

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

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The Honourable Steve Peters, MPP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Sir,

Your Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs has the honour to present its Report on its Pre-Budget Consultation 2011 and commends it to the House.

Pat Hoy, MPP
Chair

Queen's Park
March 2011

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2nd Session, 39th Parliament

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CONTENTS	
INTRODUCTION	1
THE ECONOMY	2
Economic Outlook	2
Fiscal Situation	3
MINISTRIES OF FINANCE/REVENUE	3
Fiscal Strategies	3
Tax Issues	4
Other Matters	5
ADVICE CONCERNING OTHER MINISTRIES	5
ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS	5
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	6
ATTORNEY GENERAL	6
CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES	6
CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION	7
COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES	7
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES	8
CONSUMER SERVICES	9
CULTURE	9
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE	9
EDUCATION	9
ENERGY	11
ENVIRONMENT	12
GOVERNMENT SERVICES	12
HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE	12
Health Policy and Research	12
LHINs and Related Health Service Providers	13
Nurses and Nursing	14
Insured Health Services	14
HEALTH PROMOTION AND SPORT	15
INFRASTRUCTURE	16
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS	17
LABOUR	17

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING	18
Provincial–Municipal Finance	19
Housing	19
NATURAL RESOURCES	20
NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT, MINES AND FORESTRY	21
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION	21
TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES	21
TRANSPORTATION	23
RECOMMENDATIONS	25

APPENDIX A: WITNESSES AND SUBMISSIONS

APPENDIX B: DISSENTING OPINION OF THE
PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its 2011 pre-Budget hearings in January and February 2011 in London, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Timmins, and Ottawa, and for two days in Toronto at Queen's Park.

Witnesses included experts invited by the Committee to present economic forecasts and budgetary advice, representatives from associations, community groups, organizations and unions, and interested individuals. The Committee also received presentations from municipalities and their associations, as well as local administrative bodies and service agencies exercising delegated authority and/or receiving transfer payments.

In total, 146 witnesses appeared before the Committee. In addition, about 114 written submissions came from interested individuals and groups who did not appear before the Committee. Two of those submissions represent e-mails supporting a single recommendation, from more than 400 individuals in one case and almost 60 in the other.

The pre-Budget consultation provides an important forum for citizens, stakeholders, and local government partners to discuss their social, economic, and program-related concerns with elected representatives. The submissions to the Committee are a vital part of the political process by which governments are held accountable for their decision making and administration by the electorate.

This Report is an overview of the main issues raised by presenters during the pre-Budget consultation. Details of submissions by witnesses and their responses to questions by Committee Members can be found in the Committee Proceedings in *Hansard*. A list of witnesses, as well as the organizations and individuals from whom written briefs were received, appears at the end of the Report. An electronic copy of this document will appear on the Committee Reports web site (http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/committee-proceedings/committee_reports.do?ParlCommID=8858&locale=en).

THE ECONOMY

Economic Outlook

Despite favourable economic growth and employment numbers for 2010-11, expert witnesses at the 2011 pre-Budget hearings outlined challenges facing Ontario's economy. A high Canadian dollar, weakness in the U.S. economy and a moderation of domestic consumer demand, a shift from economic stimulus to fiscal repair, high energy prices, a cooling housing market, and global restructuring of the automotive industry were among reasons given to expect more moderate economic growth in the short and medium term. Rising interest rates were also forecast.

At the end of the third quarter of 2010, Ontario's real GDP stood at approximately \$523.8 billion, compared with \$506.5 billion at the end of the third quarter 2009 (nominal GDP was \$614.4 billion, compared with \$579.5 billion a year earlier).¹ In his statement to the Legislative Assembly on the *2010 Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review (Outlook)*, the Minister of Finance forecast increases in Ontario's real GDP of 3.2% in 2010; 2.2% in 2011, and 2.5% in 2012.² The 0.9% increase in real GDP in the third quarter of 2010 was the sixth consecutive quarter of growth coming out of the recession in 2008-09.

Economic growth has improved government revenues, projected (in the 2010 *Outlook*) to total \$107.7 billion in 2010-11, \$0.8 billion more than the 2010 Budget forecast. Government expenditures are projected to total \$125.6 billion, a decrease of \$0.3 billion from the 2010 Budget forecast. Consequently, the projected deficit for 2010-11 is \$18.7 billion, down from the 2010 Budget forecast of \$19.7 billion.³

In December 2010, Ontario's unemployment rate stood at 8.1%, down from 9.3% in December 2009. Although the rate was unchanged in January 2011, 36,300 more Ontarians were at work, contributing to an annual increase of 150,800 jobs since January 2010.⁴ Ontario's annual rate of inflation in January 2011 was 2.9%, up from 1.9% in January 2010.⁵

¹ Ontario Ministry of Finance, *Ontario Economic Accounts: Third Quarter of 2010* (The Ministry: January 2011), pp. 42 and 51.

² Ontario Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, November 18, 2010. See also Ontario Ministry of Finance, *2010 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review* (The Ministry: October 2010), p. 70.

³ Included in each year's forecast is provision for a reserve of \$0.7 billion.

⁴ Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*, various months.

⁵ Statistics Canada, *Consumer Price Index*, various months.

Fiscal Situation

The 2010 *Outlook* forecast deficits of \$18.7 billion for 2010-11 (as noted above), \$17.3 billion for 2011-12, and \$15.9 billion for 2012-13. These reductions in the deficit will be achieved by expenditure reductions (in 2011-12) and by stronger revenues (in 2012-13), balanced against increasing interest on the accumulated debt throughout the period.⁶

The accumulated deficit (the difference between liabilities and total assets) is projected to increase to \$149.6 billion as at March 31, 2011, from \$131.0 billion as at March 31, 2010. The accumulated deficit-to-GDP ratio would rise from 22.0% to 24.5%.

Net provincial debt (the difference between liabilities and financial assets) is projected to increase to \$219.5 billion as at March 31, 2011, from \$193.6 billion as at March 31, 2010. Net debt-to-GDP (considered an indication of an economy's ability to pay back its debt) is forecast to be 35.9% at the end of fiscal 2010-11, and is expected to peak near 41.0% in 2014-15.

Total provincial debt (all borrowing by the Province, excluding offsetting financial assets) is projected to be \$236.5 billion as at March 31, 2011, compared to \$212.1 billion as at March 31, 2010.

MINISTRIES OF FINANCE/REVENUE

Fiscal Strategies

Belief in the long term unsustainability of deficit financing informed calls to restore fiscal balance; several presenters suggested also committing to a debt reduction timetable. Advice to prioritize poverty reduction over deficit eradication was balanced by the observation that rising debt load imperils public programs. Enthusiasm for accelerating the pace of deficit elimination and debt reduction was moderated by awareness of limits imposed by the Province's economic outlook.

Mindful that lower economic growth dampens revenue prospects, many witnesses focused on expenditure control, a strategy given added urgency by the prospect of accelerating health care costs for an expanding seniors cohort. The preponderance of advice was to limit increases in public expenditure – various benchmarks being proposed – with a solitary call to legislate a freeze on all expenditures. Others warned that drastic cuts to spending or premature windup of stimulus funding could jeopardize Ontario's economic recovery.

⁶ 2010 *Outlook*, p. 121.

Alternatively, some presenters argued that expanding public services and cancelling the public sector wage freeze could strengthen the economy. The construction sector, in particular, proposed making generating new jobs a Budget priority. Noting the tenuous nature of the economic recovery, witnesses recommended enhancing the capacity of the not-for-profit sector to provide effective programs by strengthening supports such as affordable housing, community services, and education and training.

Tax Issues

Recent tax reforms, most notably the scheduled reductions in the corporate tax rate, attracted much attention, with the business community urging the government to stay its course and implement no new corporate taxes. A broad coalition of anti-poverty, social services, health care and labour organizations demanded elimination of the corporate tax cuts, or targeted measures such as investment tax credits or accelerated depreciation provisions in their stead. Some witnesses spoke more generally about the need to increase taxes or cancel all tax cuts in order to restore the government's revenue capacity.

Other tax reforms proposed by the business community included increasing the Capital Cost Allowance for all assets, eliminating the corporate minimum tax, and raising the threshold for the Employer Health Tax (EHT). By contrast, local groups concerned about health care restructuring said that loopholes in the EHT should be eliminated. Several changes were recommended for personal income tax that would generate more revenue from high income earners.

Ontario's manufacturers asked that all tax credits be made refundable and proposed new credits for investments in manufacturing and processing equipment and in skills development and training. Calls to enhance and/or develop tax credits for research and innovation, for food donation, and for the education property tax on low density rail lines came from chambers of commerce, Ontario farmers, and Canada's railways, respectively.

Property tax issues of concern to Ontario municipalities include the tax capping system and the lack of fiscal support for provincially mandated municipal property tax discounts. Ontario farmers support the current farm property class tax rate system, but have issues with its application to their properties and to their facilities. Manufacturers requested a change in the rate for manufacturing and industrial facilities, and realtors recommended a new tax class for brownfield properties under remediation.

Advice concerning the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) came in the form of proposals for changing its rules, or their application, or for exemptions. The

latter included several hundred requests to remove the HST from basic residential utilities and home heating. Other tax proposals brought before the Committee included eliminating the aviation fuel tax on certain flights, implementing a carbon tax, and introducing a financial transactions tax, as well as conflicting advice on raising tobacco taxes.

Other Matters

Other matters falling under the regulatory scope of the Ministry of Finance also attracted recommendations, such as consulting with financial advisors and planners on proposed regulations, and continuing to support a national securities regulator. Insurance brokers asked for changes to rules that apply to their dealings with medical and rehabilitation clinics, a ban on the use of credit scoring for property insurance, and regulation of the sale of incidental insurance. Several suggestions from financial advisors addressed the promotion and regulation of defined benefit pension plans.

ADVICE CONCERNING OTHER MINISTRIES

Conscious that the Budget pertains to all government programs, witnesses bring proposals about a broad range of programs concerning almost every Ministry. While many requests focus on funding, changes to program rules and suggested regulatory reforms may also have fiscal implications.

Themes prominent in 2011 included the following:

- finding effective ways to ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged or vulnerable in society can be adequately met;
- recognizing successful initiatives – such as literacy and basic skills training for newcomers or risk management programs for farmers – and sustaining or enhancing them;
- achieving efficiencies in the design and delivery of public services;
- empowering the not-for-profit sector to provide services in the community, freeing up institutional space and human resources for other purposes; and
- mitigating the costs associated with compliance with government regulations, directives, and guidelines.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Seeking inclusion in all activities affecting their traditional lands, First Nations leaders asked that the Province negotiate resource-revenue benefits, environmental accountability agreements, and funding for training and skills development to enable First Nations members to participate in jobs created by resource development within their territories. Several stakeholders invited the government to invest more heavily in Aboriginal

health, and child welfare agencies called for the development of an adequately funded and appropriately designed Aboriginal child welfare model.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Ontario's farmers asked that the pilot business risk management program for the grain and oilseeds sector be made permanent and serve as the model for programs for other commodities, such as pork and beef. Wildlife management plans and compensation for damage to crops and livestock from predators and pests continue to be matters of concern, as are services and regulatory changes for beginning farmers.

The Province was urged to support rural hospitals, roads and schools; to invest in food processing and distribution infrastructure, to fund research and technology transfer; and to promote organic farming and the adoption of innovative on-farm technologies.

Several existing programs which should be strengthened, extended or made permanent were identified by presenters, as well as regulatory changes that would benefit farm production and sales. An environmental goods and services program was proposed to compensate agricultural producers for public benefits – such as water recharge areas, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration – provided by their operations. Funding and direction were also sought to facilitate the production of biomass crops to fuel electricity generation.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

With the exception of acting to end racial profiling in the justice system and restructure legal aid and clinic funding on behalf of racialized communities, recommendations for this Ministry were program specific. Ontario lawyers seek to be added to the list of professionals who can issue non-voting shares to family members, cancer prevention advocates want successful completion of the cost-recovery lawsuit brought against the tobacco industry, and bar and restaurant owners have concerns about enforcement policies of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. Sustainability funding for victim services agencies was requested.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

Child care providers and early education workers expressed wariness about the impact of the Early Learning Program on child care services, which they argued must remain affordable, accessible, and publicly funded and operated. It was noted that sufficient resources are required to maintain the existing level of service, as well as the expansion of out-of-school care.

Child welfare agencies explained the inadequacy of their funding to meet mandatory expenses such as new HST assessments, WSIB premiums, and administrative costs related to new programs and/or regulations. They requested the ability to extend supports – including continued residence in the foster home – to youth after age 18, up to age 25. The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth expressed concerns to the Committee about services for Crown wards.

Increases in the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) and the elimination of OCB-related reductions in social assistance benefits were recommended, as well as extension of the dental benefits being received by children to all family members. The government was urged to increase its commitment to poverty reduction, remaining open to innovative solutions and establishing benchmarks and indicators to monitor progress, especially for racialized communities and other marginalized groups. Municipalities, in particular, called for expansion of community hub projects. Others supported more funding for school nutrition programs; dairy farmers proposed extending or expanding the elementary school milk program.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Expanded investment in and application of the Newcomer Settlement Program, continued support for municipal immigration plans, and the establishment of employer mentorship programs to support internationally trained professionals were measures presented to the Committee.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The interests of Ontarians with disabilities received strong representation. The Committee heard advice to strengthen the Accessibility Directorate, to educate the public about the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*, and to explore strategies for guaranteeing opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate completely in Ontario communities, including in all workplaces. Stakeholders with obligations under the *AODA* requested appropriate consultation and staged implementation, to be led by the Ontario Public Service.

Community services stakeholders spoke about the inadequacy of the new funding model for deafblind intervenor services; the need to expand support for mental health counselling and employment services for persons who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing; and the value of a comprehensive housing strategy to address homelessness and substandard housing conditions in racialized communities. Municipalities requested support for their housing and homelessness systems, and for specific programs such as Hostels to Homes.

Members were told that the gap is growing between what the Ministry holds developmental services agencies accountable to provide and the financial resources transferred for services and supports. Agencies requested base budget increases comparable to those provided for health care and education; additional resources for programs such as Passport, Special Services at Home, Respite Services and Adult Developmental Services; and new funding to address lengthy wait lists. Community living managers criticized the decision to create regional application entities, and urged support of legislation to ban picketing outside group homes.

Concerns about the adequacy of Ontario's social assistance programs prompted witnesses to urge immediate adoption of the rule changes recommended by the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council while the Review continues. Other measures to be considered included increasing asset limits; exempting child support payments, RRSPs, and loans from the calculation of income; raising the social assistance rent scales for social housing tenants; and supporting the legislation that would improve the employment and earning prospects of social assistance recipients.

Several groups advocated protecting and improving the Special Diet Allowance, and a larger number backed the implementation of a monthly healthy food allowance for persons receiving social assistance. Rate increases of various magnitudes were proposed, often with advice to index rates to the cost of living. Principles which might be used to determine future rates included meeting the actual cost of food and shelter in Ontario communities, providing the basic fundamentals of healthy living, and guaranteeing liveable incomes that provide transition from income support to employment wherever possible.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ontario police advocated formation of a working group of policing partners to examine the effects of legislation, court decisions, reporting, and other factors on front line policing; to locate efficiencies achievable by reforming processes and improving technology; and to determine how efficiencies might enhance front line policing. Convenience store owners recommended more resources for law enforcement, including licensed tax revenue officers to enforce the collection of tobacco taxes. First Nations communities asked for solutions to policing problems that include a shortage of officers and inadequate accommodation for them.

CONSUMER SERVICES

Representatives of the real estate industry requested amendment of the legislation governing their activities to permit the licensing of personal corporations.

CULTURE

An increase in the Creative Communities Prosperity Fund was proposed, with a move from annual grants to multi-year funding. Ontario's libraries presented detailed requests for increased operating and capital funding as well as adjustments to the formulas determining these amounts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE

Stakeholders strongly back the creation of a business climate that will retain and attract manufacturing investment and employment. Programs to attract new industries, a dedicated Ministry of Manufacturing, policies focusing on value addition rather than resource extraction, initiatives to improve productivity, and the use of tax incentives to compete more aggressively with U.S. states were among the solutions offered. Incentives for small business were also sought, along with steps to foster a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, and an expanded scope for business development programs to include social agencies.

The anticipated development of the "Ring of Fire" mineral deposits generated advice to encourage value-added investment such as the processing of resources, wherever possible, and require new investment to enhance the economies of First Nations peoples. It was noted that the conflict between necessary north-south infrastructure corridors and the lateral patterns of species migration and habitat use will require resolution.

Accelerated implementation of the Open for Business initiative and evaluation of the full impact of all regulations on commerce and industry prior to their adoption was backed by stakeholders arguing that regulations which do not add economic value should be eliminated. Several trade-related requests were received, including the creation of a dedicated regional fund for southwestern Ontario.

EDUCATION

Advice concerning the Ministry with the second-largest program spending budget was understandably wide-ranging, informed by a context of system-wide declining enrolment and a funding formula – the Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) – based largely on per pupil benchmarks. Stakeholders cited a need for more flexibility to meet local needs and priorities, and on matters

from special education to school bus transportation procurement to funding for administration and governance requested that planned or proposed reductions be phased in, delayed, or reconsidered.

A recommendation to base funding of a service or program on the cost of its delivery (rather than a per pupil benchmark) was applied to specialist teachers in the arts, health and physical education; to professional supports for pupils, including special education funding for individual high needs students; and to classroom supplies and learning materials. Similarly, funding to permit one teacher librarian and one guidance counsellor per elementary school; for more educational assistants, counsellors, and child and youth workers; and for programs for students with hearing loss was advocated, as well as equitable provisions for adult day education.

Areas identified by witnesses as requiring greater support included English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development; learning opportunities for children and families in poverty, including compensatory grants for schools in economically disadvantaged communities; and a full continuum of mental health services. Further research to examine (and a policy commitment to address) any link between long school bus rides and student achievement was recommended.

Uncertainty about capital needs and funding informed requests for a multi-year capital funding process, clarification of Ministry expectations regarding capital spending, announcement of amounts for the next stage of school facility renewal funding, review of the pupil accommodation process, and supports for technological infrastructure in the classroom and in administration. School boards asked that costs related to amalgamation, internal audit requirements, and legal matters be reviewed and funded. The Committee was told that all boards require resources for their Accessibility (AODA) implementation strategies, that funding for administration for small boards is not adequate to allow the delivery of required services, and that ways to streamline and clarify reporting requirements must be found.

Funding outside the GSNs was sought for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education, for anti-bullying training and programs, and for Knowledge Ontario. Witnesses recommended expanding the role of schools as community hubs. School boards requested specific funding for the start-up costs of Early Learning Program (ELP) full-day kindergarten classes, provision for the replacement costs for early childhood educators who cannot work, and incorporation of ELP kindergarten funding in the GSNs. Presenters concerned about child poverty and child welfare urged full implementation of all recommendations in the Charles Pascal report (*With Our Best Futures in Mind*).

Broad support continues for a full review of the education funding formula, and the Committee received several dozen letters asking that serious consideration be given to the efficiencies of moving to one publicly funded education system.

Several policy suggestions focused on the content and direction of education in the classroom. Recommendations included more timely analysis of student success initiatives that impose costs, reducing the number of prescribed student outcomes, providing more balance between literacy and numeracy and other subjects, expanding technical and co-op programs, ensuring a full spectrum of programs in secondary schools, placing more emphasis on teachers' classroom assessments, reducing standardized testing and directing the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) to move to random sample student assessment, and eliminating the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and reallocating the resources dedicated to it. Advice on class size included a better tracking mechanism to help meet targets, and reducing class sizes in grades 4 to 8 and in full-day Early Learning kindergarten.

ENERGY

The government was urged to re-think the termination of the Ontario Home Energy Savings Plan, to consider legislating mandatory energy audits and mandatory home labelling at time of sale, and to promote public awareness of geothermal energy systems. Assistance to manufacturers, farmers, and rural businesses in responding to green energy initiatives was sought: in particular, the encouragement of small-scale solar and energy generation for personal and farm use, and greater clarity and transparency on the future of the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) program.

An accelerated closure of all coal-fired generating units was proposed; a recommendation to convert coal-fired units to natural gas and upgrade nuclear assets was balanced by a call to phase out nuclear power. Witnesses in different parts of the province advocated upgrades to and expansion of transmission infrastructure.

The most pressing concern for many was the affordability of Ontario's electricity. Competitive long term rates were proposed for economic development and preservation, particularly in northern Ontario, and pricing certainty was identified as a must for industrial and commercial investment. It was suggested variously that the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate (NIER) program be extended to smaller lumber mills, to manufacturers with annual consumption over 10,000 megawatt hours, and to all interval-metered consumers.

ENVIRONMENT

Ontario's forest industry companies support continued modernization of the approvals system under this Ministry, and the allocation of sufficient funds for the development of a pulp and paper sector technical standard.

Municipalities requested further initiatives to extend producer responsibility for waste diversion, and retailers asked for the flexibility to display environmental levies separately at the point of sale. Advice about funding the Toxics Reduction Strategy and the content of regulations under the *Toxics Reduction Act, 2009* was balanced with a call to delay implementation of the Act for one year. A water conservation fund was proposed, with implementation strategies, and municipalities offered to cooperate in the development of water quality regulations.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Private sector groups and municipalities designated comprehensive regulatory reform a strategic priority, with a socio-economic impact assessment of legislation, regulations, and policies at its core. Similarly, greater oversight of changes to or the introduction of user fees, including stakeholder participation, greater transparency, and an independent dispute resolution process was counselled. The introduction of accountability measures for all public service delivery was backed as well as delivery of services through the private or not-for-profit sectors.

HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

The Committee was told that annual health budget increases should be curtailed to 3% by fiscal year 2012-13, that Ontario should increase health care funding to the national per capita average, and that the budgets of hospitals and other government funded health agencies should be frozen for three years. While one witness identified the challenge of finding health care savings without jeopardizing health care quality, local health care quality advocates recommended curbing administrative and executive costs. The value was highlighted of focusing on the needs of those most at risk of ill health and chronic disease, and of addressing the social determinants of health. Arguments were presented for and against encouraging more private sector delivery of health care services.

Health Policy and Research

Teaching hospitals advocated the creation of an agency to drive the health research agenda and accelerate the adoption of research evidence into practice. This advice was seconded by the medical technology industry with its interest in the adoption and funding of new medical device technologies and treatments, such as neuromodulation therapy. Detailed

recommendations for a comprehensive pain management strategy were received, including legislation to allow a more comprehensive Drug Information System. Doctors proposed amendments concerning health college Councils. Funding envelopes were requested to provide equal pensions and benefits for all health service providers receiving them.

LHINs and Related Health Service Providers

A strong emphasis was placed on providing adequate care in all settings, such as home care, long term care, mental health care, palliative care, and restorative care. Ontario's hospitals backed comprehensive capacity planning to ensure that various sectors have the appropriate mix of capacities and recommended using mechanisms in recent legislation to identify and implement best practices related to quality and efficiency. Hospitals also proposed directing funding to programs that are successful in reducing the number of ALC (alternative level of care) patients. A northern LHIN sought more equitable funding, taking into account contextual factors. One witness advocated the elimination of the LHINs.

Much advice was received about how strengthening community support services (CSS) can reduce the need for more costly health services: proper funding of homemaking and professional services makes possible the delivery of age appropriate care in the home or community for seniors, for persons with physical disabilities or chronic conditions, for persons rehabilitating from injury or surgery, and for persons requiring palliative care. Stakeholders observed that expanding the Aging at Home Strategy and supporting family caregivers by investing in day programs and respite care can keep people out of ALC beds, rehab hospitals and long-term care homes. Recommendations were made about workplace policies and income supports to caregivers; personal support workers (PSWs) requested a defined scope of practice, an accreditation process, support for creating minimum standards and competencies, and resources for developing training criteria. Other proposals included re-evaluating the roles of LHIN funded CSS providers and Community Care Access Centres (CCACs), enhancing the information management capacity of CSS providers, ending the disparity in compensation and working conditions between the community sector and the institutional health sector, and making permanent the moratorium on competitive bidding for homecare services.

Community Health Centres (CHCs) requested increases in operational and capital funding for themselves and for Aboriginal Health Access Centres (AHACs), and advocated funding the latter on the same basis as CHCs. Community laboratories asked for enhancement of their ability to deliver value in the health care network.

Hospitals requested modest, stable funding increases with any savings to be redirected to expanding the capacity of the community and long term care sectors; they also asked that funding information be released on a three year basis. Other health sector stakeholders called for a restoration of hospital funding to a level that will meet hospital inflation and prevent service cuts. In addition to specific project requests for capital funding, the Committee received advice to cancel competitive bidding, private-public partnerships, and pay-for-performance hospital funding.

One municipal partner advocated developing a new provincial cost sharing and delivery model for long term care home providers. Funding requests from stakeholders included the full costs of implementing the *Long Term Care Homes Act, 2007*; a regulated minimum staffing standard of 3.5 worked hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day; an acuity adjustment; the increase awarded in arbitrated wage settlements; the increase in WSIB premiums; and HST imposed cost increases in utilities and service contracts. Two local health coalitions presented suggestions for additional regulation of retirement homes.

The importance of enhancing programs for mental health and addictions was stressed by several witnesses, with special emphasis on children's mental health and implementation of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Expansion of the First Link program for Alzheimer patients, an increase in the availability of flexible respite options, and greater capacity for managing patients with neurological disorders were also promoted.

Nurses and Nursing

Nurses urged the government to fulfil its commitment to hire 9,000 additional nurses, and to fund policies that create and protect nursing positions, particularly in the hospital sector, focusing on retention initiatives such as late career and mid-career nursing programs. Providing more bridging seats from registered practical nurse education programs to registered nurse (RN) education programs, supporting additional second level entry RN programs, and opening all remaining approved Nurse Practitioner-led clinics were measures proposed to increase the supply of nurses in the system. The importance of healthy work environments for nurses was stressed, as well as the need for staff nurse input into administrative, financial, operational and planning matters in hospitals.

Insured Health Services

Coverage issues were raised before the Committee, including extending coverage to international students, ending the three-month delay in coverage that applies to newly landed immigrants, extending drug benefits

to people over age 55 with low incomes, expanding drug coverage to include all medical equipment and supplies prescribed by a physician, and making drug and dental benefits available to the working poor, the self-employed, and contract workers. Ontario optometrists proposed developing a new agreement for publicly funded optometric services and expansion of the program for junior kindergarten children currently available in a limited number of school districts. Cancer care advocates and the research drug industry brought recommendations for reforms to the current drug listings and funding approvals processes.

Several witnesses suggested reducing emergency room wait times and ALC days by funding and implementing an improved, expanded community-based respiratory support program for Ontarians who require ventilator assistance. Members also heard that cost savings, improved efficiency and greater program effectiveness could be achieved by recycling and refurbishing assistive devices.

Municipalities asked for support in attracting family doctors, registered dietitians sought greater opportunities in Family Health Teams and CHCs, and midwives solicited approvals and funding to operate four birth centres on a pilot project basis.

Supports were proposed for patients who have obtained treatment abroad for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI) as well as funding for a pan-Canadian therapeutic CCSVI trial. An improved approval process for cancer treatments was requested, including a timely mechanism for review on compassionate grounds for access to cancer drugs, and measures to facilitate successful labour force re-entry for persons affected by cancer. The development of a comprehensive strategy for Ontarians living with a neurological condition, addressing housing, long term care, community-based care and caregiver support was recommended, as was greater investment in Vision Rehabilitation Services and the development of a comprehensive plan for vision health.

HEALTH PROMOTION AND SPORT

Requests to enhance funding for mandated public health programs were accompanied by advice to implement accountability measures for Boards of Health, to increase the portion of funding supporting health promotion, and to apply a needs-based formula that would phase in funding to address historical discrepancies in allocations to municipalities.

Improving access for all Ontarians to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities was presented as a priority. Dietitians asked for promotion of the EatRight Ontario dietitian service, and for a coordinated food and

nutrition strategy that includes an action plan for achieving childhood healthy weights. Sports-related recommendations included creating a bicycling investment fund, extending the application of the Children's Activity Tax Credit to all family members, and dedicated funding for parks, recreation and sports infrastructure.

Continuing or increased funding for Smoke-Free Ontario was backed by cancer prevention advocates, along with swift action to curb the availability of contraband tobacco and the development of a province-wide cessation system incorporating proven methods. This organization also urged the government to prohibit youth under the age of 18 from using indoor tanning salons and to implement complementary measures.

Interested parties, including optometrists, made recommendations about the Ontario Diabetes Strategy, including its realignment to focus on healthy weights, populations at risk, and secondary prevention, and the creation of an arm's length agency to oversee implementation of the Strategy. The Committee also received proposals to improve awareness and treatment of Lyme disease.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Presenters were unanimous in their support for continued, if not expanded, infrastructure spending, but brought competing ideas about how (or on what) that investment should be made. Some supported a focus on core infrastructure, without necessarily agreeing on what is "core." Several stakeholders called for the development of a long-term infrastructure investment strategy. Among these were Ontario municipalities, expressing a preference for addressing their long term planning needs and infrastructure deficits with long term, sustainable funding rather than short-term grant programs. One witness advocated using HST revenue from gasoline and diesel sales to generate a predictable funding mechanism for municipalities. Other policy suggestions included standardizing procurement processes, reforming legislation to ensure the timely release of funds owed for completed work, focusing on the total cost of ownership rather than simply the lowest price, and mandating the use of Portland Limestone Cement in Ontario projects.

Specific sector-related or project requests were made concerning bridges, electricity, hospitals, institutional deferred maintenance, roads, schools, sewers, social housing, transit and water.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Many recommendations brought to the Committee address matters that require action on the part of Ontario and/or another government or governments.

Stakeholders sought cooperation with or action by the federal government on changes to tax laws, the design of the Canada Pension Plan, the creation of a new pooled pension plan, the design of Employment Insurance), harmonizing environmental assessment processes, amendments to the *Canada Investment Act*, developing a national housing strategy, providing municipalities with autonomy and revenue-raising capacity, home renovation tax rebates, joint investment in research and development, a new five-year immigration agreement, fast-tracking foreign credentials assessments, new RESP rules for apprentices, and the creation of a unified family court.

The Province was asked to work with the federal government and other partners to address the illegal tobacco crisis (with First Nations), to resolve inequities in First Nations education funding (with First Nations and other provinces' Ministries), to review business-related regulations (with municipalities and other provinces), to develop an improved approach to the taxation of corporate groups (with the business community), to promote pension reforms (with provincial counterparts), and to negotiate a shared funding agreement for the renewal of basic rail infrastructure (with Ontario's short line rail industry).

LABOUR

Recommendations for modernization and stronger enforcement of employment standards legislation came from community groups and labour unions. Specific measures included increasing the capacity of the Ministry to conduct spot audits; better protection for wage earners with respect to back wages, vacation, termination and severance benefits in the event of employer bankruptcy; and stronger regulation of contract and temporary employment agencies.

Anti-racism activists proposed mandatory employment equity, with the creation of an Equity in Employment Secretariat adequately resourced to ensure merit-based employment, supported by an Equity and Anti-Racism Directorate that would collect and analyze data across all provincial Ministries and public institutions.

Labour legislation reforms sought by union members included a card-based certification system, provisions for first contract arbitration when new bargaining units are formed, interim orders in cases of employer

intimidation during organizing campaigns, and legislation banning the use of replacement workers. Labour leaders also suggested establishing a labour market partners forum to address labour market issues.

Employers requested legislative amendments requiring arbitrators to take into consideration an employer's ability to pay, the economic situation, comparable public-private sector compensation, and stated government policy.

Increases of varying magnitude were proposed for the minimum wage, including taking it to a level above the poverty line; to be followed by annual indexing to the rate of inflation. Representatives of small business asked the government to refrain from raising the minimum wage; retailers echoed this request, and proposed establishing a third party to review and recommend future adjustments. The same stakeholders called for cancellation of the 2011 and 2012 WSIB employer premium increases, for the establishment of a cap on WSIB premium increases, amendments to allow the option of private insurance coverage in the construction sector, and extension of the terms of reference for the independent review of the WSIB to include spending and benefit levels. Others suggested consideration of the pros and cons of creating a competitive market for workplace safety insurance.

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING

One municipality described a strategy of cooperation with the Province to protect gains already made, minimize the impact of new costs, and implement no cost policy changes of benefit to both levels of government. Many of the latter were contained in proposed legislative and regulatory changes, which included reducing municipalities' liability exposure, compensating municipalities for the costs imposed by new regulations, creating a Brownfields Remediation Fund through levies on enterprises at higher risk of contaminating land, developing energy conservation and demand management programs (CDMs) specific to municipalities, facilitating the issuing of debt for user-funded projects, providing municipalities with the statutory authority to use photo radar, and assisting Conservation Authorities in managing their physical infrastructure.

Review of the *Development Charges Act, 1997* to remove barriers to full funding of growth-related costs, and amendment of the *Municipal Act, 2001* to improve the position of a municipality following a failed tax sale of contaminated properties, were also proposed. Specific planning requests were delivered, as well as a recommendation to release the Northern Growth Plan, with priorities, specific initiatives, a time frame for implementation, and funding.

Provincial–Municipal Finance

Municipalities lobbied for adequate, predictable and stable revenue that matches the full cost of funding local priorities. The Province was urged to continue (if not accelerate and/or extend the scope of) its phased uploading of social assistance and court security costs, to upload all public health costs, and to upload the costs of land ambulance delivery. Witnesses also suggested developing a separate infrastructure for non-emergency medical transportation, including community-based solutions. Municipalities sought a short term solution for increased administrative costs for Ontario Works, as well as specific funding for rural road maintenance.

Municipalities also brought recommendations concerning the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF), the Province's main transfer payment to municipalities. These ranged from maintaining the current system (along with the Mitigation Fund) for northern municipalities; to creating a new model, sufficiently enhanced to address gaps in provincial-municipal funding; to ensuring that the policing component of OMPF is responsive to the needs of small and rural communities. Specific requests were made to increase the Northern Communities Grant, adjust the Rural and Small Communities Measure, and amend the formula for District Homes for the Aged.

Other measures that municipalities would welcome include making permanent the provincial gas tax for transit program, with continued flexibility in its use; increased payments in lieu of taxes for municipalities hosting universities, prisons and hospitals (the "heads and beds" levy); and consideration of a new funding approach for meeting requirements under the *AODA*. A proposal for legislation to require a municipal auditor general in each community with a population over 100,000 was made by a business community stakeholder.

Housing

Witnesses from a broad range of backgrounds requested significant investments in affordable housing. They presented a target for 2011 of 8,000–10,000 new units of appropriate housing options, including supportive housing, and a commitment to stabilize funding in 2011 and for each of the next three years at the level provided in each of the last two years. Some of this money, one group suggested, should be put into rural communities for new construction and rental benefits. Recommendations to increase the proportion of affordable housing through home ownership were balanced by requests from non-profit and cooperative housing providers for policies to increase the use of rent supplements for rental units in co-op, non-profit and private sector buildings.

Municipalities asked for the devolution to them of authority for housing, with increased flexibility, and for measures to strengthen the capacity of social housing boards. Accreditation and licensing standards for persons and companies managing rental properties were advocated by one municipal partner.

One of the recommendations most frequently put to the Committee was for the introduction of a monthly housing benefit to make rental housing more affordable. Other supports that help people to remain in their homes and live independently were identified and promoted; updating maximum shelter allowance rates, revising the provincial utility allowances schedule, and providing an energy savings subsidy program for rental housing providers were among them.

Block funding, rather than project-by-project approval, was requested for municipal service managers. Selling under-used provincially owned land for the development of affordable housing by non-profit providers was deemed a priority. Funding was requested to assess the Special Priority Policy for victims of domestic violence in social housing. Housing advocates backed amending the *Planning Act* to direct municipalities to require the inclusion of affordable housing in new developments. The importance of funding and other supports for the maintenance and repair of social housing stock was emphasized by many witnesses.

NATURAL RESOURCES

All of the recommendations for this Ministry (MNR) came from representatives of the forest industry, and concerned the MNR's responsibility for the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 (CFSA)* and the *Endangered Species Act, 2007 (ESA)*. Forestry companies asked the government to maintain the Crown dues rate for poplar and birch at no more than \$1.07 per cubic metre for the next three years. They also requested annual funding for preparing the Forest Management Plans (FMPs) and Annual Work Schedules that are required under the *CFSA*, as well as a guarantee that new or revised regulations or policies, associated with the *ESA* or otherwise, do not result in increased costs for the forest sector or a loss of wood fibre.

Forestry companies also told the Committee that the primary objectives of the *ESA* can be met through the *CFSA* and its FMPs, and requested implementation of a regulation under the *ESA* recognizing as much. Finally, they recommended moving responsibility for the *CFSA* to the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT, MINES AND FORESTRY

Continued investment in programs of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation was identified as critical for promoting economic development and innovation in northern Ontario. The need for funding to expand on-campus housing at northern colleges and universities was highlighted by one provincial student organization.

The forest industry requested the continuation of all competitiveness measures and initiatives put in place since 2005; a long term extension of the Forest Access Roads Construction and Maintenance program; the permanent protection of 26 million cubic metres per year of wood fibre for utilization by existing mills and new entrants, regardless of utilization given market conditions; and a guarantee that the existing operational land base is not eroded.

Forestry companies want a socio-economic impact assessment of all legislation, regulations and policies that could reduce the provincial fibre supply. They also requested timely completion of the Wood Supply Competitive Process and follow-through on the modified forest tenure reforms announced in January 2011, in particular the development of enhanced Cooperative Sustainable Forest Licences.

The Province was asked to recognize that implementation of *Mining Act* regulations will impede the ability of junior exploration companies to operate in Ontario. Development of a mining Centre of Excellence in Timmins was proposed, to benefit businesses; grow the local knowledge base, and spur innovation.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Business representatives sought expanded support for research and development, including access to physical infrastructure and stronger business-education partnerships and industry trade associations. Ontario students advocated developing a strategy for graduate students to receive full-time equivalent funding from the Ministry (MRI) and increased funding for MRI programs that support university faculty and students and research at postsecondary institutions. They proposed a research fund for green and sustainable projects at colleges and universities.

TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Stakeholders in postsecondary education were, with few exceptions, quite specific clear in their requests to the Committee.

Ontario's colleges asked for allocations for core operating funding, for enrolment growth, for the credit transfer system, for enhancing online and distributed learning course offerings, for industry innovation and productivity, for deferred maintenance, and for instructional equipment. Strategies and resources to expand college applied research were requested by the leadership of one institution. College students asked for reaffirmation of the commitment to invest in and implement a province-wide accreditation system and for a robust and transparent transfer system to promote system integration between colleges and universities. Incentive-based initiatives to promote transferability among postsecondary institutions were also suggested.

University stakeholders also brought funding requests, with an emphasis on investments to meet operating and capital needs in the short term, and negotiating enrolment targets and cost-sharing models for the long term. University students requested funding for programs to provide instruction in pedagogical methods and practices for all new faculty and teaching assistants, and support for a new focus on teaching quality by establishing and funding teaching chairs. They also proposed hiring more full-time tenure track faculty in order to improve the student-faculty ratio.

Student organizations asked the government to fulfill its promise to reallocate funds from postsecondary education tax credits to the reduction of students' upfront costs. Targeted funding was recommended for student support services, in particular for international students, along with tuition set-aside funds for international students to be derived from international student fees and allocated to work/study opportunities and college bursaries. The government was asked to embrace internationalization as a cultural and economic tool to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

A commitment was sought that every new qualified Ontario student admitted to postsecondary education be fully funded. College students requested a review of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) to find opportunities for cost-effective improvements and greater support for domestic and international students. Other related financial aid recommendations included making all undergraduate students eligible for Ontario Access Grants, reducing expected parental contributions for those applying for student loans, extending OSAP eligibility to part-time students and reducing loan interest rates to below the prime rate, lowering the Ontario Student Opportunity Grant debt cap, providing new Ontario Graduate Scholarships, and restructuring the Student Access Guarantee from an institutionally funded program into a government funded, needs-based program. An immediate tuition fee freeze for all public college and university programs was proposed.

Business representatives recommended centralizing access to workforce training programs from basic skills through to postsecondary education in one agency and providing funding for workplace training. Stakeholders also called for a greater emphasis on experiential learning in order to equip students with the practical skills required for a seamless transition from classroom to workplace. The Committee heard that the profile of apprenticeship training should be increased. A large number of witnesses requested that the funding for literacy and essential skills training that was announced in 2009 as a two-year grant, be made permanent.

Organized labour requested more funding for and the elimination of eligibility barriers to the Second Career Program, as well as the establishment of a parallel system of literacy and basic skills training for displaced workers unable to access Second Career programs. Others suggested expanding the Second Career strategy to persons with disabilities. Support for maintaining Employment Ontario funding at current levels was expressed, as well as advice to spend more of the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement funds on improving access to Employment Ontario programs for people receiving social assistance benefits.

TRANSPORTATION

The Ministry was asked to strengthen and prioritize key transportation links between major centres in Northern Ontario, to support early designation and protection of major transportation corridors, including the GTA West and Niagara-GTA corridors, and to provide long term sustainable funding for transportation system improvements in Peel and across the GTHA.

Continued support for the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) project was requested, and a proposal made to divide the DRIC project into two phases pending a final decision on the proposed bridge crossing.

Ontario's road builders called for overall road and transportation spending in 2011 and 2012 to be maintained at 2010 levels, with the Ministry's budget being spent through early tender calls. In addition, they suggested that any surplus or unspent infrastructure stimulus funds be redirected to certain existing strategic funding envelopes. Accelerated completion of the twinning of Highway 17 from the Manitoba border eastward was requested.

Northern witnesses proposed investment to revitalize the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission and the transfer of responsibility for the Commission to the Ministry of Transportation. Protection of the Windsor-London arm of any proposed high speed passenger rail service connecting Ontario and Quebec was recommended by local interests.

Emphasis of the importance of public transit to a sustainable green economic strategy was accompanied by requests to reinstate the Ontario Bus Replacement Program at sufficient levels, to exempt public transit service from regulations regarding mobile communications devices, and to make public transit more accessible for postsecondary education students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

1. The government continue to reduce the deficit and work towards a balanced budget.
2. The government continue to make strategic investments in our workforce and create further opportunities for job growth in Ontario.
3. The government continue to pressure the federal government to re-evaluate the equalization and transfer system and promote fairness for Ontarians.
4. The government take full advantage of the economic potential of the Ring of Fire, including promoting the processing of these minerals here in Ontario.
5. The government promote financial literacy among Ontarians of all ages, and encourage everyone to start saving early for retirement.

APPENDIX A

WITNESSES AND SUBMISSIONS

LIST OF WITNESSES AND WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Presenter (+ Expert witness invited by the Committee to appear)	Date of Appearance / Written Submission
25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction	January 25, 2011
Action Centre for Tenants Ontario	written
ACTION Ontario for People with Neuropathic Pain	written
Adult Basic Education Association	written
Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada	February 1, 2011
Affordable Housing Flagship	written
Allergan Inc.	written
Alliance Against Poverty	written
Alliance of Seniors/Older Canadians Network	January 31, 2011
Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa	January 28, 2011
Alzheimer's Society of Ontario	January 25, 2011
Anglican Diocese of Niagara	written
Anglican Diocese of Toronto	January 31, 2011
Association for Persons with Physical Disabilities of Windsor and Essex County	January 25, 2011
Association of Municipalities of Ontario	January 31, 2011
Association of Ontario Health Centres	January 31, 2011
Association of Ontario Midwives	January 26, 2011
Association of Ontario Neurologists	January 24, 2011
Bonita Poulin	written
Cambridge Health Coalition	January 24, 2011
Campaign 2000	written
Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits, Hamilton	written
Canada's Research-based Pharmaceutical Companies	February 1, 2011
Canadian Auto Workers	February 1, 2011
Canadian Automobile Association	written
Canadian Bankers Association	written
Canadian Breast Cancer Network	written
Canadian Cancer Society	January 31, 2011
Canadian Deafblind Association	January 24, 2011
Canadian Diabetes Association	January 26, 2011
Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance	written
Canadian Federation of Independent Business	February 1, 2011
Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario	January 31, 2011

Presenter (+ Expert witness invited by the Committee to appear)	Date of Appearance / Written Submission
Canadian Federation of University Women	written
Canadian Hearing Society	January 31, 2011
Canadian Hearing Society, Thunder Bay Region	January 26, 2011
Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters	February 1, 2011
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario	written
Canadian National Institute for the Blind	January 31, 2011
Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario	February 1, 2011
Canadian Paraplegic Association Thunder Bay Region	January 26, 2011
Canadian Red Cross, Timmins Branch	January 27, 2011
Canadian Secular Alliance	written
Cement Industry of Canada	January 28, 2011
Certified General Accountants of Ontario	January 31, 2011
Champlain Community Support Network	January 28, 2011
Champlain Hospice Palliative Care Program	January 28, 2011
Charles Fisher	written
Cheri Cowan	written
Children's Mental Health Ontario	February 1, 2011
Chris Moersfelder	written
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario	January 24, 2011
Citizens with Disabilities – Ontario	January 28, 2011
City of Kenora	January 26, 2011
City of Kingston	written
City of London	January 24, 2011
City of Timmins	January 27, 2011
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario	written
College Student Alliance	written
Colleges Ontario	February 1, 2011
Community Council for Ethnocultural Equity Advisory Committee	written
Community Literacy of Ontario	written
Community Living Essex County / Community Living Windsor	January 25, 2011
Community Living Tillsonburg	January 25, 2011
Community Social Services Campaign	written
Confederation College	January 26, 2011
Consulting Engineers of Ontario	written
Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada	February 1, 2011
Council of Academic Hospitals of Ontario	written

Presenter (+ Expert witness invited by the Committee to appear)	Date of Appearance / Written Submission
Council of Ontario Construction Associations	written
CUPE Ontario	February 1, 2011
Dairy Farmers of Ontario	written
DeafBlind Ontario Services	February 1, 2011
Diane Thompson	written
Dietitians of Canada	January 24, 2011
Durham College	written
E. Marth	written
EACOM Timber Corporation	January 27, 2011
Eastern Ontario Landlord Organization	January 28, 2011
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	January 31, 2011
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario-Thames Valley	written
Elizabeth Block	written
Ensemble	January 25, 2011
EnviroCentre	January 28, 2011
Family Alliance Ontario	written
Federation of Ontario Public Libraries	January 28, 2011
Flowers Ontario	written
FoodShare Toronto	written
Foster Care Council of Canada	January 28, 2011
Georgia Pacific North Woods LP	January 27, 2011
Grain Farmers of Ontario	January 25, 2011
Greater Essex Elementary Teachers' Federation	January 25, 2011
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce	January 24, 2011
Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association	January 28, 2011
Groves Memorial Community Hospital	written
Guelph Wellington Health Coalition	written
Haldimand-Norfolk Literacy Council	written
Hamilton Health Coalition	January 24, 2011
Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction	January 31, 2011
Home Ownership Alternatives Non-Profit Corporation	written
Housing Network of Ontario	written
HST Petitioners (411 individuals – see Note 1)	written
Humanist Association of London and Area	written
Huron Terrace Long Term Care Community	January 25, 2011
Imperial Tobacco Canada	January 28, 2011

Presenter (+ Expert witness invited by the Committee to appear)	Date of Appearance / Written Submission
Income Security Advocacy Centre	written
Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario	February 1, 2011
John McGivney Children's Centre	January 25, 2011
Kinark Child and Family Service	written
Kingston Community Legal Clinic	written
Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction	written
La Coalition Ontarienne de Formation des Adultes	written
Legal Assistance of Windsor	January 25, 2011
Lifelabs Medical Laboratory Services	February 1, 2011
Lions McInnes House	January 24, 2011
Literacy Link South Central	January 24, 2011
Literacy London	written
Literacy Network of Durham Region	written
Literacy North West	January 26, 2011
Livio Di Matteo, Lakehead University +	January 31, 2011
London and St. Thomas Real Estate Board	January 24, 2011
London Chamber of Commerce	January 24, 2011
London Health Coalition	January 24, 2011
Lyme Action Group	written
March of Dimes	written
Marie Cerny	written
MEDEC	written
Medical Officers of Health—Toronto, Ottawa, Peel	written
Medtronic of Canada	January 31, 2011
Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic	February 1, 2011
Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy	written
Michelle Bogias	written
MS Society of Canada, Ontario Division	February 1, 2011
Multifaith Alliance to End Homelessness	written
Municipal Cultural Planning Inc.	written
Municipality of Leamington	written
N. Wayne Irvine	written
National Airline Council of Canada	January 28, 2011
National Farmers Union	written
Network 13 Integration Council	written
Nishnawbe Aski Nation	January 26, 2011

Presenter (+ Expert witness invited by the Committee to appear)	Date of Appearance / Written Submission
Northeast LHIN Transfer Payment Agencies (see Note 2)	written
Northern College	January 27, 2011
Northwest Catholic District School Board	written
Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association	January 26, 2011
ODSP Action Coalition	written
OMNI Health Care	January 28, 2011
One School System Petitioners (58 Individuals – see Note 3)	written
Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs	January 28, 2011
Ontario Association for Infant and Child Development	written
Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies	February 1, 2011
Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services	February 1, 2011
Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres	written
Ontario Association of Optometrists	January 25, 2011
Ontario Automobile Dealer Association	January 31, 2011
Ontario Bar Association	written
Ontario Caregiver Coalition	written
Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association	written
Ontario Cattlemen's Association	February 1, 2011
Ontario Chamber of Commerce	written
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care	January 31, 2011
Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity	written
Ontario Convenience Store Association	February 1, 2011
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants	written
Ontario Council of Hospital Unions	February 1, 2011
Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association	written
Ontario Episodic Disabilities Network	written
Ontario Federation of Agriculture	written
Ontario Federation of Labour	January 31, 2011
Ontario Forest Industries Association	January 26, 2011
Ontario Geothermal Association	January 24, 2011
Ontario Grain and Oilseeds	January 24, 2011
Ontario Health Coalition	January 31, 2011
Ontario Home Builders' Association	January 31, 2011
Ontario Hospital Association	written
Ontario Literacy Coalition	written
Ontario Long Term Care Association	written

Presenter (+ Expert witness invited by the Committee to appear)	Date of Appearance / Written Submission
Ontario Municipal Social Services Association	written
Ontario Nurses' Association	February 1, 2011
Ontario Pork	February 1, 2011
Ontario Public Service Employees Union	January 31, 2011
Ontario Real Estate Association	written
Ontario Restaurant and Bar Association	January 28, 2011
Ontario Road Builders' Association	February 1, 2011
Ontario Rural Housing Action Network	written
Ontario School Bus Association	January 28, 2011
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation	January 31, 2011
Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation District 19	written
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation – Thames Valley	January 24, 2011
Ontario Social Workers; Hamilton Branch Social Action Committee	January 24, 2011
Ontario Water Conservation Alliance	written
Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth	written
OPSEU Local 116	written
Organic Council of Ontario	written
Ottawa Community Council for Literacy	written
Ottawa Poverty Reduction Network	January 28, 2011
Ottawa Public Library	January 28, 2011
Ottawa Real Estate Board	January 28, 2011
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board/Ontario Public School Boards' Association	January 28, 2011
People First of Tillsonburg	January 25, 2011
Personal Support Network of Ontario	written
Persons United for Self-Help in Northwestern Ontario	January 26, 2011
Police Association of Ontario	written
PortCares	written
Poverty Free Thunder Bay	January 26, 2011
Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth	January 26, 2011
PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs	February 1, 2011
Put Food in the Budget	January 28, 2011
Railway Association of Canada	written
Region of Peel	written
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario	January 27, 2011
Retail Council of Canada	February 1, 2011
Right to Healthcare Coalition	written

Presenter (+ Expert witness invited by the Committee to appear)	Date of Appearance / Written Submission
Robert Maich	January 25, 2011
Ryerson University Nursing 3rd Year	written
Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce	January 24, 2011
Sarnia Lambton Health Coalition	January 24, 2011
Scarborough Residential Alternatives	written
SEIU Healthcare	written
Share the Road Cycling Coalition	January 31, 2011
Shirley Roebuck	January 25, 2011
Skills for Employment, Life & Family	written
Social Planning Toronto	February 1, 2011
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	written
South West Spinal Cord Injury Solutions Alliance	January 24, 2011
St. Clair College	January 25, 2011
St. John's Rehab Hospital	written
St. Stephen's Community House	written
Student Union of Confederation College	January 26, 2011
Tamara Kaattari	written
Teresa Armstrong	January 24, 2011
Thunder Bay and District Labour Council	January 26, 2011
Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce	January 26, 2011
Thunder Bay Health Coalition	January 26, 2011
Timmins and District Hospital	January 27, 2011
Timmins Chamber of Commerce	January 27, 2011
Toby Sanger, Senior Economist, CUPE +	January 31, 2011
Town of Halton Hills	written
Tri-County Literacy Network	written
United Church of Canada-Ottawa Presbytery	January 28, 2011
United Way/Centraide of Windsor-Essex County	January 25, 2011
University of Toronto	written
University of Western Ontario	January 24, 2011
University of Windsor Students' Alliance	January 25, 2011
University Students Council at the University of Western Ontario/Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance	January 24, 2011
Urszula Kazmierski	written
Victim Services Toronto	written
VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children	written
Voices Against Poverty	January 25, 2011

Presenter (+ Expert witness invited by the Committee to appear)	Date of Appearance / Written Submission
VON Canada	written
Warren Jestin, Scotiabank Group +	January 31, 2011
West Park Healthcare Centre	written
Wesway	January 26, 2011
Wilfred Laurier University	January 31, 2011
Windsor Essex Health Coalition	January 25, 2011
Windsor Public Library	January 25, 2011
Windsor Regional Hospital	January 25, 2011
Windsor–Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce	January 25, 2011
Woodbine Entertainment Group	February 1, 2011
Workforce Windsor Essex	January 25, 2011
YMCA Ontario	written
YWCA Toronto	written

Note 1: Electronic submissions expressing substantially the same position and grouped under this heading, were received from 411 individuals.

Note 2: The Northeast LHIN Transfer Payment Agencies consists of the following organizations: Hôpital de Smooth Rock Falls Hospital, Canadian Mental Health Association (Cochrane Temiskaming), MICs Group of Health Services, Weeneebayko Area Health Authority, and Timmins and District Hospital.

Note 3: Electronic submissions expressing substantially the same position and grouped under this heading, were received from 58 individuals.

APPENDIX B

**DISSENTING OPINION OF THE
PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS
OF THE COMMITTEE**

The McGuinty Government | A Threat to Ontario's Families |

2011 Pre-Budget Consultation

Progressive Conservative Caucus, Official Opposition

Dissenting Report

Participating Official Opposition Members:

Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka, P.C.)

Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk, P.C.)

The McGuinty Government

| A Threat to Ontario's Families |

Overview

As Canada's largest provincial economy, the strength of the Ontario economy has long been an important driver of prosperity for the Canadian economy. The province has traditionally accounted for 40% of the nation's output and was the economic engine of Canada.

But that is no longer the case. Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average for over four years. And while the size of government has grown by a staggering 70% under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Further, Ontario has been the worst performer in Confederation in terms of growth in standard of living.

The private sector, economists and financial experts have all declared the need for Ontario to rein in spending and eliminate deficits and debt ahead of the McGuinty government's target of 2017-18. Yet, Ontario will be the last province in Confederation to balance its books.

This poor performance explains how Ontario has ended up entrenched on the welfare rolls of Confederation as a have-not province under the McGuinty government.¹ The implication of continued low or declining growth in our economy is minimal growth of the tax base. This inevitably means higher taxes and additional deficit financing are needed to pay for the size and cost of government.

This is the path the current government has chosen - setting historic records with their bloated deficits, sales tax hikes and income tax increases. Worse yet, this July 1st, on the same day that families were hit with the \$3 billion HST tax grab, the government introduced a new eco tax on almost 10,000 new items, with no discussion or warning to Ontario families.

The PC Caucus demanded that the government stop these new eco taxes and give families a break. However, we remain very concerned that this government will use the 2011/2012 Budget to re-introduce new taxes like an eco tax on vehicles or a carbon tax in order to pay for their staggering growth in government spending.

During the course of the pre-budget hearings held in London, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Ottawa and Toronto, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs heard from dozens of stakeholders and received hundreds of written submissions from businesses and families who were compelled to provide their advice on how to best get Ontario moving forward, protect the government services that matter most and give families a chance to catch up.

This report outlines a summary of what we heard from businesses, financial experts and Ontario families. After considering the advice and feedback we received, the Ontario PC Caucus has outlined our recommendations to the Government of Ontario for the 2011/2012 Budget in this report.

"Restoring fiscal balance is vitally important because the costs associated with health care and a number of other areas are going to accelerate very dramatically over this decade."

~ Warren Jestin, Chief Economist, Scotiabank Group. January 31, 2011

¹ DiMatteo, Livio, Professor of Economics, Lakehead University. Pre-Budget Consultation. Expert Witness Testimony. 31 Jan. 2011.

The McGuinty Government

| A Threat to Ontario's Families |

"Without prompt return to balanced budgets, there is concern that growing debt will burden Ontarians for decades to come. It could also limit the government's ability to invest in what we see as priority areas, such as public infrastructure and labour development which would hamper Ontario's economic competitiveness."

~ Doug Brooks, FCGA, CEO, Chartered General Accountants, January 31, 2011

Services That Matter Most Are At Risk

Many Ontario families are worried that the McGuinty government's mismanagement of the province's finances poses a direct threat to maintaining the government programs that matter most to them, like frontline healthcare.

As a result of Dalton McGuinty's waste and mismanagement, he will single handedly double Ontario's debt by 2012. This means the amount we spend on servicing the debt is set to rise from \$9.7 billion today to \$16.2 billion by 2016 – more than we currently spend on post-secondary and training, children's and social services, or justice.

"The long-term implication of poor economic growth and productivity is ultimately a lower standard of living and reduced public services in health, education and other programs we hold dear."

~ Livio DiMatteo, Professor of Economics, Lakehead University, January 31, 2011

Skyrocketing energy costs

One of the key recommendations that the Committee heard, was the need for an energy policy that would provide for reliable and affordable energy to bring jobs back to our economy and give families a break from skyrocketing hydro bills. Industry, business, hospitals, long-term care homes and families are all asking for relief in the face of ever increasing energy rates.

The McGuinty government's own lowball estimate admits that hydro bills will increase by a staggering 46% over the next 5 years at a minimum. And based on the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters estimate families will end up paying an extra \$732 a year by 2015.

"With respect to energy, to maintain a robust economy and achieve economic growth in Ontario, businesses need access to reliable and affordable energy."

~ Rob Rea, Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, January 25, 2011

The McGuinty Government | A Threat to Ontario's Families |

In addition to the pressure the McGuinty government's expensive, energy experiments are having on the family budget, presenters also blamed high energy rates for the loss of vital private sector jobs or warned of future job losses.

"In the years leading up to its closure, they [X-Strata] often cited energy costs as one of their greatest challenges to doing business in Ontario. The ore that comes out of the ground in Timmins is now being processed in a province with significantly lower energy costs."

~ Gary Marriott, Timmins Chamber of Commerce, January 27, 2011

"The electricity crisis that you're facing today in Ontario is not just a residential consumer political battle; it's a crisis that will soon have business running out of the province looking for more friendly territories to invest in."

~ Michael McSweeney, Cement Association of Canada, January 28, 2011

If Ontario families and businesses are to realize the full benefit of our natural resources in the Ring of Fire, it is imperative that the jobs connected to processing these materials remain in Ontario. But further expected increases in energy rates threaten to drive even more jobs away from our province, taking the economic benefits with them.

"At \$85 per megawatt hour Ontario has the third highest electricity rate in all of Canada. The neighbouring province of Manitoba is at \$35, representing the lowest rate in the country. These rates have great potential to drive high-energy-using businesses out of Ontario to search for jurisdictions with lower rates."

~ Tammy Mazzetti, GP North Woods LP, January 27, 2011

Another McGuinty government energy experiment, Time-of-Use pricing, is posing significant challenges for families and businesses alike.

"We provide intervenor services for adults who are congenitally deaf-blind. Our program is 24/7. I can't tell a deaf blind person that they can't have a bath at 9 in the morning because they need to get up a 6 o'clock to do that. There's no relief there."

Joan Brintnell, Lions McInnes House, January 24, 2011

The McGuinty Government

| A Threat to Ontario's Families |

Job killing red tape

Red tape and burdensome regulation continue to be a barrier to economic activity and threaten the private sector job creation that is vital to Ontario's economic recovery. The Committee heard testimony that focused on the Government's ongoing failure to implement real change in red tape reduction and streamlining regulations for a variety of sectors including municipalities, long-term care homes and businesses.

"We are hearing from many of our member businesses, that one of the biggest issues facing them is red tape, primarily provincial red tape. Compliance regulations and standards, along with duplication of paperwork to meet audit requirements...creates a disadvantage and severely limits business's ability to be competitive. The cost to do business in Ontario eats up ever-shrinking margins, discourages investment, eliminates growth and pressures sustainability."

~ Katherine Walker, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, January 24, 2011

"Over 25% of Ontario respondents indicated that they would not have started their business had they known the full impact of the regulatory burden on their business. "

~ Plamen Petkov, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, February 1, 2011

"Despite the anticipated recovery of global markets and the desire to put Ontario's wood back to work, our sector continues to face numerous significant made-in-Ontario challenges. The continuous loss of industrial wood fibre through untested public policy, uncompetitive electricity rates and the government red tape, have all contributed to the creation of uncertainty."

~ Jamie Lim, Ontario Forest Industries Assoc., January 26, 2011

Despite the significant contribution made by Ontario's entrepreneurs and small business owners, they have consistently been let down by the McGuinty government. In an online survey, 69% of business owners said they were somewhat or very negatively impacted by the introduction of Time-Of-Use meters. As well, the introduction of a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) in Ontario took a heavy toll with 68% claiming the HST has negatively impacted their business.

It is clear that the McGuinty government has failed to provide regulatory relief for business and indeed has made it worse. With the more than 500,000 provincial regulations businesses are forced to comply with, it costs them \$11 billion annually. Dalton McGuinty has failed to lead the way in changing the way government does business.

The McGuinty Government

| A Threat to Ontario's Families |

What does this mean for Ontario families?

During his 8 years in office, Dalton McGuinty has changed. The McGuinty Government has added a myriad of new taxes, fees and increased costs onto Ontario families including:

- the \$18 billion Ontario Health Premium;
- the HST adding 8% in new taxes to thousands of products and services including haircuts, dry cleaning, bookkeeping services, etc.;
- the Green Energy Act, Smart Meters and Time Of Use metering;
- the first round of the eco taxes on paints, oils, batteries, etc.;
- increases in auto insurance rates, while reducing coverage requirements;
- Land Transfer Tax on Fractional ownership;
- Ontario Tire Stewardship Fee;
- increased fees for various government services including Commercial Vehicle Operator's Registration and driver testing;
- the highest tuition rates in Canada;
- higher fines and penalties for seat belt, speeding and other traffic infractions;
- City of Toronto land transfer tax and vehicle registration tax;
- Increased taxes on beer, wine, and spirits;
- out of pocket charges for basic health services like eye exams;
- the \$53-million hidden hydro tax;
- the second round of sneaky eco taxes on home electronics such as computers, TV and DVD players.

With this track record, Ontario families should be warned: Dalton McGuinty will raise your taxes again. And, just like the eco tax of last year that was not mentioned in the Budget, he will try to sneak through his next tax grab.

The consequence of these increased taxes, fees, and costs, coupled with Ontario's lagging productivity, will be a continued drag on the standard of living for many Ontario families², particularly seniors.

There is no doubt that life is less affordable for middle class families in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

"I think the government needs to review what the HST impacts are on working families because, as we all know, we're in a very hard time right now and struggle to pay all our bills. Costs for everything are increasing."

~ Teresa Armstrong, London resident, Pre-budget Consultations, January 24, 2011

² See DiMatteo, Livio, Professor of Economics, Lakehead University, Pre-Budget Consultation expert testimony. Jan.21.2011.

The McGuinty Government | A Threat to Ontario's Families |

"I want to point out that my car insurance has gone up almost 30%, while my coverage has been decreased by 50%. What can I, as a citizen, do to express my shock? A letter I received from my insurers tells me the Ontario government allowed these increases. Along with the increased taxes due to HST being spread to many new items, my spending dollar is less and less. You can be sure that as a senior citizen my income is not going up to match this."

~ Ontario Resident, Ontario Legislative Assembly, Hansard Transcript, December 2, 2010

Out of pocket health care expenses paid by middle class households jumped by 43% in the last 10 years. Direct costs increased by 38% while health insurance premiums soared by 53%, as have tuition fees.

Ontario families are working longer and harder than ever with less and less to show for their efforts. They spend more time on wait lists and line-ups for services. Serious problems remain with how patients move through the healthcare system. They wait too long and the system is wasting valuable resources.³

A TD Economics Special Report, dated February 9, 2011, warns that excessive household debt in Ontario results in greater vulnerability than in many other regions of the country. The report highlights an important distinction between Ontario and the rest of Canada, where increased borrowing is for purposes other than financing a home purchase, but rather for things such as home renovations and basic consumption.

Personal bankruptcy figures for Ontario reveal that in the first nine months of 2010, 37,462 residents declared personal bankruptcy, and a further 22,980 people in Ontario filed a consumer proposal. That is an increase of 26% in the number of consumer bankruptcy proposals filed.⁴

While Ontario use to be the economic engine of Canada, Dalton McGuinty has not only turned Ontario into a have-not province, we now have a province of have-not households.

³ Ontario Health Quality Council, *Quality Monitor, 2010 Report on Ontario's Health System*.

<http://www.ohqc.ca/en/yearlyreport.php>

⁴ <http://www.bankruptcy-ontario.org/bankruptcy-ontario>, 15 February, 2011.

The McGuinty Government

| A Threat to Ontario's Families |

Conclusion

The Ontario PC Caucus, under our Leader, Tim Hudak, believes that Ontario families need relief from all of Dalton McGuinty's tax and fee hikes so they have a chance to catch up. We believe that it's time for this government to respect that it is families that pay the bills for their expensive, energy experiments and bloated bureaucracy.

We hear this message from families every day. In addition to the Committee hearings and submissions, our PC Caucus toured across Ontario throughout the winter to talk to families – consulting with more than 90 communities. Many told us that they need change. They also told us that they are forced to make difficult decisions to balance their household budgets, and Dalton McGuinty should do the same.

Given the advice and feedback we heard through the Committee hearings and in our work as the Official Opposition, the Ontario PC Caucus calls on the McGuinty government to:

- Do not introduce eco fees on vehicles or a carbon tax to pay for the growth in government spending;
- Stop pushing ahead with your smart meter tax machines and allow families choice and make Time-Of-Use energy pricing optional;
- Place a moratorium on all industrial wind farms and restore local decision-making on Green Energy Act projects;
- Close the doors on the LHINs and put every penny into frontline care for Ontario families;
- Initiate a mandatory Sunset Review process that forces every government body to justify their existence and continued value to the public;
- Install a consumer advocate at the Ontario Energy Board to protect Ontario families;
- Conduct an audit of the debt retirement charges already collected from Ontarians;
- Make the \$7 billion secret Samsung deal public;
- Repeal Dalton McGuinty's job-killing *Far North Act*;
- Appoint a member of Cabinet to be accountable for the reduction of red tape across government and re-instate the Red Tape Commission with responsibility to:
 - help to inform business of regulation and assist in achieving compliance;
 - consider principles and outcomes-based approaches before proceeding to impose prescriptive rules-based regulation;
 - undertake an assessment of any proposed legislation or regulation and determine its economic and administrative impact. The assessment should include a review of the additional burden on business as well as the cost on government to implement said legislation;
 - review all existing legislation, regulations, and forms and undertake to remove those which are outdated and streamline others wherever possible;
 - establish hard targets like counting the number regulations for each Ministry, decrease and streamline these figures, and report to Cabinet at regular intervals on progress made;
- Scrap eco taxes on electronics;
- Extend Highway 407 to Highway 35/115;
- Move forward with the mid-peninsula highway;
- End corporate welfare;
- Bring public sector wage agreements in line with the private sector's ability to pay.

The McGuinty Government | A Threat to Ontario's Families |

Finally, we call on the McGuinty government to give families the respect and relief they deserve in the Spring 2011 Budget and put an end to government waste, scandal and expensive energy experiments.