

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

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The Honourable Ted Arnott, MPP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Sir,

Your Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs has the honour to present its Report and commends it to the House.

Ernie Hardeman, MPP
Chair of the Committee

Queen's Park
March 2022

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
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2nd Session, 42nd Parliament

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INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its pre-Budget hearings virtually in the following regions: Northwest (January 10); Northeast (January 11); Ottawa (January 12); Eastern (January 18); Greater Toronto and Hamilton (January 19 and 20); Southwestern (January 21); and Central (January 26).

The pre-budget consultation provides an opportunity for citizens, stakeholders, and local government partners to discuss various issues and concerns and to make recommendations to provincial ministries. In total, 137 witnesses appeared before the Committee and more than 300 written submissions were received.

Almost all witnesses who presented to the Committee highlighted the unprecedented impact that the pandemic has had on their business, organization or work. Business owners explained how they have struggled to remain profitable during repeated periods of shutdowns. Representatives from the not-for-profit and charitable sector explained that the demand for their services increased during the pandemic, while their capacity to respond was strained. Health care workers, teachers and other public sector employees also described new and continuing challenges they have faced serving Ontario's residents as a result of the pandemic.

While many of the recommended investments, described below, were directed at specific ministries, the Committee also heard about the importance of restoring consumer confidence, maintaining investment in public services, and continuing to provide supports to businesses and not-for-profit organizations in the form of grants, loans, and tax credits.

This report is an overview of the main issues raised by presenters during the pre-Budget consultation. Details of submissions by witnesses and their responses to questions by Committee Members can be found in the *Hansard* of the Committee's proceedings. Committee recommendations, and a list of the witnesses and organizations and individuals submitting written briefs, appear at the end of the report.

COMMENTS BY MINISTRY

Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

The Ontario Risk Management Program is an insurance program designed to protect farmers in the grains, horticulture and livestock sectors from market volatility and production risks. Provincial funding for this program increased in 2020 from \$100 to \$150 million. A number of organizations asked that this funding increase to \$250 million.¹

The agricultural sector is reliant on seasonal labour by temporary foreign workers. Federal requirements to isolate upon arrival, as well as the need to protect workers from contracting COVID-19, have added costs and complexity to time-sensitive farming operations. Last year, the federal government offered grants for each temporary foreign worker; if this support is not maintained, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association asked that the Province step in to continue the grants. The Association also suggested that the Province extend the Enhanced Agri-Food Workplace Protection Program, which helps defray the costs of personal protective equipment. The National Farmers Union–Ontario noted that wage subsidy programs or enhancements to existing programs designed specifically for domestic seasonal farm workers would support farmers who employ Ontarians.

While the agri-food sector has struggled during the pandemic, the Committee heard about the sector's potential for innovation and growth. To that end, a number of witnesses asked that the Province support the development of a Poultry Research and Innovation Centre with an investment of between \$18 million and \$21 million.² In addition, the Organic Council of Ontario asked the Province to invest in an Organic Growth Strategy over a three-year period.

Attorney General

Alcohol

Several stakeholders spoke about the sale of alcohol. Organizations representing convenience stores requested they be permitted to sell alcohol, urging the government to make this a priority given the impact of the pandemic on the industry.³ They suggested the ability to offer beer and wine would not only be an additional revenue stream, but would also lead to customers purchasing other goods. Spirits Canada would like to see the sale of spirits in stores already authorized to sell beer, wine and cider. They maintained that not having their products more widely available put them at a disadvantage relative to other alcoholic beverages.

Industry representatives from alcohol manufacturers requested changes to the taxes and fees charged for their products. Ontario Craft Wineries, Wine Growers Ontario, and Grape Growers of Ontario recommended the elimination of the

¹ Beef Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, and Ontario Sheep Farmers.

² Chicken Farmers of Ontario, Egg Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chicken Commission, and Turkey Farmers of Ontario.

³ Convenience Industry Council of Canada, Ontario Convenience Stores Association, and Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association.

6.1% Basic Wine Tax charged on VQA/100% Ontario-grown wines because it only applies to Ontario producers. Ontario Craft Brewers asked the Province to cancel the beer can tax, characterizing it as a tax on small brewers because it does not apply to other canned beverages like soft drinks or energy drinks, or to beer bottles, which are primarily used by foreign-owned multinational breweries.

Cannabis

WeedMaps wrote the Committee to express its appreciation for decisions that have contributed to a stronger cannabis industry. The organization requested the permanent legalization of the retail delivery introduced during the pandemic, the creation of a framework to allow for a new class of consumption lounges, and consultation on options allowing licenced producers to establish direct relationships with retailers.

Aurora Cannabis wrote about the struggles medical cannabis patients face trying to afford their medicine, as it is not covered by the Ontario Drug Benefit program or most private drug insurance plans. They argue that medical cannabis, if authorized by a health-care provider, should be treated like all other prescription medications and not be subject to taxes.

Corrections

The John Howard Society of Ontario recommended investments in programs dealing with the bail process, in particular, bail verification and supervision programs to reduce the negative impacts of incarceration, and residential bail programs to reduce costs for extended stays in remand facilities.

Legal Aid

Several witnesses expressed concerns about access to legal aid and recommended the Province restore and enhance legal aid rates.⁴ The Society of United Professionals described how underfunding had a negative effect on the legal system as a whole. Legal Assistance of Windsor and Community Legal Aid stressed that, as the courts reopen and the tribunal system works to address the backlog in cases, stable funding for legal aid is required. The Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers recommended restoring the cost-sharing agreement with the federal government to ensure long-term funding of refugee and immigration legal aid.

Lotteries and Gambling

The Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association asked the Province to increase lottery commissions by at least 0.5%, while the Ontario Convenience Stores Association requested that this increase be 2%. Both organizations stressed that this increase would help ameliorate financial hardships brought on by the pandemic.

The Responsible Gambling Council recommended that the government allocate \$3.5 million in one-time funding to develop a public education campaign to create

⁴ Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Colour of Poverty—Colour of Change, Legal Assistance of Windsor and Community Legal Aid, and Society of United Professionals.

a culture of responsible gambling in Ontario, in response to a dramatic increase in advertising as iGaming and sports betting operators have entered the regulated market. Unifor asked the government to ensure a “level playing field” for competition between online and in-person operators.

Children, Community and Social Services

Developmental Services

Adults with a developmental disability can live independently with the right supports, but advocates noted there were long waitlists for housing in some parts of the province. When supportive housing is unavailable, families must rely on other parts of the health care system. One mother explained that her child is currently being treated in hospital because he is unable to secure housing and asked that the Province make a significant investment in supportive housing for adults with developmental disabilities.⁵ The Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs asked the Province to commit 10% of the next phase of its National Housing Strategy to supportive housing for individuals living with developmental disabilities.

Community Living Ontario asked that Passport funding, which provides financial supports to families wishing to purchase their own services, be increased to end the waitlist.

Gender-based Violence

The Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres acknowledged the Province’s investments to fight gender-based violence in the previous budget, but pointed out that these investments were primarily focused on criminal justice services. The Coalition asked that increased funding be allocated to community-based prevention programs and that stable, core funding be provided to sexual assault centres.

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses asked the Province to annualize all in-year investments and for an additional increase in the operating budget of gender-based violence shelters. Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region requested additional funding, describing its youth education programs and the She Is Your Neighbour awareness project, which highlights the complexities of domestic violence. The Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario also asked that the Province develop an action plan to end gender-based violence.

Non-Profit Organizations and Charities

Representatives from the not-for-profit and charitable sector explained that the demand for their services increased during the pandemic, while their capacity to respond was impacted by an inability to raise funds through traditional methods such as in-person events. Some noted that they had to substantially reduce the

⁵ Janet Abramson. Other witnesses also asked for increased investments in supportive housing for persons with disabilities, including Community Living Essex County, Maria Cruz, Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs, and Voices and Choices.

size of their staff, and that their remaining employees were feeling burnt out and were exploring other employment opportunities. Witnesses asked that the Province continue to include non-profits in supports that target small businesses, and that stabilization funding be provided to address operational challenges unique to the sector.⁶ The Ontario Nonprofit Network asked that the Province appoint an associate Minister to the sector to better coordinate activity that is currently dispersed through various ministries.

Goodwill Industries, Ontario Great Lakes asked the Province to partner with employment social enterprises that deliver provincial objectives and are largely self-funded.

Social Assistance

A number of witnesses who presented before the Committee highlighted the Province's recent efforts to transform social assistance and asked that these efforts include a review of social assistance rates.⁷ They noted that housing costs across the province are high, and that inflationary pressures are driving up the costs of basic goods, including food. Witnesses asked that the Province increase rates immediately and that these increases be indexed to inflation.⁸ The Income Security Advocacy Centre asked that social assistance rates be increased to 1995 levels adjusted to inflation for both Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

A number of witnesses also requested that limits on gifts be removed and asset limits increased.⁹ Neighbourhood Legal Services (London & Middlesex) asked that the basic income pilot be reinstated.

Other

The Middlesex London Food Policy Council described the importance of locally-grown fresh food and highlighted the need to support immediate food services such as food banks and school food programs. However, they explained that the Province should also support municipally- and regionally-led strategies to achieve long-term stable and sustainable food systems. Parkdale Food Centre asked for \$500,000 to pilot a project that would demonstrate how a transition from food banking to a community-centric co-operative model could work.

Prosper Canada asked for \$1.75 million a year for three years to deliver financial services such as tax filling to Ontarians with low or moderate incomes; to integrate non-profit financial help programs into Ontario Works in Ottawa,

⁶ Dance Ontario Association, Ontario Nonprofit Network, and YMCA of Eastern Ontario.

⁷ These witnesses included Daily Bread Food Bank, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, and Income Security Advocacy Centre.

⁸ Marnie Carson, Community Living Essex County, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario Division, Colour of Poverty—Colour of Change, Daily Bread Food Bank, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Income Security Advocacy Centre, Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, Kawartha Lakes Food Source, Legal Assistance of Windsor and Community Legal Aid, National Coalition Against Poverty—Ontario Chapter, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Neighbourhood Legal Services (London & Middlesex), Poverty Free Thunder Bay, Pillar Nonprofit Network, Patricia Smiley, Sarah White, and YWCA Toronto.

⁹ Community Living Ontario and the Income Security Advocacy Centre.

Thunder Bay, and Toronto; and to maintain and promote online financial self-help tools.

Citizenship and Multiculturalism

Colour of Poverty-Colour of Change presented statistics showing racialized individuals and their families are more likely to live in poverty than other Ontarians. The organization asked that the province improve its capacity to collect disaggregated socio-demographic data to better identify inequities, support planning, and improve service quality.

The Committee heard from a number of individuals who expressed concerns about the rise of Islamophobia. Among their recommendations was a request that the Province provide secure, stable, long-term funding for social service agencies that focus on the mental health of Muslims and victims of hate crimes.¹⁰

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs asked the Province to dedicate funding to support the physical security of at-risk community institutions.

Colleges and Universities

Administration and Funding

Several witnesses asked for increased funding for universities.¹¹ The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations asserted that public funding of universities in Ontario is low, tuition fees are high, and academic employment is precarious. In addition to the general call for increased funding, they asked for Northern and bilingual university grants, special purpose funding (particularly for Indigenous programming and supports), and research funding. The Council of Ontario Universities and Ontario Tech University requested additional funding to increase university spaces by 53,000 over the next five years in high-demand programs.

A number of organizations recommended changes to the funding structure for post-secondary institutions. Colleges Ontario wanted the government to use a tuition policy specific to colleges and not one based on university tuition levels to ensure that college education remains affordable. Collège La Cité and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce asked for enhanced flexibility of the college funding formula to allow micro-credentialing and modular approaches to program delivery.

¹⁰ Zahra Afara, Mohamad Bacho, Siham Elkasseem, Fahad Ghaffar, Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario, Zulfikar Kasmani, Issam Loubani, Mohamed Mithoowani, Suzanne Rajeh, Reem Sultan, Mariaf Ubaidat, and Saijad Ullah.

¹¹ Trystan Goetze, Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, and University of Waterloo.

triOS College asked the government to revise the policy directive that limits the enrolment of international students at partnership campuses to two times the number of international students at a public college's home campus. They advised that the enrollment limit adversely impacts small and rural colleges and suggested that the cap for these institutions be increased to 3,000 students or two times the total home campus population. The College also recommended streamlining the distance education approval process so that an institution only needs to be approved once to deliver such programs.

The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario spoke about Laurentian University's financial uncertainty and recent filing for creditor protection, and the impact on the Ontarian Francophone community. The Assemblée encouraged the formation of a Franco-Ontarian university network and asked the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to submit the University of Sudbury's application for strategic funds in post-secondary minority-language education, available through Canadian Heritage.

Collège la Cité asked for increased investments into their digital infrastructure, explaining that this funding would support innovative program delivery models corresponding to the specific needs of Ontario's Francophone communities.

Infrastructure

Several universities and colleges requested assistance for specific infrastructure projects on their campuses. The University of Waterloo requested \$7.5 million for an entrepreneurial hub in an expanded health sciences campus. They believe this would provide health innovators with the infrastructure, mentorship, and resources needed to succeed in the competitive global economy. Lakehead University requested support for construction of the Gichi Kendaasiwin Centre to support Indigenous learners. Colleges Ontario asked for \$7.2 million for increased lab space, and \$2.75 million to expand clinical education opportunities for nursing and PSW students.

The Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario wrote to request the creation of an Ontario Simulation Laboratory for use by all medical laboratory technician programs to support training. OCAD University recommended general investments in postsecondary infrastructure through existing programs such as the Facilities Renewal Program.

Programs

There was discussion about a variety of specific education programs, often in relation to the health care field. Several individuals asked for increased funding and support for Physician Assistant programs, proposing that increasing the number of assistants could help alleviate wait times, improve access, and help care for the province's ageing population.¹²

¹² Craig Barnes, Canadian Association of Physician Assistants, Kenneth Crosby, Ohood Elzibak, Alifiya Goriawala, Megan Dunbar Knowles, Sharjana Nirmalathanan, Manasi Patel, Pradhariny Prabakaran, Sara Shamsuddin, and Mizna Zaveri.

The Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario recommended developing a \$3.6 million Laboratory Externship program to support public and private laboratory employers in hiring clinical placement students. They suggested that this could be modeled on the Nursing Externship Program. The Association also identified a lack of lab technicians in northern Ontario and recommended a Northern Health Program for Laboratory Services, and asked for \$850,000 to establish a Laboratory Professionals Incentive Grant, provide tuition support, and expand the Community Assessment Visit reimbursement program. Guelph University and Lakehead University asked for support of their joint proposal to expand veterinary training in Ontario, with a specific focus on addressing the needs of northern and rural communities.

York University wrote about its proposed School of Medicine that would embed an understanding of the social and economic determinants of health in medical education. The university asked for a \$1 million grant to develop a strategy for implementing the proposal.

Tuition and OSAP

Student groups and other organizations made recommendations regarding the administration of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) and University of Toronto Students' Union requested the government reinstate the moratorium on OSAP payments and interest accrual. They also asked the Province to introduce a permanent grace period after graduation to ensure recent graduates are in a financial position to cover interest payments. OUSA further requested that reductions in OSAP payments made as a result of Canada Student Grants be reinvested in more direct support for students.

The Ontario chapter of the Canadian Federation of Students wrote that tuition fees were the largest barrier to accessing post-secondary education in Ontario, an obstacle intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The representatives requested a 25% reduction over the next four years until all tuition fees are eliminated. Conestoga Students Incorporated asked that the Province cap future increases to international student tuition at 5%, in line with the limit for domestic students.

Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

COVID-19 Relief

There were numerous discussions during the proceedings on the significant economic impact of the pandemic, especially its effects on the supply chain and price inflation. Many witnesses expressed appreciation for measures already taken but requested further support. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business conveyed that capacity restrictions, remote work, and public messaging have had dramatically negative effects on businesses.

Several witnesses commented that they were concerned that government messaging during the pandemic had negatively affected consumer confidence. They asked for help to promote a return to safe business operations.¹³ One individual suggested allocating a marketing budget to deliver a message about returning to normal.¹⁴

Some businesses and industry groups discussed the challenges of adapting and planning in response to the pandemic. Ontario Craft Brewers described the challenges posed by unpredictable fluctuations in supply chains, making ordering the right amount of aluminum cans the “biggest challenge” to their industry currently. The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association conveyed the ambiguity confronting the legal profession because of persistent delays and backlogs of work. The YMCA of Eastern Ontario characterized “a roller coaster of uncertainty” causing major issues with staffing and layoffs.

A number of individuals and organizations asked for wider availability of existing supports, as many businesses that are not required to shut down are nevertheless suffering revenue losses.¹⁵ Individuals concerned with the economic impact of pandemic measures urged the government to re-evaluate COVID-19 relief funding eligibility with a broader sense of who is in need.¹⁶ The Committee heard the example of dry cleaners, considered essential throughout the pandemic, but who have nevertheless experienced business declines of as much as 95%.¹⁷ The Canadian Association of Exposition Management and other groups described how they had not met the eligibility criteria of a variety of relief programs due to the particular character of their industries, despite the impact of pandemic restrictions.

Witnesses from a variety of sectors sought the government’s assistance in securing personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing supplies.¹⁸ For example, OPSEU recommended that the government provide appropriate PPE to all front-line workers. A retail worker commented that hourly wage employees often did not receive PPE necessary to prevent the spread of the virus, putting the onus and cost on employees.¹⁹ The worker added that many individuals are unable to locate KN95 masks and must therefore resort to less protective options.

¹³ Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors, Christopher Lord, and Michael Wood.

¹⁴ Michael Wood.

¹⁵ Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Trystan Goetze, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Karin Tong.

¹⁶ Christopher Lord and Michael Wood.

¹⁷ Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

¹⁸ For example, the Ontario Nurses’ Association talked about the need for personal protective equipment (PPE) for all health care workers, Lutherwood described the need in their non-profit environment, and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association talked about the use of PPE in the farm setting. The Canadian Live Music Association recommended expanding access to rapid antigen tests for their sector and Unifor asked that access to high quality PPE and the COVID-19 testing already provided to education workers be extended to school bus drivers as well.

¹⁹ Charlene Morling.

Regulations

The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada and the Ontario Forest Industries Association expressed support for Ontario's Red Tape Reduction initiative and recommended continued efforts in this area. The CSA Group suggested that the government adopt more of the codes and standards developed by this organization to help further reduce red tape. They also spoke about their involvement with the Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table in support of the implementation of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, and requested Ontario's continued advocacy for standards to help reduce interprovincial trade barriers, increase labour mobility, and reduce the cost of doing business in the province.

Innovate Cities suggested that procurement rules make it difficult for innovators to sell to the government, and recommended the creation of a pilot procurement process for Canadian innovators that would let them test their ideas.

Education

Child Care

The pandemic illustrated the importance of child care for working parents—especially mothers. The Committee heard from a range of stakeholders including business organizations and workers' advocates recommending that the Province make significant investments to improve access to affordable child care. These stakeholders asked that the Province sign an agreement with the federal government to achieve the goal of \$10-a-day care.²⁰

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario requested an increase in operational funding and a \$25 per hour minimum wage for the sector to address recruitment and retention issues. RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario further requested that school boards be prohibited from charging rent to child care operators.

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres asked that the Province allocate child care dollars directly to Indigenous Friendship Centres and other Indigenous organizations rather than through Service Managers. It was also requested that the level of funding be increased to reflect the number of Indigenous children in Ontario.

Elementary and Secondary Schools

The Committee heard from school boards, trustee associations, unions, and parent and student groups describing the unprecedented challenges schools

²⁰ Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, Canadian Union of Public Employees— Ontario Division, City of Kitchener, City of London, Daily Bread Food Bank, Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Ontario Nurses' Association, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario, Unifor, and YWCA Toronto. The Brampton Board of Trade and the Pillar Nonprofit Network did not mention the federal agreement but supported increased access to affordable child care.

faced as a result of repeated closures and other public health restrictions. A few groups highlighted specific measures that should be put in place to better protect students, including improved contact tracing, better access to rapid antigen and PCR testing, and priority for education workers in vaccination campaigns.²¹ The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association asked that the Province provide more funding to assist school boards in managing the costs associated with school reopenings, and that the Province restore school board reserve funds for expenditures made to respond to the pandemic.

Representatives explained that the pandemic exacerbated ongoing concerns about the need to reduce class sizes, enhance mental health supports for students, improve student and staff safety, improve the physical conditions of schools, and provide equitable access to technology. Specific recommendations included

- capping class sizes for grades 4 to 8 at 24 students (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario);
- funding a full-time designated School Board Staff Mental Health Lead to coordinate activities that support healthy classrooms (Ontario Public School Boards' Association);
- providing \$975,000 annually for three years to Connected North to deliver a range of virtual educational and mental wellbeing resources for students living in remote northern communities (Connected North);
- establishing a specific education sector regulation under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation);
- providing mandatory enhanced training to prevent, appropriately respond to, and report incidents of violence in schools (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 11: Thames Valley);
- allocating \$25 million for an online school sexual assault reporting system (Federation of Canadian Secondary Students);
- investing an additional \$1.6 billion per year to repair publicly funded schools to address the infrastructure problems (Fix Our Schools);
- ensuring that boards have sufficient resources to develop and implement new cybersecurity policies and risk management frameworks (Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association); and,
- implementing a predictable cycle of evergreen technology funding so that all students and staff have ready access to technology devices, and ensuring corresponding funding for IT departments (Ontario Public School Boards' Association).

²¹ Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 11: Thames Valley.

Underpinning these recommendations were requests for significant investments in public education. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association—Northern Region asked that these and future investments or supports be flexible and accommodating to their unique regional needs.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation criticized existing funding formulas, suggesting, for example, that they do not provide sufficient funding to support students with special needs. The Toronto District School Board estimated its funding gap for special education at \$34.1 million.

Witnesses also asked that hybrid learning be discontinued,²² that the requirement for e-learning be removed in secondary schools,²³ and that any plans to make virtual learning a permanent fixture of elementary school be abandoned.²⁴

On the subject of the curriculum, a witness asked for a plan to address pandemic-related gaps in hands-on music instruction.²⁵ The Black Council of Windsor Essex asked that sport and physical education be given more emphasis and that additional resources be allocated to Black history instruction in the curriculum.

Energy

An individual concerned with the cost of electricity argued that wind power is expensive, intermittent, and out of sync with demand and asked the Province to cease issuing new wind power contracts.²⁶

On the topic of nuclear power, General Electric Canada asked the Province to continue supporting small modular reactor deployment. The Society of United Professionals recommended working with Ontario Power Generation to invest in a new publicly owned and operated nuclear power station to replace the Pickering generating station.

There were two recommendations for the use of biomass electrical generation. The Ontario Forest Industries Association asked the Province to invest in forest biomass electrical generation to reduce the need for carbon-intensive fuels and avoid unnecessary pressures on landfills. The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce asked for renewal of the existing Biomass Power Purchase Agreements for a minimum of 10 years to provide businesses certainty.

ClimateFast would like a commitment that all electricity will be generated from renewable energy by 2030 and asked that the Province make the necessary investments to accomplish this goal.

²² Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 11: Thames Valley.

²³ Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 11: Thames Valley.

²⁴ Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

²⁵ Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

²⁶ Grant Church.

Enbridge asked the government to continue working with industry and other levels of government to develop a streamlined framework for carbon capture and storage (CCS) opportunities. The corporation suggested establishing incremental targets of up to 5% by 2030 for low-carbon fuel blending into the existing natural gas distribution system. Enbridge asserts that this approach would enable utilities to recover the incremental cost of hydrogen and renewable natural gas (RNG) purchased for blending.

Environment, Conservation and Parks

The threat of climate change was raised frequently by witnesses. Desjardins discussed the anticipated impact, citing rising costs for damage from extreme weather and a Financial Accountability Office estimate that climate change could add roughly \$6 billion to the costs of maintaining public buildings and facilities over the remainder of this decade. Climate change also featured in recommendations highlighted in other sections of this report, for example, relating to flooding, municipal infrastructure, public transportation and renewable energy.

The Committee received recommendations related to conservation efforts. A few individuals asked for increased funding to support the work of conservation authorities.²⁷ Conservation Ontario requested increased funding for the natural hazard program, to assist in infrastructure and floodplain mapping improvements. ClimateFast requested restoring the office of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. Several individuals recommended hiring additional staff to conduct environmental inspections.²⁸

The Canadian Beverage Association expressed concerns about the lack of accurate data on recycling, and asked the government to improve data collection in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors to better inform recycling initiatives. They also requested a plastics technology fund to help the beverage industry enhance polyethylene terephthalate (PET) processing as well as advance new technologies at their facilities to enhance collection and sorting. The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada encouraged Ontario to become a leader in the circular economy and proposed two programs. First is the Circular Plastics Innovation Fund focused on accelerating pre-commercial technology for advanced recycling in the areas of industrial decarbonisation and packaging design. Second is the Recycling Infrastructure Fund, which would support the deployment of commercial technologies for improved sortation and mechanical recycling.

Finance

Automobile Insurance

Many submissions were dedicated to issues in automobile insurance. The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association called for general reform with particular emphasis on the accident benefits system. They argued that the system is overly complex, citing a 2016 poll by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario that indicated as few as 10% of policyholders understand the coverage provided by

²⁷ Mary Ann Hodge, Marianne Larsen, and Bob Morrison.

²⁸ Mary Ann Hodge, Marianne Larsen, and Bob Morrison.

their policy. They suggested that a simplified structure would minimize the need to retain legal representation for managing disputes.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) recommended reducing claim-processing times and imposing clear deadlines on resolution for accident benefit claims. Additionally, they endorsed the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud and Abuse Strategy proposed by the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario to ensure that honest drivers do not pay for the actions of dishonest ones. The IBC further requested amendments to the *Repair and Storage Liens Act* to prevent fraudulent and predatory practices in the towing, repair, and storage sectors.

The insurance company Desjardins Group recommended prohibiting insurers from offering cash settlements for non-catastrophic injuries, instead reimbursing claimants for each treatment attended. Desjardins also recommended establishing an independent expert medical assessment process to determine recovery plans that would be binding on both the insurer and the claimant.

There were a few recommendations about insurance rates. Concrete Ontario requested a limit to premium increases, commenting that drastic increases in premiums have made it difficult to insure new and young drivers and have led to a shortage of drivers. The Co-operators Group asked for improved territory segmentation to reduce the subsidization of drivers in high risk areas by drivers in other parts of the province. They also want to eliminate credit information as a prohibited factor in determining risk. The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association suggested several changes to the Statutory Accident Benefits Schedule (SABS), including extending the time limit for medical, rehabilitation, and attendant care benefits by 104 weeks, indexing all benefit rates to inflation, and authorizing service of documents by electronic means.

Tax, Rebates and Fees

As with previous pre-budget hearings, recommendations for new tax credits and changes to existing taxes were common. This year these requests included

- the introduction of a provincial Home Renovation Tax Credit modelled on the federal tax credit (Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association, Ontario Home Builders' Association, Quinte Home Builders' Association);
- an expansion of the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit to be a more general Home Renovation Tax Credit (Durham Region Home Builders' Association);
- an increase to the First-Time Home Buyer's Tax Credit to \$8,000 to improve affordability for people trying to enter the property market (Ontario Real Estate Association and Ottawa Real Estate Board);
- a deferral of the provincial land tax for the 2022 tax season to provide relief to resource-based tourism, which was disproportionately affected by the decline in tourism from the United States (Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario);
- an exemption from property taxes for museums (Canadian Automotive Museum);

- changes to the Ontario Staycation Tax Credit to make it annual (Tourism Industry Association of Ontario) and to expand eligibility to ticketed performances and cultural sites (Toronto’s Big 8 Arts and Culture Organizations);
- changes to the eligibility of the Ontario Production Services Tax Credit (OPSTC) to include all location fees paid by local residents/businesses (Cinespace Chicago Film Studios);
- a 20% to 25% tax credit and rebate system for live performances, modelled on what already exists for the film industry (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 58);
- separation of the Ontario Computer Animation and Special Effects (OCASE) tax credit from the OPSTC and the Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit so small companies entering the market have a fair chance at securing work and to enable Ontario Creates to make progress on the OCASE submission backlog (Computer Animation Studios of Ontario);
- the inclusion of graphic novels and translations of books into Canada’s official languages and First Nations languages in the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit (Ontario Book Publishers Organization);
- a re-hiring tax credit for small businesses (Michael Wood);
- the introduction of a Home Speculation Tax (Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods (Ontario))

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business asked that no new tax increases or fees be introduced for small businesses, noting that lockdowns and restrictions continue to impact small- and medium-sized businesses and that 19% of small businesses are actively considering bankruptcy or winding down their business because of the pandemic. The Canadian Beverage Association urged the government to refrain from introducing any product-specific taxation that may impact their industry, and instead to work with industry on an awareness campaign to reduce non-alcoholic beverage caloric intake.

In contrast, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives made the argument that the government should increase tax rates to cover at least \$5 billion per year of reduced revenues from tax cuts implemented since 2018. They presented evidence of rising income inequality and suggested that rates should be raised, “especially on those most able to pay.” A number of organizations also suggested raising taxes to fund public services.²⁹ One individual requested that a commission be created to review the negative impacts of automation and digitization on the labour market, and ultimately provide recommendations for a “robot tax.”³⁰

²⁹ These witnesses included, for example, Poverty Free Thunder Bay, which wrote about the need for a “fairer tax system,” and the Health Coalitions of Chatham—Kent and Sarnia Lambton, which recommended increasing taxes on the wealthy and corporations in order to help fund health care.

³⁰ Don Lalonde.

Tobacco and Vaping

There were also many recommendations on the regulation of tobacco and vaping. Several industry representatives identified contraband tobacco as an issue and asked the provincial government to increase support for law agencies to further their efforts to end the contraband trade. Industry presenters also highlighted that the contraband tobacco trade contributes to a larger black market economy while also negatively affecting government revenues on tobacco products.³¹ Rothmans, Benson & Hedges asked the province to consider establishing an interprovincial task force with Manitoba and Quebec, to support policy development and coordination on addressing contraband tobacco. Imperial Tobacco Canada asked that the *Tobacco Tax Act* be modernized to facilitate more stringent enforcement.

Rothmans, Benson & Hedges also asked the Province to improve access to vaping products as part of its smoke cessation strategy. Imperial Tobacco Canada cautioned that vaping products should maintain their relative affordability and tax advantage over tobacco products to proportionally represent their relative health risks. However, Heart and Stroke was among those that recommended the government institute a tax on vaping products to help reduce vaping by young people and requested support for the FAST Signs of Stroke campaign.³² The Canadian Cancer Society and Heart and Stroke further recommended covering the costs of tobacco prevention and cessation programs by imposing a cost recovery fee on tobacco companies based on market share.

Other

The Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan spoke about how the accounting treatment of the Province's finances caused their assets and liabilities to be detailed, and requested that this practice cease as they are a private trust that is neither sponsored nor guaranteed by the government. The CAAT Pension Plan requested a number of changes to allow more flexibility under the *Pension Benefits Act*. They asked to eliminate the need for an employer/employee relationship in a registered pension plan, permit more options of transferring jointly sponsored pension plans (JSPPs), and amend how JSPPs calculate the commuted value (CV) of pension payments.

Francophone Affairs

The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario suggested that the upcoming provincial budget presents an opportunity to strengthen valuable relationships with the Franco-Ontarian population. The Assemblée made recommendations spanning multiple Ministries, including requests relating to university-level instruction in French, infrastructure investments in spaces with cultural and social significance, and health care to ensure equitable services. The Assemblée also asked that legislation be introduced to require the Ombudsman to be bilingual.

³¹ Convenience Industry Council of Canada, Imperial Tobacco Canada, Ontario Convenience Stores Association, Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association, and Rothmans, Benson & Hedges.

³² The Lung Health Foundation also made this recommendation, as did the Canadian Lung Association, which recommended that this tax be set to at least 20%.

Government and Consumer Services

Both the Ottawa Real Estate Board and the Kitchener-Waterloo Association of Realtors urged the government to refrain from banning the traditional bidding process in real estate. They argued that moving to an auction-style system would not make housing more affordable, noting that the cost of housing has gone up in jurisdictions like Australia and New Zealand, where auctions are common.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada requested amendments to the *Condominium Act, 1998* to define a “standard unit” as a bare shell of floors, ceilings, and unfinished walls, which would clarify the unit owner’s responsibility for insuring everything within the shell. The Co-operators Group made the case that statement limits established under the *Co-operative Corporations Act* should be reviewed, as they are currently inadequate for co-operatives to raise the money they need to capitalize their businesses.

The Council of Canadian Innovators expressed support for the government’s work in the area of intellectual property, and would like the Province to continue with the Intellectual Property Action Plan. They also asked for Ontario to share information with British Columbia to assist that province with the development and implementation of an IP strategy.

One individual wrote in support of the creation of a Consumer Watchdog Office as described in Bill 77, *Ontario Consumer Watchdog Act, 2021*, asking that the proposed new office be appropriately funded so that it can provide citizens the ability to address unfairness and unlawful activity by large corporations.³³

Health

Drugs, Devices and Coverage

The Ontario Drug Benefit program helps cover the costs of prescription medications to eligible individuals. The drugs covered are listed on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary following an approval process that involves negotiations with both federal and provincial governments. The ALS Society of Canada asked that interim funding be provided for ALS treatments immediately following approval by Health Canada and the development of applicable clinical criteria/prescribing guidelines. Merck Canada suggested Ontario facilitate access to new COVID-19 antiviral therapies once authorized by Health Canada.

The Canadian Biosimilars Forum described how a biosimilars switching policy could save hundreds of millions of dollars without compromising patient care; however, AbbVie Corporation cautioned that drug policies should not hamper patient and physician choice. Nestlé Health Science asked for a review of the medical nutrition product reimbursement process under the Ontario Drug Benefit program, which it indicated does not reflect the latest in nutritional science.

The Assistive Devices Program helps individuals with long-term physical disabilities pay for customized equipment. The Ontario Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics asked that an additional \$9.7 million be provided to improve the affordability of prosthetic and orthotic treatment, while the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Canada asked that all patients living with Type One

³³ Barbara Captijn.

diabetes be given access to Continuous Glucose Monitors. The Ontario Home Respiratory Services Association asked that the reimbursement rates for home oxygen and the fixed price for Positive Airway Pressure (PAP) devices be increased to reflect the impacts of inflation.

With regards to services funded through the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP), physicians asked that virtual services introduced during the pandemic be funded on a permanent basis.³⁴ An hourly wage worker who appeared before the Committee asked that mental health services covered by OHIP be expanded.³⁵ Witnesses requested that OHIP cover the cost of all vaccines for seniors that have been recognized by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.³⁶ The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario and the Fédération des aînés et retraités francophones de l'Ontario asked that OHIP cards include a language variable to improve data collection.

The Ontario Dental Association explained that government-funded dental programs for low-income Ontarians do not adequately reimburse dentists. They estimate the shortfall at \$150 million, but asked for an immediate investment of \$50 million in the Healthy Smiles Ontario program for children and youth from low-income families.

The Canadian Cancer Society explained that take-home cancer drugs do not fall under the jurisdiction of the public cancer agency budget and, as a result, patients must rely on private drug plans or provincial drug programs if eligible. It recommended that the Province cover take-home drugs (as it currently does for drugs administered in hospital), estimating the costs as a second payer to be between \$12 million to \$31 million.

Disease Prevention and Treatment

The Committee heard from organizations that provide services for persons suffering from illness and disease. These organizations recommended the Province invest

- \$2.8 million per year, for four years, in education and support programs at Ontario's Community Epilepsy Agencies (Epilepsy Ontario);
- \$4.5 million over four years in a provincial mental health and social support hub for Sickle Cell Disease (Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario);
- \$1 million per year for the FAST Signs of Stroke campaign for the next three years (Heart and Stroke);
- \$1.4 million to prevent further MINT Memory Clinic closures (MINT Memory Clinic);

³⁴ Ontario Association of Cardiologists, Ontario Medical Association, and Ontario Medical Association: District 9 (North East).

³⁵ Charlene Morling.

³⁶ CanAge and Ontario Seniors Care and Assistance Roundtable.

- \$3.26 million in First Link® System Navigation to support Ontarians living with dementia (Alzheimer Society of Ontario);
- approximately \$3 million to restore the chronic disease assessment supplement for cardiac specialist treatment and care of congestive heart failure patients in the community (Ontario Association of Cardiologists);³⁷
- \$2.17 million over three years to be accessed by clinicians for the use of neurodegenerative diagnostic imaging tools (General Electric Canada);
- funding for the Lung Health Foundation’s Asthma and COPD Action Program and Quash youth vaping and smoking cessation program (Lung Health Foundation); and,
- funding to enable access to the Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation procedure (Edwards Lifesciences (Canada)).

The ILC Foundation wrote the Committee to explain that individuals suffering from Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes do not currently have access to life-altering neurosurgery treatments in the province. They asked that the Province provide funding for the recruitment or training of one neurosurgeon who specializes in the syndromes and for the surgical suite required for them to perform their highly specialized work.

The Ontario Chiropractic Association asked that chiropractors be given the authority to order laboratory and diagnostic tests to enable a faster diagnosis for patients living in pain.

Health Sciences

Ontario’s life sciences sector has contributed to Canada’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, working towards solutions to address this crisis. Despite this important contribution, Life Sciences Ontario indicated that the sector is not achieving its full potential. This organization and others asked that the Province begin to develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated Ontario Life Sciences Strategy.³⁸

The Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization asked the Province to establish a two-year, \$20-million fund to encourage procurement of domestically developed health technologies. Edwards Lifesciences (Canada) asked the Province to provide hospitals with grants they can use to partner with private companies to advance late-stage medical innovation.

Home and Community Care

Witnesses reminded the Committee that whenever possible, Ontarians want to receive the care they need in their own home. Effective home and community care can prevent unnecessary hospitalizations and reduce the need for long-term

³⁷ This \$3 million figure is based on the 2013-14 cost cited in the Ontario Association of Cardiologists’ written submission.

³⁸ Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd., Innovative Medicines Canada, and Merck Canada also made this recommendation.

care. Witnesses expressed concerns that current funding levels were insufficient to meet the growing demand for service. The Ontario Community Support Association was among those that asked the Province to invest a total of \$677 million in the sector, including \$470 million for salaries, \$57 million for increases to base funding, and \$150 million in funding to address COVID-19 pressures.³⁹ Other witnesses asked for base budget increases of 7-8% to all community-based health care providers.⁴⁰

Over the long term, SE Health and the Ontario Branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses asked that the Province aim to allocate 10% of total health care spending to home and community care. The Fédération des aînés et retraités francophones de l'Ontario asked that the Province support the creation of designated bilingual organizations to offer home care services in French.

The Ontario Caregiver Coalition asked for increased funding for direct care programs that provide flexibility to caregivers. The Alzheimer Society of Ontario asked that the Province expand eligibility for self-directed and family-managed home care programs to include people living with dementia, their care partners, and/or those with power of attorney. The Ontario Retirement Communities Association requested a benefit that would provide an allowance for seniors to purchase supports directly from a greater range of care provider options.

Home Care Ontario asked that a new tax credit be introduced to reimburse 15% of family-funded home care costs up to a maximum credit of \$1,500 for \$10,000 in services.

Hospitals

The Committee heard that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant pressures on already struggling Ontario hospitals. Witnesses asked that significant investments be made to these institutions.⁴¹ The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE asked that per capita funding be increased to meet the Canadian average.

Specific requests for capital investments included

- \$51 million to the Peterborough Regional Health Centre's Regional Program Expansion Project (Peterborough Regional Health Centre);
- \$10 million-\$12 million in capital planning grants for Saint Mary's General Hospital and Grand River Hospital in Kitchener-Waterloo (Grand River Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce); and

³⁹ Care Watch Ontario, Community Care Durham, and Ontario Community Support Association.

⁴⁰ Meals on Wheels London, Hutton House, South West Community Support Services Council, and VHA Health and Home Support.

⁴¹ This included Chatham-Kent Health Coalition and Sarnia Lambton Health Coalition, London Health Coalition, Ontario Council of Hospital Unions / Canadian Union of Public Employees, and Jules Tupker.

- a comprehensive cancer care centre and a third hospital in Brampton (City of Brampton).

Medavie highlighted an opportunity to enhance the Ambulance Communications delivery model by consolidating existing centres.

Mental Health

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division described how the pandemic is increasing demands for the services they provide locally. Waitlists are longer and cases more complex because the pandemic is exacerbating the challenges faced by those already living with a mental health or addiction issue. The Association and its branches asked that their base budgets be increased by \$24 million, the equivalent of 8%. Family Service Ontario also asked for \$5 million per year to serve 5,000 struggling individuals, couples, and families impacted by the pandemic.

Lutherwood, which is the lead agency for children's mental health services in the Waterloo region, asked for \$4.3 million to support eight local service partners to deliver prevention services, assessments, counseling and therapy, crisis services, intensive treatments and caregiver supports.

The Centretown Community Health Centre was among those that highlighted that the opioid crisis has intensified during the pandemic.⁴² It asked that the Province remove barriers to safe injection sites and hydromorphone.

The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario asked the Province to fund more front-line mental health resources in French and to create an agency with a provincial and francophone mandate that would be responsible for child and youth mental health services.

Palliative Care

Hospice Palliative Care Ontario explained that only 3% of the population dies suddenly; most people experience a longer trajectory that can be effectively supported outside of hospitals. The organization asked the Province to provide \$43.2 million to fund 100% of clinical costs provided in hospices. It explained that the Province only funds nursing and personal support workers, but not other necessary costs including patient care supplies, nutrition, and infection control. It also asked for \$4 million annually for in-home services and \$10 million for patient, family, and community grief and bereavement services to offset the decline in donations since the onset of the pandemic.⁴³

Physicians and Specialists

To preserve capacity in the health care system, non-emergent surgeries and procedures were paused. According to the Ontario Medical Association, this has

⁴² Others who highlighted the crisis included the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division, Canadian Mental Health Association, Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, Canadian Mental Health Association Windsor Essex County branch, City of London, Peterborough Regional Health Centre, Ontario Federation of Labour, and Ontario Medical Association.

⁴³ The Heart House Hospice made similar recommendations.

contributed to long wait times. The Association asked for significant investments to address the backlog and reduce wait times. It also shared *Prescription for Ontario: Doctors' 5-Point Plan for Better Health Care*, which presents recommendations based on the views of more than 1,600 physicians and other stakeholders. Representatives of the North East and North West chapters asked that the Province update and review recruitment incentives for Northern doctors, specialists, and sub-specialists.

Primary Care

The Alliance for Healthier Communities, which represents community health centres and other primary health teams, indicated that its members are having to make tough choices between service delivery and bill payments. The Alliance asked for a \$253.8 million investment, a figure that includes funding to support wage parity with other health sectors, base budget increases, virtual care and infrastructure technology improvements, and improved access to team-based care.⁴⁴

An individual wrote the Committee to describe the experience of an elderly woman with unusual pain who had to consult 24 different doctors, including many specialists with their own waitlists. He highlighted this as an example of how the system works in silos, and asked for more integrated patient care.⁴⁵

A number of witnesses indicated they were hopeful that Ontario Health Teams would better coordinate services and provide patient-centered care.⁴⁶ The Ontario Medical Association reminded the Committee that these teams should include family physicians, and Bayshore Health Care asked that the Province increase funding for home care prior to transferring accountability to the teams.

TELUS Health and Hoffmann-La Roche provided recommendations relating to the use of health data and digital solutions to improve planning and patient care.

Public Health

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies asked the Province to continue to support the pandemic response. It also explained that COVID-19-related activities have put so much pressure on local public health resources that most of the routine programs and services mandated by the Ontario Public Health Standards have all but ceased. With the likelihood that COVID-19 will continue to be an important part of the work of public health, the Association asked that additional resources be allocated to resume routine programming. The Ontario Public Health Association provided similar recommendations, and added that the Province should revert to the 75% / 25% provincial-municipal public health cost-sharing formula.

⁴⁴ The Centretown Community Health Centre and London InterCommunity Health Centre also presented to the Committee.

⁴⁵ Bruce Ahrens.

⁴⁶ These witnesses included London InterCommunity Health Centre and Home Care Ontario.

Witnesses also recommended that the Province

- make routine immunizations more accessible to Ontarians by distributing publicly funded vaccines to community pharmacies via wholesalers and providing appropriate remuneration for immunization-related services (Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada);
- invest \$2 million in a communications program to educate Ontarians about the health benefits associated with improving indoor air quality (Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada and Ontario Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Contractors Association); and
- allow community labs to test specimens they collect on behalf of public health laboratories (Dynacare).

Supportive Housing

Supportive Housing requires a physical unit as well as funding for the supports that allow individuals to live independently. The Committee heard that there is a need to provide substantial investment in both.

The Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre asked for \$90 million for the development of 1,800 affordable housing units and \$15.3 million annually for ongoing operations.

The Catholic Health Association of Ontario requested \$57 million to expand Assisted Living in Seniors' Supportive Housing programs and support an additional 2,500 seniors.

Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

Artist Support

The Ontario Arts Council offers grants and services to Ontario-based artists and arts organizations. Witnesses asked that funding to this agency be increased, with the amount requested ranging from \$5 million to \$95 million and earmarked to various parts of the arts sector.⁴⁷ For example, a number of witnesses specifically asked for \$10 million allocated to support Indigenous artists and organizations.⁴⁸ Other ideas for investment included support for digital infrastructure and a short-term subsidy for unsold concert tickets similar to a model being piloted in Quebec.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Alliance of Arts Councils of Ontario, Canadian Artists' Representation, Canada's National Ballet School, Dance Ontario Association, Galleries Ontario, Orchestras Canada, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

⁴⁸ Canadian Artists' Representation, Dance Ontario Association, and Galleries Ontario.

⁴⁹ Galleries Ontario and Toronto's Big 8 Arts and Culture Organizations. Orchestras Canada made the recommendation relating to unsold tickets.

Noting that a similar initiative was in place from 1998 to 2008, witnesses asked that a program for matching private donations be established at the Ontario Arts Foundation.⁵⁰

The Committee also heard that existing funding programs to the arts were not flexible enough to meet the needs of the sector. For example, some witnesses noted that most investments in the sector are project driven, and suggested the Province fund municipal arts councils to deliver \$500 to \$5,000 micro-investments to non-profit organizations with no paid staff.⁵¹ The Alliance of Arts Councils of Ontario asked for a review of Ontario Trillium Foundation funding criteria to ensure that it meets the needs of all parts of the sector.

MusicOntario and the Canadian Independent Music Association requested a permanent increase of the Ontario Music Investment Fund to \$20 million annually. A witness submitted a proposal for a \$25 million Eastern Ontario Development Fund to target investments regionally, modelled after the film stream within Northern Ontario Heritage.⁵² To assist individual musicians, witnesses asked for support through the Unison Fund, a non-profit, registered charity that provides counselling and emergency relief services to the Canadian music community.⁵³

Libraries

The Committee heard from a number of local libraries, as well as from the Ontario Library Association and Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, describing libraries as community spaces that provide essential services. Libraries offer free internet; help with navigating government programs, seniors', teens' and children's services; and provide safe places for individuals to stay warm or cool in extreme temperatures. These organizations indicated that funding has not kept pace with the demand for their services or with inflationary pressures. They asked that the Public Library Operating Grant be increased by \$21 million, that First Nations libraries receive a \$2 million annual increase for staff salaries, and that the Province create and invest in an Ontario Digital Public Library to leverage Ontario's purchasing power to improve access to e-resources.⁵⁴

Museums

There are more than 700 museums, historic sites and art galleries across the province. Many of these institutions are struggling to survive due to lost revenues because of repeated closures as a result of the pandemic. The Ontario Museum Association warned that some museums will not survive without support and that their closure would mean the loss of tourism assets, fewer educational opportunities, and a missed opportunity for economic growth. The Association asked for a \$10-million annual increase to support museum operations,

⁵⁰ Dance Ontario Association, Orchestras Canada, and Toronto's Big 8 Arts and Culture Organizations.

⁵¹ London Arts Council and Pillar Nonprofit Network.

⁵² South Eastern Ontario Production Accelerator Fund.

⁵³ Canadian Live Music Association and Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

⁵⁴ Clarence-Rockland Public Library, Dryden Public Library, Leeds and the Thousand Islands Public Library, and Ottawa Public Library also presented to the Committee.

exemptions from property tax, a \$10 Million Ontario Museum Relief Fund to address pandemic-related challenges, and a three-year \$10-million Digital Response Fund to support museums that are experimenting with new ways to reach their audience.⁵⁵

Sport

A growing number of Ontarians are exploring outdoor activities to stay safe during the pandemic. The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs asked that the Province invest \$2.5 million to improve snowmobile trails. Golf Canada requested a similar amount to support Home of Canadian Golf, which will serve as a headquarters for the First Tee program that introduces children of diverse backgrounds to the sport.

Tourism

The Committee heard from individuals representing the tourism sector who indicated that their sector was particularly hard hit by the pandemic, since many rely on travel and large gatherings which have been restricted.

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario and Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario asked that the Province provide a second round of programs such as the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program and the Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Grant, and expand eligibility to include businesses that were indirectly impacted by public health restrictions or who are not structured as an incorporated business. A business owner explained that seasonal businesses, particularly those busiest during indoor winter months, require targeted supports.⁵⁶

Witnesses also asked for the inclusion of independent travel advisors, producers of trade and consumer shows, and motor coach and group travel suppliers in tourism-related recovery supports.⁵⁷

Indigenous Affairs

The Committee recognizes the importance of ensuring that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people are considered in the development of the Budget. Witnesses asked the Committee to advance reconciliation and support the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, highlighting how Indigenous people are more likely to experience poverty and homelessness as well as to face unique barriers to accessing social and health care services. While many recommendations are included in other sections of this report, the Committee also heard that it should work collaboratively with Indigenous Services Canada and Health Canada to provide clean drinking water to Indigenous communities, develop a housing strategy that addresses the unique

⁵⁵ The Canadian Automotive Museum made similar recommendations.

⁵⁶ Paul Goulet.

⁵⁷ Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors, Canadian Association of Exposition Management, and Ontario Motor Coach Association.

needs of Indigenous peoples, and establish September 30 as a provincial statutory holiday to honour the lost children and survivors of residential schools.⁵⁸

Infrastructure

Capital Requests

Infrastructure investments can generate social and economic benefits. In addition to the requests highlighted in other sections of this report, the Committee heard from the Chamber of Marine Commerce, which requested investments that connect rail, road, and port infrastructure along the Great Lakes/St-Lawrence commercial waterways. The Chamber explained that by increasing the rail and road connections to ports, Ontario could fill in missing inter-modal links for the exports of grains and Northern Ontario minerals as well as for the transportation of steel and aluminum materials to automotive manufacturing hubs in Southern Ontario. The City of Port Colborne recommended creating an Ontario Marine Transportation Strategy and establishing an Ontario Marine Secretariat to develop a policy and funding framework. They proposed that the strategy could be modelled on Quebec's 2015 Maritime Strategy.

The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario requested an \$8.24 million investment from the Ministry of Infrastructure for necessary renovations of Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans (MIFO) facilities. They described the significant contribution of the organization to the cultural and social life of Francophones in Ottawa and Eastern Ontario, in addition to adding \$12.7 million to Ontario's GDP. The requested funds would be used to replace the existing building on Carrière Street, triple the size of the space, allow for expanded program offerings, and make the space safer, more accessible and environmentally responsible.

Ronald McDonald House Charities asked for a one-time capital investment of \$67 million to expand from 177 to 349 bedrooms and make improvements to existing units. They discussed how the pandemic has led to an increase in the average length of stay in their residences and how they are anticipating a surge in demand as the backlog in surgeries and treatments is processed.

Prioritizing Investments

The committee heard from various sectors about the need to prioritize infrastructure in their respective areas. For example, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra requested that priority be given to culture and recreation. This emphasis was echoed by Orchestras Canada, who argued that infrastructure investment would be essential to the return of live arts post-pandemic. The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition suggested that investment should be prioritised for permanently affordable housing built and managed by municipalities, non-profit housing providers and housing co-operatives.

⁵⁸ These recommendations were made by Ontario Medical Association; Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association; and Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario Division respectively.

Witnesses also asked that infrastructure contracts include Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs) with employment equity obligations that would ensure local communities benefit from the project.⁵⁹ The Ontario Good Roads Association suggested a “fix-it-first” approach to dealing with the municipal infrastructure deficit. They reasoned that compared to new capital investments, maintenance projects generate more economic activity, involve a greater diversity of the workforce, and require less planning and permitting time.

Technologies

Industry representatives also talked about new technologies that may assist in the construction of infrastructure. The Greater Ottawa Home Builders’ Association recommended investments in automated construction techniques to help address a loss of labour supply. The Association specifically recommended investments in prefabricated construction plans and panelized construction, and investment in forming technologies, including 3-D printing. The Cement Association of Canada urged the government to accelerate the adoption of lower carbon cement, such as Portland-Limestone cement, which reduces greenhouse gases.

Labour, Training and Skills Development

Employment Services

First Work provided written commentary on the government’s ongoing efforts to transform the employment and training services sector. They recommended a broad consultation to directly collect input from frontline providers, job seekers, and employers. They also recommended the reintroduction of youth-focused supports, flexibility in service guidelines to ensure inclusivity, and increased programming and resources to fully meet the needs of ODSP and OW clients. The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants requested a commitment that new Employment Ontario service prototypes would address the systemic barriers faced by immigrants, particularly women and racialized individuals.

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) articulated the challenges visually impaired individuals experience in the labour market, with only 31% of working-age adults with sight loss employed full time. They propose an investment of \$9 million over three years in CNIB’s Come to Work Program. DeafBlind Ontario Services submitted a brief describing their “Certified Deafblind Intervenor Specialist” certification in collaboration with CNIB. They asked for direct support of professionals and intervenors for deaf, hard of hearing, non-verbal and deafblind individuals.

Employment Standards

Many witnesses made the case for increasing the minimum wage.⁶⁰ The Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario described the difficulties of living on minimum wage and called for a “living wage.” YWCA Toronto discussed the gendered impacts,

⁵⁹ These witnesses included Colour of Poverty—Colour of Change and the Ontario Nonprofit Network.

⁶⁰ Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario, Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario, Income Security Advocacy Centre, Pillar Nonprofit Network, and Unifor.

with 73% of minimum wage workers in Ontario being women. Unifor specifically called for the minimum wage to be raised to 60% of the median wage for full-time workers, which they calculated as \$17.31 in 2021.

The Ontario Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and Christian Labour Association of Canada both suggested schemes to increase the minimum wage in line with increases in the Consumer Price Index to account for the pressures of inflation. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce questioned whether some segments of the economy hardest hit by the pandemic would be able to afford wage increases.

Many organizations and individuals advocated for the provision of paid sick days to be expanded.⁶¹ The Ontario Federation of Labour conveyed that, in the absence of available paid sick days, many workers must choose between going to work sick or staying at home and losing pay. Consequently, witnesses such as the Income Security Advocacy Centre asserted that paid sick days were good for workers, public health, and the economy.

Certain sectors discussed how paid sick days were particularly important for their areas. The Ontario Nurses' Association mentioned that health care professionals are currently going into at-risk environments, and that even prior to COVID they were subject to environmental factors which increased the need for sick days. The Tourism Industry of Association of Ontario maintained that more paid sick days were important for their sector as frontline tourism and hospitality workers are not able to work from home. RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario also discussed the need for paid sick days in the child care sector.

Many witnesses speaking on the subject proposed 10 paid sick days, although several organizations requested that the number be expanded to 14 during declared public health outbreaks.⁶² The Ontario Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and Unifor recommended removing the requirement to provide a doctor's note to access paid sick days.

The South Asian Women's Rights Organization described many issues they have encountered with temporary help agencies. They advocated for legislation and policies to reduce, and eventually displace, temporary help agencies, particularly for low-skill occupations. They recommend limiting the number of temporary workers allowed to be employed by a single enterprise and requiring temporary help agencies to be licensed and bonded, with revocation or forfeiture for unfair labour practices.

⁶¹ Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario, Centretown Community Health Centre, Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario, Income Security Advocacy Centre, Charlene Morling, Neighbourhood Legal Services (London & Middlesex), Ontario Federation of Labour, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Ontario Nurses' Association, Ontario Nonprofit Network, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Pillar Nonprofit Network, Unifor, and YWCA Toronto.

⁶² Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario, Income Security Advocacy Centre, London Health Coalition, and Ontario Federation of Labour.

Immigration

Several organizations made recommendations for the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) to address gaps in the labour market. The Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) and the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario suggested expanding the list of eligible professions to allow for more spots for general labourers who meet certain conditions. RESCON described how expanding the list of eligible professions to include National Occupational Classification (NOC) skill level C and D positions would create a pathway for certain in-demand tradespeople to come to Ontario to work. The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce asked for an allocation of ONIP spots to small and rural communities in Northwestern Ontario to help address labour shortages. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce recommended doubling the total number of immigrants admitted through OINP, from 9,000 to at least 18,000, as well as expanding current pilots in regional immigration and making them permanent programs to address labour shortages in general.

There were also witnesses who pointed to the difficulties skilled immigrants face in finding appropriate work, and who made recommendations to better integrate these skilled immigrants. The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants recommended the government invest in newcomer settlement and employment programs to address labour market barriers. The South Asian Women's Rights Organization would like the government to launch a cross-jurisdictional initiative, beginning with a public inquiry, to address underemployment of people recruited as skilled immigrants.

Skilled Trades

The Quinte Home Builders' Association and Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association both applauded the Government's efforts on supporting the skilled trades and asked for continued investments to reduce the stigma, support awareness, simplify the system, and encourage employer participation. The Toronto YWCA proposed the application of an intersectional gender lens to funding for skilled trades development, and the provision of multi-year funding for employment and training programs to help women enter the skilled trades where they are underrepresented.

The General Contractors' Association of Toronto recommended an amendment to the *Labour Relations Act* to limit labour agreements in the industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) construction sector to a four-year term.

Skills Development

Certain industries requested assistance to help train and build labour capacity. The Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada and Ontario Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Contractors Association requested \$5 million to support heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration workforce development and meet the emerging needs of a low-carbon economy. The University of Guelph and Middlesex London Food Policy Council suggested partnering with industry and post-secondary leaders to attract youth to highly skilled, well-paying careers in the agri-food industry. Career Colleges Ontario asked for the renewal of the PSW Challenge Fund to train Personal Support Workers in order to alleviate the burden on Ontario's health system.

Other organizations made recommendations relating to the Skills Development Fund (SDF). Anderson College of Health, Business and Technology and Dynacare suggested expanding eligibility for the SDF to programs that are more than 12 months in length, to better train Ontarians for in-demand professions. The tilr corporation suggested simplifying the process for applicants who have already been successful in the past and expanding the project duration from one year to between two and five to match the timelines of many technology projects. The Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization asked for continued support through programs like the SDF for their Health-to-Business Bridge program, a collaborative initiative between academia and industry aimed at improving access to talent across the health science sector

Workplace Safety

The Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups - Research Action Committee discussed the practice of deeming, arguing that the process reduces benefits that injured workers are rightfully entitled to. The Network requested that the government restore benefits to people who had income benefits reduced due to “deemed” job assessments. Other witnesses also called for amendments to the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* to eliminate “deeming.”⁶³

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union suggested that, in the context of more people working remotely, health and safety and WSIB legislation should ensure coverage of workers injured while working from home. Unifor requested repealing the legislation that allows the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to return premiums to employers, and undertaking consultation with all stakeholders on the workers compensation system, including benefit coverage levels and how claims are processed. The Christian Labour Association of Canada asked for mandatory WSIB coverage to be extended to employees of retirement homes.

Long-Term Care

Witnesses asserted that the pandemic exposed systemic issues in the long-term care sector. While they acknowledged recent commitments to increase direct care and build new beds, witnesses asked for additional investments.

The Ontario Long-Term Care Association estimated that pandemic-related costs in 2022-23 will exceed \$800 million, and asked that the Province commit to covering these costs in full.

Perley Health described the challenges it faces in trying to raise capital to build long-term care homes as a not-for-profit provider. The organization asked that the Province explore a model where private developers build homes for operation by not-for-profit and charitable licensees, as proposed by the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission, and offered to help develop the model and participate in a pilot. The organization also suggested that the Province establish a fund for repairs and maintenance, modeled on similar programs such as the Hospital Infrastructure Renewal Fund and Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund.

⁶³ Richard Renzella and South Asian Women’s Rights Organization.

AdvantAge Ontario was among the organizations that asked the Province to make significant investments in long-term care and to focus these investments on care delivered by not-for-profit and municipal providers.⁶⁴ It also asked that the Province create a special, one-time fund to help long-term care homes transition to an emotional model of care, and then provide ongoing funding to support this model once implemented.

CanAge and the Champlain Region Family Council Network asked that the Province build long-term care homes that are smaller, innovative, community-based, and less institutional.

Witnesses requested that the Province require a minimum of four hours of daily care per resident per day—not an average and sooner than specified in the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*.⁶⁵ The Council on Aging of Ottawa further added that the Province should also require 60 additional minutes/day from allied professional staff. Pallium Canada provided specific suggestions on how a palliative approach, as outlined in the new *Act*, could be implemented, focusing first on a prioritized cohort of care facilities and training for health care professionals.

Municipal Affairs and Housing

Building Code

The Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) commended the progress made to-date harmonizing the provincial building code with the building code of Canada and other provinces and asked for these efforts to continue. RESCON detailed how a single harmonized building code would eliminate barriers to labour mobility and address issues related to product manufacturing and building design, but cautioned that municipalities were still introducing their own unique building requirements, undermining the national harmonization process.

Witnesses suggested changes to the building code including

- requirements to prevent radon exposure (Canadian Lung Association);
- requirements for a minimum percentage of electric vehicle supply equipment in residential and non-residential buildings (Ontario Society of Professional Engineers);
- new construction standards for more use of antimicrobial copper in public spaces (Teck Resources); and

⁶⁴ Other witnesses included the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Champlain Region Family Council Network, Chatham-Kent and Sarnia-Lambton Health Coalition, London Health Coalition, Ontario Nurses' Association, and Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

⁶⁵ Witnesses who commented on the hours of care included Canadian Union of Public Employees - Ontario Division, Council on Aging of Ottawa, John Jarema, Mary Oko, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Renata Ozimek, Jules Tupker, and Unifor.

- a tiered system of development incentives for builders implementing different levels of energy-efficiency (Ontario Association of Architects).

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability was identified as a critical issue throughout the Committee hearings. A few witnesses proposed changes to give municipalities more powers and abilities to create and acquire affordable housing. The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition suggested that affordability could be promoted by providing municipalities funding for purchasing apartment buildings and the right of first refusal for purchases. The Ontario Caucus of Habitat for Humanity suggested more funding to municipalities and changes to the *Planning Act* to encourage municipalities to increase their supply of affordable housing. One example is to encourage municipalities to use inclusionary zoning, which requires new residential developments to include affordable housing units.

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada explained that many co-op housing buildings are nearing the end of their mortgages and under the current funding formula will lose the municipal assistance they receive in the form of rental assistance and property tax subsidies. They asked the Province to revise the formula, noting that if changes are not made some buildings will be unable to undertake needed capital repairs. The Federation also recommended partnering directly with co-ops and non-profits to help them acquire and build more affordable housing.

Some organizations made proposals to assist with housing for specific groups. The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association called for the development of a provincial housing strategy that addresses the challenges Indigenous people face accessing adequate housing, especially in urban communities. Some groups recommended that the House of Friendship's ShelterCare program, which provides integrated supports to people experiencing homelessness, continue to be supported.⁶⁶ Conestoga Students Incorporated requested that funding be provided to non-profits and postsecondary institutions to increase the supply of purpose-built student accommodations. An individual asked the Province to create an Ontario Housing and Homelessness Strategy that includes an expectation that all new housing created in Ontario for vulnerable populations will have ongoing support.⁶⁷

Housing Supply

Many stakeholders provided suggestions to increase housing supply. Neighbourhood Legal Services (London & Middlesex) recommended building more Rent-Geared-to-Income units and investing in refurbishing existing units. Other witnesses suggested specific building targets over the next 10 years including

- 99,000 new affordable and supportive rental units (Daily Bread Food Bank and Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association);

⁶⁶ House of Friendship and City of Kitchener.

⁶⁷ Serena Leblond.

- 69,000 units of new affordable co-op and non-profit housing (Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada); and
- an average of 19,500 rental supply units per year (University of Toronto Students' Union).

Various witnesses suggested zoning amendments to increase the housing supply, including the use of “as-of-right” zoning to allow the owner of a property to redevelop it, without recourse to a public hearing process or a vote of municipal council if the redevelopment adheres to the zoning by-laws. Proponents suggested ways as-of-right zoning changes could allow the conversion of commercial properties into residential housing units, corner lots into multi-residential complexes, and more duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes in large urban municipalities.⁶⁸

Several witnesses spoke about changes to municipal regulations and processes which could accelerate the creation of housing supply. Home builders made the case that the Province should require municipalities to accept pay-on-demand surety bonds as an alternative to a letter of credit for development and site plan agreements.⁶⁹ The Ontario Association of Architects suggested reforming the site plan approval process, while RESCON suggested adopting and funding One Ontario, a data exchange and e-permitting platform.

Municipal Finance

Many witnesses drew attention to the fiscal challenges municipalities currently face and argued for continued financial assistance through the course of the pandemic.⁷⁰ The Safe Restart Agreements were cited as a particular example of the type of funding that could assist municipalities in this time.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario stressed the need to account for the impact of inflation in cost-sharing programs. They pointed to program areas in need of additional funding to address pressures, in particular, the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, long-term care cost sharing, emergency medical services, childcare, and hospital capital contributions.

The Township of Dawn Euphemia requested that the provincial government increase transfers to rural municipalities, as these areas do not have the tax base to maintain large road networks and other spread-out infrastructure. Along these lines, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo urged the government to review the funding for municipalities, arguing that the reliance on property taxes to provide services is not sustainable.

The Northumberland Builders and Construction Association and Quinte Home Builders' Association recommended providing funding to municipalities for the purpose of retaining outside professionals to review and approve housing and infrastructure applications. They suggested that this program would accelerate

⁶⁸ Kitchener-Waterloo Association of Realtors, Ontario Association of Architects, Ontario Real Estate Association, and Ottawa Real Estate Board.

⁶⁹ Durham Region Home Builders' Association, Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association, and Ontario Home Builders' Association.

⁷⁰ Association of Municipalities of Ontario, City of Kitchener, and Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario.

development and approvals for home builders, and in turn, increase housing supply and affordability.

Rental Affordability and Regulation

Several witnesses suggested changes to rules for rental properties. Many stakeholders made the case that rent control should be in place to limit landlords' ability to increase rates between tenancies.⁷¹ The Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) contended that landlords are currently incentivised to push out long-term tenants in order to generate increased revenues. The PNLT also recommended prohibiting Above-Guideline Rent Increases under the *Residential Tenancy Act* that are for renovations not primarily benefiting, or requested by, tenants.

Stakeholders also proposed the introduction of a rental relief program.⁷² The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario recommended a program consisting of grants and loans accessible to households of all income levels, similar to initiatives introduced in the United States and British Columbia. Some advocates specifically suggested expansion of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program, which currently provides a direct, monthly benefit to eligible households to help pay their rent.⁷³ To address challenges faced by renters during the pandemic, the Toronto Raging Grannies directed the government to prohibit evictions during this time. The Small Ownership Landlords of Ontario described how the pandemic was negatively affecting their members as well and requested financial assistance for small landlords who are unable to collect unpaid rent from tenants impacted by the pandemic.

Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry

The Committee heard from insurance companies highlighting the importance of Ontario's flooding strategy. The Co-operators Group asked that the Province continue to implement the recommendations of the Special Advisor on Flooding. The Insurance Bureau of Canada proposed that a residential high-risk flood pool would help ensure that all homeowners are able to access flood insurance. Both organizations highlighted the importance of investing in measures that prevent and mitigate flooding. The Desjardins Group suggested the Province prohibit municipalities from allowing new buildings on flood plains, while the CSA Group suggested that the Province mandate its standards on water management and flood mitigation.

⁷¹ Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Conestoga Students Incorporated, Trystan Goetze, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, and Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust.

⁷² Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Daily Bread Food Bank, and Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association.

⁷³ Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Hamilton Social Work Action Committee, Neighbourhood Legal Services (London & Middlesex).

The Ontario Forest Industries Association wrote to the Committee about the growing demand for sustainable forest products. The Association recommended measures consistent with Ontario's Forest Strategy, including creating intensive forest management areas and investigating potential mechanisms to incentivize investment in intensive forestry. It also suggested increasing support to the Forest Access Roads Funding Program to \$100 million.

It was also recommended that Crown resource fees for 2022 be waived to help outdoor operators recover from the loss of revenue due to the pandemic.⁷⁴

Seniors and Accessibility

CanAge and the Ontario Seniors Care and Assistance Roundtable explained that incidents of elder abuse and neglect have increased since the beginning of the pandemic. RTOERO pointed out that call volumes at the Seniors Safety Line have skyrocketed. These organizations asked that the Province increase funding for elder abuse prevention and services for victims.

Transportation

Highway 413

The Committee heard differing opinions on the planned Highway 413 and Bradford Bypass projects. The Brampton Board of Trade and the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) spoke in favour of these projects. RCCAO commented that the projects would reduce congestion, foster economic recovery and long-term competitiveness, improve connectivity, support housing initiatives, and facilitate job creation. They commissioned a report which found that the project would create up to 8,000 jobs a year during construction, generate \$2.3 billion in earnings for Ontario workers, create up to 600 apprenticeships, and produce \$906 million in tax revenue. In contrast, several individuals and organizations spoke in opposition, and requested that the government cancel the Highway 413 project.⁷⁵ These witnesses argue that the project would compromise the existing Greenbelt, eliminate Class 1 and Class 2 farmland, and increase carbon emissions. They also suggested that the construction would not actually relieve congestion and call for the estimated \$6 billion project costs to be redirected towards public transit infrastructure.

Transit

The TTC Riders and David Suzuki Foundation were appreciative of capital funding for transit expansion but stressed the necessity to support day-to-day operations as well. This support would include funding for things like vehicle maintenance, disinfection of stations, and hiring of drivers. Witnesses maintained that lower ridership has created a funding crisis for transit agencies and municipalities across the province that rely on fares for transit funding. They

⁷⁴ Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario and Tourism Industry Association of Ontario.

⁷⁵ Deborah Davies, Adrian Hetherington, Mary Ann Hodge, Marianne Larsen, Bob Morrison, Pillar Nonprofit Network, and Toronto Raging Grannies.

stated that both emergency and stable long-term operations funding is required for cities to recover from the pandemic.

One individual wrote to urge the reinstatement of two trains each day from Toronto to Cochrane and to operate three return rail trips a week between Sault Ste. Marie and Hurst, Ontario.⁷⁶ The Ontario Motor Coach Association suggested redeveloping the province's motor coach network to better connect to communities not serviced by bus or train.

Witnesses suggested funding for specific transit projects including

- \$400 million to \$1.7 billion, depending on the route, for an extension of the Hurontario LRT towards Main Street and to the Brampton GO station (City of Brampton and the Brampton Board of Trade);
- \$250 million for the Queen Street-Highway 7 Rapid Transit / Züm Express (City of Brampton);
- \$75 million for a third transit facility for Brampton's e-bus fleet (City of Brampton); and
- Eglinton East LRT extension (TTCriders).

An individual interested in public transit counseled the government to not bury the Eglinton West LRT, and instead use the savings to fund the Eglinton East LRT⁷⁷.

Electric and Alternative Fuel Transportation

A number of presenters made recommendations intended to promote the use of personal electric vehicles. The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers asked the Province to accelerate the electrification of the transportation system, explaining that increasing the uptake of electric vehicles and encouraging recharging during evenings would significantly reduce the amount of surplus energy sold for a loss to external jurisdictions. They made several recommendations on how to increase the uptake of electric vehicles, including developing an incentive program and permitting free or discounted access to tolled highways.

To reach a similar aim, a number of witnesses recommended restoring and enhancing the Electric and Hydrogen Vehicle Incentive Program.⁷⁸ The Society of United Professionals suggested that the goal should be to fully phase out the sale of internal combustion engines for passenger vehicles by 2035. One specific investment they identified is to create a comprehensive network of charging stations for electric vehicles to increase uptake.

The topic of electrification and alternative fuel types came up at several points during the proceedings. Enbridge proposed a joint investment with the Province and municipalities to switch buses from diesel to renewable natural gas (RNG)

⁷⁶ Adrian Hetherington.

⁷⁷ Hamish Wilson.

⁷⁸ Mary Ann Hodge, Marianne Larsen, Bob Morrison, and Society of United Professionals.

fuel in order to reduce emissions. The Ontario Public Transit Association suggested moving transportation fleets to electric vehicles.

Treasury Board Secretariat

The President of the Treasury Board is responsible for the administration of Bill 124, *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019*. Many organizations called for this Bill to be repealed, arguing, for example, that limits to compensation undermined fair bargaining processes, represented a pay cut because the allowed limits did not match inflation, did not recognize the contribution of front-line workers, and affected staff retention.⁷⁹ Some presenters pointed out that Bill 124 disproportionately affected female workers, as the Bill does not apply to male dominated professions funded by municipalities.⁸⁰

Compensation was a frequent issue raised by witnesses. The Committee heard support for the wage subsidies provided to various front-line workers throughout the pandemic, and repeated calls that these subsidies should be made permanent.⁸¹ Some also asked that the wage subsidies be extended to other categories of workers to promote fairness.⁸² Witnesses also noted that some sectors, such as hospitals, offer higher wages than others, such as long-term care, for similar work. They suggested that wage parity between sectors would improve staff retention and ultimately service delivery.

⁷⁹ Alliance for Healthier Communities; Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario; AdvantAge Ontario; Christian Labour Association of Canada; Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division; Canadian Mental Health Association—Kenora Branch; Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa Branch; Canadian Mental Health Association, Windsor Essex County Branch; Canadian Mental Health Association, Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services; Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario Division; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario; Hutton House; Kingston Health Coalition, London InterCommunity Health Centre; London Health Coalition; Lutherwood; Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants; Ontario Council of Hospital Unions / Canadian Union of Public Employees; Ontario Federation of Labour; Mary Oko; Ontario Nonprofit Network; Ontario Nurses' Association; Ontario Public Service Employees Union; Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation; Renata Ozimek; Pillar Nonprofit Network; Service Employees International Unions Healthcare and the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE; Society of United Professionals; South West Community Support Services Council; and Unifor.

⁸⁰ These witnesses included Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and Ontario Nurses' Association.

⁸¹ For example, Christian Horizons, Christian Labour Association of Canada, Community Living Essex County, Community Living Ontario, L'Arche London, and Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs asked that the wage subsidy for the developmental services sector be made permanent. Similar requests were made for personal support workers in other sectors by Christian Labour Association of Canada, DeafBlind Ontario Services, Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario and VHA Health and Home Support. The YWCA Toronto was among those that asked the Province to reinstate the \$4 per hour salary increase for front-line shelter workers.

⁸² For example, the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario asked that the \$3/hour pandemic pay increase be applied to registered practical nurses retroactively.

Specific to the management and staffing of the civil service, the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario (AMAPCEO) recommended stopping the practice of outsourcing services to consultants that can be handled by the civil service, and increasing staffing levels, as they stated that Ontario has the smallest public service staff to population ratio in Canada. The Ontario Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees recommended raising wages for public sector workers to address growing demands and inflationary pressures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs submits the following recommendations to the Minister of Finance to inform the 2022-2023 Budget:

1. Protect the health of every person in Ontario as we manage the evolving impact of COVID-19.
2. Ensure frontline health care workers have the resources needed to tackle growing demands on our system.
3. Support workers, families, young people and newcomers by investing in skills training opportunities and attracting good jobs in every region of the province.
4. Work with every level of government, communities, and industry partners to get shovels in the ground for highways, hospitals, housing and high-speed internet.
5. Address the rising costs of homes, child care and everyday essentials.
6. Invest in critical public transit, as well as highways, bridges, water, wastewater and stormwater projects across Ontario, particularly in rural, remote, isolated, and Indigenous communities.
7. Continue to build and upgrade long-term care beds to deliver the quality of care our loved ones deserve.
8. Encourage Electric Vehicle (EV) development and position Ontario as a source of valuable critical minerals for EV batteries.
9. Promote recovery for Ontario's hard-hit tourism and hospitality sector and the workers and families it supports across the province.
10. Lay a strong, stable fiscal foundation that Ontario workers, families and entrepreneurs can build and rely upon, without increasing taxes.

WITNESS LIST

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
AbbVie Corporation	written submission
Adrian Hetherington	written submission
AdvantAge Ontario	January 19, 2022
Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario	January 20, 2022
Alifiya Goriawala	written submission
Alliance for Healthier Communities	written submission
Alliance of Arts Councils of Ontario	written submission
ALS Society of Canada	written submission
Alzheimer Society of Ontario	January 21, 2022, written submission
Anderson College of Health, Business and Technology	written submission
Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario	January 12, 2022, written submission
Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors	January 18, 2022
Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario	written submission
Association of Local Public Health Agencies	January 19, 2022, written submission
Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario	January 26, 2022, written submission
Association of Municipalities of Ontario	January 26, 2022, written submission
Aurora Cannabis Inc	written submission
Barbara Captijn	written submission
Bayshore HealthCare Ltd.	January 19, 2022
Beef Farmers of Ontario	January 11, 2022, written submission
Bob Morrison	written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Brampton Board of Trade	January 20, 2022, written submission
Bruce Ahrens	written submission
CAAT Pension Plan	written submission
Canada's National Ballet School	written submission
Canadian Artists' Representation	written submission
Canadian Association of Exposition Management	written submission
Canadian Association of Physician Assistants	written submission
Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers	written submission
Canadian Automotive Museum	January 19, 2022
Canadian Beverage Association	January 20, 2022, written submission
Canadian Biosimilars Forum	written submission
Canadian Cancer Society	January 19, 2022, written submission
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives	January 19, 2022, written submission
Canadian Federation of Independent Business	January 20, 2022, written submission
Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario	written submission
Canadian Independent Music Association	written submission
Canadian Live Music Association	January 12, 2022, written submission
Canadian Lung Association	written submission
Canadian Mental Health Association—Kenora Branch	January 10, 2022
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division	January 19, 2022
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa Branch	January 18, 2022
Canadian Mental Health Association, Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services	January 20, 2022, written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Canadian Mental Health Association, Windsor Essex County Branch	January 21, 2022
Canadian National Institute for the Blind	January 20, 2022, written submission
Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario	January 26, 2022, written submission
CanAge	written submission
Care Watch Ontario	written submission
Career Colleges Ontario	written submission
Catholic Health Association of Ontario	written submission
Cement Association of Canada	written submission
Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs	January 20, 2022, written submission
Centretown Community Health Centre	January 18, 2022
Chamber of Marine Commerce	written submission
Champlain Region Family Council Network	January 12, 2022, written submission
Charlene Morling	January 18, 2022
Chatham—Kent Health Coalition and Sarnia Lambton Health Coalition	January 21, 2022, written submission
Chemistry Industry Association of Canada	written submission
Chicken Farmers of Ontario	written submission
Christian Horizons	written submission
Christian Labour Association of Canada	January 26, 2022
Christopher Lord	January 18, 2022
Cinespace Chicago Film Studios	written submission
City of Brampton	January 26, 2022, written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
City of Kitchener	January 21, 2022, written submission
City of London	written submission
City of Port Colborne	written submission
Clarence-Rockland Public Library	January 18, 2022
ClimateFast	written submission
Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada	January 19, 2022, written submission
Collège La Cité	January 12, 2022, written submission
Colleges Ontario	written submission
Colour of Poverty—Colour of Change	January 20, 2022, written submission
Community Care Durham	January 20, 2022, written submission
Community Living Essex County	written submission
Community Living Ontario	January 19, 2022, written submission
Computer Animation Studios of Ontario	written submission
Concrete Ontario	written submission
Conestoga Students Incorporated	written submission
Connected North	written submission
Conservation Ontario	January 20, 2022
Convenience Industry Council of Canada	written submission
Council of Canadian Innovators	January 26, 2022, written submission
Council of Ontario Universities	written submission
Craig Barnes	written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
CSA Group	January 26, 2022, written submission
Daily Bread Food Bank	written submission
Dance Ontario Association	written submission
David Suzuki Foundation	written submission
DeafBlind Ontario Services	written submission
Deborah Davies	written submission
Desjardins Group	written submission
Don Lalonde	written submission
Dryden Public Library	January 10, 2022
Durham Region Home Builders' Association	written submission
Dynacare	written submission
Edwards Lifesciences (Canada) Inc.	written submission
Egg Farmers of Ontario	written submission
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	January 19, 2022, written submission
Enbridge Inc.	written submission
Epilepsy Ontario	written submission
Fahad Ghaffar	written submission
Family Service Ontario	written submission
Fédération des aînés et retraités francophones de l'Ontario	written submission
Federation of Canadian Secondary Students	written submission
Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods (Ontario) Inc.	written submission
First Work	written submission
Fix Our Schools	written submission
Galleries Ontario	written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario	January 21, 2022
General Contractors' Association of Toronto	written submission
General Electric Canada	written submission
Golf Canada	January 19, 2022, written submission
Goodwill Industries, Ontario Great Lakes	written submission
Grand River Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital	January 21, 2022, written submission
Grant Church	January 10, 2022, written submission
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce	January 21, 2022
Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association	January 18, 2022
Habitat for Humanity—Ontario Caucus	written submission
Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction	written submission
Hamilton Social Work Action Committee	written submission
Hamish Wilson	written submission
Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan	January 20, 2022, written submission
Heart and Stroke	January 20, 2022, written submission
Heart House Hospice	written submission
Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada and Ontario Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Contractors Association	written submission
Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd.	written submission
Home Care Ontario	January 26, 2022, written submission
Hospice Palliative Care Ontario	January 26, 2022, written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
House of Friendship	January 21, 2022, written submission
Hutton House	written submission
ILC Foundation	written submission
Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited	written submission
Income Security Advocacy Centre	January 26, 2022, written submission
Innovate Cities	January 19, 2022, written submission
Innovative Medicines Canada	January 20, 2022
Insurance Bureau of Canada	written submission
Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition	January 19, 2022, written submission
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 58	January 19, 2022
Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario	written submission
Issam Loubani	written submission
Janet Abramson	January 18, 2022
John Howard Society of Ontario	written submission
John Jarema	written submission
Jules Tupker	January 10, 2022
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Canada	January 18, 2022
Karin Tong	written submission
Kawartha Lakes Food Source	written submission
Kenneth Crosby	written submission
Kingston Health Coalition	written submission
Kitchener-Waterloo Association of Realtors	January 21, 2022
L'Arche London	January 21, 2022

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Lakehead University	written submission
Leeds and the Thousand Islands Public Library	January 18, 2022
Legal Assistance of Windsor and Community Legal Aid	January 21, 2022
Life Sciences Ontario	written submission
London Arts Council	written submission
London Health Coalition	January 21, 2022, written submission
London InterCommunity Health Centre	January 21, 2022
Lung Health Foundation	written submission
Lutherwood	written submission
Manasi Patel	written submission
Maria Cruz	written submission
Mariaf Ubaidat	written submission
Marianne Larsen	written submission
Marnie Carson	written submission
Mary Ann Hodge	written submission
Mary Oko	written submission
Meals on Wheels London	written submission
Medavie Inc.	written submission
Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario	written submission
Megan Dunbar Knowles	written submission
Merck Canada Inc.	written submission
Michael Wood	January 18, 2022
Middlesex London Food Policy Council	January 21, 2022, written submission
MINT Memory Clinic	written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Mizna Zaveri	written submission
Mohamad Bacho	written submission
Mohamed Mithoowani	written submission
MusicOntario	written submission
National Coalition Against Poverty —Ontario Chapter	written submission
National Farmers Union – Ontario	written submission
Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario	written submission
Neighbourhood Legal Services (London & Middlesex) Inc.	January 21, 2022, written submission
Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada	written submission
Nestlé Health Science	written submission
Northumberland Builders and Construction Association Inc.	January 18, 2022
OCAD University	written submission
Ohood Elzibak	written submission
Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs	written submission
Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition	written submission
Ontario Association of Architects	written submission
Ontario Association of Cardiologists	January 18, 2022, written submission
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses	January 26, 2022
Ontario Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics	January 11, 2022, written submission
Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization	January 20, 2022, written submission
Ontario Book Publishers Organization	written submission
Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chicken Commission	written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Ontario Caregiver Coalition	written submission
Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association	January 26, 2022, written submission
Ontario Chamber of Commerce	January 26, 2022
Ontario Chiropractic Association	written submission
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care	January 20, 2022, written submission
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres	written submission
Ontario Community Support Association	written submission
Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations	January 20, 2022, written submission
Ontario Convenience Stores Association	written submission
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants	January 19, 2022, written submission
Ontario Council of Hospital Unions / Canadian Union of Public Employees	January 19, 2022, written submission
Ontario Craft Brewers	January 19, 2022
Ontario Craft Wineries (presented jointly with Wine Growers Ontario and Grape Growers Ontario)	January 19, 2022, written submission
Ontario Dental Association	written submission
Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres	January 26, 2022
Ontario Federation of Labour	January 26, 2022, written submission
Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs	January 26, 2022, written submission
Ontario Forest Industries Association	written submission
Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association	January 21, 2022
Ontario Good Roads Association	written submission
Ontario Home Builders' Association	January 26, 2022, written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Ontario Home Respiratory Services Association	written submission
Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association	January 20, 2022
Ontario Library Association and Federation of Ontario Public Libraries	January 18, 2022, written submission
Ontario Long-Term Care Association	January 26, 2022, written submission
Ontario Medical Association	January 26, 2022, written submission
Ontario Medical Association: District 10 (North West)	January 10, 2022
Ontario Medical Association: District 9 (North East)	January 11, 2022
Ontario Motor Coach Association	written submission
Ontario Museum Association	January 20, 2022, written submission
Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups - Research Action Committee	January 10, 2022, written submission
Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association	written submission
Ontario Nonprofit Network	January 21, 2022, written submission
Ontario Nurses' Association	January 20, 2022, written submission
Ontario Public Health Association	January 26, 2022, written submission
Ontario Public School Boards' Association	January 26, 2022, written submission
Ontario Public School Boards' Association - Northern Region	January 10, 2022
Ontario Public Service Employees Union	January 19, 2022, written submission
Ontario Public Transit Association	written submission
Ontario Real Estate Association	January 19, 2022, written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Ontario Retirement Communities Association	written submission
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation	January 20, 2022, written submission
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 11: Thames Valley	January 21, 2022
Ontario Seniors Care and Assistance Roundtable	written submission
Ontario Sheep Farmers	January 21, 2022
Ontario Society of Professional Engineers	written submission
Ontario Tech University	written submission
Ontario Trial Lawyers Association	January 18, 2022, written submission
Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance	written submission
Orchestras Canada	January 26, 2022, written submission
Organic Council of Ontario	written submission
Ottawa Public Library	January 12, 2022
Ottawa Real Estate Board	January 12, 2022
Pallium Canada	written submission
Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre	written submission
Parkdale Food Centre	January 18, 2022, written submission
Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust	written submission
Patricia Smiley	written submission
Paul Goulet	January 18, 2022
Perley Health	January 18, 2022, written submission
Peterborough Regional Health Centre	January 18, 2022
Pillar Nonprofit Network	January 21, 2022, written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Poverty Free Thunder Bay	January 10, 2022, written submission
Pradhariny Prabakaran	written submission
Prosper Canada	written submission
Quinte Home Builders' Association	January 18, 2022
Reem Sultan	written submission
Regional Municipality of Waterloo	January 21, 2022
Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario	January 19, 2022, written submission
Renata Ozimek	written submission
Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario	January 20, 2022, written submission
Residential Construction Council of Ontario	January 20, 2022, written submission
Responsible Gambling Council	written submission
Richard Renzella	written submission
RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario	written submission
Ronald McDonald House Charities	written submission
Rothmans, Benson & Hedges Inc.	January 20, 2022, written submission
RTOERO (Retired Teachers of Ontario, Enseignants Retraités de l'Ontario)	written submission
Saijad Ullah	written submission
Sara Shamsuddin	written submission
Sarah White	January 18, 2022
SE Health	written submission
Serena Leblond	written submission
Service Employees International Unions Healthcare and the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE	written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Sharjana Nirmalathan	written submission
Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario	written submission
Siham Elkassem	written submission
Small Ownership Landlords of Ontario	January 26, 2022, written submission
Society of United Professionals	January 20, 2022, written submission
South Asian Women's Rights Organization	written submission
South Eastern Ontario Production Accelerator Fund	written submission
South West Community Support Services Council	written submission
Spirits Canada	January 19, 2022
Suzanne Rajeh	written submission
Teck Resources Limited	written submission
TELUS Health	written submission
The Black Council of Windsor-Essex	January 21, 2022, written submission
The Co-operators Group	written submission
The Council on Aging of Ottawa	written submission
Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce	written submission
Tilr	written submission
Toronto District School Board	written submission
Toronto Raging Grannies	written submission
Toronto Symphony Orchestra	January 19, 2022
Toronto's Big 8 Arts and Culture Organizations	written submission
Tourism Industry Association of Ontario	written submission
Township of Dawn Euphemia	written submission
triOS College	written submission

Organization/Individual	Date of Appearance
Trystan Goetze	written submission
TTCriders	January 20, 2022, written submission
Turkey Farmers of Ontario	written submission
Unifor	January 26, 2022, written submission
University of Guelph	written submission
University of Toronto Students' Union	written submission
University of Waterloo	January 21, 2022, written submission
VHA Health and Home Support	January 18, 2022, written submission
Victorian Order of Nurses–Ontario Branch	written submission
Voices and Choices	January 18, 2022, written submission
Weedmaps	written submission
Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region	written submission
YMCA of Eastern Ontario	January 18, 2022
York University	written submission
YWCA Toronto	January 19, 2022, written submission
Zahra Afara	written submission
Zulfikar Kasmani	written submission

**APPENDIX A – DISSENTING OPINION OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC
PARTY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The 2022-23 Budget represents Ontario's first real opportunity to take the hard lessons of the pandemic and use them to build a more resilient economy and strengthen the public services Ontarians rely on. Unfortunately, the majority decision to exclude many of the specific recommendations and observations brought forward during the hearings and via the written submissions is not only a disservice to those who took the time and effort to share their insight with the Committee, but robs legislators of the context that this important feedback provides as we make decisions about how and where we invest as a province.

Although no one has escaped the impact of COVID-19, the pandemic has opened our collective eyes to the inequities that shape the day-to-day lives of millions of Ontarians. It is disappointing that the report failed to clearly reflect the important advice provided by a broad spectrum of Ontarians, particularly when the verbal and written testimony highlighted the problems created by the underfunding and cuts of the Ford government. Here are a few key omissions:

- **Childcare:** Stakeholders made it clear that an investment of \$500M in operational funding is needed to address the lack of affordable childcare in Ontario.
- **Education:** Fix Our School estimates that \$16.8B is needed to address the repair backlog and infrastructure problems in Ontario's schools
- **Colleges and Universities:** the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, citing a lack of public funding for Ontario's universities, called for \$95.5M in Northern and bilingual university grants.
- **Gender-Based Violence:** the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses put forward a request for \$30M to increase operating budgets for gender-based violence shelters.
- **Legal Aid:** The Society of United Professionals shared polling data that suggests nearly 75% of Ontarians oppose the Ford government's cuts to legal aid
- **Social Assistance:** the Income Security Advocacy Centre requested a specific increase to social assistance rates (Ontario Works: \$1,087; ODSP: \$1,525) to better reflect the actual cost of living.

Additionally, New Democrats find it extremely problematic that a report designed to inform the Budget process fails to include key budgetary pressures and inflationary concerns.

With access to over 137 oral presentations and 300 written submissions, there is no reason for the pre-budget report not to accurately reflect what was shared with members of the Committee, or for the report to fail to appropriately address the challenges faced by Ontarians. As Ontario seeks to take the next steps toward recovery, the Official Opposition hopes that the Ford Government makes better use of the advice provided than the majority did in crafting the summary provided to the House.

**APPENDIX B – DISSENTING OPINION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY
MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE**

Key Recommendations:

- Protect the health of every person in Ontario using an equity lens as we manage the evolving impact of COVID-19. By using an equity lens, the Government of Ontario would also acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic has had disproportionate impacts on women, Black and Indigenous communities, Ontarians with disabilities, and other equity-deserving groups.
- The Government needs to restore the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario and ensure that funding is reflective of the present costs associated with access-to-justice.
- The Government must include a \$10-a-day daycare program in their upcoming Budget.
- The Budget needs to ensure there is funding to close learning gaps, support student mental health and wellbeing, and increase sporting programs in schools.

Introduction

As the Ontario Liberal Party member of the Standing Committee of Finance and Economic Affairs (SCFEA), I would like to thank all witnesses who have provided oral or written submissions before the SCFEA. The Committee heard about the devastating impacts on people and businesses resulting from the multiple shutdowns of our communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The SCFEA also heard many of the needs Ontarians have coming out of this pandemic, so we can build back stronger in 2022 and the generations to come. The SCFEA must improve accessibility to and exposure of Pre-Budget Consultations so that all Ontarians are represented in the subsequent report.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates an unprecedented response; it is critical that lasting investments are made to ensure no one is left behind. The Government cannot continue to hoard unallocated funds and reserve funding. To realize a robust and inclusive economy in Ontario, it is necessary to advocate for women and for the equity of all Ontarians. Ontario Liberals also recognize that this pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on specific segments of the province's population; as reported by Michael Kerr at Colour of Poverty - Colour for Change, 40% of Ontarians with an Arab background, 36% of our West Asian population and 31% of those of Korean heritage live in poverty. As we move forward, we must address the unique challenges that presently exist and plot a course of economic recovery that prioritizes equity.

Health Equity Response for the Pandemic

Ontario Liberals are disappointed in the failure of the Provincial Government to apply an equity lens to their pandemic response. When it comes to the health of Ontarians, Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) communities have been struggled at disproportionate levels. In their testimony before the SCFEA, Colour of Poverty called for a "comprehensive collection of disaggregated data based on race and other identity factors." From the onset of COVID-19, our

Government should have known that the COVID-19 global pandemic hit Black, Indigenous and other equity-deserving groups much harder than others. This is highlighted in the *Annual Report on the State of Public Health in Canada (2020)* by Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Theresa Tam. The report demonstrates that race matters when looking at outcomes related to COVID-19. It notes that per surveillance data from Toronto and Ottawa, COVID-19 cases are 1.5 to 5 times higher among racialized populations than non-racialized. Using science and evidence, our Government should have taken action to protect these groups. Dr. Tam's report also acknowledges a lack of health data. As the Ontario Liberal Party Committee member, I echo the call to collect disaggregated race-based data through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan, and I would add that there should be increased resources and PCR testing made available for hotspot communities.

Ontario's COVID-19 response must include ten provincially funded paid sick days. The people of this province should not have to place themselves or their neighbours at risk. Nor should they be forced to choose between tending to their health and keeping food on the table. With ten paid sick days, Ontario would be better able to support vulnerable communities that are seeing higher infection rates. It is important to note that the call for paid sick days has also come from a number of oral witnesses, including the Canadian Union of Public Employees, AMAPCEO, the Income Security Advocacy Centre, UNIFOR, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, the Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario, the Ontario Nonprofit Network, London Health Coalition, Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Ontario Nurses Association, YWCA Toronto, and OPSEU/SEFPO.

When it comes to health, an equity lens is crucially needed; I therefore urge the Government to include it in their public health approach.

Government Neglects Importance of Legal Aid: Cuts Have Hurt Equity Deserving Groups

In the 2019 Budget, the Conservative Government made a 30% reduction to funding allocated for Legal Aid Ontario. That \$133 million cut left a disastrous impact on vulnerable people in our province seeking access to justice.

Multiple witnesses spoke before the SCFEA of a notable increase in self-represented parties due to fewer resources. Shalini Konanur, of the South Asian Legal Clinic, pointed out that the percentage of self-represented litigants has become "exponentially higher." This result has weakened the efficiency of our justice system. According to Douglas Kwan of the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, this has caused courts and tribunals to "slow to a halt." Konanur also told the SCFEA that from a cost and access-to-justice perspective, it is becoming more expensive for legal services, and that racialized people experience barriers to justice much more. These consequences have seriously affected women facing gender-based violence, and many find themselves standing in courtrooms on their own. Michelle Johnston, of the Society of United Professionals, observed that workload has increased due to Government cuts, and that this has "diminished the ability" for those at Legal Aid to serve their clientele.

As the Ontario Liberal Party Committee member, I am concerned by the lack of understanding the Government has for the impact that even 'small' cuts have on

equity-deserving groups. For every dollar invested in Legal Aid, \$9 to \$16 is saved in justice services and programs, and \$6 in social spending. The province cannot afford to roll back on progress that has been made. I therefore call on the Government to restore funding to Legal Aid Ontario to a degree reflective of the present costs associated with access-to-justice.

Government Must Stop Roadblock to Affordable Childcare

Ontario's lack of affordable childcare is an issue that was raised multiple times before the SCFEA during oral Pre-Budget Consultations by a range of voices including the Canadian Union of Public Employees to the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, UNIFOR, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Interval and Transition Houses, Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario, the Ontario Non-Profit Network, the Brampton Board of Trade, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, YWCA Toronto, the Ontario Nurses Association and Kitchener Mayor Berry Urbanovic. Every province and territory in this country has accepted the Federal Government's proposal to deliver \$10 per day childcare for families, but Ontario has yet to sign on.

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship also highlighted the lack of equity in the Ontario Government's current spending plan for childcare. While \$1.4 billion is spent annually on the sector, and five percent of Ontario's population is Indigenous, only \$2.5 million is earmarked for Indigenous-led childcare spaces. That amount is 28 times less than Indigenous communities should receive.

Ontario Liberals urge the Government to include affordable childcare in their upcoming Budget. There is real concern that Ontario is losing childcare spaces at a time when the province cannot afford to leave families behind.

Bolster Education Funding: Children are our Future and Must be our Priority

Concerns over lost learning and inadequate support for student wellbeing were raised by a number of witnesses before this SCFEA. According to Cathy Abraham, President of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, "the need for mental health supports have never been higher." Karen Littlewood, President of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, called for expanded resources to cater to the increased need for mental health supports in schools. And Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association President Patrick Daly said his most significant concern, which he believes is shared by Ontario's Catholic school boards, is "the impact both on mental health and academic achievement."

It must be recognized that funding education is investing in our future. Sadly, Ontario's educators informed the SCFEA that they feel the current Government does not share in this belief. According to Karen Brown, President of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, "the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated concerns about large class sizes, the poor physical conditions of schools, the lack of access to technology and the government's failure to provide appropriate funding to meet the needs of all students. These concerns were evident even before the pandemic, due to devastating cuts to public education."

The upcoming Budget needs to:

- cap of class sizes at 20 students;
- hire over ten thousand teachers; and
- make critical investments to bolster mental health supports in our schools by:
 - spending \$75 million for 1,000 additional mental health professionals to support students and staff directly;
 - spending \$375 million for hiring 5,000 special education and student success professionals; and
 - spending \$40 million to support free tutoring before and after school and weekend programs province-wide to help students in reading, writing and math.

It is critical that the Ministry of Education use the 2022 budget to ensure that funding is utilized to close learning gaps, support student mental health and wellbeing, and increase sporting programs in schools.