

## **Presentation to Ontario's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on August 4, 2020.**

**The following is a transcript of remarks that were made by Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario Chair Sandro Perruzza, and Vice Chair Andy Manahan. During this time slot, Thomas Kelly, general manager of infrastructure and engineering services for the municipality of Chatham-Kent, also made a presentation.**

### **Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario/Municipality of Chatham-Kent**

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Our first presenter will be the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario. If you can start by please stating your name for Hansard, and then you'll have seven minutes for your presentation. We'll give you a one-minute mark near the ending. Over to you.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Okay, thank you. My name is Sandro Perruzza, and I am the chair of the board of the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario, or CDAO. I'm pleased to introduce my colleague and co-presenter, Andy Manahan, the vice-chair of the CDAO board. It is our privilege to represent our members here today, and we wish to express our gratitude to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the opportunity to share the collective knowledge, expertise and experience of the CDAO membership and our recommendations on how to build infrastructure effectively and efficiently so it serves the citizens of this great province.

The 16 member organizations of CDAO represent the various provincial industry associations which plan, design, build, operate and maintain the vast majority of public and private infrastructure in Ontario, including the supply chain. Collectively, our member companies employ hundreds of thousands of workers in this province and account for billions of dollars of local economic development and growth. Quite simply, we are the respected and trusted collective voice of the infrastructure sector.

This group of organizations had come together early on during the onset of COVID-19. We worked alongside our labour and industry partners to co-develop new health and safety protocols that were eventually adopted by the province as the gold standard in our industry. This demonstrates our highest priority, which is the health, safety and wellness of our collective workforce. Our member organizations also collected and donated personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer for front-line workers, including our health care practitioners. We are an industry that not only builds Ontario but cares about the future of Ontario.

One of the most important components of economic recovery will be the restoration of government investment in public infrastructure. These investments have the dual effect of generating jobs and enhancing prospects for future economic growth, both of which will be critical to the economic recovery at both the municipal and provincial levels.

It is our pleasure to share the following recommendations:

(1) Implement COVID-19 contract provisions. A legislative provision for accommodation in both time and compensation should be inserted into all construction and professional services contracts where the effects of COVID-19 might result in failure to perform or

delay, including workforce and supply chain considerations. This could be performed under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

(2) The government should develop a comprehensive project investment pipeline document, similar to that of Infrastructure Ontario's P3 market forecast. This would allow proper sequencing, scheduling and preparation of market resources, which can be sufficiently marshalled and coordinated to maximize and streamline industry's response to the province's needs.

I'll hand over the rest of the presentation to my colleague, Andy.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Thank you, Sandro.

(3) Ensure that infrastructure stimulus funding is allocated to priority projects based on evidence-based business-case approaches, supported by asset management plans for municipal projects. I should highlight that the municipal sector, unlike about 10 years ago, has identified priority projects through its asset management planning initiatives.

(4) Place more emphasis on the role of organizations such as Infrastructure Ontario and the Canada Infrastructure Bank in assisting the municipal sector to deliver worthwhile projects. For example, they can seek out opportunities for regionalizing the management of infrastructure in small and medium-size communities. In addition, the Ministry of Infrastructure has an unsolicited proposal framework, and this will leverage the expertise of the private sector to develop innovative infrastructure solutions.

(5) Continue investing in and supporting training and education programs in the construction industry, as the skilled trade shortages will continue to be a factor. Governments should also begin investigating and addressing the skills leakage that is occurring in the engineering and design sectors, as there is a growing shortage of professionals needed to design the infrastructure we need for the future.

(6) Utilize our COVID-19 response to achieve climate stability and build our province's capacity to build sustainably. As we look to develop an economic response to COVID-19 and beyond, there is an excellent opportunity to expand and create new jobs and business opportunities by promoting research and local manufacturing of these building materials needed for the construction industry as it transitions to greater sustainability.

Building products and regulations that support sustainability and resiliency efforts such as engineered mass timber, which sequesters carbon, should be considered. Many building-related products are currently imported from abroad, slowing down timelines, impacting efficiencies and costs. This would create new jobs and business opportunities. An Ontario that invests in new-build projects would have the additional benefit of ensuring that we are resilient to the increasing likelihood of more severe climate events on the horizon. Providing a supportive business climate, including appropriate incentives, will help to usher in a low-carbon future. For example, encouraging the renovation of the province's existing building stock will result in the reduction of emissions and operational energy costs.

(7) Streamline the regulatory and development approvals process in Ontario. Recent changes to the municipal-class environmental assessment process are welcome, but there is still much more work to do. Ontario's development, planning and building approvals processes are much slower and less innovation-focused than in many other advanced jurisdictions. Research shows that site plan amendment approvals—I should mention this was one of the members at CDAO; the Ontario Association of Architects

demonstrated that it should take one month rather than nine months and the approval target timelines for a complex official plan or zoning bylaw amendment application that should take no more than nine months requires more than ...

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

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** three years to be approved.

(8) Work with the federal government to upgrade and modernize the digital infrastructure that will ensure that businesses and workers succeed. The pandemic has shown the disparities in access to broadband Internet across the province. In a knowledge-based economy, this is simply unacceptable and must be addressed.

(9) The last one on this list: Invest in Ontario's mining industry in building access corridors in northern Ontario communities for resources, including the development of the Ring of Fire.

Thank you for your consideration. In the question-and-answer phase, we will both answer your questions.

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

We'll move on to the next presenter, the municipality of Chatham-Kent. If you can state your name for Hansard and then you may begin. I understand that our presenter is going to be presenting just via audio today, just for everyone watching at home to be aware.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Yes, hi. It's Thomas Kelly. I'm the general manager of infrastructure and engineering services for Chatham-Kent. I apologize; my video is not working.

I also sent a presentation. Do you have access to the presentation?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** We'll make sure the presentation is sent to the committee.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Okay, very good. I was just going to walk through the presentation itself, just slide by slide, very quickly.

In Chatham-Kent, we certainly have our share of challenges, like every other municipality. One that's unique for us is that we're a very large area. We're 2,500 square kilometres of area to cover, with a very low population density. We're also surrounded on two sides—we have Lake St. Clair on one side and Lake Erie on the other. I'm going to talk about some of the challenges we have with those two bodies of water.

But when you go through and create policy, we ask you to consider that we have two main cities, Chatham in the centre and Wallaceburg to the north, with a population—I'd show a map here—of 102,000 in total. If you started to insert some of the larger areas like Toronto, Pickering, Brampton and so on, that population density would be 5.6 million, so we are less than 2% of the population you would typically see in some of the areas that you're dealing with.

The COVID impact to Chatham-Kent has been significant: up to \$5 million. We also have had a significant infrastructure funding deficit. One of the challenges, again, is that, with this low population, we still have our fair share of infrastructure. Every year, we've convinced our council to put away 1% of taxes, increasing them so that we can help fund our asset management plan.

The impact on local business, like others, has been significant, so much so that the public themselves have formed the Chatham-Kent Economic Recovery Task Force. The main message from this group is survival and creative ways that we can get there.

It's one of our recommendations, certainly, that in order to stimulate the economy, we continue to invest in infrastructure, and we have many projects that we would like to take on. There were four projects I listed in the presentation. One is some of the infrastructure damage caused by Lake Erie. There are three main areas. We are looking at green energy investment. We have a major municipal building which needs to be upgraded; it has not been upgraded since 1977. One interesting one is that we have a company who wants to move jobs from the south to Chatham-Kent, but in order to do so, we have a public works facility that needs to move out of the existing building, and that presents some challenges. Lastly, because we are so rural, fibre installation is very weak here in Chatham-Kent, and we see a road to recovery, certainly, is to try to improve that.

Along with Lake Erie, we've been studying the shoreline over the past three years. We have just come out with a report to council, which they've endorsed. Essentially because of the high water levels but also based on climate change, we have an eroding and a flooding shoreline that's wreaking havoc on our infrastructure, along with the residences along Lake Erie. We've had three road closures now in place. We've had four states of emergency since 2018, as well.

Those areas are Rose Beach Line—and to give you some of the impact, I've included some pictures that show you the devastation. We're looking at \$20 million for Rose Beach Line to correct the situation, \$50 million for Erie Shore Drive, and then Talbot Trail, which interestingly is a former provincial highway, is close to \$100 million. All of these figures are beyond the scope of the taxpayers here. It's going to be a big challenge for us, and we're really talking about some type of movement of these residents away from that area, as well.

The civic centre is an \$18-million upgrade to make it to a point where it's accessible and it's age-friendly and we have the right security, but we improve our energy efficiency. That's something that is very difficult for our council to approve because, typically, that investment is really based on employees. The council could like to see that type of investment go more toward roads and bridges. It's an aging building and we're really struggling with it, struggling to get moving forward into the year 2020.

We also have the public works garage. We have this company from the south that is prepared to move 253 jobs. We currently occupy the space in an old manufacturing facility, and we would like to get out of there and find a way to make this work. That's certainly a great news story. Again, we have all of the pressures of COVID, we have all of the pressures of infrastructure, and we have a model here that just isn't sustainable, so we're looking for some creative ways to make that happen, and if possible, some support from the government.

Lastly is the rural fibre installation. I've shown a map of some of the areas where we have high-speed connection. Most of them are completely deficient, with limited access. We have a lack of a backbone. Residential fibre is typically running at about 10 MB, and it's been a real challenge for us. This fibre installation we see as really critical to not only getting us to where we need to be long-term, but also in the future as well.

I am sorry you couldn't see some of the pictures, but that's the extent of my presentation and summary. The COVID has had a big impact on us.

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

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** We were already faced with a lot of challenges financially, and this has certainly put us behind the eight ball. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll start with the government for questions. We will start with MPP Barrett.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to lead off with some questions to the municipality of Chatham-Kent and the very serious problems down there with road closures and roads washing out. They mentioned damage to municipal property. I'm on this call from Port Dover actually; I'm just down the lake from you, of course. You mentioned Infrastructure Ontario—and I should know this: In your area, did you declare a disaster designation or any special designation? Would that better enable you to qualify for assistance? I'm thinking that designation is probably through municipal affairs. Has there been any action on the part of the municipality or any progress on that?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Well, yes, there was. We've had four emergencies. Each time it's been looked at, and there is a certain percentage—I think it's 3% to 5% of our entire budget that must qualify. These floods are occurring on a regular basis, and we have never got to the point where we've met the threshold that we would qualify for that type of funding.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I see. With respect to private property, are there any programs available or is the taxpayer willing to help out people who have a cottage, for example, on the lake?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Yes. I can tell you that the people on the lake certainly are looking for programs like that. The general taxpayer, who is interior, feels very strongly that they made a decision to live on the lake and, therefore, they need to take the risk. That's a real point of contention that has been a big challenge for us certainly. We do need to do something.

We have two aspects of lost investment: First is the overall property, and secondly is the infrastructure. We have a number of roads that are severely impacted, one being the Talbot Trail. That used to be a provincial road back in 1998, and it was transferred to the municipality for a total amount of all provincial highways of \$13 million. We would like to give that road back to the province now, and you can take care of it. That's a big disaster for us and completely unaffordable for us as well.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** It sounds like Lake Erie would like to take it back as well.

Chair, if I have time, just a quick question to Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario: They made mention of some of their concerns with problems in fulfilling contracts, delays related to coronavirus and who bears the cost. I just wondered if the group there would want to expand a bit further what kind of policy direction they are looking at from the province of Ontario. I think you made mention of the emergency management act.

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

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Go ahead, Andy.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** I'll start out, and Sandro can join as needed.

We have had discussions with the province and some of its agencies with respect to recognizing in contracts that it is difficult to meet certain timelines because of COVID. We're trying to ensure that our workplace is a safe one, and that means things like physical distancing and now we're talking about wearing apps for the workers so we can find out where they are and who they're in contact with. But at the same time, these measures will result in not necessarily hitting the deadlines for the projects. We don't want to be penalized as the construction industry for doing what we think is the right thing, and that is keeping construction workers and others who visit the site as safe as possible.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Of course, safety is uppermost. I used to work in construction. It's an industry where you're so used to wearing hard hats, maybe ear protectors and, of course, steel-toed work boots. Is everybody amenable to changing compliance, perhaps wearing a mask? I mean, we're used to wearing masks if you're grinding or sanding or insulating, but are people buying into this and accepting of wearing masks or face shields relating to coronavirus?

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** I think so, and I'll let Sandro jump in as well. Although I have to admit that I've heard that on really hot days, it's quite uncomfortable to wear a mask, so the two-metre distance is a preferable thing. I should mention that both Sandro and I are supporting a University of Toronto study about health and safety in the construction industry during the pandemic. The survey that U of T is going to be doing will be launched fairly soon. We're looking to get more feedback from the broader construction sector as to what's been working so far, what hasn't worked and what improvements can be made. That's through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and that was a grant that was provided to the university.

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

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Just further on that, people are wearing masks for the most part. Again, physical distancing is preferred, but they understand the consequences of the virus, of contracting it. But I think what we're really looking at is that if there are things outside of the control of the contractor, the subcontractor or the designer that are causing a delay, we're asking for it not to go to some sort of penalty for the people involved. The province, as a bigger procurer of infrastructure, could set the tone for the rest of the industry, so we'd like those contract provisions put in.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much. We'll move on now to the opposition for questions. MPP West.

**Mr. Jamie West:** My question is also for the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario, Andy or Sandro—I don't know who wants to take it. First, I want to compliment you and construction in general on your commitment to health and safety. There has been a real turnaround. You were given some tough odds at the beginning of COVID, and consistently, construction has been doing a good job of taking care of improving safety, along with everything else in construction, with what's going on with COVID.

In the presentation, you had nine points, and point 9 was about northern mining. I just want to give you the opportunity to expand on that. Being from Sudbury and a mining town, that really caught my ear.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Sure. This is something similar to a deposition I gave on Thursday. The north—when infrastructure is being invested in, the focus seems to be on southern Ontario, but we don't want to underestimate the value of investing in northern Ontario. We think that the Ring of Fire is a great investment opportunity, but of course, the problem is access to that community.

Building these access corridors isn't just about road access to the community. It's really about broadband Internet access. It's around the infrastructure of clean water, transmission lines, energy—all those things that will open up the north to more than just mineral deposits. It will open it up to transportation and it will open up to education. One of the things we strongly believe in is that it's an untapped skill network we should be

creating the opportunity to take advantage of, so that they can get good-paying jobs and they can build themselves up as well.

**Mr. Jamie West:** I just think it was worth repeating. I agree with what you're saying, that as you bring, broadly, the infrastructure, as you bring good-paying jobs, it really builds those communities and they build themselves beyond that.

I'm going to hand off—I lost my count—I think to MPP Jennifer French.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP French. You have four minutes remaining.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Four whole minutes. Okay, awesome.

Welcome. It's nice to see you both again. I appreciate the opportunity to actually engage this time. Sandro, I just got to wave last time, so I will look forward to asking some questions.

You had mentioned as one of your points the training and education. We've heard from a number of other presentations the need to attract youth, to not just invite them into the skilled trades and into construction, but to keep them there, and also to support them on that journey. We had heard from the Jane-Finch folks that were talking about community benefits, about programs that would support youth and support community members as they do get into more of these great jobs—supporting them whether it comes to helmets or work boots or what have you. So if you could expand a little bit—we've got a lot of building to do as we continue through this pandemic, and hopefully, one day, out the other side. So how do we attract new talent that otherwise wouldn't find these jobs?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I'll speak to the design side and then Andy will speak to the construction side. From the design side, one of the things that we recognize is there are a lot of under-represented groups that aren't getting into engineering and architecture and the other design professions. So there's a lot of outreach going on to not only encourage them to get into the right schools to get trained, but also to get into the industry upon graduation.

There are a lot of unforced biases in industry, unconscious biases. We're working hard as an industry to remove those, to find leadership positions for women and other under-represented groups, visible leadership positions, so that they see themselves in that as a long-term opportunity. We referenced the leakage. What we find is there are a lot of, again, under-represented groups that go into engineering or architecture and then quickly upon graduation go into other industries, and it's a lost, untapped market. We need to do more to do that. I'll let Andy talk to the skilled trades.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Sure. Thank you, Sandro. I'll mention an initiative that was started a little over a year ago called Job Talks. What we've done is create a study that looks at what the motivators are that attract young people into various jobs, not just construction. What we found out was, although the financial aspect is certainly a driver in construction, there are many other pieces of the puzzle that result in a high level of satisfaction, and that's seeing, for example, an end product at the end of the project. You see a finished result—the building or transit project or the sewer and the water main—at the end of that. Working in a team was also another factor that came out as a high satisfaction level, and the change on the job site. Although it's not necessarily changing a lot between different sectors, there is change as the project progresses from T1 until project completion.

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

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** We have created so far 43 videos, and we're aiming to produce 50. They're about a minute and a half, two minutes maximum, and it shows young men and young women explaining the types of jobs they do and why they love what they do. I think this will be something that will really capture young people to consider a career in construction.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Just a final point: I think it would be interesting to build some of the partnerships amongst your members and other groups that we've seen to get into racialized and marginalized communities, to introduce those videos and these different strategies and reach further than we have in the past. I think there are some real opportunities there. Thank you very much for the work you're doing.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. Perfect. We'll move on to independent members now. MPP Schreiner.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thanks to both groups of presenters for bringing valuable information today. My first question is actually going to be directed at both of you, but I think I'll start with Mr. Kelly first and then move over to the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario.

Both of your presentations talked about the importance of broadband. We've had many presenters come to committee talking about the importance of broadband infrastructure. I know both the provincial and federal government have made funding announcements but, Mr. Kelly, do you think that the funding that's been put on the table by both levels of government is enough to actually build out the kind of broadband infrastructure we need—urban, rural, remote, north, south, east, west—all across the province?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Thank you for the question. For us, we put in the presentation that we needed about \$100 million or more in investment dollars. The challenge we have, again, is that we are a very rural community, so the typical providers are not interested in moving forward. It's difficult for them to have a business case when you're really just trying to connect a few users. They have good business cases both Chatham-centric and also in Wallaceburg and maybe in some of the smaller communities. We are a rural community, but one that has business models moving—for example, with farmers—very quickly.

We feel that for our own sustainability long-term we need to connect those rural areas. In order to do that, the providers need to have some help to do that. Our own municipality has put forward \$6.5 million just to try to get them to move forward. In return for that, we're looking for some enhanced service and maybe some service for the municipalities. It's a very important initiative and certainly the way that all business is moving, and it's critical for Chatham-Kent. Thank you.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Just before I go to Sandro or Andy, to deliver in Chatham-Kent totals \$100 million, whether it's public or private investment. Is that correct, from your statement?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Yes, we're looking at at least \$100 million just to service Chatham-Kent, and that's just the main tracks.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Gotcha. I just want to go over to either Sandro or Andy. Does either one of you want to talk about whether you think there's enough money on the table to actually connect up the province?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I'll speak to it. It's something we've studied. The short answer is no, but I don't know if you will ever have enough money to really understand how much we need to invest in broadband Internet. A similar project of this scale and nature is what the federal government did to build the CBC across the country. That was an opportunity to connect communities, but that was one-way communication. Broadband is two-way communication, and it's not just communication; it's an opportunity for education. It's an opportunity to—

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

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** —create new opportunities, new educational opportunities, new economic opportunities in these regions. The challenge, similar to—you talk about the electrical autonomous vehicle network. It's not the last mile; it's the last 20 miles. You can build these trunks, and then it's the 20 miles to the various communities and the outreach communities. It's going to be a huge investment, and it's not something you can do overnight, but certainly it's something that requires investment of a huge proportion, so a three-way partnership between private, province and federal governments.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Great. Thanks for that. The question directed back at you is around climate resiliency. Again, our friend from Chatham-Kent talked about the challenges they're facing with climate resiliency. Can you maybe just give us a bit of what kind of infrastructure investments the province needs to make, whether it's shoreline erosion or flooding etc., that it's going to take to protect our communities and individual households as well?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Again, I'll speak to the design side. Maybe Andy wants to speak to the construction side of things. I think communities and infrastructure need to be designed to be resilient to the ongoing changes of climate. You have more severe weather patterns, which is causing more erosion, not just along the shorelines, but in buildings. You need buildings that can withstand a 100-year storm every 25 years instead of every 100 years. Again, I'll speak to the engineering side. I know that it's not being taught in the schools, and Ontario engineers don't have mandatory professional development. So very few of them are actually learning this as well, as an ongoing skill. Our organization joined the Canada green building alliance to really start to understand what—

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

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** —the challenges are for the design community so that we can start to re-skill them to start to build more resilience. Andy?

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Thank you for that question, MPP Schreiner. What we're seeing compared to even 10 years ago is that the use of sensors within municipal and other types of infrastructure is really growing. If we're looking at a flex on a bridge or if a stormwater pond is getting too full or a sediment is rising in it or there are leak detection sensors, there are drones that are going by utility corridors—I think that will be a good way for us to measure what's happening with our infrastructure and to keep on top of it. It's an asset management approach and an ongoing approach to remaining more resilient. There's lots we could talk about on that but I know I have no more time.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** You can use the rest of it until he cuts you off.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid I'm going to step in and cut you off right now.

We'll move to the government side for a second round. Mr. Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here today and for your presentations. I think investing in infrastructure is important to the economy overall, but it's particularly important when it comes to talk of economic recovery. Certainly infrastructure doesn't get built without the skilled trades to do that. You touched on some interesting ideas on how we can narrow that skills gap.

It was very interesting to hear you, Mr. Manahan, talk about that completed project look first, to influence others to get into the trade. Last time you presented, I think you mentioned how getting rid of streaming in our education system should also help. What are some of the other measures that we can take to narrow that skilled trades gap? This is a question for anybody from the CDAO, whether it's Mr. Perruzza or—

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Andy, go ahead.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Unfortunately, I couldn't hear the question very well, so—

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Let me try that again. How do we narrow the skilled trades gap? I was a little far from the mike.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** On the skilled trades gap, I should say that our particular organization works very closely with the labour sector, with construction unions. We have joint labour-management training facilities to ensure that the skill level is kept up to date. I'll give you an example again—I've used it before—going back to the early 1990s, when the housing sector was basically in a recessionary period, but there was the building of the Highway 407 corridor. Some of those workers in residential were retrained and re-skilled to be able to do road-building-type work, and so that type of flexibility and ability for this sort of workforce to adapt to the situation, I think, is really important, so that we are nimble and ready to move wherever the sector is busiest.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I'm going to add to that, as well. In addition, a lot of education is done at the student and at the worker or potential worker, but I think a lot of education also has to go to the parents. A skilled trades job is actually a very lucrative job. It's a well-respected job. I'm telling anyone who's interested in skilled trades to become an elevator technician. Within three years of graduating and getting your licence, you'll be making about \$100,000 as an elevator technician. It's a place where you can actually make a really good living—not a good living, a really good living.

But I also want to address the engineering side, the design side. There is a talent gap, as well, a skills gap on the engineering side. I spoke about it as well on Thursday. Again, I'm going to re-emphasize the point I made there: Without engineers designing the infrastructure, it doesn't matter how many skilled trades you have; without the design side, you can't build it. Not just this government, but all governments always ignore the engineering side and the design side, but there is a significant need that needs to be addressed there, as well.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Well, thank you, gentlemen. That's very insightful, and I appreciate that talk about quick adaptability to the changing circumstances, as well as the education side. Certainly that stigma that exists with the skilled trades is something that we absolutely have to work on breaking down. As we know, the times have changed since the early 1990s here in Ontario. For example, in Willowdale, which is 53% visible minorities in my constituents, that stigma is something that we have to tackle.

But there's also another challenge that I'm hoping you can discuss with me here today. I can't tell you how many times I've had a taxi driver, Uber driver or pizza delivery guy tell me that back in Iran they were in fact a mechanical engineer, or they were in an industry

that we really desperately need serviced here. I'm wondering what the appetite would be amongst your members about looking at the foreign accreditation piece here in the province of Ontario as a solution to narrowing that gap, as well.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** The organization I'm CEO of, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, is a member organization for engineers, and one of the programs that we have, which is funded by the province and the federal government, is a bridging program to help internationally trained engineers get the experience to apply for their licence. We also have a licensing process for internationally educated engineers. It's something that we support out of our offices at Yonge and Sheppard in Willowdale. We've helped hundreds of engineers from foreign countries get trained and get licensed here in Ontario. We'll continue to do so, and I'll reach out to you directly to share the program and where it can be improved.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Please do. My office is just a few hundred metres from Yonge and Sheppard, so I'm looking forward to that.

How much time do I have there, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** One minute and 30.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** One minute—and then also in our offline conversations maybe eventually we can have that discussion around the safety piece as well, when it comes to accreditation. I know that you work with, as you said, many organizations in various sectors as well, so that will be a very important piece to these as we move forward.

Thank you for appearing. I know a minute is not enough time to expand on that, but looking forward to further conversations.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** If I can just add one thing on that, construction workers from foreign countries often don't meet the points criteria; for example, they may not have completed high school. I think we need to recognize that if someone has a certain skilled trade set—they're a mason or a plumber or a carpenter—there should be allowances, especially when there are shortages. We found, for the most part, other than right now and maybe it's not as busy as it used to be, that we can absorb these workers very quickly. That's another important thing to work with the federal government on.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you. We'll move now to the opposition for questions. MPP Lindo.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** I have one question for Mr. Kelly and another question for the CDAO. I'm actually going to start with the CDAO, because I just said it. One of the interesting things about the skills gap that I'm hearing locally—I'm out in Kitchener Centre—is that engineers and architects also design safety hubs for people, and people don't realize that sometimes it's in the design of communities that you can actually address the root cause of safety, belonging—things that have actually been called for in the broader community. I'm wondering if you can just speak a little bit about the importance of investing in that, because I actually think that that's another piece that will probably—when you folks are putting out your videos and such, trying to get more people engaged, that will speak to marginalized communities who are trying to find alternative ways to stay safe in the community.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** One of the things that we do to attract more people to the profession is that we don't talk about the technical side of engineering; we talk about the

community side of engineering and the social side of engineering; how engineers build communities, but safe communities. When we talk about a bridge, for example, we don't talk about the stability of a bridge; we talk about how bridges connect communities and bring people together. We found that that has been a tremendous opportunity to encourage people to come into the profession.

One thing too that this pandemic has demonstrated is what engineers, architects and skilled tradespeople do in providing pandemic-proof communities. The way we build communities, moving forward, is going to be much, much different, because this pandemic won't be the last pandemic that we face in our lifetime.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you so much for that, because I know in some of the earlier conversations that we've had today—we've been talking to folks at Jane and Finch, for instance, who have been saying that they want to find ways to better engage with the professionals so that they can ensure that the needs of their particular communities are taken into consideration. We know from some of the mapping of how the pandemic has impacted communities, that Jane and Finch has a high COVID rate because a lot of their homes are much closer and you can't isolate. All of that kind of stuff needs to be taken into consideration moving forward. So thank you for that.

I'm going to switch gears over to Mr. Kelly. You had mentioned the need for renovations of the civic centre. You were saying that one of the bigger issues is that it's an older building, and trying to meet the accessibility needs is something that you are now having to grapple with, while you're dealing with some of the emergency situations that are coming your way during the pandemic etc.

I've been sitting on the committee for a couple of months now, and we keep hearing it, no matter which sector we hear from, that these sectors aren't separate; they are interconnected. It's like a web of investments that needs to happen in order to provide the supports that municipalities, for instance, are needing. So I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit about the importance of the province stepping up with financial support for the AODA—

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

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** —the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and whether or not, if there was actually funding available on that side of the government, that would be able to address some of the needs that you're finding with something as important as renovating the civic centre.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question. First of all, it was built in 1977. It was built based on the building code of 1977. Any type of renovation that we would like to do is all deemed to be termed an extensive or a major renovation. As a result, we have to bring it up to 2020 accessibility standards, which are quite different from 1977. When you look at the cost to do that, it's something that everybody would like to do but the cost is significant in order to do that. It's some major reconstructions. As a result, I have now presented to our council three times to get this work done, and it's been declined. They're all very supportive of AODA, accessibility and age-friendliness, but the nature of the work and the scope—and the bottom line is the expense; it's just unaffordable. As a result, it doesn't get done.

Something along those lines would be extremely beneficial to us. It not only would make our building more accessible for all; it would also help us with overall green energy and

efficiency of the building. That would be a very wise investment for everyone moving forward. I really appreciate the question. Thank you.

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

Chair, how much time do we have?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** You have one minute remaining.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Oh, one minute. I'm actually going to pass it over to MPP French. I can't see if they are still there. Are they there?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** MPP French is here. She's giving the thumbs up. MPP French, over to you.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Perfect.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you very much. My question is for Mr. Kelly. You had talked about the importance of broadband. That's definitely something that I don't think you need to explain the importance of. We have been hearing that for years. The government did leave almost \$32 million in broadband spending basically on the table, according to the FAO report, and the Minister of Infrastructure talked about that a lot of the spending will depend on partnerships in business and whatnot. What do you need from this government, and would you be able to wait for business investment in your community for broadband?

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** We would like to see some type of funding assistance. Certainly, we're very fortunate in Chatham-Kent, where we have actually a provider here that's local. They want to invest in Chatham-Kent. They're willing to make that investment. But again—

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

We're going to our last round of questions from our independent members. Our first question goes to MPP Schreiner.

Interjection.

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

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Yes.

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

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thanks, Chair. MPP Schreiner, I will pass it off to you.

I actually would like you to just continue your sentence there that you were speaking to with MPP French's question.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Thank you. The situation even lies with our local provider here. They're called TekSavvy. They're not as big as Bell, but they do offer competition. I think that's very much needed in the market for broadband. They're prepared to make some of these investments into the rural areas, but they can't get the business case either, so they're looking at some type of subsidy as well.

As I said, we, as a municipality, stepped up. We took taxpayer dollars and put it aside to help them with it. It would be just a monumental feat if we could get something similar from the government as well to help with this. This will allow us with improved connectivity across and all the benefits we've talked about previously. It just comes down to investment and a business case and return on the investment.

This is a case where I think it's government's role to step in. As a municipality, we have. We're just looking for some support as well from the province to do that. Thank you.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Okay, that's great. I'm wondering if you could just talk a little bit about how—you've got a particular expertise in large-scale fabrication and that semi-skilled area, which is actually, in terms of quality and output, amongst the best in North America. How can we continue to support the great work that's happening there, considering the proximity, as well, to some of that deep-water port access, once those types of markets open up again? That's for Thomas Kelly.

**Mr. Thomas Kelly:** Yes, I'm just trying to focus on where exactly you could help us the most. We do have a lot of expertise here, particularly. The construction industry talked about the shortages. That's my job, really. We spend close to \$70 million per year in construction projects. We know that it's becoming more and more of an issue for the construction companies to get people engaged. I fully agree with the construction industry: It would be extremely beneficial to invest in training and encouragement of young people to get in that market, because for me, what it does is that it gives us greater flexibility, more competition in the construction industry, and when we do that, we get better prices as well.

Right now, the demand is exceeding the supply, so we're all accomplishing less as a result. So anything the government could do in that regard would be very helpful.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Let's move over to Sandro and Andy to talk about how to attract more people to those amazing jobs and opportunities, because I think that when it comes to women, under-represented groups, Indigenous people, Black people, people of colour, there seems to be—

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

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** —the need, but the match isn't as strong. What more can we do in those areas?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I'll speak to it. This is something that our organization, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, focuses a lot of our energies on, trying to get under-represented groups into engineering, and in leadership positions as well. We hold a conference every year in Ottawa and we get upwards of 800 people involved, and what we find works best is, again, having representatives from these groups who are in the industry share what they're doing.

For example, my chair this year is a young Black woman. She's up there talking about her struggles coming over from Trinidad and going into the profession, but how people stepped up and helped her, and to look for those allies and mentors. So she talked about it, but then that follows up by having a business owner who then says, "And we want people like you in our company," so here's what we're doing in our company to remove these barriers that we talked about.

She talks about the barriers that exist, so it's an education of the employers to understand what barriers exist and the employers' responsibility to remove those. Then we have business leaders who do that and say, "Here's what we've done." They do it because they want to attract the best talent available. That's something that has worked for us, that kind of progression, and Andy will talk around the skilled trades and what we're doing to get more people from under-represented groups in skilled trades.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Good to see you, Andy.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Good to see you. Just so everyone knows, there might be some favouritism here; MPP Hunter is my local MPP in the Guildwood riding.

I should just add that when I was talking about the Job Talks videos earlier, when we're complete, we will have about 50% from women in construction and 50% young men in construction telling their stories. We did our darnedest to make sure everyone—

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

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** — was equally represented. I think women in particular have a certain aptitude. They're great team players and they will be very helpful on the construction site.

I hate to raise it, but I was reading this media piece last Friday, and I won't say which sector, but let's just say a certain dinosaur was talking about the multiplier effects of construction and used this very unfortunate quote that said, "And then their wives will be able to afford to go to the salon." A lot of us were just knocking our heads against the brick wall, saying, "Get with the 21st century. That's not what we're about." Sometimes we do have these challenges out there.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Definitely.

I don't know, MPP Schreiner, if there is any time to—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** I'm afraid not. We've got two seconds remaining.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Andy answered it.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Okay. That's great. Thank you.

**Mr. Andy Manahan:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Thank you so much to all of our presenters from this round. We're going to have to take a short recess, perhaps two minutes, as none of our next witnesses have arrived as of yet.

**The Clerk pro tem (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** We'll need five, at least.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts):** Okay. We'll make it a five-minute recess. We'll be back shortly. Thanks, everyone.