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Thursday 25 January 2007

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 25 janvier 2007

**Standing committee on
finance and economic affairs**

Pre-budget consultations

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

Consultations prébudgétaires

Chair: Pat Hoy
Clerk: Douglas Arnott

Président : Pat Hoy
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

Thursday 25 January 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Jeudi 25 janvier 2007

The committee met at 0901 in the Delta Ottawa Hotel, Ottawa.

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): The standing committee on finance and economic affairs will now come to order. The committee is pleased to be in Ottawa this morning and, as well, this afternoon.

**CANADIAN CHEMICAL PRODUCERS'
ASSOCIATION**

The Chair: Our first presentation is by the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association, if you'd please come forward. Good morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation; there may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourselves for the purposes of our recording Hansard. You may begin.

Mr. Dave Podruzny: Thank you. I'm Dave Podruzny. I'm the vice-president, business and economics, for the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association.

Ms. Fiona Cook: I'm Fiona Cook, director of business and economics for the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association.

Mr. Podruzny: Thank you for the opportunity to appear on behalf of our members. We're representing industrial chemical manufacturing across the country, but specifically in Ontario that sector accounts for close to half of Canada's \$47-billion industry, so about \$23 billion in sales in Ontario.

The business of chemistry is characterized as a resource-based, value-added manufacturing component of the economy. Chemical manufacturers and fabricators can add up to 10 times value to things like natural gas or salt or oil. So it's a very significant—I'm getting a bit of an echo here.

The Chair: They'll try and deal with that.

Interjection.

Mr. Podruzny: That's it. If I break into song, you'll understand.

So half the industry is here. That activity translates into some high-paying jobs, it creates wealth in Ontario and the companies pay a lot of taxes. The average salary in the basic industrial chemicals and resins industry is

\$61,000 a year; that's the second highest in Ontario's manufacturing sector.

Our message today: We want to draw your attention to the fact that Ontario's share of chemical manufacturing is at risk. It hasn't been growing. There have been plant closures in this province due to a variety of factors. As we look out, we don't see new investments planned. And that shouldn't be happening. We're at the top of the business cycle—this is as good as it gets. Ontario has a lot of positives going for it. Why aren't the investments taking place?

Our membership collectively is facing the same challenges that Canadian industry generally and the Ontario manufacturing industry is facing. There's a high Canadian dollar, there are sustained high energy prices and there's pretty intense competition from emerging economies such as China.

Those are external factors. They challenge the industry and government alike to focus internally on what it takes to allow Ontarians to compete in a global marketplace. Capital is mobile, investors have choices and production chains are global. We don't want to be just at the end of those chains. We're operating in a new paradigm where exports and profits aren't a given for the province. Proof that times are changing can be found in the Economic Outlook released by the Ontario Ministry of Finance, which shows that our GDP rate will be below the Canadian average and that of the US. We've historically been drivers of the Canadian economy. I think that instead of drivers, we've shifted to the back seat. In the third quarter of 2006 growth was negative. We haven't seen the fourth quarter yet, but this is a cause for concern.

Industry needs to do its share in terms of business strategies and plans. Government also has a role to ensure that its fiscal and policy framework encourages investment and equips Ontarians to compete in the global marketplace.

Fiscal policies should be designed to be competitive with other jurisdictions. We're talking about attracting new investments and encouraging innovation and specialization. Our companies will compete globally, but they're not going to be able to do it alone.

Governments need to adapt, as well, to ensure a favourable environment, both business and regulatory.

I'm going to come back to this again, so I'll be repeating it a couple of times: Ontario really lacks an industrial strategy. A series of project-specific programs

and handouts to selected sectors is not a strategy and it's not working.

CCPA produces a scorecard each year, and I've included that scorecard with the presentations and with our submission. It assesses the factors that are important in Ontario and in Canada. You've got the Ontario scorecard. I'd encourage you, if you have the time, to look at the scorecards for places like Quebec and Alberta and at the national scorecard, because Ontario isn't comparing very well. I'm going to focus on our tax recommendation just in the interests of time today, but you'll see on the scorecard that we look at all aspects of competitiveness globally.

Ontario needs to restore investment in the manufacturing sector, so we'll be talking about something general for manufacturing and not specific to chemicals. We believe that a sustainable commercialization strategy is what the province needs.

We think the last budget did a number of things that were positive in the tax system. I think the harmonization agreement with the federal government was an important move, but it really didn't address the motivations to invest in Ontario's relative tax competitiveness with other jurisdictions.

The facts are clear: Ontario has the second highest marginal effective tax rate on capital in the country, and as a country, we're about seventh worst amongst 80-some competing jurisdictions globally. That's not the worst of the worst, but it's not where you like to be when you're trying to win the next capital investment within your company.

The future needs to be built now, and I think the government can help in some of the changes it needs in the tax mix.

We're suggesting three things:

First of all, immediately eliminate the capital tax—not by 2012. Eliminating the capital tax by 2012 is not going to attract investors. Alberta, BC and a number of other provinces have done it already, the feds have done it already. It's time for Ontario to get on with it. We also think that, along with the federal government, in harmonizing the sales tax, you need to eliminate taxing intermediates and taxing goods that go into new investments.

In concert with the federal government, we think it's time to look at a two-year accelerated capital cost allowance for machinery and equipment. That's going to improve energy efficiency, it's going to improve environmental performance, it's going to provide additional energy choices such as cogeneration, it's going to increase productivity and competitiveness. That's a commercialization strategy. That's a strategy to bring new investments in.

Finally, as fiscal room permits, we think that the corporate tax rate for manufacturing is going to need to come down and be competitive with the other provinces.

Let me conclude by urging that Ontario take control of its spending and introduce changes that will allow the province to leverage its advantages. We're right next

door to the world's largest market, but we need to compete for investment dollars.

We believe this government has successfully addressed the issues of education, health, infrastructure and labour supply. You've done a good job there in your previous budgets. Now it's time to look at the manufacturing sector fundamentals.

We don't believe that targeted approaches are the solution. We think an industrial commercialization strategy is the solution, and we believe that it will result in the manufacturing industry seizing the environment you set and making investments.

The Chair: Thank you for the presentation. This morning's round of questioning will begin with the official opposition. Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Thank you both very much for being here on behalf of the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association. I always enjoy reading your report card, which delves a great deal into the state of Ontario's competitiveness in attracting the high-paying jobs.

Certainly, though, there's a very disturbing trend when you look at your report for Ontario for 2006-07. In fact, according to my quick count, you have Ontario declining, in its trend toward uncompetitiveness, in 17 different measures, with none improving and the others just staying neutral. Fiscal policy, for example, has made Ontario less competitive, transportation investments are falling far behind, energy supply etc. When you see an Ontario that has shed some 100,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs under the Dalton McGuinty government, it gives you cause for grave concern.

0910

As you noted rightly, Ontario actually slipped into negative growth—shrunk—in the third quarter of 2006. Two consecutive quarters, of course, a recession make. We do hope that's not the case, but it's alarming, when you see other provinces growing, that Ontario had slipped into a negative state.

You had mentioned the elimination of the capital tax as a key recommendation, as immediate, as well as a two-year—let me get the right phrase—capital cost allowance as a key measure for investments.

The other issue that you mentioned is energy supply, more so in the report card than in your report. Do you have any comment on energy generation or transmission investments that are or are not happening?

Mr. Podruzny: I believe there's a very intense effort under way to address some of the shortfalls, and I'll speak specifically to electricity in that area. There's a lot of effort under way. We're playing a bit of catch-up there, both on the supply side and, I think, on the reliability of the infrastructure. Those investments are under way right now, and the Ontario Power Authority is doing some work there.

We also believe that work is under way to bring additional energy options into the Ontario picture. That will be issues such as LNG terminals in Quebec or the

Maritimes, which will offer some alternatives to western Canada sedimentary basin gas, which is in the decline. We think that's important.

We also think it's important that Ontario participate in discussions to increase the supply of energy options to the province. We are consuming more energy each year as our population grows. We need to have access to additional supply. Ontario should be part of the intervention in things like new offshore gas coming into the province, LNG terminals, that sort of thing.

Mr. Hudak: Time?

The Chair: Two minutes.

Mr. Hudak: A couple of quick questions and then my colleague Mr. Arnott had a—so I'll table my questions and give the microphone to Mr. Arnott. The first was any comment on the government's on-again/off-again plan to close the coal-generating plants and, secondly, just if you wanted to go a bit further in your comments about the auto industry strategy versus a broad-based manufacturing strategy. But I think Mr. Arnott had some points as well.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Just very quickly, I want to express my appreciation to you for your presentation today. Your brief talked about meeting the competitiveness challenges that your industry is facing. As you'll recall, I tabled a private member's resolution in the Legislature in May 2005, more than a year and a half ago, calling upon the finance committee, this committee, to do a study of those issues as they impact on our manufacturing industries. To date, those hearings have not taken place, but you've used your opportunity today to raise some of those issues. Even though the Legislature passed my resolution unanimously—with the exception of one vote, I think—with strong support from all three parties for the resolution, those hearings have not yet taken place, nor have they been scheduled. But it's my intention to continue to raise this issue, and I hope that you'll get another opportunity to go into more detail, perhaps with an hour-long presentation as opposed to a short session, when we commence those hearings, hopefully in the spring.

Mr. Podrutzny: We would certainly welcome an opportunity to participate in that when it comes before a committee.

Just on the coal, on-again/off-again, I believe that there are some decisions that have been taken which would leave coal in place until there is a suitable alternative. We would add that cost is part of the word "suitable," that there needs to be a cost-competitive alternative. The public is going to be very concerned with some of the rates that are going to result from the infrastructure investments. Let's not reduce the diversity of energy supply in the province. Let's keep it as diversified as possible and participate in some of the research to improve the environmental performance. I believe that's part and parcel of a sustainable energy policy.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

FAMILIES MATTER CO-OPERATIVE INC.

The Chair: I call on the Families Matter Co-operative Inc. to come forward, please.

Good morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourselves for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. John Toft: My name is John Toft. I'm the secretary of the Families Matter Co-op and this is my wife, Anne, who is the treasurer. We are two of the original five founding members of the co-op.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you about concerns outlined in the written brief presented to this committee on behalf of the Families Matter Co-operative. That brief was prepared by me, John Toft, with input from members of the co-op, including Kenneth Pope, Henson Trusts specialist.

The Families Matter Co-op is for and about people with developmental disabilities. It is an Ottawa-based social co-operative, with its mission to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

I come to this committee as a parent of a developmentally disabled person, my adult autistic son, Adrian. My personal interest began with the perpetual support and advocacy for my son that my family and I have undertaken since the day he was diagnosed with autism. Through my involvement with the Families Matter Co-operative, that support and advocacy now extends to all people with developmental disabilities and their families.

The written brief I submitted to you contains eight short-run recommendations and one long-run goal to bring these hopes and dreams, the dreams of a normal life or as normal a life as possible, closer to reality. In today's presentation I will focus on three of those eight recommendations as well as the long-run goal.

The first is that Families Matter recommends that the Ministry of Community and Social Services have the necessary funding to implement the transformation of services described in its document Opportunities and Action. This document describes much-needed changes to the Ministry of Community and Social Services in its delivery of services to people with developmental disabilities. Through this transformation of services, services are to serve families and individuals and their needs. The focus is to be the individual and not the agency.

Page 14 of that document states: "The fundamental vision is to support people (with developmental disabilities) to live as independently as possible in the community and to support the full inclusion of Ontarians with disabilities in all aspects of society." Families Matter members share this vision of inclusion, community living and living as independently as possible.

Research shows that the Ministry of Community and Social Services is severely underfunded by at least 25%. Evidence shows that an infusion of \$200 million to that ministry in the budget year 2007-08 is needed to begin implementing the transformation initiative.

Page 11 of Opportunities and Action summarizes the changes needed: “[C]hanges are needed in developmental services to:

“—strengthen and support individuals and families;

“—create a fair approach to supporting families and individuals;

“—provide people with more choice and flexibility....; and

“—improve specialized services for people with specialized needs.”

With their implementation, families and individuals are to be placed at the centre of this revolutionary change. Now the message is that individuals and families are to be central in the service delivery.

Up to now, agencies, not individuals, received funding, and these funds could not be transferred with the individual to another agency. This would change with the transformation as the funds would now be portable. Similarly, funds would be portable when a person moves from one ministry region to another. With this portability, families and individuals could now directly influence the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Families Matter supports this vision of the importance of family and the individual by the ministry in its transformation initiative. Our members believe that the transformation will only succeed with sufficient funding to fully implement the recommended changes.

The second recommendation is that the provincial government adopt a policy that there be no clawbacks to social benefits received by people with developmental disabilities until the combined income from all sources exceeds the poverty line. In the written document, you have a chart that shows, for example, that a disabled person currently would receive \$11,765 in ODSP income, which is 59% of the level of the poverty line. And, even though they get that money, it gets clawed back if they get any other monies.

0920

A New Beginning: The Report of the [federal] Minister of Finance’s Expert Panel on Financial Security for Children with Severe Disabilities recommends the establishment of a registered disability savings plan to benefit persons with disabilities. Families Matter supports this recommendation, as long as the additional recommendation concerning clawbacks in that report is also adopted. The expert panel recommended that “negotiations be commenced with the provinces ... with a view to having registered disability savings plans entirely exempted from the asset tests in provincial ... regulations.” I won’t read the rest of that long, detailed paragraph.

Families Matter supports this clawback elimination recommendation, not only with respect to disability savings payments but also to income received from all sources by people with developmental disabilities.

Our third recommendation is that policies be put into place to enhance employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. People with develop-

mental disabilities have few employment opportunities and suffer from very high unemployment rates. Families Matter encourages the government to enhance the opportunities for employment for people with developmental disabilities by:

—passing enabling legislation encouraging ministries and departments to make purchases of goods and services from “social enterprises” where the costs of such procurements are no more than 10% higher than comparable goods and services from other sources. A social enterprise is a business that employs people with disabilities;

—passing legislation encouraging Ontario municipalities to develop similar policies;

—passing enabling legislation to encourage private businesses through tax incentives to develop similar procurement policies; and

—funding and encouraging the development of social purchasing portals throughout Ontario where government, business and social enterprises would come together to market their goods and services to each other.

Long-run recommendation: the dream. Families Matter Co-op recommends the provision of mandatory services to all people with developmental disabilities, whatever their age. Five-year and 10-year goals should be set by the province to enable this plan to be met by, say, the year 2017. Up to the age of 21, services are mandated for people with developmental disabilities through the Education Act and the provision of services through special education. After the age of 21, services are no longer mandated. Families Matter asks that the provincial government work with families in developing this long-term goal of providing lifelong mandatory services for people with developmental disabilities.

On page 10 of Opportunities and Action there is an all-Canadian vision for people with developmental disabilities, as developed by the social services ministries from the federal government and provincial and territorial governments. The idea of citizenship and enabling people to have control over their lives was central to an agreement struck by the federal, provincial and territorial social services ministers in 1998. The agreement, titled *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues*, outlined a vision of full participation for people with disabilities in all aspects of society. We at Families Matter believe that this vision can only become reality with the development of a long-run goal of mandatory services. We believe that the short-run goals outlined here and the additional ones in the written brief are steps towards that vision. We believe that proper funding of the Ministry of Community and Social Services is an essential first step. The elimination of clawbacks is desperately needed, as are enhanced employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

Will you join us in insisting that this long-run vision, together with the short-run recommendations, be adopted by the government of Ontario?

The Chair: Thank you. You have impeccable timing. We’ll move to the NDP and Mr. Prue.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): The first question I have is, I think, a little bit of a technical one.

In your recommendations, you say—and you're correct: "People with developmental disabilities have few employment opportunities." You then say, "... passing enabling legislation encouraging ministries and departments to make purchases of goods and services from social enterprises...." I'm trying to understand. Is this a social enterprise where all of the participants may be developmentally disabled or is this where some of them are?

Mr. Toft: A social enterprise employs developmentally disabled people and other people with physical disabilities or emotional disabilities, a whole range of disabilities. So it's not just developmentally disabled people who are employed in a social enterprise. But my emphasis is on employing more, because that is one area. Our co-op at the moment is exploring the development of a social enterprise with an organization called Causeway, which works with mentally disabled people. We're trying to form a partnership between the two groups of people to increase employment opportunities for both segments of society. We hope that will come to fruition in the next year.

New York state apparently has this kind of policy, with 10%-plus as the possibility for purchasers. It doesn't just include developmentally disabled people; it includes workers in jails. I'm not necessarily recommending that part of it, but it does extend to other segments of society.

Mr. Prue: Okay. The second point is the clawback elimination. You are recommending the clawback elimination for people with developmental disabilities. Would you extend the clawback elimination for all people who are having it clawed back? It would be all single parents and those on welfare, those on ODSP.

Mr. Toft: All the ODSP people.

Mr. Prue: So you're not just confining it to your own group.

Mr. Toft: No.

Mr. Prue: Okay. This has been debated in the Legislature ad nauseam for the last three and a half years. It seems to date to have fallen on deaf ears. Have you any indication that any government ministries are looking more favourably at this? Have they confided to you at all?

Mr. Toft: No.

Mr. Prue: No. Okay.

Mr. Toft: I do know that there are recommendations at the federal level for this registered disability savings plan and the recommendations from that. The group that put forward those recommendations is definitely in favour of eliminating the clawbacks.

Mr. Prue: Now, in terms of your long-term goal—and this will be my last question—you're looking for five- and 10-year goals for governments when they set up the program to show that they're actually meeting it, so that there's a yardstick so that we can see the progress.

Mr. Toft: Yes. The phrase I've used in the past is, "Services are at the whim of the government." When my son was placed in a house—he got a home in Ottawa—there were 241 people at that time in desperate need of housing. He got a house. What happened to the other

240? There are desperate needs to have the services that people need becoming mandatory. It's not going to happen overnight; I'm not that naive. But if there was a plan set up with goals by such and such a time, that would be very good.

Mr. Prue: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

CANADIAN NATURAL GAS VEHICLE ALLIANCE

The Chair: I would call on the Canadian Natural Gas Vehicle Alliance to come forward, please. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Ms. Alicia Milner: My name is Alicia Milner. I'm the president of the Canadian Natural Gas Vehicle Alliance.

First of all, thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in the pre-budget consultation today. As you can see, the focus of my presentation will be on cleaner transportation for the province of Ontario. Ontario has been a leader in promoting more sustainable transportation. Progressive retail sales tax measures and the alternate fuel capital subsidy for transit buses are just two examples that demonstrate this leadership. While there's a long way to go to achieve more sustainable transportation goals in the province, there are important interim steps that we need to continue to take. One of these interim steps is continuing to provide meaningful fiscal and program supports for cleaner alternate fuel vehicles, including natural gas vehicles. So, to the presentation.

0930

Some background: The Canadian Natural Gas Vehicle Alliance is the national trade association representing Canada's natural gas vehicle industry. Our membership includes alternate fuel engine manufacturers, refuelling infrastructure and equipment manufacturers, regulated utilities etc.

First, Ontario's early leadership: The province took an early lead in promoting alternate fuels and alternative technologies for more sustainable transportation. Programs and fiscal measures were adopted to encourage cleaner transportation: the alternate fuel capital subsidy program for transit buses, including natural gas and diesel electric hybrid; the retail tax rebates for alternate fuel vehicles, light duty passenger vehicles and transit buses; and the exemption of alternate transportation fuels from provincial sales tax.

Positive results were achieved as a result of these measures. Ontario, for instance, has the greatest concentration of retail natural gas refuelling stations in Canada. The province also has the earliest and most extensive use of cleaner transit buses. Seven out of every 10 natural gas buses are in use in Ontario communities. The province also leads with early hybrid bus adoption. And there are initiatives related to hydrogen use for transportation under way in the province, including the

Hydrogen Village in the GTA and the recent funding announced for the Sarnia-Lambton fuel cell program through the Ministry of Research and Innovation.

Yet I would go on to say that much more needs to be done. Ontario has one of the lowest GHG emission rates per capita, but the province's transportation footprint is by far the largest in Canada. Fully 37% of all GHG emissions from on-road transportation come from Ontario. Ontario also leads the country in NO_x emissions from on-road transportation sources; 29% of NO_x emissions come from the province. Ontario also has 37% of all heavy trucks. Heavy trucks are the fastest-growing transportation source of GHG emissions in the country, with a 109% increase in emissions since 1990.

As you know, with emission comes costs, and continued growth will drive this even further. MTO's Transportation Tomorrow Survey projects a 35% increase in population within 25 years, and trips by car are increasing, with 80% of all trips in 2001 by car, an increase of 6% from 1986. The health care costs of air pollution are serious in terms of human health and economic impact. An Ontario Medical Association report estimated that air pollution would lead to 5,800 premature deaths and 17,000 hospital admissions in 2005, with an economic cost of about \$7.8 billion.

Natural gas vehicles: Natural gas vehicles are cleaner. Natural gas is the least carbon-intensive fossil fuel. Used in a combustion engine, natural gas has a lower emissions profile than any other commercially viable alternative. Criteria air contaminant emissions are reduced compared to gasoline and diesel vehicles. NO_x, particulate, volatile organic compounds and sulphur oxides are reduced on a total life cycle basis. GHG emissions are reduced as well.

Natural gas is a less expensive fuel. Natural gas has been 10% to 30% below gasoline at the retail level since 1999. Relative to diesel, natural gas has been 20% to 40% lower over the same time frame.

The benefits of light duty natural gas vehicles: They equal or improve upon gasoline-fuelled vehicles on all air quality measures, as well as GHG life cycle emissions. A single light-duty natural gas vehicle will emit close to less than half a tonne of NO_x over its life, and a natural gas taxi will reduce GHG emissions by almost 7 tonnes per year.

Retail sales tax measure on light duty vehicles: The current rebate for light-duty vehicles is \$1,000, and this has been in place since the 1980s. The cost to convert a light-duty vehicle to operate on natural gas has more than doubled in this time frame. In 2002, Ontario's all-party select committee on alternative fuel sources recommended doubling the retail sales tax rebate to \$2,000 per vehicle and, in 2006, the province extended sales tax relief to light-duty hybrid vehicles at a rate of \$2,000 per vehicle.

To shift into talking about natural gas for transit, a natural gas transit bus has the lowest life cycle emissions of oxides of nitrogen, or NO_x. Over its 18-year life, a natural gas bus will emit four tonnes less of NO_x than a

diesel-fuelled bus. As of this year, natural gas engines are six times cleaner than diesel engines for NO_x emissions. Natural gas transit buses also reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a total life cycle basis. The 2007 engines for transit will produce 13% less GHG emissions, than diesel. For a typical transit bus, this means about a 17-tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions every year. Natural gas vehicle technology is fully certified and commercialized and meets EPA and CARB, or California Air Resources Board, standards.

So where are we at with transit in the province? The former Ontario transit vehicle program provided a capital subsidy covering one third of the incremental cost of a cleaner alternative fuel transit bus. The Ontario bus replacement program, introduced in 2006, does not include any provisions to support municipal procurement of cleaner transit vehicles. In addition, the newly formed Greater Toronto Transit Authority, the GTTA, has developed a diesel-only specification for transit buses which was used as the basis for its recent tender.

The proposal to the province today: The recommendations are to increase the retail sales tax rebate on light-duty natural gas vehicles from \$1,000 to \$2,000 in light of their environmental benefits, reinstate the alternate fuel capital subsidy program for transit buses, assist with the procurement of cleaner natural gas transit buses, and ensure that the GTTA incorporates alternate-fuel technologies in its coordinated procurements.

I'd just like to close with a quote from the Premier: "It's not a matter of choosing between prosperity and the environment." Ontarians look to the government for the cleaner air and the healthier communities they deserve. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. This round of questioning will go to the government. Mr. McNeely.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Thank you for the very good presentation from the Canadian Natural Gas Vehicle Alliance. The issue of greenhouse gases and climate change is certainly in the newspapers every day, a big change in the last year, and the work that you are doing is very important. I recall that the city of Ottawa had presentations when I was there as a councillor, and I think we were one of the groups that did move ahead. It's good that Ontario has most of the natural gas vehicles or buses, or a good part of the ones in Canada.

You speak about the GTTA. The legislation has been passed, the representatives have been selected and it's just starting to move. I'm very surprised that, on page 13, "In addition, the newly formed ... (GTTA) has developed a diesel-only specification for transit buses which was used as the basis for its recent tender." So that's the former organization that is doing that. Have you made presentations to the GTTA or—it's not a working body yet. What are you doing in that case?

Ms. Milner: We have discussed the issue with MTO since the Ministry of Transportation is where this GTTA really has been incubated from, and I believe it's still in transition between MTO—I'm not sure if it's a legal entity yet, although it will be soon if it's not already

established. Some of our members did go in and made presentations regarding the need to have an alternate fuel spec within this body. As you know, the GTTA is intended for joint procurement to benefit municipalities in the greater Toronto area, and we think that cleaner vehicles have absolutely got to be part of that.

In terms of the feedback our members received at the time, while the transportation reps were interested in the information, it ultimately did not get incorporated. We did have the opportunity to speak to Minister Cansfield's office on this topic last week and she did direct her staff to investigate more thoroughly, because she too was surprised to learn that it's a diesel-only specification. Now, we were told, because the new program is capped financially, that this was sort of in keeping with that, and this would all be left to the market. But we don't think that's appropriate, and we think the early lead in the province is something we want to build on, rather than step back from.

Mr. McNeely: I'm very pleased to hear that you have been in to see the minister, because it's certainly one of the initiatives that she will be looking at very closely. This is a big interest to us. Also, with the GTTA, I believe that they are going to be providing procurement assistance to municipalities. This is one of the original objectives, providing procurement assistance to municipalities across the province, so it's very important that early on, as the GTTA is formed, as it gets rolling, you make those presentations. I certainly will do so as well to the minister. I will be sitting down with her, hopefully next week, to go over your presentation today.

I thank you very much for the initiatives you are taking to make this a cleaner province and a greener province.

Ms. Milner: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you for the presentation.

0940

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC
EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 2204
CHILD CARE ACTION NETWORK

The Chair: I call on the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2204, Child Care Action Network to come forward, please. Good morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Ms. Shellie Bird: Thank you. I'm Shellie Bird. I'm the union education officer of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2204. We represent over 200 early childhood educators, cooks, cleaners and clerical staff in 12 non-profit child care centres here in the city of Ottawa. We are a member of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and work with our community partners the Child Care Action Network, Child Care Council and the Ottawa Child Care Association to advocate for universally accessible, high-quality, non-profit regulated

child care for all children zero to 12 years old who require it.

We are committed to bringing about an early learning and child care system that is not-for-profit, publicly funded, universally accessible and high quality. Central to this is the notion of a single, comprehensive system of early learning and child care services for all children zero to 12. We want one that is based on research evidence and that supports, first and foremost, children's healthy development and lifelong learning; and secondly, their parents being able to work, study and contribute to their communities. We want an early learning and child care system that would be non-compulsory but available to all children regardless of their parents' employment status.

Children thrive in families and communities that provide security, nurturing, respect and love. Early learning and child care is a foundational support to families with young children. It promotes the healthy development of children by contributing to their physical, emotional, social and intellectual development, while at the same time enabling parents to work, study and contribute to their communities. For women, child care is the ramp to equality.

Modern economies cannot function without women workers, and few women would now want to function without paid work. By increasing labour force participation, early learning and child care enhances economic growth and employment income, which in turn increases tax revenues and reduces expenditures on social supports such as welfare, health and social services.

Quebec's comprehensive child care system is demonstrating these dividends. Increased tax revenues generated from more mothers working outside the home cover 40% of the cost of the program. Welfare caseloads have decreased as sole support parents are able to access child care that they can afford.

In no other field is the evidence for public investment so clear and compelling. Research clearly establishes the benefits of early learning and child care for children's overall development and later life outcomes. It also shows the benefits of early learning and child care for population health, labour market attachment and as a vital element for poverty reduction. The case has been made: Early learning and child care is smart social policy, smart economic policy and smart health policy.

Unfortunately, the case also has been made, strongly and repeatedly, that Ontario does not have an adequate, let alone good, early learning and child care system. Inadequate government funding and an over-reliance on parent fees have perpetuated a patchwork of poorly resourced, stand-alone service providers ill-equipped to meet the increasing demands being placed upon them.

There was great optimism, after more than a decade of despair, when your government announced the Best Start plan and a promise to invest \$300 million in new provincial funding, along with the federal transfers flowing from the federal-provincial early learning and child care agreement. The Best Start plan laid out a vision for early learning and child care that was evidence-based and

acknowledged the need for public investment to, first and foremost, support children's healthy development and, secondly, support their parents being able to work, study and contribute to their communities.

Though the vision of Best Start is to be commended, we have argued from the beginning that it was flawed in not more directly addressing the need to shore up the foundations of the current patchwork of early learning and child care services and to build from what we have now to where we want to be in 10 years. The initial optimism of Best Start has turned into uncertainty and concern as community-based child care centres struggle to maintain and improve quality services with the increasing pressures and instability created by inadequate funding under the Best Start plan. Best Start is compounding long-standing issues in the child care sector:

- chronic underfunding, instability and fragmentation;
- increasing complexity in funding arrangements;
- increasing inequity in the provincial-municipal cost-share arrangement;
- continued over-reliance on parent fees;
- difficulty in recruiting and retaining a well-trained and professional workforce.

Best Start has not addressed historic funding gaps from a decade of provincial funding cuts in excess of \$160 million. It has not provided for inflationary increases for fee subsidy funding, annual cost-of-living increases for the workforce, lifting the cap on the wage enhancement grants or continued funding for pay equity obligations. Failure to fund these costs has created an imbalance in the 80-20 municipal-provincial cost-share arrangement and has left local governments covering up to 30% of their overall child care program costs. This, together with the provincial-municipal fiscal imbalance, is restricting the ability of local governments to respond to these growing pressures and is creating uncertainty about the future stability of Best Start expansion.

The current subsidy system and user-pay model erect financial barriers for families and cause ongoing fragility in the system. The move to income testing for child care fee subsidies was encouraging, but again, it fails to deal with the need for core funding similar to health and education. Although a broader range of families will be eligible for child care subsidies as a result of this change, the funding for subsidized spaces has not increased to accommodate this increase in demand. These families are essentially being given access to subsidy for a space that doesn't exist. Best Start recognizes the need for inclusive services for children with special needs, but the 2006 provincial budget did not provide the increased funding needed to integrate children with special needs and to provide the capital infrastructure to make facilities accessible.

A key element for the provision of high-quality child care is the child care staff. The daily interactions between children and staff, the meals prepared and the cleanliness of buildings are what make the difference between good child care and bad child care. We also know that low wages, poor working conditions and undervaluing of the

profession undermine quality, because these lead to high annual teacher turnover rates. More educators are leaving the field because they are unable to make a viable career of it, or they grow tired of working two jobs just to make ends meet.

Average wages in the sector are about \$12 an hour. These wages are cobbled together from a number of different funding pots: the wage enhancement grant, pay equity, parent fees and fee subsidy. This untenable situation is made worse by the fact that Best Start has provided little in the way of annual cost-of-living increases, funding for the full cost of the wage enhancement grants that were capped in 1996, and it ended pay equity adjustments beyond 2006.

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We will continue to lose the cornerstone of quality when we cannot attract and retain the best and brightest in our field. If we are genuinely concerned, as a country and as a province, about providing children with the kind of care and education we know supports them, governments at all levels must systematically address the chronically low wages, poor working conditions and the undervaluing that takes place.

A proven marker of quality in early learning and child care services is public or non-profit delivery as it better ensures equitable access, is accountable to governments and taxpayers, and responds to the real needs of families and communities.

We acknowledge Minister Chambers's commitment that there will be no big-box child care in Ontario, but we remain concerned that there is no clear policy to contain the expansion of child care to the non-profit sector. We support the decision by the cities of Toronto, Ottawa and Windsor to improve quality and accountability of public dollars and child care by earmarking funding for expansion in the non-profit sector only.

Our recommendations for the 2007 Ontario budget follow.

The 10-year rollout of Best Start was premised on substantial federal investments—\$1.4 billion over five years—and \$300 million in new provincial investments. Cancellation of the early learning and child care agreement and the attached funding that was cancelled in 2006 we know was a wrenching blow for the province of Ontario, for quality child care and for children and families.

Despite this setback, other provinces—Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan—have committed to continue building their provincial early learning and child care programs with provincial dollars. In contrast, Ontario took the final federal instalment and spread it out over four years. Nowhere in the 2006 provincial budget was there mention of the \$300 million Premier McGuinty pledged to the electorate in September 2003.

Our early learning and child care system is at a critical point. Without substantial provincial funding commitments, the investment in the future of Ontario's children is at risk. We are therefore calling on the government of Ontario to honour its commitment to families and children with:

—an initial investment of \$600 million in the 2007-08 budget to allow Best Start to move forward;

—direct funding for early learning and child care programs, and elimination of the fee subsidy system;

—funding support for the child care workforce through increased wages, benefits and improved working conditions;

—continued, increased investment in early learning and child care for all children between zero and 12, and especially for children with special needs;

—expansion of the early learning and child care system in the non-profit sector only;

—leadership in demanding that the government of Canada honour the agreements it signed with the province on behalf of Ontario families.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll move to the official opposition.

Mr. Arnott: Thank you very much for your presentation. You've done a very effective job of representing the views of your members. Your position is very clear on all of this.

I wanted to ask you quickly one question. You mentioned that in the provinces of Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan those governments have committed to carrying on their early learning and child care programs with provincial dollars. In essence, are they increasing the provincial contribution to offset the withdrawal of federal funds? Is that what they're doing?

Ms. Bird: Yes. When they developed their agreements, the funding that was required under those agreements—they've lived up to those agreements. They've put in provincial dollars to ensure that their agreements were met. In Ontario, we took the funding from the agreement and spread it out over four years and have not put any new provincial funding into it.

Mr. Arnott: The question that has arisen in my mind listening to your presentation—I'm not sure if the parliamentary assistant is in a position to get us an answer to this but maybe you know—in the way of overall tax dollars, how much goes into funding child care programs in the province of Ontario, including local tax dollars to municipalities as well as the provincial contribution? Have you any idea?

Ms. Bird: You're asking me a question that I don't know the answer to.

Mr. Arnott: Well, I would just put it on the record and ask if the parliamentary assistant could perhaps get us an answer on that for the end of the day.

The Chair: Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Hudak: Ms. Bird, thank you very much for the presentation. I'm just following up on my colleague Mr. Arnott's question with respect to what happened post-cancellation of the federal plan. The McGuinty government, as I recall and as you mentioned in your presentation, had said that they would inject \$300 million in new funding into child care, but you do know that that commitment has not yet come forward in any of the budgets. It's a broken promise to date.

Ms. Bird: Yes.

Mr. Hudak: So any of the new money that the province boasts about in their press releases, that's simply federal dollars that they've spread out over a number of years?

Ms. Bird: Yes.

Mr. Hudak: Then you call in your presentation to move forward on that campaign commitment, at least in the last year of the McGuinty government.

Ms. Bird: Yes, we're looking for that campaign commitment in this year's budget.

Mr. Hudak: You make a point about non-profit delivery and quality, and you make some arguments why the policy should be contained to the expansion of child care in the non-profit sector. Is that with respect to taxpayer dollars, provincial or federal dollars, or do you mean that there shouldn't be private for-profit delivery in any sense?

Ms. Bird: What we know from research—and again, the field of early learning and child care has been researched to near death. The research clearly, unequivocally snags the key elements that must be present in order for quality services to be delivered, and we know that those elements are most present in non-profit delivery. When you are plowing all money back into the program for the children, back into food, back into facilities, you know that it's creating quality. When you're trying to run child care as a for-profit business, you're having to pull out money instead of putting it back into the programs and into children. You're having to pull it out for profit for shareholders, and that is going to diminish quality.

Mr. Hudak: If I have time, the last question I have: You mentioned that Best Start did have some good ideas in it with respect to helping special-needs children and delivering services for them and their families, but you said that the 2006 provincial budget did not provide the increased funding needed to integrate children or provide the capital infrastructure to make facilities accessible. I apologize if this is in your document. Do you know how much that would be or what the demand is, I guess, for special-needs children in early childhood education?

Ms. Bird: We're not sure of the demand. I can't give you an exact figure on the demand, but I do know that there are long waiting lists for children who are waiting to get integration support services. I know that in the city right now there are 1,200 children on the list waiting to get supports to be able to take part in early learning and child care.

Mr. Hudak: Twelve hundred special-needs children.

Ms. Bird: Yes.

Mr. Hudak: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

CITIZEN ADVOCACY OF OTTAWA

The Chair: I call on Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa to come forward, please. Good morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, and there may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. Would you please identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. Brian Tardif: Good morning, and thank you very much. My name is Brian Tardif, and I'm the executive director of Citizen Advocacy in Ottawa. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. With me is a member of our board, Mr. Rick McCabe. Mr. McCabe is the parent of a 32-year-old daughter with a developmental disability, and he will be prepared to join me in responding to questions that you may have following the presentation.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with Citizen Advocacy, it's an organization that exists in many countries around the world and is dedicated to pairing volunteer advocates and people with disabilities in relationships that can have a profound effect on both. These relationships empower people who may need a voice, encourage them and sometimes act on their behalf. These relationships enhance the quality of life and give the person with a disability a chance to exercise their rights.

For the past 33 years in Ottawa, Citizen Advocacy has worked towards envisioning a community that welcomes and values the participation and contribution of all of its citizens, including those who live with disabilities. We strive to enhance personal choice and community participation for persons living with disabilities through advocacy support.

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Through our Everyday Champions program, we have created over 2,000 relationships between volunteer advocates who are matched one-on-one with someone in the community who has a disability and needs practical assistance and friendship.

We have a Chance for Choice program that matches older adults with disabilities who are isolated and vulnerable. Through this program we reduce their vulnerability to the potential for abuse and neglect that is so often experienced by older persons.

Through our Resolution Service, we offer a community problem-solving forum for adults with developmental disabilities and their families who are at risk of harm, intrusive measures or family breakdown if supports and services are not provided, or who require support beyond what an individual agency or our service system in this community can provide or has the capacity for.

As the executive director for the past 22 years, I have come to appreciate the significance of the unique perspective that we have as a result of our distinct position in our community. Our unique role is a key distinguishing feature of Citizen Advocacy and is the result of a number of factors. Firstly, the involvement of ordinary citizens in voluntary, unpaid relationships with some of the most vulnerable citizens of our community provides an independent perspective that is free from conflict of interest.

As an organization, we do not provide direct services such as housing, money or day-to-day support for community living. We do not hold authority over the person's most basic elements of life. As a result, we are privileged to have a high level of trust and respect among in-

dividuals with disabilities and their families. So they turn to us for direction, for support and for someone who will act with or provide a champion for them.

So what has our experience taught us?

In Ontario, there are approximately 120,000 people who have a developmental disability. A developmental disability is permanent in nature, with permanent intellectual limitations. The degree of these limitations varies, as does the impact on the individual. Many of the people with developmental disabilities will require support for some or all aspects of daily living for most of their lives. Approximately 25% of people with a developmental disability have multiple and complex disabilities that require a high level of care that often means they need 24-hour assistance.

The number of people with complex disabilities who live beyond childhood is growing and the challenges for their families are significant. Families want to care for their family member with a disability but are experiencing huge obstacles to accessing the supports and services that are required to enable them to be effective.

I ask you, just for a moment, to imagine facing each day with the uncertainty of whether your adult child will assault you. Imagine having to provide care for someone 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. Imagine being retired and having to schedule your days and weeks around your son's or daughter's schedule of that day. Imagine being the parent of a young woman with a developmental disability and having to manage significant, seemingly unprovoked, unpredictable and uncontrollable outbursts. Now imagine the absolute helplessness as a father if you had to remain in the bedroom each morning to avert a crisis of significant and uncontrollable outbursts of your daughter that only seem to be provoked by your presence, while your wife helps your daughter get ready for her daily programs alone. These are the real life experiences of families in our communities, and not just here in Ottawa.

Our youth with developmental disabilities are finishing school with few opportunities to engage in constructive and meaningful activities during the day. The availability of planning support is non-existent for most families. We have seen families who are burned out, mothers and fathers who have experienced significant stress-related illnesses caused by the tremendous pressure they endured every day as they attempted to fill the void left when their son or daughter finished school.

At 21 years of age, these young people lose most of the programs and clinical supports that kept them stable and engaged in schools. Little children become young men and women, 200 pounds and more, and their parents are physically unable to manage them. It's their frustration and boredom that causes the problems. Yes, there have been some recent developments and investments in terms of the Passports program for adults with developmental disabilities, but the need extends far beyond this enhanced capacity.

Sometimes, outbursts of frustration leave parents with no alternative but to call 911, so their child is hospitalized. They can't take them home. We know of families

whose child or adult child has been in hospital for one year, two years, occupying acute care beds at \$1,200 to \$1,500 a day. Many families are distressed about what's going to happen to their sons or daughters when they're no longer able to care for their daily support needs.

Families want to be part of the solution. Aging parents, aging family members: These are other issues that are causing a crisis in our developmental services system.

In Ottawa, we know that there are more than 2,800 people receiving some level of support through 16 organizations. But there are over 300 people waiting for service. The waiting list for residential support is growing by approximately 10% every year. We know that there are insufficient residential options. Individuals with high needs wait for several years to get appropriate residential supports, placing unrelenting stress on families. Our hospitals' acute care beds are being inappropriately used. The changing profile often suggests that the needs are much more complex.

What does the future hold? The developmental services sector, we believe, is at a critical juncture. There is an urgent need to transform the sector to meet the requirements of individuals who are not able to access supports. Transformation must also better meet the needs of individuals and their families who are receiving some but not the necessary level of support to sustain their quality of life.

While the transformation agenda includes several underlying key principles, the principle of citizenship is paramount. Transformation must contribute to the development of thriving communities for all people, including those with a developmental disability. Promoting citizenship recognizes that people who have a developmental disability have the same right as other members of our society to participate in community life and to realize their individual potential for physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development.

The Chair: You have about a minute left for your presentation.

Mr. Tardif: We urge the committee to ensure that this budget package includes provisions to promote and support the engagement of people with developmental disabilities as citizens of our community.

The transformation agenda includes the development of individualized and direct funding models. Individualized funding is available in some parts of Ontario and in other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States. We urge the committee to support a budget that includes provisions for a funding model in developmental services that provides for the identification of funding for individuals and choice receiving this funding directly or through other agencies.

We are all engaged in individualized life planning. Planning gives direction and purpose to our lives. Planning helps us increase choice and control what we experience in life. We would encourage the transformation agenda to provide opportunities for individualized, independent, person-centred planning for people with

developmental disabilities. The importance, then, of advance planning in helping individuals and families to participate and envision transitions and their implications is a central piece of the transformation agenda.

We know that you'll hear from others regarding the pressures of this sector. We want to support the transformation agenda in its entirety, but we believe that promoting citizenship of people with developmental disabilities, developing a funding approach that includes individualized and direct funding models, and developing the capacity to support individualized, independent and person-centred planning are critical elements to achieving this success. To that end, we believe, and support the provincial network on developmental services, that the investment of an additional \$200 million in the next budget to stabilize the sector and contribute to its successful transformation is important.

I'd like to acknowledge the presence of families here today and express their appreciation for being here, and I'd like to close by commending this government and all previous governments for their work with the closure of provincial institutions in our province, and urge you to maintain your resolve in this matter as we close the last three institutions.

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The Chair: Thank you. The questioning will go to the NDP and Mr. Prue.

Mr. Prue: In terms of the \$200 million, does that include the amount of money that will be necessary to close the institutions and to have additional spaces made available to house the people who are living in them now?

Mr. Tardif: No.

Mr. Prue: So this is \$200 million on top of whatever that will cost.

Mr. Tardif: Yes.

Mr. Prue: We ask this question in the House, but we never really get an answer: How much is it going to cost to close down the institutions in the next couple of years and move the people out?

Mr. Tardif: My understanding, from the minister's previous announcement, is that all the money that is currently being used to support people in institutions will be transferred to the community and that that money will be sufficient to support those individuals in the community.

Mr. Prue: In terms of the waiting lists, which are very large, there has been some discussion of whether or not the people who are in the institutions will add to the burden of the long waiting lists that already exist on the outside. Does your organization foresee that as being a problem, or it won't be?

Mr. Tardif: We would say that it doesn't add to the problem, because the people coming out of the institutions are coming with money that has already been allocated to support them. So it's not adding to the problem, and it's not creating any solutions for most people. There may be a few people who are going to be able to

be supported with some of these dollars, but we're not anticipating that it's going to be a significant number.

Mr. Prue: The \$200 million is what is necessary, then, for the broad spectrum of people who are not institutionalized at this time but who are on waiting lists, sometimes for years and years.

Mr. Tardif: That's right.

Mr. Prue: Is the problem particularly acute in Ottawa? We've had a number of media reports over the last couple of years talking about the waiting list in this city and the problems related to Ottawa. I don't know why, but that's what I seem to remember reading.

Mr. Tardif: My understanding is that Ottawa is not unique and that this is a problem that is endemic to communities across Ontario.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

CHILD AND YOUTH HEALTH NETWORK FOR EASTERN ONTARIO

The Chair: I call on the Child and Youth Health Network for Eastern Ontario to come forward, please.

You have 10 minutes for your presentation; there may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourselves for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Ms. Dennise Albrecht: Good morning. My name is Dennise Albrecht. I'm the director of community and outreach services at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and a staff member who supports the Child and Youth Health Network for Eastern Ontario. I'm joined by the network's project coordinator, Jama Watt.

Our focus is on the healthy development of children aged 6 to 12. We call that Middle Childhood Matters, as you can see from the handout.

I'd like to begin a little bit with that front page in introducing you to the framework that we developed. It identifies four key elements that are evidence-based and help to cluster the issues that impact on the healthy development of children: safe and caring environments; meeting fundamental needs; the opportunity to develop competencies; and stable and nurturing relationships. We want to promote to you this asset-based framework for planning and policy development as well as address a number of key issues that fall under meeting fundamental needs.

Our five recommendations are to encourage the government to adopt this type of framework as the anchor to their current and future policy and program initiatives. While the focus of the document is on ages 6 to 12, it can be easily adapted to cover the full spectrum of zero to 18. Within that, then—our focus on meeting fundamental needs—we have identified four key issues for your consideration.

One is to conduct regular reviews of the minimum wage legislation to ensure that levels reflect both the cost of living faced by people on social assistance and the working poor and also by the small business people who form the core of our communities. Third is to end the

provincial clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement and to maintain the funding for the reinvestment programs. The next is to make affordable and adequate housing a priority, and the fifth is to increase social assistance levels for families to more accurately reflect the basic cost of living for the children and youth and families and to reduce the gap between the financial resources and the costs for shelter, food and clothing.

A little bit of background as we expand on these recommendations: The Child and Youth Health Network has been around for 10 years. It's facilitated through the children's hospital and brings together over 200 people from not only across the counties of eastern Ontario but also from the sectors that impact on the health and well-being of children and youth: the health and health care sector, community health centres, hospitals, but also that full gamut of social services, recreation and education, as well as justice.

So a little background on the framework: This government and past governments have an excellent initiative and record for work with preschoolers. We have a very strong program for the zero to six. We now need to turn that focus on the children six to 12, because they do grow. With appropriate services and initiatives in place to help Ontario children, they will be able to reach their optimal potential. This evidence-based framework, Middle Childhood Matters—we've just brought one copy but others can be downloaded—helps provide the developmental assets that are needed for this particular age group. The document has been supported by many organizations, policy- and decision-makers, including the city of Ottawa, Best Start and the strategic planning branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

You can see in the chart that we have the four key elements necessary. The health of children and youth is the result of the services and supports from a number of sectors that are supported through our provincial government. We support the leadership of government in its goal of increased cross-sectoral partnerships and the strong role for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to try and facilitate this. We realize what a challenge it is, but certainly for children, better linkages between health, social services, MCYS and education is quite critical. We believe that this proposed framework will provide that policy and program construct to improve system integration, reduce unnecessary duplication and increase outcome-based planning and evaluation.

Within that framework, then, a little bit more information on some of the key fundamental needs that we wanted to raise: Regarding the minimum wage, a family's income level determines, obviously, what they can afford and consequently the options they have for raising their children. When adequate income is available, parents and caregivers can provide children with stable housing, healthy food and opportunities for children to develop competencies in recreation and arts and enhance their education. Low wages and the growth of insecure, unstable work with few benefits, which has so much characterized our communities in the last decade

and beyond, are part of the reason behind Ontario's child and family poverty rate. Ontario's minimum wage will be raised to \$8 an hour in February, and we certainly commend the government on that, but we ask the government to continue the review. That rate is still insufficient for families who are earning minimum wage to even reach the low-income cut-off. Please ensure that the minimum wage is a living wage.

Regarding the child benefits clawback, we recognize the government's decision in July 2004 not to claw back national child benefit supplement increases as one in the right direction. The NCBS continues to be clawed back, however, from families receiving social assistance. As we continue to claw back \$122 a month from these social assistance cheques, it affects over 200,000 children a month. Families are often forced, as you well know, to choose between feeding their children and paying rent, and we know the role that food banks have unfortunately been playing in our communities.

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In supporting an end to the clawback, we also request that the funding to programs across Ontario that are currently funded with the reinvestment dollars be continued. In eastern Ontario, this is about \$4.1 million of reinvestment funding going towards programs and services for families and children. Ending the clawback means that families receiving social assistance will have more income each month to support their children and youth. The Liberal election platform in 2003 included a plan to end the clawback, and we believe that this commitment should be honoured in its comprehensiveness.

Linked to that is affordable housing. It's a key determinant of child and youth health, and yet a significant portion of children and youth do not have access to acceptable and stable housing. Thus, they are at increased risk for disease, injury, malnutrition, sleep deprivation and behavioural problems. You'll see noted there another document, Adequate and Affordable Housing: A Child Health Issue, which again is evidence-based and can be downloaded from the network's website.

Tonight, just to anchor it in reality on a very cold, cold day, 80 families will be using emergency shelters across Ottawa. It costs \$53 to house someone in a shelter for one night. In contrast, it costs only \$36 to house a person in new housing, or between \$20 and \$30 to house someone in a pre-existing two-bedroom apartment.

Housing, as we know, is a cross-jurisdictional issue and needs to be a priority for the government. Fully 70% of low-income families with children are living in housing that they really cannot afford. The health and well-being of these children are at risk. New funds for housing and rent supplements must be part of a 2007 provincial budget strategy, both to reduce the wait times and to increase access to affordable housing.

Finally, the social assistance rates for families: Families living in poverty must often decide which to pay, the rent or feeding their children. Families receiving social assistance are plagued with the challenges of securing stable housing and ensuring there's enough

nutritious food. Over 50% of single parents on assistance have used food banks, paid their rent or mortgage late, and can't afford to take their children to recreational sports. Inadequate social assistance rates are a barrier to finding work, and we urge the government to review and raise the rates of assistance to ensure adequate incomes for families.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Phil McNeely): Thank you very much for your presentation. We will now go for questions to the government. Mr. Lalonde.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): Thank you very much for your presentation. I want to congratulate you for the role and the service you render to the children and youth of the Ottawa area and also for the province.

As you are probably aware, we did increase the minimum wage to \$8, which will come into effect on February 1. There hadn't been any increase for many, many years. What do you think the new minimum wage should be?

Ms. Albrecht: The research shows that \$10 an hour would bring it up to that low-income cut-off. We appreciate that it's always a balance between raising the minimum wage and support for small businesspeople. Ten dollars has been quoted in the research.

Mr. Lalonde: The other question I have is, are you aware that the McGuinty government has allowed more social housing to every municipality in this province?

Ms. Albrecht: Yes.

Mr. Lalonde: When I say "municipality," a municipality like mine would be at the upper tier that would be taken care of. I forget the number of housing units that we will be adding by the end of next year. This was a big improvement, and we know there's always a need to increase the number. But we have to follow our budget, in a way, and as you're probably aware, we're trying to balance the budget. Right now, I don't think we'll be able to do it, again, this year; otherwise, we would have to cut services, and people just don't want us to cut services. I do recognize that.

I think my colleague Ms. Matthews has a question also.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): Thank you very much, and I join with Jean-Marc in commending you on the work you do. It's very important.

I notice that you recommend ending the clawback and increasing social assistance rates. I wonder if you've turned your attention at all to the working poor, other than increasing the minimum wage, and whether you've had a chance to look at the recommendation from the MISWAA group that's recommending an integrated child benefit for all children in Ontario, regardless of the source of income of their parents.

Ms. Jama Watt: No, I'm not familiar with that, but I will look into it.

Ms. Matthews: I'll give you the context. It's an interesting new idea that I think deserves some serious attention.

Ms. Albrecht: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

REGROUPEMENT DES PARTENAIRES FRANCOPHONES

Le Vice-Président: La prochaine présentation est du Regroupement des partenaires francophones. Je demande à M^{me} Diane Desrochers, présidente, de s'adresser à nous. Nous vous remercions de venir aujourd'hui devant le comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques. Vous avez 10 minutes pour votre présentation et cinq minutes après pour des questions. Alors, pour commencer, si vous pouvez nous donner votre nom pour nos records.

M^{me} Diane Desrochers: Oui, certainement. Merci, honorable Président. Mon nom est Diane Desrochers. Je suis la présidente du Regroupement des partenaires francophones d'Ottawa.

Sur ce, please permit me to do my presentation in French, and if you have questions, I would certainly appreciate them. I can take them in English. Thank you.

Merci beaucoup de m'avoir invitée et d'accepter de recevoir ma présentation. Je veux particulièrement féliciter le gouvernement sur les actions qu'il a entreprises pour adresser la question de nos personnes les plus vulnérables, nos citoyens et nos citoyennes les plus vulnérables.

Le Regroupement des partenaires francophones existe depuis près de 20 ans. Il a été créé comme réseau intersectoriel francophone suite à la première vague de désinstitutionalisation dans les années 90 et, évidemment, poursuit avec beaucoup de joie cette dernière phase.

Notre secteur intersectoriel favorise la planification des services en français basés sur les besoins des individus qui ont une déficience intellectuelle. Notre réseau ne travaille pas, évidemment, en isolation de nos autres collègues du secteur. Nous travaillons de très près avec eux afin de développer des initiatives, des projets, en partenariat avec ces agences-là et d'autres, pour améliorer le bien-être et adresser les besoins existants, autant qu'émergeants, de nos personnes ayant un handicap de développement et de leur famille.

Nos membres sont des parents, des individus pré-occupés par la question, des représentants d'agences et d'institutions qui offrent activement des services en français aux personnes ayant un handicap de développement.

La recherche aujourd'hui nous indique que les personnes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle ont quatre fois plus de chances d'être exclues des activités communautaires que les personnes ayant d'autres types de handicaps. Le Regroupement doit donc se prononcer d'avantage sur l'inclusion sociale de ces individus afin de favoriser la diminution de cette exclusion. On sait, évidemment, que les francophones sont doublement défavorisés à plusieurs égards, pas seulement dans notre région d'Ottawa-Carleton mais dans d'autres régions de la province.

Nous travaillons fort afin de s'assurer que les personnes et les familles ont des choix, qu'elles fréquentent l'école, qu'elles soient acceptées et intégrées et qu'elles aient accès aux services comme vous et moi, et ce, accès sur une approche centrée sur la personne.

Des 600 000 francophones de l'Ontario, on sait que 3 % de la population est touchée par la déficience intellectuelle ou un handicap de développement, donc environ 18 000 francophones de la province, et ceci exclut les personnes de souche ethnoculturelle qui parlent le français. On sait aussi que deux tiers des jeunes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un handicap de développement ont besoin d'aide pour leurs activités quotidiennes, et ceci comparé à 15 % de jeunes ayant d'autres types de handicaps. Ces personnes sont nos plus vulnérables.

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D'après l'Institut Roehrer, on sait que de 39 % à 68 % des filles et de 16 % à 30 % des garçons qui ont une déficience intellectuelle ont été victimes d'une agression sexuelle avant l'âge de 18 ans. C'est sérieux. Moins de 40 % de ces jeunes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle s'inscrivent dans les écoles et ont moins de services par rapport aux années précédentes.

La tendance se veut à considérer les personnes ayant un handicap comme un groupe d'intérêt à part. Pourtant, ce sont bien des femmes, des hommes, des enfants, des adolescents, des francophones de souche, des immigrantes et des immigrants et des aînés. C'est donc une population hétérogène désirent contribuer de part entière à toute leur communauté.

Il y a évidemment plusieurs éléments que j'aurais pu adresser, comme le transport, les services de jour et les emplois, mais il y a quatre composantes particulières qui touchent les familles et les personnes francophones.

Je veux souligner l'allocation en termes d'emploi et de la main d'oeuvre qui a été avancée par le gouvernement. C'est certainement une bonne base sur laquelle bâtir, mais il reste encore beaucoup à faire pour s'assurer que notre système peut être soutenu et peut appuyer les individus. Nous savons que les salaires de nos employés sont de 25 % inférieurs aux salaires d'autres employés d'autres secteurs et que le personnel change à un taux de 22 % dans notre secteur, ce qui est très significatif.

La question de recrutement et de rétention est une situation de crise et ce, encore plus au niveau des services en français. Nous sommes particulièrement touchés par le manque de formation en français, compte tenu qu'il y a un plus petit nombre et que nos institutions d'enseignement doivent travailler très fort afin d'assurer ces éléments-là. Mais il y a beaucoup d'autres facteurs qui entrent en jeu. Il existe donc très peu, ou une fraction limitée, de formation professionnelle en français.

On encourage le Regroupement à poursuivre les démarches et à avoir un plan d'action à court terme et à long terme concernant la revitalisation des salaires afin de travailler avec les organismes provinciaux pour résoudre cette question. L'investissement des sommes nécessaires, on espère, arrêterait ou ralentirait la réduction

tion des services offerts à nos personnes et, par ce fait même, comblerait d'autres lacunes dans le secteur.

En termes d'appui des familles et des parents, les familles demandent depuis longtemps une écoute, une formation en français, des choix de services, un financement individualisé et des ressources humaines à leur disposition. Le gouvernement présent a fait beaucoup de démarches à ce niveau-là et doit continuer.

Des longues listes d'attente et des mécanismes de sélection n'adressent que les questions critiques, et c'est donc une petite portion de la population qui est desservie à ce niveau. Le financement individualisé prôné maintenant est certainement un pas dans la bonne direction.

Nous voulons aussi signaler les investissements graduels au niveau des services des enfants autistes : encore là, un pas dans la bonne direction pour pallier ces lacunes, mais nous voulons certainement que ça puisse se poursuivre et ce, encore au niveau des services en français.

Le financement individualisé doit être assorti d'une offre de ressources humaines pour appuyer les familles et les parents et ne doit pas servir à réduire le niveau des services déjà offerts au sein de nos communautés par les réseaux formels et informels. Certainement, vous savez que la communauté francophone est particulièrement vulnérable à ce niveau.

L'offre des services en français doit être active, équitable, accessible, de qualité et de façon continue afin d'adresser tous les besoins et afin que les parents ne se trouvent pas dans des situations où ils doivent choisir des services en anglais pour pouvoir aider leurs enfants à ce niveau-là. Ça c'est très critique et ça fait tellement longtemps que ceci perdure.

Les services ne doivent pas seulement adresser les questions urgentes mais doivent tenter d'adresser l'élément préventif. On n'axe pas assez sur cette question-là pour prévenir des situations urgentes au niveau de nos familles et de nos personnes, autant au niveau des francophones que de la communauté anglophone.

Un plan d'action et un engagement concret du gouvernement de l'Ontario est nécessaire pour identifier l'écart à combler et les ressources nécessaires au cours des prochaines années pour répondre aux besoins au niveau de l'autisme.

Les barrières interprovinciales sont particulièrement importantes en ce qui concerne les professionnels francophones. Également, en termes de l'autisme, on sait que le gouvernement fédéral, ainsi que le rapport imminent du Comité sénatorial des affaires sociales, de la science et de la technologie, entame présentement des démarches afin de développer des questions au niveau de l'autisme. On vous encourage, comme province, à poursuivre et à prendre le leadership au niveau des provinces à cet égard.

Afin de s'assurer que notre système perdure, nous, le Regroupement, devons travailler avec vous et avec toutes les instances afin de réduire les barrières au niveau des services en français. Encore, on vous encourage à développer des stratégies pour adresser la question des barrières professionnelles.

Afin d'appuyer et de participer au développement de ces stratégies visant le bien-être des personnes autistes et leur famille et des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, nous vous encourageons encore à travailler avec le fédéral.

Au niveau des services en français, que ça soit des psychologues, des intervenants de première ligne, des médecins et des infirmières, le manque de professionnels francophones est flagrant et bien documenté en Ontario. La formation professionnelle en français est difficilement accessible et n'est disponible que dans certaines régions de la province. Des bourses offertes par le ministère des Services sociaux et communautaires pour encourager les professionnels à étudier dans certains domaines n'ont atteint que les institutions anglophones en ce moment.

Le Vice-Président : Vous avez une autre minute.

M^{me} Desrochers : D'accord. Je vous remercie.

Nous soulignons que nous travaillons de façon intersectorielle et, par notre Planification, nous offrons des planifications avec des gens d'autres secteurs—que ça soit la santé—depuis de nombreuses années. Alors, nous appuyons fortement la transformation qui est courante et nous encourageons tout le travail fait à ce niveau-là et sommes prêts à travailler coude à coude avec vous pour nos francophones de la province.

Le Vice-Président : Merci, madame Desrochers, pour votre présentation. On va aller à l'opposition. We'll go to the Conservatives for questions. Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Hudak : Merci pour votre présentation. I apologize; my French is poor, so I'll revert to English for my questions. Please respond as you see fit.

I actually have a small but important francophone population in the southern part of the Niagara Peninsula, Port Colborne, in Welland. It's always a struggle to ensure that we have appropriate services for that population.

You did mention in your presentation the importance of the 600,000 francophones and that about 3% of that population would have a developmental disability. How can you actually deliver those services—you mentioned the need is great in the Ottawa area—in small communities like Port Colborne, or smaller populations like Welland?

Ms. Desrochers : That is a very good question, and it's certainly a difficult one to address, but there does exist expertise in our province, whether it's in the north or in this area or in Prescott-Russell and Stormont-Dundas, and there are exchanges that can be done. We can take on the models from health—Telehealth, for example—in developing resources. In terms of training, also, we've done a number of training sessions, video conferences, that would help to support the workers at that level. So there's a whole variety of levels, and we, le Regroupement, certainly have worked very closely with Community Living Ontario and their francophone provincial network to try to gather all of the individuals, whether family members or persons with disabilities, to work together to develop a strategic plan to be able to address situations that your fellow citizens experience in the Welland area.

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I think it's to keep on encouraging these networks by supporting them, first, financially, and with the different initiatives that can tap into what already exists. There's so much wonderful work that's being done at every level that can be translated and *peaufiné*—adapted—to fit the particular community in question.

Mr. Hudak: I can imagine one of the extreme challenges, if you have people to assist those with developmental disabilities—sometimes that is a very rare talent, for individuals with some more significant needs, whether it's autism etc., and then having the additional skills of being bilingual or francophone, right? So is it best to try to recruit more people from the francophone community to get involved in developmental disabilities or to take those who are anglophones and train them in French? What's the best way to try to get support on the ground as quickly as possible?

Ms. Desrochers: There's no best way to do it. There are multiple ways, multiple strategies, and certainly trying to encourage francophones to train in this sector is one way of doing it. But as I mentioned, the inter-provincial element is important too, because there are people who are coming from the exterior of this country who don't have the qualifications to train, or their qualifications are not recognized. That is a serious situation. Of course, the salaries are a large portion of it, and because the numbers are so small, so we need to look again, within the strategy that the government is going to develop or is developing, at that component of the francophones and not consider the francophones as an interest group, but as part and parcel of the population that immediately must be part of the planning process.

Mr. Hudak: You mentioned—

The Vice-Chair: The time is up, Mr. Hudak, but I would ask if we could let Jean-Marc Lalonde, who represents the riding with the highest percentage of francophones in the province, just say a couple of words of thank-you to M^{me} Desrochers.

M. Lalonde: D'abord, madame Desrochers, je tiens à vous remercier d'avoir fait la présentation ce matin en français. C'est très important.

Je dois vous dire que la province de l'Ontario travaille déjà de concert avec le fédéral afin d'assurer la venue de professionnels, et le dernier recensement a démontré que le nombre de francophones augmente en Ontario.

Encore une fois, merci.

M^{me} Desrochers: Merci, monsieur.

Le Vice-Président: Merci.

SPECIALTY CARE GRANITE RIDGE

The Vice-Chair: The next presenters are Specialty Care Granite Ridge: Norm Slatter, administrator. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation, and there will be five minutes for questions afterwards. If you would please state your name for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. Norm Slatter: Good morning. My name is Norm Slatter. I'm the administrator of Specialty Care Granite Ridge.

Specialty Care Granite Ridge is a 224-bed long-term-care facility located in Stittsville, Ontario, here in Ottawa. We've been providing long-term-care services since November 2002 and have well over 200 dedicated staff members.

I'm here today to request your support for more time to provide the care, programs and services that enhance the quality of care and quality of life for the residents of Granite Ridge and for all residents across Ontario.

Last spring, our family and residents' council supported a petition requesting funding for more time for resident care. They did this because, although they see staff doing their very best, they also see that they are run off their feet just to do the minimum that our residents require. Let me give you an example. During the night shift at Granite Ridge, we have approximately 13 staff members looking after the needs of 224 residents. With a facility our size, the staffing ratio during the night shift is about one staff member to every 17 residents. During the day and evening shift, the ratio improves to anywhere between one staff for eight to 14 residents, depending on the care needs of the clients on a particular unit. Often, there are residents waiting for toileting assistance because, as the ratios above indicate, there is just not enough time for staff to meet their very basic needs.

Residents need more. They deserve more. We want to do more. In fact, we believe we should be doing more to help hospitals with their wait lists, but we can't. The reason we cannot do more for residents is simple: Our operating funding has not kept pace with the trend of increasing care needs. Last year alone, provincial resident acuity levels increased by 3.15%. Since 1992, the increase has been over 27%. At our home, our acuity increased 8.25% last year alone.

The last significant base funding increase was the \$116 million announced in the 2004 budget. With our share of that funding, we provide our residents with an additional bath per week and one more full-time registered nurse. With the base funding adjustments since then, we have not even been able to maintain the status quo as labour costs have increased more than the base funding has. Consequently, we did have to lay off that registered nurse. Since 2004, government has provided other targeted funding, which has allowed us to purchase lifts and medical equipment. These are very valuable initiatives, but they do not enable us to add more staff to provide more resident care.

With current resident acuity levels, homes should be providing three hours of care per resident per day. With current government funding we are only able to provide, on average, 2.5 hours. If our home were in Manitoba or Saskatchewan, our residents would be getting the three hours of daily care they need. In Alberta or New Brunswick, they would be reassured by a government commitment to get 3.5 hours of daily care.

Today I am asking for your support in requesting government to commit the funding in the 2007 and 2008

budgets that is required to address what is a 30-minute care gap. This would mean providing \$390 million, or \$14.27 per resident per day, to fund an additional 20 minutes of care in 2007, and \$214 million, or \$7.81 per resident per day, to fund 10 more minutes of care in 2008. The details of this request were outlined in a submission by our association, the Ontario Long Term Care Association, to this committee in December. I have attached a copy of the OLTCA's submission in my submission to you. With our allocation of this funding increase, we estimate we would be able to hire 30 more full-time staff members. With this total increase, the raw-food funding should be increased from \$5.46 per resident per day to \$7 per resident per day. This would enable us to meet the basic cost-of-living increases.

As you may know, our funding either comes directly from government for nursing, programs and food or is directly controlled by the government through setting the rates for the resident copayment. We use the residents' funding for accommodation services. These would be services such as administration, housekeeping, laundry and dietary staff, utilities and general building maintenance. When funding in this envelope does not keep pace with our operating costs, the services we pay out for this envelope will suffer.

Over the past three years, our revenue-cost gap in this envelope has been widening. For example, as with any organization, our utility costs have increased and are expected to grow by a further 10% annually over the next two years. Labour costs continue to outpace our revenues.

If this revenue-cost gap is not addressed now, it will affect the resident services I just noted. We are not asking government to raise the resident copayment rates beyond the annual inflation adjustment. Instead, within the total funding request, we are asking government to allocate \$2.75 per resident per day to help us maintain our laundry, housekeeping and other services, services which I can assure you are very important to our residents and their families.

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The upcoming budget may play a pivotal role in determining whether we'll be able to make gains towards the care our residents need or whether we'll begin to slip back from where we are now. Another year of maintenance-level funding is just not good enough. A substantial funding increase that adds 20 minutes more care this year and 10 minutes more next year is required to provide the care residents need, expect and deserve. This is without even considering our increased costs to implement the additional paperwork and processes required to meet the requirements currently outlined in the proposed Long-Term Care Homes Act.

Granite Ridge is a new home. I realize we are not directly impacted by issues that face other residents, families and staff in the older B and C homes. As a long-term-care administrator, I am concerned about Ontario's double standard for resident physical comfort, privacy and dignity. Residents in B and C homes pay the same

fees as residents in Granite Ridge, yet I know these homes are not able to provide the privacy and the home-like dining environments that we can.

With an aging population, increasing resident and family expectations and research that shows that physical design impacts a home's ability to provide appropriate care for residents with dementia, the time has come to address this double standard.

Therefore, I would like to add our support to our association's request for the government to provide \$9.5 million in this budget to support the renewal of the first 2,500 B and C beds and to continue this process in a planned and rational manner annually until the job is done.

Again, thank you for your time. I'm pleased to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you. The questioning will go to the NDP. Mr. Prue.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much for your presentation. We have seen similar presentations with very similar language and very similar words, but what you're saying has to be very heartfelt and it has to be known, I think, by all of the members of the committee.

It seems to me, and I could be mistaken, that the quality of life in the homes in terms of the food has declined a little because of the raw-food money that you have. Is that feeling common across all of the groups of homes and administrators in Ontario?

Mr. Slatter: Certainly raw food is a concern for us. We call it the raw-food envelope. You can imagine that feeding yourself on \$5.35 a day would be quite impossible. I know we're talking about lots of people and therefore more money, but it's a challenge to meet that. It's not only a challenge just to meet the basic food requirements, but there are a lot of standards that we need to meet as far as ensuring that we're providing appropriate protein and carbohydrate amounts. So there are an awful lot of standards around the food that we need to provide. It's not just providing the basic food; it's also providing it in the parameters that are assigned to us by the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Prue: By law, you also have to provide, I believe, at least two choices for the main meal every day. Is that correct?

Mr. Slatter: That's correct. Many residents in long-term-care facilities can eat regular food, but there's a process where we would have to mince food, which takes more manpower, and we even have to purée food. All of those types of textured diets need to be provided in an alternative choice.

Mr. Prue: In the lead-up to the last election, some of the government candidates put out a pamphlet calling for an increase per resident per year of \$6,000. Would what you're requesting fall within that \$6,000 or do you need even more than what they were promising?

Mr. Slatter: To tell you the truth, I'm not sure how the millions of dollars I'm requesting globally for Ontario impact per resident. I believe we're looking at \$9 to \$10 in 2007—excuse me: \$14 in 2007 and \$7.81 in

2008. That's for nursing programs, raw food and accommodations.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

**CHARLOTTE BIRCHARD
CENTRES OF EARLY LEARNING**

The Chair: I call now on the Charlotte Birchard Centres of Early Learning to come forward, please. Good morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourselves for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Ms. Silvina Alves: Thank you very much for this opportunity today. My name is Silvina Alves. I'm the executive director of the Charlotte Birchard Centres of Early Learning. Along with me here today are the president of our community board, Suzanne Grenier; Eleonore Benesch, the founder of our organization and an honorary board member; and also Elda Allen, another honorary board member who sits on our community board.

Our organization consists of the Children's Centre located in Ottawa West, attached to Hilson Avenue Public School, and the Greenboro Day Care Centre in Ottawa South. We are an incorporated, non-profit, charitable organization governed by a community board. We offer early learning and child care programs for 200 children from 18 months up to 10 years of age.

The purpose of appearing before you today is to urge the Ontario government to include capital funding for non-profit child care organizations in their upcoming budget. The reinstatement of the capital grant program for non-profit child care is critical in the ability to deliver high-quality early learning and child care systems. This funding was cut in 1996 by the Conservative government and it has continued to cause a major barrier for our organization to complete its capital project.

Since the cancellation of the capital grant program and the completed construction of the first level of our child care centre in 1998, our organization has been actively seeking funds to add what was a planned second storey. Our new building was constructed after the demolition of Hilson Avenue Public School, which previously housed the Children's Centre in rented space since 1979.

In recognition of the high value of our service in the community, we were very fortunate to obtain a 50-year lease for the land from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, which allowed us to build our one-storey building. With a capital grant of \$960,000 from the Ottawa-Carleton regional government plus our very own funds of \$350,000, we were able to complete the first phase of this project.

To date, however, neither the government nor the private sector has been willing to support our efforts in completing this building. Our voluntary community board has spent countless hours trying to raise funds. Once again we are prepared to contribute approximately \$300,000 from our own reserves towards the overall cost of an approximately \$1.4-million project that needs to be

completed. Our request is urgent, as the temporary roof that we put on back in 1998, when we completed the one-storey facility, now needs to be replaced.

The architect's drawings are complete. Our construction company, that built the original facility, has been on standby and is more than willing to assist us again and has been of some assistance to us over the past nine years with other repairs. We have been working for the last nine years towards securing permanent space for all of our programs. We have been trying to secure permanent space since 1979. We have reached 50% of our goal. However, 65 children are still in rented space, space that we can lose at any time. We trust that you will agree with us that waiting 27 years to secure a permanent home for a valuable and valued child care service in our community is long enough.

We urge you to take our request to Queen's Park and directly to Premier Dalton McGuinty and Minister Mary Anne Chambers for immediate consideration and action.

We have attached, in your handout, a brief history of our organization and our purpose for the second storey at the Children's Centre. We would be very happy to provide a detailed copy of our capital project if need be.

We do want to take this opportunity to thank you for the chance today to speak to you, and we look forward to seeing our presentation reflected in the upcoming budget. Thank you.

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The Chair: Thank you. This round of questioning goes to the government. Mr. Arthurs.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Thank you for your presentation. I'm certainly familiar with children's centres, having one not in my riding but in the Durham region where I reside, Grandview Children's Centre, which you may be familiar with among the various centres around the province. Certainly, we'll make sure this gets back, but if you have the opportunity to forward a direct copy to Minister Chambers's office as well, that would be helpful also so that it can be given consideration during the finalization of her development of her budget process and the like.

Ms. Alves: Definitely, and we will follow through with that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Arthurs: That would be great, because we could take it back, but it's more difficult to deal with sort of the one-off options that are requested, although committee will certainly be considering it when it deliberates on its recommendations.

Can I ask you, though, just briefly about funding that came from Minister Chambers last year? It's a little bit off topic, but were you the benefactor of that at all?

Ms. Alves: No, we weren't. I'm assuming you're referring to the Best Start dollars.

Mr. Arthurs: There was about \$10 million last year that Minister Chambers released as additional dollars, so that we're talking the same money—

Ms. Alves: Yes, I'm pretty sure we're talking the same dollars. We were not a benefactor of it; no, we weren't.

Mr. Arthurs: Okay. Do you have a waiting list, as others have?

Ms. Alves: Within our organization, for children needing care? Is that what you're—

Mr. Arthurs: Yes.

Ms. Alves: Yes, we do, a very substantial one.

Mr. Arthurs: Okay. Thank you for making the presentation. We'll make sure this gets back, and if you can forward a copy directly, that would be helpful as well.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that Ms. Matthews may have a question as well.

The Chair: Ms. Matthews?

Ms. Matthews: I'll be quick, Chair, I promise.

Thank you very much. I just saw the commendation from Charles Coffey in your platform. That's something to be proud of.

Ms. Alves: Thank you.

Ms. Matthews: I just want to understand your centre a little bit better. You're a not-for-profit.

Ms. Alves: We are.

Ms. Matthews: What fees do you charge the parents of your children?

Ms. Alves: Monthly fees. Children who attend either one of our facilities—as I alluded to, we have two facilities in the Ottawa area, the Children's Centre and the Greenboro Day Care Centre. There are children who attend where their parents pay a full fee, depending on what program they are part of, from toddlers up to school-age children. Then there are children who do have a subsidy, because we have a purchase of service with the city of Ottawa, so there are some children who attend our facility under a subsidy system. So we do get paid for them to attend by the city of Ottawa.

Do you want the actual fees? Is that what you were interested in?

Ms. Matthews: Yes, I'd be interested in knowing.

Ms. Alves: The toddler fees per month are \$915 per child. That's an 18-month-old child to a two-and-a-half-year-old child. The two-and-a-half- to the four-year-olds, which we consider our preschool children, are \$725. After that, we have our senior kindergarten children, who attend our program half day. Then some of them attend the school that we're physically linked to, and others attend other community schools that we bus the children in and out of. That monthly fee is \$535. I would like to comment that for that group of children, all of the children, we provide a nutritious morning snack, a hot meal at lunchtime and an afternoon snack. Our facility is one of the remaining few here in the Ottawa area that still provides that for our senior kindergarten children, which parents are very, very thankful for.

We also have our school-age children, who are the six- to 10-year-olds. They are part of our program before school and after school. That monthly fee is \$315.

Ms. Matthews: And then for 11- and 12-year-olds, do you offer a service for them?

Ms. Alves: At this time, we do not have 11- and 12-year-olds. That's definitely part of our second-storey

needs. Right now it's very much a limitation on us due to space. That, along with flexible hours, is another prime issue in our community: families that want not just the traditional 7:30 to 5:30 or 6 p.m. They want maybe 7 or 7:30 p.m. And then part-time care is an urgent need in both of our communities and, I've heard, in lots of other communities, where we just presently cannot provide it due to space limitations, where perhaps some work-at-home families only need one or two days a week as opposed to a full five days a week. That's another area where we'd really like to be able to provide service to our community as part-time care.

The Chair: Thank you. If you should provide additional information, if you would give it to the clerk so that all members can look at that. Thank you for your presentation.

Ms. Alves: Our pleasure. Thank you.

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES OTTAWA

The Chair: Now I call on Development Services Ottawa to come forward, please.

Good morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourselves for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Ms. Karen Anderson: Good morning. My name is Karen Anderson. I am the chair of Developmental Services Ottawa. With me today is Mary Frances Taylor, who is the president of the volunteer board of directors of our organizations.

The Chair: You may begin.

Ms. Anderson: All right, thank you. Developmental Services Ottawa, or DSO, is comprised of 17 non-profit organizations that work together with individuals and their families with developmental disabilities in Ottawa. These organizations strive to ensure that people with developmental disabilities, some of whom are our most vulnerable citizens in this province, live with dignity and respect, as full and contributing members of our community.

With a common purpose and vision, DSO organizations are serving over 4,000 people, including adults and children with developmental disabilities; those with complex physical, medical and behavioural needs; people with autism; and those with psychiatric and developmental disabilities. Services are delivered through a variety of high-quality services which include homes, job support, leisure activities, respite care and outreach services in Ottawa.

We are here today to offer our unqualified support to the government of Ontario in its transformation agenda for developmental services, which was introduced several years ago, and we are in the midst of its implementation.

The transformation of developmental services involves two main areas, and I know you've heard about some of it this morning: the closure of the three remaining provincial institutions as well as a complete

overhaul of how community-based services are delivered and accessed.

In terms of the facility closures, our network has been working very closely with MCSS here in Ottawa and across the province to help plan for the relocation in Ottawa of up to 230 people by the end of March 2007. That will be a lot of new homes and supported specialized services. This initiative, although an incredibly positive step and one which we support, is not without its challenges. It will obviously place greater strain on our network, which is stretched. When I talk about our network, it is of non-profit and transfer payment agencies.

In the community, the transformation agenda has been developed through broad consultation across the province with families, individuals, advocacy groups, employers and associations to try and get really good feedback. We're quite pleased with the results.

One of the major pieces of that that you may have heard about is the opportunity for individualized funding directly to individuals and their families. This is an approach that we strongly support and applaud. At the same time, we are concerned that we maintain a strong, responsive and stable non-profit system because we know, from what families and research tell us, that families want options, but not all of them will choose the direct funding route.

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As an example, this past year Passports funding was announced, and that is a direct funding program that we're all excited about that and has been supported by developmental services organizations. We held an information fair for families so that they could look at options. We see this as one of the very positive steps on the way to the implementation of these new policies.

To continue to move forward and implement the government's initiative, additional funding is required. In Ottawa there are a total of 604 people on the housing registry waiting list. Of that 604, 350 are what we refer to as critical 1 or 2, which means in urgent or critical need of housing support and other supports, but most critically housing.

Our community—and when I talk about that, I'm talking about families, advocates, professional associations, employers and employees as well as organized labour—is in agreement, and this is no small feat. In the evolution of our community services, this is one of the first times that we've come to agreement on what some of the issues are and some of the potential solutions. We believe that in order to launch this transformation in 2007-08, \$200 million must be added to the provincial base budget in order to address existing system pressures and to build on the positive momentum for change.

DSO is working closely with our community partners in MCSS to ensure that we are introducing innovative, cost-effective models, not just more of the same. The people we support do require safe, supportive homes and the leisure activities that all of our citizens enjoy.

Often we talk about what kinds of partnerships we can look at so that we can really leverage all of the commun-

ity services. There are examples recently. Last year, one of our developmental service organizations partnered with a long-term-care facility. Through an agreement with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, we have an agreement that we will provide the developmental piece of support to people with developmental disabilities who are aged and living in long-term-care facilities.

Another example of an innovative approach is—you heard from Families Matter Co-op this morning. One of our DSO agencies is working along with them and the city of Ottawa as well as McLean's non-profit housing co-op to access and secure adequate housing units. Our part of it will be providing the on-site support, but we're not doing the housing and we're not doing any of the other pieces. These are the types of endeavours that we envision in the future. There are also a couple of other member organizations who are working with the city of Ottawa who, I must say, have been incredibly supportive. They've identified surplus lands that are too small, really, for a large affordable housing development, but might just meet our needs to build a small home on, so two of us are in the process right now of purchasing lands.

The waiting list that you've heard about—I've talked about Passports and some of the positive steps we've taken with the new funding from last year. However, there are significant waiting lists. At the same time, the waiting list for housing and support services in Ottawa is continuing to grow at a compound annual rate of approximately 10%. So we're talking about elderly parents having shouldered the responsibility of raising their disabled children well into adulthood who are just no longer able to cope with their constant responsibilities as caregivers. Inevitably, a crisis ensues.

Also, on the other end of the spectrum, we have recent graduates, young adults who are finishing the school system and who've been very successful in co-op placements, coming to the end of their years and then sitting at home for a very long time, waiting to get into some kind of supported work or programs.

We believe that enhanced funding to support transformation will allow the sector to move beyond crisis management—which is very expensive, as we all know—to respond to the needs of individuals in families living without adequate support.

The other critical piece of this—and I'm really speaking from an employer's perspective, but the same can be said for families who look to hire staff through special services at home and now with Passports—is that we have a real crisis in being able to recruit and retain qualified workers. We believe that this is due to a number of factors.

Sector growth: We're talking about a 33% increase as a result of the folks who are moving to Ottawa from Rideau Regional Centre. At the same time, we have an extensive waiting list, and we're currently having trouble recruiting to fill the need. So compound that with the growth that we'll be experiencing—we're worried.

The other thing is the education gap. Of the 11 developmental service worker programs in community

colleges across Ontario, only two are at capacity. We believe, and research shows, that the reason for this, as many students tell us, is that they're not willing to make the investment of time in this career path for the return. It's just not worth the return of getting paid 12 or 15 bucks an hour to work in this field. Of the 70 graduates from Algonquin, 50% chose to go into the school system, which is much higher paying, as teachers' aides, rather than into residential and day options.

In conclusion, the wage level is significantly below education, health and other service sectors, and this is something that needs to be addressed. In order to move the government's agenda of transformation of developmental services forward, \$200 million is needed for ongoing service and system enhancements, and it's critical that the sector have sufficient resources to address these urgent needs.

The Chair: This round of questioning goes to the official opposition. Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Arnott: I appreciate your presentation. You've done an excellent job of informing the committee members of the challenges and issues that you face in providing services for your clients' health through Developmental Services Ottawa. I want to thank you very much for the work that you are doing. I think it's very important work, obviously, and as a committee we want to do what we can to help.

Looking at the issues that you've identified, you mentioned the closure of the Rideau Regional Centre. That is ongoing, I gather, in a phased-in way. You've suggested that it's going to be completed in 2009.

Ms. Anderson: That's right.

Mr. Arnott: I'm sure that many of those individual situations are challenging, because you're dealing with residents and their families and you want to ensure that the families are satisfied with whatever group home placement is established. How has that been going so far?

Ms. Anderson: I can speak for my own organizations. We've had a lot of activity this last year, specifically. We've had 10 new admissions, and I can say unequivocally that they're going wonderfully. I just saw all of the families at our recent Christmas party, even a family that was involved in the litigation to keep the facility open. Her son moved in November, and she said to me at the party that she couldn't be more pleased.

Fear of that kind of significant change is completely understandable, and I think until families experience community living and what it really means and that the supports are there—unfortunately, I think in our society we only hear about the things that don't work, and it's those rare cases that make it to the front page. I can say that all of our admissions have gone incredibly well, with excellent work on behalf of the individuals who are in the facilities.

Mr. Arnott: About halfway through your presentation you talked about a reality that many elderly parents face who have raised a child with a developmental disability of some sort and looked after them for many, many years. If you look at it in another way, they may have

saved the government hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars because of their dedication and love for their child. As they age and get to the point where they're not able to look after that child anymore, obviously we as a government need to be very sensitive in those situations and do whatever we can to support and ensure and give the parents confidence that, going forward, things are going to be looked after. What's happening here in Ottawa in that respect? Do you have any suggestions or advice as to what we could do across the province?

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Ms. Anderson: Certainly, in talking with families regularly, when the decision was made for the final closures, many families expressed their concerns, just as you have—"I've kept my child home all these years, expecting that you would be ready, and now these folks are jumping the queue and are going to be ahead." One of the things that often isn't understood well is that the commitment from the government was that all of the funding, every single penny of the operating dollars, from the three remaining facilities will be reinvested in communities. So the operating dollars that are attached to the folks, the 10 we've taken, are not community dollars. It's money that's coming from the facility. They've been phasing down and closing. Obviously, fiscally there's probably a higher cost, but in the long run it's a re-investment in the community which will, over the long term, create more community capacity.

However, for an elderly parent—I was just talking to one yesterday—who is 78 and has poor health and their child is 56, that's not going to help them 10 years from now. They need something quickly. So there were some community dollars, and we sit at a planning table where we talk about these situations every day. Some of the partnerships I talked about earlier that we're creating, whether it's for long-term care, where it's appropriate, and others that are less costly, are freeing up some spaces, but that's why we do need—we have a huge waiting list. Sometimes it's hard to offer the hope that these folks need, but we're trying.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

I call on the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. I'm advised that they are not here at the moment.

STEVE SANDERSON

The Chair: Mr. Steve Sanderson, would you please come forward. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, and there may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard. Good morning.

Mr. Steve Sanderson: Good morning. Welcome to Ottawa, everybody, on a cold day that we're used to in Ottawa; back to winter. Thank you very much for this opportunity of speaking to all of you. And thank you very much for this, to me, very important part of the democratic process: going to the public and talking about how they need to have representations to the government

about what should be in the budget, and I think that's really significant. Thank you very much for that.

My name is Steve Sanderson. I have been involved in social services in three different provinces since 1973. Since 1984, I've worked for the Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. This is kind of a tag team here, by the way, following Karen Anderson. I've actually worked as a supervisor for the last 23 years with the organization itself, in developmental services. For those 23 years, I supervised a number of the programs that Karen was speaking about. I've supervised transportation services, support employment services and respite services in the community, in residential and in the homes and in what's called brokering for special services at home. So I'm fairly familiar with the field itself from a practical day-to-day basis.

Also, in that period of time I've been president of my local, CUPE Local 1521, since 1987. So I've been president for 20 years. In that period of time, I've sat on the provincial, Ontario division body, social services, for six two-year terms and I've represented ACL workers in that capacity. I can tell you that over the 23 years that I've worked in this particular area with OCAPDD, I've had a longstanding relationship with I don't know how many parents, with parents groups, with advocacy organizations, with educators, both in community colleges and at universities. I guess I could say, beyond saying that I go to work every day, that this has been the work of my life.

What I do want to talk about: I'm going to be touching on a number of issues that Karen already spoke about, but maybe from a little bit of a different perspective, and not taking away anything from the comments she has already made, but from a different perspective, possibly. The document that she was talking about is called Opportunities and Action. This is the document, this transformation document, that the Ministry of Community and Social Services has come forward with in an effort to say that we need changes in service delivery.

I want to talk about the current situation, and I want to use a meteorological term that we've all heard, which is the perfect storm. What I want to describe to you is what is happening in this province right now. We have, as Karen said, a deinstitutionalization process that's happening at the three remaining institutions: Huronia in Orillia, Rideau Regional down in Smiths Falls and Southwestern in the Chatham-Kent area. There were approximately, when this started, 1,000 individuals there. We did mention the 2009 date. One of the things about that is that, in effect, the prior government—and up until that point, there was the 2012 date. So moving 1,000 people in a three-year period, shorter, although there are going to be success stories, causes considerable consternation in the communities because they're moving to the communities. These are individuals who have significant needs and who need supports and services that are quite extraordinary. That's one piece.

The other piece is what I call the crisis in developmental services in the communities. I've given you a

package here as my submission. I know we can't go through all of it, but I know there are pieces that I wanted to bring to your attention which are significant. On the third tab, there's a piece that's called Beyond Numbers. It's a report that was brought forward by the Metro Agencies Representatives Council. That's the MARC group in Toronto. What it talks about, the major thrust of this, is the chronic underfunding and the collapse of the community services, including the extreme waiting lists of individuals, that Karen also mentioned, in the Ottawa area. I'll read to you, in their summary, the statement they make about the present state of affairs for those services. It says, "A squeeze is on: The sector has reached capacity, the service system is overloaded, and there are serious shortages in services. The capacity of the sector to manage current and future risk is of concern as service pressures continue to challenge the seriously depleted and stretched service system. The organizations do not have the resiliency they need to meet the service challenges ahead." That's a picture in Toronto, which is similar everywhere. By the way, that is on page 2 of the document under the executive summary report.

The other piece that I want to bring to your attention is the last piece, which is called "Quality Supports Through Competitive Compensation: A Business Case, which actually was brought to the ministry in March 2006. This was brought forward by all of the major organizations in the province that offer developmental services: OASIS, CLO, the MARC group that I just referred to, the Great Lakes Society and the Faith and Cultural Community Group. In their summary—and I will tell you, this is the issue of being able to have individuals who actually do this important service. In their conclusion they state the following: "The current government talks about a transformation of the developmental services sector. To effectively deal with any transformation initiatives, there has to be a solid foundation. The foundation of the developmental services sector is in danger of crumbling."

These are very strong words but these are done by the organizations, all of the umbrella groups across the province. That is a significant piece. There is information in there about waiting lists that go beyond the city of Ottawa, as Karen has described to you.

The other piece that I do want to refer you to—and I was trying to get a PDF for you for this but I wasn't able to do that—is a special report done by Trish Crawford for the Toronto Star, from June 10, 11 and 13, 2005, called Lost in Transition. It's a 13-page piece that she did by following families for a whole year. It's rife with statistical information that is significant and that you should be aware of. It talks about what happens to individuals when they move from under 21 years of age, where there are mandated services, education, transportation and a variety of things, to 21, where in effect people end up staying at home. They don't have the capacity to go any further than that. The waiting lists are extraordinary. She talks in her report of 2,300 people just in the Toronto area who are waiting for services.

As a result of this Opportunities document that was brought forward by the government, they also continued

with the research on that, speaking to over 500 groups, organizations and agencies. The final report that they have is dated November 2006, and it's called Summary Report on DS Consultations: Consultation on Transforming Supports in Ontario for People who have a Developmental Disability. I'm just going to give you a couple of things that the ministry now knows that have been given to them in those reports. I'm going to give you the universal pieces, not, "One person said this or one person said that."

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On the issue of the developmental services system needing additional resources, it states the following: "Families, individuals, agencies, advocacy groups, associations, and other organizations were unanimous in their call for greater resources within the developmental services sector."

It then goes on—and I think it's significant to have these quotes because they tell you what communities across this province are saying: "After 21, numerous families referred to 'the cliff,' where there is a significant and dramatic decrease in the level of supports available, but not necessarily a decrease in the individual's need for supports."

Another very significant area, quality supports and services: "Families, agencies, advocacy groups and associations all expressed concerns about the adequacy and availability of qualified support workers. Respondents confirmed that the current low-wage structure and lack of training opportunities make it very difficult to find appropriate support workers."

The final piece that I wish to refer you to—because this is the document that the ministry is going to be referring to in their deliberations about how to change things—is about families facing extreme hardships: "Virtually every session included individuals and families that simply said that there is not enough money in the system to adequately service the need."

This is the document that the government has as a summary, which I think is extremely important.

In your package, you will see that I have also incorporated in the front of it a petition to the Honourable Dalton McGuinty. The reason why it's here is that Mr. McGuinty is the Premier, but he's also a local MPP. This petition is about OCAPDD, but I will tell you that it is simply a microcosm of the picture that we find in the province. So let me just briefly go through a couple of pieces there that are significant.

The agency offers services to 80 individuals for a period of 20 years without any financial support from the government; 80 individuals receive supports because of the agency's initiatives. There are three major facilities that the agency owns: Quinlan, Loeb and Rosenthal. There are 130 individuals who have received services there. There is no rental or lease cost to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The estimate is over \$9 million in savings for that group.

Until September 2004, there was a Hospital Labour Disputes Arbitration Act—which is provincial legis-

lation—agreement and wage settlement that was received by the agency, and it was summarily cut off. The agency lost its ability to move ahead. It cut 14 staff positions. It lost nine beds. This is what I describe as the perfect storm scenario, with people coming out of institutions with lengthy waiting lists in the community and the agencies struggling to be able to offer adequate services.

This is not an attack on Mr. McGuinty. This is a representation of what's happening right across the province. Of course, there's a letter that accompanies it from the parents who put this together. There were close to 1,500 individuals who signed the document.

I'm going to conclude there just to say that there are a variety of circumstances and issues that are before us. I also agree that transformation is very important and necessary in this province. There are thousands of individuals waiting for services. As a service provider, I have gone from eight staff helping people get jobs to six staff. Beyond that, I have also been given the responsibility, for no more pay, for all the transportation services. I'm not the only one this is happening to. The system is under attack, and we need financial capacity. The government has given that to a certain extent, but as Karen Anderson has stated, it's not enough. There has to be a major infusion. Otherwise, you are going to be seeing tragedies in communities across this province, with elderly parents and individuals coming out of these institutions who will not be able to get the services they need in the end.

That concludes my report. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity of reporting to you on this matter.

The Chair: Thank you. This round of questioning goes to Mr. Prue of the NDP.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Sanderson, you've given us so much information, it's been hard to take it all in, I have to tell you. You've gone from position to position.

I just want to ask a couple of questions, though, concerning the closure of the institutions. There has been some concern expressed, I think by your, and certainly by parents of older children who are in those institutions, that the process has not been inclusive. I can see that in one of the letters which you've included. It was written to Mr. McGuinty on March 23, 2006, and signed by Judy Holmes. I'm not sure who Judy Holmes is. Is she a parent?

Mr. Sanderson: She's a parent. That's correct.

Mr. Prue: Is that the feeling of the community, that the government has not been inclusive in discussing how this is going to happen?

Mr. Sanderson: Let me just say that I work in the community and so I'm not against people coming to the community, and I think a lot of the parents who have spoken about the closure of institutions and who are frightened by it are not against the closure either. But what they need to know is that the doctors, the nurses, the physiotherapists, the recreationists, the capacity to have the leisure programs and the transportation are in place, and in many cases we don't see that happening. How can

that be when the organizations that I've just talked to you about don't have the capacity to do that?

If I could be so bold, I just did a presentation on long-term care the other day, and there is a protocol now in place for persons with developmental disabilities to be moved from institutional settings into long-term care in mass groups—not individuals, but in mass groups—and for individuals to come out of the institutions and take the place of people in the community organizations right now, who will then be moved into long-term care. Both of those, I feel, are inappropriate. I don't think we want to move people from one institution to another. What I'm saying is, there's desperation, because the timelines have all been reduced. So theoretically, ideologically, am I against it? No. Practically, am I against it? Yes, because it's people. If we put ideology before the needs of individuals, if we sacrifice individuals—and some will benefit; there's no doubt. That's not the question. But if we put the ideology before the needs and people suffer because things are not in place, or it's done in a thimble and they don't have what they need and they have to stay in a home 24 hours a day because they can't get transportation to go out into the community and they don't have access to those things, then I think that's inappropriate.

I don't know if you're aware of this, but in Manitoba they're closing institutions very quickly. They want people to be out in the communities. But they're keeping one institution open in case there's a breakdown, in case a person has a behavioural challenge that's extraordinary, in case there's a need for medication, in case there's a problem with their medical needs, so that they can go there, have the wherewithal to be able to deal with the situation, and be reintroduced to the community. We need a spectrum, and I think when we break things off and just say, "That is the end. That will never happen again," we're hurting ourselves more than we're helping.

That's my answer. I hope that is clear to you and that it's helpful.

Mr. Prue: In your opinion, and I asked this question of an earlier deputant, is the money that is being made available from the closure, which is supposed to then be transmitted to the community in order to be used, sufficient for the community to do the same kind of service for the people who are presently in these three homes?

Mr. Sanderson: I think, from the documentation that I've given you or that you may have a chance to look at in more detail, you'll see that the agencies are presently under a tremendous crisis: Do they have the staff to be able to do the work? Do they have the ability to keep up with the financial capacity that they are undergoing? They had 10 years of flatlined budgets, so they've lost 25% of their ability to purchase things, and that is in the form of food. Any supplements, transportation, heating costs, WSIB costs—none of those costs have remained constant. They've all gone up, but the agencies' capacity to meet that has gone down. So you continue to kind of eat yourself up in that sense. In some ways, it's death by a thousand cuts.

So I would say no at this particular point, and that's why I think, one way or the other, you will hear one person after another saying there has to be—and I have a document here that says all the things the government has done. They've put a lot of services out there. But because of the 10 years of baseline flatlining, we're falling behind, and so we need major infusions to be able to actually meet the present needs, let alone look at the lengthy waiting lists, because they are extraordinary. There are thousands of people waiting for service. How do we meet that? If we get them a service, how can we get them to it? Transportation is a major problem, and that's a major cost factor. How do you get a person who needs specialized service from their home or a residence to that day program or that activity? Are we going to leave people in their homes 24 hours a day? Is that fair? It then becomes like an institutional setting. So that's why I think we need a substantial, significant increase, and that's why I'm appearing here today, to say I think this is something that's really important to look at with regard to the budgetary process for the province.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Sanderson: Thank you.

The Chair: I call on the University of Ottawa Heart Institute.

We shall recess until that 11:30 arrives, and if they should not, we will remain recessed through the noon hour, until 1 o'clock.

The committee recessed from 1141 to 1303.

FAMILY SERVICES
À LA FAMILLE OTTAWA
OTTAWA-CARLETON
CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

The Chair: The standing committee on finance and economic affairs will now come to order, please. Our first presentation of the afternoon is by Family Services à la famille Ottawa and the Ottawa-Carleton Child Poverty Action Group. Would you please come forward?

Ms. Christina Marchant: Here?

The Chair: Yes, anywhere at all there would be fine. Good afternoon. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard, and then you can begin.

Ms. Marchant: My name is Christina Marchant. I'm the president of the Child Poverty Action Group. My co-presenter is Paul Howes. He's a student colleague with me today. CPAG, the Child Poverty Action Group, is a public interest education and advocacy group that's made up of volunteers, parents of school-age children, teachers and other professionals. We work with the support of the agency that employs me, Family Services à la famille Ottawa, along with the Child and Youth Health Network for Eastern Ontario, other community organizations and interested individuals, to alleviate the devastating impacts of child poverty in our region.

Mr. Paul Howes: Roughly 18% of children in Ottawa-Carleton continue to live in poverty. While this number represents an improvement over 2001 figures, it still means that over 32,000 children are living in poverty. Children who grow up in poverty tend to remain in poverty as adults. The recently released Workbook on Child Health and Poverty in Ottawa outlines some current statistics:

—One third of low-income children in Ottawa come from families where parents work full-time, all year round.

—Children represent 41% of all those who receive assistance from the Ottawa food bank.

—The number of working single parents has increased steadily over the past decade, yet 37% of these jobs are insecure and are part time, temporary, seasonal, contract or self-employed.

Ms. Marchant: Your government over the last years has made very effective and significant investments since coming into power: \$6.2 billion for post-secondary education, \$32.9 billion for health and \$30 billion for infrastructure. But we wonder, how can public investment in education be fully effective when children are still coming to school hungry because their parents can't afford to feed them breakfast? Given our knowledge that low income is a key determinant of poor health, wouldn't it be good public policy to invest up front and ensure that the vulnerable 18% of children in Ottawa have adequate incomes while growing up?

Mr. Howes: Your government must clearly articulate principles and policy in keeping with the premise that child poverty is unacceptable. These principles should include providing adequate income security and shared responsibility between the individual and governments to find transitions out of poverty. Neither the current policy of the Ontario government to claw back the national child benefit supplement nor its current definition of what constitutes a minimum wage are supportive of these principles.

Ms. Marchant: So as we noted before, low wages and poor working conditions are part of the reason behind the high child and family poverty rates. Workers in contract and temporary jobs are at higher risk of unpaid wages, wages below the legal minimum and unpaid overtime, yet they are not protected by Ontario's Employment Standards Act.

The Ontario government—your government—has promised to increase the minimum wage to \$8 an hour in February. That's an excellent step, but it's still not sufficient to bring low-wage families to the low-income cut-off. The increase will allow minimum wage workers to still only make up to 70% of the poverty line. So in order to meet basic needs, we believe that the minimum wage must be brought up to \$10 an hour, indexed to inflation, and the Employment Standards Act should be updated and thoroughly enforced.

It's not only individuals who will benefit from increasing the minimum wage. Research has shown that persistent inequalities of income that result from lower

minimum wages are also an "economic dead weight in terms of lost productivity, forgone tax revenue, reduced consumer spending, and higher expenditures on income assistance, social services, health care and security."

Mr. Howes: As of July 2004, the province hasn't clawed back increases to the NCB, and that's a move in the right direction. However, a family of four on social assistance still has their monthly income reduced by about \$225. When the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$940 and money required to meet nutritional requirements equals about \$520, only \$300 remains. Before being elected in 2003, Premier McGuinty ran on a platform that included a plan to end the clawback. CPAG urges you to follow through on this promise in this budget.

In supporting an end to the clawback, we are also advocating that your government maintain funding to the programs across Ontario that are currently funded with reinvestment dollars. In eastern Ontario alone, this provides \$4.1 million of funding to programs that offer quality services for families, including families on low incomes. These programs provide quality after-school care, contribute to positive parenting, promote school achievement, and help to prevent emotional, behavioural and substance abuse problems. Over 50,000 children and youth access these programs. Families should not have to choose between feeding their children and paying their rent or participating in community programs that are proven to enhance children's development and strengthen parenting.

Ms. Marchant: Our third recommendation is in the area of education. Many children in Ottawa are struggling with the fundamentals, both of academic achievement in school and basic necessities in life. Research indicates that the results of living in poverty can be a source of poor concentration, lower motivation and higher stress, which can then lead to lower achievement, difficult behaviour, poor attendance and a greater likelihood of dropping out of school.

As you all may know, the public education system is becoming increasingly unaffordable for all families. Parents are being asked to pay up to \$250 a year in school fees for things that are basic to education, like school agendas. That amount is unaffordable, especially to those working-poor families who are already in debt. School boards are downloading the costs of educational materials, supplies and extracurricular activities to parents, and some are not covering basic supplies like pencils, notebooks or facial tissue. Schools are fundraising to fill their libraries, their textbook requirements and their playgrounds.

The Education Act is clear: Children have the right, without payment of a fee, to attend a school in which the person is qualified to be a pupil.

Some research has indicated that—again, kudos to you—overall funding to school boards has increased over the term of this government, and that's great. However, some boards have seen the opposite effect, and unfortunately the Ottawa-Carleton public school board is one

of those. Some inadequacies in the funding formula mean that schools with high numbers of special-needs children, ESL children and so on are not benefiting. So we're saying and asking that by revisiting the school funding formula and increasing the total funds allocated to public education, Ontario could ensure that school boards across Ontario have sufficient funds to deliver public education and sufficient funds to help those children who are growing up in poverty to succeed in school.

Mr. Howes: Access to quality affordable child care is a key pathway out of poverty for families. It promotes children's well-being while enabling parents to work or receive training with peace of mind. In fact, parents whose children are in quality child care tend to experience less stress and are better able to perform in the workplace.

Child care is often too costly for ordinary families, however. On average, licensed child care costs \$530 per month. For infants and toddlers, this doubles. Research suggests that for every \$1 spent on child care, there is a \$2 return through increased tax revenue and reduced social service costs.

1310

In the last election, your party promised \$300 million for new funding to increase affordable and quality early learning and care. Given the federal government's cancellation of the bilateral child care agreements, we urge the Ontario government to step up and invest the funds needed to maintain the momentum generated by its Best Start program and dedicate all new tax revenue from the federal universal child care allowance to invest in Ontario's regulated child care system.

Ms. Marchant: In conclusion, the 2007 budget is an opportunity for the government to make children and families who live in poverty a priority. Our group, CPAG, believes that you also have the resources to make this possible. In 2006, the budget identified a little over \$2 billion in higher-than-expected revenues, and the decision was made to invest much of that in public transportation and infrastructure. Other provinces in the country have chosen to make poverty reduction investments the key focus of their budgets, so we invite the government of Ontario in 2007 to do the same thing. Investment to move children and families out of poverty is essential to building a strong province now and into the future.

The Chair: Thank you. Continuing the rotation, the question goes to the government.

Ms. Matthews: Thank you very much for your presentation and for all the work you do to advocate on behalf of the poorest kids in the province.

A couple of questions: You've given a pretty comprehensive list of things that could and should be done. If you had to choose one to be a priority—sadly, as government, we do have to make choices—is there one that stands out as the highest priority?

Ms. Marchant: I'm representing a coalition of different people who want to end poverty, so the fact is that whatever answer I give you some of my partners may not agree with. So I'm going to say two and you guys can pick.

Ending the clawback of the national child tax benefit while maintaining funding to reinvest in programs is a huge priority, for lots of reasons around equity and how that method of clawing back tends to stigmatize the poorest of the poor in a whole lot of different ways that I won't bother talking about right now. Yet that clawback money really supports some good programming in the communities. So that would be the priority that I would suggest.

The other, equal priority that I would suggest is revisiting the education funding formula. We have been hearing, not just from our group but from many of the anti-poverty groups in the city, that the challenge of paying school fees is causing huge problems. The city finds more use of its emergency services in September, when the school fees are charged to parents, and the food bank sees much higher use of the food bank in September. We're hearing nasty stories about how children from poor families are being stigmatized and shamed in other ways by teachers who really feel that they have to get that money for their schools. So that would be the second big priority, I would say.

Ms. Matthews: Following up on that, I know you've recommended that we raise the minimum wage, that we continue with the increases that we have done. But ending the clawback, of course, benefits only the kids whose parents are on social assistance. It doesn't benefit the working poor. I wonder if you've had an opportunity to look at some of the recommendations out there for an integrated child benefit that would go to all children from low-income families rather than just those on social assistance.

Ms. Marchant: I've been told about that and I've heard about it broadly. I don't know the details enough to speak to it. What I do know is that my one concern would be to make sure that any kind of integrated child benefit still actually meaningfully raised the income of those families that are living on social assistance, so that they really did have access to more money to pay the rent and feed the kids than they did before it was changed. Do you know what I mean?

Ms. Matthews: As you well know, we've built ourselves a system where it's very difficult for a single mom with two or more kids to make the decision to actually leave social assistance for the workforce. That's probably not a good system that we want to maintain.

Ms. Marchant: It's actually more cost-effective for single parents to stay on social assistance until their children enter school right now, and it's probably a better parenting decision, which is pretty scary.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

Ms. Marchant: Thank you for having us and for taking the time to listen.

OTTAWA-CARLETON HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair: Now I call on the Ottawa-Carleton Home Builders' Association to come forward, please. Good afternoon. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

There may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. John Herbert: Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Good afternoon. My name's John Herbert. I'm the executive director of the Ottawa-Carleton Home Builders' Association. I've been involved in the residential construction industry for about 40 years, in the private and public sectors, including municipal, federal and international work. I know that you have a full agenda today, but I want you to know how much we appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today.

Our association is the voice of the residential construction industry in Ottawa and includes about 365 members. We're proudly affiliated with the Ontario Home Builders' Association, which I know works very closely with your government in Toronto, and also with the Canadian Home Builders' Association here in Ottawa.

You may know that in Ontario alone our industry represents about 5% of the provincial GDP and contributes about \$25 billion to the economy every year. So we like to think that we're making a small contribution, at least, to the high quality of life that Ontario residents generally enjoy.

Over the past couple of years, the development industry in Ottawa has been dramatically overhauled by a number of government initiatives, including a new official plan in 2003 based on intensification but without the zonings necessary to achieve the targets, significant development charge increases, a new provincial policy statement, building code changes, and changes to the Planning Act. While some of these changes are supported in principle by the residential construction industry, we have been vocal in that we believe it's imperative to preserve choice in the marketplace for new homebuyers and to try to keep housing affordable.

We've reached a general consensus with the government on the need to better manage our growth, preserve our clean air and clean water, and protect our green spaces, while at the same time working to try to accommodate the anticipated growth over the next decade.

I know that everyone here is interested in our members' viewpoint on the future of the health of the housing industry in Ottawa, so I'm going to speak to you today about the housing market and some of the challenges we face going forward as well as our recommendations for the upcoming provincial budget.

The Ottawa-Carleton Home Builders' Association and its members are looking forward to another healthy year in 2007. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. made a presentation to our membership yesterday, as a matter of fact. When the final numbers are in, we believe that we'll close out 2006 in Ottawa with about 5,700 new housing starts. They're forecasting a decline of about 500 units for 2007, so they're targeting about 5,200 units in the upcoming year, which for us is still a very healthy market.

I'm now going to discuss briefly the top concerns of our membership as they relate to the health of the resi-

dential construction industry as well as housing affordability for the citizens of Ottawa.

Many of you will be aware that the city adopted an intensification growth strategy in 2003, which I referred to earlier. This vision was quite acceptable to us because it's something that our members have been trying to achieve on their own, unsuccessfully, for the last 30 years. The reason we have been unsuccessful is precisely the same reason that Ottawa's current intensification strategy is failing miserably: that municipal councillors consistently refuse development proposals based on intensification due to NIMBYism. At the same time, Ottawa city council refused to expand the urban boundary to bring in additional lands necessary to meet provincially mandated requirements. Our own consultants estimate that about 5,000 acres of additional land would be necessary to meet those provincial requirements. The result of all of this is that city of Ottawa policies have artificially driven the value of land up within the urban boundary by approximately 60% in the last three years. These increased costs are naturally passed on to new homebuyers, which reduces affordability and thereby choice.

In order to correct past mistakes that have distorted the marketplace, we believe that two things have to happen. The first is that the city of Ottawa must immediately undertake an urban boundary expansion in the most logical infrastructure locations. The second is that the province must not allow any further Ontario municipalities to adopt an intensification strategy unless they simultaneously adopt the up-zonings necessary to achieve it.

1320

We also urge the government to use the budget to inject whatever funds are necessary to offset proposed increases in the Development Charges Act which have been proposed for implementation following the next election. Members may know that development charges averaged approximately \$3,000 a unit when they were introduced in 1987. In Ottawa they now average about \$25,000 a unit.

We suggest that the budget allocate funds necessary to pursue energy and environmentally related technologies. Members will know that we work very closely with both provincial and federal government officials on changes to the building code directed towards greater energy efficiency in housing. But when we work our way up to the top of the energy production chain, it's obvious that a great deal more can be done by simply funding demonstration projects for new technologies that are already on the shelf but will not be funded by conventional financial institutions.

Kanata, as an example, has always been known as the high-tech research and development capital of Canada. With all federal energy- and environment-related departments in Ottawa, we believe there's no reason why Ontario cannot become a world leader in the development of clean energy technologies.

Lastly, we congratulate the government on the manner in which it has increased spending on education. You may be aware that one of the biggest threats being faced

by our industry is a looming wave of retirements over the next few years. In order to try and mitigate this, we have been working very closely with Algonquin College in Ottawa on a new centre of excellence that will house all construction-related trades. Minister Watson has been working very closely with Algonquin on this as well, so we would encourage you to financially support the development of this facility in the near future and in the budget.

At the provincial level, I would like to congratulate the government for running a balanced budget this past year. We're aware that there are many competing demands on the pocketbook of this government, one of which I just listened to a few minutes ago. We take a sympathetic view to the government's concerns with regard to the federal-provincial fiscal imbalance when we see the province making hard choices. The Ottawa HBA encourages the province once again to try and plan a balanced budget this year.

Mr. Chairman, how am I doing here on time?

The Chair: You have about three minutes left.

Mr. Herbert: Thank you. Our members are rather worried about the harmonization of the GST and the PST. The federal government has sent some signals that the province of Ontario should consider harmonization of these taxes. While I won't address the politics which may defer the final decision to do so, we believe there is a case for the province to go down this road. However, I caution that, from the home building industry's perspective, there is a big "but" that I'd like to highlight. It goes back to the day that the federal government introduced the GST.

The GST is imposed on new housing but, in recognition of the fact that the land component of new homes was never targeted in the past, the federal government introduced something called the new housing rebate when the GST was introduced. It reduced the tax rate on new homes from 7% to 4.5% for homes that were less than \$350,000.

First of all, in Ontario, 4.5% is still a much higher tax rate than the manufacturers' sales tax that the GST replaced. Secondly, the \$350,000 was never indexed. At the time the house prices at the above levels were introduced, it was felt that lavish, custom-made homes for rich Canadians were the only ones that would be impacted by this.

A lot has changed in 15 years. The average price of a new single-family home in Ottawa is now \$382,000; in Toronto, \$456,000; and in Hamilton, \$395,000. So your average buyer today is not rich. They are mortgaging their homes to get into the market and are paying too much GST when they buy a home. We need this issue to be addressed.

My message to you is that we're working hard to get the federal government to see this. We would request that you assist us in this in any way that might be possible to do so.

Our industry is concerned about the broader economic climate that we operate in. The higher Canadian dollar

has certainly negatively impacted manufacturers in Ottawa and across the province. Unfortunately, we are seeing the creation of the same high-level technology positions that existed prior to the high-tech bubble bursting. So if you don't have a job or are worried about losing it, you're not going to be interested in buying a new home.

The Chair: You have about a minute left now, sir.

Mr. Herbert: Thank you, sir. I've got about three pages left so I'm just going to do a brief review here to see which page might be the most interesting for you.

One thing that I have to say is that the Ottawa-Carleton Home Builders' Association does not support a legislated, mandatory WSIB coverage plan for independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in a partnership and executive officers carrying on business in a corporation. Legislated, mandatory WSIB coverage will not serve to promote health and safety in the construction industry and will increase underground economic activity because it's going to drive a lot of folks into the underground market. Our members see this as a new cost of doing business, particularly for small builders, with very little benefit to them. We recommend maintaining the current legislative framework for independent operators and executive officers.

Thank you very much for your attention today.

The Chair: Thank you. This round of questioning goes to the official opposition. Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Herbert, for the presentation. It's good to see you again. There's one part of your presentation I just wanted to add on to. You congratulated the government on balancing the budget, which is a polite thing to do. Just for the sake of the record, it was almost accidental. They had a massive surplus in the last fiscal year and went on an end-of-year spending spree that would make Donald Trump envious—about \$2.5 billion in the last month of the year—trying to spend themselves into a deficit. They managed to have a very small surplus at the end of the day.

A concern we have is, despite that massive revenue coming in and more revenue this fiscal year, they're spending us back into deficit again. The question is, what do we see as a result? We're seeing more TV commercials. We're seeing the Premier with a 40-person entourage and a 17-day all-expense-paid trip overseas.

Ms. Matthews: Tim, come on.

Mr. Hudak: I thought they were good points. I thought they were important points.

So that's the reality. There are massive amounts of revenue that have been brought in through higher taxes, some \$18 billion or \$19 billion more than before McGuinty took office.

But to your other points—I needed to get that on the record with respect to balanced books. The point you made too with respect to WSIB mandatory coverage in the construction sector: You indicate that the home-builders oppose that mechanism. What do you see as a result if the government goes ahead with its plans in that respect?

Mr. Herbert: As I tried to refer to in my presentation, what it will do, most certainly, is drive a lot of folks underground—anywhere from 5% to 10%, particularly in the renovation sector. These folks will just drop off the map and start doing all of their work underground because they simply can't afford it. To them, it's not a policy choice; it's a life choice. They either go underground and survive economically or they pay the premiums and go bankrupt.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the point on page 8 of your presentation. It says, "Lastly, the Ottawa-Carleton Home Builders' Association is generally supportive of reduction in the level of personal income taxes, which are far too high in Ontario. High tax rates encourage the underground economy, which impacts legitimate builders and renovators and creates general economic distortions."

It's an excellent point. One of the recommendations I'll be bringing forward is to lower the tax burden on working families. I believe that fundamentally an important policy is to make sure that homes are affordable to working families and immigrants to the province of Ontario.

You make a point about the intensification targets in the Ottawa area but not expanding the urban boundary for greater land use. If changes aren't made, what do you anticipate the increase in housing prices may be, which you already said were extraordinarily high at \$381,000, on average?

Mr. Herbert: First of all, I didn't have a chance in my presentation to mention that fees, charges and taxes now represent about 30% of the cost of a new home. It's staggering. That is municipal, provincial and federal. But if these intensification policies continue without rectification, they will continue to drive the price of housing up by, probably, 5% a year. It's an artificial increase; it's totally unnecessary.

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Mr. Hudak: How do you recommend the province reconcile the issue that intensification targets have with the NIMBYism factor, which means a lot of the projects to suit the intensification goals never actually occur because they are rejected by councils?

Mr. Herbert: What can we do about that?

Mr. Hudak: Yes, what could the province do about that?

Mr. Herbert: I think what the province can do—they can do this very easily—is require, as I referred to in my presentation, municipalities that are going to adopt an intensification strategy to simultaneously adopt the up-zonings necessary to implement it, because right now the province and municipal councillors are having a political free ride. They have the authority to require intensification, and yet they are taking no responsibility whatsoever to implement it. It's all being thrown onto the backs of developers, who get shot down at councils every time they go forward with an intensification proposal. Municipal councillors won't approve them because of the NIMBYism, so it's up to the province to direct them to

put the up-zonings in place so that politically they are off the hook.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Herbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee.

TOWN OF SMITHS FALLS

The Chair: I call on the town of Smiths Falls to come forward, please. You have 10 minutes for your presentation and there may be five minutes of questioning. I would ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. Dennis Staples: Certainly. My name is Dennis Staples, mayor of the town of Smiths Falls. Thank you for this opportunity and greetings from our town. As you probably know, we're in the news today. With Hershey, we're known as the chocolate capital of Canada, so I've brought some chocolate along for you to enjoy this afternoon.

I'd like to raise five items for your consideration this afternoon. I might add that I've had the privilege of serving our community on our council for 22 years.

(1) Provincial education tax: Since 1999, the town of Smiths Falls has been corresponding and meeting with Ministry of Finance and other government officials in the province to seek a remedy to a provincial education tax inequity faced by the Smiths Falls business sector, the commercial sector. Specifically, the commercial education tax rate assigned to the town of Smiths Falls business sector is higher than the rate established for all counties in Ontario, higher than the cities of Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury, Windsor, Hamilton and many others.

The town of Smiths Falls continues to request that the province reduce our commercial education tax rate to a level at least equal to that of the county of Lanark, which covers all nine member municipalities in Lanark county. I'd also like to note that the commercial education tax rate assigned by the province to the town of Smiths Falls' commercial sector is 28% higher than the county of Lanark rate.

(2) Local economic challenges: On September 9, 2004, the Minister of Community and Social Services announced that the three remaining facilities for the developmentally disabled would be closed by 2009, thus resulting in a permanent job loss of over 830 positions at the Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls. Also, within the past 12 months, announcements by two local industries—and I can tell you, Hershey was one; the other one was ABB Coiltech—have resulted in further permanent job reductions in our community of 150 positions. In addition, in December 2006, one other local industry, Stanley tools, temporarily laid off over 110 employees in our town and we are uncertain as to how many employees will be recalled to work in the months ahead.

Thus, in a town the size of Smiths Falls, with a population of just over 9,000 and known job losses we are aware of right now that approach and exceed 1,000, we are faced with a most serious economic challenge. In

fact—not in your notes—driving in here today from Smiths Falls and noting the population sign for the municipality of Ottawa, 840,000, if they had that same percentage level of reduction, it would be 90,000 jobs in the city of Ottawa.

It is also worth noting that in the most recent census, 2001, the average earnings for the province of Ontario are 38% higher than the average earnings for citizens in the town of Smiths Falls.

The provincial government formally indicated in September 2004 as part of the Rideau Regional Centre closure announcement that they “will work with the communities, bringing many provincial ministers to the table to mitigate the effects of the closures.” We appreciate that. We trust that this commitment will be honoured and efforts will be successful to replace the serious loss of not only public sector jobs, but private sector jobs in our community.

(3) Infrastructure program: The town of Smiths Falls, similar to many other jurisdictions, is faced with the critical need to replace basic infrastructure. The town of Smiths Falls, I state sincerely, is most appreciative of the support and consideration of the provincial government with respect to recent funding within the last one to two years that has resulted in a new high school, COMRIF funding for a new water treatment plant, the establishment of a community health centre, and a favourable funding formula to assist the redevelopment of the Smiths Falls hospital site, which we’ve been working on for well over 15 years.

It is our hope that funding will be provided by the province, and also the federal level of government, to meet their commitment to assist with the replacement of a 60-year-old arena that we have in our community that services not only the town of Smiths Falls but our five surrounding townships. That’s essential for us to continue to grow, prosper and survive economically.

In addition, we are hoping that a formal approval decision is announced soon by the province to enable the commencement of the Smiths Falls hospital site redevelopment project work to proceed. Furthermore, we strongly suggest that infrastructure funding arrangements for municipalities be funded by the province and the federal government on an ongoing basis to meet current and ongoing needs.

(4) Provincial-municipal services responsibility: All Ontario municipalities, along with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, have requested that the government of Ontario address and resolve the serious fiscal gap that we are facing regarding social services, social housing, land ambulance as well as the other downloaded services that you’re very familiar with. We’re also appreciative, and supported the province in our efforts to assist you to get the federal government to come to the table to address the fiscal gap between the province and the federal government.

It is our continued request that this imbalance, which amounts to well over \$3 billion within the provincial-municipal relationship, be remedied without further delay.

My last point: physician recruitment and retention. The town of Smiths Falls, not unlike many other communities, does not have sufficient numbers of doctors to meet the health care needs of our citizens. This situation creates a serious economic impediment in attracting new citizens and retaining existing citizens in our community.

A solution, in our opinion, to solve these problems, albeit simplistic, is to admit more students to medical school, ensure that medical school is affordable, and also allow and create situations where foreign-trained doctors are enabled to begin their practice in a more timely fashion than is now the case.

I thank you for this opportunity and thank all the MPPs around the table for the good job that you do in serving your constituents in the province of Ontario.

The Chair: The questioning goes to the NDP.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much for your deputation. The first question I have: I’m curious as to how it all transpired, how it all happened. Since 1999, you’ve been asking for the commercial education tax rate to be lowered because it’s higher than in Toronto, Ottawa and Sudbury. How did it get to be so high?

Mr. Staples: Since 1999, I’ve had no less than 33 letters between our community and provincial authorities and no less than nine meetings with delegations, presentations for this. What we discovered in our efforts to rejoin county government: Smiths Falls is a separated town. We have been for 102-plus years, 103 years, and we discovered that in seeking re-entry in the county government, because the Smiths Falls commercial and industrial education rate was higher than the Lanark county rate, that would have to be averaged or smoothed out. Our county officials said we can’t afford to have Smiths Falls back in the county. Once we discovered that, every time we’ve attempted to get this resolved, with all due respect, the provincial politicians have said to me just exactly what you said: “How was this rate arrived at?” No one seems to know. My best guess, as a municipal politician and accountant, is that it was arranged at the time when the province took back full responsibility for education funding and it was a forced calculation to say that’s what Smiths Falls was providing before, under the Lanark County Board of Education, and this is what the new requirement will be. That’s the best answer I can give you.

Interjections.

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Prue: You said you’ve written letters. Thirty—

Mr. Staples: There have been 33 letters between myself and responses coming back from provincial authorities since 1999.

Mr. Prue: And no resolution?

Mr. Staples: The information that we receive is that the business education tax reduction program will eventually provide a situation where this thing is addressed. The businesses in Smiths Falls say to me, “Why is it that my business pays 28% higher than a business across the road, in Lanark county or in Leeds and Grenville?” In fact, the Leeds and Grenville rate is actually less than the

Lanark county rate. So to me it's an inequity and our businesses say the same. They've actually encouraged the Canadian Federation of Independent Business to try and resolve this for them as well, so we're mindful of that in trying to seek the resolution.

Mr. Prue: What is the unemployment rate like with the job losses that you also outlined? What's the unemployment rate in Smiths Falls?

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Mr. Staples: I don't have a current rate, although it's a rate that I'm concerned about. My concern is that in the future, as it stands right now with the impending reduction of the 830 public sector jobs—questions about what Stanley Tools will do to bring back laid-off workers to work. And we've just recently dodged the bullet with another plant in our community, Shorewood Packaging, which is one of our three largest employers, in terms of the decision that was made recently to remove 80 jobs in Brockville versus Smiths Falls. But that issue is still being contemplated in terms of future changes that might affect Smiths Falls. It's a troubling situation.

Mr. Prue: Job losses: From what you describe, these are fairly good-paying jobs.

Mr. Staples: These are our best-paying jobs.

Mr. Prue: And what are they being replaced with, if anything?

Mr. Staples: At the very best, we've had some replacement in the last two years with a new Wal-Mart store, retail jobs with salaries and benefits nowhere compared to what we're losing.

Mr. Prue: No. Minimum wage at best.

Mr. Staples: The provincial government, and we thank you for this: We've had the eastern region headquarters of the OPP relocate to Smiths Falls in the past couple of years—about 130 jobs. Most of those jobs are existing jobs where people have transferred into our community or are commuting from other communities, but really no impact of new jobs.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm advised that there is a competition building here. The committee is in competition with the sound people for the Hershey's that you've presented. So we don't know if it's going back to Toronto by truck or by airplane, but we thank you.

Mr. Staples: Please enjoy it.

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC
EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 3826

OTTAWA-CARLETON LIFESKILLS INC.

The Chair: I would call on Ottawa-Carleton Lifeskills Inc., CUPE Local 3826, to come forward, please. Good afternoon, gentlemen. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. I would ask you to identify yourselves for the purposes of our recording Hansard. There may be five minutes of questioning following your presentation.

Mr. Marcel Walsh: Great; thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Marcel Walsh. I am a member and the secretary-treasurer of our CUPE Local 3826, representing about 130 employees who serve individuals with de-

velopmental disabilities at Ottawa-Carleton Lifeskills. This is my colleague, the president of our local, Russell Harris.

We have a very serious message to give you about how decisions that are made in the next provincial budget will affect individuals in this province who have a developmental disability. I'm not only speaking professionally; I'm speaking personally as I have a sister who has a disability and is living at home.

Your decisions will affect the quality and level of support that individuals and their families receive, support that helps persons with a developmental disability fully enjoy life in the community. Right now, those supports are affected by waiting lists, staff turnover and serious problems with recruiting, retraining and even training staff. You can make that a better situation.

The provincial government is set to introduce a transformation plan that will bring many changes to developmental services in Ontario. Before that happens, we need to discuss how we can best strengthen supports and services and address chronic underfunding. We believe that the next provincial budget is the place to start. We're asking that the provincial government show a real commitment to individuals who have an intellectual disability by increasing agency funding to ensure that quality supports and services are maintained.

Community living agencies and support workers provide quality supports and services despite tremendous mounting challenges posed by provincial underfunding. This system of community-based services is under extraordinary stress and faces growing instability. Since the mid-1990s, they have struggled with an annual 5% base budget cut followed by years with no increases. There were minimal base budget increases in 2005 and 2006, including some agency revitalization funding, but this did not even keep up with the pace of inflation. Recent funding announcements, while much needed, do not address the long-standing issues created by chronic underfunding.

One of the most important things for people supported by their families is having consistent support from staff who understand their individual life goals, outcomes and needs. Inadequate funding, however, jeopardizes this consistency as it results in unacceptable staff turnover along with recruitment and training challenges. Individuals who have an intellectual disability and their families are aging. Many have increasing challenges. I can personally speak that I have a sister who is 45 years old who is still living at home with my mother. In the future, due to my mother's aging and probable death before my sister, I have no idea where my sister is going to live. These demands for support are in addition to the many people who sit on waiting lists. As agencies and support workers struggle with increased workloads, provincial funding has not kept pace with demand or reality for providing quality services. As challenges increase, funding for staffing must increase.

A research study in 2000 by KPMG found that developmental service workers earn 25% to 30% less than other social services staff in comparable jobs within

hospitals, boards of education and directly operated government facilities and children's aid societies. Not surprisingly, low wages mean that many support workers must hold multiple jobs to have an adequate income until they find higher-paid work elsewhere, creating unacceptable staff turnover.

The agency in particular that I work at and all the agencies in the city of Ottawa at the moment are suffering from not enough staff, so a burden is put on the staff who are already working to work extra hours. Because wage rates are low, community living agencies struggle to retain skilled support workers. Low wage rates also discourage young people from entering the developmental services field. There is a diminishing pool of qualified potential employees. Some community colleges in Ontario have considered closing their developmental services worker programs because of low enrolment.

Agencies must have adequate funding resources to ensure that workers have the necessary skills and training to sustain quality services. Employers in the field have recently submitted a brief to the Ministry of Community and Social Services that makes the case for a competitive wage for the sector.

We would like to recommend adequate multi-year funding to agencies in the developmental services sector so that they can provide consistent and quality supports, meet increasing demands and recruit and retrain staff; that any significant increase in base funding be targeted to wages in order to improve supports for persons who have a developmental disability; and that funding ensures that our communities have a strong, community-based agency infrastructure for developmental services in order to provide accountability on levels of quality of service. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. This round of questioning goes to the government.

Mr. Arthurs: Gentlemen, thank you for your presentation and for being here this afternoon. This is not the first time that we've heard, obviously, in the days we've been out, about the challenges that are facing the developmental services part of our society, and we thank you for adding to that. You articulated some of the wage issues and the burnout issues that come with that, the overwork that comes with it, the lack of qualified staff, so you've covered that very well.

I want to ask you, if you would, to just tell me about some of the conditions of work that present the greatest challenges for those working in the field. We kind of get the rest; a lot of it I've heard of. I'd be interested in just taking a minute or so: What are some of the conditions that you work with, some of the challenges you face that are the most challenging, that by having the additional supports, whether it's financial support or retaining people or adding staff, it would help to take some of that burden off?

Mr. Walsh: I think first and foremost is the staff-individual ratio. For a lot of individuals working in this field, we're having increased numbers of individuals who come under our care with less numbers of staff. As Russell, my colleague, pointed out earlier today, in

several day-program-type situations there are usually two staff to 15 individuals who have multiple intellectual disabilities, so you can well imagine what two people can actually accomplish in a day with 15 individuals who have an intellectual disability and how their quality of life is not being promoted to the utmost.

Mr. Arthurs: Can you give me a couple of specific examples so we can have them on hand for the record as well, the specific kinds of challenges that really would say to you, "You know, if we had that extra person, we really could be doing this particular thing that much better"?

Mr. Walsh: Yes. I'm going to let my colleague, Russell—

Mr. Arthurs: Great.

Mr. Russell Harris: Hi. I would believe that we'd be able to service everyone's needs better by getting them out in the community, having them be seen, having them meet their neighbours, having them meet their grocery store person, having them be able to go on the bus, see a movie, see a hockey game.

We're unable to get our jobs done because we're so underfunded and we're all stressed out. We're all burnt out. I've been in this field for 14 years, and I have taken stress leave twice. I have thought of quitting my position numerous times.

1350

We're begging for help. We take care of some of Ontario's most vulnerable people. We feel that we don't get appreciated. Maybe some of that is because we don't tell everybody what we do. We take care of behaviours; we take care of medically fragile people. I have been knocked out. I have lost two weeks of work because of a concussion. We can go on with numerous stories like that. But we're begging that we get more money so that our staff are protected, our clients are protected and our agencies are able to provide everything for them.

Mr. Arthurs: What I understood from your response in regard to what you would be doing more effectively is that among the primary things is the capacity for you to be able to have your client base interact in the community, to do the things at a community level that we all take for granted in a "normal" situation.

Mr. Walsh: That's absolutely correct.

Mr. Harris: It's not even just in the community. It's also being able to give a bath at an appropriate time or having someone's laundry done at an appropriate time. When you're so busy in a house that you're not able to provide everyone's personal needs, you may be able to sit down with a client for five minutes a shift and talk with them about their day, and that's not really acceptable; I don't think anyone here would think that is. So as well as being out in the community, it's also home issues.

Mr. Arthurs: Thank you very much for your presentation.

The Chair: I believe we have your name, Mr. Walsh, but I don't know if Hansard has your name. If you would just—

Mr. Harris: Russell Harris.

The Chair: Thank you for the presentation.

ONTARIO SOYBEAN GROWERS

The Chair: The Ontario Soybean Growers, if you would come forward, please. Good afternoon. You have 10 minutes for the presentation. There may be five minutes of questioning. I'd just ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. Arden Schneckenburger: My name is Arden Schneckenburger. I'm a director in the Ontario Soybean Growers from eastern Ontario.

I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to address this crowd. I understand you've already had a presentation from the Ontario grains and oilseeds group. You may see us more times throughout the province. It's one of the few times that farmers are actually united in a cause of what we want and are asking for from the government. It's interesting because, being a director from eastern Ontario, my members see not only the programs they have in other jurisdictions like the United States, but also what's available to the farmers in Quebec.

As the presentation points out, we have 25,000 members from seven grain and oilseed groups. We're presently in a long-term crisis due to worldwide subsidies, aggravated by appreciating currency value and increased input costs.

Our problem basically is difficult times due to international agricultural subsidies. Even though our prices have indeed rebounded here since mid-fall, it has to be noted that the majority of the crop last year was still sold at very low prices, brought on by farmers having to meet cash flows. So they were forced to sell early in the fall to do that. While it may sound like the prices are very good right now, it's not the case.

We also appreciate both the provincial and federal governments saying the best result is to level the playing field through the WTO. But again, with the recent collapse—this is something that has been ongoing for 15 years with no resolution. Even if there would be a resolution, it would take a number of years to have an impact on the incomes of Ontario farmers.

Both levels of government basically recognize that our crisis is brought on by a number of factors, the main one being trade injury brought on by primarily the US subsidies. With NAFTA, we have an open border between Canada and the United States. With Ontario being in a unique grain and oilseed situation, where we import as well as export some grains as compared to the rest of Canada, which are exporters, we are affected for corn and soybeans primarily by the world price, which is set in the US.

Long-term price decline: Again, this was brought on by US subsidization. It specifically started in 1995 with their series of farm bills from then to now. The US was trying to buy world market share. Unfortunately, farmers in Ontario were caught in the crosshairs. I don't think that was their intent, but that was the result.

We have several government programs. Ontario is a participant in the CAIS program and in production insurance through our crop insurance. But I think it's

been recognized that the CAIS program, which is the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program, does not work for grain and oilseed farmers due to our declining reference margins, brought on by the US farm bill.

The rapidly appreciating dollar over the last three years has definitely not helped our cause. As you know, with many manufacturing sectors in Ontario facing the same problems, as the dollar goes up, our price goes down. The problem with corn and soybeans is that with an open border, the price is still the US price, not a made-in-Canada price. Also, we have a problem that many of our products, such as diesel fuel and fertilizers, which are also made out of petroleum products—as oil increases, so do our inputs, but our incomes do not increase.

The solution: We have a number of principles that we want. Basically, we want something that is bankable both for the government and for the farmer; we want something that is relatively long-term; and we want something that's commodity-specific. The bankable part is important for the government in order to set your budgets, and it's also very important for farmers. Most farmers deal with operating loans and have to deal with banks, so we would ask that we have a program where we can predict from one time to the other what we're going to get, including from our lending institutions.

The solution that we've come up with is the risk management program. I am pretty sure everyone in the room here has been lobbied over the last year, or will be, and we'll continue to lobby for our program. Again, what we want in basic principles is to be commodity-specific. Part of the program we designed was to be paid twice a year. One of the push-backs we've received from government bureaucrats is that we may capitalize any government support. If a program is paid when the need for farmers to pay their bills is at hand, that's less likely to happen.

The problem with the old programs we had is that they paid 18 to 24 months after the fact; prices might have recovered. Farmers had to borrow money in the past to pay for their inputs from before. Now they have that false sense of security that they have money, so they capitalize that government grant instead of paying their debts at the time of need. That's one of the main factors we want to see in a program: bankability. And long term: We want something that is at least a three- or four-year program so we can be able to plan for our future.

Basically, what we're requesting is a long-term investment of approximately \$150 million annually. This can be as low as \$40 million and as high as \$250 million. Last year, it would have been the high of \$250 million. This year, with the higher prices, it will most likely be closer to the low end, but we're asking that the money be earmarked by the government on a yearly basis and put into an account. The farmers would also be willing to pay part of their share's premiums to be in it. Again, this would make it bankable for the government and for us. At the same time, we're also asking the federal government for companion-type programs. They are already partially funding through the ASRA program in Quebec,

so the principle has been set by the feds. We're working with the government to try to have this as a reality.

We also agree that a long-term solution—the government, with its bioproducts and biofuel initiatives through OMAFRA, is going in the right direction. Ethanol production and these kinds of things are very good. The problem is that we're just starting to build these plants in Ontario. It will be three or four years until a major impact for farmers. We have to stay with that open border with the US. We need a program where we can move from one point to the next. This may or may not be a solution, but as long as we have that safety net backdrop, that's all we as farmers are basically asking for. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you. This round of questioning goes to the official opposition. Mr. Barrett?

1400

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Thank you, Arden, for coming down. Peter Tuinema of the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board came down from New Liskeard yesterday and testified in North Bay.

As you've indicated, cash crop prices are up a bit. I wouldn't want the committee to be misled. We've been on the road—I don't know what the price of beans is today. But I do know that I sold soybeans 27 years ago for \$10 a bushel, and my spray, fertilizer, fuel and labour costs were considerably less than they are today. In fact, what is the price of beans today?

Mr. Schneckenburger: It's \$7.25 at Chicago.

Mr. Barrett: It's \$7.25 today at the Chicago Board of Trade; in 1980, I was selling them for \$10 a bushel. So I don't want anyone to think we're out of the woods yet on commodity prices.

I think the good news for any federal or provincial funding agency as we attempt to take on the uneven playing field—the lack of equity with US farmers—as you've suggested, is that when prices are on the rise, a program like RMP, for example, does not draw on the treasury.

You compared last year and the projections for this year. I just wondered—it's hard to predict the future—are there any projections for the coming year or, say, the coming eight or 10 years? We know that ethanol has been a significant factor with corn prices. Any projections, not only for prices but for what kind of an impact RMP might have on provincial and federal tax revenue?

Mr. Schneckenburger: Our long-term projections would be an investment of approximately \$150 million a year from the treasury. Some years it will be very little; some years it will be a lot more. Our guess is the long-term average. In the last few years, the payments would have been considerably higher because of the way the US was going. But with the biofuels and bioproducts industries coming on line, they should have a significant impact on long-term revenues for farms. We'll have to wait and see if that happens.

Your first point you made was that you got considerably more money 10 years ago than now. I think the

reason farmers are still in business now is that we've done everything we possibly could to become more efficient, environmental things like no-till and the proper use of herbicides, anything to cut costs and still keep the crops going. We've done, I think, all we can do. The problem is the US price and US farm bill, which primarily hurts Ontario versus the other provinces. Wheat, canola and all these other crops out west are exported. They are world leaders in setting the price, whereas we in Ontario are price-takers. They couldn't care less how efficient we are or anything like that. We have no choice but to take the Chicago price. That's where it's hurting us right now.

Mr. Barrett: I was just going to ask as well as far as next steps; for example, late winter. I know this time last year we were gearing up to come to Ottawa. The federal and provincial governments are in the process of launching this broad consultation program. I know I sent my e-mail in; I haven't heard back yet. I think maybe there are meetings coming up in Kemptville, perhaps. What other steps are we looking at this winter before we get busy again this spring?

Mr. Schneckenburger: The grain and oilseed groups are hoping that we can work with both the federal and provincial governments soon so our members know that before this APF 2 comes out, they have a program to transition us from now till then. We're going to be very active in the APF process, to which Ontario is a signee.

Like I say, we're really interested in the innovation parts and all these other aspects, not just the business risk management. But we first have to stabilize our farmers so we have enough stability and can go to our banks and say, "We want to participate in this new biofuel economy" etc. So we're going to be very active in participating in the whole consultation.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

CANADA DANCE FESTIVAL

The Chair: Now I call on the Canada Dance Festival to come forward, please. Good afternoon. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. Brian Webb: Good afternoon. My name is Brian Webb, and I'm the artistic director of the Canada Dance Festival. I've just been asked for a demonstration, but I guarantee you don't want to see one this afternoon. I'm speaking on behalf of the whole Ontario arts community, and specifically the dance community, through the Ontario members of the Canadian Dance Assembly and the Ontario dance service organizations. We are requesting support for an increase of \$35 million over three years to the base budget of the Ontario Arts Council.

Just to tell you a bit about the Canada Dance Festival, it was established in 1987 and presents biennial festivals. Over the years, Canadian contemporary dance has grown on a world stage and is actually Canada's number one cultural export. Each time we hold a festival here in

Ottawa, we actually have over 50 foreign presenters from Europe, Asia and the Middle East who come to our festival to buy Canadian dance. We have virtually all of the dance presenters from across Canada who come as well to buy Canadian dance. So we do showcases of this art form.

As well, we have a very extensive youth program, so we take contemporary dance into the schools in Ottawa, which is our home. We work with Canterbury and with l'école secondaire publique De La Salle, and we work in both official languages.

Last year, with the help of Telus, we were able to engage in a pilot program, which we are continuing to build upon, in which over 80 aboriginal youth from the Odawa Native Friendship Centre and the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health were able to attend a performance and take workshops with the Toronto-based aboriginal performance group Red Sky. This was the first time that virtually all of these young people had ever been in a theatre. What was really important was that they were not only seeing the arts, but they were seeing the arts from the perspective of their own culture. This was a unique event. We've actually started to build that event to include this same group of people with a growing base to see the arts from various indigenous backgrounds. For instance, next weekend the same group will be at the National Arts Centre, to which we are taking them as our guests to see the South African choreographer Vincent Mantsoe.

The Canada Dance Festival is run by a volunteer board of directors. We have a large group of volunteers who help us with each of our performance events, and of course, this is how the arts operate from one end of our country to the other.

We're an absolutely firm believer in the importance of the arts in our culture and the importance of funding from the public sector. Indeed, without public funding, the arts are literally unable to flourish, and we know that without the arts, our quality of life plummets. We become less creative as a society, and we are unable to see the bigger picture.

The festival firmly believes that the Ontario Arts Council must be awarded an increase of \$35 million over three years to the base budget, taking its annual budget from \$40 million to \$75 million. This will once again make Ontario a leader in arts funding, a role that it relinquished in 1995 as its support decreased to seventh place among the 10 Canadian provinces. Indeed, funding for the arts in Ontario is now lower in actual dollars than it was 12 years ago, even though the number of artists in our community has increased by over 33%.

1410

Not only do the arts positively affect our quality of life, they are regarded by economists as having a major impact on the economics of cities and regions. Of course, I can quote Richard Florida's famous book, which is being used virtually all over North America as a source of information on this.

The arts encourage a respect for diversity and they encourage volunteerism. They attract businesses and they

define our commitment to innovation. I think it is important to give you some statistics. Economically, every dollar invested in the OAC has a \$20 spinoff in the Ontario economy, since culture contributes nearly \$18 billion to Ontario's GDP, which is a 2001 figure.

The impact of this increase that we're requesting would go to core operating funding for over 250 arts groups in Ontario. It would bring the OAC's average contribution from 7% to 10%. This would be in the amount of \$21 million. Individual artists, who actually are the people who make the art, and their creative projects—we request \$7 million to improve the success rate of artist applications. It would also include artists in education, to expand the number of artists who go into the schools, at an amount of \$3 million. And it would affect both provincial, national and international touring so that audiences would be engaged much more. As well, there would be outreach activities to the various regions, expanding programs and services by \$2 million.

These increases will guarantee investment in people. It's not just the artists, it's all of the citizens who enjoy the arts. A 2005 economic poll shows that some 87% of Ontario's citizens think it is important for children to have an arts experience and that arts education is extremely important. We know that arts education prepares our society for tomorrow. The Globe and Mail, in its November 1, 2006, article "Arts New Frontier for Province's Leaders," recognizes that communities that attract creative people generate economic growth and social cohesion. This increase only makes sense for Ontario's future.

Ontario is home to 52,000 artists. In eastern Ontario, including Ottawa, we are home to 7,000 artists, so that 8% of Ontario's artists live in Ottawa. It's important to note that here in Ottawa we also know that less than 6% of the OAC budget actually comes to this community. The OAC funded arts activity in 253 communities in 2005 and 2006, so this money affects the whole province. Our province is rich in its social diversity, and the arts help to recognize that diversity. Artists from culturally diverse communities, aboriginal communities and those from the communities of both official languages are able, through OAC funding, to participate in a most vibrant expression of who we are.

The dance community itself is large. There is professional dance in Toronto and Ottawa, but also in Guelph, Sudbury, Peterborough and Six Nations Brantford, as well as many other communities. And of course there is dance taught to children from one end of this province to the other. Dance comes from every cultural background, and dance defined as some of the best in the world is here in Ontario. Dance defines who we are. It defines our aliveness in the here and now. Without OAC support, dance, along with the other art forms, actually becomes insignificant.

I think it's important to just talk for a minute about what has happened since 1995, and I can use the Canada Dance Festival as a perfect example, because of course this was when the OAC took major cuts from the government. The OAC took cuts in 1995 that reduced its

impact. There are fewer actual dollars being spent on the arts, and this has affected both the dance and the arts community as a whole. For the Canada Dance Festival, I can say that the province of Ontario is our fourth-largest partner, after the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts and the city of Ottawa.

In Quebec, a similar festival, the FIND, receives funding in the opposite equation: first the province, then the city, then the Canada Council and finally Canadian heritage. Ontario dance companies used to tour Canada and abroad. They are now literally unable to do this, since the OAC is only able to fund companies to tour in Ontario. In Quebec, the dance companies receive funding and are encouraged to spread the Quebec culture across Canada and abroad, and they receive provincial funding to do this activity.

The Chair: You have about a minute left for your presentation.

Mr. Webb: Okay. I also create a dance season in Edmonton, and I can tell you first-hand that because of the cuts, Ontario dance communities are really not considered in the bigger picture. This is an issue, and it's an issue for the whole arts community. It negates the success stories that our province was full of before 1995. So we feel, then, that our request is justified and that, as well as having economic impact, it will impact our whole quality of life. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Questioning goes to the NDP.

Mr. Prue: You've not written this down, but how much does Quebec give? How much do they give, and what would we have to give as a province to meet their standards? I do think they have incredible standards.

Mr. Webb: Certainly they have the best standards in the country. We know that. We are asking that the budget be doubled. To bring it to the level of Quebec, the budget would have to be increased by just more than three times.

Mr. Prue: Okay, so you're not asking—I think you should aim to be as good as Quebec, as vibrant as Quebec, as touring as Quebec and everything else and I'm just a little puzzled as to why you're not.

Mr. Webb: I think we want to make our request in as judicious a way as possible. Of course we would like to be at that level, but I think we also believe that in a one-time ask, that really would be impossible. We are asking for, we are requesting, an amount of money that we feel is in hand and is totally justifiable and in no way is outrageous.

Mr. Prue: I think the government will probably thank you for that.

Mr. Webb: If we were to be considered for the three times, of course we would use that money, and it would be well used, I have to say.

Mr. Prue: You made the statement that you rarely tour anymore, and I think that's probably true. I don't really see much evidence of touring, other than big festivals like the one here in Ottawa. Is there a market out there? Is there a desire out there, in other parts of the country, to see Ontario artists perform? I can tell you that I know there's a market to see the Quebec artists, because I've seen them. But is there a market?

Mr. Webb: Absolutely, there is. For instance, we try in Alberta, where I have the largest dance season west of Toronto, to include artists each year from Ontario. But it's interesting to note that in the last several years the companies themselves have had to cancel the engagements because they simply do not have the base budget to leave their home. That is a fact. There is a market.

1420

Mr. Prue: The last question is about the aboriginal youth. It seems to me that encouraging culture, encouraging them to see their culture from the inside, to explore it from the inside, to expand it from the inside, would do as much, if not more, to help the aboriginal communities in Canada get out of the malaise—I don't know how else to describe it—the hopelessness that one sees in some of the communities. Do you see the arts as a way of bringing the aboriginal community out of that and into the wider mainstream of Canadian life?

Mr. Webb: Absolutely. I'll tell you a quick story. There is a hip hop dancer here in Ottawa named Stephen Leafloor, who is 48, who has been a street dancer all over the world but now happens to have a master's degree in social work. He came from a very rough background. We know that hip hop oftentimes engages all youth, but it really engages youth of marginalized backgrounds. Last year he was invited up to Iqaluit to do a workshop with youth. They did it in the spring break, which is in the middle of winter, and it involved every student in the school. They not only involved the students in the school, they brought all of the youth out of the jail to participate in this event. It has increased self-esteem to such a level that they are finding, by continuing these workshops in dance, they are able to engage the community in public service; that is, the youth in their own community. That is the power of the arts.

We see that all over the place. Some of Canada's most celebrated visual artists right now—for instance, Jane Ash Poitras from Edmonton, is probably the number one selling artist in the country on an international level. This engages people in the community in a positive way. I think you've hit the nail on the head. Art creates something that is positive. Art doesn't destroy anything. It's a positive expression. It engages people in a public way and it encourages people to participate in community. There is the investment.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Prue: If I could just add, I think the government should dream big on this one.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

CHURCH IN SOCIETY COMMITTEE
OF OTTAWA PRESBYTERY
OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

The Chair: Now I call on the United Church of Canada, Ottawa Presbytery, to come forward, please. Good afternoon.

Rev. Andrew Jensen: Hello. My name is Andrew Jensen. You have received some copies that also have the

name of Dr. Dietlind Gardell. I apologize, but she phoned me this morning to say she couldn't come, so it will be just myself.

The Chair: You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be five minutes of questioning. You've already stated your name, so you can begin with your presentation.

Rev. Jensen: Thank you very much. The United Church of Canada has always understood the inter-relationship between economics, social justice and faithful ministry. As the Church in Society Committee of Ottawa Presbytery, it is our responsibility to address these concerns as representatives of the largest presbytery of the United Church and as partners with other organizations which have similar goals.

We are members of the Social Justice Network of Ontario Conferences and of the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, better known as ISARC. If you have not already heard from other participants in these groups in your hearings, I'm quite sure you will in the near future.

Speaking personally, this is the second time that I have made a presentation to this committee. The last time was three years ago, in January 2004, on behalf of the London Conference of the United Church, where I was assisted by Susan Eagle. I suspect that some of you know Susan. At that time, we were hopeful that what seemed like a shiny new Liberal government of the day would take steps to reverse some of the economic and social damage done to Ontario by the Harris government.

Our first point: In 2004, we asked you to raise the minimum wage to \$10 per hour, as that would put workers above the poverty level for this province. We're here today to again ask you: Raise the minimum wage to \$10 per hour. In the sheets that I've given you, there is an appendix A, and in that I provide once again the same material that I provided three years ago that shows how much poverty costs us in the extra demands on the health care system. Similar costs affect the education, criminal justice and social assistance systems. Now, these are just the costs to the provincial economy. In human terms, there's a terrible cost in lost confidence and demoralized workers, in lower productivity and in the terrible stress that all of this puts on families. I would ask you to note that the figures in appendix A are from 2004, so please adjust them to the value of the 2007 dollar; they just get worse.

To leave the minimum wage below the poverty level is to be fiscally short-sighted. It is to force people in future years to pay the increased health, educational and social costs of people whose lives have been compromised by poverty. It is common wisdom that politicians rarely plan beyond the next five years or so. Please prove that you have more vision than this.

We call on you to support Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill to raise the minimum wage to \$10 per hour. This is a bit that I've added myself: If you really want to improve the economy of Ontario, raise it to \$10 plus whatever inflation has added since the last time I was here.

Secondly, still in the area of poverty: In 2004, we asked you to stop clawing back the amount of the national child benefit supplement from social assistance payments. This costs Ontario's poorest families \$122 per month per child. Social assistance payments are not enough to provide adequate nutrition to ensure healthy development of these children as it is, and that will lead to future health problems, immediate educational problems and costs to the system as a result that begin now and go for decades into the future, as we've identified if you look particularly at appendix A.

This clawback has always looked like a way of punishing the poor; I'm not sure for what. That is shameful enough, but the fact that it is also fiscally stupid does not do anything to inspire confidence in the government.

Thirdly, \$392 million, including \$80 million intended for aboriginal housing, was provided by the federal government several years ago. Due to a dispute between provincial and federal governments, the Ontario government put this money into a trust account, where it has sat ever since.

People who need affordable housing don't care about jurisdictional disputes. They simply want a place to live. Appendix B contains a report card on homelessness in Ottawa in 2005. The 2006 figures are not available yet. In 2005, 8,853 people in Ottawa were homeless and stayed in a shelter at some point. That includes 1,414 children. In that year, the average stay of a family in a shelter was 37 days, which, strangely enough, was actually an improvement. That does not include all the people who are homeless but who manage to avoid shelters by moving from friend to friend or family to family. Ottawa has enjoyed a good economy, and benefits from an above-average level of education. That makes these numbers all the more appalling.

To hold this money hostage in this dispute harms the most vulnerable people in Ontario. In 2004, we asked you to release these funds, with interest, and allocate them for affordable housing. Now it is three years later and people are suffering because you didn't listen.

Three years ago we told you that holding this money back was immoral. Today we say to you that to continue to hold this money back is sinful. To play intergovernmental politics with this money is cynical in the extreme. How many people could have been helped if this money had been used for affordable housing initiatives three years ago? How much suffering has been experienced by Ontario families because of this decision then? Please find another way to make your point with the federal level of government. By holding this money back, you are in fact holding hostage some of the poorest families in Ontario. You may have noticed that society has very little patience for hostage takers these days.

All three of these issues were brought to your attention three years ago. I did it myself, and I know that numerous other groups did as well. These concerns are more pressing now than they were then. The long-term cost of ignoring issues of poverty and affordable housing will

simply get worse. Ontario cannot afford to ignore these concerns any longer.

1430

In 2004, the presentation that I made was in very hopeful terms. We in the Church in Society Committee had hoped that the Liberal government would undo that harm that I mentioned earlier that was inflicted on the poor and homeless by the Harris government. Now, having seen only slight improvements in the minimum wage and absolutely no improvement on the clawback and affordable housing fund issues, we see that the gentle approach has failed.

We join with many other groups across Ontario to call for immediate action on these three issues. We in the church have first-hand experience working with the people who have been hurt by this failure to act. For their sakes, please listen this time. The benefit will be that, in the long term, we will all be richer for it. Thank you.

The Chair: And thank you. This round of questions goes to the government. Ms. Matthews.

Ms. Matthews: First let me say thank you very much for your strong advocacy on this very important issue. I represent a riding in London, and I know Susan Eagle very well. I consider her a friend and a co-conspirator on some of these issues.

The first thing I want to do is make sure you understand that we actually have made progress on the clawback issue. We do not claw back the increases that have been made since 2003. What that really means is that for a single mom with two kids on social assistance, her income has actually gone up by 15.7% since we were elected. So we're not all the way there, but we've made important progress and I think it's important that you know that.

Rev. Jensen: It's good to hear about the progress, but the original amount is still a problem.

Ms. Matthews: I understand that.

Rev. Jensen: Okay; thank you.

Ms. Matthews: But I want to ask you if you've had the opportunity to look at some of the other recommendations out there. Susan actually sat on the MISWAA task force. Are you familiar with that?

Rev. Jensen: I'm not familiar with that particular one.

Ms. Matthews: The St. Christopher House and the Toronto City Summit Alliance got together and really looked at this issue of the difficulties with poverty among working-age adults. They came up with a series of recommendations, one of which has some appeal and I wonder if you've had a chance to look at it, and that is, taking kids off social assistance. As you know, ending the clawback would benefit only those kids whose parents were on social assistance. It doesn't do anything to help the working poor.

Rev. Jensen: That's true. The minimum wage part would.

Ms. Matthews: The minimum wage part would. Actually, the poorest kids in the province aren't the kids whose parents are on social assistance; they're actually the kids whose parents are working at low-paid jobs, who

have made the choice, for whatever combination of reasons, to continue working and not go on social assistance. So I wonder if you've given any thought to that notion of having a child benefit that would go to families regardless of the source of the income of the parents, be it social assistance or working.

Rev. Jensen: When I was a child, I believe there was something very much like that called the baby bonus.

Ms. Matthews: At the federal level.

Rev. Jensen: Yes, at the federal level. I don't see any problem with that kind of an initiative. The focus is to help across the board, of course. The presentation here is dealing with some specific injustices that have been built in for a little while now, and I think the new initiatives are a very good sign as long as we don't forget some of the things that are already in place that need to be fixed. I think that that could be a very helpful thing in combination with some of the things that we've presented.

Ms. Matthews: I think all of us recognize the need to do more for the poorest kids. We see the link between how well they do at school and the cost to the health care system, and on and on we go.

Rev. Jensen: The basic nutritional things are there, and the teachers tell us how much they see in classrooms where somebody hasn't had breakfast. My last congregation prior to coming to Ottawa was in Chatham, and the number of breakfast programs and the desperate need for those was painfully apparent. Many, many volunteers from the church were active in those every day and they would come back to me with stories of what they'd seen. It was very hard for them to tell, just by looking at a child, whether that child would have come from a poor situation. So it is across the board and it does need a good, thorough look.

Ms. Matthews: Okay. I appreciate the advocacy of ISARC and you. Thank you very much.

Rev. Jensen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation this afternoon.

SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME PROVINCIAL COALITION

The Chair: Now I call on the Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition to come forward, please.

Good afternoon. I've noted that you've been sitting there for some time, but I feel compelled to tell you that you have 10 minutes for your presentation, with five minutes of questioning. I would ask you to identify yourselves for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Ms. Beth French: Hello. I'm Beth French and I'm the co-chair of the provincial coalition on special services at home.

Ms. Noreene Adam: I'm Noreene Adam. I'm a parent from beautiful Beachburg, whitewater capital of Canada.

Ms. Kathleen Jordan: I'm Kathleen Jordan. I'm a parent. I'm also on the Individualized Funding Coalition of Ontario and Special Services at Home Provincial

Coalition, and I'm here as a director for Family Alliance Ontario.

Ms. French: Thank you for the opportunity to present here this afternoon. Just before I begin our formal presentation, such as it is, I'd like to commend the two previous speakers. I think we've all benefited from being here and listening to them, because they're presenting important information and an important visionary perspective pertinent to vulnerable people in Ontario. We particularly—I think I can say this pretty safely on behalf of my colleagues—commend Reverend Jensen for so honestly stating something that has affected us all profoundly, those of us who represent vulnerable groups, and that is the economic and social devastation that was done by the previous government, which we have barely managed to cope with and have barely been able to compensate for. This is one of the facts that we represent here today and one of the issues that we turn to your government for help with.

We are here on behalf of a coalition of organizations. Whereas the previous presenters spoke about people who are poor and spoke about the arts and put a particular spin on their presentations and their issues, our particular spin here is on the issues of people who have intellectual disabilities, the movement of developmental disability, but from the perspective of families, not from the service system perspective. We know that, if you haven't already, you will be hearing from Community Living Ontario and other organizations. We do, in effect, all bring you the same message, such as the man who presented on behalf of Lifeskills from Ottawa, and the message is that there must be an investment in the developmental services sector. I'm going to come to specifics about that.

We do bring that message, as I say, from the point of view of families. I am an executive director, in addition to being co-chair of the coalition, and I work for the Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement. We're a member of the federation of Community Living Ontario. The organization I work for, like many associations for community living, has just celebrated its 50th anniversary. For 50 years, families in Brockville and Leeds and Grenville have come together to do something about the issues that face families of vulnerable people.

Our organization currently provides family support and coordination to over 160 families in the Brockville area, so the message we bring is based on our first-hand knowledge of families' expectations and needs in 2007. We very much appreciate the opportunity to speak here and to talk about what families need in order to continue the support to their sons and daughters with intellectual disabilities so that they can have lives of full inclusion in their community.

Our message is straightforward. As we've said, the government of Ontario must provide a substantial increase to funding in the developmental services sector.

One aspect of this need is all that was lost from cuts during the Harris times, and of course also, and most

importantly, our message says that this investment must not only be directed to shore up the current service system—which is much needed, granted—but it must also enhance the capacity of families to continue doing what they've been doing for over 50 years. And we ask you to recognize that this isn't a contradictory message. Families have supported their sons and daughters as full citizens to live in communities and to participate in community life, and that must continue. If you just look practically at the cost of a system, this system of supporting vulnerable people with intellectual disabilities is dependent on family contributions, and that must continue. So we're talking about the need for enhancement to that. As Noreene and Kathleen will tell you, families across Ontario are saying that their sons and daughters must live in community, not live in programs; that they must have rich lives and be supported, not be seen as only participants in programs.

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There are thousands of Ontario families needing support that are not counted in the statistics you receive from the service system. These are often families with very small amounts of individualized funding through special services at home, which we refer to as SSAH in short. It's a visionary program started in 1982 by the government of Ontario. I'll repeat that: It's a visionary program started in 1982 and still flourishing. Currently there are over 25,000 Ontario families receiving over \$80 million in special services at home funding. Those are Ministry of Community and Social Services statistics.

It allows families to be creative and to partner with the government. The average amount received per family is \$3,500. It is an enhancement to the natural support that families provide. With over 25 years of experience using special services at home, families have demonstrated accountability with this funding. It was through using SSAH funding that families in Ontario learned to be creative and to push the envelope for new ways of doing things and supporting people.

As I said earlier, these families want and expect full citizenship for their sons and daughters with intellectual disabilities. They want individualized funding, not program funding. The more families and people with disabilities have control over their resources, the more likely it is that families will contribute substantively to the financial and personal support of their sons and daughters.

Also, more direct funding to families means less funding tied up in administrative and facility or program costs. Families tell us that they want flexibility, portability and control of their funding at every level of decision-making. SSAH is a very successful program that offers these advantages. Families want special services at home, like Noreene's and Kathleen's, and they will tell you that when their child has been included all their lives in family, in school, in community, their expectation is that when they reach adult age or when those families age and can no longer care for them, they will continue to be included in community, in work and in family life; they will not become program recipients.

Recently the Ministry of Community and Social Services, under the leadership of the Liberal government, engaged in a process of transformation of developmental services. We applaud that initiative wholeheartedly. We have participated actively and we've done whatever we could to convey our message to the government and to work with them. One aspect of that transformation is more direct funding and a new direct funding program. So in addition to special services at home, there is a new direct funding program called Passport. We applaud that and we think that is an excellent beginning.

In order to ensure that families and individuals get the support they need, though, there will have to be an investment by your government to expand its direct funding programs to make sure that there is more funding individualized and to provide enhancements that have, up until this point, only been provided to formal services. This is a major issue that you must consider. Formal services, as modest as they have been, have received wage enhancements through pay equity, through revitalization funding, to deal with wage pressures and training needs and support to the workforce. But those enhancements have not been provided through SSAH or other direct funding to families, so the average wage paid to workers funded by special services at home and other individualized funding sources is approximately \$10 per hour. That's far from a competitive wage, and families are facing a crisis in recruiting and training workers. They compete for workers with a service system that has received pay equity and other wage enhancements and where the average wage is closer to \$18 to \$20 per hour, and that isn't right.

Now I'd certainly like to provide you with an opportunity to hear from Noreene and from Kathleen about their personal experiences with creating support for their adult sons.

The Chair: We have about a minute left for your presentation.

Ms. French: Oh, Noreene?

Ms. Adam: Five minutes?

The Chair: A minute.

Ms. Adam: A minute. My name is Noreene Adam. I'm the mother of Kirby Adam. You have his picture in your handout; he's the very proud young gentleman. We use our special services funding and our individualized funding, along with the funding we receive from Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley, to help him live in his own home. He requires a lot of support to do that. In the information you have there, we get about \$3,500 from Community Living, and we combine that with other funding, individualized funding, as well as funding from special services at home. In addition, my husband and I pay an average of between \$350 and \$400 a month to help support him in his own home, out of our pocket. Now, that's not going to last. We're getting old, so it's not going to last. Kirby pays his rent, his phone and his food out of his ODSP. He can't pay for anything else; he doesn't have the money. We bought him a house, but that was—his brother and sister went to university and are

getting married; that's his wedding and his university money. That's how we supported him.

I'm going to cut mine short because Kathleen has something to say as well.

Ms. Jordan: I'm going to try and do it in 25 words or less. If my husband was here, he'd probably faint. We unfortunately didn't have enough copies of *The Ties That Bind*, but for those of you who did receive a copy of that, there is a story inside where the National Film Board and CBC did a documentary on Christopher. I'll leave that to you, and maybe we can get some more copies for you.

I want to just speak further to special services at home, because—you can see by the white hair that I've been around a long time; Noreene and I have been doing that—my son was a youngster when that program came out. I was on every advisory committee to every government. In those days we had Liberals, Conservatives and NDP. I felt that I was apolitical; I was just trying to help whatever government was in place, trying to make this work, because it was the best thing that ever happened to us, for us to keep our son at home. We were told that he should go to Rideau Regional. That made us feel like we didn't know what we were doing. But we did it; we kept him there. He was never going to talk or walk or do anything. He doesn't do it all well, but he doesn't do it too badly.

I just want to tell you a little story. Somebody asked me about all those supports we need for Christopher. I said, "You know, special services at home supplies me with money." I get very emotional when I talk about my son, so I'm going to let it all hang out and then it will be finished.

I want you to think about: If my son had said he wanted to be an astronaut, we'd all say, "Great." We'd put all kinds of money into his education and so on. I say to him, "Tell everybody you want to be an astronaut, because you know why? It's zero gravity. They'll pay millions of dollars to put a great big uniform on you"—he loves uniforms—"and they'll hook you up to anything you need to breathe. They'll even give you free food, Christopher, and it's all packaged and made; you won't have to do a darn thing with it," which is what he can't do; he can't make the meals. "And do you know what else? They'll have a whole sewer system in space so you can defecate and urinate and you won't have to change anything. And they pay millions of dollars for that."

I'm asking for that from you here. Gravity works; that's the tough part. He can't stand up, so he falls over and we have to do this, that and the other thing.

Ladies and gentlemen—not just you; but the province of Ontario, the federal government—we all just throw money at NASA and space, and I'm all for it. But I want my son to have a chance to be in that space capsule because I think he'd be a hell of a lot better off than he is now here. He wouldn't need so many supports, but all the ones he would need would be provided for him.

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The Chair: Thank you very much. This round of questioning goes to the official opposition.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Thank you very much for joining us today. To Kathleen and Noreene, thank you for your personal experiences. Noreene, of course, I'm familiar with Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley. I've been involved in a number of events of theirs and they do a tremendous job in that part of the province.

Our daughter works with developmentally challenged people here in Ottawa with the Tamir Foundation, so I have some background in that. My brother has an adult child with significant needs, and he's made the comment to me that the supports—and he's at home; he's 26—that are available to them once they reach adulthood leave a lot to be desired. So we certainly appreciate your bringing that to our attention today in a personal way.

One thing that you said, Beth—I did want to mention the supportive home program. I'm proud to say that that was brought in by a Conservative government. You may not like that, but I did want to make that point.

Just let me understand this a little bit. Are you suggesting that we should have a lot more funding going directly to families as opposed to associations so that they can cope with the needs that they understand better than others: the individual needs of their children, whom they've chosen to keep at home and for whom they've chosen to make monumental sacrifices, I certainly know, in their lives? Obviously, there would be some sort of a formula—maybe not necessarily, but there would be a program to determine how you would mete that out. Am I correct in saying that we should be looking at a way of getting the money more directly to the parents who are providing that specific care?

Ms. French: Yes, that's exactly what we're saying, although we are certainly in agreement with other groups, as I've said, that are suggesting that there needs to be an investment in the infrastructure of the system that is there. But clearly, families in Ontario are saying that they want direct funding.

Mr. Yakabuski: In your case, Noreene, clearly at some point, as you've indicated, you're going to have to play much less of a role in your son's life, simply because, physically, you're not going to be able to. But I would guess that there's quite an involvement of the association as well.

Ms. Adam: Yes. We're fortunate in that we have involvement from Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley; we have substantial support from them, but it's not enough to meet our son's needs, not just from my perspective—they acknowledge that as well—but also from my son's perspective. He wants to do things differently. Actually, what he wants to do is to do things like his brother and his sister. He has always modelled his life on his older brother's. So when his older brother graduated from high school and moved out of home, Kirby thought, "When I'm finished high school, I'm moving out of home." In fact, the Monday after his graduation, I was having coffee and he came out to the kitchen with his suitcase. I said, "What's this for?" "I'm going to

Ottawa to get a job." That's just the way he sees life. He wants to do things as everybody else does.

He does not perceive himself as being disabled. He does admit—he will say, "I need help," but he doesn't perceive himself as being disabled or living with a whole bunch of people who have similar needs to his. He's very active in his community. He does a lot of things with his neighbours; he's got fantastic neighbours. He doesn't even live near us. I live in Beachburg and he lives in Pembroke, 25 minutes away. He brings in the wood for an elderly gentleman down the street who has a heart condition, and that is very important to him. He was home this past weekend, and we had to get back on Monday by 10 o'clock because he told Norm that he was going to go and bring his wood in, and "I don't want him to have to go back to the hospital." He's very involved in his community; he does a lot of things in his community. I guess, as a parent, I just want him to be able to keep on doing that.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO HEALTH CENTRES

The Chair: Now I call on the Association of Ontario Health Centres to come forward, please. Good afternoon. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be up to five minutes of questioning. Please identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. Scott Wolfe: Good afternoon. My name is Scott Wolfe. I am the senior policy analyst with a Toronto-based provincial association called the Association of Ontario Health Centres. Before I make our formal remarks, I just want to acknowledge personally, having come to our association after having worked in the international arena for a number of years in health care and social justice issues, how struck I am every time I have the opportunity to participate in a forum such as this, how truly fortunate we are to have these processes before us. As grand as the problems may be that we face, I think it behooves me and it behooves us to demonstrate our appreciation for this process. With all sincerity, I'd really like to thank you for your time and for the integrity of this process.

Second, I want to acknowledge the presentation that preceded me, which I'm sure was akin to a good number of presentations that you have heard and will be hearing over the next little while. A good number of social determinants of health that have an impact upon the clients that all of our centres see on a daily basis are tremendously important. So I'd like to just express our association's solidarity with a good number of the organizations that have been advocating quite powerfully for changes to a good number of the social services that have an impact upon health care in our system.

What I'm going to do is something quite uncharacteristic for myself and actually read to you what is prepared. It's a bit out of spirit for me, but I think this expresses our concerns quite succinctly, so I'd rather dedicate the

remainder of the time to any questions that you might have for me.

The Ontario government has recognized the importance of community health centres and aboriginal community health centres, AHACs, to the overall health and productivity of the province. In addition to expanding the number of CHCs in Ontario by 60% between 2006 and 2008, the government has called upon CHCs and aboriginal health access centres to play an important role in several of its broader strategic initiatives. These include, but are not limited to, tackling chronic diseases; enhancing early childhood health and development; building strong rural communities; combating youth violence; increasing support in urban and underserved communities; enhancing immigrant settlement and health; and increasing francophone and aboriginal family and community health—no small task, as you can see.

CHCs and AHACs have truly embraced this broadened mandate. At the same time, however, there are two key obstacles in existence that will hinder our member centres from achieving these objectives unless additional measures are taken by government in this upcoming fiscal year.

The first of these obstacles relates to the issue of recruitment and retention at community health centres and aboriginal health access centres. At this moment in time, staff at CHCs and AHACs, the positions into which they fall, are funded at levels significantly below fair market standards. This is not only anecdotal; it has been documented by independent external review. These are numbers, these are figures, these are cases that government has before it.

Unless remedied, the inequity in funding for CHCs and AHACs will result in the inability of centres to retain and recruit qualified staff and, by extension, to deliver services and programs that are mandated by government. I alluded to several of those broader strategic initiatives just a moment ago. Left unresolved, this inequity will be passed on to patients in the form of disruption and gaps in services, increased wait times, overcrowding and other potential risks, including added pressure on Ontario's hospitals. In addition, the provincial strategic initiatives that I just mentioned would be put in peril. These problems will also be inherited by the 37 new community health centres and aboriginal health access centres slated to open by 2008, unless the situation is remedied. That's obstacle one.

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Obstacle two: Physical disrepair and extreme cramming at many centres are threatening patient and health worker safety, occupational health and access to services. What is the potential consequence of this? Ongoing risks will be present for patient and health care worker safety, and patient access to services will be limited—needlessly, I might say; we can solve this problem quite easily. The cost of not taking action to address these obstacles is serious and, as I guess you can imagine, quite troubling. The cost of taking proper action, however, will be measured in safe, healthy and productive communities

for our province. Better yet, it's actually quite cheap. In actual dollars and cents, measured against what else is being spent and the sorts of increases that it would require, it's quite an effective and sound investment.

In real dollars and cents, what would it cost to avoid these crises in many of the communities throughout the province? That cost is \$15.8 million in operational funding for this upcoming year and \$27 million in capital funding. Against the backdrop of health system spending, which now sits at \$35.4 billion, almost half of our total expenditure—taking into consideration that we had significant increases over the last two fiscal years—\$15.8 million to avert these crises would amount to about 0.04% in new spending for the upcoming fiscal year. I would absolutely drop off my seat were we not to realize any sort of increased spending for this upcoming year, and so placed in context, I think these requests are quite nominal. And against a projected expenditure of many, many billion dollars in infrastructure in our province over the next year, I think \$27 million at a good number of community health centres and aboriginal health centres to ensure patient and worker safety and to actually increase patient numbers is also a very, very sound investment.

You have before you how those figures break down, and I won't go into further detail; you can skim through those very, very quickly. But again, \$15.8 million this year and \$27 million in capital are, in essence, the nominal funds that CHCs and AHACs will require. In addition, I'd like to point out that this does not cover additional costs for nurse practitioner salary increases, which are the subject of a provincial task force at this point. Nor does it account for, again, the increases that will be required at new centres as they open and attempt to fulfill the mandate that this current government has given them, and for which we are extremely thankful. I echo the sentiments, I know, of community members throughout the province.

Are these too much to ensure care and support for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians or to help the Ontario government achieve its provincial initiatives? We as an organization, on behalf of our member centres, say no, absolutely not. Having acknowledged the role of CHCs and AHACs already, we trust that the government will agree that the 2007-08 provincial budget should reflect these priority needs and, in essence, enable us to fulfill the mandate that's been given us—again, for which we're tremendously thankful.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Carol Mitchell): Thank you for the presentation. The next round goes to the NDP.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much—a very modest proposal. Has this been flown by Minister Smitherman?

Mr. Wolfe: Minister Smitherman is quite aware of the fiscal challenges facing CHCs. He is aware of requests that were made on behalf of the aboriginal health access centres as of last year. If you were to filter down to the bowels, if you will, of our request for this upcoming year, you'll see that the issues facing aboriginal health centres—the funding has actually been tabled in previous years, so this is a standing issue. The government is aware of this.

Our association has been in discussion with government. There was a cost-of-living allowance that pertains to fair and equitable compensation for health providers at community health centres that was reached. But again, based on the independent, external assessment of compensation at these centres, the Hay Health Care Consulting Group has identified that that COLA increase does not reflect the true cost of bringing centres up to market standards. So yes, I would say the government is aware, and this is something that our health centres are working with MPPs at the moment as well to make them aware of.

Mr. Prue: Has Minister Smitherman given any indication whether he's going to support your request? This is the finance committee, and we have to go through the finance minister. I just want to know the—

Mr. Wolfe: The status.

Mr. Prue: Yes.

Mr. Wolfe: As of last week, there were a number of letters to the editor on the part of our centres, our organization, and then a response from the Ministry of Health—the assistant deputy minister of the community health unit at the Ministry of Health—exchanged back and forth on this issue, and there have been meetings to discuss the issue. The \$6 million that was found to provide the COLA allowances for centres falls significantly short of the needs at community health centres to ensure that they can recruit and retain qualified staff—physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, counsellors etc.—and the formal position of the Ministry of Health at this point is that they will not be supporting that position this year. With respect to aboriginal health access centres, there is absolutely no indication of where that sits. While I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care himself has been incredibly supportive in principle of the needs of aboriginal communities, there's no indication of where their financial shortfalls and the health of their communities are going to fall.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much for the presentation.

Mr. Wolfe: Thank you.

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

The Acting Chair: I would ask the University of Ottawa to come forward, please.

Mr. Gilles Patry: Thank you very much.

Interjection.

The Acting Chair: They're not here. So thank you very much for coming early. We really, sincerely appreciate it.

Mr. Patry: My pleasure.

The Acting Chair: Ten minutes for your presentation and then five minutes for questions by the panel. Thank you.

Mr. Patry: Merci, madame la Présidente, de l'invitation. First of all, I'd like to thank you for the kind invitation to appear before the finance and economic affairs committee today. I'm pleased to be here as presi-

dent of the University of Ottawa to tell you a little bit about the role of universities, and of the University of Ottawa in particular, in furthering the prosperity of Ontarians.

First of all, let me start by thanking the government for its leadership in reinvesting in universities. The Reaching Higher plan and the commitments that have been made will help all Ontario universities tackle the job of opening up more opportunities for Ontarians to pursue higher education. We applaud the government's decision to support accessibility, quality enhancement and accountability. In fact, you probably know that all Ontario universities have now submitted what are called multi-year accountability agreements that identify strategies to foster accessibility, enhance quality and be accountable to all of our stakeholders.

In some ways, universities have been victims of their success. More and more, young Ontarians are seeking a post-secondary education, so much so that this year there are more than 14,000 additional students in the system. This is 14,000 more students than what the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities had predicted and had budgeted for. This number will grow to 46,000 in the next couple of years. Between 2000 and 2006, just to give you an example, the applicants to Ontario universities have increased by 36%. For the University of Ottawa, that increase has been 47%. Again, to put things into perspective, in 1993, when I first arrived at the University of Ottawa, we had 23,000 students, and about 1,100 professors. Today we have 34,500 students and 1,100 professors. So we're in the process of reinvesting in enhancing the quality of the post-secondary education system.

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Ontario universities are committed to accessibility and to quality enhancement. However, it will be important in this budget and in future budgets to ensure that students are not short-changed. What I mean by this is that if there is an increased participation rate in universities, it's going to be important that the quality funding and the accessibility funding for those students follow the students.

We look forward to continuing to work with the government of Ontario. In particular, we wish to underline three areas where the University of Ottawa can play a leading role in partnership with the government of Ontario for the advancement of economic opportunities for all Ontarians.

First of all, the University of Ottawa is a very unique institution amongst Ontario universities and amongst Canadian universities in that it is the largest post-secondary institution to offer a comprehensive range of programs in both French and English. We're talking here not just of one or two programs; we're talking about 225 programs in French and about 300 programs in English at the undergraduate, master's and Ph.D. levels.

We provide a unique experience to Franco-Ontarians and to francophiles; that is, anglophone students who wish to pursue their studies in whole or in part in French.

The University of Ottawa attracts more than 10,000 francophone students in its 34,000-student population.

This is larger than all of the francophone students outside Quebec combined. In addition, the university attracts 3,000 students from French immersion programs. These students come in to study in both French and English.

Delivering a bilingual university education, however, comes with additional costs, which are in part funded by the province. Our bilingual grant has essentially been frozen for the last 15 to 16 years, since 1992. We've had an independent audit done recently by an audit firm to look at the increment of costs associated with delivering a bilingual university education at the undergraduate, master's and Ph.D. levels. There's an important shortfall that we've indicated to the government and to the ministry. There is a minimum of about \$12 million that is missing, and that can go as high as \$25 million. We've made the ministry aware of that shortfall.

The second point that I'd like to make is to consider universities as hubs of innovation. In fact, we applaud the launch of the Ministry of Research and Innovation, led by the Premier, and the recent release of the strategic plan by the ministry. We couldn't argue with the message of building strength through partnerships, and we look forward to working closely with the government of Ontario, as well as with our local partners, to strengthen innovation in eastern Ontario and all of Ontario. It's important for the province to fund basic and applied research. This is what is exciting about what could potentially be happening through the recommendations that are going to be coming from the Ministry of Research and Innovation: for Ontario to take a leadership role in funding research in areas that are of strategic importance to the province. That is fundamental. So we're looking forward to the results of that consultation that is now ongoing.

For those of you who may not be as familiar as my local colleagues about the University of Ottawa, nationally, across Canada, the University of Ottawa ranks fifth in terms of research intensity, and we rank third across Ontario. So there is potential that the university can work with you in furthering the prosperity of Ontarians.

The third point is developing the next generation of innovation leaders. The province has rightly acknowledged the important role that advanced studies will be playing in attracting, developing and retaining the best and the brightest people, who will in turn lead our innovation and advance our prosperity for many years to come.

Just as an example, at the University of Ottawa we're planning to increase our graduate enrolment, in line with the mission of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, by about 1,500 additional graduate students over the next three years. That's an important direction for the University of Ottawa and for all Ontario universities. It's going to be important for those students to benefit from the best possible experience when they are looking to complete their master's and their Ph.D.

There are two major issues surrounding this growth at the master's and Ph.D. levels. One is infrastructure to ensure that we have the capacity to service this increased

growth. The government has targeted 14,000 additional master's and Ph.D. students by 2010; there has been \$500 million targeted to support the infrastructure growth in that area. And that is barely going to make it. What's also happening on campuses—and my other colleagues from other universities probably will have told you—is the serious infrastructure renewal problems that all universities are facing right now, what we call deferred maintenance. Essentially, for the University of Ottawa, which again represents about 8% or 9% of the system—so you can multiply by 10 or 11 to get the full picture—we have a deferred maintenance liability at the university of about \$140 million. So that translates into an investment that would be needed of about \$8 million to \$10 million a year minimum. Currently, the infrastructure renewal investment that we have coming from the government on an annual basis at the University of Ottawa is \$1.9 million. So it's short by about a factor of five in terms of meeting our infrastructure renewal needs on campus.

The other aspect that I think needs to be looked at in terms of graduate enrolment is that as universities, AUCC, COU, and as the University of Ottawa, one of the things that we'd like to encourage the government to do is to have a different policy in accommodating international students who want to do a master's or a Ph.D. in Canada. I would encourage the government to ensure that, in our planning exercise for the 14,000 additional students, funding be identified, targeted to bring the best and brightest students from abroad to come and do their master's and their Ph.D. This is a tremendous addition to Canada and to Ontario whether these students decide to stay in Canada or decide to return. If they stay in Canada, the net benefits, for those economists around the table, is huge because they will have been trained elsewhere, come to Canada, done their master's/Ph.D. in Ontario universities and then very likely will stay within the country. And if they decide to leave, then essentially they become ambassadors for the country and for the province.

You probably don't know that these international students who come to Ontario universities are not eligible for a single source of funding from the province. There is not one penny that comes from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities grant. So one of the objectives would be to—

The Acting Chair: Excuse me just one moment. You have a minute left, if you'd like to begin to—

Mr. Patry: Thanks. In fact, this completes the presentation. One of the messages I'd like to leave is that it would be important for Ontario to ensure that international students are considered and are eligible for grant funding the same way that Ontario students are. That would allow us to identify the best and brightest to come and study in our province and potentially stay, or return and become ambassadors for the province. Merci.

The Acting Chair: Thank you. The first question goes to Mr. McNeely.

Mr. McNeely: Thank you for coming in today. I was a student at Ottawa University in 1957, so that's a few

years back. We had our engineering in the barracks left over from wartime. So it's changed a lot.

Mr. Patry: A little bit.

Mr. McNeely: We're very proud of the university. It services all of our riding of Orléans and certainly Ottawa Centre, the riding of Mr. Patten, who is here today, and a good part of Ontario and Quebec. So it's a great university, and we see that you have a lot of interesting ideas.

One of the things that obviously interests us is the transition that we have to do in Ontario, and that's by research and innovation. It's so important to us. There is a committee under the parliamentary assistant, Richard Patten, that I and a few other people around this table are members of, and it's something extremely important to us. This is one of the directions you're going in, so maybe in the limited time we have you could just tell us where you're going there. One of the criticisms we've had is that we do great research in Ontario but we do not have the dollars; we do not have that ability for the commercialization of our research. If you could just speak on that, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Patry: Thank you, Mr. McNeely, for asking that question. I'm fortunate enough to sit on the Ministry of Research and Innovation's ORIC. One of the aspects that obviously is a key element of the preoccupations of that council is to ensure that the research that is done in universities has direct benefits to Canadians, but to Ontarians in particular.

The idea is not to turn universities into commercial enterprises—I think we need to be very clear about that; that's not the objective—but to ensure that the tremendous amount of research that is done in universities benefits Ontarians and benefits Canadians. Developing this entrepreneurship culture, developing this innovation culture, is key to our success, I believe.

We could also look at one element of commercialization. One major aspect that universities are involved in in bringing ideas to market is through the training of master's and Ph.D. students. This is the best commercial product that we can deliver: our people, highly qualified individuals who are going out on the market and working for the benefit of Canadians and Ontarians and enhancing the prosperity.

We're one of many universities that are involved in commercializing some of the research activities that are going on, particularly in the health sector. I just came back from a board meeting of the University of Ottawa Heart Institute a second ago. There's a lot of activity going on in enhancing health care delivery through innovative developments that are now being transferred to other hospitals, to other clinics and so on. So that aspect I think is an important one and universities are key stakeholders in delivering on that.

What is also needed, and what I'm hoping will be coming out of MRI and the MRI strategy, is, as I said earlier, a strategy that is going to invest in partnered research between industry and universities and colleges

where we will ensure that there are some direct benefits to Ontarians in areas of strategic importance to Ontario.

I think we have to make choices—sometimes that's difficult to do—in identifying what are the five or six key areas in Ontario where Ontario needs to be the leader not only in Canada but in the world: in the areas of health, for example, in the areas of energy, in the areas of the environment, in the areas of manufacturing and so on. We will have to make tough choices and identify those niche areas where Ontarians can be proud of what is happening in terms of the leading research that's done in universities, institutes and in industry also.

Mr. McNeely: How are we for time?

The Chair: We don't have any left.

Mr. McNeely: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: I thank you for your presentation before the committee.

For the committee, our 3:15 has cancelled. We will recess until our next presenter, the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre, arrives.

The committee recessed from 1524 to 1536.

OTTAWA CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRE

The Chair: The standing committee on finance and economic affairs will now reconvene. I believe we have the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre here now.

Ms. Kathleen Stokely: Correct.

The Chair: We appreciate you being here somewhat early. We appreciate that very much. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There may be five minutes of questioning following that. I would ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Ms. Stokely: Certainly. I'm Kathleen Stokely, the executive director of the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre.

I believe it was Confucius who said, "May we live in interesting times," and I hope that there might be some of you who would empathize with the sentiment that I don't think I could handle much more interesting times.

I will start by way of noting that the documents that each of you will receive are still en route at this moment and will catch up with us, so I hope that you'll permit me to just go ahead and then you can direct yourself to the written submissions as they arrive.

First, we thank the Ministry of Finance and this government for their commitment to transparency and responsiveness, as evidenced by these pre-budget consultation sessions of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, and the opportunity to make this presentation. We recognize that at this point in the afternoon, drawing the last slot in your day, that there's probably an element of fatigue, not to mention that the daunting task facing government, addressing competing needs and making tough choices in allocating the province's resources to best effect, probably already suggested in what you've heard today—the demands far outstrip the pieces of the pie that can be distributed. We

also recognize, like you recognize, that the needs of vulnerable groups within our population who most heavily rely on and use Ontario's health and social service system continue to outstrip the resources which can be infused into the provincial infrastructure.

Our submission is from the perspective of a single health care institution and from the context of the benefits that derive from the mission and service that we and other children's treatment centres provide.

OCTC is a regional, tertiary bilingual agency which annually provides 40,000 face-to-face visits to over 3,000 children and youth with disabilities and their families across the Champlain district of eastern Ontario.

You've heard already today from a number of groups in the developmental services field. It is the case that developmental delay is the most common disability in children age zero to four, estimated at just over 1% nationally in 2001. Approximately 40% of our clients have a developmental disability, although an even greater proportion of our overall client population have developmental issues or delays, often secondary to physical disabilities. A further 20% of those we serve have autism or an autism spectrum disorder. As you've likely heard, that number, too, is growing.

In terms of the provincial context of children's treatment centres, there are 7.2% of Ontario children zero to 19 with some form of disability, according to estimates from Stats Canada, the Canadian Institute for Child Health and the PALS survey on activity limitations. It's further estimated that for 15% of this group the disability is moderate or severe. In our Champlain district, this suggests a prevalence of between 3,000 and 6,000 children and youth who would require services such as those from a children's treatment centre.

OACRS, the Ontario Association of Children's Rehab Services, is our provincial association and comprises over 20 children's treatment centres. These centres serve children and youth with physical, communication and developmental disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, as I mentioned earlier. Some of these children are medically fragile and technologically dependent, and the majority of clients served by CTCs have three or more health and/or developmental problems, which require two or more professional therapies from our interdisciplinary teams. We serve clients and families in a variety of settings, from clinics to in-home, preschool and other specialized community venues. As well, we work with a broad array of partners. In fact, we have either links or formal partnerships with seven out of the 24 presenters that you've heard from today. We provide supports well-tailored to the needs of our families and appreciate the government's recognition of the critical role that our centres play in supporting children and youth with multiple and complex special needs in their families.

Most importantly, we consider that economic well-being and growth are fostered when there are programs that cost-effectively mitigate the impact of childhood

disabilities on the long-term cost impacts of medical and social assistance and on the productivity of families. We need to sustain families by supporting their ability to cope and help youngsters to develop and have the same potential to thrive that we as a society want for all of our citizens. As such, in our view, it is not only incumbent on a society to recognize and help disabled children to advance in their potential, but it makes good economic sense to do so. There is a return on investment, and many of the costs associated with rehabilitation need to be thought of as an investment that will produce a return for all Ontarians, both on a social and an economic basis.

There is substantial research to demonstrate that early identification and intervention with children pays the biggest dividends—again, something you've heard in some of the presentations earlier today. It has been well documented that the early years, from conception to age six, have the most influence of any time in life on brain development, subsequent learning, behaviour and health. This came from the Mustard report. Early intervention for children reduces the health, learning and social problems they will experience later. It reduces the costs to education and health systems and helps to ease some of the undue burden on families.

CTCs are in place to respond immediately to a family whose lives have been impacted by the arrival of a baby with special needs. As babies grow, develop and learn, CTC services are designed to maximize their potential and create the necessary physical and emotional supports for the best possible outcomes, both for the baby and the family. Whether treatment is focused on motor, language or social skills, CTC's professional staff are working collaboratively with the child, family and community partners to best equip them for the future.

That future includes many possibilities. We have services and many other supports for our clients which reflect a lifelong need or connection, not that of a temporary sickness or a minor accident recovery. As a youngster grows, the demands for service change, but they're still there. A child's language and cognitive skills increase and they outgrow, for example, their augmentative computer-based communication device. Vocabulary has to be updated to include words that a teenager would use, for example. Otherwise they will have less of a chance to be included in their peers' conversations or to complete school work. Similarly, walkers or wheelchairs need to be altered when growth spurts and successive orthopaedic surgeries are required.

In the United States back in the 1980s, the late Peter F. Drucker, renowned management science guru, contended that "of all health care dollars, those expended on rehabilitation are the best spent," specifically, restoring and achieving function in humans subsequent to injury and disabling conditions. Drucker estimated that there is a higher positive return from funds devoted to rehabilitation in terms of reduced health care system costs overall.

This said, there is a dearth of cost-benefit analysis and outcome research associated with pediatric rehab which

is critical information. Given that the Ontario government's projects include investing more in university research for disorders like autism, our first recommendation would be that additional specific funding be targeted in the 2007-08 budget for research into best practices in outcomes and cost-effectiveness in pediatric rehab services.

The 2006 government investment in CTCs: We certainly welcomed the government's support in addressing our sector's expressed concerns regarding the long-standing problem of unacceptably long wait times at CTCs for core therapies through your investment in 2006 of an additional \$10 million. For OCTC, this translated into an annualized increase of almost \$1 million. The investment was focused on strengthening several core therapy disciplines to speed access to the assessment and therapy services needed by the families relying on us. The new funding indicates that you will recognize and support the need for our young clients to have better opportunities to reach their maximum potential.

Additionally, we value the government's ambitious multi-year MCSS transformation agenda to improve services for adults with developmental disabilities—again, a recurrent focus throughout your day-to-day. While an important part of our focus is on early screening, identification and intervention for young children with missed developmental milestones, various aspects of the transformation initiative have major implications for many of our clients who will have lifelong needs for supports. They face what often proves to be a difficult and complex transition into adult services.

So what's the impact of wait times on our families? When you've been told that your son or daughter has a lifelong and, in some cases, life-limiting condition, you need access to professional services as soon as possible. If you're parents of a child who is not meeting the typical motor or speech developmental milestones or is displaying unusual or concerning behaviours, you desperately want to know why. If you have to wait for diagnostic assessments, every day, every week and every month seems like an eternity, and in the meanwhile, you're struggling as a parent and as a family.

We know the challenges of bringing up a child; we all know those challenges. Consider the additional demands when you have a child with special needs, perhaps on top of the pressures of raising other children in the family. Indeed, some of our families have two children with complex special needs, often due to congenital causes.

Literature supports that raising a child with a disability creates special challenges for the parents. For families, reviewing the literature available quickly points to the importance of early diagnosis and intervention having the best shot at the most positive outcomes for our youngsters, which only makes that wait more desperate.

Our client satisfaction results over the last several years reflect a very high degree of overall satisfaction with clinical services and professional staff expertise, but the highest levels of dissatisfaction conveyed were routinely with wait times and frequency of direct therapy

visits. Specifically, for example, one family described their voyage this way:

"Our son was diagnosed with autism near his third birthday—about 16 months after he was exhibiting unusual behaviours that included obsessively lining up objects on the floor, wanting to spend all his time alone, losing what vocabulary he had.... But after the initial shock and the assistance of programs and services offered at OCTC and through other community partners, we are able to enjoy our son for the awesome little boy that he is." He is now able to attend a community school and is a happy child, changing and learning new skills every day.

Another family had to wait six months to access speech-language therapy. During this time, they indicated that they were unable to communicate with their daughter. But after the second session with the speech-language pathologist, their lines of communication and strategies for communication were greatly enhanced, and they and their daughter learned how to talk to one another. Yet they wonder what ground they've lost and where they would be now if they'd been able to access services shortly after it was identified that they needed to see a professional speech-language pathologist.

Fortunately, we can tell you that your 2006 investment is already working to provide more services to children and youth with multiple disabilities. Specifically, it's enabled OCTC to improve access to our services by hiring an additional 12 FTE clinical professionals, providing services to an additional 326 clients in this fiscal year, beyond the 3,000 already served the previous year. By the end of December, we'd reached 70% of this target and will reach the full target by the end of this fiscal year.

Further, we've been able to reduce wait times to access core therapies. There are three specific disciplines: OT, PT and SLP—occupational, physical and speech therapy.

The Chair: You have about a minute left for your presentation.

Ms. Stokely: Thank you.

Moving on to "Where to from here," we recommend that children's treatment centres, along with other health and social service agencies, require multi-year funding arrangements to be able to more proactively plan and adjust services to clients for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

We now look to the government to amplify the benefits by extending additional funding to reduce unacceptably long wait times across the much broader array of services in those core therapies. In fact, we have about 10 professional disciplines. An investment from the government of an additional \$20 million across children's treatment centres, of which \$1.2 million would be directed to OCTC, would ensure that no child will wait more than 12 weeks on average—three months—to access the therapy they need.

The impacts of not making the additional investments are significant. With existing cost pressures, without

additional annualized operating funds forthcoming in 2007-08, it needs to be clearly understood that OCTC's client services, for example, will again be eroded. This would place additional burden on families already stretched and at risk of not being able to cope adequately, let alone optimally, in addressing the special needs of their youngsters.

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Similarly, we need to expand the commitment to having the right skills in place in pediatric rehab. There is a looming shortage in both allied health professionals and pediatric medical specialties. That is certainly not an Ontario problem; it's national and even international. But it certainly requires a varied and targeted approach from the government in investing in multi-ministry strategies to address this, to increase the interest in moving into careers in health and social services, and particularly to serving the needs of children and families where there is a disability.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation. This round of questioning goes to the official opposition.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much for joining us today. Kathleen, I want to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you back in the fall, and with members of your board and staff at your Renfrew site. It was a very worthwhile experience for me and very eye-opening. I must say. I certainly want to commend the mother who met with us as well to articulate her personal and her family's personal situation and the work that the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre has done for them.

You touched on a couple of things, and one thing I noticed in your recommendations at the end—your request is for an additional \$10 million for children's treatment centres. Correct?

Ms. Stokely: We got \$10 million last year; we need \$20 million this next year across centres—

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm sorry: \$20 million. That's right. You got \$10 million last year.

Ms. Stokely: —to make the same difference that you've made in those three core therapies work across all the therapies.

Mr. Yakabuski: My apologies on that.

I see that you've highlighted in here in bold that there are 25% more children on waiting lists for these essential rehabilitation services. It would seem that the demand is only growing, and the need is going to have to be addressed or the costs and the price paid are only going to get higher from some other perspective.

One thing I wanted to ask you about: You talked about some of the work that you do with autistic children and families of autistic children. One of the things that the government had indicated and promised was that they were going to extend that IBI funding to children beyond the age of six. Do you have an opinion on that, as to the importance of that and the value of that?

Ms. Stokely: I've been joined by my colleague Anne Huot, who is our director of client programs and information. I'll make one quick comment, just to say that we work very closely with the Children's Hospital of

Eastern Ontario, which provides the regional autism program, where the focus is on intensive behavioural intervention, and the supports we provide are outside that. But we serve the same number of children, and certainly we would be seeing children both under the age of six and, as you say, older than that, right through adolescence.

Anne, would you like to comment further?

Ms. Anne Huot: We would certainly recommend that the government continue to support and enhance the funding to the IBI program. It's really doing a very important role for a certain group of the children with autism spectrum disorder. Not all the children are eligible for it, but it has a really large impact on the outcomes for those children and their families.

Ms. Stokely: An additional point there might be that we know that this government has invested in looking at youth transitioning into secondary school who have autism spectrum disorders. That's a particularly vulnerable time, because there is increasing difficulty of youngsters with autism or autism spectrum disorders in coping with the regular structured classroom setting, and certainly it's in the interests of our province and the families, where there is a youngster with autism, to have any support possible that allows them to stay in school, in an educational program.

Mr. Yakabuski: You talked about the importance of early intervention, as stated and supported by Dr. Mustard. You work closely with, for example, CHEO in identifying—is that how that works? Maybe you could explain that a little bit.

Ms. Huot: Sure. I think we want to emphasize that the fact that there are more children identified early means there is a higher demand for the services, so that increase in the number of children—they're getting identified through many of the programs that the ministries fund, like Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, or public health initiatives that have new children being identified and screened for infant hearing and speech delays. Those kids are getting identified by the providers that are supported through those initiatives that are separate from ours, but they're coming to us once they're identified as having special needs. That really is an important role that we play, being at the specialty end once they have been identified as having special needs.

In the partnerships that we have with the Ontario Early Years centres, as an example, we don't duplicate the efforts. The Ontario Early Years centres are playing an important role in the community, and we're working with them to provide some of the ways in which children with special needs can be integrated into the Early Years centres, because they're set up for the average child, not the exceptional child. So our infant development staff and our therapy staff work hand in hand. Kanata, in the western Ottawa area, is an excellent example of that and was recently in the press about the wonderful partnership that we have with the Ontario Early Years centres. It really means that a child who has cerebral palsy can go to the play group alongside the child who is also three years

old but doesn't have any motor delays, and that means a lot to the child in terms of social interaction, but it also means a lot to the parent to be included.

The Chair: Thank you. We have the name of the first presenter. If you would just state your name for the recording.

Ms. Huot: Sure. It's Anne Huot.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you for your presentation this afternoon. It's appreciated.

That concludes our hearings in Ottawa. We are adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1557.

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