'assurer le plein respect de la Loi sur les services en français, il est important que le gouvernement de l'Ontario assure une perspective francophone dans sa révision des finances publiques et dans sa création de programmes afin d'assurer la pérennité des institutions franco-ontariennes.

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Ceci résume les recommandations contenues dans notre mémoire, où vous pourrez y trouver un peu plus d'information, et je suis prêt à répondre à vos questions. Merci.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go to the government side this time. MPP Roberts.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Bonjour, Carol. Bonjour, Bryan.

M. Carol Jolin: Bonjour.

M. Jeremy Roberts: C'est un plaisir de vous voir. Bonne année à vous deux.

M. Carol Jolin: Merci. Pareillement.

M. Jeremy Roberts: J'apprécie vos idées pour assurer qu'on puisse travailler ensemble pour créer plus d'emplois ici en Ontario. Je pense qu'il y a beaucoup d'opportunités intéressantes pour nous ici en Ontario.

Nous avons parlé déjà d'un sujet qui m'intéresse : c'est la Maison de la francophonie dans ma circonscription. J'ai hâte de suivre l'ouverture plus tard au mois de janvier. Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres projets intéressants autour de la province qui feront la promotion de la culture francophone, qui sont similaires à ce projet aussi?

M. Carol Jolin: Bien, si on regarde Sudbury, il y a le centre des arts qui est en construction présentement, donc ça va devenir un catalyseur pour toute la francophonie, les gens francophiles et aussi tout le monde qui va pouvoir se servir du centre. Ça va avoir un apport important. Évidemment, on a eu une entente pour l'Université de l'Ontario français. Ça, ça va être énorme pour la communauté. Ça va également avoir des retombées économiques importantes pour la ville de Toronto. J'entendais la personne qui a présenté précédemment, qui parlait de l'apport des étudiants internationaux. L'Université de l'Ontario français compte accueillir beaucoup d'étudiants internationaux de la même façon. Honnêtement, on espère pouvoir les garder une fois qu'ils vont graduer.

M. Bryan Michaud: Si je peux me permettre un petit ajout, il y a des projets d'infrastructure très intéressants présentement au niveau culturel, soit celui du Théâtre français de Toronto—qui ont un projet, qui ont commencé déjà à ramasser du financement. Il y en a également un à Orléans, à Ottawa, avec le MIFO qui prépare présentement des présentations pour faire financer un projet d'agrandissement et de rénovations.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Excellent.

M. Carol Jolin: Il y en a encore un—je viens d'avoir le flash—le « hub » de la santé qui s'en vient à Orléans. Ça fait plusieurs années que les gens ont travaillé sur ce projet, et maintenant c'est en construction. C'est un projet qui est totalement innovateur aussi, où on va concentrer plusieurs expertises à un endroit, plutôt que d'avoir les gens courir les spécialistes un petit peu partout. Donc, ça aussi c'est une autre belle réussite.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Excellent. Et j'espère que quelques-uns de ces projets-là, les théâtres, etc., ont soumis une application pour le fonds d'infrastructure de la récréation et de la culture?

M. Carol Jolin: Oui.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Excellent. C'est fantastique.

Vous avez parlé des étudiants internationaux. On veut continuer à agrandir notre population francophone dynamique dans la province. Quelles autres choses est-ce qu'on pourrait faire pour améliorer l'immigration francophone en Ontario?

M. Carol Jolin: Ce qui est important au niveau de l'immigration, ce serait de développer une politique provinciale en immigration francophone et de pouvoir travailler étroitement avec le gouvernement fédéral pour mieux synchroniser le travail qui se fait dans les deux paliers de gouvernement. Il y a déjà plusieurs belles

initiatives qui ont été mises ensembles, mais je pense qu'on a besoin d'une politique concrète pour l'immigration francophone pour être capable d'atteindre nos objectifs.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Excellent. Merci beaucoup d'être venu ici à Belleville aujourd'hui.

M. Carol Jolin: Ça m'a fait plaisir. Merci, Jeremy.

M. Bryan Michaud: Merci, Jeremy.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll move to the opposition side. MPP Shaw.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Merci. Bonjour, Carol Jolin. J'essayerai de parler en français ce matin; je m'excuse en avance. Aussi, je voudrais vous remercier de votre belle lettre que j'ai reçue avant Noël. Merci beaucoup. Je voulais dire que nous, le NPD, apprécions tous ce que vous faites pour les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. Nous savons très bien ce que vous faites pour les Franco-Ontariens.

Ce matin, je sais qu'il y a des coupures scolaires dans les écoles de langue française. Je me demande comment ces coupures ont affecté vos élèves.

M. Carol Jolin: Du côté de l'éducation, lorsqu'il est question de restrictions—peu importe que l'on fasse des restrictions à grande échelle—l'impact est toujours plus grand chez les francophones.

Lorsque, par exemple, on risque de restreindre le nombre de cours qui sont disponibles dans les écoles secondaires, ça veut dire qu'il y a moins de—aussitôt qu'il y a des coupures, il y a moins de cours qui sont offerts. Quand il y a moins de cours qui sont offerts, bien, c'est moins attrayant pour nos étudiants qui graduent de l'élémentaire de poursuivre leurs études au secondaire, parce que l'école anglophone offre davantage de sélection au niveau des programmes. Donc, à chaque fois qu'on se retrouve dans une situation comme ça, c'est un nouveau défi pour nos écoles de pouvoir garder leurs élèves, pour être capables de compétitionner avec les écoles qui sont plus grandes, notamment dans les milieux ruraux.

Donc, l'impact est toujours plus grand, que ce soit au niveau des arts et de la culture lorsqu'il a eu des coupures—bien, ça fait toujours plus mal chez les francophones. À chaque fois que c'est plus difficile, ça nous complique la tâche à pouvoir dire aux francophones : « Continuez à vivre votre culture. Continuez à consommer du produit francophone. Continuez d'être francophones. » C'est là le danger qu'on a au niveau de l'assimilation qui nous guette toujours.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Certainement, comme vous êtes en train de construire l'université francophone, s'il y a moins d'élèves qui veulent apprendre en français, c'est dommage, pas seulement pour les Franco-Ontariens, mais pour tout l'Ontario. Comme vous avez dit, il y a beaucoup de choses que les Franco-Ontariens donnent à l'Ontario, surtout la culture mais à l'économie aussi.

M. Carol Jolin: Exactement. Puis dans la région de Toronto, il y a un besoin flagrant, parce que les étudiants qui—premièrement, la démographie de l'Ontario est en train de changer. L'Ontario français est en train de changer. Dans six ou sept ans, la plus grande concentration

de francophones ne sera plus dans l'est, mais ça va être dans le GTA. C'est important que les conseils scolaires ouvrent de nouvelles écoles régulièrement—

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

M. Carol Jolin: —élémentaires et au secondaire. C'est important que l'université puisse ouvrir le plus rapidement possible, parce que ces élèves-là qui graduent ne vont pas à Sudbury, ne vont pas à Hearst, et ne viennent pas à Ottawa. Ils s'en vont dans les écoles anglophones. Malheureusement, à ce moment-là, ils n'apprennent pas à travailler dans les deux langues dans leur nouveau domaine.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Maintenant, je sais que l'ACFO représente beaucoup d'agences francophones partout dans la province.

M. Carol Jolin: Oui.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Est-ce que ces agences veulent des changements dans les montants qu'ils reçoivent du gouvernement provincial, et en général, est-ce que ça va bien ou non?

M. Carol Jolin: Le financement des ACFO un petit partout dans la province vient de patrimoine Canada, donc ce financement a été stable et a été bonifié de 20 % à l'été 2017, suite à un gel qui a duré 10 ans.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Finalement, très vite : que pouvons-nous faire pour améliorer les relations entre le gouvernement et les francophones—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry; I apologize to cut you off. That concludes our time. Thank you so much for your presentation.

NORTHUMBERLAND FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Peter Archer: It's Peter Archer, Northumberland Federation of Agriculture. Thank you for having me here today.

I introduced myself as Peter Archer. I have a farming operation in the east Northumberland-Quinte area that I farm with my family—corn and soybeans—and we run an elevator operation named Maizeing Acres, Inc.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I will remind the members that there's a presentation going on. If they can please go out and talk—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): If you can please go out and talk—thank you.

Mr. Peter Archer: Thank you.

I'm one of the local farmers who have had severe issues with conservation authorities here as of lately. We'll get right into it.

With respect to the Conservation Authorities Act, we understand that the Ontario government has made

amendments under Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act, and understand that the conservation authorities—the funding was significantly decreased. We want to emphasize our support for this as we believe there needs to be significant work done by the government in determining the core mandate of the conservation authorities as well as clarity around terms under the mandate.

1000

On May 17, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture commented on ERO 013-5018, Modernizing Conservation Authority Operations. We'd like to reiterate a few of those key points.

First, the OFA supports finding a clear definition of the mandatory programs and services that each conservation authority is expected to provide, including drinking water source protection and protection of the Lake Simcoe watershed. Furthermore, we support the conservation authorities focusing their efforts on key services—namely, natural hazard protection and management, conservation and management of conservation authority lands.

At the outset, the conservation authorities were created and empowered to address the protection of people and property from natural hazards, primarily flooding. CAs should retain this function. Being established on a watershed basis serves them well for planning and delivering protection of people and property from flooding.

Secondly, OFA believes that conservation authorities' board members owe their primary duty to the municipality that they represent. They're named to the board by the local municipality, and representing the interests and concerns of their local municipality should be their foremost responsibility.

Across southern Ontario, the majority of the land is dedicated towards agricultural uses—namely, the production of food, fuel and fibre. Regrettably, individual conservation authorities do not adequately reflect this reality through the makeup of the board. What is lacking is dedicated farmer representation on the CA boards.

As agricultural representation is lacking on municipal councils, we propose that the CA boards include a minimum of one seat representing farmers on the boards. Furthermore, the board training should include agriculture's role in watersheds, which boasts a broad suite of environmental and ecological services in addition to providing clean, safe and affordable food.

We believe that the fees for programs and services, including permits, should reflect the actual costs of delivering the permit, the service or the program. Conservation authority fees should never be a source of revenue.

Timelines for issuing a permit should be as short as possible, as unnecessary delays can add unnecessary costs to applicants. CAs, the government and stakeholders should be brought together to develop service standards for issuing permits, project approvals and fee scales that apply consistently across the province.

With respect to the regulation of areas over which the conservation authorities have jurisdiction, we'd like to see definitions of the terms, like “wetlands” and “watercourses,” the driver for an authority's regulated areas. The

specific wording for those key terms—wetlands, watercourses, development activity, interference, conservation of land—are critical. OFA submitted proposed wording to the ERO on that posting.

Some of the submissions include the following: OFA has long advocated reliance on the provincial policy statement definition for “wetlands,” as it is comprehensive and has remained consistent through two of the provincial policy statement reviews.

We propose that any definition of “wetlands” should be clear, and exempt man-made ditches and drains, along with irrigation ponds and constructed wetland areas. These wetland areas are routinely misidentified.

OFA has long argued that the CAs’ definition of “watercourse” is excessively vague and, in its current state, could include a furrow in a plowed field as a watercourse.

We believe there are three core principles to a wetland. They include (1) a reference to a defined channel, with bed and banks; (2) that intermittent streams are natural watercourses; and (3) the definition of a watercourse excludes man-made drains, road ditches, grass waterways, agricultural swales etc.—anything constructed under the Drainage Act.

The terms “interfere” and “conservation of land” are not currently defined, despite appearing in the Conservation Authorities Act. Both need to be defined, due to the interrelationship between the terms and the CAs’ core role in the protection of people and property from natural hazards.

OFA supports its requirement for CAs to notify the public of changes to mapped regulated areas, such as flood plains and wetlands. Property owners deserve personal notification before changes are considered, to allow for public input and comments. There should be a no-cost appeal process for the property owners, and the burden of proof should be on the ministry, the municipality or the conservation authority that is opposing the change, not on the property owner.

Finally, while we agree that the conservation authorities do and should have authority over areas adjacent to wetlands, the limits of those regulated areas must be clearly defined and mapped, and the conservation authority must not have authority on land outside of those areas.

In conclusion, we would encourage the government to go back to the Conservation Authorities Act and clarify these areas and concerns for all stakeholders, and limit the funding of the conservation authorities so that there is no operating above and beyond their core mandate and outside of the regulated areas. We would like to see the government improve overall governance, oversight and accountability of the conservation authorities—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We have to go to the opposition side for questioning now. MPP Arthur?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good morning, and thank you so much for coming in. You said in the very beginning that you agreed with the cuts to the conservation authorities that the government had made. Is that correct, yes?

Mr. Peter Archer: Correct.

Mr. Ian Arthur: And then you went into saying that you still support the work that conservation authorities are doing to prevent flooding?

Mr. Peter Archer: Yes.

Mr. Ian Arthur: In your mind, is there any sort of correlation between the 50% decrease in the funding for flood management for conservation authorities and their ability to effectively do that?

Mr. Peter Archer: I believe that there are dollars that are being misdirected through those conservation authorities that—

Mr. Ian Arthur: But specifically on the flood management funding, does a 50% decrease to flood management funding hinder the ability of conservation authorities to do what you actually support them doing?

Mr. Peter Archer: I would have to get back to you on that, I guess.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay. I wanted to talk a little bit—I have a background as a chef. I worked extensively with local farmers. I spend a lot of time talking with the OFA about how we can advocate for farmers. You’re not here representing the OFA? You quoted them a lot in your presentation.

Mr. Peter Archer: Yes, I am here with the NFA, the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, which is—

Mr. Ian Arthur: But not the OFA, which is what you were quoting in your—okay. Thank you very much for that.

I’d like to talk a little bit about climate change. What do you see in terms of the risks that climate change poses to farmers in Ontario?

Mr. Peter Archer: I believe that climate has always changed, and it will always change, and I believe there’s very little that we as humans have to control the climate.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay. Do believe that global warming is happening and it’s caused by man-made activity?

Mr. Peter Archer: No, I do not.

Mr. Ian Arthur: In that case, no further questions, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? Seeing none, we’ll move to the government side now. MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much, Mr. Archer, for being here today and representing the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture as well. I know that the NFA and OFA work closely together and I know why you’re representing and spoke to a number of recommendations that the Ontario farming association has made and the OFA has advocated to government.

You spoke about the important role that conservation authorities play in watershed management. Can you cite some specific examples where you see them having, in your experience, gone beyond the core mandate?

Mr. Peter Archer: Yes. We’ve had them throwing designations on land that are unwarranted, putting un-evaluated wetland designations on ground, unbeknownst to farmers, and then a farmer is doing some drainage work

and somebody complains and the conservation authority comes along and is threatening \$10,000 fines for doing something on their own property that was really tile drainage that improves flooding risk. It does not increase flooding risk; it improves the situation. So, really, that conservation authority, by putting these designations on and trying to prevent us from doing drainage work, is really at odds with their core mandate of managing the flooding risk, because flooding risk—we've got farms around Trenton that the municipality, the mayor, is on record thanking me for draining those farms because we improved the drainage around the subdivision.

Mr. David Piccini: I think you saw earlier the intent—the opposition is keen to demean anyone that doesn't fit into their specific agenda or support their agenda. I think we can have a frank conversation about the environment, about climate change—and I personally, as a representative from rural Ontario, believe our farmers are some of the best stewards of the environment and do a remarkable job in that.

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But talk to us about the increasing pressures you're facing as a farmer. If it's not there, there are other regulations and challenges. What can government do to support our farming community? What I'm hearing is they're facing increasing pressures from all sides, and at the end of the day, farmers feed cities and play a vital role to the economy of rural Ontario and communities like mine.

Mr. Peter Archer: Yes, we are the largest engine of the economy in Ontario by far. It all drives back to the farming and the production that we do. But consolidation has been a constant part of this business. As consolidation has gone on, it has left us very weak in votes, and our opinion isn't really that big a deal anymore.

I think that it's listening to what farmers' opinions are and what we're seeing going on. Our conservation efforts within farms—reduced tillage, stripped tillage and stuff that has gone on—have made huge improvements to conservation and to wildlife. I think farmers in Ontario are doing a tremendous job. If you're going to continue to push us off the land, your food is going to come from somewhere else in the world that's not doing as good a job.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much. That's excellent.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: One quick question: Our colleague across was asking you about the funding and whether or not you believed that the cut to funding was going to impact the ability of the conservation authorities to operate, and you were going to expand on that. Do you think that there is perhaps waste within the financial model? You had—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut you off there.

Thank you for your presentation.

ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We'll now welcome our next presenter, the Alliance for Healthier Communities. If you can begin by stating your name for the record, you'll have seven minutes for a presentation. We'll give you a one-minute warning.

Dr. Kate Mulligan: Good morning. My name is Kate Mulligan. I am the director of policy and communications at the Alliance for Healthier Communities. We provide team-based health and social services, under one roof and close to home, for Ontario's most marginalized and underserved residents. We have 106 community health centres, Aboriginal health access centres, community family health teams and nurse-practitioner-led clinics, and have demonstrated our ability to help this province meet the complex challenge of ending hallway health care with a focus on health equity and community well-being.

Many of you have community health centres, Aboriginal health access centres or other alliance members in your riding, including the Belleville and Quinte West Community Health Centre right here in Belleville. You're proud of us and you know how proud we are to be innovators, adapters and collaborators in your communities, to be the ones who step up and say yes to meet the most complex challenges facing our communities, from serving as strong voices of community on Ontario health teams to delivering oral health care to low-income seniors.

Last year, I spoke to you about two of our most promising innovations: social prescribing and TeamCare. Both of these are now ready to scale up beyond alliance members and to be taken up province-wide to improve access to health and social care for more Ontarians who need it.

Social prescribing empowers health care providers to work with their patients to address the social determinants of their health. Through social prescribing, health care providers across Ontario health teams can measure and track social referrals and gauge their impacts on health outcomes and the use of health services for people who are lonely, isolated or need support to engage in exercise, arts, music and other activities that are proven to improve the 80% of our health that's not addressed by medical care. After just one year, 90% of participating physicians say social prescribing has improved their clients' health and well-being, and 50% report decreases in health service utilization.

For \$20 million in this year's budget, we could hire social-prescribing link workers in every primary care team in the province—something that would be welcomed not only by the alliance but by other primary care providers, including the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario—to keep people out of hospital hallways and in the communities where they live, work and play.

TeamCare also offers a way to provide team-based primary care, including social prescribing, to the most socially and medically complex patients of family doctors

who are operating on their own. These are the patients that keep family physicians up at night.

In the 30 communities where we've tried it over the past two years, TeamCare has proved massively popular, with over 1,600 physicians signing up, referring 22,000 new patients for over 100,000 encounters with allied health care teams, without any changes to OHIP fee codes. Why? Because it supports their patients, and at the same time eases the burden on these hard-working health care providers, particularly for patients who need mental health services.

And \$75 million phased in over three years would expand TeamCare to all primary care teams across Ontario.

We have two other important requests. One is necessary to support our work at the forefront of Ontario's opioid crisis: improving access to life-saving treatment and care by listing injectable hydromorphone on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary; addressing barriers to accessing diacetylmorphine; and adding \$5 million to ensure the sustainability of the comprehensive care that we provide in our consumption and treatment services.

Lastly, you all know, and the Minister of Health herself has recognized, the many ways in which alliance members step up and lift well above our weight. However, our ability to continue stepping up is at great risk. Our members have not seen a base funding increase to fund things like rent payments, digital health infrastructure—and, frankly, keeping the lights on—in well over a decade. We note with interest that comparable small and mid-sized hospitals received \$68 million in October for similar funding pressures, over and above their regular annual budget increases over the past 10 years and beyond.

We recognize that this government supports community health and well-being in the pillars of Ontario health teams:

“(1) Prevention and health promotion: keeping patients as healthy as possible in their communities and out of hospitals.

“(2) Providing the right care in the right place: When patients need care, ensure that they receive it in the most appropriate setting, not always the hospital.

“(3) Integration and improved patient flow....

“(4) Building capacity: Build new hospital and long-term-care beds while increasing community-based services across Ontario.”

It's beyond time to rectify this decade of inequity. A 5% base funding increase and additional investments in the information technology infrastructure will empower alliance members to continue their work at the forefront of community well-being and integrated care in Ontario.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you. We'll start with the government side. MPP Kramp.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Welcome, and thank you for the good work that you do.

Dr. Kate Mulligan: Thank you.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I have a couple of—not concerns, but I'm looking for some clarification.

Dr. Kate Mulligan: Yes.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: The hydromorphone: We've seen it used; we've seen it abused. While I well recognize the benefit and cost-effectiveness, and certainly knowing they're caught up in the entire opioid situation, I still have some concerns. Can you alleviate some of those concerns that I might have, as far as the potential abuse of that?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: Sorry, can you specify what the concerns are?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: The concerns are addiction. Obviously, a person is going to go in—as an example, I just had a knee replacement. “Hydromorphone? There you go.” “Thank you very much.” I'm down for a month, or two months, or three months if I wish—no problem. Obviously, I said, “Two weeks—I'm gone. No, thank you. I don't want that.” But perhaps, people with less discipline would then potentially be on longer and longer.

To promote that—while I recognize the need and the cost-effectiveness, is there a concern about addiction?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: The specific context for our request is in the context of emergency safe supply. That means, for people who are already engaged in using opioids or other substances, providing a safer supply of hydromorphone than what might be accessed on the street—which would be very likely to be contaminated and poisoned—to provide a safer alternative for people. What that does is, it opens the door for building a trusting relationship with a primary care provider and a team. That opens up opportunities to provide that comprehensive wraparound health care, including addictions and treatment services, for those very marginalized people who require it.

Right now, one of the barriers is a lack of regulation. There would be a need to ensure appropriate regulation, to make sure it's used in the contexts in which medical and clinical professionals feel it is most appropriate.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Okay. One other question, then—and I think you're favourably positioned. We've seen the growth in administration costs go from, perhaps 20 years ago, maybe 8% of the entire health care budget to upwards of 20-some per cent, a dramatic, dramatic expenditure in administration rather than direct line of services. Can you address that challenge and how your organization would be more helpful in delivering services rather than building administration?

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Dr. Kate Mulligan: Yes. We have a long history of, as I mentioned, stepping up whenever there's an emerging health crisis. We are positioned well in our communities to know who the people are and what the context is, and so we're right at the front line when there is a new influx of refugees from a particular community who require services. Community health centres are right there at the front line. But we do require enough administrative funding to keep the lights on to keep management in place, to ensure that we can do this properly. We've done without that for more than 10 years, and we are just really reaching the limits of our ability to do that.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: But what percentage of your budget would be administration?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: Right now, it's a very small percentage, compared to any other health care provider.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Just very quickly: What's the dollar amount you're looking for in terms of funding?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: In terms of funding? Well, we have a few different funding requests, but in terms of funding for the base increase—

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Overall, I mean.

Dr. Kate Mulligan: Overall—okay. There are a few different things, some of which would accrue to alliance members and some of which wouldn't. For the things that we think are important for alliance members, we're looking at \$46.5 million.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: At \$46.5 million?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: That's right.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Annual increase?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: Yes.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Annually?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: No, sorry—\$30 million of that is annual increase; \$16.5 million is a one-time funding for information technology.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Sorry; what was the amount?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: It was \$46.5 million.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: No, for information technology—

Dr. Kate Mulligan: IT is \$16.5 million. It's all specified in our background.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you so much. We're going to have to move to the opposition side now. MPP Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for the presentation, Kate. There's a term that you use here: "social prescribing." My riding is in the Far North, in northwestern Ontario. When we talk about health care systems, we go back and forth between the federal and provincial health jurisdictions.

Anyway, I remember this family I was working with a few years back—this family of six with very young children. The children under the age of five kept getting medevacked—we had to use Ornge—because of respiratory issues because of the mould that existed in the community. Every now and then, they would get medevacked, especially in the wintertime, because these homes use wood stoves.

But anyway, I remember talking to this doctor. He'd say, "You know what? If I can prescribe a cleanup of that place and if I can prescribe a ventilation system they would be okay." Is that what you're describing, and if so, can you elaborate on that, when you talk about the social determinants of health?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: Social prescribing helps adjust people's immediate social needs, and that includes material needs—so, all of those determinants of health for which we can try to use prevention. So yes, it would

include, where possible, referrals to social support agencies, to culturally appropriate services and so on. It helps us to build a clinical case for addressing the broader social determinants of health. Social prescribing in and of itself can't improve housing conditions, but it can create the evidence base we need to show the impact of poor housing conditions on people's health and the costs to the overall health care system. It's one important part of that broader strategy of addressing the social determinants of health.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Okay. Thank you.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for your presentation. I'm constantly struck by the role that Kingston Community Health Centres play in our community for multiple different groups coming from very varied socio-economic backgrounds—many new Canadians. The health centre has somehow become a hub for many of those groups. Would you talk about the cost offsetting that what you call "social prescribing" plays in terms of downstream health care costs?

Dr. Kate Mulligan: That's an important purpose of the work of social prescribing: to help us, for almost the first time, really measure and quantify the savings to the health system but also to other systems across government and across levels of government by doing the work of prevention. For a long time, this work has been interpreted as a cost, as a service that we deliver that just costs money. But now we're able to show the impact on people's improved health, the impact on the reductions in their need for health services and so on. So yes, we are already seeing this knock-on effect. It has only been a year, so we expect those numbers to grow as we expand and grow across the province.

Mr. Ian Arthur: It strikes me that community health centres—you're almost playing a liaison role between the work that public health does and the acute-care centres, as an intermediary.

Dr. Kate Mulligan: That's right.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I suspect we're out of time—very close.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Twenty seconds.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That's okay. Thanks for coming in.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you for your presentation.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE CLUBS

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We'll now call our next witness, the Ontario Federation of All-Terrain Vehicle Clubs. Good morning.

Ms. Denise Erickson: Good morning.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We'll get you to begin by stating your name for the record. You'll have seven minutes, and I'll give you a one-minute warning.

Ms. Denise Erickson: I'm Denise Erickson. I am the general manager of the Ontario Federation of All-Terrain

Vehicle Clubs. It's my pleasure to be here. Thank you very much.

The Ontario Federation of All-Terrain Vehicle Clubs is a not-for-profit, volunteer-driven association that provides resources to our member clubs to provide responsible, safe, legal and environmentally friendly trails for our members, while strengthening the public's perception of our sport. We represent the interests of all recreational ATV riders in Ontario, with over 7,000 active members and 19 clubs at this time. We manage over 5,000 kilometres of trails across the province.

The federation is a necessary entity to ensure the unified, sustainable future of the all-terrain vehicle and recreational off-highway vehicle sporting industry.

In an industry nearing a billion dollars of investment in Ontario annually, ridership numbers are consistently growing, and we lack the current infrastructure to adequately support this. Our current system is fragmented, with various clubs implementing their own regulations for riders that often do not meet the highest standards of trail maintenance, compromising environmental protection and rider safety. There's a better way, and the federation is poised to deliver a revitalized and improved industry to enthusiasts across the province.

I am excited to bring to the finance committee recommendations that the federation believes are necessary to ensure a safe, responsible and comprehensive approach to the all-terrain vehicle industry. The first would be establishing a licence funding model. The federation seeks to implement a licence funding model that will serve as a revenue source for conservation and environmental engagement efforts that are already in action, alongside our ongoing mission to promote and build the reputation of the sport. Development and maintenance of trails in a sustainable and timely fashion is a large expense that will only increase over time with increased ridership. A licensing model will allow revenue to match current ridership and ensure that the money is reinvested into the trails in a responsible manner.

There is an existing success story of a licence funding model, which is the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, following the 2001 change to the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act, which requires any snowmobile driven on a federation trail to display a valid trail permit. They have consistently invested this income into trail maintenance and advocacy.

The OFATV has always been a team of volunteers interested strictly in improving the sport for our riders. Our goal is for the betterment of our clubs.

Universal regulations and trail access would be our second ask. The federation can only be successful if there is a single, universal set of regulations governing rider activity. Furthermore, there must be open access to all trails for any rider who purchases a valid licence to ensure that licence funding model comes to fruition. Currently, there are many clubs within different regional borders where riders must purchase an entirely separate permit to experience the trails outside of their local zone. This is a fragmented system that yields different regulations by

region that do not necessarily meet the highest available standards for rider safety or responsible trail use.

Leaders in the power sports industry have long understood that educating the public and establishing comprehensive rules of use are imperative to preserving Ontario's resources and avoiding environmental damage.

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Bearing this in mind, we request that the Ontario government mandate that all ATV clubs in Ontario must belong to the federation, in order to standardize the rules and regulations. The federation actively works alongside public land managers and conservation initiatives to mitigate and repair environmental damage on behalf of the riders, but this can only occur where the federation is given jurisdiction over trail maintenance. In order to ensure rider and environmental safety, the federation must be the only authority on rules and regulations.

Last, but not least, implementing new safety training for youth: Rider safety is of the utmost importance and requires the implementation of mandatory ATV safety training for youth aged 16 and under. We absolutely have the responsibility to protect the most vulnerable demographic of ATV operators. Despite representing only 12% to 15% of all ridership, they account for more than 27% to 35% of all related fatalities. Some studies have reported that youth under 16 are four times more likely to require ATV-related emergency room treatment than any other demographic. Among this sub-demographic, the primary purpose for ER visits was vehicle rollover, or falling off the vehicle, further exacerbated by almost 23% of ATV riders refusing to wear a helmet during operation.

The federation has a duty to actively promote safe practices and ensure rider safety, particularly among our youth. Early safety education will save lives and promote a more careful, healthy approach to the sport.

In conclusion, the Ontario Federation of All-Terrain Vehicle Clubs seeks to dramatically improve the experience of our 7,000 members and enable Ontario's power sports enthusiasts to enjoy the province's trails in a safe, responsible manner. With over 5,000 kilometres worth of trails, it's crucial that the Ontario government approve a unified, sustainable approach that will guarantee a flourishing industry for all enthusiasts to enjoy.

We thank the government of Ontario for its ongoing support and look forward to working alongside policy-makers to revitalize and improve the future of the sport. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go to the opposition this time. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good afternoon—or morning, I guess, still. Thank you for coming in—it has been long days on this.

I have just a couple of questions. Thank you for bringing this stuff forward, the safety features, the importance of environmental considerations in terms of the trails. I think that's really important.

Kind of a nuts and bolts practical question: You put a lot of emphasis on being the only organization that should be allowed to do this. Just because I want to understand

more, is there competition between multiple organizations? It feels a little bit like there might be some territorial stuff at play here.

Ms. Denise Erickson: There is, absolutely. We are the only federation, but there are trails groups out there also.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay.

Ms. Denise Erickson: The difference between us is the federation represents riders and clubs. Our clubs maintain our trails. Trails groups get money from their local municipality to maintain the trails in that area, so they can implement different rules than the federation implements, or have a different path.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I actually didn't hear any funding request; authority being given was the request more than a funding request—

Ms. Denise Erickson: We have zero funding right now from the government, so any funding would be appreciated.

Basically, the implementation of mandatory safety training for anyone under 16—they have it for snow machines, they have it for boats, they have it for motorcycles, but they have nothing for ATVs right now. Any age child can ride any-sized ATV off of their property. They cannot go on the roads, of course; you have to be 16 with a valid G2 licence to go on a road, but you can trailer that ATV to any trail, and there is no requirement to have any sort of safety training to be on the ATV.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just because this is a budget consultation, then, if there is an ask attached to it, I didn't hear any numbers. Do you have a cost estimation for enforcing that?

Ms. Denise Erickson: We had asked for some numbers to implement the boating certificates and I wasn't able to get any. So I was going to actually look back at that and see what the cost was for the boating licensing, or the online course for that.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay.

That's all I really have. I appreciate you coming in. Your emphasis on safety and those considerations is noted. Thank you.

Ms. Denise Erickson: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? Seeing none, we'll move to the government side now. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you for your presentation. I have a cottage in the Ottawa Valley, and boys and an ATV, so I have spent a lot of time in the emergency rooms in local hospitals.

I remember going into one hospital in Barry's Bay, and there's a section dedicated to ATV education and ATV problems. They are a lot of fun, and they are so dangerous in the wrong hands. They are really, really dangerous, and not just with kids. I love the idea of having some sort of education.

I wouldn't want to restrict them; I'm not sure if I would. Helmets: I can't believe—are they mandatory?

Ms. Denise Erickson: Yes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: They are? Okay.

Ms. Denise Erickson: It's a law.

Ms. Donna Skelly: But also, adults who are unfamiliar with it come in from the cities and think that jumping—I assume that with four wheels, there's an assumption that they don't tip, but as we all know, it's probably one of the easiest ways to be injured.

I love what you're doing. But I would like to expand on what MPP Arthur had asked about on the jurisdiction, and why you want it. I know that in my area, there is a former CN Rail track that has been lifted. It's now a trail for the snowmobile association—is it the OFSA?

Ms. Denise Erickson: The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, OFSC.

Ms. Donna Skelly: OFSC. I'm assuming that you work with them, then, for ATVs?

Ms. Denise Erickson: Yes. That's the Ottawa Valley Recreation Trail.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay, yes.

Ms. Denise Erickson: When it opens up to snow machines, ATVs stay off. Then once the snowmobile season is done, ATVs are allowed on it.

Ms. Donna Skelly: ATVs can't go in through the winter?

Ms. Denise Erickson: No, not right now, not as long as it's an OFSC trail that is groomed. What we are working on now, because OFSC is looking to expand their trail permits, is that ATVs with tracks may be allowed on snowmobile trails if they buy a permit, but that is not official yet.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. But again, if you could just share with me why you believe that your organization should have jurisdiction. As you said, you mentioned there is a bit of a turf war, but why this particular association or federation?

Ms. Denise Erickson: Our largest mandate is on safety. The other thing we love to do—well, we don't love to do it, but we do it—is to make sure that it's consistent rules across all trails.

Right now, signage is different. If anyone comes to Ontario from, let's say, Quebec and they want to do some ATVing, if they leave one area, the signage changes. We are working with tourism, culture and sport—I guess that has been renamed to something else—to implement a trail—

Ms. Donna Skelly: Standardization?

Ms. Denise Erickson:—standardization, so that if you see a sign, it will say, "This is a black trail."

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay.

Ms. Denise Erickson: That's what the federation is doing. We would love to have that consistent, so that somebody coming will be able to see these signs and recognize how hard it is on a trail so that it also does stop the chances of there being accidents, or someone being on a trail that would be too hard for them.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I have one last question, and that is: Do you have the ability to offer online courses for children or youth under 16? If we went forward with this, could they seek that?

Ms. Denise Erickson: Yes, we already have the CASI program, which is the Canadian ATV safety institute, that

is implemented by the Canadian off-highway vehicle coalition. It's all written. I already do courses. It's not mandatory for them to take it, but I do already teach it. There's a hands-on section that is four hours, where you take it right from the basics to hill climbing. Then there is a booklet and whatnot that we give out.

For the side-by-side, we have an online one, so this is where we would implement an online section to the ATV course.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): That concludes our time as well. Thank you so much for your presentation.

Ms. Denise Erickson: Thank you.

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY AND LEGAL CENTRE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from the Community Advocacy and Legal Centre. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Michele Leering: It's Michele Leering. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you this morning—good morning—and for actually coming out to our small urban/rural area. It's a bit unique to have you visit, so I really appreciate it. I know it was a matter of some debate before you got here, so thank you for that.

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I'm the executive director and a lawyer with the Community Advocacy and Legal Centre here in Belleville. We serve a three-county area. We're a small community-based justice organization, funded by Legal Aid Ontario. We've been working here since 1980, so we're coming up to our 40th anniversary this year. We've been impacted by the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario. You may be aware that 30% cuts were implemented last year and more cuts were threatened for this year, but they are not going forward, which we deeply appreciate.

I'm here to talk about three things today, and I've given you a written submission and also copies of PowerPoint slides that probably say more than the words in terms of explaining some of the ideas I wanted to talk about.

The three points that I'd like to make today are respectfully submitting that funds be reinvested in Legal Aid Ontario and in its system of legal clinics to increase our capacity and maintain it, and to provide timely legal help to vulnerable people and communities. In particular, we are quite interested in meeting with people from the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Health to talk about justice and health partnerships, which is an innovative initiative that we've been working on now for almost five years that we think is quite an interesting community-based way of responding to growing justice gaps.

Most of my written submission is about that particular point, about Legal Aid Ontario, about clinics, about what we do and about justice and health partnerships. But I want to speak to two other issues of importance to us because, as an advocate for people who are vulnerable, I would not

be doing my job if I didn't raise two issues of concern. One is the impact on victims of crime of the cuts to their compensation for pain and suffering and other remedial help which happened effective September 30, 2019. Our clinic has been recovering more than a million dollars a year for victims of crime in our area. This is focused on women who have been victims of domestic violence and people who have been the victims of childhood sexual and physical abuse.

It was very difficult for us to respond when those changes came without consultation. One of my co-directors of legal services at the clinic is on a provincial advisory committee. Nobody was consulted about the change and it has been devastating. I don't know if you've heard about it here, I don't know if you've heard about it in your constituency offices, but it's a sad day for victims of crime—more than a sad day.

The new approach is not working. It's nowhere near the compensation that was offered to victims before and it's quite complicated to access, so that's a difficult thing. I would urge you, in whatever ways that are possible, to re-look at the decision that was taken last April and think about compassion for victims of crime and what we might better do to support their healing and equal justice for them.

The other point I wanted to make was about possible changes to the Ontario Disability Support Program legislation because we're very concerned that the existing definition and how it's understood by the tribunal that makes decisions—the disability adjudication unit at the ministry that makes preliminary decisions—and the courts has been quite well established. We're quite concerned that any change not only will be disruptive to the system of people receiving compensation, but there's also a threat that it will disempower people. I can get into more details if you have questions about that.

I'm also concerned about the rates being raised and we're also concerned about the unnecessary red tape—more than 800 counterintuitive and confusing rules around eligibility and entitlements. We don't often think about how poor people are engaged or entangled in red tape but they are. Anyone who works in a legal clinic can tell you all about that. It's a fairly complex area of law to advise people on. I would encourage you, if there are going to be any changes, could we get rid of all those rules and simplify things? Particularly because it's this area and you're in a rural area and the “roomer and boarder,” and the way they are treated, people with disabilities who live at home or in various facilities, it's prejudicial to them compared to other renters. It's a human rights issue, and I would encourage you to look at that.

We also endorse the submissions that will come later today from the Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward, which we are a member of, and the Income Security Advocacy Centre, which I think you've already heard from.

Some of the slides that I gave you—how many minutes have I got left?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You have one minute and 40 seconds almost.

Ms. Michele Leering: Super. Thank you so much.

What I thought I'd do is bring these along because people don't always think about lawyers playing the kind of role that community legal clinic lawyers actually play. We're quite multi-dimensional in our work. Our big focus and Legal Aid Ontario's focus is on access to justice. This is an idea that many of us haven't heard about—even I didn't hear about it when I went to law school; it's something that I learned about in the field—and that is ensuring that people have access to the legal help they need. I've given you some slides that explain how multi-tiered that is. It's about information, it's about help, it's about ability to enforce laws and shape laws.

I've given you an example of our early intervention approach here. Also, we conducted a survey in the fall about the cuts and their impact and what people are concerned about. You'll see PowerPoint slides of those there, about how people are losing faith in the justice system, the hardship on families, unfairness to children, and also suggestions about how things might be different. We had a forum that discussed that, and the survey responses came in that way, too.

We also got some feedback, by the time you get to what is labelled page 5, about the legal clinic and how invaluable it is locally. We've provided some information on the approach that we take to working with trusted intermediaries—which include, by the way, our local members of provincial Parliaments' constituency office staff—and how our website is designed to help people who help other people and are not just the people themselves. It got 22,000 users, I think, last year, with 2,000 downloads. We've given information about the justice and health—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. Your time is up now.

We'll start with the government side this time. MPP Rasheed.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you so much for your presentation this morning. I just want to put this on the record here. You spoke about the funding, as well. As for the Attorney General, and I'm taking a quote from his past interview—“After full consultation, this is our plan, and our plan is to maintain existing funding on a go-forward basis.” He said that on December 9, 2019.

Ms. Michele Leering: Yes, that's for the cuts that were going to come and were threatened for this year, in addition to last year's 30%.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: This is based on the budget of 2019?

Ms. Michele Leering: No. Legal Aid had the 30% cut. Clinics didn't get that full amount passed onto them, but Legal Aid had a 30% cut. So that stays, is what we've been told. And then they were threatening another 30% cut. It was a bit mysterious; we weren't sure what that all was—because I'm on the ground; I'm not at Legal Aid Ontario. They were talking about another 30% cut, and that's the cut that has been held off.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: How much funding are you looking for?

Ms. Michele Leering: I am not personally looking for any funding—

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Your organization.

Ms. Michele Leering: —but Legal Aid Ontario's funding was cut by \$133 million last year, and the cut that was passed on to clinics was \$15 million, to the system of more than 70 clinics in Ontario.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: So if I may just ask a dollar amount that you're asking us to have a conversation with the Minister of Finance—

Ms. Michele Leering: It's to reinvest the amount of dollars that were lost to Legal Aid Ontario, because it resulted in the cuts to various innovative programs I discuss in more detail in my submission, and the cuts to legal clinics which have had various impacts depending on which legal clinic you're at in the province, and so on. Does that help? It's really about reinvesting the money that was taken away.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: So you're saying, \$133 million. That's your ask, based on the presentation—

Ms. Michele Leering: Yes. Remember, I'm a community-based organization doing work here. So I'm just telling you about how the larger system was impacted, but I'm not a person who makes decisions at that level.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: My local group—and I preface this by saying they do vital work in my community. I've met with Northumberland's clinic on a number of occasions. I think we can have a discussion at the government level, in response to the very real and valid criticisms the Auditor General made about Legal Aid Ontario—and ways to go about that. Can you reference, specifically, what the impact was on your organization, because I know, with mine in Northumberland, it was nominal. And they've welcomed the definition, to redefine Family Court and a couple of the other things, like family law—

Ms. Michele Leering: There's no time to talk about all these systems issues today, but one of the things that Northumberland clinic and our own clinic have been working on is a more holistic approach to legal aid. That ends the bifurcation between criminal and family and poverty law services and gets us working on a more holistic model. That is really important, but it's kind of a complicated idea to explain. We were working on that regardless of the cuts. The cuts impact on that, because Legal Aid has no time to talk to us right now about doing the work differently.

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So, it's an issue for us, right? The innovation that we planned, that we've been lobbying for, all this is lost. We have been working towards it for three or four years now, about having a more holistic model that integrates it better.

One of the things we did locally that I haven't had a chance to talk about is sponsor this whole forum. It brought the community together around these cuts, and what we are going to do. That's an innovative approach in Ontario. It has not happened elsewhere.

Mr. David Piccini: Can you have that partnership without them?

Ms. Michele Leering: Without Legal Aid?

Mr. David Piccini: Because it sounds like you're meeting with Northumberland and having those discussions.

Ms. Michele Leering: The clinics are together on this.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay, wonderful.

Ms. Michele Leering: We have a regional planning initiative that we've been—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We have to move to the opposition side now. MPP Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for your presentation today, Michele. I just wanted to say that it's quite transparent. MPP Rasheed has got a running tally of the requests, but I'd like to put on the record that most of the requests that we have are from people who just want the funding that was cut from them to be restored.

From what I learned about PC math, there will not be any offsetting numbers to show the savings that some of these organizations are making to the system, and also the cost to people's lives. That will not be on their tally.

Specifically to the cuts to compensation for victims of crime, and the cancellation of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, it's my sense that this government has no lens. They don't look at demographics. They don't understand the inordinate impacts that this will have on women, particularly. If you could very quickly speak to the gender impact that these cuts will have, even around legal aid but specifically to the compensation for victims of crime.

Ms. Michele Leering: Because of who we served, which was largely female victims of domestic violence—not exclusively, but by far the majority—we're talking \$1 million lost to this community each year, right? That's a lot of money. All the money stayed at home because our people are poor, our folks are poor, that we help, and then women don't have access to the supports that they need. Women and men, of course, don't have access to the supports they need, which is largely counselling help.

What's being offered under the new system, first off, doesn't apply to them, but it's very minimal compared to what you could have received before. And pain and suffering has gone completely.

Every time I read a horror story in the news about someone who has been a victim of crime, I think, "Poor you. You were victimized after October 1, 2019."

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Absolutely.

Ms. Michele Leering: It's a serious issue, for sure.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. I'm going to cede to my colleague.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Arthur?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your presentation. It is mind-boggling that you could be a victim of a crime that you have absolutely nothing to do with, and you're not entitled to the compensation from that.

I want to talk a little bit about the report that came out this morning about the record high of Indigenous inmates in the federal institutions. I know that is a federal report. It's exaggerated again among women: 42% of federal female inmates are Indigenous, and that's out of a national

population of 4.9%. So we're talking, with women, of almost by a factor of 10 that they are overrepresented in it.

What role could legal aid play in helping to correct this?

Ms. Michele Leering: Again, I work in a system that helps people keep a roof over their head and food on the table and doesn't help prisoners directly, because we don't do criminal work. It just happens—

Mr. Ian Arthur: But in terms of preventative—

Ms. Michele Leering: Oh, absolutely. I can talk to you about a study that we have just been wrapping up of people who are incarcerated at the Quinte Detention Centre. It's kind of an innovative way, again, that we approach issues. We actually did a research study to find out what their unmet civil legal needs were, and what was creating problems in their lives.

There is no doubt that we could help people, in partnership with other organizations, like the John Howard Society, Indigenous organizations and Elizabeth Fry, to deal with the issues before people go in, while they go in, and also afterwards. The reintegration is difficult, and the punitive measures that are taken, even with their social assistance entitlements—if they happen to have that, when they are incarcerated—totally make it difficult for people to reintegrate into society.

The name of our report, by the way, is Stymied—because that's what people are, and quite frankly, that's what I was, doing the research, but that's another topic—Stigmatized, and Socially Excluded. People don't have a chance once they're in there. There is no doubt, with this issue about Indigenous people being over-incarcerated, that it is an extremely unjust situation.

Again, we take a holistic approach. We'll work with anybody. That's what we've been doing historically. Anything you read about us or other legal clinics will tell you that.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. That concludes our time as well. Thank you so much for your presentation.

Ms. Michele Leering: Thank you so much, everyone.

FORESTS ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from Forests Ontario. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you can proceed with your presentation. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Rob Keen: Thank you very much. My name is Rob Keen. I'm the CEO with Forests Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

Mr. Rob Keen: I'm here to recommend that the province re-engage with the support of private-land tree planting and the suite of activities that are required to ensure the successful establishment of new forests on our landscape. Just to be sure that we're understanding, this is the establishment of new forests; it's not reforestation, which is something that our forest industry does extremely well and plants something to the amount of 68 million trees per hectare in northern Ontario, as required by law.

Afforestation, or the planting of new forests, is just that: It's establishing new forests across the landscape.

Forests Ontario had administered the government's 50 Million Tree Program since 2007. During that time, we planted, with our partners—that included the Forest Gene Conservation Association, First Nations, conservation authorities, stewardship groups and forestry consultants—some 29 million trees across southern Ontario on some 5,000 properties, creating 16,000 hectares of new forest. It's really a significant success.

I would like to remind everybody that with the planting of trees, it's not just digging a hole and sticking a tree in the ground. There's a whole suite of activities that go with it, starting with seed collection, developing stock, nurseries engaging as partners in the development of that stock, training people to plant the trees properly, assessing the sites to ensure we know which is the best tree for that particular site, doing the plant, and then overseeing and monitoring the trees as they're growing—in particular right now, in response to climate change.

The whole seed issue is of significant importance right now, as I said, with the advancement of climate change, because we know that climate change is going to have an impact on our forests. We therefore need to ensure that we know where the seedlings came from, i.e. the seed source, so that we can go back and track how the trees are doing and, in fact, whether we should be using that seed source on a continual basis. It's a very iterative process. There's a chain of custody associated. But it's all these pieces that need to be in place to ensure the success of the regeneration and creation of the new forest.

We did an economic analysis that was released in February 2019. It was Green Analytics, actually, and I've got copies of this analysis, if anybody is interested. This report identified what the GDP return was from the 50 Million Tree Program and identified it as a 3 to 1 return. It also identified that the 50 Million Tree Program, on an annual basis, supports the rural employment of 300 full-time seasonal employees. It was quite significant, especially for the rural communities. Certainly, the ecological goods and services were quite significant, with about a 12 to 1 return.

It also identified what the cost was to plant trees: about \$2.81. The Ministry of Natural Resources, with the 50 Million Tree Program, was contributing about \$1.88 per seedling to the program. The remainder of that was assumed by landowners and other granting agencies that topped it up, as needed, to ensure that the costs were covered for the tree planting. So we can see that tree planting is not an inexpensive venture. Certainly, in order to get landowners to engage to provide that societal benefit, it requires us to provide financial subsidies to reduce their costs, thereby increasing their desire to participate.

Unfortunately, on April 12 of last year, after the budget came out on April 11, the government decided to cancel the 50 Million Tree Program. It was certainly directly related to addressing the deficit. It's perfectly understandable. The government made it very clear that that was the direction they wanted to go. They saw the cost of this

program at \$4.7 million per year as something that was a significant cost, and therefore they cut it.

With that came quite an incredible public outcry. You may have seen on the news some of the blowback that came from that. I had, in the course of some four weeks, about 400 media events—radio, TV, newspapers and magazines that wanted to get some details on the cancellation of the program.

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We also had a fellow—we didn't even know who this was—out of southwestern Ontario who started a change.org petition. This petition, over the course of the next couple of months, brought in some 99,000 signatures of people who were against having the 50 Million Tree Program cancelled. The handout that, hopefully, you might have in front of you shows an electoral map. Interesting enough, about 2% of the respondents to that were right in the Northumberland-Quinte West electoral riding, so it's a quite a significant amount of support for people who want tree planting in this particular area.

On June 5, 2019, Minister Catherine McKenna, the then-Minister of Environment and Climate Change, announced their support of the 50 Million Tree Program to the tune of \$15 million over five years. This was an incredible support and allowed us to keep the wheels on this incredible infrastructure that we had developed over the course of maintaining the program.

I would suggest that at this point in time, with the federal government now looking at re-engaging in private land tree planting and reforestation to the tune of two billion trees over the next 10 years, it is an opportune time for this provincial government to re-engage itself in private land tree planting.

Prior to, there's no doubt that the majority of the costs were being assumed by the province. I would suggest that now, with the federal government stepping forward, and certainly with our increased sponsorship efforts since the cancellation of the program, and successfully so, there's an opportunity for the government to re-engage at a much lesser cost than the \$4.7 million that it was paying into the program prior. I would recommend that—

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

Mr. Rob Keen: —the government put in \$2.5 million out of this budget.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Your time is up now. We have to go to the opposition side for questioning. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good afternoon, and thanks so much for coming in. I very much enjoyed your presentation in Kingston last week at the climate symposium there. It was incredibly informative.

I want to talk a little bit in the context of climate change. I don't think we have to elaborate on that too much, on the roles that trees can play, in doing that. But I want to talk about the changing industry of forestry and some of the actual challenges that you are facing.

I have many friends who are tree planters, lots of them out west; I met some of them in Ontario. The loss of

market share to US companies that have a 12-month growing season—it's becoming harder to access forests in both BC and Canada for easy removal. What role could afforestation and dealing with the climate crisis in this way play in sustaining the forest industry in Ontario?

Mr. Rob Keen: Again, just to be clear that the difference between reforestation—which, again, is the forest industry's legal responsibility to regenerate—and afforestation, which is—

Mr. Ian Arthur: Afforestation, yes—that's why I was very clear on—

Mr. Rob Keen: Okay. Good enough.

In southern Ontario, it's 26% forest cover. We should have about 40% for a healthy forest. Of course, it's 95% owned by private individuals. Certainly, in eastern Ontario, there is a huge industry that's dependent on private-land forests. We see this up and down the Ottawa Valley, as I mentioned at the presentation last week. But they are highly reliant on those forests.

Certainly, looking at an afforestation program, working with landowners in those particular areas to create new forests on their property and therefore potentially creating a future wood supply may perhaps help address that situation to some degree. I'm not saying that it's the magic bullet, but it is a small portion of wood supply.

Mr. Ian Arthur: But it can play a role in sustaining forestry in Ontario.

Mr. Rob Keen: Sure. Absolutely.

Mr. Ian Arthur: In hearing from OFA and the role that agriculture can play in carbon capture as well, would you elaborate on why afforestation is going to be so important in terms of carbon capture and dealing with the climate crisis?

Mr. Rob Keen: I think we all remember our biology. Any plants will assume CO₂—carbon dioxide. Trees do that. In fact, 50% of a tree, the wood, is made up of carbon. That tree, as it's growing in a healthy state, is continually absorbing CO₂, sequestering CO₂. In doing so, it's actually taking CO₂ out of the atmosphere, whereas there is so much other discussion about reducing emissions—which is something we have to do for sure—this actually gets the CO₂ out.

Certainly, when we look at that, we would look at the lifespan of the tree sequestering all of that carbon. When we take it then, to your point about the forest industry, and can turn the tree and the wood of the tree into wood products, further locking up the carbon within the tree, further making sure that we have a sink for that carbon, that's where the benefits really come from the forestry sector, from forests, in addressing climate change.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just very quickly, because we're running out of time: Your organization helps coordinate how this can be done well?

Mr. Rob Keen: Yes. We work with partners right across Ontario, coordinating sites to be planted with landowners; working with nurseries for the stock; working with the Forest Gene Conservation Association, who are somewhat the gurus of seed, and knowing where the

source of the seed is that is going to the nurseries to grow the stock; and then following up—

Mr. Ian Arthur: And all of this makes it more resilient?

Mr. Rob Keen: Absolutely.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move to the government side for questioning. MPP Roberts?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much for your presentation. It's very informative. I really appreciate as well that you understand that all of our decisions in government are balancing competing priorities, and that you recognize that, obviously, the deficit is a big priority, and we need to balance that with competing priorities.

I've been learning a lot more about the forest and the impact that trees can have on CO₂ reductions. I read with interest the article that came out this summer, in July. I can't remember which publication it was, but it talked about trees as being the number one tool that we could use to fight climate change.

Mr. Rob Keen: Was that the trillion-tree article? Yes.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I believe so. Yes, exactly. Also, this may be outside your purview, and if so, let me know, but one of my constituents in my riding owns the Wood-Source, which is the largest, last remaining timber mill in Ottawa. He has met with me a number of times to talk about mass timber structures, and how that can also actually have an impact on CO₂ reductions.

Is that something that you guys are looking into at all? Or is that a bit beyond your scope, because you're mostly focusing on getting the trees planted, rather than cutting them down?

Mr. Rob Keen: How much time do I have for an answer, just so I can know how much—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You have two minutes and 40 seconds.

Mr. Rob Keen: Okay. At Forests Ontario, we basically have three areas of focus. One is tree planting, afforestation. The second is forestry education, and that's getting youth engaged in the environment and understanding more about our forests and the environment, and hopefully instilling a passion for the environment and for our forests, so that they perhaps will move forward and get into a career in the environment, or potentially even forestry.

The third is awareness and public awareness. We're working a lot with the forest industry and a lot of the municipalities on getting the word out about how well we do manage forests here. We have the best-managed forests in the world right here in Ontario. So when we look at that sustainable wood supply, and then tie that into tall wood buildings and the resurgence—or the “surge”—of more and more people seeing the opportunities for using tall wood buildings as a cheaper way to build, first of all, and certainly as an excellent way to secure that carbon beyond the life of the tree, then it all ties together.

We're working with architects and engineers and the carpenters union. We took them up north to Timmins to look at some of the boreal operations up there, to get people more aware of just how well we do manage the

forests, so that they feel more comfortable when they're using wood products and promoting wood products to their clients.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Great. Much appreciated. I think one of my colleagues also—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? MPP Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: We're talking about forests, but do you do anything with urban municipalities, with tree canopies? Do you work with them at all to try to expand their tree presence?

Mr. Rob Keen: It's sort of the same idea of making sure that we take opportunities to talk to the public in urban centres on the importance of their urban forests and maintaining the large trees. I can't say this too loud: Planting trees is a great thing, but we've got so many beautiful, old, large trees in our urban centres. We need to make sure that people understand, and municipalities understand, how valuable those trees are to the green infrastructure of the city. We certainly provide that kind of information.

We have a heritage tree program to allow us to profile some of the big old trees. As well, we're collecting seed within cities, seed that is coming from trees that are highly resilient to those harsh urban conditions, and growing stock for those trees that then gets planted back into the cities.

Ms. Donna Skelly: As we see intensification, we're seeing all this concrete and a lack of trees. I see it in Toronto all the time, and it just would be interesting to see if there's a way of expanding tree canopies in that highly intensified area.

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Mr. Rob Keen: I think you're bang on, and—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. That concludes our time. Thank you so much for your presentation.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Moving along to our next presenter, from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, please come forward. Please state your name for the record. You can get right into your presentation. You will have seven minutes.

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: Thank you and good morning. My name is Lisa Anne Chatten, and I am an elected trustee for Belleville and Thurlow, from the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board. I am also a representative on the board of directors for the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, which is commonly known as OPSBA.

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address this committee as it tours the province for pre-budget consultations. And thank you, sincerely, for visiting our town of Belleville. We appreciate the members of provincial Parliament seeing the people and meeting the people of Ontario to hear what they have to say.

School boards have a responsibility to promote education and also to help students achieve well-being. As local trustees in our communities, we hear first-hand, and often, about the needs of our students and their families and communities. That is why it's important to appear before you today to speak about the importance of sustainable and equitable education funding.

For every child to have the opportunity to learn and grow, they need support; they need support in classrooms, in their environment and through access to education.

Public school board trustees are committed and dedicated to public education. We do this because we care deeply about our students, our community and our future.

Provincially, we know that education is the second-largest funding line. We feel that it should be. Appropriate funding should provide students with a range of program options that allow them to pursue a pathway that supports their interests, their strengths and that will be a betterment for our province.

The top funding pressures for most school boards across the province continue to be special education and mental health supports, student transportation, and capital-related costs.

Recent polling done by OPSBA in partnership with Nanos Research found that a majority of Ontarians agree that spending in public education is an investment in our future. Eighty-three per cent of Ontarians support school boards having more autonomy to ensure that the budget reflects local needs. Ontarians are twice as likely to say that spending on public education is more important than eliminating the deficit. And two thirds of Ontarians oppose having larger class sizes and less course selection in order to save money.

While the government may have increased overall spending on education, per-student funding has actually decreased.

Locally, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board has 15,000 students across 40 schools: 33 elementary schools, one K-to-12 school, four 7-to-12 schools and two secondary schools, which are grades 9 to 12. We are a unique district, comprised of both urban and rural schools, which is a challenge when we speak of equity for Hastings and Prince Edward. Unique needs, as you can imagine, face rural schools, specifically access to technology, travel and supportive services, just to name a few. The impact on our students as a result of these barriers and hardships is deep.

Because of the nature of remote areas, we have a great deal of trouble recruiting and retaining supports for students. Funding could help us to narrow that gap. Children not having access to mental health supports both in and out of the classroom in rural areas leads to behavioural challenges within the school system. Often children with disabilities are also suffering greatly with mental health at the same time, which makes it much more critical for schools to have the means to both identify and strategize, with internal and external supports, how best to support these students.

We have 1,800 teaching and support staff across all of our schools, and I can tell you, we need more. We need to

support the unique challenges we face in our school climate today. Special education supports specific to students with autism who are coming into our system who are currently not supported by the Ontario Autism Program is a problem both in urban and rural areas of our district.

We struggle with knowing what we're to do without more funding to support students with the emergence of mandatory e-learning in rural areas, namely North Hastings and South Prince Edward. Some students do not have access to Internet outside of the school. Some families do not have the money to purchase technology to support their child's learning. They are relying on schools to provide laptops or iPads for e-learning. These students are bright, capable and willing, but without access, that means nothing.

Previously, the provincial government was funding broadband access. That funding runs out this year. As a system, we're unable to support it on the budget we currently have without affecting other parts of our system that students equally need to access their mandatory requirements. We cannot have broadband access in buildings that desperately need structural repairs, nor can we put all of our budget towards maintaining our school buildings and leave little to nothing for supporting a child who needs additional 1 to 1 support for emotional regulation, or simply access to tools because they cannot express themselves verbally.

Frankly, there are families in our district who are struggling in extreme poverty, who don't know of or have any other resources except our school community. This will help them to support their child's learning—but it helps them to support the “whole child.” You cannot learn if you're hungry. You cannot learn if you're scared, hurt or traumatized. You cannot learn if you do not have the tools that you understand the use of, to complete tasks expected of you. But you are still expected to be in school—which is why we need help to support these students, as part of the “whole child.”

We need local flexibility and funding specific to supporting our students with the new expectations that the province does have for them and that the province has for us. We're asking for you to help us to have the ability to respond to our school community needs.

Again, our most pressing issues locally largely mirror the needs that we see across the province in school boards: special education and mental health supports; transportation funding; and capital costs and broadband support in our rural regions.

In closing, I'd like to remind the committee that our association, OPSBA, has a wonderful working relationship with the Ministry of Education and will be providing a separate submission with specific requests and recommendations to be considered when developing the 2020-21 Grants for Student Needs.

I am happy to take any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start with the government side this time for questioning. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'll be sharing my time with my colleague MPP Piccini.

Thank you for your presentation.

We have just returned from northern Ontario. It was an eye-opener in terms of some of the special needs in our Indigenous communities and in northern communities. They mirror many of the issues that you've raised today—struggles with mental health amongst youth and mental health supports within our schools.

I understand that Tyendinaga—is that community part of the school boards that you're representing?

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: Yes, it is.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Does your school board do anything—and it will be different, because we're not in northern Ontario, and the challenges in northern Ontario are truly unique. But I'm curious what your school boards may have been looking at to address the unique needs within our First Nations communities. Are you working on developing certain programs etc. and looking at it from, I'll call it, southern Ontario—because this truly is not even close to north. Is there anything that you can share with us about what you have been doing in order to address the unique needs of kids from those communities?

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: Thank you for the question. We do have a northern area, North Hastings, that does present a lot of the similar needs that you were speaking about for the very, very north. They're very reflective of those challenges.

We have a couple of programs that are set up for outside-of-the-school, outside-of-the-building learning. Hands-on hunting—I have a colleague with me today who is the trustee for North Hastings, and she could speak much more clearly to that particular program. It allows children to come out of the schools to learn about hunting, trapping, fishing. It helps to bring them a different style of knowledge outside of the actual classroom—not forcing them to sit in chairs—because the reality is, this is some of the greatest components of their life up north. So, yes, we do have programs that are specific to helping.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I also wanted to speak to what I believe is valid, and that is looking at teaching online courses, for a number of reasons. Our society is changing. Technology is part of our lives. Certainly, younger generations are far more comfortable.

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You did address the fact that there is a lack of broadband right across Ontario, but we are committing \$71 million to see the expansion of broadband in rural and northern communities.

Some of the stakeholders that we met with in northern Ontario have said, “We need to be able to function in an online world, because of the realities of geography.”

I just wanted to ask you—I mean, there is resistance to two courses—to graduate with two courses taught online—but do you see that there is any value in understanding how to navigate online, whether it's learning how to get an ATV licence, or an online course?

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: I can tell you, from personal experience, I've taken a great deal of courses myself online, so I do see the value of online learning.

Where it becomes a divide is that term “mandatory.” When you see “mandatory” versus “optional,” when you do not have the access to be able to complete a requirement from the province or from the Ministry of Education in order to graduate—through no fault of your own, your family is not able to afford access—that would be—

Ms. Donna Skelly: I don’t mean to cut you off. I just want to get this on the record, because we’ve got about six seconds. I think accommodations would certainly be considered as we roll these programs out—

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: And that’s what we’re asking. Yes, certainly. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We’ll move to the opposition side now. MPP Arthur?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good morning, and thank you so much for coming in, and thank you so much for bringing up some of the results of that Nanos survey. They’re quite dramatic.

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: They were, yes.

Mr. Ian Arthur: We’re not talking about 51% to 49% in basically any of these categories. In what I think is frankly an unprecedented feat, this government has managed to unite school boards, teachers, education workers and parents across Ontario. It’s really quite dramatic.

Leading from MPP Skelly’s comments on the course—she talked about the need to be able to navigate online. If you’re at the point where you’re delivering mandatory courses online, is there not an assumption that one can already navigate online resources?

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: We don’t actually have any mandatory requirement in place right now for students to complete any courses online.

Mr. Ian Arthur: But if there was one offered in the future, there’s an assumption there that they actually can already navigate online. Because if they’re struggling to navigate the online world in the first place, how are they going to be able to effectively execute that online course?

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: I’m sorry. I’m not quite sure what you’re asking.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That’s fine. Do you know anything about the enrolment rates versus the graduation rates for the non-mandatory online courses that are already offered?

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: Not off the top of my head; I’m sorry. That would be information that the operations director of education would have.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay.

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: But I could get it for you, and I would be more than happy to forward it to you.

Mr. Ian Arthur: It’s significantly lower than in-person classes.

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: Certainly.

Mr. Ian Arthur: There is a lot more in terms of dropout rates, and a lot more in terms of failing to graduate, for online courses versus in-person.

I want to talk a little bit about the infrastructure funding and the transportation costs. I went to a rural high school. I know some of the challenges that are associated with it. Are there any shortcuts, or do we actually need to put the dollars into infrastructure to fix the schools in Ontario?

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: We really do need to put the dollars into infrastructure. We need to fix the schools that are in Ontario, to have buildings that are adequate for learning. As I said, if you’re in an environment that is falling apart around you, you’re not going to learn. You’re not going to be able to focus. We’re expecting an outcome from children that they couldn’t possibly reach when things are not in place in that manner, in terms of capital funding.

In terms of transportation, if you can’t get to school because of snowdrifts or whatever, then it’s going to impact your education as well.

I don’t think we can find any more efficiencies in terms of our transportation. We work with three different boards across this particular region to make it as efficient as possible. All of our routes are planned out in conjunction with our coterminous board. It’s really quite amazing, how much we’re able to do on the little funding that we do have for this particular line item.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Absolutely. Our education system—the funding formula needs to be looked at. We absolutely support that. We truly believe that it is underfunded currently, and it is being held together by the dedicated workers who operate in that space. So we thank you for doing that for so many years—because this not a new problem; this is something that has been going on for a generation.

MPP Shaw, do you have anything you’d like to add?

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Just quickly, I want to touch on your comments about the per-student funding. It is going down. We have one of the lowest per capita student funding in Canada. We’re at the bottom of the pack when it comes to funding our students in Ontario. I wanted to mention that.

The very fact that these government cuts to education, as you’ve identified—our class sizes will continue to grow. If we are forcing mandatory e-learning on students, we’re going to see these students fail and drop out. If you could do one thing for this government, how could you explain to them that forcing mandatory courses on students who are going to lose other classes is really a significant—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. That concludes our time. Thank you so much for your presentation.

Ms. Lisa Anne Chatten: Thank you. I appreciate your time.

SPIRITS CANADA

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN DISTILLERS

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Next, I would like to call on Spirits Canada and the Association of Canadian Distillers. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record. You have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Jan Westcott: Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members. My name is Jan Westcott. I’m the president and CEO of Spirits Canada. Joining me today is my colleague C.J. Hélie, who is our executive vice-president.

We're particularly pleased to appear today because it has been exceedingly difficult to garner any meaningful policy attention to the spirits sector in the past few years. In fact, during this time we have seen and heard plenty about beer and wine, and wine and beer, and beer and wine and cider, but nary a mention of spirits. Yet Ontario spirits are the most local of all Ontario beverage alcohol products that are produced in Ontario, with, in our case, 100% of our agricultural inputs grown by Ontario farmers on Ontario farms. To be entirely honest, Ontario spirits producers and the Ontario grain farmers who supply us deserve, we think, more respect and attention than we've been getting. I think it's time for this to change.

Just so you know, Ontario spirits are the very highest-value-added agricultural products. We account for over \$1.1 billion in economic activity in the province. We generate, because we export so much, eight times more export value per job than the provincial average. We are way up at the top in terms of the value that we bring to the province economically. In doing all of this, we support about 5,000 full-time jobs across the province, many of those in rural Ontario.

We've also seen various provincial tax freezes and tax rollbacks for beer and wine but no tax relief for spirits, the highest-taxed product of them all. In fact, given the automatic increases in federal excise duties on beverage alcohol, Ontario has seen a windfall of an extra \$30 million a year from the sale of spirits due to the cascading effect of Ontario's high ad valorem spirits taxes. These taxes, imposed on top of other taxes, are crippling the industry's ability to compete.

Beer is now available in some 450 grocery stores, in addition to being sold in over 400 private Beer Stores and its expanded space within LCBO stores. Wine is now available in over 150 grocery stores, in addition to 292 private wine stores and wine boutiques. These are not the stores that are at the wineries; these are stores that are away from the wineries.

You may ask or wonder, "What about locally made spirits?" Well, they've been completely frozen out of all of these private and grocery store channels. Frankly, it's completely absurd, not to mention extremely harmful, to jobs and investment in this province, yet somehow, through all of this policy stuff, we have allowed foreign-made beer and foreign-made wine better retail opportunities than are provided to spirits made in Ontario by Ontario workers from grain grown by Ontario farmers.

We know that there is broad public support to treat spirits equally with beer and wine. In fact, Ontario consumers really can't understand why spirits are facing this kind of discrimination. We also know that under the current distribution and pricing model for alcohol sold in grocery stores, with the LCBO acting as the distributor, the LCBO is actually strengthened and makes more money and more profit by including spirits in its grocery offerings. Independent economic modelling has shown that excluding spirits in the retail store expansion that has taken place for beer and wine will cost the Ontario treasury about half a billion dollars over the next decade in direct

revenue loss alone as higher-taxed spirits become substituted by beer and wine. The very real tax revenue risk to the Ontario treasury is not by including spirits in these new sales channels but rather by excluding them. The market-place impacts of these policies are already starting to bite.

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After enjoying a nearly 3% annual volume growth between 2015 and 2018, spirits sales in Ontario were essentially flat in 2019 due to the expanded sales opportunities provided for beer and wine outside of the LCBO. Our sales slowdown is a policy-directed market change with the heavy hand of government-directed regulation distorting the market, not a consumer-driven phenomenon.

Our specific recommendations for budget 2020 are as follows: Immediately allow spirits to be sold in the grocery stores that are licensed to sell beer, cider or wine; commit to including spirits in any new retail sales channels provided to beer or wine; and stop the windfall tax grab from federal tax increases.

In closing, I would underline that we continue to believe that the LCBO is a world-class retailer, and its employees are extremely well trained to sell alcohol. In fact, we have a very good working relationship with the LCBO and count on them to do most of the business.

Also, we are not the catalyst for demanding greater retail access for alcohol in the province. We didn't start this. But let's be crystal clear: If Ontario wants to maintain a viable spirits manufacturing sector and wants to treat Ontario consumers with respect and allow real choice, then Ontario-made spirits must be allowed to be sold in any and all private stores licensed to sell imported beer and wine.

I think it's safe to say that politics in Ontario today are fairly polarized. That's true of alcohol policy, where there are differences in opinion—fairly—in how and to what extent alcohol retail sales should be liberalized. But what is not a partisan issue is that, if a decision is made to expand alcohol retail sales to augment or complement the LCBO, then Ontario-made spirits must be treated no worse than foreign beer or foreign wine and must be given the opportunity to participate in this new retail access.

We respectfully ask the committee to endorse fair and equal treatment for Ontario spirits in its recommendations.

Thank you for your time. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start with the opposition side. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good morning, and thank you so much for coming in and for your presentation. I think you made some really excellent points in pulling in the information about the export value per job. That sort of data is really important.

My background is in food and beverage. I was a chef at Chez Piggy in Kingston. One of the things we did in our push to buy local was that we actually shifted a lot of our alcohol purchasing. The first one everyone thinks of is craft beer on tap, but then we were able to switch our entire bar rail to Top Shelf Distillers out of Perth. I think we appreciate the quality products that are being made in

Ontario and that they are excellent—Dillon’s comes to mind, as well, as a better-known one.

I think you are right in terms of the non-partisan ask that you’re having, which is to be treated the same. We can have differences of opinion about how alcohol should be delivered in the province. But I hear your presentation. I don’t actually have a lot in terms of questions, but I think that that is a very strong argument: to be treated the same as other alcohol producers in Ontario.

Mr. Jan Westcott: Thank you.

Mr. C.J. Hélie: I would maybe just add that we now have over 60 smaller new spirit producers in Ontario who are being as shafted as the historic legacy spirit distillers.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Yes.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for your presentation. I’d like to be on record to say that I am a big fan of Ontario-made spirits—

Mr. Jan Westcott: I thought I recognized some customers around the table.

Ms. Sandy Shaw:—none the least because of the kind of economic uptick that you’re talking about.

I’m from Hamilton. In Hamilton, we have, for the first time in Ontario for a long time, a G3 mill, so we’re actually milling grain in Ontario. I was the director of the Hamilton Port Authority, so I have a sense of the scale and scope of our farmers and our grain industry in Ontario. What a match made in heaven, really: Ontario-grown grain and Ontario-made spirits. Also, Dillon’s is close to my riding as well.

I wonder—you have touched on this—if you could just drive home the point that this unfair and inequitable treatment of Ontario-made spirits really has a limiting impact on our economic growth.

Mr. Jan Westcott: As I said, we’ve seen good increases in spirits. Certainly, we’re seeing that across Canada, and we’re certainly seeing that in the United States, right? In fact, in the United States, spirits have increased their market share. Beer has been struggling, largely due to demographic shifts that have taken place as the boomers, like me, move through. I still drink beer; I just don’t drink as much as I used to. We’re starting to see the very beginnings of this here.

One thing I would mention is that we’ve already had this experience in Quebec. In the 1980s, Quebec moved to allow beer and wine to be sold in grocery stores, but not spirits. When the government of Quebec made that decision, spirits had 40% of the beverage alcohol market in Quebec. Four out of every 10 drinks were spirits drinks. About seven or eight years later, we were down to 14%. So it killed the industry.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: And we would be remiss sitting here in Belleville not to mention Corby’s and the demise of Corby’s distillery.

Mr. Jan Westcott: We’re going to drive up to Corbyville just for sentimental reasons after this.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Again, I am from Hamilton. There was a nice connection between some of the characters in Hamilton sailing over to Corby’s to take some of that

product across the lake. There is a lovely history in Ontario of spirits. I think your presentation is an eye-opener; in particular, your notion that the LCBO is a really responsible and effective deliverer of your product. We’d like to let you know that we also support that notion, that this public service, the LCBO, should be—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We’ll have to move to the government side now. MPP Kramp.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing before this committee again. The sad thing that I have to say is, how many times have we heard this, again and again, for so many years? I think we can all recall, federally and provincially, that this has been an ongoing debacle, quite frankly, in my opinion. There are four or five points that you’ve made that I think are profound—all we want is fair and equal. It’s really, really unfortunate that government taxation policies on that are creating “winners and losers.” The market should determine that, I believe. So that’s the inequity that I would hope at some particular point in the near future would be resolved.

One of the other challenges, of course, that I have is the impact on the budget, the impact on the revenue for the administration, whether it’s the institution of government itself, whether it’s the wholesalers or retailers. Could you comment on how much of an impact this could have on, say, a provincial budget, if we were to try to have fair and equitable treatment?

Mr. Jan Westcott: We hired a firm called CANCEA—they do economic modelling, and they’ve done all kinds of work for many public bodies, like school boards, the provincial government—to look at this. They came back and they said if spirits goes in and has the same access, the opportunity available in net new revenues to government is about \$500 million over the next decade. If, on the other hand, spirits is excluded, it’s a \$500-million loss. So we’re talking about a \$1-billion swing for just giving us the same access that everybody else has. We provided that information to the government, obviously.

The Grain Farmers of Ontario tell us that we’re either the third- or fourth-largest buyer of corn in Ontario, so we’re significant—225,000 to 250,000 tonnes a year. We are the single largest buyer of rye grain in the country. I talk to farmers almost daily and they say, “We don’t understand why the products that we supply for can’t have the same treatment as everybody else.” We don’t have an answer for that.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Hopefully you will.

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

Mr. David Piccini: As a rural Ontario MPP who advocates on a daily basis for the largest employer in my riding—farmers—I appreciate you alluding to that earlier, and I appreciate the sentiment of the non-partisan nature of ensuring fairness here. I hope this will translate into the Legislature.

How much would the current spirits tax have to be lowered to simply offset the impact of the federal government’s tax increase, to result in a revenue-neutral—just to keep us even. I’m going to ask C.J. to answer that.

Mr. C.J. Hélie: Because the excise is the first tax in a long line of taxes, and the LCBO applies a 139.7%—almost 140%—markup on spirits, including the excise, that 139.7% would have to be reduced to 122.7% just to keep the LCBO revenue-neutral and give back that tax windfall.

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

Mr. Jan Westcott: We appreciate your time.

QUINTE LABOUR COUNCIL

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from Quinte Labour Council. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Scott Marshall: Scott Marshall, vice-president of the Quinte Labour Council.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

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Mr. Scott Marshall: Thank you for allowing me to be here today. My colleague Marg Bourgoin, who is the president of the labour council, couldn't be here, so I'm here in her place.

Current government policies have negatively affected Ontario's high-quality public services, weakened our social safety net, undermined working conditions and the democracy of our workplaces, and have restricted access to justice for many Ontarians. Government policies have failed to recognize the experience of equity-seeking workers and have endangered the health and safety of the workplaces in our communities.

The 2020 Ontario budget provides an important opportunity for the Conservative government to change course. We need a government that governs for the many, not the few.

Ontario needs public services for all. Ontario already has the lowest program spending per person of any province in Canada. According to the Financial Accountability Office, this Conservative government plans to reduce spending per person per year by \$1,070 over the next five years.

Demand for public services, on the other hand, will exceed the government's planned spending by approximately \$5 billion by 2022. There is a significant risk that the fiscal plan will not provide enough resources to meet the need for key public services. Instead of generating more revenue to use for public services, this government's regressive policy agenda will reduce revenues by \$4.2 billion in this fiscal year, and by an average of \$3.4 billion each year until 2024.

In Canada, corporate income taxes accounted for an average of just 1.75%, less than a week's worth of a corporation's annual operating revenues in 2020. Increasing corporate tax rates by two percentage points would generate \$2.4 billion in revenue this year, growing to \$2.8 billion by 2022. It's time that this government ensured that big corporations and the wealthy contribute their fair share

of taxes to increase revenues, and then used those revenues to fully fund public services for everyone.

Regarding health care: When it comes to health care, the Conservative government has laid the groundwork for undoing our universal health care system through underfunding, dissolving specialized and regional providers, and setting the stage for the privatization of our universal health care system.

This government's current education strategy will undermine the quality of our public education system by decreasing funding, increasing class sizes and moving to mandatory e-learning. There is no research out there anywhere, by the way, that supports the government's current mandated e-learning plan. In fact, the data that's out there would run contrary to all of that.

Post-secondary education is out of reach for many. This government has turned grants that low-income students depend on into loans, and cancelled the six-month interest-free period for student loans, forcing students to end or pause their education goals.

Child care in Ontario is the most expensive in the country. Instead of creating child care spaces that are affordable, high-quality and publicly delivered, this government relaxed restrictions on the number of children that home child care providers can care for at any given time. It is important to understand that these restrictions were introduced years ago after several infant deaths in Ontario's private child care sector.

Social assistance and services are also under attack. The government cut the scheduled 3% increase to social assistance in half, then cut 50% of the Poverty Reduction Strategy's funding. Then it announced an overhaul of Employment Ontario that will disrupt services for workers and could open the door to American for-profit organizations.

The government must change course to invest in and strengthen access to publicly delivered universal services and programs for all Ontarians; stop the privatization of our public services and assets; ensure that government funding models for publicly delivered services only provide public monies to public and licensed institutions; and guarantee professional-level wages for all public sector workers. To make Ontario a better place to work and live, everyone must have decent working conditions.

On the heels of cancelling the scheduled increase to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and many needed changes to the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act, the government passed Bill 124, which infringes on the charter rights of all workers to free and fair collective bargaining, and limits total compensation increases, including salary and benefit increases, at 1% a year for three years, a rate well below cost-of-living increases.

This government must ensure higher employment standards for everyone, ensure that everyone who wants access to a union can access union protection, and respect and uphold the right to free and fair collective bargaining. Everyone must be treated fairly.

Underlying the growing divide between the richest 1% and the rest of Ontarians are the disproportionate economic impacts of these forces on marginalized groups. In its

2019 budget, the Ford government once again targeted immigrants and refugees, eliminating two thirds of the funding for refugee and immigration cases, forcing layoffs at Legal Aid Ontario, delaying justice through the courts, and discouraging vulnerable people from seeking legal remedies.

The government must ensure access to justice for every Ontarian, and examine all policy through an intersectional equity lens to eliminate systemic discrimination of all.

We deserve healthy, safe and sustainable communities and workplaces. WSIB statistics show that in 2018, 228 people died from work-related injury or illness in Ontario, and lost-time injuries have increased by 33% since 2015.

The importance of health and safety extends beyond our workplaces to our communities and our environment. The United Nations has declared that we are less than 10 years away from irreversible damage to our planet. Nonetheless, the Conservative government's inaugural move was to eliminate the cap-and-trade program and cancel 758 green energy contracts, also spending millions of dollars to fight a national climate strategy.

I guess I'll be out of time for a few more points, so in conclusion, the Quinte Labour Council strongly hopes that the preceding recommendations and those included in our submission—which is consistent with the submission made by the Ontario Federation of Labour president, Patty Coates, last week—inform the development of the 2020 budget as well as the upcoming legislative agenda.

It's time to build an Ontario for all. Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start with the government side for four minutes of questioning. MPP Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much for speaking with us today. You raised health care, an area close to my heart, having worked in health care prior to politics. Can you reference specifically what has been privatized over the last year?

Mr. Scott Marshall: I think the concern is that it's laying the groundwork for that, and—

Mr. David Piccini: Where?

Mr. Scott Marshall: Health care is not my area of expertise; education is.

Mr. David Piccini: So just to clarify, you can't specify one area of privatization, yet you broadly engaged in the smear campaign just now for it.

Mr. Scott Marshall: It will be in our policy paper, which I said was submitted by Patty Coates of the OFL last week.

Mr. David Piccini: Well, I look forward to reading that.

Just what you'd likely know—did you share in the concern of the bureaucratization of our health care system with our LHINs? Do you support the LHINs or—

Mr. Scott Marshall: I would disagree with it being framed that way, yes.

Mr. David Piccini: So you disagree with the super-agencies?

Mr. Scott Marshall: I disagree with the way you're setting it up as a layer of bureaucracy is necessarily the problem there.

Mr. David Piccini: Well, I think Ontarians loudly said it was. Are you aware of Ontario health teams?

Mr. Scott Marshall: Again, David, I point you to our policy paper from the OFL on the pieces on health care, because I'm not—

Mr. David Piccini: I just think if you're testifying before the finance committee, it begets you to understand what you're saying before you say it. What I would suggest is—are you aware of Ontario health teams? Are you aware of any privatization? I think the answer has been no. You can't name one thing here.

Mr. Scott Marshall: No, I didn't say that, David. Again, I'm presenting on behalf of the Quinte Labour Council. I don't think I can be expected to be an expert in absolutely every single area.

What I do know is that the details that support the comments we've raised here are supported and articulated in the OFL policy paper that I referenced as one that was presented last week by the president, Patty Coates.

Mr. David Piccini: But you can't point to one area of privatization locally here.

Mr. Scott Marshall: I'll stay by the comments of what I represented here—

Mr. David Piccini: Do you know how many—

Mr. Scott Marshall:—and they are supported in the policy paper presented by the OFL last week—

Mr. David Piccini: Are you aware of how many long-term-care beds have been brought online in the region?

Mr. Scott Marshall: Again, I'm not an expert in the area of health care.

Mr. David Piccini: Would you support notionally, though, that if we bring on more long-term-care beds and invest more for front-line workers in long-term care, that would be a good thing?

Mr. Scott Marshall: My presentation here today is not on behalf of myself. It's on behalf of the labour council, and their positions are articulated very clearly in that policy paper.

Mr. David Piccini: But surely as a labour activist, you would support more long-term-care beds and more opportunities for workers to work in that sphere, no?

Mr. Scott Marshall: I'm not being drawn into making personal statements about issues, David. Again—

Mr. David Piccini: I just find that grossly unfortunate, that you can't stand up for workers in health care and conditions that would create more long-term-care spaces and more opportunities for workers in health care.

Mr. Scott Marshall: I would say you're putting words in my mouth, things that I did not say. That's simply untrue.

Mr. David Piccini: So you can't point to any privatization, and you can't speak to anything locally that's being done on health care, yet you're going to broadly make statements and presuppose government's motives and intentions on health care.

Mr. Scott Marshall: I'm making statements here that are supported in the policy paper that we presented last week—

Mr. David Piccini: Perhaps you should read that policy statement before you come before the finance committee, then, and understand what you're saying before you say it, because you can't support it with any facts here. In health care, we've made record investments as a government, yet you're saying we're privatizing it.

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Mr. Scott Marshall: I've heard the government make a lot of claims that, when we dig deeper, aren't necessarily true, in my opinion—

Mr. David Piccini: For example, locally, Northumberland Hills Hospital, Campbellford—\$13.5 million—local health teams that have brought together local partners and local front-line workers. Yet you have no idea about any of it.

Mr. Scott Marshall: I know those workers, and I know those hospitals. Again, I'm not here to—

Mr. David Piccini: So if you know it, can you speak to any of the workers' conditions?

Mr. Scott Marshall: Again, I will stand behind the comments we've raised, and they are supported with the OFL policy paper. The details are all in that paper.

Mr. David Piccini: No further questions. Thanks.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Scott, on behalf of the New Democrats, I'd like to apologize for this very disrespectful behaviour on the part of MPP Piccini.

Mr. Scott Marshall: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I appreciate that you're coming here to depute in front of the government. Despite the fact that Mr. Piccini may have questions that he would like you to answer and you didn't feel you were in a position to answer them, it doesn't mean that you need to be under attack in such a manner. So I do apologize. It was just a shocking display of completely rude behaviour.

I can maybe help MPP Piccini out in terms of your questioning around privatization, and that's around long-term care. What we have seen in the province of Ontario is a burgeoning of privatization in our long-term-care facilities. The government talks about long-term care, but I need to put on the record that they've created 21 beds since they've come to power.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Point of order.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: MPP Shaw should not be using that kind of language.

Interjection.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Yes, stick to the subject. That would be awesome. Personal attacks should not be allowed.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I'll remind the members to direct your comments through the Chair and be respectful to each other.

MPP Shaw, you may continue.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To put it on the record: Since this government has come to power, they have opened 21 beds in the province of Ontario. When this government passed their health care bill to create a super agency in health care, there was nothing in that legislation, despite us asking time and time again if they would put in the provision that this would be a public delivery of health care—the minister refused to put that language into this bill, despite the fact that it's in the Canada Health Act. The concerns about privatization in our health care system are very real, and I support you in making sure that we keep an eye on what this government is doing with our health care system.

Getting back to long-term-care beds and the staff—we talk about beds, but we don't often talk about the staff who support people in those beds—and getting back to the workers you represent, can you talk a little bit about the conditions for personal support workers working in our long-term-care facilities? These are mostly women. Often, if they are represented by a labour union, they're working in quite challenging conditions. Can you talk a little bit about the nature of this part-time, precarious work in homes that are looking after our seniors, our loved elders?

Mr. Scott Marshall: What we hear at the Quinte Labour Council is that these workers are overworked and the rate of injury is very, very concerning. Of course, in any work where you're working with individuals, you want to see an environment where you can be doing your work effectively. They feel that it's almost an impossible task that they have right now, with the conditions that they're in.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: We're talking about public delivery, but in terms of private resources going towards, in this case, education, and the leaked document that indicated the rationale behind the two mandatory online courses—I just want to read an article from a couple of years ago on the transformation of the US education system and the increase in cyber charter schools in the States: "The record of Pennsylvania's 14 cyber charter schools was so abysmal that the state of Pennsylvania denied all applications to open new cyber charter schools beginning in 2013."

We have so many examples of online delivery of courses to students not being adequate. What are going to be the learning outcomes in Ontario? Why is Ontario going to be different than that?

Mr. Scott Marshall: It will be—

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Oh, sorry. I apologize. I took up all the time.

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

Mr. Scott Marshall: Okay, thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Looking at the time on the clock, this committee stands in recess until 1 p.m., when we'll continue the public hearings. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1155 to 1300.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome back. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

As a reminder, each witness will receive up to seven minutes for his or her presentation, followed by eight minutes of questioning from the committee, divided equally amongst the recognized parties. Are there any questions before we begin?

CNIB FOUNDATION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I would like call upon the next presenter, from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Wayne Henshall: Thanks very much. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Wayne Henshall. I'm the manager for career support and impact evaluation with the CNIB.

The reason for my visit here with you all today is to talk about our focus around the Come to Work program. We've named that based on the focus of looking at our community.

In Canada, there are 1.5 million Canadians who deal with moderate to severe vision loss. The CNIB, as an organization, is in support of those individuals, whether that's through initial adjusting to vision loss with orientation and mobility independent-living skills; whether it's through the foundation, which we represent here today; or whether it's through our Deafblind Community Services, for those individuals who are dealing with multiple challenges from a hearing as well as a vision activity. In Ontario alone, 681,000 individuals are in that same category of moderate to severe vision challenge.

The Come to Work program was really focused around looking at those individuals who are looking to engage in work. We orient much of our programs and initiatives around the principle of coming to live, learn, work and play, and technology, because all those things combined are what makes an individual be an active member within the community that they support and live in.

As we went out and understood from those individuals, and asked them where some of the gaps are, they came back to us and said, "This employment piece is very important to us," because in order to go do some of those other things—play, live, do the shopping, understand technology—if you don't have a job, it's very hard to be able to engage in those activities. We looked at that community and said, "How do we put around a program and an initiative that can help those individuals through the various stages of engagement?"

In November 2018, we put together a program. We launched with 10 partner organizations around this Come to Work program, oriented around those five stages of readiness, stage 1 being adjusting or new to vision challenge, through to stage 5, which is working already.

But in some cases, it doesn't just stop there, because the individual who may be working may be making less than

\$20,000 a year, and they're aspiring to the next opportunity.

As we looked at the program and activities, what we built it around was starting from that orientation of the talent pool. We very much use the word "talent," because these individuals are actively looking for work and wanting to work. They want to be active members within society and be able to pursue their passions. So we were looking at the talent pool from a cultivation standpoint, and helping them achieve those goals, working with them but also then working with other vocational providers and partners to ensure that they are building out those skills, whether that is completing their education, whether that is working on some of their technical skills activities or the aptitudes, resumé-writing and those types of things. That's the first piece of the Come to Work program.

The second piece is, though, you can't just go with the talent pool and then say, "Where are the jobs? Where are there the opportunities?" We do a lot of partner collaboration, which is going out and having the discussion with the partner employers, and not going out with a hand raised, asking for something. We're reaching out a hand to work as a collaborative partner. How do we enable the environments? How do we enable the culture and the work experience based on the needs of those business entities that we're engaging with?

In one year's time, we've grown from 10 partners to 31. Shopify Canada joined us in the last week—and we're not just doing it here within Ontario, but that is a partner for across Canada. We're very proud to have them joining us as part of this program. But it doesn't just stop there.

When you look at engaging with these individuals, these partner organizations, in many cases they look at, "We don't know how to do it." We're working in that continual collaboration—so not just for the initial engagement of a person, but ongoing, working with them to support them in their initiatives, whether their business objective is that they need to grow their business in sales or they need to do a production-level activity, whether it's merchandising or whatever that opportunity may be.

The third piece that we focus on in the program is around mentoring. Our research shows that an individual in our community who has had the benefit of having a mentor in their life is actually one and a half times more likely to succeed in their career objectives. We've seen that manifesting as we brought this program together. We started with an under-30 talent pool, as individuals. We are at over 240 now in Ontario alone, of which 47 are fully employed, many of them now over a year, and have moved on to their next stage of opportunity. They've gone through a career progression within the organization.

Our ask of the committee here today is to help invest with us as we grow. We did this based on stakeholders and individual contributions, but as that talent pool continues to grow, there are more partners out there to go work on. We want to work with more and more of those people. We did this with three individuals in Ontario—and my role actually bridges into Ontario and Quebec. So we have

started small, but we want to continue that forward and invest as we go forward. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll go to the opposition side for questioning. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for your presentation. We had a lovely conversation over the lunch break.

Could you just mention how old the CNIB is and some of the beginnings of the CNIB?

Mr. Wayne Henshall: The CNIB has just celebrated its 100th anniversary as an overall organization; it's one of the oldest charity organizations. We have worked with government to change our mission and objective to continually adapt to the needs of the participants we support—but as well, looking at the focus areas for the future. Employment is one of those focus areas; technology is another; education and activities. So as we continue to evolve as an organization, we're not losing sight of where we come from. That comes from the talent, the individuals who are out there.

I've dealt with my vision challenge since I was born. Up until I was 10 years old, my family just thought I was clumsy. I grew up in rural Ontario, in a little town called Orillia. On the farm, they just thought I was clumsy. But as you go through life, that doesn't stop you from pursuing your aspirational goals. I've travelled the world. I've used technology to help me adapt, and that's why I'm passionate in this program.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm going to cede to MPP Arthur, but I want to just talk about the technology. I think it's lovely that you've included your presentation in Braille.

I also wanted you to talk a little bit about evolving technology and whether that poses a challenge or whether that's an advantage for you helping to get some 681,000 Ontarians who could use your assistance in moving into work.

Mr. Wayne Henshall: Technology is definitely an advantage, but you can't just put technology into a person's hands without wrapping around the training and the activity.

I am holding up to all of you a badge. Based on the badge, this is how we did our conference.

All the phones nowadays, whether you're Android- or iOS-based, have the ability on the native camera to scan a QR code. Instead of me trying to give you my email or write down an email, I can scan that QR code and now it's added into my contact list.

I always talk about shopping. There are apps available now where I can go out and do the shopping. Montreal steak spice and cayenne pepper are two very different spices; you don't want to mix the two. You don't necessarily get the chance to open them while you're at the grocery store. But by scanning the bar code on there, it will actually tell me which one I've picked up so I don't get home and have my 11-year-old tell me, "Dad, you did it again."

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Ms. Sandy Shaw: Too spicy.

Mr. Wayne Henshall: Yes. "You did it again."

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

Mr. Duane Morgan: Duane Morgan here, from CNIB. Technology certainly has enhanced the ability to work. For example, I live with sight loss as well. On the train here this morning I was doing all of my email and Excel spreadsheets on my phone as I was travelling on the train using VoiceOver on my iOS phone.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Good. MPP Arthur?

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Yes, just very quickly: Thank you for your presentation. It is succinct and I think with actually the smallest per-year ask that we've seen with any organization that has come before us. And your emphasis on working with other external partners I think is very welcome and hopefully heard by the government.

I just want to add a personal thank you. My brother is dealing with ongoing vision loss, and your organization has been tremendous in being able to help him. We don't know the causes of it; we've been unable to identify what is causing it to happen. But certainly as he goes through that and experiences it, your organization has been incredible.

Mr. Wayne Henshall: Thank you for that.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you for your presentation. One quick question: Can you provide an example of a job that a blind or partially sighted person would be able to qualify for and the type of accommodations that would be needed, necessary, that need to be put in place to make sure that the job is carried out?

Mr. Wayne Henshall: That's a very hard question to answer because there is no one definition of vision loss. Even though individuals may have the same medical condition, the degree by which that individual is at that stage of their vision challenge may necessitate different accommodations.

As an example, I have some central vision, and I would use a large-screen monitor to do most of my day-to-day desktop things. Going into the workplace, as long as I could get to that large screen—if I couldn't, I would then learn and do a different technology which some people use, which is a screen reader technology. Many of our partner organizations like Microsoft are making that part of their native application suite, whether you're looking at Narrator on a Windows 10-based device or even looking at the Office 365 products, where now you can not only check for spelling and grammar but you can also check for accessibility. So those of us that like to press the spacebar 25 times, and I have to listen to it as an individual—it will tell you that you're doing that so you can correct it, or if you're putting a picture into your presentation, to add alternative text so that I could then engage.

So to answer your question, there is no one-size-fits-all, but there are best practices that we would work with these partner organizations to enhance. That's part of what we've done with organizations like Deloitte as well as with other organizations like Microsoft as, even within their space as a technology partner, they're learning new things to help enable for all.

I would say that one prime example is one-click telephone calls. I don't know how many conference calls you all have to join, but if someone adds a nine-digit code and you have to remember all that and type it all out, why don't we look at—many of the telephony systems actually have the capability to have two commas after the dial-in number and the conference code number with the pound. With one-click calling, it automatically dials. I was talking to Meridian as one of our partners, and they were floored about this capability, this accessibility function.

We did an event at Connecting the Dots and we talked about using LinkedIn as your route to making connections and networking with folks. I don't know about you all, but sometimes you run out of a business card, right? If you're at an event, in LinkedIn it has a native QR code scanner that you can make the connection automatically so I don't have to worry about trying to find the business card or make sure I don't lose it; I make the connection automatically.

Using that technology and helping the partner based on what industry they're in to be prepared in support of those individuals is really based on the individual basis. That's where CNIB comes in, from a program standpoint but also from that of rehab supports.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you so very much for your presentation. My very first job, right after high school, was working for CNIB, so do you know what? Keep up the great work.

I just wanted to get a clarification on the \$3 million you mentioned. You said that this funding is going to be used for job opportunities or—I just want to get a clarification on that.

Mr. Wayne Henshall: It's oriented on the four things that we laid out within the proposal. One is around individuals as they go through those stages, to get them ready for job opportunities. The second is the partner engagements: going out and working with those partners to open up the doors for opportunity. The third piece is working with the government—we would love to have the Ontario government come on as a Come to Work partner—ensuring that as we bring tools to the marketplace, they are supported to our community. There are—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. That concludes our time. We appreciate you coming for the presentation.

CUPE ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from the Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Fred Hahn: Good afternoon. My name is Fred Hahn. I'm the president of CUPE Ontario. CUPE is the largest union in the province, with more than 270,000 members who work in our hospitals and throughout health care, in our schools, our universities, our social services

and community agencies, and for towns and cities everywhere across the province. That includes thousands of members who live and work in Belleville.

Thanks to the members of the committee for this opportunity to speak to you about the 2020 budget. A detailed written brief is on its way to you by the end of this week, but I'll do my best to summarize that work in the few minutes I have to speak to you all today.

People across Ontario have been clear over the last year that public services matter to our communities. People want and need investments in these services, and they want an end to cuts that hurt their communities. After years of underfunding by the Liberals, followed by deep cuts from the current Conservative government, vital public services across Ontario are approaching a tipping point. Just to maintain the current level of public services that exist across the province today, just to keep things the way they are, the Financial Accountability Officer said spending needs to increase by at least 3.6%, just to keep pace with inflation and population growth. The way things are is not what our communities need.

Hallway medicine continues to plague our hospitals, as do long wait times in hospital emergency rooms.

Demand for long-term care continues to rise, with wait-lists that grow longer and longer.

Class sizes are scheduled to grow, and people are genuinely worried about cuts that hurt our kids and their schools.

Tuition fees for post-secondary institutions in Ontario are the highest in Canada, and the same goes for child care fees and other important services.

Community and social services that support our most vulnerable citizens are increasingly hard to get as demand and wait-lists grow and funding shrinks.

The forecasts the Conservative government provided in last year's budget don't increase spending anywhere near the 3.6% required just to keep things the way they are.

The real problem is that since being elected in 2018, the Conservative government has steadfastly repeated lines based on an ideology—one that believes that taxes are high and need to be cut, one that believes we spend too much on public services and that somehow reducing government revenues and cutting real spending for services will balance the budget. But just repeating that over and over doesn't make it true.

We know from our province's Financial Accountability Officer that Ontario generates the lowest amount of revenue per person compared to every other province in Canada, and that we spend the lowest amount per person to fund public services compared to every other province.

That's the problem with ideologically driven budget policy: It just can't help but bump headlong into the real world—not just the real world of cold, hard facts and numbers verified by specialists, but the real world in which most people, most families, struggle paycheque to paycheque, where people try to get by with less real income year after year as their wages are eaten away by inflation that drives up the cost of living, where people rely on public services to make their lives better.

While people's real incomes aren't keeping pace, to make matters worse, the Conservative government passed a law that takes away the charter-protected rights of employers and workers to free collective bargaining, and condemned over half a million workers to three more years of declining real annual incomes.

Our communities are under pressure. Working people in Ontario are under pressure. If you thought they were unhappy at the wave of cuts that hit communities last year, the wave of cuts that caused demonstrations across Ontario and the government's polling numbers to take a nosedive—failure to change course will make what happened last year look small in comparison to what's to come.

Meeting your own budget promises will mean that program spending has to be reduced by \$1,070 a person, or 10%, over the next five years. This graph gives a visual of what a cut that size would look like. It comes directly from the Financial Accountability Office. But what would a cut of this size mean in real terms for communities? In Belleville, where we have the pleasure to be today, it means a potential loss of almost \$111 million that fund public services. And that's just for services in Belleville alone. That means hundreds of jobs will be lost as well, because a cut to services not only means fewer services to communities but it always means job losses, because public services are provided by people.

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A failure to change course would impact communities across Ontario. Thunder Bay could face the loss of over \$130 million to fund services, Niagara could lose over \$479 million, and Toronto more than \$6.3 billion. We all know that is not what Ontarians voted for in 2018, including those who voted Conservative.

It doesn't have to be this way. We could start by remembering that as the province that spends less per person on public services than any other province, we have room to grow, and that as a province with a growing and aging population, we have to grow program spending just to maintain the level of service delivery we have now, let alone expand to meet the true needs and demands of Ontario families.

We have the capacity to grow provincial revenues to support services that Ontarians rely on to get by every week. Corporate profits continue to be strong, yet individuals in Ontario still pay three times more in taxes than profitable corporations. Restoring the corporate tax rate to where it was 15 years ago could generate new annual revenues close to \$3 billion a year, which would go a long way to not only balancing the budget but protecting vital public services.

This is only one way to raise revenue. There are many others. Ontario could, for example, stop ignoring the biggest multinational corporations, like Facebook and Amazon, Netflix and Google, who refuse to pay corporate taxes or even to remit legally required sales tax in Ontario. How many millions in service-protecting revenue could that generate each year?

Our point is simply that a budget should be a tool used to make people's lives a little bit better and more secure.

It's what Ontarians want and deserve. No government gets elected because people want bigger class sizes, or less money spent on kids with autism, or cuts to health care and social services. And people have been clear: Failure to change course will only fuel resistance to cuts in communities. Now is your opportunity to do something different.

Thanks. I'm happy to take your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go to the government side this time. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, Mr. Hahn. Thank you for your presentation. Your points are well documented. We've heard them, but we don't have any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll move to the opposition side. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to say that we do have a lot of questions. It's unfortunate that the government side did not feel compelled to ask some questions about things you're talking about, which are essential services. We're talking about health care, we're talking about education and we're most certainly talking about long-term care. We've been hearing across the province to date—and the government side has been hearing this as well—that long-term care is in a crisis. It's my sense that, had the government chosen to ask you some questions, you could have helped advise them on the health care crisis that they're seeing before us, particularly in long-term care.

I'm wondering if you could expand a little bit on long-term care. You talked about the cap on wages. I think it needs to be understood that this 1% cap impacts workers who could possibly be minimum wage earners. They could be women working in our long-term-care facilities—personal support workers. So if you could just expand a little bit on what it looks like to be a personal support worker in a long-term-care facility in Ontario, that would be great.

Mr. Fred Hahn: Absolutely. We're proud to represent tens of thousands of workers who work in long-term care all across the province, both in for-profit and public facilities. Their average wages are about \$38,000 to \$40,000 a year, but they're doing incredibly important work. They're providing care and support for our parents and grandparents, and there simply aren't enough of them. Even if we look at the beds that are available today and the services provided today, we know that the hours of care provided per resident simply aren't enough to meet any kind of standard that provides a good quality of life for seniors in long-term care. It's why we've been advocating and are quite supportive of the opposition's bill that would mandate four hours of legislated care in long-term-care facilities.

That's only one piece of the puzzle. We know that there's a huge and growing demand for long-term care. Wait-lists are incredibly large. In Belleville alone, the wait-list is almost twice as long as the provincial average to get a bed, and there are huge demands. While the government talks about bringing new beds online, those new beds don't exist today and they simply aren't enough to meet the growing need. We have an aging population—a

demographic bubble that will require additional care. Only public investment will be able to meet that challenge.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that answer. I agree with what you're saying. Polls show that the people of Ontario value their public services. These are essential services. Maybe we could just focus on the fact that, as you presented here, Ontario is at the bottom of the pack when it comes to per capita investment in these essential services. What we have is a crisis in health care. We have hallway health care that was bad under the Liberals and is continuing to get worse under this government. If you could maybe just expand a little bit on the fact that this underinvesting in health care, this below-inflation investment in our health care system—how that's impacting your workers and everyday Ontarians who expect health care to be there when they need it.

Mr. Fred Hahn: It's causing a crisis in our hospitals. It's why hallway medicine is a scourge that exists across the province. It's why, for example, in Belleville, less than a third of people who visit the emergency room in Belleville are seen by a doctor in eight hours, which is a cap that we say in Ontario is a good thing, if you only have to wait eight hours in an emergency.

We can do better. We're the largest province. We're part of the economic engine of the country. That we spend the least amount per person on public services is not something about which we should be proud. In fact, we should invest. Those investments in our health care system, in education and in community and social services not only make lives better for people who are struggling to get by paycheque to paycheque, but they actually help our economy and they help to bring the budget back into balance. Investments matter.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. That concludes our time. Thank you so much for your presentation.

ONTARIO AUTISM COALITION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Next I would like to call on the Ontario Autism Coalition. Please come forward. Please state your names for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Angela Brandt: My name is Angela Brandt, and this is Laura Kirby-McIntosh. I am the vice-president of research and policy for the Ontario Autism Coalition; Laura is president. The Ontario Autism Coalition, for those who don't know, is an autism services advocacy group in Ontario, which is sadly still needed.

What I wanted to talk about, and I'm going to try to do this as quickly as possible, is that currently—I know this is the 2020 pre-budget, but I wanted to talk about the 2019 budget quickly, because only recently the budget of \$600 million was announced for the Ontario Autism Program. Currently there are roughly 10,000 kids in service, and that cost is between \$330 million and \$360 million, leaving about \$250 million left of the budget.

The current interim plan, which I'll discuss in a minute, should cost approximately \$250 million, based on the

number of children waiting and the way that the interim plan is set up. If you add those, that will give you approximately \$600 million. However, that \$200 million or so is unlikely to be spent in the 2019 fiscal year. I don't see how logistically the ministry is going to be able to get payments out to 20,000 children in the next few months when they've only been able to provide childhood budgets to under 4,000 children since the beginning of the program. You'll see those numbers on the next page.

What we're seeing is actually fewer kids in needs-based services as these childhood budgets are being rolled out. These childhood budgets are extremely wasteful, and that's something I really want to point out. If you look at slide 4, you'll see that I was able to use Hawaii data—this is autism data that was provided by the state; it's public. Unfortunately we don't have data for Ontario, but what we know is that as a child's need increases, the cost of therapy increases. This is a linear regression with the child's needs, very significantly—it's not always going to be the case, but as a general rule. You can see the chart, the linear regression, on slide 4.

If you go to slide 5, I think this is really very, very telling. The problem is immediately obvious. If you put in a funding level—and, based on the interim plan, it's \$5,000 for children over the age of 6 and \$20,000 for those under that age. If you put a funding level into that needs line, what we're seeing is—and if you look at the chart, the area in blue is the unmet needs of children, and the area in red is overpayment. So there are going to be a number of families who are getting more resources than they need and other families who aren't going to get what they need. The area in red is just pure waste. As a Progressive Conservative government, I don't think you want to see waste. It's not very fiscally responsible to have that. Needs-based therapy is fiscally responsible. Not only is it fiscally responsible; it is the compassionate thing to do. Why wouldn't we use the overpayment monies to pay for the needs of the children whose needs aren't met? It doesn't make sense.

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We also know, based on studies done in Ontario specifically, that there are huge cost savings for reducing wait-lists for children, based on increased independence. One particular study quoted a cost of \$276,000 per person in direct and indirect health care and social supports—

Ms. Laura Kirby-McIntosh: That's for kids who don't get the intervention that they need in a timely fashion, and that's a lot of kids over the last 18 months to two years.

Ms. Angela Brandt: Speaking of needs-based therapy—what is it? Laura was on the autism advisory panel, and I know that they received well over 40 reports. There are a number of stakeholder reports that were made public, and the common themes are access to evidence-based treatment in the absence of arbitrary caps; high-quality, well-regulated clinical services; and a system that delivers those services based on the unique needs of the child.

In terms of developing the Ontario Autism Program, what we should be doing is treating as many children as

possible. Ontario was one of the fastest-growing jurisdictions in the world for ABA, but because of the recent changes to the Ontario Autism Program, our capacity has been decreasing. The fiscally responsible thing to do is to treat as many children as possible, given monetary and capacity limitations in the program. The quickest way to achieve that is to roll back this one-time interim funding.

We already know that it's wasteful. We need to keep the direct-funding option, with direct billing. At the same time, we need to implement direct funding as described in a plan that was actually developed by a member, Roman Baber, where he talked about funding parameters and a standardized rate card. That is one of the reasons the cost per child may be increased in the province under the current program.

The first thing we need to do, once we have this Ontario Autism Program, is move the kids in service—they're termed "legacy children"—into the program immediately, because these are the children at the greatest risk of harm. We can't have a child going from 30 hours of therapy to zero overnight. That will cause irreparable harm. It could cause regression, aggression. There could be severe—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. We'll have to go to the opposition side for questioning. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you for coming in today, and thank you for the advocacy that you have done over the last months. I know it has been extraordinarily difficult for so many across this province. It's heard and seen and appreciated by many.

One of my constituents is watching the proceedings and texted me a question to ask if I could ask it. Kelly McGarry is asking, what are the effects of cutting services to children currently in service, and what is the path forward for these legacy children?

Ms. Laura Kirby-McIntosh: The path forward is, at this point, entirely unclear. There has been no direct communication from the ministry about what the plan is for those so-called legacy children. I'm hearing rumours—at this point, I can't confirm them—that the plan is for them to finish out their existing behaviour plans and then stop. That's so extremely dangerous. Equally so, it's dangerous for the kids who have received one childhood budget cheque to be told, as Minister Smith said on December 17, that we have no idea when they might get another instalment.

For the families that have never received therapy—we've got three streams of kids—for the families that have just been waiting for the last several years, they're eligible for this one-time funding. But again, it's a flat-rate amount; once you spend it, it's gone. We're now told that instead of April 2020, it will be sometime in 2021 that core services will be available. For whatever stream these families are in, things don't look good.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just because we don't have a lot of time: I understand that you were on the panel that produced the report. Would you talk about what you think the intention of the recommendations was, and if the report was written in a way that could have been misinterpreted?

Ms. Laura Kirby-McIntosh: I don't think we could have been more clear about what our recommendations were.

The other thing that I'm frustrated about, both as president of the OAC and as a former panel member, is that all through the process, we were assured by politicians and government officials that April 2020 was a completely realistic deadline. Any time we raised concerns at panel and said, "Are you sure?," they were like, "No, no, it's going to be fine." And then, five days before Christmas, the minister goes, "Oh, sorry; maybe not until 2021."

Our families were barely hanging on to the hope that they had: "We've just got to make it to April." That's why, when the minister said 2021, there were parents in the gallery and they burst into tears.

Ms. Angela Brandt: The intention I think we're talking about is an implementation tool and care coordinators.

Ms. Laura Kirby-McIntosh: That's another thing that I'm very concerned about that could be a significant waste of money. Our panel was under intense pressure from day one to develop a standardized needs-assessment tool. We refused to do that, because—

Ms. Angela Brandt: That is not needs-based therapy.

Ms. Laura Kirby-McIntosh: —it's not clinically sound. We don't want to see jobs created for bureaucrats, at an enormous cost, where they are put in charge of assessing kids and putting them into a box: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Instead, to be needs-based, it has to come from a clinician. So I'm deeply concerned about that.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just because we're running out of time: In terms of the fallout, the disruption done to families and the disruption done to the institutions that provide the services, how many years until we're going to recover from that? Will it be decades?

Ms. Laura Kirby-McIntosh: Possibly. I'm extremely worried about two things, sir. One, I'm worried about the mental health of autism families in this province, who were attacked first under the Liberals and now attacked again under this government. I'm also deeply concerned about service providers, small businesses, that you should be concerned about—

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

Ms. Laura Kirby-McIntosh: —that are going out of business.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We have to move to the government side now. MPP Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I just want to say, Laura and Angela, thank you so much for your presentation and for providing all of this information. Of course, Laura, again, as always, thank you for participating in our Ontario Autism Program panel. I know I speak on behalf of Minister Smith in saying that we're excited to get this up and running as quickly as possible.

I'll just add a word of caution, before I close out, that rumours are just that: They're just rumours. People at home right now should make sure that until they see something on a government of Ontario letterhead press release, they don't put much stock in it.

That's the thing that we're going to be focusing on going forward: When we have new information on how we're acting on the panel's recommendations, there will be a press release that comes out that lets people know what the answer is.

Ms. Angela Brandt: Can I say something to that?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sure.

Ms. Angela Brandt: Can I respond by just saying that some behaviour plans are ending as early as April. I fully understand and appreciate what you've said—that rumours are rumours—but families need to plan, especially families with children with autism. They need to be able to plan. April is around the corner, and if they can't plan, then they don't have services. I need to plan a year in advance for my son when it comes to summer camp, to make sure he gets the support. April is around the corner. These families need to know now.

Ms. Laura Kirby-McIntosh: We can't wait. Families have been asked to wait for years and years. I know—and you yourself said—there needs to be clear communication from the ministry. The reason families latch on to rumours—and sometimes it's misquotes in newspapers and other things—is because if there's no information coming from the ministry, then where else can we get information?

The sooner the minister can announce the details of this plan, the sooner our families can calm down. But right now, we have nothing to be calm about. We're still in crisis. We're not okay.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? Seeing none, thank you so much for your presentation.

1340

RURAL OPPORTUNITY AND INVESTMENT COALITION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from the Rural Opportunity and Investment Coalition. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Carling Dinkler: Good afternoon, committee Chairperson and members of the provincial Parliament. My name is Carling Dinkler. You may tell from my accent that I'm from Louisiana.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I thought from southern Ontario.

Mr. Carling Dinkler: Well, I was going to say "southern Ontario." It's just very southern. I serve as the vice-president of—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Go, Saints. Who dat?

Mr. Carling Dinkler: Go, Saints. There you go. Who dat?

I serve as the vice-president of Enhanced Capital. We are an impact investment firm that works with small and medium-sized businesses across the United States. We've also invested in projects that restore historic buildings, create affordable housing and create renewable energy developments. We also specialize in helping and investing in businesses that are in low-income or rural communities.

For 20 years, we've provided financing to real estate projects, businesses and renewable energy projects, and our projects can be found in both rural and urban environments. They need targeted public policy goals, and they achieve community impact.

I'm appearing here today on behalf of the Rural Opportunity and Investment Coalition, a group of private investment funds, to speak in favour of a rural investment tax credit program to support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, in rural and northern Ontario. This is our second opportunity to speak before this committee. We're also pleased to see that the government made specific mention of the need to invest in rural and northern areas in its fall economic statement.

The ROIC's rural investment tax credit proposal is supported by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, municipal economic development staff and political leaders. We are unified and focused on supporting targeted small and medium-sized businesses by creating pools of private capital dedicated to supporting job growth and creation in rural and northern Ontario.

The coalition includes three competing, industry-leading investment firms with more than 60 years of experience and a specialization in providing growth capital to small businesses that lack access to traditional sources of financing such as venture capital or banking. The investment firms in our coalition have a long history of working with policy-makers like yourselves to support local businesses as they seek the capital they need to stabilize, grow and create jobs, most importantly.

Access to capital is a serious issue for SMEs hoping to expand, increase production and grow market share. Lack of access to growth capital is particularly acute for businesses located in rural or northern areas. In many instances, SME owners in these areas are unable to secure the patient financing that businesses need to buy new pieces of equipment, add additional employees or build out a new facility.

If enacted, a rural investment tax credit would take a meaningful step towards helping SME owners in rural and northern Ontario gain access to flexible growth capital. It would allow these communities to prosper, putting more money in the pockets of rural and northern residents by supporting private sector growth.

The model for economic development outlined in our proposal has been embraced in states throughout the US, including Connecticut, Georgia, Ohio and Utah, and the foundation is in a 20-year-old federal program known as the New Markets Tax Credit. This innovative approach empowers experienced private sector fund managers to make smart investments within certain parameters set by policy-makers.

The rural investment tax credit would result in the investment of up to \$300 million in private capital administered by qualified fund managers into targeted SMEs located in rural and northern Ontario. That \$300 million of investment would have to be made within three years, and that level of investment would be maintained for the following four years.

To build this pool of capital, an incentive is required so it can be leveraged to raise the remainder of the fund. We are proposing that a tax credit be created against Ontario's insurance premium tax, one of the few taxes paid to the province. This structure enables funds like ours to raise approximately half the capital from insurance companies and then raise the remainder of the funds from traditional investment sources.

The Ontario insurance premium tax is a gross receipts tax paid by insurance companies that write premiums in the province. The credits that would be authorized under this program can only be claimed once investments in the SMEs are made. The full value of those credits would be taken over a four-year period. In other words, the proposed program would create \$300 million in upfront private capital in rural SMEs by leveraging a delayed four-year stream of \$45 million annually in tax credits, taken after the full \$300 million is invested.

The proposed rural investment tax credit includes stringent safeguards that ensure accountability, transparency and efficiency. Under the program, tax credits can be recaptured if investments do not comply with program safeguards or investment milestones, and fund managers face financial penalties if their investments fail to produce projected job numbers. Importantly, the program contains provisions that ensure a diversity of investments by capping the amount of investment any one SME can receive and encourages competition among multiple fund managers.

During the application process, fund managers would have to create a business plan for deploying the private capital managed by them. That business plan would have to project the number of jobs that would be created or retained by those investments and demonstrate through a third-party economist that, over a 10-year period, the economic impact of those investments would result in more revenue coming back to the province than authorized in tax credits. Before exiting the program, a fund manager would have to demonstrate that the fund's investments meet or exceed job projections or face penalty payments.

The approach to economic development proposed in the rural investment tax credit is designed to harness the power of the private sector to support Ontario's rural community while protecting the interests of taxpayers. This type of program provides SMEs with the growth capital they need without additional red tape, and it allows the private sector to make smart business decisions without the government picking winners and losers. Enacting a rural investment tax credit will be a meaningful signal that rural and northern areas of Ontario are open for business.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go to the government side this time. MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much, Carling, for being here today and for bringing this opportunity to our attention as part of the budget 2020 process. I know that in the fall economic statement, the government indicated using tax measures to incentivize growth and investment in rural Ontario. Can you speak to some of the success that

you've seen south of the border in rural areas, and be specific as to how you see that translating over the border here in Ontario?

Mr. Carling Dinkler: Sure. We have a program that we run in Ohio, which I think has an economy that's very similar to Ontario's. We have seen that we've been able to get money out the door within two years. The program there is targeted specifically just to rural businesses throughout the state of Ohio. We've seen investment in manufacturers.

Really, what we're trying to do here, Mr. Piccini, is find those businesses that don't get the bank capital that they need. We don't see venture funds and investing in a widget maker in rural Ohio. They may want to buy a new piece of equipment to become more competitive, to grow their market share, and to get a new customer on board.

We've been able to take our capital and make investments there. What we're really trying to find is a business that is not able to attract bank financing because of the restriction on bank lending, but they are growth-oriented and they're able to create jobs in that community. Even a 10 job increase in a rural community, we know, is a big deal.

Mr. David Piccini: Currently, what measures will be in place to prevent them from leaving rural Ontario and to ensure long-term success and economic viability that stays in rural Ontario?

Mr. Carling Dinkler: First of all, we see that once the investment is made, we hope that the company is then more established and would grow there. But while the investment is in that company, it would not be allowed to leave. It's going to help them grow their roots, but also they would not be able to take the company and move. Really, what we're trying to do is make sure that the businesses that have the opportunity to get capital by going closer to an urban area and centres of finance are actually staying in their local communities.

Mr. David Piccini: Perfect. Thank you very much. No further questions.

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The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? Seeing none, we'll move to the opposition side now. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good afternoon. Thank you for coming in, and thank you for your presentation.

I grew up in rural Ontario. My parents had a farm, a small business. I certainly am aware of some of the struggles that those businesses operate under and the need to try to keep those businesses operating in rural areas. We have seen such an outflow of economic activity from the rural areas to urban centres, and I think that's a loss for the entire province.

Just so I understand this a little bit more: What would be the average size of the capital investment that you help these businesses with? In Ohio, for example—

Mr. Carling Dinkler: We've received between half a million dollars to \$3 million of investment per small business.

Mr. Ian Arthur: And that's a loan you're providing them or—

Mr. Carling Dinkler: It's either a loan or an equity investment.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just out of curiosity, what's the interest rate on those loans, on average—

Mr. Carling Dinkler: We usually see between 6% and 8%. It's going to be a little more than a bank would charge, because this is financing that they wouldn't get. They're unable—

Mr. Ian Arthur: So in order to access the financing, they're going to pay a higher interest rate than if they were able to access it through a bank?

Mr. Carling Dinkler: Correct.

Mr. Ian Arthur: If the interest rate is that much higher than a bank in terms of creating an operating profit for your investment firm, why do you need public money to help you do that? If banks are able to do that at a lower interest rate and still have a return—I'm just curious. I'm not—

Mr. Carling Dinkler: That's a really good question.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I really do want to understand how this functions.

Mr. Carling Dinkler: These are the types of investments that the bank is not going to make, so—

Mr. Ian Arthur: I get that, but the question I'm asking is, why do you need public funds to help you do this? If you are charging more than what the bank is charging, in terms of an interest rate going into a small loan like this, why do you need the public dollars to make this profitable?

Mr. Carling Dinkler: Because if you had a traditional investor who was going to go in and make an investment in this type of business—first of all, we don't see that there are other investors who are going to make these types of investments, but if there were, they're going to charge significantly more than that. They're probably in the double digits somewhere. So the rate of return they're going to require in order to be willing to make that type of loan or equity investment, which has a higher risk profile—it's going to be more expensive than what we would be able to charge.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That makes sense. I understand that.

In terms of forgone revenue on the part of the government in order to run this, what kind of safeguards are in place to make sure that there's no decrease in delivery of services to these rural areas, which already are struggling to access the sorts of services that are needed?

Mr. Carling Dinkler: I think a really important point is, when we go in to apply for the program, we will have to show a business plan that projects out, as I said in my testimony, the jobs that we're going to create. That is then scored by an independent economist, which says that if you produce the jobs that you project, there will be a revenue return back to the province. So it goes into a modelling system that shows that there will be revenue returned. If we don't hit those numbers, then we would actually pay financial penalties back to the province to make them whole.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Interesting.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I know that you spent some time with MPP Piccini in preparation for this. I'm just curious: How far along are the discussions on the part of you and the government with this proposal?

Mr. Carling Dinkler: I would have to defer to Mr. Piccini on that. We've had conversations with a number of folks.

Mr. David Piccini: Do you want an answer? I'm happy to answer that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No, it's okay.

Mr. Carling Dinkler: We've had a number of discussions with various stakeholders.

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

BELLEVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
AND JOHN M. PARROTT ART GALLERY

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from Belleville Public Library and John M. Parrott Art Gallery. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Trevor Pross: Thank you. My name is Trevor Pross. Good afternoon and greetings, committee members and members of provincial Parliament. I know we have Mr. Joyce here representing our local member of provincial Parliament, Minister Smith. That is very welcome.

I'm representing the Belleville Public Library and John M. Parrott Art Gallery. Last year, our library and gallery had a total circulation of over 366,000 items. Over 196,000 people entered our building. We ran over 841 programs and events with a total attendance of 18,876 people.

I'm going to run through a few comments on the value of public libraries and the opportunities we provide, but we'll start with a general comment. In my opinion, the best way to balance the books and pay down public debt is to increase revenue through tax reform and modest tax increases, not through spending cuts.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, for example, in their 2019-20 budget, posted online, allocated just over \$28 million to support public libraries in Ontario. While this is very welcome and very much appreciated, this is compared to over \$614 million allocated for the Ontario cultural media tax credit program, which supports the video game industry and the movie industry. I realize that tax credits support local businesses and jobs, but I would encourage the government to reduce tax credits as a way to reduce the deficit rather than cutting spending on things like libraries and education.

If we all need to work together to balance the books, I believe tax reform and modest tax increases should be a part of this effort. That is my personal opinion.

Now I'll move to libraries, the funding pressures we face and the opportunities that we present to support government priorities. Last year's Ontario budget included maintaining strong base funding for libraries through the Ontario Public Library Operating Grant. This funding,

which in our case represents about 3.5% of our total funding, is incredibly important and is very much appreciated. It's crucial to supporting a strong library sector and assisting the municipalities. With over 93% of our funding provided by local municipalities, any assistance to libraries, and consequently any cuts to library funding, will affect municipalities. I urge you to please maintain or increase this base operating grant funding for libraries like mine.

Beyond the base funding, there's more that public libraries in this province can do to support our communities and help the government ensure that our economy is working for everyone. There are public libraries in virtually every town and city in Ontario. They provide a ready network for distribution of information and technology for all government ministries.

In our organization, we also have the amazing Parrott art gallery, which provides access to quality art for the enjoyment of all, including hundreds of schoolchildren who tour the facility every year. The gallery promotes tourism and economic growth. It helps local artists sell their wares. Many other libraries in the province are also involved with cultural activities like this.

Public libraries provide a vital, and in many cases the only, community hub for seniors, youth and families. For people who cannot afford books, computers and Internet access, libraries provide an incredibly important service. Libraries help foster early literacy and reading education, and they help new parents and children to learn, grow and interact with others. Libraries serve a vital educational function by offering a wide variety of free courses, both in person and virtually, on a variety of topics like technology, finances and health.

In our region, we have libraries ranging in size from our library in Belleville, serving a population of 51,000, to very small libraries like Centre Hastings, where they serve a population of about 4,500. What unites us is a desire to help people and to provide free educational and recreational services.

We're also united by budget pressures. We're struggling to close the gap between our current services and the services that the public expect to receive. Strong provincial funding is key to closing that gap and providing equitable library services to all Ontarians.

For example, having a good Internet connection and access to a computer is absolutely essential in today's world. I'm sure you've heard from many other communities that lack access to broadband Internet. This is a major problem, especially in rural areas. Libraries are at capacity when it comes to providing technology access and training. By investing in libraries to provide infrastructure to improve broadband Internet and technology access, the government can partner with us and get, through our network, facilities and professionals that will help people and encourage more participation in our economy.

Libraries are well suited to provide broadband Internet access for public use. If government funding allows libraries to upgrade their Internet bandwidth, wireless networks, public-access computers and technology training

programs, it will mean more people applying to jobs, taking courses and working online. This reduces unemployment and will generate more revenue over the long term.

Libraries like mine are seeing the transition to digital resources and services, and we're working hard to keep up with demand. If the province could support this more, it would help us to meet the demand in our communities for digital content.

1400

There is potential for cost savings as well, as many different libraries in schools purchase digital products like e-books, research databases and online courses separately. If Ontario supported a province-wide service delivery of these products with group purchasing, the overall savings would be substantial. Creating an Ontario digital public library could help to realize these cost savings through group purchases of digital resources.

I would also like to briefly comment on the interlibrary loan program that recently saw a change to the Canada Post delivery model. Libraries now have to pay for their own shipment of interlibrary loans through the mail. We've seen a decline in the overall usage of the system because libraries are putting caps and limits on the program.

We would encourage the government to increase funding for the Ontario Library Service, which administers the interlibrary loan program. They provide vital consulting and training work that would cost much more if libraries had to pay for it on their own. Increasing the operating funding for the Ontario Library Service would lead to more support for libraries and the interlibrary loan service.

Strong provincial funding is key in closing gaps like this for everybody. In summary, I would encourage the government to look to the revenue side and to tax reform as a way to balance the books.

I do thank the government for the vital base funding that libraries are receiving, and I encourage you to maintain and, if possible, increase that.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Sorry to cut you off. We have to go to the opposition side for questioning now. MPP Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for the presentation, Trevor. Just a quick question: I know you provided some stats and numbers on the number of visits and the number of programs. What's the total budget of your library, and also the gallery itself?

Mr. Trevor Pross: The library gallery together is one entity. Our total budget is about \$2.4 million a year.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Okay. I come from an area where I have four municipalities, and the rest are fly-in communities, in northwestern Ontario. When we talk about public libraries, it's pretty much non-existent, so it's not something our communities are used to. I'm just wondering if you're aware, of the percentage of users that you have listed, if they're First Nations Indigenous peoples.

Mr. Trevor Pross: The best source of information for First Nations libraries would be the Federation of Ontario

Public Libraries. I know that in our area, we have a very strong, large community with the Mohawk territory, and they have a really nice new library. But that is sort of an urban area, and I don't think that's the norm for First Nations libraries.

My understanding is they are struggling with funding. They're struggling with access to technology in the same way that everyone else is.

That's actually an excellent example of how broadband Internet could work. If there is even a very small library in a fly-in community like that, bringing broadband to that library would certainly help—I would hope. I don't want to speak for them. But when you're talking about a very remote community, it's going to be difficult to get Internet, so a library could do that.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Okay. We went to Sioux Lookout and also Thunder Bay—Sioux Lookout on Monday, and then Thunder Bay on Tuesday. There were some significant people from the north who presented, and a lot of First Nations as well, Indigenous people. Do you think there's a role for your library, and also libraries, for that matter, to do some type of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples within Ontario?

Mr. Trevor Pross: I think there is a role there. We have such a wide variety of services, and we're for everybody. I know the Ontario Library Association and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries do support libraries with reconciliation.

In our community, we have a relationship, but it could be improved. It could be better communication, because the one librarian in the Mohawk territory did retire, so I'm not as connected with the new one.

That's something that we definitely can support. It was the topic of a lot of discussion over the past couple of years when the report came out—the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

There's more to be done. I don't profess to be doing enough, or doing a lot in that area. But again, the libraries are a community resource—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We have to move to the government side now. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you for your presentation. What percentage of books are now accessed online?

Mr. Trevor Pross: Our digital content, which includes audiobooks, and some things like online movies and things like that, would be about 40% of our total circulation. That number is at a record high. It has gradually increased over the years. That's the number, off the top of my head. It might be closer to 35% or 30%, but it is significant, and it's growing every year. It's changing how we do things. It's bringing young people in, and they're accessing things on their phones. It's significant.

Ms. Donna Skelly: So the bricks-and-mortar experience has shifted. The experience in the library has shifted from bricks and mortar, perhaps, and we're seeing a more virtual experience?

Mr. Trevor Pross: I wouldn't say that it's replacing the community centre aspect. The bricks-and-mortar part

has definitely been changing over the past 20 years, and it's more of a community centre, but it is a vital community centre. As I say, 196,000 people entered our building. We also have an archive in the building.

We're focused now more on computer access, and lounge and recreation space, meeting space, maker space, 3-D printing. I wouldn't want to emphasize digital at the expense of the facilities, but for sure, it's not just a building full of books.

Ms. Donna Skelly: The 3D printing is something that I'm seeing a lot of libraries have incorporated into their bricks-and-mortar. But I don't know if the novelty is wearing off. It doesn't seem to be in use a lot. Would you say that it's there, but it's not as popular as it once was, when it was introduced?

Mr. Trevor Pross: We're behind in Belleville. We've got 3-D printing now, but we haven't done a lot with it, so I'm bit rusty on that.

If you just say 3-D printing, that probably is a low amount of people using it. But if you include maker spaces, as they call it—things like fabric, clothes design, book printing, self-publishing, podcast recording, businesses doing commercials, that kind of stuff—I think that's going strong. But perhaps with 3-D printing, there is a bit of a novelty to it that might be wearing off, yes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm just wondering about something that could possibly help residents in our northern communities. You could be a member of your library if you live elsewhere. Is that correct? If I wanted to borrow a book, could I just—

Mr. Trevor Pross: I just missed the last part.

Ms. Donna Skelly: If I lived in Sudbury, could I borrow a book online through your library, through any library? Or do I have to be a resident of the community?

Mr. Trevor Pross: Generally, we charge a fee for outside of the tax area. But we also have what's called an Internet card with which you could access digital stuff from other libraries. It's not technically acceptable to some of our digital content providers, because they're looking for each library to pay for that product. There's a lot of that happening, but not to the point where it's cohesive and through the province. That's where the lobbying for the Ontario digital library is, because then it would be consistent around the entire province.

Ms. Donna Skelly: That's something that would be very interesting to remote communities—

Mr. Trevor Pross: Absolutely

Ms. Donna Skelly: —that don't have access to that content. So it's an Ontario library?

Mr. Trevor Pross: There's an idea that has been developed over the past five years of this digital Ontario public library. It's the idea that everybody can access the same e-books, the same things—

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

Mr. Trevor Pross: You've got to invest in broadband.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you.

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

BELLEVILLE NURSE
PRACTITIONER-LED CLINIC

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Next, I would like to call on Belleville Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

1410

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: Okay, thank you. Karen Clayton-Babb.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present my recommendations today.

My name is Karen Clayton-Babb, and I am the chief nurse practitioner and clinic director of the Belleville Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic. I have worked in primary care for over 20 years, and I have observed the increased demand for primary care and the shrinking availability of primary care professionals. This, however, creates the perfect situation to develop and put into practice innovative models through the formation of highly effective team-based care.

One example of these models is the nurse practitioner-led clinics. Nurse practitioner-led clinics are a well-established collaborative model of care, which ensures interprofessional teams. These teams are economically feasible for the solution of primary care and positive patient outcomes. The team-based model ensures a decrease in fragmented care, a decrease in inappropriate use of the emergency room, increased patient coordination, and it aligns perfectly with the vision of the Ontario health teams.

The primary purpose of my presentation today is to make two recommendations. The first recommendation is that the scope of practice of nurse practitioners and other practitioners in primary care be maximized to improve access to primary care and end hallway health care. The second recommendation is that the government allocate additional funding for the expansion of the Belleville Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic, which will improve access to primary care for the residents of Belleville and the surrounding Quinte area.

The background by which I make these recommendations is the enormous number of residents in the area who are not attached to primary care. Although we are transforming primary care with the Ontario health teams, these residents will have no access to this improved system.

There are three major groups which we should consider a priority, and they should have urgent access to primary care.

The first group is our military families who have young children and neonates who have to sit in the emergency room for health conditions that could be better treated in primary care.

The second group is the frail and elderly patients who have to sit in the emergency room or sometimes they lay on the stretcher in the hallway of the hospital with destabilizing disease conditions, which could have been managed or prevented had they had access to primary care.

Our third group is adults, adolescents and youths with mental health conditions who are frequently admitted in crisis because they have no primary care provider to write their prescriptions or link them with social services.

Approval of additional funding for the expansion of the clinic would have positive impacts on the patients, the community, the health care system and health care dollars. Some of the documented outcomes that will be realized should funding be granted for this expansion are:

(1) There will be increased access to primary care, and therefore a reduction in the number of inappropriate visits to the emergency room.

(2) Patients with access to primary care will see a decrease in the rate of readmissions to the hospital seven days post-discharge because they will be followed in primary care.

(3) Our frail and elderly patients will be managed in the community. They will be linked to appropriate social services and supports, which will allow them to stay longer in their homes.

(4) Another positive impact is the decrease in hospital admissions of patients who suffer from mental health and addictions for crisis intervention.

(5) Lastly, allocation of funding for the expansion of the clinic will improve access to primary care, thus reducing hallway medicine using a ground-up approach.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start with the government side this time for questioning. MPP Rasheed.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: Thank you for your presentation. Sorry, can you just explain how much funding are you looking for, as you are here as part of the budget consultation? How much funding are you looking for in our budget?

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: Currently, we have immediate funding needs and we have long-term funding needs. We're addressing the \$342,000 immediately. That would allow us to employ two additional nurse practitioners, which would give us the ability to care for 1,600 additional patients.

Then we also talked about a satellite clinic for the Belleville Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic, where we would employ a full team. That would be about \$1.6 million.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Karen, for your presentation. As a member from rural Ontario, I can't underscore the importance of our nurses and nurse-led health teams that we have providing vital care for folks in my community.

Laughter.

Mr. David Piccini: I know the opposition are very giddily laughing there. They laugh when we try to cost things out, because it's a concept they're not familiar with: actually costing out programs. As a part of the budget, of course we want to cost things out.

My question was a non-cost-related issue and a legislative change. How do you feel about independent degree-

granting autonomy for colleges? One of the things we've seen is nurses leave when our colleges engage in partnerships. They've left the community, like in Belleville with the Loyalist partnership, and then we don't get them back. What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: It would depend on the reason why they leave. They are professionals. Individuals have a career path. As it is here in our local community, there is not the opportunity to grow in that career path. It may not be available here. So the intention should be to expand or increase the paths that are available for young nurses who are graduating.

Mr. David Piccini: Excellent. I echo what you're saying.

The question with the partnerships: When colleges cannot grant the degree—because, right now, you have to be a university—they partner. In the case of this partnership, the final two years require them to go to a university that's two hours away, and then we just lose them geographically. It's tough with rent, as well. You engage in rent and you're having to move. What do you feel about giving colleges that autonomy to grant degrees?

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: I think we should do that, for two purposes: (1) When they leave to complete that degree, as you rightly said, they may not return; and then (2) If they have to leave to go and get a degree, lots of them may not be able to go because of financial reasons some of the time, so you may lose them from the career totally because they're not able to complete.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you for that. I appreciate it.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Just to follow up: The \$1.6 million is for our fiscal year or budget year—

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: Fiscal year.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: The government fiscal year, right? Just to confirm.

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: Yes.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? Okay, we'll move to the opposition side now. MPP Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you very much, Karen, for the presentation. In the north, I know that there's minimal access to NP-led clinics or NP services. With the scope of practice between physicians and also NPs and RNs, there's certainly a significant difference.

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You spoke about mental health services, and also developmental services for youth and adolescents in the area. Perhaps you can share within that point on what that would look like.

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: Developing the services to care for mental health patients—

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Yes, mental health services for youth and adolescents, and also developmental services—what would that look like?

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: Okay. Currently, although we are a team-based approach, we do have practitioners

who offer mental health services. Those patients are fortunate, because they have access to the care.

In an ideal situation, you would want all of the patients who have mental health and addictions health concerns to be linked to an interprofessional primary care. What that would look like is, you would have the primary care providers, who can either be physicians or nurse practitioners, and then you'd have the mental health practitioners, the psychotherapy individuals who offer cognitive behavioural therapy. If it's addictions, you'd have staff who are trained in addictions.

So you would have that interprofessional team, so that when the patients get there, not only their mental health needs are met but also their physical needs and their social needs.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions? MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Good afternoon. Thank you.

Just so that the members opposite are aware, we spend a lot of time together, and all of us now know that Sandy worked at a credit union, and I used to be a chef, and Mr. Piccini is from rural Ontario. There are a lot of "rurals." That's what we were laughing at—not anything to do with the actual policy—because it comes up so much.

Would you talk a little bit about the family health team model and how nurse practitioners fit into that, versus actual nurse practitioner-led clinics?

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: The family health teams and the nurse practitioner-led clinics are two separate models of primary care. They are similar in that they are team-based models.

You asked the question: How does a true nurse practitioner-led clinic differ from the family health team?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Yes.

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: We differ because in the nurse practitioner-led clinics, the primary care providers are nurse practitioners. Our approach to care is different in that we're salary-based. If you take the appointments, for example, they're very flexible. We can build the appointment to meet the health needs of the patient, so that when they present to us, we see the patient as a holistic person. We can address all of their needs in the same appointment, whether it's a medical need, a social need or a mental health need.

So we are different in our approach and the comprehensive nature that we employ—

Mr. Ian Arthur: What you're talking about—there is a distinction between a capitation model of payment versus a fee for service.

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: Yes.

Mr. Ian Arthur: But family health teams are actually capitation-model service deliverers.

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: I think it's a blended model. I cannot speak to it because I've never worked in that model.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay, that's fair.

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: But I think it's blended.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay. Perfect.

No further questions, Chair.

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

Ms. Karen Clayton-Babb: You are welcome.

ONTARIO TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you will get seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. John Karapita: My name is John Karapita. I'm the director of public affairs with the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association.

Mr. Kristian Bonn: I'm Kristian Bonn, vice-president of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, and a local lawyer here in Belleville.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

Mr. John Karapita: Thank you for inviting us here today to speak with the committee. It's a real privilege to be able to share our thoughts with you as part of this process.

As we've said, we're here on behalf of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. We want to comment about auto insurance proposals, and the proposals that we've brought forward.

I want to start with a little bit of history for you this afternoon.

Under the previous government, in particular from 2010 to 2018, there were 17 separate and substantial cuts to auto insurance here in the province. After all those changes were made, what was the actual net result of that process? I'm here to report to you, as you may know, that the result hasn't been lower premiums. Just last week, the Ontario regulator revealed that auto insurance companies have received yet another rate increase in this province, the ninth consecutive time that has happened since 2017. Rates are now up by 20% in the last three years alone. Consumers continue to pay too much for their auto insurance, and accident victims get far too little. Our system, we believe, is dangerously out of balance. There is not much left to cut, frankly, and yet insurance companies want even more.

We are grateful, however, that this current government has begun a process—and that process began before last year's budget—to fundamentally fix the system. The budget last year included some important measures that, for one, would begin to restore benefits for those people who are catastrophically injured in accidents. It would restore that coverage to \$2 million, which was cut under the previous government.

The 2019 budget also brought forward important changes to the rules of civil procedure that would increase the monetary amount for trials under rule 76. This is called "simplified procedure." We supported that initiative and applauded it as a way to enhance access to justice. Currently, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, MPP Cho, has met extensively with stakeholders in his efforts to consider further improvements.

We've previously commented as well on the proposal to put an end to cash settlements in accident benefits cases.

The concern that we have here is simple. Until we address the structural, fundamental and foundational issues that permit insurance companies to bully their consumers, this proposal should be deferred.

Unfortunately, we have a system for insurance disputes that already greatly works in favour of the insurance companies. Under the current system, insurers routinely deny treatments recommended by family physicians and treating professionals, forcing injured victims to fight their insurers for basic treatment. Disputes typically take months, and all the while their conditions worsen. Until companies can be forced to provide that care, and that care is assured, cash settlements should continue to be an option that both insurers and consumers can agree upon.

I now turn it over to Kris to tell you more about our proposals, going forward.

Mr. Kristian Bonn: Thank you. We're here today, just to be clear, to offer some solutions. We've had some excellent discussions with MPP Stan Cho about what we can offer to help develop an auto insurance system that's fair and also more cost-effective. Obviously, we're coming from the perspective of injured victims, but we understand it has to be affordable to everyone in Ontario, and that's where our proposal comes in.

There are two distinct but related components to the auto insurance system. There's the no-fault accident benefits and then there's the tort law, which is the innocent victim bringing a legal action against the person who caused the injury—the at-fault driver. In our proposed system, we are suggesting we bring back more balance to the system, where innocent, injured people are permitted to sue the at-fault party for their provable losses. If they go to court and a judge and jury decides that they've suffered these losses, they should be entitled to that compensation without any arbitrary reduction.

In exchange for increased tort rights, we understand that there would be limited, mandatory, basic no-fault benefits. The goal should be, with no-fault accident benefits, to design it in a way where there is immediate and short-term rehabilitation to victims, a fast return to function, without the need for lawyers or so-called independent assessors. A basic, no-fault accident benefits policy should be much simpler and much more limited, with the option to purchase significant optional benefits, so there should be a basic level available to everyone, and then options to increase that coverage if they choose to pay more for enhanced coverage.

This goal would be modelled in a way—for those who are familiar with extended health care benefits—where your treating doctor or physiotherapist recommends certain treatment, if you've got extended health care benefits, then it's paid up to a certain limit. There are no disputes; there are no insurer examinations to test whether or not you need it. That's what we need in the accident benefits system: a system where it's streamlined where people can access care without disputes. That's really the issue, because when insurance companies dispute treatment, then it's a delayed process and system costs increase.

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This government's driver care card is an excellent proposal to streamline access to care in the no-fault claims process. We certainly encourage and support that initiative.

On the other side, there is tort law. It's only in Ontario where there's a significant reduction in a person's provable losses. For example, if an innocent person is injured in a motor vehicle crash and a judge and a jury assess their pain and suffering damages at \$50,000, what they don't know is that that is going to be reduced by a secret deductible of \$40,000. There is already a threshold—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. We have to move to the opposition side for questioning now. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have four minutes to ask questions on this complicated proposal that you're making. Can you quickly finish your comments? I do have a few questions for you.

Mr. Kristian Bonn: Sure. Thank you, MPP Shaw.

I was just talking about the deductible. We've already got a threshold in Ontario, which means you cannot sue someone for pain and suffering damages unless you can prove you've got a serious and permanent injury. That's already getting rid of any trivial or minor claims. The \$40,000 deductible is just punitive. There's no basis for that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. Going to the top of this, what you were saying and what I'm hearing from my constituents is that they're paying more and more for insurance premiums and they're getting less and less. I think sometimes it's a surprise to people who dutifully pay these increasing premiums that when they go to access what they think are benefits that will be there, they're not there for them. I think this just goes along with some of the really increasing costs that people are seeing in the affordability of their daily lives.

Can you just really narrow down for me some of the benefits that insurance premium payers have lost in the last few years?

Mr. Kristian Bonn: I can do an overview. Since 2010, the basic—first of all, I'll start with the tort. In our view, the most important one is this tort deductible on pain and suffering damages. It has gone from \$30,000 to currently just under \$40,000. Again, that is a deduction that is made on damages that have already been assessed as owing to the injured person.

And then, moving over to the no-fault system, where people are paying for contractual benefits, it started out where it used to be \$136,000 before 2010 for medical and rehabilitation benefits and attendant care. Then it was reduced to \$86,000 shortly thereafter. Currently, it's \$50,000 total. So you've got less than a third of what it used to be.

As well, the time frame went from 10 years where these benefits are payable to five years where these benefits are payable. One of the most significant changes, not just to the overall benefits, is that to dispute these benefits—if the insurance company denies them, you have no reasonable

way to dispute that because there's no way to hire a lawyer for people who aren't working. When you go to the LAT, even if you win, there is no legal cost paid. The only thing you win is to get the treatment paid for. Then how are you going to pay for someone to help you at the LAT?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's such a conundrum that I don't think people understand until they're in that position.

Just an aside—you don't need to comment on it—we've seen huge cuts to people's access to justice through cuts to legal aid, so people trying to get recompense through WSIB claims—those people are having the most difficult time getting access to justice before the courts.

For the little time that we have left, around the catastrophic claims, people are paying their premiums, they are injured in an unimaginable accident and now their costs are not being covered by insurers, which we would think because they're paying premiums, but those costs can fall on government services. Can you comment a little bit about how much cost this is for taxpayers when people now have to go to long-term care, or perhaps they need to be in hospital longer, they're not getting the services and they're not getting better as fast as they should be?

Mr. Kristian Bonn: Yes, certainly. In fact, I can tell you from personal experience, I have had some cases in that situation where the money is not available because they don't meet the strict definition of "catastrophic." Instead of getting privately paid the insurance benefits they paid for—attendant care, an OT in the home or a rehab worker—they're now using the provincially funded VON, for example, or other government services. It could be thousands of dollars a month over the course of 30 or 40 years. We're talking millions of dollars for a single individual. The catastrophic limits should be a bare minimum of the \$2 million that this government has already gone back to.

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

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

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you both very much for this. In the multitude of files we're dealing with, taking a tertiary overview of this, I understand at a very high level, and it is a complex system, but on its surface—as an elected member, I got a message just this morning from a resident in Orono whose auto insurance rates have gone up 40% and who wants to know how this is possible.

When you talk about simplifying the system—if you could elaborate a little more for me, in layman's terms, about the end goal you'd like to see, with specific reference to some of the concerns that we've also heard. Are we just paving the way for more lawyers to be involved in the system?

Mr. Kristian Bonn: Again, going back to the two systems: We'll start with the no-fault system. I think that's the one that has the most impact on the ongoing premiums. I think our system that we're proposing would reduce lawyer involvement. Even though I'm a lawyer, I'd rather not be involved in these disputes, because they take up a lot of time, and eventually, a lot of times, we don't even get paid for doing it. We do it because they're already a

client and we're working on other aspects of their case. I would love to not be involved in those cases.

Say you've got an injury from a crash and your family doctor or your physiotherapist recommends six weeks of physiotherapy, for example. The insurance company decides, after six months, that it doesn't want to pay that. It denies it. If you're a rural person, you'll usually get sent to Toronto. The insurance company now pays for your transportation to Toronto, for example, pays up to \$2,000 for an insurer's assessment—a lot of times, on a \$1,500 physiotherapy treatment plan. They could have paid it and it would have been a lot less. But what they do is they deny it, and then the insurance assessors routinely support the insurance company's position, and then you're into the dispute at the LAT, if they want to dispute, where they now hire a lawyer to defend their position, and the injured person, if they have a lawyer, then has to equalize that.

So our system is, let's choose an amount where there's no fight over it. Is it \$15,000? Is it \$20,000? Is it \$10,000? It's a smaller amount than the \$65,000 now, for sure, and that's not disputable. So you would remove a lot of those transaction costs to the insurance companies, where there are no longer these insurer examinations or disputes about treatment. That would be a huge cost savings for all the people involved.

Mr. David Piccini: You mentioned that you've had conversations with MPP Stan Cho and finance. Is there anything else you'd like us to relay? Have you achieved some of the goals and objectives there?

Mr. Kristian Bonn: We don't know if we have yet. Obviously, one of the goals was to return to catastrophic impairment of \$2 million. We think that has been a great development, so thank you for that work, for all injured victims in catastrophic.

I think the message has to be two things: one, on a broad basis, transparency, because we really can't know what's happening until we understand where the auto insurers—how much money they're making in Ontario, because they're not required to be transparent about their profits in Ontario on auto insurance. So transparency is one, as well as fixing the system fundamentally. No more tinkering with the system. Let's figure out, once and for all, a fundamental change to make it more fair for everyone.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions?

Thank you so much for your presentation.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY PRINCE EDWARD-HASTINGS

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Next I would like to call on Habitat for Humanity Prince Edward-Hastings. Please come forward.

Please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: Good afternoon. My name is Glenn May-Anderson. I am the executive director of the Prince Edward Hastings affiliate of Habitat for Humanity. We are one of 54 national affiliates, nearly half

of which are located here in Ontario. I want to thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak before the committee today.

For those who may not be aware, Habitat for Humanity transforms the lives of families by helping them achieve affordable home ownership. Our mission is to increase the supply of decent and affordable housing in order to achieve our vision of a world where everyone has a safe and decent place to live. We work toward this goal every day by engaging our local communities, mobilizing countless volunteers and fundraising through several avenues, including our Habitat for Humanity ReStore operations.

When a family transitions to home ownership in a Habitat home, there are significant impacts to the quality of their lives. Our partner families experience better educational outcomes for their children, with more of them attending post-secondary institutions and more of them graduating. Habitat partner families experience greater employment stability. After families move into their Habitat homes, the quality of their employment, employment stability and household income all increase on a consistent basis.

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Habitat for Humanity reduces demand on social housing; 37% of our partner families vacate social housing in order to move into their Habitat home. Over 70% of our partner families donate time and money to their charities and causes, becoming more engaged with their communities, and there is a 60% reduction in food bank usage by our partner families after moving into a Habitat home.

Our future success will be determined by the partnerships we build with communities, businesses, other non-profit organizations and social agencies, along with major corporations and with government and government-funded agencies at all levels.

I want to thank the government of Ontario for all the work you've done so far to improve access to affordable housing. Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act, contains concrete measures to create the right environment for developers, including non-profits like Habitat for Humanity, to expand affordable housing stock. We fully support the government's efforts to reduce the red tape and the tens of thousands of dollars that delays can cause to construction projects, and we agree that more can be done.

There remain inconsistencies in municipal planning processes that sometimes see neighbouring municipalities with substantively different planning and design requirements for the same type of housing. This makes it more difficult and more costly for us to scale up and build more homes. It would be helpful if there were some consistency to these planning requirements across the province.

We also struggle with exponentially increasing building costs. A significant portion lies in the permit fees and development charges. While we are fortunate that some of our local municipalities have been able to waive these fees, we also understand the revenue these municipalities are sacrificing in order to do so. We hope the province will consider funding these fees to municipalities on behalf of non-profit affordable housing providers, as this would

help support the municipal infrastructure that our homes and our partner families benefit from.

There are two things that our affiliate needs more than anything else: land and money. Of the two, land is actually more difficult to acquire, due to scarcity and cost. While the province has taken steps to accelerate the sale of surplus lands, we believe your current land divestiture process could be improved. We would like to see Ontario shift this process so that the creation of an affordable housing component becomes a condition of sale, so that non-profits like Habitat for Humanity are given greater access to this available land for either purchase or donation from the province.

The other thing we need, of course, is money, just like everyone else does. Believe it or not, I'm not here today to ask you for money, although I'm not going to turn you down if you offer me some. Budgets are about revenues and expenses, and not just what you earn and spend, but how you earn and spend it.

At Habitat for Humanity Prince Edward-Hastings, our expertise lies in building and repairing homes, operating retail stores, and volunteer coordination and management. Along the housing continuum that stretches from homelessness to market-price home ownership, our affiliate exists in the space where people move from affordable renting to affordable home ownership.

Yet Habitat for Humanity can actually help solve our current housing crisis in so many other ways and, in doing so, fund our own core programs that build, maintain and grow affordable home ownership opportunities.

Through our own research, we already know that a Habitat for Humanity dollar that we spend on home building and renovation turns into \$4 of community impact. Imagine our affiliate taking a dollar that the province was already going to spend—for example, on renovations or repairs to social housing, or on building and expanding the inventory of social housing in Ontario—and watching those same dollars also have that additional \$4 of community impact.

Point 5 of the five-point plan outlined in *More Homes, More Choice* is innovation. Minister Clark is quoted as saying that the province wants to “encourage more innovation and creativity in Ontario’s housing sector.” There is tremendous opportunity for the government of Ontario to facilitate a greater impact of spending dollars by building and growing partnerships with non-profit agencies such as Habitat for Humanity Prince Edward-Hastings for the delivery of construction, renovation and repair services.

We would encourage the province to investigate ways in which these dollars might be directed towards non-profit organizations that can provide needed services to other provincially funded entities.

Habitat for Humanity can also help the province build a larger skilled workforce, one that creates more skilled tradespeople who are so desperately needed across the province to help solve the current housing crisis. We are exploring partnerships with post-secondary institutions, where our affiliate organization can provide experiential

learning for college students in trades, social work, marketing, administration and retail merchandising programs. Habitat for Humanity Prince Edward-Hastings would be very interested in engaging with the province, municipalities and their funded agencies to further explore test initiatives or projects like these that we might begin to pursue in partnership.

Once again, I want to thank you for allowing me to present to you today. In closing, let me leave you with this: While many staff and volunteers who work with Habitat for Humanity affiliates across this province are focused on changing the lives of others, the first life we change is actually our own. It's our hope that through stronger partnerships and innovative funding models, we can help the province solve our existing housing crisis and, in doing so, move closer to our goal of a world where everyone has a safe and decent place to live. That starts right here.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Well, first of all, let me begin by thanking you for your presentation, and also for the tremendous work that you and your organization are doing right here in Belleville and right across the province. I think I speak on behalf of all of the committee members in thanking you for that important work.

I was interested in pressing a bit further on one point you made, when you were talking about land as something that you need desperately. You said that you had some further ideas on land divestiture policy that we could perhaps act on. Could you elaborate a bit more on that, so that we can bring that back?

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: Well, certainly. Whether it's provincially owned land or municipally owned land, we know that there are pieces of land where properties need to be torn down, or they've been taken over in tax sale situations. There can be surplus land from previous facilities. Having a component of the sale force whoever the purchaser is to have an affordable housing component either on that site, or agree to a certain number of affordable housing units on another site, or in partnership with an organization such as ourselves—we feel that that's a really good way to make sure that you're continuing to add to the affordable housing supply, while also still supporting the developers that are out there providing market-level housing and market-level rental properties.

Again, it's a question of if we build a component of affordable housing into the sale of each of those pieces of land—again, either on that site or somewhere else—we think that'll help to make sure that we don't run into the situation we're running into right now, which is the current housing crisis we're facing.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Sure. Are there any other jurisdictions that have done this, either at the municipal, provincial or state level, that you're aware of?

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: I can't speak to municipalities outside of Prince Edward and Hastings counties.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Sure.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: And I apologize—

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: No worries.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: —I've only been in the position 60 days, so I'm still drinking from the firehose a little bit. But I will tell you that I've had several conversations with several of the municipalities that are in our catchment area, and they're very open to having these discussions about ensuring that an affordable housing component is part of any land divestiture that they do. So we wanted to bring that idea forth to the province as well.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Perfect. I appreciate that. Last question, unless any of my colleagues have anything to add: I'm just curious what type of housing options you think are most needed in Ontario.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: Single detached or single units tend to be what is the most required at this point. We know that infill is taking place in major urban markets, but when it comes to rural markets and smaller markets like Belleville and like what we have throughout Hastings and Prince Edward counties, it's really semi-detached or fully detached single-family units that are the most in demand and that tend to be the issue. It differs based on the geography.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Region by region.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: In Prince Edward county, they have a housing crisis, but Airbnb has a lot to do with that. In Hastings county, we have a housing crisis, but that's because there's a lot of vacation property ownership and purchasing, but not as much support from an infrastructure perspective in smaller municipalities. So, again, it depends on where it is. But really, single-family dwellings whether they're single or semi-detached, are the ones that are the most important for us to add to the supply.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Any further questions? We'll move to the opposition side now. MPP Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for your presentation. I share MPP Roberts's commendation of the work that your organization does. The need is great and unending.

Before I ask you some very specific questions, could you take it a little bit further and describe the need? Housing, as you've said, is different in different communities. We just came from Sioux Lookout. We know that in Far North communities, they have housing that's unlivable. There's mould and there are terrible conditions there. In most cities, we have a homelessness crisis—people living in culverts and on the streets in our cities. So could you just explain to me your sense of why this housing crisis is here in Ontario and getting worse by the minute?

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: I think migration from the major urban centres is playing a large part in this. I speak often with the executive directors at other affiliates. I know, for example, that in Northumberland county, that's one of the issues that they face. Here in Hastings county, it's really that properties are not being maintained, a lack of proper upkeep, and the aging population and the fact that those people can't really afford to maintain the homes to the level that they really should be on the fixed incomes that they face.

We've had conversations with Hastings county, for example, on certain ODSP and Ontario Works situations where someone simply cannot afford the upkeep. They can't afford to do what they need to do. We're trying to look at creative solutions to help repair and fix those properties. I think it's a two-pronged problem, and that is that some of the supply, especially in rural areas, is deteriorating—the quality is deteriorating. Poverty housing is increasing. And what is being built is being built at a level that isn't necessarily affordable. There is a large chunk of the population that is a down payment away from being able to afford a house, and they just can never seem to get there.

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That's what we're seeing as the need, and we see it continuing, from a rental perspective and from a home-purchasing perspective. While we live in the affordable housing space on home ownership, we see ways to help on the affordable home rental side that can help to stream people through that continuum.

Again, to your point, you can't really look at it in isolation. It's the entire continuum of homelessness to market rent, and you've got to look at the solutions in context.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. There is no one-size-fits-all, and the market is not necessarily going to respond to all of the need.

I want to just talk a little bit—you touched on affordability. In my riding of Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, we do have seniors who are in their home, and they're finding it increasingly difficult to stay there because they can't afford their hydro rates, which are going up, and they can't afford increased property taxes. Their residential property taxes continue to skyrocket, despite the fact that they themselves are on a fixed income.

You've touched on development charges. Development charges are an important source of revenue for municipalities. Can you talk about how you see the ability of municipalities to offset the costs of development, and how that is impacting the tax base? I know that in Hamilton, it is making the taxes go up.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: In Belleville, we have very high property taxes. I would say that—and I alluded to this in my presentation—the municipalities are very nice in that sometimes they'll waive those charges for us. But they need that money for infrastructure; they need that money for other pieces. So that's why I would say to the province—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. You should be an exception, I would say.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: But that's why I would say to the province that, really, there needs to be a partnership with the province and municipalities to help support that infrastructure.

The building that we need to do to solve the housing crisis, even if we snapped our fingers today, we couldn't do, because we don't have the infrastructure to support it, from a sewage and from a water—from that infrastructure perspective.

I don't know the solution to that problem; I wish that I did. But I think there has to be a serious investment in that infrastructure, and giving the municipalities the ability to build that, so that we can then work with them and build more affordable housing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, I would agree with you. The idea that development pays for itself never really held water, and it's getting even more difficult when the taxes are being borne by residential taxpayers.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: Correct.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's a complicated issue.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: Yes, it is.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There's a huge continuum. You've done an excellent job of trying to illustrate the whole scope in the short time that we have here. Thank you very much.

Mr. Glenn May-Anderson: Thank you very much.

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

NATIONAL ELEVATOR AND ESCALATOR ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenters are from the National Elevator and Escalator Association. Please come forward. Please state your names for the record, and you will get right into your presentation. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Christian von Donat: Great. My name is Christian von Donat.

Mr. Richard Mullin: Richard Mullin.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

Mr. Christian von Donat: Thank you, Mr. Chair and honourable members of the committee. Good afternoon. I'd like to begin by expressing our thanks for the opportunity to appear before you today.

As indicated, my name is Christian von Donat. I am joined by my colleague Richard Mullin. I am the public affairs spokesperson and lead for the National Elevator and Escalator Association, which we also refer to as NEEA.

NEEA proudly represents the four large manufacturers of elevating and escalating devices globally and in Canada. Those members are Kone, Otis, Schindler and Thyssenkrupp.

NEEA has been an association in Canada since the early 1970s. Over the past five decades, our industry has undergone tremendous advances in innovation and modernization. Our members continue to drive innovation and technological advances within the elevating industry, aimed at delivering the best possible experience to the riding public. Safety remains the number one principle in our industry—safety both for the riding public and for those who install and service elevators and escalators. Each member holds the highest standards in order to ensure the safety of all, and we are proud of our safety record in the province.

NEEA and its members have been an integral part of Ontario over the last number of decades. The growth and continued success of the province is tied to the innovative

and reliable products our members offer, as well as the high level of professionalism and expertise demonstrated across our workforce to meet the needs of buildings across the province. As Ontario grows more and more vertical, our members and their teams have been meeting the needs of builders, residents, building owners, businesses and the general riding public. We look forward to continuing to be a key part of this province's growth.

Mr. Richard Mullin: We have seen from recent job data for 2019 that Ontario leads Canada in economic growth. Thanks to efforts by this government, the economic conditions to operate a business and serve the public continue to make Ontario a great place to live and work.

By fostering a sustainable economy, the success and evolution of our communities will lead to the continued success of our industry. Our members are proud of the services they offer across this province and advocate for policies that incentivize new sustainable development, attract business to the region, and continue to strengthen the conditions that make Ontario a supportive environment for businesses.

Like this government, we support policies that tackle the need for more housing in the province and new housing that will address the ongoing affordability and accessibility challenges for many Ontarians. We believe that as buildings are made taller in order to accommodate more housing, appropriate considerations must be given to ensure that an adequate number of elevators are installed to service the public in these buildings. The needs of the residents and the riding public must be anticipated, for those with accessibility concerns, for moving in and out, and for recurring preventive and normal elevator maintenance in order to ensure the continued safe operation of units.

Bringing forward legislation establishing a traffic analysis framework would align Ontario with other global jurisdictions and make a meaningful impact in this regard.

It's also important that as more individuals and families move into high-rise living, we consider the needs of individuals with accessibility concerns. Many individuals and families are excluded from access to housing due to limited access to proper and safe transportation devices. All manner of residential buildings are being developed with an inadequate number of elevators to service the residents, which prevents those with mobility issues from living in the communities and buildings they may desire.

Mr. Christian von Donat: With this in mind, we recommend that the government ensure it has ongoing plans in place to ensure that the transportation systems of public buildings are modernized and meeting the needs of those they serve. This would include hospitals, schools and universities and public offices that deliver services.

As an association, we ask this government to ensure that as it develops programs and policies targeted towards Ontario's vertical communities, NEEA and its members are consulted in these developments. We have a strong working relationship with the regulators and officials across this country, and Ontario is no exception.

In late 2019, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services announced plans for substantive consultations on the future of the elevator industry in this province over the coming months. We commend the government for taking these steps to address ongoing concerns in the industry and to ensure that our province is fostering a positive landscape for both businesses and the riding public. I'd be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank Minister Thompson for the work that her office has been doing in this respect.

The National Elevator and Escalator Association is looking forward to working with Ontarians and continuing to bring innovative transportation solutions to this province, creating the infrastructure and systems for residents to feel safe and comfortable and ensuring businesses have the tools they need to succeed. There is no limit to what we can accomplish together, and we look forward to those exciting possibilities.

Thank you for your time today. We would be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start with the opposition side this time. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for your presentation.

In Hamilton, we've had Otis Elevator since we had Studebaker. So we have the long history of Otis Elevator and understand that that industry is important. At the time, it was an advanced technology. Now we just take it for granted. Most people don't even question what the cost is, how they function—unless you're in Queen's Park. There are some questions about how those elevators are functioning in Queen's Park.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Or yesterday.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. Yes. We're just having a few jokes at the expense of your industry.

What I wanted to ask is about residential development and vertical communities—a new expression for me; I like that. It is absolutely true that in large developments—it seems like elevators are either undersized or there are not enough of them to meet the needs of the number of units that are in these buildings. So just help me to understand this: Are you asking about building codes that would ensure that there are bigger, faster and more elevators in these residential developments that are huge in Toronto? They're massive.

The second thing is, who's paying for that? Is that going to be passed on to renters, is it going to be passed on to condo owners, or is it something that would be absorbed by developers? It seems like something that everybody would want, but I think the question is, where is the resistance going to be?

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Mr. Christian von Donat: Sure. Thank you for the question. I would start by saying, first of all, that Otis did invent the elevator, so we know that they've been around for a long time, given that information.

You raise a very good point. That's part of the reason why we're here today. This is an issue that is only getting worse as the price per square foot of building vertically—more so, perhaps, in places like the greater Toronto area

and other certain urban centres; we're seeing it in Hamilton and whatnot.

Right now the issue is that if a building owner decides to construct a new development, they could build a 50-storey building and they would ask an elevator consultant to prepare a mathematical proposal of how many elevators they would put into a building. That consultant or that elevator firm would come and say, "Okay, you should have six elevators." At the end of the day, though, there is nothing to say that the developer can put in two elevators. So part of the cost-benefit trade-off analysis for a building owner would be to say, "How can we maximize the space that we have to lease, rent or sell? How much space do we want to put an elevator shaft through every floor, and how many of those do we want?"

What we've been advocating for, with the idea of introducing a regulation for traffic analysis, is that in most of Europe and in many parts of Asia, the Middle East and other jurisdictions, there is legislation in place that would give a mathematical formula based on whether it's a residential building or a hospital, how many people you're moving and how many floors. You can calculate exactly how many elevators you should have. There is this international standards organization, ISO, guide that has been developed, in part by our experts in Canada with our member organizations, that we follow in the UK and in other jurisdictions. For us, we would very much welcome the idea of saying there needs to be some kind of a standard in place within the building code to say that you need X number of elevators.

These days, we're seeing this issue—not just in residential buildings, but we're seeing in new hotels that used to have service elevators, now they have less elevators for the public and all of the service staff have to use those same elevators. We see it time and time again in different areas. Obviously, residential is part of the huge concern.

We remain really interested in looking at this issue of traffic analysis legislation because we think that it will make a big difference. This would be the first place in Canada to implement it, but it is being followed elsewhere in the world.

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

We have to move to the government side now. MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much, Christian and Richard, for being here today for this important issue. I know we all talk about being rural Ontario MPPs, but from time to time we find ourselves in the city and certainly echo the concerns of many in the GTA over getting up and down, specifically in condominiums. I know a number of friends of mine and others have voiced the concern.

We recently held a round table with Minister McNaughton on the skilled trades piece and the discussion around some of the challenges with developers and the industry association. I know there is a narrow scope of expertise in this industry and it's tough to move beyond that.

One of the issues that emerged from that was on data. I'm wondering if you would commit today to engaging

with government and some of the stakeholders on transferring the data on outage and outage times. One of the big barriers in that discussion was on just getting data on outage times. Has anyone undertaken that or is this something we could look at doing in the coming months?

Mr. Christian von Donat: It's a great question. I think that this has been an issue that has come up now for several years in our engagement on the topic. The TSSA does collect a limited amount of data around elevators, but they don't have all the information.

One of the things that was launched with this new consultation through the department of government and consumer services was an effort to look at how we can better collect data and work together both as a regulator and with industry to see how we're analyzing and collecting data. For us, we are very much supportive of that because we are confident that our data has continued to show that entrapments, as an overall level, are down in the province year over year. We have data going back 10 years to show a lot of positive trends that might refute what people anecdotally are hearing about the industry.

The biggest concern that we have around data collection is that it be done in such a manner that is not a major cost burden to our members. There is definitely a way forward on this. We just need to make sure that we can work out a method that everyone can follow, that's easy to submit data and that is not creating additional red tape we don't need.

Mr. David Piccini: Definitely, and I would echo that. The intent isn't to create additional red tape.

I know moving beyond anecdotal evidence, but certainly what we hear across the board from GTA MPPs, and members of the opposition too, is not that one is entrapped in an elevator, but that traditionally it takes an equal amount of time to walk home as it does just to get up your building to your floor. I think it speaks to your comment on standards.

But I'll turn it over to my colleague.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I have one question. We hear time and again that there's a skill shortage, and one of the areas where the largest gap is in your industry. Is that true?

Mr. Christian von Donat: It's a really complex question. As the "big four," as we call them, elevator manufacturers, we all draw our labour pool from the union. We all work with the same union. They're the ones who onboard folks in the labour process, and we hire through their union halls, right? It is the independent elevator contractors, the third-party folks out there who are a bit smaller companies out there, who would be able to hire at their own.

For example, the only elevator program in Canada is at Durham College. They only have 25 spots a year. They're always in high demand. It's a huge program, but we can't hire those individuals because we have to go through a specific process in hiring and bringing on additional folks, so—

Ms. Donna Skelly: There is one starting at Mohawk in Hamilton as well.

Mr. Christian von Donat: That's exactly right, but everyone in Canada wants those spaces, and companies

will come and try to buy every single person. But again, we can't access that labour pool. It's a bit of a longer conversation because of the nuance around the union/non-union balance in the province and how we access labour, but it really depends who you ask. We don't feel like there is an issue around labour right now, so—

Ms. Donna Skelly: So there are enough elevator technicians?

Mr. Christian von Donat: In our opinion, we don't have a problem—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. That concludes our time. Thank you so much for your presentation.

CANADIAN SOLAR INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from the Canadian Solar Industries Association. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record. You can proceed with your presentation. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Nicholas Gall: Good afternoon. My name is Nicholas Gall. I'm the director of policy and regulatory affairs with the Canadian Solar Industries Association. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be with you here today, and thank you for conducting these thorough consultations. I understand that it's the most consulted budget in Ontario's history, and we're certainly very pleased to be part of that.

Just for a bit of background: CanSIA was founded in 1992. We work on behalf of almost 300 member companies, including manufacturers, installers, project developers, engineers, consultants and a variety of other companies that directly contribute to solar projects here in Ontario and across Canada.

CanSIA strongly supports this government's Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, which emphasizes investment, competition and innovation. We believe that solar has a critical role to play in lowering electricity bills for Ontarians, creating local jobs and empowering consumers through choice.

First, at the outset, I would like to say that we are not here to ask for any subsidy. The global average cost of solar has fallen by approximately 90% since 2009. Last year, Alberta's Ministry of Infrastructure public procurement auction obtained 94 megawatts of solar at an average price of just 4.8 cents per kilowatt hour, which is cheaper than natural gas generation. That's why our industry is seeking red tape reductions and market access, not incentives or subsidies. Specifically, we would like for this forthcoming budget to address three key regulatory barriers to the growth of the Ontario solar industry.

(1) Enable third-party ownership of solar: The current restriction on third-party ownership prevents households and businesses who may lack the upfront capital to purchase a rooftop solar system from leasing a system from a third party in order to benefit from these savings on their electricity bills. It also prevents innovative businesses from offering these types of solutions in Ontario.

Third-party ownership models are proven and well established throughout North America and Europe, and there are many options available for ensuring that consumers are protected.

We are aware that removing current restrictions on third-party ownership of net-metered generation is a particularly high priority for Ontario's class B commercial and industrial consumers, who do not have access to the ICI program, and we see this as a major opportunity to unlock savings for those consumers.

(2) Enable virtual net metering: Virtual net metering, also known as community solar, enables consumers of all types and sizes who may lack access to a suitable roof, or any roof at all—for example, people living in apartment buildings—or who may lack the upfront capital to invest in a solar system of their own to purchase solar electricity credits without the need to install a solar system on their home or business. The solar energy can be generated at a suitable site near the consumers, where it makes sense for the local municipality and where it provides the most benefit to the electricity grid. Again, virtual net metering is a tried and tested model that delivers real savings for households and businesses.

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Lastly, remove the 1% net-metering cap: Right now, the Ontario distribution code section 6.7.2 permits local distribution companies to restrict net-metered solar energy to 1% of the distributor's peak demand. This limit was arbitrarily set by the OEB in 2005 and is not supported by any evidence or industry best practices. We believe that this arbitrary 1% limit is fast approaching in several LDC areas, particularly around the GTHA, and once it's reached, consumers in these regions will be needlessly prevented from connecting rooftop solar to the grid.

We therefore recommend that your government launch a review of this section of the distribution code, with a view toward replacing the 1% limit with one based on evidence and reflective of technological advances in solar PV system monitoring and control.

Right now, the government of Ontario has an opportunity to make simple, common-sense regulatory changes that will empower Ontario families and businesses to make a choice on cheaper, safer and reliable forms of energy. Ontario has already taken major steps forward with the environment plan in supporting businesses that invest in clean tech and lower energy bills. Ontario's solar industry continues to urge the government to go further in cutting the red tape that is preventing businesses and families from taking advantage of the energy cost savings that solar technology can deliver.

We strongly believe that enabling third-party ownership of solar and virtual net metering, and removing the arbitrary 1% net-metering cap, will empower families and businesses across Ontario to lower their bills and create thousands of new jobs in the skilled trades.

Thanks very much for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll go to the government side this time. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you for your presentation. Let's talk about third-party ownership. How does it work? I thought we had it.

Mr. Nicholas Gall: We don't. Yes, you would think that.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Because there are an awful lot of people knocking on the door, saying, "Can I put a solar panel on your roof? We'll pay you X amount of dollars."

Mr. Nicholas Gall: Okay. Well, perhaps. My sense is that that would probably be illegal, or certainly of questionable legality.

Currently, the framework just doesn't exist in the existing codes and regulations to permit that. If companies are setting out to do that before that's clarified—certainly, no CanSIA member companies would do that. I'm not personally aware of that. Right now, there just isn't the clarity in the regulation that would enable that to happen.

Ms. Donna Skelly: How would it work? Do they do have to be on the grid? How does it work?

Mr. Nicholas Gall: I guess you could do it without a grid connection, but that would be very rare. Essentially, a company would offer to install the solar, and from the savings that would accrue to the consumer, they would take a small percentage of that as an incentive for them to offer that service. The consumer would rent the system, and the benefit would accrue to them in the form of reduced demand for grid electricity.

Ms. Donna Skelly: And there's no subsidy from the government?

Mr. Nicholas Gall: That's right. This is totally separate from the microFIT program which formerly existed. In this case, the savings would be purely in terms of your reduced demand for grid electricity.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Interesting. I believe MPP Rasheed wants to—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: You talked about red tape. Can you further elaborate on what sort of red tape you're talking about over here?

Mr. Nicholas Gall: Yes. First of all, there's no clarity in existing regulation over whether it's possible to offer the third-party net metering I was just describing.

Secondly, it's impossible to offer virtual net metering, which is where, for example, a ground-mount solar site can be located a few hundred metres or perhaps further from the consumer, and the consumer can rent the benefit of that panel located off their property and earn savings that way. That's a model that's very common in a number of jurisdictions around the world. It's not yet permitted in Ontario, though I understand this is something the ministry is actively exploring and we certainly support that.

Lastly, the LDCs are currently allowed to restrict net meter generation to 1% of the load within their area. There's no evidence for why that limit should exist. It's not a safety issue. It's not a technology issue. It's purely arbitrary.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Have you submitted your findings to our associate minister, Prab Sarkaria?

Mr. Nicholas Gall: We have, yes. Hopefully we'll be meeting with Minister Sarkaria soon on this.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thanks for coming in. I think you know where the NDP stands on net metering and virtual net metering. Our position really hasn't changed on that in a long time.

What I want to talk about is the potential of solar. We have seen the cancellation of a significant number of renewable energy contracts, both wind and solar, which I know has had a negative impact on your industry and many of the people who make up your industry. I've talked with many of them. New contracts for them are grinding to a halt, so I understand very much why you're looking for new opportunities to bring solar to market.

I want to talk a little bit about the cost. You quoted here the 4.8 cents per kilowatt hour, which is, frankly, tremendous and very hard to compete with in terms of other generation, other than perhaps wind. Projections I've seen say that within a decade we're looking at one cent per kilowatt hour in the US for solar.

Mr. Nicholas Gall: Quite possibly, yes. In places like California, New Mexico, that is certainly achievable.

Mr. Ian Arthur: How far down do you think we can get here in Ontario?

Mr. Nicholas Gall: I'm not sure, but I think there are significant cost savings that can still be realized. A rule of thumb is that every year the cost of PV modules falls by around 7% to 8%.

Mr. Ian Arthur: There aren't many industries like that, are there?

Mr. Nicholas Gall: You're right. Solar is remarkable in having had those really consistent year-on-year decreases. The technology is improving, so you're able to derive more power from one module, and it's getting cheaper to make those modules.

Mr. Ian Arthur: My understanding is that they actually last longer, as well.

Mr. Nicholas Gall: Yes. People used to think 20 years was the maximum; we're now seeing 30 to 40 years.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Based on our energy mix that we're currently using in Ontario, do you think it's possible, if we include nuclear and hydro, for us to move to 100% renewable energy?

Mr. Nicholas Gall: I think it's absolutely possible that Ontario could move to 100% non-emitting electricity within the next decade. There's no technological limitation.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for coming.

Mr. Nicholas Gall: Thank you for your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you so much for your presentation.

BEEF FARMERS OF ONTARIO

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We'll now call forward our next witness, from the Beef Farmers of Ontario. I'll get you to start by stating your names for the

record. You'll then have seven minutes for your presentation, and we'll give you a one-minute warning before the end.

Mr. Dan Darling: Good afternoon, folks. It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for the invitation. My name is Dan Darling. I'm a director of Beef Farmers of Ontario. Joining me today is Katherine Fox, our manager of policy and issues.

I'll just start off by saying that I'm also a beef producer not too far from here, so thanks for coming to meet me—rather than me having to go meet you guys.

The beef industry is an important economic driver in Ontario's agri-food sector, contributing \$2.69 billion to Ontario's GDP on an annual basis. Gross sales from the sector exceed \$13 billion annually and sustain more than 61,000 jobs. There is significant opportunity to build on these contributions.

A recent report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates that the global beef trade will increase by 25% by 2023. Strong demand for Ontario beef puts us in an excellent position to take advantage of new growth opportunities.

However, for more than a year, Ontario's beef industry has been in a state of uncertainty and duress. Trade and market access barriers, a shortage of processing capacity and, most recently, the closure of Ryding-Regency Meat Packers, one of the largest beef processors in eastern Canada, has only amplified the seriousness of the current situation.

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This critical processing capacity shortage is threatening the viability of the entire Ontario beef value chain. On average, farmers have lost more than \$200 per animal since the beginning of 2019. Collectively, beef cattle farm losses in the province exceeded \$150 million in 2019. On the cattle feeding side, the industry is losing more than \$2 million per week, on average. This is simply not sustainable.

We ask that the Ontario 2020 budget include financial resources, in partnership with the federal government, towards the development and implementation of a beef cattle investment and assistance program, to help Ontario beef farmers mitigate the harm of recent market disruptions and the lack of processing capacity.

In addition to a beef cattle investment and assistance program that would help Ontario beef farmers mitigate the harm of recent market disruptions and the lack of processing capacity, we would request an increase in Ontario's investment in the Ontario Risk Management Program, or the RMP, for short.

RMP is a cost-shared insurance program designed to help stabilize the industry by providing partial financial protection for Ontario farmers against global downturns in commodity market prices by providing assistance when market prices fall below a participating producer's support level.

RMP fills a critical gap for livestock commodities, like beef, that are not protected by the supply management system or access to other effective farm support programs, like crop insurance.

RMP is a made-in-Ontario solution that addresses shortcomings in the national programs. We would like to thank Premier Ford for his campaign commitment to increase the cap on the RMP by \$50 million annually, and the NDP and Liberal parties for their own commitments to increasing the funds for this critically important program.

It is vital for the Ontario beef industry, during this time of economic loss and turmoil, that the \$50-million commitment be brought forward in 2020, so that the RMP is better able to assist farmers in times of severe financial hardship.

Bringing forward this commitment to 2020 would represent an excellent investment by the province. A 2015 study by Harry Cummings and Associates found that every \$1 invested in the RMP results in \$2.24 in positive economic activity.

In addition, the study found that 62% of participating producers indicated the program had a positive effect on their decision to hire or maintain employees.

Ms. Katherine Fox: The third item we would like to raise is the need to open up crown-owned land in northern Ontario for agricultural expansion.

Like you, we want Ontario to be open for business by creating and protecting jobs. Unfortunately, the current process for accessing crown land for agricultural production is anything but open. Limitations on the amount of land that can be accessed, what activities can be permitted, and the overly burdensome and lengthy approvals process—which can take two years or more for a farmer to complete—eliminates potentially massive opportunities for agricultural growth in the north.

Land is the single largest cost in the establishment of a farm. Every decade, we are losing over a million acres of farmland to development, and the land used for beef cattle—pasture land and hayfields, environmentally valuable grasslands—are being lost at an even higher rate.

To address this concern, we ask that a dedicated, transparent agricultural application stream be created for access to crown land that allows for transfers of sufficiently-sized parcels of land, so farms can quickly achieve economies of scale.

There are almost 200 million acres of land in northern Ontario, and 16 million acres of land in the Great Clay Belt, which is land that is ideal for beef farms. Having environmentally sustainable pasture- and forage-based farms on just a fraction of these acres will provide new opportunities to new, young and expanding beef farmers.

We bring this request forward as part of the Ontario budget 2020 consultations, as a dedicated agricultural application stream for purchasing or leasing crown land would generate revenue for the province.

Developing farms in northern Ontario is the most significant economically sustainable plan for the region. Committing to develop the north through agricultural expansion will help spur growth in sectors like the beef industry, generate economic returns for the province and increase Ontario's food security.

Lastly, we need to find new ways to assist farmers in the establishment or re-establishment of perimeter

fencing, which will create new opportunities for growth in the beef and sheep sectors and for other farm operations looking to incorporate livestock grazing.

Other jurisdictions support livestock farmers with fencing programs to deter predators, assist with expansion, improve land and promote new income streams for grain farmers; so, too, should Ontario. We hear year after year from our members about the need for a fencing assistance program. It could be an allowable project activity under the existing federal-provincial Canadian agricultural program. A province-wide, cost-shared program would have immediate impacts on the rural economy by supporting local supply businesses as well as farmers.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): I'm afraid I'll have to cut you off there.

Ms. Katherine Fox: That was perfect, thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We're going to have to move to questioning. We'll start with the opposition. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just have a couple of questions. You talked about the recent market disruptions. Can you describe what those are?

Mr. Dan Darling: It's a vast array of market disruptions. Firstly, we depend greatly on export to sustain our industry. There are disruptions from China not taking our product, Saudi Arabia, the uncertainty of our US trade deal—now, hopefully, that's out of the way.

More recently, we still have BSE risk status, which we are below the US status on. We had hoped that would change, which would allow us to get into countries like South Korea, without segregation. CFIA, unfortunately, missed the window of opportunity to apply for that early judgment at WTO, and so we will have to wait another year. That's also putting us at a disadvantage.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well—do you have a question, Ian?

Mr. Dan Darling: I could go on.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. Also, I just want to talk really quickly—to understand the scope of your challenges. You're talking about losing a million acres a year to development. Is that, essentially, that farmers have found it too difficult to continue, given some of these challenges? Is that how this land is being lost?

Mr. Dan Darling: No. A lot of land is being appropriated by expansion of highways and the building of lots. There are lots being taken off for subdivisions, cities expanding. The producers, quite frankly, can't pass up on what they're being offered—many of whom don't want to stop farming, so they have to look someplace else. That's why the north is a critical option for them.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your presentation. In terms of the market factors, I know that MPP Piccini wants to ask a little bit about process and capability. We've had a couple of conversations about the need for more small abattoirs and the ability to transition what few still exist to new generations of operators.

You talked about a lot of external, outside factors. How is the beef industry preparing for or dealing with the

pushback against beef that's happening with the younger generation of eaters?

Ms. Katherine Fox: I think that's an important question. There's a lot of discussion about beef. There's a really good story with the Ontario beef industry. Across the province, there are family farms. They provide jobs. They contribute to the economy but also the environmental value of those lands. I think that we have a really good story to share about that. That can help us sustain our industry with the future generations, who understandably have questions.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just expanding on that, because I do understand some of their criticisms and what they're saying: Is there a need to distinguish between pasture-raised and the environmental impacts of those communities versus feedlot beef?

Ms. Katherine Fox: No, I don't think so. I think that all beef in Canada depends on grasslands, regardless if it has the last period of its life in a feedlot or whether it's out on a pasture for its whole life; either way, they're depending on forages. Hay is eaten by the cows for their entire lives. Feedlots are actually a very sustainable option, because there are fewer resources needed for those cattle to reach market weight. There are multiple ways that beef can be produced—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): And I'm going to have to cut you off there.

We're going to have to move to the government side. MPP Piccini.

1530

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much, Dan and Katherine, for being here today and for the work you do on a day-to-day basis to feed our cities and to feed our country. I'm really proud to come from rural Ontario, where agriculture is the backbone of our economy.

My question is on processing. I'll start with processing capacity, if you could just extrapolate a bit on that. Is this a question that we need more processing and we need more programs to fast-track people on labour so that people have the skill sets required to process? Talk to me a bit. I want to take a bit of a deeper dive on that.

Mr. Dan Darling: That's a really good question and lengthy to answer, but I'll try my best. Locally, for the smaller abattoirs that our smaller producers rely on, there is a shortage at those local abattoirs on skilled people to further process those animals. There are no schools, to my understanding, in Ontario that offer a course for killing, for further processing of animals. They would have to go to Olds College, Alberta, in order to get that. That's on the smaller side.

On the larger side, for our bigger plants like the Cargill plant in Guelph, their issue is labour, period. They can't get enough labour. When they bought that plant years and years ago, their thought process was to put a second shift in which would have a lot more jobs, but they can't get labour. If they run a shift on a Saturday, they don't get labour there on the Monday. So it's just a sheer labour problem for a lot of these bigger plants, like the Cargill plant.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much. The program you talked about to support farmers and mitigate the market disruptions—have you costed that, but a rough cost to that, what you estimate?

Ms. Katherine Fox: I think that we have numbers for what the loss has been, and we have costed some numbers. What we would really like is a commitment for the provincial government to come to the table to discuss what the number would be, covering perhaps 70% of the loss from 2018-19. Of course, that is separate from the second ask we talked about, which is the \$50 million to RMP.

Mr. David Piccini: Yes, the RMP. Definitely, I hear you on the RMP. That's a promise the government made, and one we fully intend to hold.

Sorry, back to that piece there on the loss. I know, obviously, engaging in the discussion around the loss—that's not something we want to see—am I correct in saying that the cause for that is on the market, and if we could send one message to our federal counterparts, one message to the agriculture minister, what would that be?

Mr. Dan Darling: That the issues have been derived by things completely out of our producers' hands. Because of that—and we are going to them for an ask, as well—they need to step in and help our producers with some type of a program, or putting money in the existing program that we have now, federally, to help our producers out. In recent years, they've cut back on that program to the point where, really, our producers can't access it. There's no money for them. They need an influx of money.

Mr. David Piccini: And just quickly: If we were to make a bit more of an investment here, would we see this spin off—can we be a titan on the world stage with respect to our beef exports?

Ms. Katherine Fox: Yes.

Mr. Dan Darling: Oh, absolutely. I think right now, about—I heard the other day—60% of the product going into Japan is Ontario product.

Mr. David Piccini: It's Ontario product.

Mr. Dan Darling: So, for sure.

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

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you so much for your presentation.

Mr. Dan Darling: Thank you.

Ms. Katherine Fox: Thank you.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): I would now like to welcome our next presenters, Children's Mental Health Services. Good afternoon. I would ask that you begin by stating your names for the record. You'll have seven minutes for your presentation. We'll give you a one-minute warning before the end.

Ms. Susan Sweetman: I'm Susan Sweetman, CEO of Children's Mental Health Services for Hastings and Prince Edward.

Ms. Nancy Kodis: I'm Nancy Kodis. I'm a mother of a child that has had to use the service.

Ms. Darien Kodis: I'm Darien Kodis, and I'm the child.

Ms. Susan Sweetman: I want to start today by thanking you for inviting us to speak today about the needs for investment in services that serve children and youth in our province. We're talking about kids: your kids, your friends' and families' kids, kids in your neighbourhood and kids that you're responsible for as MPPs in this province. Children's Mental Health Services is a lead agency for Hastings, Northumberland and Prince Edward counties. We oversee the planning and delivery of core mental health and addiction services for children, youth and their families through five transfer payment agencies across our service area.

We're one of 33 lead agencies across Ontario that make up the lead agency consortium. We meet monthly in Toronto, bringing together the entire provincial child and youth addiction and mental health service sector. We meet monthly in Toronto with each other, as well as with our ministry reps, with the purpose of improving the entire provincial mental health system for children, youth and their families. As a consortium, we want an exceptional system of mental health services for all children and youth in Ontario, and this also means a system that works for parents and the community partners we work with, like schools, health care professionals, child welfare, justice etc. We're starting to make great progress.

Our current state right now is that Ontario child and youth mental health services provide mental health services to more than 120,000 kids and their families every year, but across the province thousands of them are waiting up to 18 months for treatment they need.

Seventy per cent of mental health and substance use problems begin in childhood, and your best return on investment is investing in services for children, particularly when effective treatment can change the trajectory of their lives.

Strategic investments of an additional \$150 million a year will enable us to hire and train another 1,400 front-line professionals, to ensure that families have access to counselling and psychotherapy within 30 days. It will also expand the specialized youth mental health and addiction services to ensure that children and youth get the treatment they need. And it will allow us to scale a 24/7 crisis support service to ensure that kids and families don't have to go to the emergency department when they're in crisis.

There are some additional ideas and solutions around investments that we have from the sector, which we think are really important. Some of the additional things are:

- improve transitions for youth by increasing the age that they can be served from 18 to 25;
- introduce a common brand of child and youth mental health centres across the province for easy identification for parents and those in the community;
- simplify access by leveraging existing resources and work already being done with the emerging Ontario health teams, which we are part of;
- scale digital solutions that include the ideas of digital counselling and things like that, which help when there is

geography and different constraints where there's not service right in the community; and

—develop and implement a quality and data strategy, and develop and implement an equity strategy for funding—so this goes back to the funding formula—to ensure accessibility for all.

Our kids are our future, and our families can't afford to wait any longer.

Now I'd like to introduce you to Nancy and Darien. They came to Children's Mental Health Services probably a year and a half ago—maybe it's longer—seeking service. I really want them to tell you first-hand what the impact of waiting is on parents and on youth. So I'm going to turn it over to them.

Ms. Darien Kodis: I had been struggling for a long time before I actually decided that I wanted to get help. It's already hard enough, but then you finally get the courage to step up and go forward to get yourself the help you need to succeed in life, and then you find out that you have to wait. The waiting thing is fine; I was able to deal with it. During that time frame, though, it was really hard for me because I noticed, for one, that going to school was so difficult. I really like to get good grades, I really like to do all that stuff, but going to school was just so hard because I couldn't even deal with my own battles. I even notice that with my friends now. Sometimes it's just so hard in that waiting period. You feel like you've tried so hard to even get where you're at, just to be let down almost in a way of "Oh no, now I'm just like another person who has to wait," where it's almost something that's kind of urgent, because you're losing your relationships with your friends.

1540

Especially when you're a teenager, I feel like experimenting is a huge thing. I find that a lot of people turn to drugs just to aid what they're missing. To have that in place so that there isn't as much of a waiting time, at least, I think that a lot of people would still have—I don't know; I guess their childhood would be normal and they wouldn't have to turn to drugs and alcohol. Maybe instead of that time of losing hope, I feel like the hope would still be there, because you don't even have time to think about it that much.

Ms. Nancy Kodis: As a parent waiting, it's really frustrating—I'm sorry to cry—to watch your child going through that. Mentally, it's just really—you're afraid of them committing suicide.

The one call I had to do was that I phoned to see if I could get her into a counsellor, and they made me wait three weeks. We had to make an appointment just to get an hour-long phone conversation—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I'm sorry; I apologize to cut you off.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Please continue.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): The government side has given their time to continue.

Ms. Nancy Kodis: Okay; thank you.

It was an hour-long interview on the phone with my daughter to see if she qualified to be seen by a counsellor.

From there, it took another two weeks or three weeks for her to see the counsellor. In that time, my daughter—she could do anything in that time.

That was already a month and half, and then I didn't hear from anybody after we had that conversation. Then finally, about three or four months later, we got a phone call that she was accepted into Honeywell House. Then she had to go for counselling for that too.

In the meantime, before I even found out anything to do with that, it was six months to find the right people to talk to. Just to get the phone numbers—when I did talk to people, they're like, "But they're everywhere." The phone numbers are up on walls and they're up in different spots, but you don't know that. There is so much other information out there that you don't go to look on a wall for a phone number for counselling.

If there could be something maybe put in place where you would train people that there is one phone call to make, and then they are maybe taught or whatever to actually give the people the proper direction where they need to go, then it's major.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. MPP Piccini, do you have a question?

Mr. David Piccini: A quick question. Thank you very much for coming today. We often hear from service providers and business owners, but the most impactful is hearing from people and their stories. You've got a mom who cares and a daughter who has gotten the supports through amazing agencies. I can't thank you all enough, of course, for the work that you do on a day-to-day basis for the people of my community. I appreciate that.

Upstream/downstream: Your standardization piece, I think, speaks to some of those concerns about what number to call. A little more standardization: I take that point and we'll take it back.

Looking upstream, government looked at some of the social and emotional well-being and expanded that into the HPE curriculum from grades 1 to 8—in addition, 180 new dedicated mental health employees in the schools, and doubled the funding.

Talk about some of those supports and the important role that that can play and what else you would perhaps like to see upstream in schools.

Ms. Susan Sweetman: What that has done, though, that investment in education—in certain areas, what has happened is that education, whether it be local or what have you, has come to work with Children's Mental Health Services and contracted with us to put professionals in the school. Where that doesn't happen, there's a disconnect. We don't know what they're doing. They don't know what we're doing. Are they properly supervised? Are they actually providing treatment that is evidence-informed? Do they actually have qualified people to be delivering the service?

What you'll find is that the dollars that have gone into schools often don't—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sorry. I apologize to cut you off again. We have to move to the opposition side now.

MPP Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you very much, Susan, for bringing Nancy, and of course, Nancy, for bringing your daughter. I'm an MPP from northwestern Ontario, and our youth struggle with mental health issues and a suicide crisis. I think bringing Darien here brings—a system where you give a voice to the voiceless, which is youth. Thanks for coming.

Over the holidays, our communities in my riding—First Nations communities, fly-in communities—suffered significant losses through deaths by suicide of youth.

We travelled on Monday and Tuesday to Thunder Bay, and we were able to hear some of the stories about the struggles for access to services for adolescents.

I'm also here, as an MPP, to serve all people. I will continue to be your voice at Queen's Park with respect to provision of mental health services for children and youth.

I'm wondering how we can work together, moving forward, as a province, to make sure that there's equitable access to mental health services for children and youth. Do you have any ideas? I know you outlined the things—and another question would be about the children's mental health services: What is the provision of services for Indigenous people?

Ms. Susan Sweetman: Your first question is around equity. How the funding formula is set up right now is that it's predominantly based on child population. The problem with that that you find in the north, that you find even where we are, because geographically, if people understand how big and broad our service area is—our child population is dropping, but we have one of the highest rates of drug and alcohol abuse. We have one of the highest rates of suicide. We have a high, high rate of poverty. The problem, if your only factor is child population, is that you're getting it wrong, because we can't continue to provide the same services that are needed. Just because our child population is dropping, it doesn't mean that the kids who live here don't have those needs. It's the same with the north. When you know how much it costs to go from place to place, the travel, the time, it really diminishes the amount of service that you can deliver when that's not even accounted for in your funding formula.

So I think the funding formula itself is flawed, and that's where it needs to be re-looked at. It's not about something outlandish; it's considering those pieces that all of you know is an issue in your own ridings.

Ms. Nancy Kodis: The farming community has less kids because they're in bigger areas, as well. We heard from women in Picton that they fought to get help for their children and they had to search high and low. So to go by—

Ms. Susan Sweetman: Just numbers of kids.

Ms. Nancy Kodis: By numbers—they still have the same issues.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry. I apologize to cut you off again. That concludes our time. We really appreciate you coming for the presentation.

1550

ONTARIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is from the Ontario Public Transit Association. Please come forward. Please state your names for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Karen Cameron: Thank you. My name is Karen Cameron, with the Ontario Public Transit Association.

Mr. Paul Buck: I'm Paul Buck. I'm the manager of transit services for the city of Belleville.

Ms. Karen Cameron: I'd like to start by thanking the members of the committee and the Clerk for inviting the Ontario Public Transit Association to this Ontario pre-budget consultation. Paul is here today with me to help me answer any questions from a transit system perspective.

The issues facing the public transit industry are the same issues that are facing all Ontarians. About 42.6% of all transit trips in Canada in 2018 were taken in Ontario. The province represents the largest hub of public transit infrastructure in the country. OPTA represents 70 of Ontario's transit systems, from some of the smallest to the very largest.

Investments in public transit are a key policy tool to combat climate change and reduce road congestion, but most importantly, grow the economy. Transit is the most effective and affordable way to move large volumes of people through limited urban space in Canada.

As we begin a new decade, we must learn from the past and look to the future, to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead. Ontario can do that by focusing on the expansion of programs that have been successful in growing public transit, and investing in transit infrastructure for the coming shift to lower- and zero-emission fleets. There are transit systems in Ontario that have experienced double-digit growth in ridership, in the last five years in particular, so that is an excellent example of the success in public transit.

Today, I will go over our three recommendations: expanding the dedicated public transit fund; developing a plan and a funding mechanism to meet the federal government's new transit electrification targets; and taking action on the Auditor General's recommendations for safety in the transportation sector.

Ontario's gas tax funds for public transit program, which I will be referring to as the dedicated public transit fund, is a best-practice program that provides the capital and operational funding that Ontario municipalities rely on to deliver some of the best transit services in Canada. OPTA's members account for 98% of all of the transit funding in Ontario.

The case was made in 2017 for the Ontario government to double the fund incrementally over time from two cents per litre, of the 14.7 cents of gas tax, to four cents of that 14.7 cents, owing to consistent annual increases in transit ridership since the program's inception in 2005. The doubling of the fund was cancelled in budget 2019, pending an ongoing review of the program.

When the fiscal situation permits, a reversal of this cancellation would support municipal governments to continue to invest in transit operations which, in turn, increase service frequency and reliability and lead to more transit use. This provides an affordable mobility option for commuters, and gets our economy moving.

According to the Toronto board of trade, congestion in the GTHA area is estimated to cost the economy roughly \$6 billion per year, and this figure is set to increase to \$15 billion by 2031.

Ontario residents have the longest average commute times in Canada. We transport, on average, up to 40 times more people in a bus or a train than a car, and use far less road space doing so. Moving people from cars to transit relieves our clogged roadways, eases congestion, shortens commutes and boosts economic productivity.

A recent study that analyzed decades of infrastructure investment patterns in Ontario concluded that investing in transit has had the largest long-term impact on GDP growth of all infrastructure asset classes. Each dollar invested in transit infrastructure grows the economy by \$29 over its life cycle. Each additional \$1 million invested in transit creates 107 jobs in Ontario.

Evidence shows that building transit infrastructure clusters economic activity by increasing population density and reducing vehicle trip distances. This not only shortens commutes and expands economic productivity but also impacts on the labour market and economy by connecting workers to employers and businesses to customers.

Electrification: The federal government adopted policies in December 2019 to encourage the shift towards zero-emission transit buses and rail systems. Beginning in 2023, the procurement of non-zero-emission vehicles will be restricted, and federal investments in transit will instead support the procurement of 5,000 new zero-emission transit and school buses by 2025.

Though this ambition is welcome, the task is daunting and transit systems require support to help achieve these goals. There are currently no coordinated federal-provincial policies to help fund the required on-road and in-facility electric charging and associated zero-emission refuelling infrastructure necessary to service green fleets.

We call on the Ontario government to work with Infrastructure Canada, Natural Resources Canada and our industry to develop a funding program and a plan that will meet Ontario's needs in transitioning to zero-emission transit fleets.

The 2019 report by the Auditor General of Ontario recommended that the Ministry of Transportation analyze the difference in pass rates between the driver certification program and those at Drive Test centres to determine whether they are reasonable and, where relevant, identify instances that require follow up or corrective action.

The report also recommended that the ministry study and report on the potential road safety benefits of mandatory pre-employment and random drug and alcohol testing for commercial vehicle drivers to reduce the risk of

collisions involving commercial vehicle drivers under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Road safety is the most important priority for the transit industry. We recommend keeping the DCP in place and ask the government to consider the transit industry as separate and distinct from the trucking industry in its review.

With regard to the other safety measures, we support the Auditor General's call to study the safety benefits of mandatory pre-employment and random drug testing for train and bus operators—

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

Ms. Karen Cameron: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll have to move to the opposition side for questioning. MPP Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much. I appreciate your presentation here today. I'm from the city of Hamilton. We recently were disappointed to learn that the planned LRT project has been cancelled by this government. Really, what you're presenting here is why the city of Hamilton was supportive of building the LRT. It was seen as a way to combat climate change; it was what we saw as good, green infrastructure. More importantly, your discussion about how this would grow the economy was something—the decision to invest in the LRT was based on an economic uplift. I notice here that what you're saying in this is that for every dollar invested in transit infrastructure, the economy will grow by \$29 over the life cycle of the investment.

Given that this was our argument for why the LRT was the right transit solution for Hamilton—it was green transit; it would grow our economy—we're now faced with having to, I suppose, go to plan B on what was a long-term study for an LRT. Can you comment on some of what we see as a loss to our city when we lost the LRT funding?

Ms. Karen Cameron: Yes. On behalf of OPTA and the Canadian Urban Transit Association, we are also disappointed when any project goes off the rails, so to speak. We always advocate that local councils—they know their city. Hamilton and other cities are doing the right planning. Professional planners are involved in assessing projects and prioritizing those projects. We're calling for an approach where higher orders of government respect the local planning.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that.

The second part of your presentation I want to focus on is the issue of the gas tax—what did you call it?—the dedicated public transit fund. We've been hearing across the province from municipalities that are struggling with a lot of the downloading costs from the province; we'll probably get to see a lot more when it comes to public health and child care provisions. Municipalities are struggling to provide these essential services. Public transit is an essential service.

The promised gas tax increase and doubling of the gas tax was something that municipalities were counting on to offset the costs they are facing to try to deliver public transit to their residents, which is, in some way, the only

way residents can get around in certain communities. It is an essential service, this public transit. Can you just help us to quantify the loss to municipalities when this promised increase to support public transit was lost to municipalities?

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Ms. Karen Cameron: Thank you for the question. We haven't yet received the allocation amounts for this year, the 2019-20 gas tax allocations. The review is going on, so we used 2018-19 numbers. Last year's was around \$350 million to transit systems across Ontario, so the doubling would have brought it close to \$700 million. The beauty of that gas tax funding is that it can be used for operations. When we analyze and look at municipalities that used most of their gas tax for operations as opposed to capital projects, those are the ones like Belleville that have seen 20% to 25% increases in ridership, because people will take transit that is frequent and reliable.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Absolutely. There are certain routes in Hamilton, for example, that are more travelled, but there are certain routes that are expensive to maintain. We have an escarpment in Hamilton. We have people on the mountain, the west mountain in Hamilton, who have a very difficult time accessing public transit as it is now, and this loss of this investment in public transit will only make it—

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

We need to move to the government side now. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I have to carry on on the LRT, and I just have to say my side of the story. I was quite—I wouldn't say "pleased," but I wanted to share that I support the government's decision to say that the billion dollars couldn't go towards an LRT at that point, because it was short \$2 billion. Just to put it on the record, Hamilton never qualified for higher-order transit; we don't have the ridership.

The great news is that we now have—probably the only city in Ontario—a commitment for \$1 billion to build what I'm hoping will be the greenest transit system anywhere in North America. We can buy all electrified buses. We can put buses on the roads to go to all parts of our city, up and down the escarpment, and actually provide an integrated transit system. The LRT would have taken people on a very, very short defined route and wouldn't even have come close to bringing people across the city, so I think that this is actually a blessing in disguise and I think that we're going to have a state-of-the-art transit system that will work for all residents of the city of Hamilton. A billion dollars is an awful lot of money, and I don't think it's something that we see every day in other communities, so I'm quite pleased.

I also want to say, don't forget, talk to people in Ottawa about their LRT system. They're not too happy right now. In fact, I think that they're even buying cars.

I just wanted to put that on the record. We have an opportunity, and we're going to have the greenest, best transit system everywhere with this billion dollars.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions? MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: I had a question, just building on what you said about the province respecting lower tiers. I absolutely take that. I take guidance from our lower tiers. I would also put a word of caution back, though, that from time to time lower tiers engage in what is fundamentally provincial planning, GO Transit and other things, spend tax dollars on studies that are best left with Metrolinx and look to transit infrastructure before really defining the core investments.

To speak to one core within county and within municipal investments, we just recently took steps to have a greener fleet of buses in Cobourg through the ICIP program. I was wondering if you could comment on the ICIP program. You said there are no programs; ICIP and the Green Stream is an opportunity for all three levels of government. I've challenged my municipalities to work together to say, "Rather than our own, let's come together and look at a county-wide initiative."

Can you speak to that? The project was nominated—unfortunately the feds haven't come to the table with their portion yet, but we're certainly hopeful soon; there was an election. Could you speak to that stream, the ICIP Green Stream?

Ms. Karen Cameron: Yes, thank you for mentioning ICIP. It's a very important source of funding. It is strictly capital funding, whereas the gas tax can be used for capital or operations. That flexibility, we certainly appreciate.

I wanted to pick up on something that MPP Skelly was talking about: There are lots of ways of delivering good transit. Bus rapid transit routes are nice, a great way to go from frequent service to a dedicated service. Look at the TTC and what they did on King Street. They turned that into a subway overnight without it having to be LRT. LRTs are not the only way to do that.

ICIP is delivering some great projects. There's a lot of electrification. Municipalities are starting that journey with electrification using ICIP funding.

Mr. David Piccini: I look forward to that. Coming from rural Ontario—we've increased accessibility, barrier-free, which was key for Port Hope and Cobourg, and certainly utilized that stream.

I do think that across the board, it behooves us, irrespective of political stripe, to work together at all levels to increase public transit across this big and vast province.

I appreciate your presentation today. Thank you.

Ms. Karen Cameron: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. That concludes our time as well. Thank you so much for your presentation.

POVERTY ROUNDTABLE HASTINGS PRINCE EDWARD

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I would next like to call Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward. Please come forward. Please state your name for the

record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Cathy McCallum: Cathy McCallum.

Thank you to the committee for this opportunity to speak with you today. I represent the Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward. We work to eliminate the causes of poverty in our two counties by building the capacity of our community to work together to plan for and implement strategic, long-term solutions that result in fair and equitable opportunities for all. We share the government's goal to help lift individuals out of poverty.

While poverty is complex and cannot begin to be discussed in seven minutes, I want to address two aspects requiring urgent attention and on which progress could be made in the coming year. These are housing for people living on a low income, and social assistance.

Like other parts of the province, we have an incredible lack of available and affordable rental housing. The face of homelessness in this community has become so much more visible: people living in tents out behind Walmart; large numbers of college students sharing a house or apartment because there is nothing else available. There are more and more people in our community with nowhere to go, no place to call home. What do you do when it's winter and it's cold and you have no place to just be?

Our new 21-bed emergency shelter, the Grace Inn, opened in Belleville last month and is full. While the shelter helps to provide a sense of dignity, safety and mentorship to those facing desperate circumstances, it is temporary accommodation.

People living on a low income need access to permanent, affordable housing that allows individuals and families to reach out to the community-based supports that enable them to meet their basic needs and move toward becoming self-reliant. In our community, virtually no housing is affordable for those on social assistance.

Low incomes and high shelter costs are key contributors to precarious housing and risk of homelessness, exacerbated by a chronic lack of housing that is affordable for those with low income. So we ask that you work with other levels of government to increase the supply of purpose-built housing. We need both social housing and affordable housing for people on low income.

I have provided a written report, Precarious Housing and Risk of Homelessness in Hastings County, which was produced here in the fall of 2019 and describes factors that contribute to the risk of homelessness. While it's a local report, it provides valuable information to inform realistic planning and policy to help prevent homelessness.

The second area I want to address is the need for a social assistance program that promotes well-being and dignity for all Ontarians.

There are two main concerns regarding social assistance: single-adult poverty, and changes to eligibility for ODSP.

While we have made progress in reducing child poverty, we have not made progress against single-adult poverty. The greatest increase in poverty is among singles, both those on social assistance, and working singles with low wages and precarious employment.

For a single adult on Ontario Works, their total annual income, including any federal or provincial tax credits and benefits, is \$9,646. That's per year—annual. While there are different possible measures of poverty, this is only 45% of the market basket measure, or only 40% of the low-income measure, so this is very deep poverty.

How can a single adult turn things around with \$733 per month to cover rent, food, clothing, transportation and all other expenses? How much is left for a bus ticket, a tube of toothpaste or a bottle of cough medicine?

As a result of inadequate benefits, people on Ontario Works and ODSP live in substandard, dangerous housing and rely on food banks and other charities, or they go without. Raising the rates is the right thing to do because everyone deserves the ability to feed and clothe themselves and to live with health and dignity.

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We ask that you provide income for social assistance recipients that reflects the real basic costs of living, including housing, utilities, the cost of a nutritious food basket, transportation and communication, such that an individual may plausibly expect to take steps to become employed and move out of poverty. There is little hope of doing that when one can't afford rent or food.

In last year's budget, the provincial government announced plans to take \$1 billion out of social assistance programs, representing an 11% reduction in spending. This cut would have catastrophic implications for the well-being of those who rely on social assistance.

We are deeply concerned about the possibility of narrowing the definition of disability. This would significantly deepen the poverty of persons with disabilities—people who already have higher living costs and disability-related employment barriers. Moving them to Ontario Works would only increase the OW caseload and would not support positive outcomes for recipients. It would cost the government far more in health care and other costs than it would save in reducing benefits and administration costs.

We ask that you maintain the current definition of a "person with a disability" for the purposes of eligibility for the Ontario Disability Support Program.

For those who are not at a point in their life when they can take advantage of employment services, Ontario has previously announced its intention to provide wraparound supports to help vulnerable social assistance recipients address barriers and access employment supports. Recipients have been calling for such services for many years. Done correctly, the provision of wraparound services, like mental health and addictions supports, child care, housing and life skills, will provide the supports people need to respond to traumatic and difficult situations that lead them to apply for social assistance.

We ask that you ensure sufficient funding, inter-ministerial collaboration and administrative alignment so that Ontario Works and ODSP recipients receive wrap-around services, such as child care, housing, mental health treatment, addictions treatment and employment supports necessary to achieve their personal goals.

Thank you for hearing our requests.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start with the government side this time for their questioning. MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much for your presentation today. You've hit on a number of topics. Unfortunately, these four minutes never give us enough time, but I'll touch on a few things.

Obviously, in More Homes, More Choice, we've really signalled an approach across ministries to address this. The status quo isn't working, with a ballooning number of Ontarians on OW or ODSP. We need to address some of the underlying causes and work to support them.

You spoke about collaboration and alignment, and that really struck a chord with me. In my first year in government, just wrapping my head around the system—let alone someone who's in a vulnerable position, who has been laid off, who's suffering with mental health issues or who has a disability. If it takes their elected member that amount of time to really get their head around the system, I can't imagine what they're going through. Thanks to organizations like yours and others, there are supports there.

With the employment services revamp in Ontario and the pilot projects, we're looking at how to better service people with those wraparound supports. Do you have any advice or recommendations you'd like to provide government on who's best positioned on the front lines to provide that?

Ms. Cathy McCallum: With a lot of the employment services that exist, it's probably taking advantage of the expertise that's there and that has been developed—and making sure that it's not an intention to cut the funding, but it's an intention to look at how the services can best support an individual. Keeping the individual at the centre of the decisions that are made is really important.

Mr. David Piccini: I completely agree. We know that there will be those who will never be able to work and need to be provided the supports that they need, but there are those, as well, who have—I think of a neighbour of mine who has back issues, and it's more temporary and seasonal. Helping to support them in finding gainful and meaningful employment, I think, is vital and key in those wraparound supports.

Can you talk a bit about—I know in More Homes, More Choice, we responded to recommendations from Habitat for Humanity. You've talked about non-profit in builds. I see them playing an important role. Correct me if you feel I'm wrong, but the deferred development charges for non-profit builds and doubling the time frame to defer that out in More Homes, More Choice—can you speak to the importance of that and following your recommendations from Habitat for Humanity?

Ms. Cathy McCallum: I think that's really important. Our local council had a summit on housing early last year and came up with some really good recommendations around what the municipal level can do.

We also have some really good examples of private-public partnerships here, and some housing that also provides supports for people who require support, to be successful in their housing and in employment. So I think there are some really good examples to learn from.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much. I'll turn it over to my colleague.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: During your presentation, you mentioned other levels of government partnering up with your organization. Can you help me understand how the federal and municipal governments are helping you in this program?

Ms. Cathy McCallum: In poverty reduction generally, and certainly in looking at affordable housing, the federal government has provided some funding that provincial and municipal governments can add to, to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: How much is that funding that you have received from the federal government?

Ms. Cathy McCallum: I can't tell you that offhand. I'm not directly involved in the housing.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Okay. Perfect.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much, Cathy, for your presentation. I'm from Hamilton, and we have had the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction for a number of years. I possibly think we were one of the first in Ontario to start that. There are significant challenges. We have a significant problem with poverty, particularly child poverty, as you mentioned, in the city of Hamilton.

I want to focus on education. One of the successes that the city of Hamilton has determined is that if we can ensure that generations have access to education, it might help to lift families out of poverty and to break the cycle of poverty. It's one of the reasons why we are concerned that some of the changes this government has made to access to post-secondary education may make it more difficult for kids, especially kids coming from low-income families, to access post-secondary education. Do you have any comments on that?

Ms. Cathy McCallum: I would certainly agree that education is important. When we look at poverty, we look at the causes of poverty, and that would be things that fall in the category of social determinants of health. I focused today on housing and income. Others are food security and education, of course. Education is another really important way to help lift people out of poverty and help prevent poverty.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, and thank you for that. I certainly would agree with you, and that's what we feel in the city of Hamilton, where we are rallying around. We have the City School trying to get kids in the lower-income neighbourhoods to understand that Mohawk College is an option for them and that McMaster, our university, would be an option for them. Ensuring that kids continue to have more access, not less access, to post-secondary is something that we're working on in the city of Hamilton.

I will take your point that you were focusing on income, and particularly around the Ontario Disability Support Program. We too share your concerns that changing the definition of "disability" will deepen the levels of poverty for people in the province of Ontario.

I can't not mention this: It is disturbing to hear that the best social program is a job. Martin Luther King said it's a cruel jest to tell a man with no bootstraps to pull up his boots, and that's how we see it.

I guess what I would like to know is, how hopeful do you feel that this government won't change the definition and disentitle many people from ODSP?

Ms. Cathy McCallum: I'm very hopeful. I feel that perhaps that plan was put forward before truly understanding the impact that that would have on people with disabilities in our community.

I also like to refer to the words of Nelson Mandela—that poverty, like slavery and apartheid, is not natural; it's man-made. It's a choice that we make, and we can choose otherwise.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think we'll end it there. That was well said. Thank you very much for your presentation here today.

Ms. Cathy McCallum: Thank you.

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

1620

THREE OAKS FOUNDATION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is Three Oaks Foundation. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: My name is Sandy Watson-Moyles. I'm the executive director of Three Oaks Foundation. Thank you for providing me with this opportunity today. It's very much appreciated. I did provide a package of my presentation and the further recommendations.

Three Oaks Foundation provides shelter and services to women and their children who have experienced violence against women. We have been providing service to Hastings and Prince Edward counties for 36 years, and in fact are the only shelter funded and mandated by MCCSS to do so in this area.

Along with the emergency VAW shelter, Three Oaks also provides second-stage housing, community counselling and outreach, children's outreach, transitional housing, court support, and public education and awareness.

During the last fiscal year, Three Oaks provided safe shelter to 209 women and 110 children, even though our funded targets are only for 130 women and 65 children. Of those women, 84 were assessed as high-risk and five identified as victims of human trafficking. There are no additional funds that are provided when the targets are exceeded, and no additional funds are provided for human trafficking, even though we have provided direct service for years. It's important to note that we are only a 16-bed shelter.

We have sufficient funds to provide \$16,100 in groceries for the entire year. That includes hygiene products, formula and diapers for babies, and cleaning supplies. That equates to \$1,006 per bed for an entire year. Divide

that by the number of days in a year and that allows us to spend \$2.75 per bed each day—on February 29 this year, we have zero dollars to spend, this being a leap year. Clearly, this is insufficient, so we fundraise for basic needs.

Our sheltering services are single-staffed, so along with providing direct service to the women who live in our shelter, that person is also on duty to be responsible for answering our crisis line. Last year, we had 1,702 calls on that line.

When victims of human trafficking are admitted, we must go on high alert, and staff are not permitted to come on the grounds between shifts without calling in first. This may seem extreme, but when the police were called to attend to a van with heavily tinted windows that was sitting directly across the street from our shelter and found five associates of the trafficker in that van waiting for us and the victim, I can assure you it is not.

Our second-stage housing receives no ongoing funding from any source and relies on rent-geared-to-income amounts. With mortgage, utilities, repairs and maintenance, as well as some dedicated hours for minimal staffing, we are unable to meet those requirements fiscally—so we fundraised to help 21 women and 11 children last year in transition to find safe, affordable and permanent housing.

I tell you all of this as you will see that this government gets no greater value for its money than it does from the services of women's shelters. Shelters have, since the beginning of time, operated on less than shoestring budgets. Our funding formulas are archaic and inconsistent, with no one knowing the real rhyme or reason of how and why a shelter is funded.

The need to fundraise without the ability to pay for a fundraiser puts added strain on already strained staff. In our case, we must raise, on average, \$150,000 per year. That is more than \$1 for every man, woman and child who lives in our catchment area. Although we did receive some in-year money this year from MCCSS, which is much appreciated, it does fall short of the actual need and is not annualized. Therefore, it cannot be committed to ongoing programs and services.

A few years ago, the government provided funding to increase some salaries after a multi-year freeze. Unfortunately, it was only to cover the front line. As a union shop, this meant that the burden to fundraise increased to meet the same increases for staff who are not funded by MCCSS but by other ministries, or those staff not considered front line or an agency-funded program. It created such a problem with wage compression that my managers now make 50 cents an hour more than the staff they supervise. Because we could not bear any more fundraising, the managers were unable to receive the additional increases. We are well below the sunshine list, and those increases still wouldn't have put us near it.

Also, it has been years since the agency has seen any increases for utilities, repairs and maintenance, yet as homeowners yourselves, you know that these costs have continued to grow. We have to fundraise to make up these differences.

During all of this, the issues faced by our clients who experience mental health and addictions have placed the shelter in difficult situations, keeping in mind that we are single-staffed. MCCSS put standards in place which were much needed and called for; however, the impact of some of those standards without the funds to support them is also making shelter work very difficult. For example, we cannot ask a woman to leave who hasn't found housing. Knowing what we know about the housing market being slim to none, this creates an issue of women having to stay longer and others not being able to get in.

Shelters and services across the province are efficiency machines. We can and will make it happen, which, unfortunately, I think has been to our detriment to date. Since shelters began, no government has taken on our cause and recognized the need to fully fund our services. Many of us are still on the old 80-20 split, meaning we have to fundraise 20% of our base budget, and that's from 36 years ago.

Ontario has over two million women and children who will either experience or be exposed to gender-based violence. However, MCCSS only receives \$166 million annually to address this problem.

During the SARS epidemic, an emergency was declared by the province, and the then Minister of Health estimated the cost to be approximately \$945 million. Yet in 2019 alone, 37 women and children died because of violence against women, and those are only the ones who could be confirmed. There are some who would say that the money spent on SARS was preventive, but imagine how many lives women's shelters could save if we were adequately funded and had resources.

Because of this, we are asking that, during your budget deliberations, you recognize this and make this government the first government in the history of women's shelters to commit to fully funding our much-needed and valuable services. As well, I would encourage you to seriously consider the recommendations of OAITH, which I have attached and provided for you.

In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. I do not envy your tasks. Shelters have been providing service officially for over 40 years—

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

We'll have to move to the opposition side for questioning. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for coming in and for making such a strong case.

Reading some of those numbers—I mean, \$2.75 per day per bed is quite shocking to read. There's not a lot you can do with \$2.75 a day.

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: No.

Mr. Ian Arthur: The fact that you are stringing it together on that sort of budget is remarkable and admirable, and thank you for the work that you do.

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just in terms of—I'm sure the government will also get to it—what exactly—you're asking

for an update of the policy or a standardization of the funding formula for women's shelters or—

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: Sort of all of the above. I think it's important that we look at the difference in the funding models from shelter to shelter and see where we can make things more standard so that people can answer questions when they're asked. Nobody truly knows how decisions have been made in the last 40 years, and they've changed depending on the situation. You could have two 16-bed shelters that opened at different times; one has tens of thousands of dollars more than the other, but there's no rhyme nor reason why.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That's remarkable.

MPP Shaw, do you have anything you'd like to add?

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Certainly. Thank you for your presentation. The numbers you've presented are shocking. I mean, \$2.75 per day for women who are in crisis is unbelievable.

I also would like to focus on the total budget of \$166 million to address this growing and significant need for women and children in crisis. For me, it speaks to the priorities of this government. We've seen a government that has essentially wasted a lot of money. They spent about \$220-plus million to cancel green energy contracts. That's a waste of money that could have doubled, essentially, the funding that you have in this need. I share your concern that this is something that doesn't seem to be a priority for this government and that the funding is wholly inadequate.

1630

My question, very specifically, to you would be: The funding has always been special project funding, and I'm of the opinion that women aren't projects, that they shouldn't be funded this way. Can you talk a little bit about how project funding continues to destabilize organizations in the way that you're trying to deliver much-needed service to women and children in your communities?

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: Sure. Any funding is always welcome, to be clear on that. We're always excited with that. But there's some kind of irresponsibility that comes with only project funding, because you're allowed to offer what is a much-needed service during the time that the project is funded, and then it's pulled away when the funds run out. It makes it very difficult to have sustainable programming.

But if I could also address this—in the history of women's shelters, no government has taken this cause on. So it's important that this committee, from our point of view, stand up and say it's time that women's shelters were taken seriously.

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

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you so very much for coming here, and thank you for all the great work you are doing.

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: Thank you.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I truly appreciate it. On behalf of my colleagues here, thank you very much.

How much funding is your foundation looking for, as part of this budget consultation?

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: The reality is, we have to fundraise approximately \$150,000 a year just to break even. That's to present a zero budget. So that amount would help.

But the numbers—we'd really have to sit down and look at options and possibilities. Because the second-stage housing funding was reintroduced, that would also increase our ask as well.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Based on the notes that I'm going to prepare and everything, if the ministry asks me, "Kaleed, how much funding is Three Oaks Foundation looking for?", what would be the number?

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: The magic number for me, today, would be \$150,000.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It's \$150,000.

MPP Roberts, do you have a question?

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Yes, I just wanted to jump in. Thank you so much for your presentation. I've had the chance to meet with the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, alongside Minister Dunlop. I think we've met three times now.

There are two things that I might get you to touch on. Number one, you spoke a bit about how you get amazing value for money out of women's shelters—if you could expand on that a little bit.

Then the other piece I think it's important to get on the record is the important work that you're doing in children's services as well, that often goes undiscussed because we talk about women's shelters. If you can elaborate a little bit more on that as well, that would be great.

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: Sure I can. To address the first part of your question, if you were to look at budgets of shelters and compare them with other services—not equal but equitable services, through other funding streams and other ministries—you would find that women's shelters are really quite dynamic. There are not many other residential services that are providing food, and all of the other things that come with it, for \$16,100 a year. So that's one area—just one area—that we can certainly say that we do very well in. But as I said in my presentation, I think that is sometimes to our detriment, because then we continue to do it and we continue to do well, and, frankly, I think we get ignored.

The second part was, you were asking about the children's programs. We know that three to five kids in every classroom in this province are witnessing violence in their homes. It's pretty hard for Johnny to concentrate on math when he watched his mother get the crap kicked out of her the night before. If we don't address those issues, and we don't address the support that those children need, we're not going to end this insidious problem.

Our shelter has a child witness program. We encourage moms with children to recommend that their children come, and refer them to our program. They are child-centred, child-specific counselling and support programs for children who are witnesses.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much. I appreciate all the great work that you're doing here in the community.

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

Ms. Sandy Watson-Moyles: Thank you very much.

HOSPICE QUINTE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our last presenter for the day is Hospice Quinte. Please come forward. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: Jennifer May-Anderson. I'm the executive director for Hospice Quinte.

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak on behalf of Hospice Quinte today. I would like to thank the government for its current support of hospice palliative care. This community-based programming is really a true partnership between government and grassroots donors and volunteers.

"Hospice" is a scary word for most people. The ends of our lives are not what we want to talk about or think about. That's often why I have to answer the question, "What is hospice?"

Hospice palliative care exists at the intersection of health and social care, by providing medical, psychological and spiritual care, as well as a variety of other supports, for terminally ill people, their families and their caregivers. Community-based hospice palliative care is funded jointly by the provincial government and our local donors.

What does talking about hospice palliative care have to do with the budget? To put it plainly, if the government is serious about ending hallway health care and improving the patient and caregiver experience, then we need to get the dying people in our province out of the hospitals. Right now, far too many people are spending their last hours, days, weeks or, in some cases, even months in hospital beds or hospital hallways, simply because there isn't enough community-based care for them to stay at home, which is where people want to be.

Some 80% of Canadians say they would rather die at home; sadly, 67% die in hospital. The next-best option to spending their last days at home would be a bed in a hospice residence, but there aren't enough of those either, so dying people take up beds in acute care hospitals at an astronomical cost to taxpayers, when there are options that are much more cost-effective.

Just this morning, on the news, CBC released an investigative report outlining the challenges faced by Ontario hospitals every day. The report states that on any day, one out of six hospital beds is occupied by a patient who does not need to be there but cannot be safely discharged home. Lengthy waits for long-term-care spaces are the chief cause of that, but a lack of available home care and other

forms of continuing care, which would include hospice palliative care, also contribute to that problem.

Hospices can help the chronic bed shortage at hospitals and work with the government to end hallway health care. We are poised and ready to take on end-of-life care for people in Ontario.

Right now, all across our province, 16,000 specially trained volunteers help over 20,000 terminally ill people stay at home and out of hospital, while also supporting the well-being of their family caregivers. Last year, more than half of family caregivers reported that the support of their community hospice volunteer helped them to avoid a trip to the emergency room, saving our health care system and taxpayers over \$10 million in unnecessary emergency room visits. That is just the cost savings that our community hospice visiting programs can provide the system.

A bed in a hospice residence costs the health care system only one third of what it costs to keep the same person in a hospital bed.

Since 2017, nearly 15,000 people in Ontario have been discharged from hospitals, or have bypassed hospitals altogether, instead entering a hospice residence, saving taxpayers over \$140 million and freeing up hospital beds for other patients.

The hospice community stands ready to help this government control costs, end hallway medicine, prevent further crisis in our already overcrowded hospitals, and provide the end-of-life care that people want in the locations where they want it.

To provide this assistance to the health care system, the hospice palliative care sector needs the following additional financial supports:

- Volunteer community hospices such as Hospice Quinte need additional funding in order for us to help home care to succeed at properly supporting people and their family caregivers within the home;

- We also need more hospice residence beds throughout the province. We are only meeting 45% of the current public demand with the 367 beds we have today. We urgently need another 447 beds across the province to meet current demand—and that's not even looking at the additional beds that would be needed as our population ages, and;

- Older hospices and hospice residences also need access to capital and equipment renewal funds.

Hospice and end-of-life care aren't things for a small, select, niche population. Only 3% of Canadians die suddenly, which means that almost all of us will have a need for quality end-of-life care. Funding that supports quality end-of-life care benefits virtually everyone in our province. We all experience dying, death and bereavement. It touches each and every person multiple times. Supporting people to live well until their last breath is a measure of our humanity and our society—as well as easing costs and congestion in our health care system.

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

1640

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, again, for the work that you do. I'm sure all of us have—fortunately or unfortunately—attended hospices to be with loved ones and family members. They are valued contributors to our communities.

Are you familiar with the Ontario health teams and have you been working with them at all?

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: Yes, we have been working with the Ontario health teams. I was involved with two different Ontario health team applications, initially, and then went forward and signed on with one Ontario health team. Unfortunately, we're Ontario health team-less at the moment because feedback came back on the application that we signed on for that eliminated our geography from that application. I'm not really sure what's happening with us in terms of Ontario health teams, but I actually look forward to that model of care because we find our challenges are in that communication, as people transition from hospital to home care, hospital to hospice, home to hospital. It's all in those transitions where we find challenges with our clients. Any streamline of that or any way that enables us to share information about our clients and make those transitions easier is good.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I know we get criticism on this new model of continuum of care. I'm hoping that members opposite understand that a number of people are very supportive of this. They believe that that lack of communication and that lack of continuum of care has hurt people and has contributed to our hallway health care. Hospice just seems to be one of those components that was missing in the delivery—

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: It's interesting, because technically we don't exist in the health care system. I don't have a direct relationship with my local health integration network, which is where the hospice funding comes from. It's challenging for us. We kind of have to put ourselves in where we can and create relationships where we can, because we aren't—unless we're hospice residents—part of that health care system. We're not part of that care plan or that care team. We're kind of an add-on. We could do a lot of work—I spend a lot of time telling my LHIN, “I can give you four hours of free service. Just put me in, Coach.”

Ms. Donna Skelly: Exactly, and saving an awful lot—but also providing what is so valued.

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: We provide a different kind of care because when we—we aren't a PSW; we're a nurse. We're not doing anything to someone. It's the same volunteer who goes in every time, so we build up a relationship. I think what we do is really a valuable support to our home health care. I look forward to increased communication and increased ability for us to participate fully as a partner in people's care.

Ms. Donna Skelly: One of the issues that I noticed that was raised to me by our local hospice was the issue surrounding the handling of food and how troublesome it became. I'm wondering if that has been addressed and, if not, I would like to address it through our red tape ministry.

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: Yes, it's kind of a difficulty. Right now, our volunteers cannot assist in feeding patients because that's a licensed activity. When we think about hospice residences, we have to have a special food preparation area where people trained in food safety can prepare food. We have to draw a line. Families can go up to the line but not cross the line. Really, that has been one of the most challenging features of trying to build our hospice residences: to maintain a home-like atmosphere while adhering to—

Ms. Donna Skelly: Commercial standards.

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: Commercial standards, right. It's just that that part is a little bit challenging, considering that we're going to be feeding six people.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: I'm all for food safety. We need to have safe food handling. We want to do everything right, but a commercial kitchen—

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

We have to move to the opposition side now. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much, Jennifer, for your presentation. I agree that the whole idea of palliative care is much needed and it's overlooked. It should be a part of the continuum of our health care and the fact that it's being run by private donors and volunteers is just unacceptable, given the valuable work that you're doing.

I just wanted to let you know that I had a private member's bill—it was called the Nancy Rose Act—and it was passed unanimously by the House. I can't tell you how much I appreciated the support from the government in passing this at second reading. It's about pediatric palliative care. While pediatric palliative care is much different—there are many different components of that—than adult care, there are some things that are similar.

The people of Ontario, whether you're a parent accessing palliative care for your child or whether you're an adult, should have equity of access, equity of the quality of care. I'm just wondering if you could talk a little bit about how it would be important that no matter where you are in the province of Ontario, you can expect to be accessing good-quality care.

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: I think that good-quality care for anyone of any age, at any stage of terminal illness, is really important.

It's an interesting thing to note that while we have served pediatric patients with our community-visiting hospice volunteers, and we have no barrier to age in terms of our community-visiting hospice volunteers, one of the most frequently asked questions I get about our upcoming hospice residence building is, “Will you be able to have pediatric patients?” We will not, because there are certain regulations, guidelines and so on. I totally understand that and appreciate it.

But for people in our region—if you have, let's say, a pediatric cancer patient, that family has already travelled to Ottawa or Toronto, right?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly.

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: Now, at end of life, if they need that support, they have to go to Ottawa or Toronto for that. I appreciate the need for pediatric equipment and also pediatric spaces—they're important. I think it's really unfortunate that the way that we apply for funding—what was determined is that we were not able to have a pediatric bed.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I agree with you, and I agree that this is underfunded. Whether you're serving the adult population, the senior population, or whether you're dealing with children, it's underfunded.

I just will say I think that people don't realize that there isn't a provincial coordinated strategy for pediatric palliative care—clearly, not even for adult palliative care—across the province of Ontario.

We have the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice in Hamilton. We have Margaret's Place as well, in Dundas. Neither of them serves kids.

I'm going to be going to Roger Neilson House and Emily's House as well. These are the few homes that deal with pediatric palliative care.

I think it's important to note that, mercifully, the numbers of children who require pediatric palliative care

are small. The importance of this—if we get this right for kids, we can certainly make sure we get it right for adults as well.

So I really do support your work. I want to give you an opportunity, in the last half-minute that we have left, just to talk about—you talked about hallway health care, but talk about the human side of what you're delivering.

Ms. Jennifer May-Anderson: What happens is, if we can get people into appropriate places, we can serve them appropriately and provide that emotional, physical, spiritual and psychological support to them in their home, or in a hospice residence, that we can't in a hallway.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for your presentation and for wrapping up the day.

I would like to thank all the committee members, all the presenters and the committee staff for their work today.

As a reminder, our deadline for written submissions is 6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Friday, January 24.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow in Kitchener. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 1648.

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