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Speaking Notes – Pre-Budget Submission
Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
DATE: January 20, 2020

- Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

- My name is Trevor Davies, and I am the President of Northwest Ontario CUPE Council, and President of CUPE Local 2141 for the municipality of Sioux Lookout. With me today is our secretary treasurer Silvia Jakobs.

I'd like to speak to you today about some of the struggles our community faces, this includes housing, social issues and affordability. Also other issues we've seen and heard about throughout our province.

- Affordable housing. We need housing that is affordable for everyone especially people who are earning minimum wage or low income earners, and for the people who are on social assistance. We see many people struggling to pay rent and many people can not afford to buy their own home. Rent here can range anywhere between \$1500 to \$2200 I've seen. Someone earning \$18/hr might bring in roughly \$2000/month after taxes, so for \$1500 they have a place to stay but now you have to purchase groceries, pay utilities and transportation to get to work, etc.

We need affordable housing for our seniors who are on fixed incomes. Note: There is no natural gas available and hydro can cost anywhere from \$500 to \$1500 a month to heat a home 7-8 months of the year.

The Ontario government needs to recognize the uniqueness in our smaller communities like Sioux Lookout, we need to ensure the municipality receives the much needed funding to help offset costs. We pay the highest prices for all goods and services.

We pay the highest prices for groceries and fuel and heating costs, we pay some of the highest policing costs for a community of our size, and we also pay the highest taxes, property taxes are unaffordable for many.

Note: 84% percent of the taxes are on the shoulders of our resident tax payers. Sioux Lookout is a knowledge based industry town (by the way is not recognized by the government as economic importance like forestry, mining, etc) therefore a foot print the size of Meno Ya Win pays only \$6,000 a year in taxes and if it were a mill it would more like 60 million.

My family's gross income is roughly one hundred thousand dollars per year, even with a good budget we still find it difficult to live here, many people find the cost of living out of hand.

My wife and I purchased our home sixteen years ago, my house has at least doubled in value for what we paid, however we cannot afford to leave our small house to live a little more comfortably in a larger home because housing costs have soared way too high, you're now looking at an average of three hundred and fifty thousand to four hundred thousand dollars for a decent house here. I know that we simply cannot afford it, we

would be more than house poor, we would most likely go bankrupt. Now imagine those who are earning way less.

We need to ensure the government increases funding to communities like Sioux Lookout for programming to assist the people who are struggling with drug and alcohol addiction issues, we desperately need funding for a treatment center. Funding to help with our policing costs. Funding for a shelter to get the transient people off the streets and out of the cold. Increase funding to help people with disabilities, and those who face barriers. We need funding incentives for new businesses to help boost our local economy. Note: We are the Hub of the North serving 30,000 additional people from isolated communities recording 90,000 overnight stays in 2019 for healthcare alone. The government needs to respect and acknowledge this additional impact on our infrastructure and services.

We would like to see more consideration given to caregivers, people who care for others with disabilities. My parents whom are in their late sixties care for my older brother who is forty four years old and has had a multitude of health issues including being born with autism, contracting diabetes, and leukemia cancer. All the while my parents have had to care for my brother with very little assistance with no respite care and no one on one care provided by any professional services and they've been on a waiting list for the past nine years to get a spot for him in a group home with the much needed support and resources. All at the same time that both my parents have been trying to manage their own health issues. My mother has had mobility issues, and my father has had multiple health issues including gall stones, kidney stones, and three types of cancer, melanoma cancer, prostate cancer and basal cell carcinoma. Recently it was discovered that there is another concern with his pancreas as a small tumor was recently found. There are not enough spaces, there is not enough support.

- The 2020 Ontario budget provides an important opportunity for the Conservative government to make real and positive change.
- We need a government that governs for everyone. That includes First Nations.
- Ontario needs public services for all.
- According to the Financial Accountability Office, Ford's Conservative government plans to reduce spending per person per year by \$1,070 over the next five years.
- Demand for public services, on the other hand, will exceed the government's planned program spending by approximately \$5 billion by 2022.
- There is a significant risk that this fiscal plan will not provide enough resources to meet the need for key public services.

Trevor Davies
President
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