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(Hansard)**

G-53

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des débats
(Hansard)**

G-53

**Standing Committee on
General Government**

Supporting Recovery
and Competitiveness Act, 2021

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 18 May 2021

**Comité permanent des
affaires gouvernementales**

Loi de 2021
sur le soutien à la relance
et à la compétitivité

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 18 mai 2021

Chair: Goldie Ghamari
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Goldie Ghamari
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES**

Tuesday 18 May 2021

Mardi 18 mai 2021

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1 and by video conference.

**SUPPORTING RECOVERY
AND COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2021
LOI DE 2021
SUR LE SOUTIEN À LA RELANCE
ET À LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 276, An Act to enact and amend various Acts /
Projet de loi 276, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on General Government will now come to order. We are here for public hearings on Bill 276, An Act to enact and amend various Acts.

We have the following members in the room: only myself. The following members are participating remotely: MPP Bailey, MPP Bourgouin, MPP Crawford, MPP Glover, MPP Sabawy, MPP Sandhu, MPP Tabuns, MPP Skelly, and MPP Lindo. Have any other members joined us? No.

We are also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please speak slowly and clearly and wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Please take a brief pause before beginning. And, as always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we begin?

Our presenters today have been scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot, with each presenter allotted seven minutes for an opening statement, followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses, divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent members of the committee. Are there any questions?

**MISSISSAUGA BOARD OF TRADE
CUPE ONTARIO
CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS
AND EXPORTERS**

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I will now call upon the Mississauga Board of Trade. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

Mr. Brad Butt: Well, good morning, Madam Chair, members of the committee. My name is Brad Butt. I'm the vice-president of government and stakeholder relations at the Mississauga Board of Trade. On behalf of the Mississauga Board of Trade, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today in respect of Bill 276, Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act.

The Mississauga Board of Trade, or MBOT, as it is affectionately called, is the voice of business in Ontario's third-largest city. In 2021, we are celebrating 60 years as being the local chamber of commerce for Mississauga.

At the outset, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the work of all MPPs as we have been dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. MPPs have been strong champions and supporters for business, and your actions and efforts have been greatly appreciated by the business community. While we may not have agreed on everything and we certainly still believe there is more the government can do to support business, as we are by no means out of the woods, defeating this virus must be the number one priority so we can get back to some sense of normal as soon as possible.

But today, we are here to discuss Bill 276. Any time a bill comes forward that reduces red tape and eases regulatory burdens on business, it is most welcome. Ontario businesses are still some of the highest-regulated in North America, and regulations are often duplicative and complicated. It has taken decades to get us here, and it will certainly take some time to fix it.

The bill proposes dozens of amendments to various acts. To the eye, it may look cumbersome; however, most of these are clearly designed to modernize the regulatory framework and reduce the number of regulations on the books. Further, it's good to see a major focus on digitization of government services and the ability to conduct more business by way of modern technology and virtual meetings. One positive thing about the COVID-19 pandemic is that it forced many of us to adopt new technology and ways of doing business.

The bill proposes amendments to the energy act, Mining Act, Corporations Act, Employment Standards Act, Liquor Licence and Control Act and other acts that directly impact businesses in Ontario and help to clarify and reduce regulatory burdens.

It is important that we proceed with legislation that focuses on reducing red tape in Ontario, and on that note, I would be remiss if I did not inform the committee of

some of the concerns that have been raised by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce network as it concerns the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. The OCC recently wrote to Ministers Fedeli and Sarkaria, outlining a number of concerns based on feedback from businesses. There does not appear to be an effective process to gain feedback on applications submitted as well as for those that have been denied. Some have said the application process is difficult, especially if English or French is not the applicant's first language. Earlier, I talked about the importance of government services being properly digitized, yet the site for the grant has often crashed, and the requests for additional information are often not processed in a timely way.

The Ontario Small Business Support Grant was well received by the business community generally, and we would encourage the government to again extend it and raise the limit for support as we continue to be in lockdown. In my area of the province, many businesses have been effectively shut down since November 23.

I'd also like to inform the committee that MBOT is participating with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade on the provincial rapid antigen screening program for small business. We're delighted to be able to provide rapid test screening kits to our local businesses, and greatly appreciate the support of both the federal and provincial governments to roll out this program.

I'm also pleased to support that MBOT has established the Mississauga economic recovery group, which is also looking at issues around recovery and competitiveness, so that businesses can bounce back, grow and prosper in the post-COVID-19 world. This has brought together more than 50 CEOs of Mississauga-based businesses to be champions for our future.

In conclusion, if Bill 276 is indeed focused on recovery and competitiveness, we need the Ontario government to continue to support businesses hardest hit by this pandemic, so they will be on solid ground when they can reopen. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you.

We'll now turn to our next presenter, from the Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario. Please state your name for Hansard, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Fred Hahn: My name is Fred Hahn. I'm the president of CUPE Ontario. The Canadian Union of Public Employees is the largest union in Ontario, with over 270,000 members. We represent employees in nearly every part of the public sector, from hospitals and nursing homes to schools, universities, municipalities and social services.

Before I begin speaking to our greatest concerns about this particular bill, let me say that CUPE Ontario once again objects in principle to bills of this sort and to government-by-omnibus. Bill 276 has 28 schedules, with no coherence or unity of purpose. The effect of structuring a bill like this is to make public scrutiny and engagement virtually impossible. Much of the content of the 28 schedules is administrative in nature—it's housekeeping—but

some of it is not. The citizens of Ontario should not need to wade through a pile of housekeeping minutiae to find important pieces, so I'm going to highlight some of the schedules that we at CUPE Ontario feel need to stand alone and should be removed from the omnibus bill.

First, we oppose changes to the Employment Standards Act contained in schedule 6. The schedule would remove important protections for workers from the ESA. Currently, the ESA requires that an employer who uses direct deposit for their payroll should do the following: (1) get the employee's agreement on where to deposit that paycheque—perfectly reasonable—and (2) to deposit that paycheque at a financial institution within a reasonable distance from the workplace. Schedule 6 removes both of those requirements. Why? What possible rationale could there be to giving an employer the right to deposit an employee's paycheques somewhere that they never agreed to or that might not be anywhere near their workplace? There's nothing wrong with the previous rules. They don't place an undue burden on employers, and they provide important protections for workers who are already squeezed for time and energy. This schedule needs to be removed from the bill, and the ESA needs to be left as it is.

Second, schedule 21 provides a skeleton for enabling future reforms of social assistance provided by Ontario Works. Social assistance is an area that everyone agrees needs major reform. In our written submission, you're going to see much greater detail, based on the government's own review of social assistance and on a survey of our members who administer these programs.

A very basic point: Let me start by saying that it seems like an absurd waste of time and energy to talk about any revisions to the Ontario Works act, which is the Social Assistance Reform Act, without taking action to raise social assistance rates that have stagnated since massive cuts by the Harris government decades ago.

The same thing is true for funding arrangements between municipal service partners. Local governments are burdened greatly under the strain of trying to provide stable, adequate services with access to only 10% of tax dollars for the administration of Ontario Works, and some of that money is already used to try to fill the gaps, to actually provide wraparound services to lift people out of poverty. You don't just need money for that; you need job training, child care, affordable housing. These services need to be adequately funded as separate support streams to provide holistic services to those most in need, and there has to be no action of any kind to tighten funding screws on municipalities.

And Bill 276 is entirely silent on how so-called "life-stabilization services" will work. Our members who work in Ontario Works are already incredibly overburdened with large caseloads and the stresses of COVID-19. There's no way the services can be maintained for new life stabilization cases, unless caseloads decrease and staffing levels increase significantly. But there's no commitment to that in this legislation.

0910

And what about changes to automation that the bill enables? How will that impact service delivery? How will administrative procedures change? How will the 31% of poor Ontarians who have no access to the Internet even do this? Again, the bill is silent.

There are so many reasons for the government to step back, to breathe, to do the work of comprehensively reforming and improving Ontario Works and other elements of social assistance, without doing it in a piecemeal way. That starts with the removal of schedule 21 from this omnibus bill.

Finally, there are two schedules in the bill that impact the post-secondary sector in Ontario where CUPE represents over 38,000 workers. Schedule 28 proposes to give a private college, the Collège de Hearst, a university designation. We've testified on this issue before. We remain concerned that the government seems willing to provide university designations to any private college that requests it. University educations should be fully public in Ontario. Diverting money towards private schools that don't have to conform to the same standards of rigour and excellence as Ontario's public universities is wrong at the best of times. But when Laurentian University is facing insolvency, and this government refuses to intervene, it seems just like naked privatization of the higher education system in the province. Schedule 28 needs to come out of this bill.

And speaking of Laurentian, schedule 16 seems like a half-baked scramble to deal with one of the many consequences of Laurentian's insolvency. The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is jointly run by Laurentian and Lakehead Universities. There's no problem with this arrangement. It works well for students. It's wildly popular with the citizens of northern Ontario. But rather than bolster Laurentian and commit to the continuation of this institution in its current form, the government continues to just stubbornly fold its arms while Laurentian sinks.

Our first request is that the government reverse course and actually help Laurentian to save this public, vital university. Then there's no need to reorganize NOSM. But if NOSM is going to exist as a university, it should be done in a separate act like every other university in the province. It's very irregular to once again legislate only a skeleton in schedule 16 and leave everything else to be outside of the public eye and scrutiny through regulation. We're very concerned that this schedule suggests that even collective agreements could be trumped by these abstract future regulations, although we know the province's labour laws and our country's Constitution would never allow it.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Fred Hahn: The normal course needs to be followed. Remove schedule 16. Work practically to support the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and Laurentian as proper universities.

Thanks for your time. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. We'll now go to our next presenter, from Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. Please state your name for

Hansard, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Alex Greco: Good morning, everyone. Alex Greco, director of manufacturing policy with Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. Thank you for inviting me here today on behalf of our association's 2,500 direct members. Today, I will outline the importance of continuing to reduce the regulatory burden for the manufacturing sector, our support for this bill, and other measures that could be taken to reduce red tape and business costs.

Before commenting on this bill, it is first important to acknowledge and thank the government for keeping the manufacturing sector as an essential service over the last year. Over the past year, our companies have stepped to the forefront to respond to the challenges the province and the country have faced. Manufacturers shifted production to make PPE and other critical goods needed in the response. They ramped up the production of food, medicines and other everyday essentials, and they have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to keep our workforce and communities safe through enhanced health and safety protocols, screening and testing.

Our sector also continues to serve and supply national and international supply chains. In this spirit, CME has also been extremely proud to continue to partner with the government on the rollout of Ontario Made, a program to identify, celebrate and promote locally manufactured goods. We are pleased that this program has been extended for another year, to build on the successes of last year.

With respect to Ontario's regulatory challenges, over the last several years, manufacturers have been concerned about Ontario's regulatory burden and associated compliance costs. Addressing regulatory issues is challenging, because companies are affected by a wide range of regulations, depending on the industry in which they operate.

In 2018, CME published *Industrie 2030*, a strategy that laid out the blueprint to drive growth and investment in our sector once again in the province. In the paper, we highlighted that Ontario manufacturers identified an increased regulatory burden as being a significant impediment to making investments here in the province.

Two years after this strategy was published, survey results from our 2020 management issues survey report confirmed this: 35% of survey respondents want the government to prioritize the impact that regulations can have on business growth and competitiveness when regulations are being made, reviewed or revised. Additionally, close to 30% of manufacturers would like the government to focus their attention on the modernization or elimination of outdated regulations, and more than one quarter are looking for the government to make regulatory harmonization across the provinces and with the United States a policy priority.

These results underscore the fact that there is widespread agreement within the manufacturing sector that Ontario needs to be vigilant and take steps to reduce red tape and improve business investment, a key foundation of

economic prosperity. Simply put, Ontario needs to continue to take steps to modernize the regulatory system in the province.

The Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, 2021, is another important red tape bill to reduce the regulatory burden on manufacturers. Overall, we support the legislation and would like to highlight four reasons as to why this is the case.

First, the modernization of inspections through the expansion of self-auditing is welcome and appreciated by CME. These changes would align the self-audit and inspection processes, and provide clarity as to what employment standards officers could require when employers need to complete a self-audit of their records in situations where they are already aware that business owners are in violation of the Employment Standards Act. These changes would provide an opportunity for these officers to guide non-compliant employers toward becoming compliant and self-sufficient, and make it easier for manufacturers to understand and navigate the process.

Secondly, we are pleased to see that provincially significant employment zones are addressed in this bill. Too often when companies are investing in Ontario, their options are often limited to just a few locations, some of which are unserviced or require rezoning. This results in unnecessary investment delays, prevents plan expansions, and places additional costs and regulatory burden on businesses. Industrial lands must be better protected for current and future growth in our sector, and we welcome the opportunity to participate in upcoming consultations to develop and enhance the policy framework for the longer term use of PSEZs and how they can be used to support growth and investment in Ontario's manufacturing sector.

Third, to assist businesses with compliance, we welcome the amendments that clarify when factories need to conduct safety reviews on certain machinery or processes before they are used or modified. In our view, the proposed changes streamline existing requirements and make it easier for manufacturers to comply while maintaining existing worker health and safety protections.

Fourth and finally, we welcome the commitment to support the manufacturing sector by reducing environmental compliance approvals. In the past, we have heard from our members that it can take as long two years to obtain such an approval. The government is taking the necessary step to create an outcomes-based environmental permissions system by giving companies the flexibility to make low operational changes, like the recycling of materials, without having to seek permission from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

While many of these measures in the bill are welcome, the work to reduce regulatory burden must continue. One additional area of consideration where the regulatory burden could be further reduced is the streamlining of inspections conducted by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. Costs associated with inspections are increasing significantly due to onerous reporting requirements and no streamlined dispute resolution processes

when manufacturers express concern about how inspections are undertaken. Inspection experiences in other jurisdictions have been more seamless compared to what takes place in Ontario. An outcomes-based and customer-focused approach must be introduced to reduce business costs and ensure a more responsive culture within the TSSA.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Alex Greco: In closing, I would like stress three final points on what we must do to continue to modernize the regulatory process and drive new growth and output in our sector.

First, the government must continue to harmonize regulations, and view and implement regulations through both an environmental and competitiveness lens.

Second, the government must rely on evidence, science and seek guidance from industry experts on impacts of regulations to avoid unintended consequences.

Third and finally, such measures need to be woven into developing and implementing a detailed advanced manufacturing strategy, following the commitment made to create such a strategy in the 2021 budget. This strategy needs to be developed and implemented to drive investment, growth, technology adoption and skill. Such a strategy is necessary if we are going to drive economic recovery, secure Ontario's long-term industrial future and achieve prosperity for all Ontarians.

I thank you for the opportunity to present here today. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

Before we continue, we have a couple of members who have joined us.

MPP Harris, can you please confirm that you are present and in Ontario?

0920

Mr. Mike Harris: I am. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you.

MPP Schreiner, can you please confirm that you are present and in Ontario?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I am present at Queen's Park in Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

At this point, we'll turn to the official opposition for the first round of questions. MPP Lindo, you may begin.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to all of the presenters. I'm going to focus my questions on the CUPE presentation with Fred Hahn—Fred, it's lovely to see you—but before I do, I just want to say thank you in particular to Brad Butt from the Mississauga Board of Trade. I'm the MPP for Kitchener Centre, and I have a number of people who are calling me about the small business grants. The grants are crucial, but they are also asking for two big things, as you noted: One was to extend the grants and raise the limits, but also to have some kind of a bridge so that they can talk to somebody if their grants are denied. My office has spent a number of hours finding a contact in the ministry to try to get some help for

small businesses locally. Now that contact is gone, so we're back to square one. So thank you for putting that on record, and I just want to echo, from Kitchener Centre.

Fred, as per usual, it is lovely to hear from you. Thank you for joining us. I have two big questions, but I think that you can answer them collectively. Yesterday, we had some folks who came and also were very concerned that, with NOSM, the schedule is leaving far too much to regulations. I'd love to hear a little bit more about why there are concerns about that and why that should be a separate act. Also, part of what we were hearing was that the connection between the universities in the north is providing a different kind of education that is responsive to what's needed in the north and that not investing in Laurentian and trying to separate it out is also problematic. If you could just speak a little bit more to both of those, that would be fantastic.

Mr. Fred Hahn: Certainly. Thank you for the question.

The reality for every other institution that we rely on in the post-secondary sector is that there's a separate piece of legislation that clearly articulates the way in which that university will operate its governing council, its structures. None of that is provided here in the creation of a Northern Ontario School of Medicine. In fact, it's all left to regulation.

It's interesting that my other two co-presenters talked about their perceptions of the burdens of regulations and that regulations are problematic, and yet here we have an important institution in northern Ontario, the structure of which is basically going to be completely left up to regulation, in a way in which no one will be able to actually see, because regulations are done not in a public way, not passed by the Legislature, not with the input that legislation would have. It's quite worrisome. In fact, it's unnecessary, because if we were actually in a situation where the government of Ontario saw the problem at Laurentian as something that it could solve, that it was responsible to solve—we and many other stakeholders, the people of northern Ontario, certainly believe that the government has a responsibility here—why are we talking about the Northern Ontario School of Medicine even potentially being separated out? It's because Laurentian was allowed to fail by the provincial government. It had to seek insolvency protection under a piece of legislation only ever imagined for the corporate sector, and it resulted in fragmenting the system.

Northern Ontario is a unique part of our province. It has unique needs, and the communities there are quite strongly connected in many ways through the public services provided there. They've developed mechanisms and systems where people can work across the vastness of northern Ontario but support one another through institutions like the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and yet all of that is also endangered because of these structures. It's like folks at the ministry and in the government have no real understanding of the way things work in northern Ontario, how valuable these services are to the people of Ontario, how important it is to be quite clear in the public about the structure of post-secondary institutions like the Northern

Ontario School of Medicine. All of this is quite problematic and it's why we're asking for both of these schedules to be removed from this bill and allow people to actually think about the best way forward that supports services, post-secondary schools and other services in northern Ontario in a way that's sustains the mechanisms that people in northern Ontario have found valuable for generations.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Merci, Madame Chair, and thank you to all our presenters this morning. Thank you for the information that you give.

My question is also to Fred. Good morning, Fred. It's always nice to see you, and it's also nice to hear you. You talked about section 21 that needs to be removed. You also talked about—social reform needs to happen. I'd like you to elaborate on this, because you talked about a few things, and seven minutes is short to explain in detail. So I want to give you that opportunity to talk on the points that you brought—more elaborate—so that you can inform the committee.

Mr. Fred Hahn: You're absolutely right; seven minutes is too short to deal with this issue because it's quite a huge one.

I'll just reiterate that I think there's a great deal of consensus from all kinds of perspectives that we need reform in the social assistance system in Ontario. The government conducted its own kind of survey. We surveyed our members. We're proud to represent folks who work in municipalities providing these services. We discovered a bunch of things that shouldn't be a surprise to anyone: Caseloads are massive; there simply aren't resources adequately provided to lift people out of poverty. I think there's one thing everyone could agree to: We want to get people to a place where they're no longer reliant on social assistance in order to live; that they have jobs in communities, they can raise their families, they can afford services. But the truth of the matter is that these chronically low social assistance rates lock people into poverty. There were massive cuts to them more than 20 years ago, and they've never been substantially raised.

It's not just about putting money in people's pockets; it's actually about the support services that are required to help lift people out of poverty. Women and other family members need child care—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Fred Hahn: —for their kids to go to work. They need supportive housing and affordable housing. All of those services are provided by municipalities. But again, there's no mention here. And there's automation that talks about things being online. When 31% of poor people don't have access to the Internet, how are they supposed to actually apply for these services or have anything to say about the supports they have when they don't have access to the Internet?

That's why we're saying remove schedule 21 and take the time to do this properly. Yes, reform is needed, but this is not the way to do it.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: How much time left, Madam Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Twenty-five seconds.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Well, Fred, you've got 25 seconds. If you want to add some stuff, I give it back to you.

Mr. Fred Hahn: Certainly. There's also not enough funding for municipalities, for these other supportive services like child care, like affordable housing, like job supports to get people to actually be employed. The way to lift people out of poverty is to think about it comprehensively. Everyone from every part of the political structure knows this—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, you have four and a half minutes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three presenters for coming in today and providing such valuable information. I'm hoping to be able to ask you all questions, but we'll see how much time we have in the two rounds.

I want to pick up with CUPE. Fred, it's good to see you. On schedule 21, I think one of the ironies of this bill is that it's designed to remove red tape, but it actually seems to be increasing red tape for people on social services, who have to go through so many forms and processes just to be able to access supports. It also appears that some of the services are being downloaded onto municipalities that don't have the capacity, really, to provide service. Can you comment on that and just how it could actually make life even more difficult for people on social services?

Mr. Fred Hahn: Certainly. I think we've all been reminded in the last year and a half about the vital role that municipalities play in our communities. Municipalities provide so many important services that matter directly to the lives of folks who live in communities. Like so many other parts of our province, whether that be the business community, whether that be our health care system, municipalities have really felt the impacts of COVID-19. And so, supporting municipalities to ensure that they can continue to provide these services is absolutely vital and important. They're the service delivery agents for Ontario Works. They're the ones who are supporting folks in their communities who are living on social assistance. And as I said, they're also the ones who are providing the other sorts of services that help to lift people out of poverty, like child care, like affordable housing, like job training and creation programs. They simply don't have sufficient funding to do that. They didn't have sufficient funding to really do it in a comprehensive way before the pandemic. They certainly don't have it now. Changing regulatory frameworks, making things go online, doing things that look like modernization for the sake of modernization can all sound very good, but there are real impacts for people who are living in poverty.

0930

When we share a collective goal to say people shouldn't have to rely on social assistance and that our goal is to have people not rely on a social assistance program or a social assistance system, if that's our goal, then creating barriers

in that system actually makes it more difficult. We know that a third of people don't have access to the Internet, yet we're going to move all this stuff online. When we're talking about completely restructuring—it sounds very good, this terminology of life-stabilization programs, but nobody knows what that means.

So instead of just creating a shell, it would be really good to be clear about what exactly this is or how exactly we can set people up for success—how we can support municipalities to provide those services; how we can assure the workers who are actually providing these services don't have massive caseloads of hundreds and hundreds of people who are just simply impossible for them to actually support in a way that is meaningful to get them off the system.

There's lots to do here. That's why it needs to be removed from this bill. There needs to be a separate process with actual engagement to restructure and amend the social assistance system in a way that will help people be lifted out of poverty.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I appreciate that.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm going to switch gears really quickly to the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. One of the concerns about having it in regulation versus legislation is that it could compromise the independence of the university. Do you share that concern and can you comment on that in the last minute or so we have?

Mr. Fred Hahn: Certainly. Again, the challenge of having this done by regulation is that it's away from the public eye. It isn't clear how this will be set up. Every other public institution has a separate piece of legislation about which there has been debate and discussion in the Legislature and there has been a public process and engagement. Structures have been set up to ensure the independence of these organizations. This is important and key to academic freedom. None of that's guaranteed here. This is an incredibly vital mechanism in northern Ontario to do training and support for health care in northern Ontario, and to imagine that we would try to create this school as a separate entity without the same process—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's the time that we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the government for seven and a half minutes. MPP Sabawy, you may begin.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to thank all the presenters.

I would like to thank the MBOT for being engaged with us. I understand, of course, that as Mississauga is the sixth-biggest city in Canada, the economics and finances of Mississauga are a big part of the economy of Ontario.

MBOT has always been there trying to give voice to businesses in Mississauga, in different bills like Bill 213, Bill 215, many round tables, many finance and budget consultations—outreach from all the MPPs in Mississauga to the MBOT to consult with them about all the different aspects of bills we are working on, private members' bills,

and any consultations we need to go forward and understand what the obstacles are to unleash the businesses and make sure that the businesses can thrive.

Throughout the three years we have been in government, I can't even count the number of times we got in touch with MBOT and Brad and different sectors of the business to understand their burdens and their issues, especially during COVID-19. Brad and I attended many calls and many Zoom meetings, and even when we were open, many in-person meetings with small businesses, with restaurants and hospitality.

In those three years, our government did a lot of work in regard to small businesses, not-for-profit organizations and municipalities—changes to make sure that the businesses have less load on them.

Can you give us an idea of what you think, in your opinion, the impact is of what we did throughout that time helping the businesses?

Mr. Brad Butt: Thank you very much for that question.

I do want to express, on behalf of the Mississauga Board of Trade, our thanks to our six local MPPs, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic time. You have all been very accessible to us. We haven't agreed on everything, but you've always been there to listen and be supportive, and we appreciate that. I don't think there's much more that we can ask of our locally elected officials, other than that they're willing to sit down and listen and be part of trying to support businesses, particularly during this difficult time.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic taking place, there was no doubt that this government was sending a very strong message to the business community that they had their backs, that you understood some of the concerns we had with some of the legislation brought forward by the previous government—which you brought forward changes to, and those were greatly appreciated by the business community. As I say, you've attended many, many events and functions, both in person and online, to engage with the business community. I can tell you, I know that a number of you have taken back very specific ideas that were raised at Mississauga Board of Trade meetings, and you have gone back to your government, you have gone to the minister or the Premier, and you've said, "This is what the business community is saying, and these are some of the things that we think the government should look at doing." So we've been very appreciative of that, and we hope it continues, obviously. We're always going to be there to stand up for issues that we believe are important to the Mississauga business community. Again, as I say, there are going to be days when we're not going to agree, and that's fine—we understand that and appreciate it—but we really do appreciate the fact that we feel our MPPs have had the backs of small business, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to also take the opportunity to emphasize this piece of legislation we are discussing now. This bill, the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, is expecting to save businesses time and effort in getting business going—and policies which

actually, I think, impeded the flexibility of businesses to grow and to quickly get to market.

Can you tell me why addressing red tape and regulatory burdens is of particular importance to Ontario's economic recovery after we open, after COVID-19?

Mr. Brad Butt: Well, there's no doubt that when we talk to our business members, they believe that there are regulations, restrictions and red tape that make it more of a challenge, that make it more difficult to conduct business in our communities and within the province of Ontario. So when the government brings forward a bill that talks about reducing regulatory burden and red tape—and duplication of regulations is often a huge problem: "The federal government already regulates; why is the province doing it?" or "The municipality is already in that sphere, so why is the province in it?" and vice versa. Always looking at that is important.

Some of the people in this meeting, though—I used to be a federal member of Parliament, and we used to say that legislation never kept up with how the economy was evolving, how things were changing rapidly and quickly, and we've seen that. Legislation is years behind. Regulations are years behind where modernization is moving, where the economy is moving. If you can implement regulatory changes that then don't have to go through a prolonged legislative process to get the change we need to make our businesses more competitive, these kinds of bills like Bill 276 are welcome news.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I have a small comment to add in regard to the bill. It has been said that 31% of Canadians do not have access to Internet, which is understandable, and moving some pieces to online doesn't mean that this eliminates the access to the rest of the population. Talking about the 31% who, for example, don't have cars doesn't mean that we have to prevent the other 70% from having cars because 31% don't have cars. At the same time, our government has been doing a lot of effort, spending lots of money in the budget to expand our broadband to northern Ontario, to areas which don't have good Internet, because the only way to go is having more access, not less access, just for the record.

With that, I will conduct my questions to Brad, with only one more question. In your opinion—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry; that's all the time we have for this round.

0940

We're turning to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Tabuns, you may begin.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much, Chair, and my thanks to all the presenters who came here this morning.

My first question is for Fred Hahn. Fred, thanks for being here. Thanks for the presentation you made. One of the concerns that you raised was with schedule 6, changes to the Employment Standards Act. Can you go over again what it is in that schedule that presents problems?

Mr. Fred Hahn: Certainly. Schedule 6 provides that an employer who uses direct deposit has to do one of two things: deposit it at an institution that is agreed to by the

worker or at an institution close to the worker's workplace. This seems completely reasonable. There's no burden there. Everything's fine. And yet those requirements get removed by the bill. What that seemingly allows is that an employer could pick a financial institution that isn't your financial institution. That financial institution could have higher fees, could be located in a community that's far away from you. It doesn't seem to make any sense. What's the problem this is trying to solve? I can't imagine that, again, my other two co-presenters, who are worried about regulatory burden, would find this a burden, because employers haven't found it a burden to just be able to work with workers and deposit their cheques in an institution close to their workplace or one that they choose.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Is there anything else in the schedule that's problematic?

Mr. Fred Hahn: In terms of schedule 6?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, anything else in schedule 6 that's problematic.

Mr. Fred Hahn: Well, I have to confess, it was a real challenge to be able to wade our way through all of the different pieces in this legislation. In fact, just yesterday we discovered the schedule that deals with creating the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. So I hesitate to say that there are no other problems here, because I quite honestly can't say that. We just didn't have adequate time to actually look properly at all of the proposed changes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I understand that completely. I think omnibus bills are always difficult to get through, frankly—you're right—because there's not a unifying theme that actually gives one a road map to get through them and distinguish what's problematic and what's not.

I'll just ask quickly—and then I'll turn it over to my colleague Chris Glover—with regard to Ontario Works, you commented that the workload for social workers now dealing with people on OW is such that you don't see them being in a position to actually deliver another raft of programs around life stabilization. Could you just clarify a bit on that? Does this mean that, in fact, this would be a dead letter for the provision of those other services?

Mr. Fred Hahn: Yes, that's really very clearly and strongly what we're hearing from our members. Municipalities have been under a great deal of financial strain. As a result, caseloads have mounted for folks who deliver Ontario Works. Many of them have hundreds of folks they're responsible for. It's simply not possible to adequately imagine that somebody could, even in today's system, be in touch with hundreds of people in a regular way that assists them—never mind a new suite of things that is, quite clearly, not articulated here. Nobody really knows what "life stabilization" means, but if it means additional supports and services for folks, I guess that's great, except we're going to need more people to deliver those services. There aren't enough people today to do this adequately, and if we're going to provide enhanced supports, we're going to need more people to do it.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My colleague Chris Glover may well have questions. If Chris runs out of time, I'd be happy to come back. Thanks very much, Fred.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: How much time is on the clock?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Three minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Chris Glover: He timed it exactly in half. Thank you, Peter.

Thank you all for being here. I have a quick question to Fred.

I hear what you're saying about the independence of the new school of medicine: that the board of governors and the senate are going to be determined through regulation, which essentially gives the minister control over the institution, and that's a real concern.

The other issue that I'd like to ask you about is with the Ontario Works and ODSP changes. Right now, across this province, there's a homelessness crisis. You can especially see it in downtown Toronto. Our parks are full of tent encampments with people with no place to go. Our shelters are full of—the pandemic has exacerbated it. Do you think that the potential changes to Ontario Works and ODSP are going to further fuel this crisis, or are they actually going to help address this crisis?

Mr. Fred Hahn: Well, it's hard to imagine that they're going to help it. The challenge we have here is that what's proposed is the skeleton. It doesn't really tell you what's going to be underneath it. It doesn't provide additional funding. You're absolutely right to point to the crises of affordable housing. Just a block from my house, there are encampments in a park that are growing every day. It's not because the city of Toronto hasn't done almost heroic tasks at trying to find people places; it's because so many people have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. It's because so many people can't afford to live in this city when we aren't regulating the affordability of housing here. There's nothing here that deals with that.

You can change a structure all you want and you can say things need to go online. If I don't have a house with Internet connection, I can't go online to actually do anything about services. It doesn't actually fix the problem and, in fact, it may make it worse.

Mr. Chris Glover: My next question will be for Brad Butt. Thank you so much for being here.

I meet regularly with small businesses in my riding. They are really struggling, and so many have gone under. The main streets in downtown Toronto are full of closed stores. Are you experiencing something similar? Do you have a sense of how many businesses in Mississauga have gone under through this pandemic?

Mr. Brad Butt: The city of Mississauga economic development office did a study on that. Actually, it's surprisingly low: Under 10% of businesses have been identified as deciding to close permanently within the city of Mississauga.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Brad Butt: The difficulty is, we have certain sectors of the economy—let's pick personal care businesses; hair salons and those types of places—that have been completely under lockdown. They don't even have takeout as an option. They have no other option to survive.

We're still waiting to see that shoe drop. I'm really worried about the number of those that are going to be able to reopen even when the province allows them to reopen under whatever framework is going to happen after the stay-at-home order has expired. We're really worried about that sector.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm also concerned. I have regular meetings with people from that sector as well. They're asking for changes like if it is possible for them to reopen safely if we go to grey or red zones.

The other question I wanted to ask you very quickly: The Ontario Chamber of Commerce recommended five changes to the small business support grant. I won't read them because I'm almost out of time. Do you echo those five recommendations?

Mr. Brad Butt: Yes, and I referenced that letter in—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. That concludes this round.

We'll now turn to the independent member for four and a half minutes. MPP Schreiner, you may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Brad, I'll give you a chance to follow up on that question that was cut off. I can tell you that I have worked with so many small businesses in my riding and even small businesses from outside of my riding just looking for some help. Can you echo what the Ontario chamber has said and any thoughts you have on how we can fix the Ontario Small Business Support Grant to make it work better for small businesses?

Mr. Brad Butt: Thank you for that, and I thank MPP Glover for the question as well.

The Ontario Small Business Support Grant was certainly perceived as being very welcomed, particularly because it was a grant, not another loan; the federal stuff is a lot of loans. So that was appreciated, because it was a grant, and then it was doubled to \$40,000. But like lots of programs, it's often steeped in bureaucratic challenges, in difficulties applying, in not getting calls back when the application has additional questions that could easily be clarified to get the application processed. Now that we're in another wave of a lockdown, one of the things we're calling for is yet again to increase the amount. As the province is making the decision to keep businesses closed and shuttered, I think there's a responsibility to provide some additional financial support there as well.

In that letter that we sent, we did outline a number of different things and challenges with the program. I talked about the site crashing and some other administrative burdens. The overall idea of the program was good, but sometimes these things don't always work well at the end of the day, when you have to go through all these processes. All of you as MPPs are hearing from your small businesses; I know that, and we know that through the chamber network. We tried to offer some ideas to the government to improve the program, and we're hoping that they'll take us up on it.

0950

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I hope so, as well. Some of it may be lack of staffing, just to be able to process the applications.

Fred, are your members the ones who are processing those applications? Is that part of, potentially, the overburdening of the public sector to be able to deliver programs?

Mr. Fred Hahn: I think that those are processed through direct government of Ontario employees, and so that would be members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Okay. I was just curious.

Alex, I want to ask you a question. You haven't been able to get a whole lot of questions in, so just in the little bit of remaining time: We've had some people from the mining sector come in and talk about the potential of a made-in-Ontario clean-tech sector, mining to manufacturing, particularly when it comes to electric vehicles, the parts for electric vehicles, and batteries so we can fully utilize renewables.

Do you have any thoughts from the manufacturing perspective of the potential for Ontario to be a leader—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: —in the clean-tech revolution that's happening around the world?

Mr. Alex Greco: Absolutely, MPP Schreiner. It's good to see you.

I think there absolutely is potential. Right now, the government is consulting on a Critical Minerals Strategy, and I think it's all good that we talk about minerals in terms of a critical minerals list, but there need to be investments tied into clean-technology adoption. Whether that's through direct tax incentives that are written into the tax code, similar to what we've seen in US states like Michigan and Louisiana, for example, or looking at big green innovation funds, where small and medium manufacturers could be able to apply to purchase new machinery, equipment and technology, there has to be that combination.

I think what we've seen in the past when we've talked about critical minerals or anything tied into development is that it has just been a plan but then there has been no investment behind that. If you want technology adoption to happen, you need programs and incentives to be able to incentivize that; otherwise, things will just stay stagnant.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Do you think manufacturers in Ontario are—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time that we have.

We'll now turn to the government for 7.5 minutes. MPP Bailey, you may begin.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Hahn, Mr. Butt and, of course, Mr. Greco.

I'll turn to Mr. Greco. He didn't get too many questions. I'm interested in that mining question, but I'll move on from that right now.

want to know if you could comment on behalf of the one-stop shopping which we've tried to introduce for permitting and others, and how that would have a major effect on Canadian manufacturers and other businesses that you represent.

Mr. Alex Greco: Certainly. I think that the one-stop shop and to always simplify processes are always important for our members, because not only is it from a time

perspective, but it's also about reducing business costs. For years, our members were going through different hoops in terms of getting their questions answered or trying to find out how they get a permit or approval. They didn't really know which way to go, and so anything to streamline business certainly is helpful in that.

It's not perfect yet—I think there are still opportunities where we can focus on a one-window approach—but I think that if we can develop things like Invest Ontario to be that true concierge service, to build on what has happened, I think it will serve us well in the future.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Second point: With the deregulation and a number of other items that are addressed in the bill, could you speak to—I know that's a concern; I'm sure you've discussed it with a lot of your members—how we can protect the environment and health and safety, and what steps your organization and the people you represent have taken to remediate that and make sure safety and health and environmental regulations will be respected?

Mr. Alex Greco: What we've done throughout the years is that we've always put out health and safety guidelines in terms of what our members can follow, in terms of following proper guidelines, but also being environmentally responsible. That has been through our different working groups, as well as all the other sessions that we do, whether it's webinars or conferences.

We are firm believers in balancing the environment and the economy. Safety is a top priority for our members, so we expect our members to be in compliance with environmental permits and approvals and to be on time so they're not only protecting the facility but also their employees, in order to ensure that not only the business is functioning, but also that the neighbouring communities around are safe.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to know a little more about—as MPP Schreiner brought up, and I raised the issue yesterday about not just new mines, but former mines. I listened to a radio program the other day, and they talked about how there were in mines, say, for iron ore many years ago, other minerals they discovered that they just cast aside in these tailings streams, and they could go back in today—they're valuable—they could clean those sites up, remediate them, because there would be money in it. Everybody would win. Have you and your manufacturers had any thoughts on that or looked at that at all?

Mr. Alex Greco: Yes, absolutely. I think if we're going to look at this from a mining perspective, one of the things we need to do is ensure that energy-efficiency solutions support the necessity of existing supply walls, so facilitating the development of new technologies. That's also leveraging things like hydrogen, for example, in order to help spur new mining investments.

Secondly, I think the small and medium manufacturers—if we want them to adopt new critical minerals and be able to go at mining projects, you need an SME transition strategy, and there has to be a focus on global supply chain competitiveness. Tying that in together to align the strategy with our major trading partners to strengthen

regional integrated manufacturing is also going to be important. And then that ties into doing investment supports to support the creation, commercialization and manufacture of new technologies in order to ensure new critical mineral projects.

Mr. Robert Bailey: don't know how much time I've got left, but I've got another question—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Three minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey:—you brought it up and you made me think about it. I spent two hours one day coming home from Toronto listening to a Queen's University study about hydrogen storage and production. Of course, the spot where they were predicting that they would do this that made sense to them would be in Sarnia, Ontario, the petrochemical sector in Ontario and probably North America—anyway, I like to say. I wonder how much you know about that, or if you could comment on the hydrogen storage and energy. It's a different source of energy than I think we've looked at, so I just wondered if you had any comments on that.

Mr. Alex Greco: It's something that more of our members are starting to look at in terms of technology. I think what we've seen, especially in the last few years, whether it's carbon capture and storage or hydrogen, is that they want to look at transitioning. To transition, though, can be very expensive, and so having those investment supports is really important. I think one of the things that we could look at is if we can have even a demonstration facility, whether it's for hydrogen or whether it's for carbon capture and storage. If you fund a demonstration facility to showcase how we could adopt those kinds of technologies, I think that would help the small and medium manufacturers be able to look into that transition, going forward. But that's also tied into private sector and academic partnerships so manufacturers can better understand the reach, the scope and the opportunities of these technologies, and then, from there, look at doing pilot projects to be able to, hopefully, take on an initial project and build it for the future.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I don't know how much time I've got left, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): A minute 30.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I just want to say that the southwestern Ontario geological formations of the salt caverns, anywhere from Huron county down into Sarnia-Lambton and as far as Windsor, served itself well to this. I'm very interested in this concept, and I'm going to put a lot more time and effort into researching it. It's something that I'm very interested in. I think there's a lot of potential. It's a green type of energy. Mr. Schreiner and I will have to have a chat about it some time when we've got a minute. I'm sure he'd be interested too.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Brad, did you have any comments, just before we wrap up?

Mr. Brad Butt: I'm no expert on mining, so I'm not going to comment on that.

I guess the last shout-out would be that we really need MPPs to continue to advocate for small businesses that

have been very shuttered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly, more support is needed, and we hope we can count on you to advocate for that with the government.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That concludes all the time that we have.

At this point, I'd like to thank our presenters for joining us this morning. You are now released.

I wanted to thank the committee for being here this morning. At this point, we are going to recess and resume at 3 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1000 to 1500.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO
MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION
MR. SHELDON LEVY
ADVOCACY CENTRE
FOR TENANTS ONTARIO

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on General Government will now come to order. We're here for public hearings on Bill 276, An Act to enact and amend various Acts.

At this point, I'll call upon our first presenters, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association. Please state your name for the record and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Ms. Wendy Landry: My name is Wendy Landry, and I'm president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association here in northwestern Ontario, primarily out of Thunder Bay. I'm also mayor of the municipality of Shuniah.

Thank you to the Chair for allowing me the opportunity to present to the committee today. As I mentioned, I am president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, as well as mayor of Shuniah, which is just outside of Thunder Bay—we border Thunder Bay—on the shores of Lake Superior. I'm also a member of the Red Rock Indian Band, and I'm the first First Nations woman to be elected as a mayor in the province of Ontario.

NOMA includes the Kenora District Municipal Association, the Rainy River District Municipal Association, the Thunder Bay District Municipal League and the city of Thunder Bay. The area we represent extends from the city of Kenora, with basically the Manitoba border to the west, and then all the way to the town of Hearst in the east and on Highway 17, the town of White River, comprising 37 municipalities.

As well, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, otherwise known as NOMA as we move forward, as well as the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, known as FONOM, form the northern caucus of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. So we're also part of that caucus at AMO.

Why we're here today: The health of northern Ontario universities and the availability of physicians and other skilled health care personnel are both of the utmost concern to our members and the communities we represent. To that end, we are deeply concerned to learn of the

government's decision to dissolve the partnerships between the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Lakehead University and Laurentian University through schedule 16 of Bill 276, which proposes the creation of a new stand-alone Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

A strong, equitable and mutually beneficial relationship has been formed over many, many years between these organizations, and they have, together, developed a comprehensive understanding of the unique health challenges experienced by northern communities and a strong pipeline of students and faculty that live among and serve our population.

I was also a representative of the Indigenous communities participating in the advocacy for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, with the partnership with Lakehead University, in its early years, as well as for the law school within Thunder Bay. We believe that it is short-sighted to sever the union without consulting with the respective parties or considering the ramifications of this decision and the negative impacts it may have on northwestern Ontario communities and our already vulnerable health care system.

There is a desperate shortage of physicians and health care professionals in northwestern Ontario, and the global pandemic has put a microscope on the inadequacies present in our health care system in our northern communities, with limited access to physicians and specialists. Northwestern Ontario is a vast geographic region. Maybe many of you have visited our part of the province; maybe you have not had that opportunity. Smaller communities are not equipped with their own hospitals or trained professionals; therefore, residents from many municipalities must travel long distances to access health care services in our area. Procuring and retaining skilled physicians who can respond to the unique and multi-faceted health care needs of northern communities is of vital importance and will translate to lives saved.

NOSM, along with Lakehead and Laurentian universities, has developed a unique and successful curriculum that has resulted in highly trained physicians and specialists. A large portion of students completed their training in our rural communities in northwestern Ontario, and many choose to stay and develop their practices here. Just from a personal note, I participated as a First Nations woman in the training of doctors here in our scenario situations.

NOSM and Lakehead University are instrumental in attracting and retaining physicians to northwestern Ontario, and their partnership has proven to be effective. We do appreciate that there may be something to be gained by NOSM's separation, including autonomy and expanding their programs and granting degrees. However, there are outstanding questions about the risk to the accreditation of a newly independent medical school that must be resolved before any change could be even contemplated.

As the impacted communities who are reliant on the physicians and health care professionals who graduate from these two institutions, we want to be fully engaged in the decision-making process and have guarantees in

place that there is sufficient northwestern Ontario representation on the school of medicine governance board to ensure our concerns are addressed and that NOSM is stronger than ever in our region, going forward.

With regard to lack of consultation and lack of clarity and assurance, there remain numerous unanswered questions about this matter due to complete lack of consultation. We have plenty of opportunities to participate in consultation through our agreement with the MOU table, with AMO. As well, both FONOM and NOMA are always available to participate in any forms of consultation. We need a comprehensive understanding of why this decision was made so quickly and what the projected outcomes will be to ensure that northwestern Ontario will not be negatively affected. At this time, there are no assurances for us.

Historically, Lakehead and Laurentian universities provided funding to NOSM. It is unclear how this funding will be supplemented.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Ms. Wendy Landry: Additionally, NOSM being a separate entity, their presence in northwestern Ontario could be limited if they were to decide to move out of northwestern Ontario. Risks to the cost to the province and taxpayers in a time where we need economic recovery due to the pandemic and more costs to the taxpayers should not be considered or even risked at this time. While we have to date heard assurances that this wouldn't happen, this is insufficient, given the importance of Lakehead and NOSM to all of our communities. The NOSM dean and board have never met with any of us.

There are also economic impacts. Having NOSM associated with Lakehead University and Thunder Bay is critically important to regional and Indigenous jurisdictions and to our local economy. The students who attend these institutions and the staff and faculty who work there make meaningful contributions to our economy. There are also thousands of direct and indirect jobs that result from having a strong, internationally recognized university in Thunder Bay. We are worried that any further dismantling of northern Ontario universities will not only affect those who are currently attending or work there, but it will also impact the choices of our young people—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. That's all the time we have, unfortunately.

We'll now turn to our next presenter. Sheldon Levy, please state your name for Hansard, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Sheldon Levy: My name is Sheldon Levy, and I appear before you as the president emeritus at Ryerson University and as well as a former deputy minister for colleges and universities at Queen's Park. Good afternoon, Madam Chair and all the members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak regarding the proposed Northern Ontario School of Medicine University Act.

I know you will be hearing from many people about the future of NOSM. You're going to hear about the funding and governance. You're going to hear about accreditation and quality assurance and academic structures. All these

issues preoccupy decision-makers when structural changes are afoot. They are all important issues, but I'm not going to talk about them. I'm going to talk to you today about students. They are the reason our universities exist. So when you evaluate any proposal for structural change, the litmus test that really matters most is whether or not it is better for students.

What matters to students is the reputation of their university, the quality of their education and their campus experience. On all these accounts, the affiliation between NOSM, Lakehead and Laurentian has been incredibly beneficial to students, and here I mean those students at NOSM and students studying in other disciplines at Laurentian and Lakehead. I worry that many of those benefits will be lost as a result of the proposed legislation. And measured on what is best for students, all the partners in the affiliation will be weaker as a result.

Allow me to use Lakehead University as my primary example, because I happen to know it particularly well. In the last 10 years, Lakehead has seen a remarkable growth in application to its programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Getting students to choose careers in STEM is a priority across the post-secondary system, and most certainly a priority for northern Ontario, but you can't fool those students into choosing STEM. The best way to boost enrolments in STEM is to have top-tier STEM programs, and when students see that you have a medical school, they know the STEM programs will be excellent.

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But it's just not STEM enrolments that benefit from having NOSM as part of Lakehead. NOSM is part of all of Lakehead's recruitment materials, its website, its publication, its open houses, its preview days and even its application form. It's a huge reputation builder for Lakehead across all programs. It leads not only to more enrolments but more motivated and more talented students in every department—the kinds of students who want to be challenged in their education, who, in turn, provide NOSM with a better pool of local applicants.

The enrolment effect of these affiliation agreements ripples throughout the universities and the community. These are things that no statistic can capture but that everyone can feel. When NOSM joined with Laurentian and Lakehead, it created a real buzz in the local high schools because for all of the students, the local university became a more attractive option. More students in high school looked at Laurentian and Lakehead as their first choice.

Over the last decade, roughly half of NOSM West graduates had prior academic experience at Lakehead, and more than one out of 10 of those NOSM graduates self-identified as Indigenous. That's incredibly important to NOSM because its mandate is to train physicians committed to the north. Attending and excelling at Lakehead is a great way for students to demonstrate that commitment.

Then, there are the international students. Ten years ago, if I told you that Thunder Bay would be a magnet for

international students, you probably wouldn't have believed me. Well, Lakehead's international student population has increased from 150 in 2011 to more than 1,800 today. All of northern Ontario is enriched economically and socially by having so many international students. Just think of what that means to Indigenous communities when their students aspire to learn at Lakehead as their path to NOSM.

Then, there's all the cross-departmental partnerships that have been forged between the medical school and Lakehead's existing departments. Thanks to the affiliation with NOSM, Lakehead now offers an entire suite of interdisciplinary research programs from biotechnology to medical visits to smart health technologies. These programs also mean that NOSM students get a better and more advanced medical education. They also create better research opportunities for Lakehead graduate students in physics, chemistry, computer science and electrical engineering. If you ask the researchers involved, they'll tell you straight up: The research at NOSM would not be where it is today without Lakehead. NOSM would not be able to recruit and supervise all the graduate students it needs to run the experiments that have been central.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. Sheldon Levy: I know many people will say in response to all this that there's no reason all these partnerships and other benefits can't continue, but as a former university president, I can tell you that won't happen. It's simply not going to play out that way. A divorce is a divorce.

Once NOSM becomes a separate institution, everything about the approach at Lakehead and Laurentian must change. Recruitment is the biggest casualty because Lakehead can no longer claim it has a medical school. All the joint research programs could no longer be taken for granted. Lakehead's graduate programs and STEM disciplines would now be recruiting directly from NOSM's talented talent pool for students. So NOSM and Lakehead, which are currently working well as collaborators, would lose these synergies that make them both better for their students. This would be a loss to northern Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time we have.

We'll now turn to our third presenter, Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. Please state your name for Hansard and then you may begin. You'll have seven minutes.

Mr. Douglas Kwan: Thank you, and good afternoon. My name is Douglas Kwan. I'm the director of advocacy and legal services at the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. We're a community legal clinic that provides legal services for Ontario's tenants.

I'm here to speak about schedule 27 and the amendments to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. The reasoning behind schedule 27 of Bill 276 may have had the best intentions in mind, which was to protect tenants, but I'm here to tell you today that it appears to be overbroad, with a real consequence of silencing serious concerns with the Landlord and Tenant Board. Furthermore, since half of the participants of the board are tenants, and most of them are

of limited means, it is likely that the fine of \$25,000 would have a punishing impact on their lives.

Over the last year, we have witnessed the growing equity issues within the Landlord and Tenant Board and with the adjudicators during the hearings. The move to the online format has only highlighted and made more evident the issues at the board. With these issues, ACTO has many concerns surrounding the online-first switch that the board is moving towards.

There are three concerns that we wanted to highlight to you today. First, the current Landlord and Tenant Board operations are not in keeping with the duties of procedural fairness and equal treatment. By forcing everyone to access the board digitally, they're leaving out people who have digital barriers. They don't have the data plans; they don't have efficient phone plans or the hardware or the digital literacy to truly participate at the board level.

Secondly, the technical problems are still exacerbated at the board. People are not being admitted to hearing rooms. They have problems turning off their mute during the hearings. People are waiting for hours to be let into their hearing rooms, as I mentioned before. They also have limited ability to provide evidence. There are size caps and also a number of exhibits. Oftentimes, when they submit on time with the board and they appear on the day of their hearing, the adjudicator doesn't have that evidence before them.

The third is the lack of training for adjudicators. We have been seeing that many adjudicators don't know the rules, especially for simple matters such as the rules of evidence versus argument. They either don't know them or they're ignoring them. There's also inconsistency on how the rules are being applied between adjudicators, and really a disregard of the exercise of their power and interpretation of the legislation to preserve tenancies and protect tenants.

These issues have the effect of unfairly evicting Ontario's tenants, and none of these issues would have gained public attention without the participants and interested parties sharing their experience.

The other concern we have with this schedule is that it is a possible infringement on the freedom of expression within the charter. As I understand the amendment of schedule 27, it copies section 136 of the Courts of Justice Act. But what is of interest in the note is that it doesn't also copy section 137.1 of the same act. That section concerns anti-SLAPP provisions. SLAPP stands for "strategic lawsuit against public participation." And it's notable. Without a safeguard, without a mitigating factor, just putting this amendment in the legislation would possibly infringe the Charter of Rights and Freedoms with regard to the freedom of expression.

We also note that this new amendment that this government wants to implement for tribunals, which is a copy of the Courts of Justice Act—those two bodies are not the same. You have one body where it has long institutional provisions and safeguards, run by judges who have been practising law for 10 years and is governed by the Law Society of Ontario; whereas tribunals are oftentimes lay

adjudicators who do not have the same safeguards. You have courts where lawyers are present representing parties, and in tribunals, it is more of a people's court, where more self-represented litigants are appearing before it. That means that tribunals should be under greater scrutiny than courts. We feel that this schedule silences that important public scrutiny.

Furthermore, we have a concern that this legislation might have unintended consequences. As I mentioned before, many self-represented litigants appear before the tribunal—those who have language barriers, those who don't understand the complex process. Many of them have relatives or friends or neighbours record the process for the parties, to be replayed later, so that they can better understand what transpired at the hearing and what everything meant. Surely it's not the government's intention that that transfer of information from a relative who is recording the proceeding to the party themselves, in an effort to help explain what happened—surely in that type of situation, you don't want to unnecessarily fine people who are merely trying to get a better understanding of what happened at the board.

1520

Lastly, I want to say that the Landlord and Tenant Board—and the tribunal before it, the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal—has existed for over 20 years. Throughout its operation, it never needed this additional provision or power. In fact—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Douglas Kwan: —the current Statutory Powers Procedure Act, section 9, allows the board to remove parties. It allows the board to issue any order that it sees fit, even asking a peace officer to enforce the orders, in order for it to maintain order at its hearings. So that power is already there. No fine is necessary. It's within the purview of the board to issue what it determines is appropriate at the time.

Overall, the new measures of fining \$25,000 for those who disrupt and distribute recordings of the hearing seem more like a way to keep these abuses quiet than to protect vulnerable tenants. We ask that this schedule be removed. It requires greater scrutiny in a bill in its own right to ensure compliance with the charter and with the expectation of our civil society.

Thank you so much for listening to my presentation. I'm open to any questions you may have.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

We'll now turn to the government for the first round of questions. MPP Harris, you have seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Mike Harris: It's great to be back here on committee this afternoon. Thank you to all of our presenters.

I'd like to ask Ms. Landry a few questions.

I'm from North Bay originally, which often gets confused as Thunder Bay. It's funny, because everyone says, "Oh, you're from so far away." I say, "Well, it's only three and a half hours from Toronto."

Ms. Wendy Landry: Try driving this far—18 hours.

Mr. Mike Harris: Exactly. I have had the opportunity to visit your beautiful part of the country many times. In fact, one of the last trips that I participated in on behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry was up in Thunder Bay.

Ms. Wendy Landry: I appreciate that you did that.

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, we had a great time up there for a couple days. We got to visit with some of the conservation officers who are working out of that area, and tour around a little bit and see some of the good things that are happening.

I know that you're specifically here to talk a little bit more about NOSM and Lakehead and some of the different things that are happening there, but I want to focus on some of the other things that are, I think, in this bill and in some of the other red tape bills we've introduced that are really key for the economic success of northwestern Ontario. There are some really good things around critical mineral strategies in this bill.

Obviously being a port city or a port area on Lake Superior, there are a lot of goods that get moved back and forth through that area. Also, the forestry industry is super-important to northwestern Ontario and, more specifically, to Thunder Bay in general.

I want to get your thoughts on what it means to remove burdensome red tape from businesses, to help businesses. Obviously, right now, it's even tougher and it's even more crucial for our businesses to get a hand up and try to get through the pandemic and the really tough times that they've had over the last year and a little bit now. What does it mean for some of these smaller communities to have the ability to now hire two or three more people or expand or move into a different area? How important is it for a lot of these little things or little incremental pieces that the government has put forward to remove some of this red tape for businesses in your neck of the woods?

Ms. Wendy Landry: Thank you very much, MPP Harris, for the question.

Something that is very, very passionate for me is that economic piece. We do believe, in northwestern Ontario, that we are the future of Ontario's economic recovery with regard to the natural resources and the opportunities we have through mining and natural resources, MNR and forestry, and those kinds of opportunities. The ability to reduce the red tape is something that I've been in discussions with, with some of your colleagues, in some of our processes and changes of legislation etc. I'll tell you that the reduction of red tape and getting businesses moving forward much quicker, online much quicker, is a huge help, an economic driver right from each corner of our NOMA region.

Thank you for the comments with regard to North Bay versus Thunder Bay. People often forget, even just in relation to NOSM and Lakehead and your question, just how distant we are from North Bay and Sudbury—it's 12 to 16 hours. We're talking about 18 to 20 hours from anywhere in the GTA. So it's an opportunity for us to not only attract people to come to our communities to live a

good quality of life, an affordable way of life, but to be that economic driver for our communities.

The reduction of red tape is so important to get business online quicker, not to mention the accessibility and the opportunities for natural gas expansion, too, for some of our mines and for some of our small businesses that are associated with those mines. If you've been up this way, you know that our Canadian Shield isn't that great for us, up this way, when it comes to pipelines and opportunities to attract big businesses to our area, as well, to bring those costs of running businesses down. So the reduction of red tape is a huge piece that we're happy to have further discussions on at any time. We have many ideas of how to do that. NOMA has always had a solutions-based approach to some of the issues that we track.

To attract people to come to northwestern Ontario, when we talk about international students, to small businesses, to just having people come this way—I've been to Toronto, prior to the pandemic, of course, on a weekly basis, and most taxi drivers don't know where we are, and a lot of them have engineering certificates and high education skills where they could be contributing and working in their areas of study. The reduction of red tape and also in addition the ability to advertise and participate in that attraction to coming to a different part of the province is definitely something.

We have Bombardier—sorry, Alstom now—and the railcars piece and the minerals.

We always say, and we truly do believe, that we can help your government on the economic recovery after this pandemic because we are the future of this province, with the minerals and the natural resources we have available here.

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, I absolutely agree.

It's funny, because MPP Bourgouin always gives me a hard time because I'm not from true northern Ontario but the gateway to the north.

Ms. Wendy Landry: Exactly. We do establish that there is a difference between northwestern Ontario and northeastern Ontario.

Mr. Mike Harris: Absolutely.

Ms. Wendy Landry: The definite difference is the access to the bigger city. So if you talk about people coming to work for our smaller businesses, if you have a choice between going to North Bay or Sudbury and being closer to relatives who are in the GTA area, you're going to choose that over an 18-hour drive. Right?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes. It's absolutely a challenge. When we look at better services via air transportation and different things, it does help connect communities.

I think that the one piece you touched on, too—just the ability to remove red tape for different permits or different applications, instead of having to send paper in 50 times to a bunch of different ministries, having more of a one-window approach and modernizing and trying to do these things, so that folks who maybe live an hour from the closest ServiceOntario office don't have to drive all the way in, spend an hour there and then drive all the way back

home. You've basically eaten up your entire day. So being able to move a lot of services online, too, is really important.

Sorry, Chair, did you say one minute left?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Now you have 10 seconds.

Mr. Mike Harris: Okay.

Anyway, Wendy, thank you so much. I appreciate your comments.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. We'll now turn to—

Ms. Wendy Landry: I appreciate that, and if I may—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): My apologies; we'll have to wait until the next round.

At this point, we'll turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes.

Sorry, MPP Sabawy; do you have a point of order?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: You didn't recognize that I am on the committee. I just want to make sure that I am noticed on the committee. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Okay. We'll now turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I do give a hard time to MPP Harris, because it's just fun doing so. That being said, I'm from Mushkegowuk—James Bay, and of course, I live in Kapuskasing, on Highway 11.

I want to thank all the presenters today for your presentations. They're greatly appreciated. My questions, though, for this round will be directed mostly to NOMA and also Sheldon.

1530

To start with, Wendy, you mentioned coming from small communities in northern Ontario—the distance. You did mention in your presentation the concern—to take NOSM and to separate them from Lakehead and Laurentian. It's quite the concern—without any consulting with NOMA and the rest of the northern communities. It's very scary. I've heard this throughout the communities in my region: “We had a good thing. If it's not broken, why fix it?” This is something we tend to say a lot in the north. If it's not broken, don't fix it.

I'd like to hear more about the effect [*inaudible*] on these small communities because of the lack of—we don't have as many physicians. We don't have access to many specialists. It takes us on the road quite a bit. I'd like to hear your aspect—more of an explanation on these points that you brought forward, Wendy, please.

Ms. Wendy Landry: Merci beaucoup, MPP. I appreciate that you are very well familiar with the northwest. I have a lot of family down in the Kapuskasing and Hearst area, on my husband's side. Thank you for asking the question.

The impacts on our local community are really quite—grandeur, if you will. The response to the government's announcement has been overwhelmingly negative from the northern communities. Over 2,000 letters about this issue have been sent to the ministers and local MPPs, respectfully, and we have received thousands of messages

from students, faculty, staff, alumni, regarding their concerns with this decision. I have the Chronicle-Journal in Thunder Bay today with a big column in there with their concerns. Thunder Bay city council passed a motion as well, and each of our communities is standing strong on this.

To your point specifically: If you're choosing a university that has an attached school of medicine, no word of doubt that you will take Lakehead into consideration. Even if you've never been to northwestern Ontario and you've never been to this part of the province—because that piece attracts them to the Lakehead school, Lakehead University, they come this way. That's what I was talking about with MPP Mike Harris—the ability to attract people to come to the northwest, the northern part of our province, to study and become doctors. It is so imperative that it attracts people, and then when we get them here, we have to get them here to keep them here. So if we can get them here with that attraction of that attachment with NOSM to Lakehead, the effects are insurmountable and unmeasurable, to be quite honest.

So many of those students, once they come to this part of the world, realize the quality of that life. They realize the opportunities—the opportunity to be a specialist in their specific area of study, in any one of our small communities. Many doctors who have now completed that program have said that it was Lakehead that attracted them here, attached with the ability to carry on through the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in this area. And then, our shortage of doctors—we have locums that are calling in from Toronto. We have people we can't get to move here because they think we live in igloos sometimes. It's so remote for them that they hardly believe that we have television, I believe, sometimes. So to reduce that piece and attract people here, we can keep them here when they get here, because they realize that the quality of life here is unmeasurable, if you will.

To another point, the distance between our communities and the opportunity for them to practise and specialize in different areas of medicine: The competitive levels are less here. If you go down to the larger hospitals in Toronto, you might have 1,000 doctors applying for one specific area of medical specialization; whereas here, you might be one in only maybe a couple, maybe 10—under 100. Those opportunities to also gain that experience and gain that medical experience and to improve on their own knowledge are really something that we don't advertise enough, if you may.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you, Wendy.

Sheldon, you used the word “divorce,” and I'd like you to expand on that. If NOSM is separate from both universities, there is a huge impact. I'd just like you to explain more of what you meant by that comment.

Mr. Sheldon Levy: I think there is a tendency when you look at these issues to think, “Well, even if they are separated or apart, why can't all of the same things continue?” My comment was that that's wishful thinking.

When I said a divorce is a divorce, what I meant by that is that when Lakehead right now recruits students, exactly

as Wendy said, they recruit students advertising that they have a university that has a medical school. That attracts students, exactly as Wendy said. The moment that they're separated, Lakehead cannot say that again. And so, all of a sudden, the way students look at Lakehead and Laurentian is, by definition, different. Lakehead can't now say they have a medical school when they don't.

I think the other aspect of this is that when NOSM came into northern Ontario and became part of Laurentian and Lakehead—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Sheldon Levy: —the NOSM faculty helped build joint programs, and there's no guarantee that those joint programs will continue. But Wendy said it better than I, and I agree with her 100% on what would be lost.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: If I could hear from you on the effects on Indigenous peoples, I'd like to hear you. We don't have much time, so a quick response, please.

Ms. Wendy Landry: Definitely, that includes all of our Indigenous people too—sorry, unless you wanted Sheldon to speak to that.

Mr. Sheldon Levy: Oh, please, Wendy. You're doing great.

Ms. Wendy Landry: The impact on our Indigenous communities is huge. The numbers are low already on the acceptance of Indigenous students into the NOSM program, and we have the majority of the First Nations in this part of the province. Out of 134 First Nations, the majority of them are in northern Ontario. To have our First Nations people leave our area to go to a school, even in Sudbury, is intimidating. As you know, that's still northern Ontario—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time that we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the independent member for 4.5 minutes. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three presenters for coming to committee today. I have so many questions and so little time.

Before I turn it back over to you, Wendy, I just want to say that this conversation between Thunder Bay and North Bay is that—my electric vehicle can make it to North Bay on a single charge, but there is no way I'm getting to Thunder Bay on a single charge. So those are important differences, for anybody who's checking Google Maps.

Wendy, could you finish on the importance of the effects to Indigenous communities and, in particular, specifically around if NOSM is independent from Lakehead, how that affects Indigenous students?

Ms. Wendy Landry: Thank you for the question, and thank you for the comment on the electric vehicle. I always say that there are no plug-ins in our trees between even Hearst and Thunder Bay.

Specifically, to finish my comment: As a First Nations woman, back in the 1980s I was accepted into law school, and the only law school that I got into was U of T. I chose not to go because it meant leaving my community. Leaving our communities to go to the big-city environments to further our education is something that is, to the heart of

Indigenous people, hard to do. It's very unlikely for our students to leave our communities to go study in larger communities. Even a place like Sudbury, even though it's still in northern Ontario, would be considered a great distance away from our communities, because we're so attached to our communities and have to be responsible to our families. There are many different pulls from all of our people and our culture and our history with Canada—that our people still feel very connected to our communities, and it's difficult to leave to go to larger schools.

What does that mean for Lakehead University, if the separation happens with NOSM? Potentially, our Indigenous population that is presently applying to go to medical school because Lakehead University is so accessible and located in an area for our Indigenous people to access within a small amount of time, would be gone. We would lose those applications or even the thought of our young people when considering where to go to school and what studies they want to do. If they're considering medical school, potentially, just like me—I chose not to go in the legal field because it meant me leaving this area—our students won't apply and they won't go. That's a huge disservice to the Indigenous communities our doctors service, to this area, and to the connection to Lakehead University feeling like a local home school to all of this region, and that ability to carry on their post-graduate studies from Lakehead into the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

1540

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks for going into some detail on that for us.

My next question is either for you, Wendy, or Sheldon—whichever one of you thinks you can answer this better. You talked about the importance of attracting students. I've had some faculty reach out to me who are very worried that if the separation happens, it will be difficult to attract and retain faculty, as well.

Sheldon, this may be a better question for you, given your experience. Is that a concern, as well?

Mr. Sheldon Levy: Well, faculty members are going to choose where they can advance their career the most—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. Sheldon Levy:—where there are research opportunities. There's no doubt that Lakehead and Laurentian are able to attract the best faculty members because of the greater opportunity that's available with NOSM, particularly in the biological sciences and sciences generally. It would be the same if you asked it about U of T, McMaster or Western. Having a medical school is a big plus for attracting the very best talent.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Obviously, that has implications for students, because I would assume students want to study at places where—

Mr. Sheldon Levy: It's a virtuous circle, yes, absolutely.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Ten seconds.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: That's what I thought—my internal clock.

We'll get you on the next round, Douglas.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to the government for 7.5 minutes. MPP Sandhu.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to thank all three presenters for their presentation.

I will direct my first question to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association.

Establishing NOSM and Hearst as independent degree-granting institutions demonstrates the Ontario government's commitment to post-secondary education in northern Ontario. The evolution of universities is not new. For example, Lakehead University started as a technical institute, became a college and then a university. This legislation puts NOSM on equal footing with Lakehead and Laurentian, and allows for a true, equal relationship between the three schools.

It is also crucial to point out that the president of NOSM has already stated that the school has no plans to leave Sudbury or Thunder Bay. The founding dean of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine also said that the provincial bill aimed at making the school an independent institution shouldn't be an issue, as long as NOSM continues to address the health needs of the region. So my question is, are you aware of these details?

Ms. Wendy Landry: Thank you for your question.

We have not had the opportunity to directly speak with the dean of NOSM. We know that she has made public statements after we asserted ourselves and advocated for not severing the relationship.

There are no guarantees. There are no assurances. Just like some of the items that we talked about today, the cons outweigh the pros. At this point, there is no stand-alone school of medicine in North America that does not have accreditation or a relationship with a university. All of the signs, all of the research and all of the statements that have come forward do not support the dean of NOSM's push to bring this school as an independent school.

At the same time, there was no consultation with the outside, all of the other impacts. Although she says that the school will continue to service our area, it will be a grave economic downturn with regard to, like we mentioned, our attraction of students to Lakehead University. As well, the university has financially supported—they do contribute \$8.4 million, I think it is, to the costs. There are no assurances that those costs will not go back to the taxpayer, and I don't think I have to tell the government that this is not a time to add dollars and money to taxpayers' costs with running an independent school.

We also understand and know that there's a lot of administration. There's the building. There are the academic supports from the university that support students. All of those—that relationship, tied to that school—will be lost with that severance of that relationship. I could go on for 10 minutes, but I know she's going to cut me off. There are so many reasons why severing it does not support a successful transition to NOSM being a stand-alone, successful institution.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Don't you think that this legislation would make NOSM [*inaudible*] a great deal of

additional burdens, some red tape and regulations that are duplicative and unnecessary?

Ms. Wendy Landry: Sorry; was that question for me?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Yes.

Ms. Wendy Landry: Yes—definitely a burden. The financial costs alone that would be associated with the stand-alone school of medicine would be downloaded onto the taxpayers of Ontario. We don't think that this is a time to do that.

Lakehead University has always been a reliable partner that has operated on a balanced budget policy for over 15 years. It has positioned Lakehead to continue to serve the faculties, the students' interests, including those of NOSM. There has always been a great reputation to the highest level. Lakehead's financial sustainability metrics are a strength and demonstrate that not only are they financially sound but they lead the way amongst all universities in their categories. Medical schools are a very important part of public universities in attracting faculty and students. They also enable Lakehead to maximize research funding and creative and invaluable opportunities for collaboration and innovation, both in research and in teaching, as both Sheldon and I mentioned, and that in turn has an impact on the economic and social health of the communities we serve. We strongly believe that the reputational and material risks to the future of Lakehead University if the faculty of medicine is severed from Lakehead—we won't be able to come back from it.

Let's also be clear that there will be a financial impact, like I mentioned, to NOSM if they were severed from our existing partnerships. While the proposed legislation presents the severing of NOSM as being cost-neutral, this is absolutely not the case. There will be substantial costs that will be involved with doing that, and I think everybody should be very, very concerned with those costs.

I hope I answered your question.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you.

My last question I will direct to the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. Section 136 of the Courts of Justice Act attempts to protect both in-person and virtual court proceedings from disruptions by prohibiting the unauthorized recording of court hearings. However, there's no similar such joint provision that exists for tribunal hearings. This bill, if passed, will extend similar protections to people who appear before a tribunal that they would have if they appeared in court. Simply put, it will put these tribunals on an equal footing with the courts when it comes to virtual hearings.

Why do you oppose extending these similar provisions to tribunals when they would help protect the privacy of all participants in hearings; most significantly, witnesses and litigants?

Mr. Douglas Kwan: Thank you for the question.

As I mentioned before, the courts and tribunals are not the same beast. You have judges who are peer reviewed, who've practised law for 10 years, who've been governed by the Law Society of Ontario, and you have lawyers and licensed paralegals appearing before them. Courts are not

a place for self-represented litigants, whereas tribunals oftentimes are.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. Douglas Kwan: So you need the review and public scrutiny involved at these tribunals to ensure that they function properly. It's incumbent upon the government to support the Landlord and Tenant Board so that there's confidence from the public in their provision.

Secondly, the Courts of Justice Act actually has an anti-SLAPP provision: section 137.1, which is the section after 136. There is no counterbalance within the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

Thirdly, the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in section 9 gives all the powers they need. So if you want to cut red tape, why add more provisions to a power that they already have in section 9 of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act? It's simply inefficient and not a great use of legislative time or resources.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I think that's all the time I have, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to the official opposition.

However, before we begin, I just want to confirm, MPP Bisson, that you are MPP Bisson and that you are present and here in Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, I am MPP Bisson, and I'm here in Timmins.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. Welcome.

MPP Glover, you may begin.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the presenters for being here. Northern Ontario is well represented on the screen right now, I've got to say, especially with the addition of MPP Bisson.

I'll start with some questions, and I'll start with Wendy about Lakehead University.

I hear what you're saying about Lakehead University. I lived in Geraldton in the 1980s, and I was on the forest fire crew, so I know how big northern Ontario is. I also know how difficult it was to attract a doctor to Geraldton in the 1980s. One of the doctors was moving out, and it was virtually a disaster for the community. There were all kinds of recruitment strategies.

1550

In my understanding and my recollection, it was a 25-year fight to get the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. I toured Lakehead University. I was the critic for colleges and universities before my current—I'm tech and innovation now. I toured Lakehead University and Confederation College a couple of years ago. The thing that really struck me is the disproportionate impact of Lakehead and Confederation on the northern economy versus in Toronto. We've got three universities and five colleges, and each one is important. But in Thunder Bay, Lakehead and Confederation are it.

You were talking about the negative economic impact, and Sheldon was talking about the ability to attract students.

Can you talk a little bit more about the fight for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and what that meant?

The other question I have: Does this feel like the government—you said there was no consultation—is coming in and taking away something that northern Ontarians fought for 25 years to achieve?

Ms. Wendy Landry: Thank you very much for your question.

I appreciate your time in Geraldton. So you have a very good idea of what our geographical area looks like.

The MPP who is representing the government said that there were assurances from the dean that they would still include the north and they wouldn't be leaving Thunder Bay completely, but we can't trust that. You're absolutely right; we fought for this for 25 years. As I mentioned in my opening comments, I was part of the Indigenous leadership that represented our communities to advocate not only for the school of medicine but for the school of law, as well. Those were huge turning points for our economic drivers for this area.

The ability to bring and attract people, as you said, to MNR, to all of these different areas for our northwestern communities, has to be a very strong draw. We can't rely just on forest fires, for example, and the recruitment of firefighters in our communities in the summer months. This has to be year-round, multi-year commitments from these attractions to our communities. The school of medicine is a key anchor to that, because not only do we have the school of medicine-Lakehead University relationship; we have the research. We have made so much progress in that research area, as well. We've become well known and world renowned for the research and the work that has stemmed from that partnership between Lakehead and NOSM.

This does feel like not being consulted. It feels like the rug is being pulled out from underneath us. Twenty-five years of advocacy for that school was a huge accomplishment that our entire region celebrated and were so proud of and continue to be proud of. To just let this go without screaming and yelling and getting our voices heard—I'm a loud personality anyway, and I always joke with your colleagues that I have to scream a little louder, to hear us from this part of the province. I can't say enough how disappointed and scared and paranoid and suspicious we were that this happened, without any discussion, without any consultation, not even from the dean of the school, who has the relationship with our university.

We don't have any representation on the board to have that voice. The two chairs who would have represented our communities were not part of that decision, were not even part of the consultation or the discussion. That puts up some red flags for us.

So, absolutely, it's a huge impact, and it's a slap in the face, to be quite frank, after many, many years of advocating.

Mr. Chris Glover: We hear you loudly and clearly, and I'll be taking some of your words—all of us will—into the Legislature when this is debated again.

Sheldon, when I was up there, I was speaking with a number of international students, including Farhan, who

was the president of the student council at Lakehead at the time. He was talking about the attractiveness. He's a student from India who had come to Lakehead University. There were other students at Confederation, as well. Part of the attraction would have been, as you said, the school of medicine. Tell me about the impact that that will have on the ability of Thunder Bay and Lakehead to attract international students.

Mr. Sheldon Levy: Thanks for the question.

International students are attracted by the reputation of the university, primarily. They're attracted because they have programs, they have faculty, and there is no doubt the prestige of having a medical school enhances that reputation of the university. As I mentioned, Lakehead then advertises that they have a medical school, and it's attractive to international students. It brings them into Thunder Bay, not only in the biological sciences but in all the disciplines, simply because the reputation of a university is enhanced by having a medical school. So if you take away the medical school, it won't hurt the applications of southern universities, that's for sure, but it will hurt the applications of Lakehead. It's a pretty certain proposition.

Mr. Chris Glover: I can see the economic spinoffs—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. Chris Glover: Getting a school of medicine meant that doctors were being trained in the north, and it meant that places like Geraldton could actually get a doctor. Having a doctor is an economic driver for a small town like Geraldton, as well.

How much time do I have, Madam Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Just under one minute. You have about 45 seconds.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay.

Mr. Kwan, you mentioned that the bill ignores section 37.1 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I didn't quite get that. I don't know if you'll have a chance to answer it now—but if you could email my office with a more detailed explanation afterwards.

Mr. Douglas Kwan: Sure. Section 137.1 of the Courts of Justice Act is the piece that follows section 136, which is what the government is using as a template for schedule 27. Section 137.1 of the Courts of Justice Act is the anti-SLAPP legislation. It allows parties to not be silenced when they're providing public opinions on matters through litigation—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time that we have.

I'd like to thank our presenters for their time. You may now step down.

We'll now call upon our next set of presenters, starting with John Robert Prichard and Arnold Aberman—my apologies. We have one round left for MPP Schreiner.

Sorry, MPP Schreiner. That was my mistake. MPP Schreiner, you have 4.5 minutes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair. I was just getting ready to type a message to the Clerk asking about my second round, so I appreciate that.

Douglas, the question I wanted to ask you is very similar to the question that MPP Glover asked, so if you could continue your answer, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Douglas Kwan: Absolutely. When you have 137.1 and 136 in the same legislation, it mitigates one from the other and allows for freedom of expression. So when you have a provision fining people for reproducing or disseminating reported material to third parties and then you have another provision in the same legislation saying people are protected by providing public opinions on matters, then they balance each other out. There is no anti-SLAPP provision currently in the Statutory Powers Procedure Act that balances schedule 27.

What's more, section 9(2) of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act gives all the powers that tribunals need without having schedule 27 placed in this bill. Section 9(2) says, "A tribunal may make such orders or give such directions at an oral or electronic hearing as it considers necessary for the maintenance of order at the hearing, and, if any person disobeys or fails to comply" with that order, then "the tribunal ... may call for the assistance of any peace officer to enforce the order or direction...." It's a very broad power.

So the question that committee members should ask is, what gap is schedule 27 trying to fill? And if there is no gap, are we just adding more red tape to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: And adding more red tape specifically for tenants in general—would that be correct to say?

Mr. Douglas Kwan: Well, adding another layer of obstacles that tenants have already been facing because the Landlord and Tenant Board is digitizing their entire process. So not only can tenants have difficulty participating at the Landlord and Tenant both because of digital, as well as they're low-income—people in the north don't have data that could help them participate.

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You have now an ability to fine individuals who want to highlight the fact that when people can't participate, adjudicators are evicting them. When people aren't showing up at the hearing, they are being evicted. When they can't speak because of technological barriers or their minutes run out, eviction orders are then produced.

By highlighting these problems at the Landlord and Tenant Board to third parties, individuals are publicly commenting on our government institutions. That should be something that we should praise and encourage, because tribunals are not the same level as our courts because of the training of judges compared to adjudicators and who we have. As I said before, tribunals are oftentimes the land for people who are self-represented.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Sheldon, I'm almost out of time but I quickly want to ask you, given your—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: There are two schedules in this bill that outline board of governors for NOSM and l'Université de Hearst that put the governing structure in regulations rather than legislation and a lot of concerns

raised about that. Given your experience, are you concerned by that as well?

Mr. Sheldon Levy: The board of governors of every university in Ontario is an independent board with government representation on it. The consistency of those boards and their relationship to the senates which give the university the academic independence is one of the hallmarks of a university, whether it would be—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time that we have. Now we are done this round.

I would like to thank our presenters for joining us.

Again, my apologies, MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I would never think of missing your time.

MR. ROBERT PRICHARD AND
DR. ARNOLD ABERMAN
TIMMINS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY
STUDENT UNION

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I'd like to now call upon our next set of presenters, beginning with John Robert Prichard and Arnold Aberman. Please state your names for Hansard and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Robert Prichard: Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Robert Prichard, and I appear as president emeritus of the University of Toronto with my colleague Dr. Arnold Aberman. We are both long-time champions of medical education. We appear as supporters of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and its critical mission of educating physicians for the north, but we appear to speak against schedule 16 of Bill 274, which proposes a fundamental, harmful and unnecessary restructuring of NOSM that, if adopted, would put at risk an outstanding innovation in Canadian medical education, undermine the mission of NOSM, and risk the career of current and future NOSM students. We recommend to your committee that schedule 16 of Bill 274 be deleted and be replaced by a careful, deliberative and transparent policy process to determine what, if any, changes should be made to NOSM to allow it to more fully realize its mission. I will offer three brief reasons, followed by Dr. Aberman.

First, the process that led to this bill was deficient. NOSM was created through a transparent and consultative process with all stakeholders and was carefully designed to ensure strong governance and quality control. In contrast, this bill was developed in secret, with no consultation with Lakehead and Laurentian Universities and no background analysis, discussion of alternatives, engagement with stakeholders, assessment of the academic and financial costs or recognition of the serious risks for current and future students. This is simply not worthy of NOSM and its mission. The north deserves better.

Second, the bill, as drafted, is inadequate for its stated purpose of creating a university. The proposed act lacks

essential terms determining its board and senate, preferring that those and numerous other critical terms be prescribed by regulation instead of legislation. This would undermine the autonomy of the proposed university and risk politicizing it. This would permit any government to make fundamental changes to the proposed university and risk politicizing it. This would permit any government to make fundamental changes to the proposed university simply by cabinet order and without the need to face the Legislature. This would ensure NOSM would permanently be a second-class university instead of the first-class institution it is today. The north and NOSM deserve better.

Third, and finally, if government wants to invest to expand enrolment in NOSM and open additional campuses for NOSM, we concur. Similarly, if the government wants to ensure that NOSM is protected from the alleged financial mismanagement at Laurentian University, we concur. However, these objectives can readily be achieved with the current structure, and neither warrants destroying NOSM's highly successful current governance structure that draws on the well-established governance and academic strengths of Lakehead and Laurentian. NOSM is far stronger in its current form.

Over to Dr. Aberman.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Madam Chair, members of the committee, I appreciate this opportunity to express my views on the proposed changes to NOSM, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. It is my respectful recommendation that NOSM retain its current structure. Furthermore, in any case, no change should be made to NOSM until the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools has made a determination as to the accreditation status at the proposed new NOSM.

My name is Arnold Aberman. In 2011, after stepping down as dean of medicine at the University of Toronto, I was appointed by the Harris government as a consulting dean and a member of the committee which was tasked with planning a new northern medical school in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, with Laurentian University and Lakehead University. As consulting dean, I was instrumental in designing the unique structure of NOSM.

NOSM has been a resounding success. This year was the 13th graduating class. There have been 714 medical graduates, and of the 196 NOSM graduates who have completed residency in NOSM, fully 90% practise in northern Ontario. In many ways, NOSM is truly unique. It is the only medical school of the 17 Canadian medical schools that has a home in two universities.

The requirement for NOSM to have two parent universities and yet to be one faculty of medicine was a thorny one and was met by a unique structure: NOSM was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation. Laurentian University and Lakehead University are the sole members of this corporation and thereby control it.

Every single Canadian medical school is part of a university. No Canadian medical school is, as they want to say, independent. It is well recognized that a medical school is enriched by being part of a university, with other faculties, undergraduate, graduate and professional. A

stand-alone medical school will be an inferior medical school.

There is one more important issue that must be considered: accreditation. The medical education programs of all Canadian medical schools are accredited by the CACMS, the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools. Accreditation is a voluntary, peer-reviewed process of quality assurance that determines whether the medical education program being reviewed meets established standards.

The importance of accreditation cannot be overstated. A graduate of an unaccredited medical school would find it difficult, if not impossible, to get a residency position or be licensed. NOSM currently enjoys full accreditation. However, whenever there is a change in ownership or governance, as this bill proposes, an extensive questionnaire must be completed and submitted to CACMS, which then determines whether the current accreditation can be transferred over—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: —to a new institution. Accreditation policy makes it clear that no change in governance or ownership should take place before CACMS has had an opportunity to review the proposed changes and has satisfied itself that accreditation can be maintained. CACMS may want changes to be made before approval is granted, in which case NOSM may risk not being accredited if it proceeds without approval. If the questionnaire is submitted before June 30, it will be considered at CACMS' September meeting. I respectfully submit that regardless of your views on the proposed changes, no changes should be made before we learn the results of the September review.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome any questions.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. We'll now turn to our next presenter, from the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

Before we begin, though, I believe MPP Piccini has joined us.

MPP Piccini, can you please confirm that you are present?

Mr. David Piccini: Yes, it's Dave Piccini, here at my office in Toronto.

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The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you.

We'll now turn to the Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Please state your names for Hansard, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Thank you. Members of the standing committee, my name is Cameron Grant. I'm a senior policy analyst, government and stakeholder relations, for the Timmins chamber. Joining me today are chamber president Melanie Verreault, Trimedia Consulting, and chamber vice-president Robert Knox, Knox Logistics.

Every business right across the province is affected by government legislation, to no surprise, whether it deals with policy, skills, taxation, regulations or the infrastructure that we use. As a result, the decisions made by government are critical for the success of our northern businesses.

I don't have much to share outside of a few components built into Bill 276 that deal with mining activity. As I'm sure you're well aware, mining is fundamental to northern Ontario's economy and social health. The industry provides jobs and, essentially, anchors northern communities. Maintaining the health of the mining industry requires mineral exploration.

While I note that there are some components to reducing red tape within permitting delays in mine exploration, and certainly noting that ENDM is undertaking a critical mineral strategy, much to our applause, there are some components that still remain troubling as we try to increase the mine activity and exploration here in the region that will undoubtedly boost provincial economic activity once things go back to healthier times.

Programs that encourage mineral exploration are paramount to the economic well-being of our province and mining communities alike. The mining industry has played an essential role in the economic growth and sustainability of many communities, to no surprise of anyone.

I won't begin to go through the entire background of this story, but the Ontario Focused Flow-Through Share Tax Credit is intended to stimulate mineral exploration in Ontario and improve capital for small mining exploration companies. Currently, the flow-through share tax for shareholders sits at 5%, which is the lowest in Canada. In comparison, the British Columbia Mining Flow-Through Share Tax Credit is 20%; Saskatchewan is at 10%; and Manitoba's tax credit is at 30%. On average, 68% of the funds in exploration in Canada on the Toronto Stock Exchange were raised through flow-through share financing.

What we're suggesting and recommending to government is that the province consider increasing immediately the Ontario flow-through share tax from 5% up to 25% to further accelerate mining exploration and development. Immediately increasing this tax will ultimately lend to the health and ongoing well-being of the mining sector, including all of those in the support sector industries as well.

Beyond that, I did want to talk very briefly upon reducing permitting delays for mineral and mining exploration. One thing that we will note is that the one-window approach is helpful. However, we do want to note that the issue is not purely anecdotal. Frustrations related to these issues have been widely and increasingly shared in the media for recent years, and growing numbers of mining exploration firms have publicly aired their concerns with delays which were extending to such a duration—and these projects become less economically viable. This punishes existing investors while providing less confidence to prospective investors, as well.

We're asking that the province, within this bill, consider dedicating sufficient resources to streamlining this process even further, improving the process for reviewing and approving exploration permits and environmental assessments, and beyond that, work with the federal

government to address the duplication of regulatory requirements and processes required for mining exploration, including environmental assessments.

This is the result of ongoing and years of back-and-forth within this legislation. We're recommending that addressing the duplicative nature of these legislations would ultimately lead to the ongoing health of the mining sector, which supports not only northern Ontario but the First Nations communities they serve, as well as the province as a whole.

Beyond that, there was one thing I did want to note. I would be remiss if I didn't utilize my time before government to address the concerning nature of the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. While obviously the chamber networks do support its application in principle, we understand that the promise of this program has been very slow to roll out. Many businesses right across Timmins, northern Ontario and Ontario for that matter are suffering greatly. There is little application process and there is little processes in general for any type of consultation or any type of review of declined cases without cause, and funds are still being held up.

I would note that it is a time now more critical than ever that these businesses receive this funding that it is vital to their ongoing viability as they sit waiting for the June 2 release, not knowing whether these restrictions will be put further or not.

Needless to say, nobody can predict the current third wave that we're all experiencing, and we do understand the need for particular public health measures, but financing and funding, as promised by the province, should be shared and disseminated expeditiously, rather than being held up behind ministries with no process for review for those who have been declined.

Also, the Ontario Small Business Support Grant did put out an additional \$10,000 on top of the initial \$10,000 payout, and yet there is still little news on that front.

So I'm urging the government to get those funds out the door immediately, to assist these businesses who lie waiting in the lines and waiting for this critical funding.

I don't have much more. I just want to thank all the members of the standing committee for your attention and consideration. Best wishes for these productive discussions. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

We'll now turn to our third presenter, from Lakehead University Student Union. Please state your name for Hansard, and then you may begin. You'll have seven minutes.

Mr. Farhan Yousaf: I'm Farhan Yousaf, executive director, Lakehead University Student Union. Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the standing committee.

Lakehead University Student Union represents 8,500 undergraduate and graduate students across its two campuses, based in Thunder Bay and Orillia.

NOSM students are able to access our universal transit pass, our health and dental plan and our six service centres. These are essential services that support NOSM students'

success and well-being throughout their time at Lakehead. They are an integral part of our student community, contributing not only to academics and practical pursuits in the medical field, but also to student life.

The NOSM/Lakehead research relationship has been symbolic and has only enhanced the medical research space in northwestern Ontario. Lakehead is almost 30 years into this partnership. Thousands of alumni see NOSM as their faculty of medicine, including myself. Lakehead has excelled in international recruitment as a research-intensive university, attracting the best from across Canada and around the world.

NOSM also benefits from this partnership in many ways. Specifically, francophone and Indigenous students have a direct line of sight from Lakehead and Laurentian. Half the students at NOSM have previous academic experience with Lakehead University. One such student is Nick Bel. Nick has transitioned, from an undergraduate student in applied biomolecular science, completing his honours thesis at NOSM, to a master's of science, and is now a PhD student doing research at NOSM. With that progression, Nick has been able to expand on his techniques in a unique way because of the collaborative environment between Lakehead's chemistry, physics and biology departments and NOSM.

I came to Lakehead as an international student. I chose Lakehead because it is a comprehensive university that allows students to live in Thunder Bay.

For some students, Thunder Bay is home; it is where they were raised and where they hope to build their lives. Lakehead allows them to receive a high-calibre educational experience. Removing NOSM and Lakehead's faculty of medicine is a major blow to both the educational opportunities we have access to and the reputation and standing of the last remaining comprehensive university in northern Ontario.

The benefits of a comprehensive and well-respected university that includes NOSM are endless: attracting the best faculty and researchers to teach us, inspire us and confer knowledge; attracting high-calibre students from across the country and around the globe; collaboration between medicine, nursing and other human health disciplines that creates better programs, better research and better outcomes to address the unique needs of northern communities.

Members of the committee should understand that if this legislation passes as written, there are possible significant implications for current NOSM students. Many students are anxious about their future, and rightly so. The accreditation of medical degrees at NOSM was given on the basis of its affiliation with Lakehead and Laurentian. Every medical school in Ontario is with a comprehensive university. This is a faculty, not a technical institute or college. It sets a dangerous precedent.

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Creating a new university will include increased administrative costs to replicate all the services that Lakehead currently provides. As a result, the additional costs will no doubt be borne by either the taxpayers of Ontario and/or

students themselves in the form of higher tuition fees and other service fees, which will discourage students from pursuing their medical education in the north.

I would like to remind members of the committee that NOSM was created to provide education to students in the north. Many students attending Lakehead are first generation or come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Additional overhead costs will mean less money that is available for student spaces.

What the government should be doing is expanding access to medical education, particularly on the heels of the global pandemic, when Ontario felt an acute shortage of health care professionals, so much so that we had to call in the military to help.

As you understand, committee members, money should not be wasted in duplicating university infrastructure, but invested in our current institutions to strengthen them further. Our students are concerned about the proposed schedule in the bill and the lack of consultations.

My ask here today is to pull schedule 16, make Lakehead University part of the path going forward, and keep medical education at Lakehead University.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for your time and allowing me to appear here today.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

At this point, we'll now turn to the independent member for four and a half minutes. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three presenters for coming in today.

Farhan, I'll start with you since we ended with you. We've had other presenters come in and talk about the importance, typically for Lakehead, of having NOSM be part of Lakehead in recruiting international students especially. As executive director of the student union, can you comment on how important you think that relationship is in attracting international students?

Mr. Farhan Yousaf: Thank you for that question.

I think international students are a vital part of any post-secondary institution across Canada. Having a faculty of medicine, a comprehensive university, obviously gives us an edge to attract international students. We know that the demographics of northern Ontario are declining, and international recruitment in many ways plays a vital role in bringing students to the north and, hopefully, staying in the north and building their lives after. Lakehead plays a key part in that, and the relationship between NOSM and Lakehead is a key ingredient to the recruitment of international students.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to turn my next question to Dr. Aberman. You talked about the importance of accreditation before making any changes to NOSM. Can you talk a bit more about what the potential reputational risk is in the government making a move like this before any accreditation decisions have been made?

Dr. Arnold Aberman: The risk is that in the September meeting—the accrediting committee will never outright deny accreditation, but it's going to say, "You've made these changes. You should modify them." If the act has

been passed and there's a law already, it will be a problem, because then, in essence, NOSM will lose its accreditation. I'm not even sure, by the way, who holds accreditation—whether it's the medical school or the universities—because that never has come up. I just want to emphasize how important accreditation is. It's unthinkable to me that medical students from Canada would graduate from an unaccredited medical school.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My next question would either be for you or Dr. Prichard. NOSM, if this should go through, would be the only independent medical school in Canada. Could you talk about what that means for academic quality, faculty recruitment and retention etc.?

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Seeing as they gave my former president a doctorate degree, I'll refer to him.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Okay.

Mr. Robert Prichard: Thank you for the question.

We think it's negative in all respects for the quality control, for the quality of attracting people, both faculty and students.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Robert Prichard: It deprives the faculty of the interdisciplinary interplay of different disciplines that are found in a university, from ethics to engineering to law—all disciplines relevant to the practice of medicine and the training of medical students. We think it's unambiguously negative, which is why in Canada there are no such schools at present, and in the United States there is only a small handful of such independent schools not associated with universities.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: One example of the interplay is engineers collaborating with medical faculty by working on COVID-19 and the transmission of COVID-19 either in aerosols or droplets. That's just one example; there are innumerable examples of collaboration between faculties of medicine and other faculties.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: You anticipated my next question I was going to ask—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time that we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the government for seven and a half minutes. MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I know that my colleague MPP Piccini wants to participate in this round as well, so I'll try to be brief.

To the Timmins chamber: Obviously, being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, we do quite a bit up your way, and I've had a chance to get up to Timmins many times throughout my life. We were talking about this with the Thunder Bay folks earlier: I'm originally from North Bay, so not too far down the road from you guys. Certainly, being in Kitchener now, it's a very different look when I look out my window. Instead of lush forests and hills, it's farmland. It's a big change for me in the last 10 years, living down here.

I want to touch on some of the things in regard to mining—obviously, it's a very, very important industry, having a gold mine literally smack in the middle of town—the Critical Minerals Strategy and different things that

have been proposed over the last little while and some of the pieces in this bill when it comes to trying to streamline some of the application processes and different pieces. You talked a little bit about some other things that you'd like to see when it comes to mining.

I want to get your take on some of the other red tape reduction pieces we might be able to introduce going forward in the future surrounding mining or forestry, as they're both pretty important industries in your area.

Mr. Cameron Grant: If you wouldn't mind, ultimately, I can speak to the forestry piece. I was part of your consultation on the critical forestry strategy as well.

One thing that I will note: The public forest access roads program must be reinstated back to the original \$75 million; no two ways about it. This does not act only as a P3 partnership for creating critical access roads for the forestry programs, but ultimately, it acts as the vital lifeline in and out of remote First Nations communities. I don't know if you've ever ridden in an ambulance down a bumpy road, but imagine doing that down miles of forest road. Please consider reinstating that program back to the \$75-million mark.

Beyond that, for the mining, we did talk about permitting delay. You have to work with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. You have to work with the MNRF. You have to work with the ENDM. You're building an ecosystem when you're building a mine—not only for the start-up; within its production and at the mine closure and reclamation process. You're dealing with First Nations. You're dealing with federal and provincial government. It is becoming more costly for investors to bring these projects online.

I currently am looking, as the crow flies, a kilometre over there, at one of the largest historical gold mines in the camp here. It is because of that that our community thrives.

Permitting delays: It's critical that we analyze how the permitting process is now, and if there can be one ministry representative assigned to a project who can guide them and navigate them through all of these processes and hoops—and I respect the process and the need for these acts because of historical, critical environmental concerns, but mining has changed. Mining is a responsible leader in our economies and—

Mr. Mike Harris: I think there have been stories of upwards of five to seven years that it has taken for permitting and some different things, even just for exploration. It's certainly a bit of a cumbersome process.

I definitely appreciate your input.

1630

I just want to say, Mr. Knox, you look like you're having a pretty good day out and about.

I'm going to turn it over now to my colleague MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to all the presenters.

My questions are to Dr. Aberman and Mr. Prichard. Thank you both for your comments. I'm going to start with Dr. Aberman. I really value the input and what you've shared today.

Much of both of your discourse revolved around the piece on accreditation. Dr. Aberman, you then went on to say you weren't sure whether or not the accreditation was applied to the faculty. I just want to assure both of you that NOSM is independently accredited.

In fact, I think it is worth reading into the record NOSM's submission: "NOSM is independently accredited by" CACMS. "As a result of the Laurentian insolvency, NOSM's accreditation may be at risk. However, no standards of accreditation will be affected if the proposed legislation is passed."

Dr. Aberman, can you elaborate a little more, then, on what your concern is with the accreditation process, given they're independently accredited?

Dr. Arnold Aberman: I don't know how they came to that judgment, but it isn't for them to decide whether it's independently accredited; it's for the accreditation agency to decide. And I'm not sure that's true. I think it's the faculty that has accreditation, and the faculty belongs to the universities. Don't forget, NOSM is not an educational institution; it's a corporation. It is not chartered as an—it gets its educational credentials from the senates overseeing it.

Mr. David Piccini: It's a separate legal entity with its own—

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Yes, exactly. Absolutely, it's a separate legal entity which is not an educational institution. That's why we structured it like that.

Mr. David Piccini: And they're a freestanding not-for-profit, correct?

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. David Piccini: So the concern, though, on the accreditation piece—they are independently accredited. That's not up for debate; that's a fact. What is the concern, then, going forward? Are you just waiting until after CACMS—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Well, if you read the accreditation documents—saying it's independently accredited doesn't make it so. I want to hear it from accreditation agencies. It's clear from the documentation that once you change governance, and if you change governance and ownership, then you have to come back to the accrediting agency for their opinion.

Mr. David Piccini: Do they not have their own board of governors, though? I'm just trying to understand. They have their own board of governors. They do their own hiring and firing. They do their own administration.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Yes, and add one more thing: They're not an educational institution. That's how we designed—

Mr. David Piccini: [*inaudible*] though—that piece on inferior. But Karolinska and Vienna, for example—there are a number of medical schools that are not affiliated worldwide. Would we submit that they're inferior?

Dr. Arnold Aberman: I'd have to look at each example.

Mr. David Piccini: It's the number six medical school in the world. Is the submission that they're inferior?

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Europe is not the same as North America.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That's all the time that we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the official opposition. MPP Bisson, you may begin.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Boy, there's not enough time to ask questions of all of you. You're all making wonderful presentations.

I've got two questions for the chamber of commerce. One starts with a bit of a statement, followed by a question, and then another question.

Be careful what you ask for when you talk about getting rid of red tape, my friends at the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

Cameron, you and I live at Kamiskotia Lake, and you kind of mentioned it in passing: When you don't have regulation—red tape, as it's called—you get the environmental disasters that we got here, where we almost lost all of our properties and we almost lost this lake because of the tailings situation up at the mine.

I think the larger issue is not so much the rules but how quickly we're able to process the applications. I will agree with you 125%: What we need to have is capacity within the ministry, so that when a junior exploration company or a mining operator puts forward an application to be able to move forward with a water-taking permit or whatever they may need to do what they have to do, it be done in a timely, expeditious manner. That's the issue.

I would caution—encouraging this government to do red tape, because it will end up like with NOSM, where we'll end up with a university that's going to have issues with regard to how it's going to be able to run.

So back to you, Cameron: I take it you're not arguing for throwing the rules out.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Thank you, Gilles, and thank you for constantly reminding me—in fact, I think, in 2017, we had the same discussion.

No, of course not. I urge this government to find another word for "red tape," because frankly I think that's thrown around far too much. We're talking for a measured approach. We're talking for alignment here. If it's consistently duplication or it's consistently something—these rules exist somewhere; if they exist twice, then that is only just further imposing barriers upon critical projects.

I believe—yes, strongly—that there needs to be some form of regulation, especially for the respect of the First Nations communities under which they're affected. Beyond that, mining has become far more responsible these days, and it's not because of—well, certainly because of the implications of government, but they're able to have some level of corporate responsibility of their own.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We've become much better at mining. Why? Because we did the mine reclamation act and because we did a number of things that ensured that mining is able to be done in a sustainable fashion and in a way that's environmentally as sustainable as possible, and—

Mr. Cameron Grant: And that feasibility study is done at the end. That's fine. Once we get the project online, at least they can get the thing going. That's what the mining flow-through share tax will help.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I agree with you on the flow-through share stuff. We've been arguing that for years, all of us; we're on the same side.

My only point was that when you're trying to get a water-taking permit—for example, when we did Iamgold down by Gogama, that took a long time, and I agree with you; that was problematic. It wasn't so much just the duplication; it was more that there are some things that the federal government has to do its due diligence and there are things—“Hey, Rob, your daughter is there. Good stuff.”

Mr. Cameron Grant: I would agree with you, Gilles.

Again, what we see is that there's clear turnover in the ministry. There are younger generations coming in, junior policy analysts. That's great. Get some internal processes to get them trained and recognized, so that those permits aren't sitting on desks.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, agreed.

On the issue of dollars going to our local businesses: We talk about this; we had a meeting yesterday, and I think we're all frustrated. My worst story today was that one of the businesses we've been talking about finally got the money but they deposited it in the wrong bank account. It went to another business that wasn't supposed to get it. Finally, the ministry figured it out and they took the money back, but they haven't given it to the original business, and that original business now had to lay people off.

So if we can say anything to the government—you need to be able to allow some sort of a process that allows people, when they apply for this money, to be able to get the process dealt with quickly, and that there's some logic to why it is that they get the money. And if they're denied, there needs to be some sort of appeal process. That's what our chamber of commerce is urging you to do.

Do you have any comments on that, Cameron? And then I'll turn it over to my colleagues.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Nothing further, apart from that I agree. They're calling me and getting angry. They're calling our MPP and getting angry. That's understandable—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, they never get angry at me; they love me.

Mr. Cameron Grant: Oh, how lovely. But give me somebody to be angry at—because, ultimately, they just need to hear something is going on with their grant, and beyond that, to get it done.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Arnie, you mentioned that the non-accreditation will hurt students for getting residency. This is important for students who are at NOSM, and that will hurt them if they are not accredited or don't get the accreditation. I'd like to hear you more on this subject.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Yes, let me make a comment. In the question before—made a statement that Karolinska Institutet is a free-standing medical school. That's not true. It's a university. It offers two dozen programs, master's

and PhD degrees. So your problem is, they say that a misstatement gets halfway around the world before truth has its boots on.

What did you want to ask me again? I'm sorry; I forget.
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Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Well, it's the—

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Oh, yes. Sure. Let me finish here. When students will go and apply for residency throughout North America, most people won't know NOSM. Many people know the University of Toronto, but most people won't know NOSM, and they have to rely on independent assessment of NOSM's strengths, which would be accreditation. If they knew it was accredited, they'll understand the quality of the education. Also, even to get licensed in medicine in many jurisdictions requires graduating from a medical school which is accredited.

By the way, I'm not saying it's not going to be accredited—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: I don't know. Nobody knows because the committee is not meeting till September. Why are we even discussing this? Let's wait till the committee meets and then we won't have to have any supposition. We'll know what the committee said.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Arnie, you mentioned that you were part of the structure for NOSM when we—

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Right.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: —with the Harris government.

This will hurt the community—because we heard one of the mayors speak. How is that going to hurt the communities up north?

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Well, again, I don't know how it's going to hurt them, but NOSM will be an inferior medical school if it's not accredited. We have to wait—I'm saying wait until the September meeting.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: How many seconds left, Madam Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Five.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Well, thanks, Arnold and Robert. I'll come back next round.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to the independent member for 4.5 minutes. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My first question I'll direct to Robert.

We've had people come to committee, regardless of where they stand on the severing of the relationship between NOSM and Lakehead and Laurentian, who have expressed concern about the composition and procedures of the board of governors being in regulation versus being in statute. We've also had people express concerns with the schedule related to Université de Hearst on the same issue. Given your history at the University of Toronto, how important is that issue in terms of maintaining the independence of a university?

Mr. Robert Prichard: Thank you, sir, for your question.

I think it's fundamental to preserve the appropriate independence of each university that its fundamental formation, its board of governors and its senate, be set in statute. That doesn't mean it can't be changed by the Legislature, of course, but it means that for it to be changed,

for a government to intervene, the government has to come to the Legislature to make the change and receive the support of the Legislature. If it can be done by regulation, it can be done at any time simply by cabinet order. That, in my view—and the view, I think, of all observers of higher education in Canada—threatens the autonomy and independence and the appropriate relationship of the university to the government.

If you look at the statutes that create universities from coast to coast in Canada, virtually every one is done by statute, not by regulation.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Can you just elaborate on what the potential implications of that loss of independence means for a university?

Mr. Robert Prichard: I believe it means that the university could be inappropriately interfered with by a government without the sunlight of the Legislature. The government can intervene inappropriately in changing the structure of the governance of the university. The role of the board of trustees or governors and the role of the senate can be disrupted inappropriately without legislative change. The legislative process can always change these. Changes are made from time to time through a deliberative, open and transparent process. But if it can be done by regulation alone, it could be done—and I'm not making an accusation about any particular government. I'm talking about, in principle, it's the wrong relationship between the state and our university—to not put the structure in legislation so as to protect it in the short term, the medium term and the long term.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I've had some people reach out to me, worried about the ability to attract and retain high-quality faculty if NOSM is independent.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Given your experience at U of T, is that a valid concern?

Mr. Robert Prichard: From my perspective, it is much more attractive to a faculty member to be part not just of a faculty, a discipline, but part of a university faculty. It's one of the great privileges of life for people who give their life to education, to be part of the broader body of faculty members at a university. A faculty of medicine, on its own bottom, without any other disciplines beside it, is a less rich environment for a faculty member to grow and develop in. It's what makes it more difficult to attract them to that call.

There's a reason why every school of pharmacy is part of a university. Every school of nursing, every school of medicine—all these schools are part of broader universities across Canada for good reason: because it makes them as attractive as possible, a place for students and for faculty to provide the highest possible quality of education. This would be a highly—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time that we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the government. MPP Piccini, you may begin.

Mr. David Piccini: Mr. Prichard, I'd like to continue with you and Dr. Aberman just a little further. You talked

about the structure, and I think the intent here is to get this right. This is why we have committee and the opportunity for amendments.

Dr. Aberman, you mentioned Karolinska. I think the intent of the legislation is, it gives NOSM that ability to grow. Ultimately, either that's what the legislation does—I did look at LCME's standards here quickly, and in IS-2, under governance and administration, it says that a medical school should be part of a not-for-profit university or a not-for-profit institution, which NOSM already is.

I value both of your interjections here, and maybe, Mr. Prichard, you could go on a little more about the structure piece, because I would like to take a deeper dive there on what's specifically missing. If you had an amendment and you had the pen today, what would you put in?

Mr. Robert Prichard: If I had the pen, first, I would delete the schedule, because I think the decision to go in this direction is a mistake at this time for the reasons Dr. Aberman gave you and I gave. If I were working within the bill, I would maintain the affiliation with Lakehead and Laurentian universities. Some have argued it would be appropriate to extend the statute to allow NOSM to also affiliate with additional institutions in the north, and I personally have no objection to that so long as it's done in consultation with Lakehead and Laurentian.

If it were to be a university on its own bottom, as is imagined in the legislation, I would put into the legislation the structure of the board of governors and the structure of the senate, not deferring that to be decided at a later date by regulation.

Mr. David Piccini: I'll quote a previous presenter from yesterday, from Hearst—which is a similar direction we're taking, governed by and for francophones. I quote what Diane said here: "Having independence will allow us to move quicker." She also said, "As far as we are concerned, the autonomy is the ability to develop. Francophones have been asking for a complete range of education. In order for us to continue to develop, we need that level of autonomy." I think, certainly, in the written deposition from NOSM, that's what they said.

I just want to talk about those partnerships, because NOSM did go on to say here, "NOSM will not be leaving Thunder Bay or Sudbury"—I think that's important to mention—and "We want to enhance our relationships with the two universities, as well as forge new ones with other universities and colleges in Ontario." They went on to deeply reiterate their commitment to Indigenous partnerships in the north.

So I just want to clarify. The supposition the two of you are making is not that we shouldn't value local decision-making and local autonomy; correct? It's that you want to maintain those affiliations and partnerships?

Mr. Robert Prichard: Well, Dr. Aberman can speak for himself.

My view is, the faculty of medicine should be located in a broader university context for its governance, for its academic strengths, for its research strengths, for its inter-disciplinarity. That is not a barrier to being nimble. It's not a barrier to being innovative. What has been accomplished

at NOSM is highly innovative, highly unusual and extremely successful. And it has been successful not despite the two universities; it has been successful in significant part because of its affiliation with the two universities.

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So to characterize it as standing in the way of being innovative and nimble is wrong. I think the right way to think of it is that the mission can be more fully achieved by being part of two good universities. If the government is prepared to invest, as I hope it is, in expanding enrolment and expanding campuses, as we said in our remarks, we think that's terrific and would applaud the government for doing so.

Mr. David Piccini: Do we not think, though, they would continue their relationships with and grow the relationships, as NOSM suggests in their deposition?

Mr. Robert Prichard: I think there's a fundamental difference between being part of a university and having a relationship with a university. At present, the senates of Lakehead and Laurentian and the board of governors of those two universities bring appropriate governance and quality control to the proposals that come from that faculty and any other faculty. That, I think, over time has been proven to be a very robust model for strength and for quality being maintained and is not a barrier to be nimble and innovative.

I simply think the better model is the model that the previous government, the Harris government, settled on, on Dr. Aberman's advice. It has been successful beyond anybody's imagination at the time. It exceeded every hope for the future of NOSM, and so to tear up something that's working extremely well strikes me as ill-considered in the absence of evidence that there are some things standing in the way of NOSM's potential.

Mr. David Piccini: Well, I think just their deposition spoke to \$20 million in reasons of what's standing in the way of potential growth.

But the piece that you said—can you point to one of the specific benefits that we've seen that their own board of governors' oversight hasn't given? Do you have a tangible example of the enrichment that the senate has provided from the other two universities that their own board of governors hasn't provided with their own competencies?

Mr. Robert Prichard: As a general matter, it is important to have university-wide standards of quality that are imposed and required by a senate, and in the absence of that, single faculties often would get off-track.

NOSM, so far, has been a magnificent success. My advice—and again, Dr. Aberman should speak—is to continue building on that success rather than ripping it up.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. David Piccini: Dr. Aberman, I know we just have a minute. As Gilles said, this isn't enough time, and maybe we could continue our conversation offline, but over to you for the remaining minute.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: What I hear people suggesting—the favourite is, “Let's get divorced to get married again.” I don't understand. The current structure is working

so well; it's working beyond our beliefs, to tell you the truth—a lot of it I attribute to the former dean Roger Strasser, for 15 years.

Mr. David Piccini: Yes, I worked with him.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: I don't understand the point—*Interjection.*

Dr. Arnold Aberman: I'm sorry?

Mr. David Piccini: Sorry. Have you spoken with Dr. Verma or read her deposition, because I think she alludes to some of the research—

Dr. Arnold Aberman: Yes, we have a difference of opinion—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is for Dr. Aberman and Mr. Prichard. You mentioned that it would be a second-class university. I think you were both very clear in your position on the benefit.

We also heard from NOMA and all the communities, and a lot of people are saying the same thing: If it's not broken, why fix it?

I'd like to hear more from you—and also, how many stand-alone medical universities are there in North America? Are there any?

I'd also like to hear why you think it's going to be second-class and how that is going to affect northern Ontario.

Dr. Arnold Aberman: I'm not sure there are any truly independent medical schools, or medical schools alone, in North America.

We have something like Mayo Clinic, which is a medical school, but it has a nursing school. It has other programs as well.

The Cleveland Clinic, for instance, opened a medical school just recently. The first thing they did: They went to Case Western Reserve and said, “Will you be our university?” This is the Cleveland Clinic, which is one of the best hospitals in North America, saying, “We can't do it alone. We need to have the programs that a university offers.” So it's sponsored by Case Western Reserve.

In Canada, I know there's certainly not. And of the 150-plus medical schools in the United States, I doubt if more than a handful are stand-alone medical schools, and even then, they've had decades of experience. The University of California San Francisco—but again, it's affiliated with the university.

When you look deeply into them, you may not find one—I can't deny that; that you may. The Mayo Clinic—but then Mayo Clinic has thousands of students and graduate programs. I don't think there are any, to tell you the truth, but I could be proved wrong if you find one or two. So let me say, besides one or two, I don't think there's anything.

Mr. Robert Prichard: Even if we look at the Karolinska Institutet, which was referred to earlier, it has pharmacy, nursing, dentistry, psychology. It's a multidisciplinary institution. It's a multidisciplinary university. There's no vision of NOSM that has these multiple professional disciplines,

and there's no experience anywhere in Canada with having these disciplines being run independently of a university. Indeed, the trend has all been the opposite direction: The schools of education became part of universities. OISE was integrated into the University of Toronto. It has been acts of integration to strengthen disciplines, not disaggregation to strengthen disciplines.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: And one more question, Dr. Prichard—because you mentioned that in one of your first points. You said that the process is difficult or was different and that there's no transparency or consultation. We also heard that from a lot of communities, and a lot of stakeholders said consultation was not there. So what's the benefit?

Mr. Robert Prichard: I've only been told by the presidents that they were not consulted—the presidents of Lakehead and Laurentian were not consulted in advance of the decision. I don't know if that's true or not; I can only go by what has been said publicly.

I think if there is a view that NOSM needs to chart a different course, that course should be put on the table for public discussion with the stakeholders, with the communities, with the faculty, with the students, with the staff, and see if there's a better way forward. If that were done, I believe one would say, "Let's stick with the current model and let's improve the current model, not rip up the model and start again." Given the incredible success that NOSM represents—I was skeptical when NOSM was first created; I was wrong. It has been a huge success, and I applaud NOSM for what it has achieved. I don't applaud going off on this new direction, because it's very difficult to see benefit, and it's very easy to see many risks to the students and to the faculty.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I'll pass it over to my colleague MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, all, for being here and expressing your views on this really, really important bill.

I'll start with Farhan.

Farhan, we met when I was at Lakehead a couple of years ago. You came to Thunder Bay as an international student.

We've heard about a potential decline in enrolment or that Lakehead University would be less attractive to international students if the medical school is not part of that university. Can you speak to that? Is that what you believe based on your experience?

Mr. Farhan Yousaf: Thank you, MPP Glover, for that question. When I was selecting my path to higher education, I looked at various universities. One of the reasons why Lakehead was an attraction for me was the comprehensive nature of it, a one-stop shop where you have multiple programs being offered. There are multiple other international students who have chosen Lakehead as their destination, and we have seen an increase in international enrolment at Lakehead over the last couple of years because of programs it offers.

I think NOSM plays a huge role in that, in terms of recruitment, in terms of prestige. Lakehead has a medical

faculty that they can let students know about. So absolutely, I think there will be—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. Farhan Yousaf: —concerns around recruitment.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Thank you.

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Let me ask one more question to Cameron Grant. Thank you so much, everybody, for being here. I wish there was more time. But Cameron, there are literally dozens and dozens of small businesses in my riding of Spadina-Fort York that are going under, that are having trouble with the small business grant. I heard you asking for the government to make some changes: to expand the criteria, to drop the loopholes and also to have an appeals process. Are you seeing many small businesses in your area going under?

Mr. Cameron Grant: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: And if those changes are not made, will you lose more small businesses?

Mr. Cameron Grant: It's likely, yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Thank you. That was my question. Thank you all for being here.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. I'd also like to thank our presenters. At this time, you are now released and may stand down from the committee.

UNIVERSITÉ DE HEARST
MS. ANGELA BROWNE
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The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to our final group of presenters, beginning with Université de Hearst. Please state your names for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Bonjour. You'll have to unmute your microphones. Okay. Merci beaucoup.

M. Luc Bussi eres: Merci. Mon nom est Luc Bussi eres. Je suis recteur de l'Universit e de Hearst. Merci au comit e de me recevoir aujourd'hui. Je suis ici pour participer au travail sur l'adoption du projet de loi 276. Je m'int eresse particuli erement   la section 28, celle qui est l  pour accorder une charte autonome   l'Universit e de Hearst. Donc je vais me prononcer en faveur du projet de loi pour cette raison-l , en tant que recteur de l'Universit e de Hearst.

Ma pr esentation, je vais la faire bri evement en six points pour expliquer un petit peu qui on est puis pourquoi c'est quelque chose qui arrive pour nous   un bon moment.

Le premier  l ment de ma pr esentation, c'est quelques mots d'histoire. L'Universit e de Hearst existe depuis 1953.  a fait maintenant pr es de 70 ans. Elle a port e au fil des ann es plusieurs noms : le S minaire de Hearst, le Coll ge de Hearst, le Coll ge universitaire de Hearst et finalement l'Universit e de Hearst, en 2014. On a  t 

successivement affilié à l'Université de Sudbury, d'abord, et à l'Université Laurentienne, avec qui on est toujours, depuis 1963. On était à l'époque trois collèges universitaires affiliés : Nipissing, Algoma et Hearst. Depuis ce temps-là, les deux autres sont devenus des universités autonomes, depuis 1992 et 2008, respectivement.

Mais depuis 1972, on a aussi un statut particulier qui est unique à l'Université de Hearst parmi les universités affiliées ou fédérées : c'est qu'on est autonome financièrement, donc financé directement par le gouvernement, par le ministère, sans passer par l'intermédiaire de notre affiliation. Donc ça, ça nous donnait déjà une autonomie qui était assez unique dans le système ontarien. On compte bien qu'en 2021 on sera maintenant autonome entièrement.

Le deuxième point de ma présentation, c'est un peu notre contribution au fil de ces presque 70 années-là. On est enraciné dans le nord-est ontarien depuis tout ce temps-là avec trois campus : d'abord à Hearst, ensuite deux autres campus, à Kapuskasing et à Timmins. Donc on est un partenaire au niveau de l'éducation, de la vie sociale, culturelle et économique, particulièrement pour les francophones dans cette région depuis tout ce temps-là, et ça, c'est largement reconnu.

Le troisième point sur lequel je veux insister c'est la résilience de l'Université de Hearst. On a travaillé dans des conditions difficiles, je vous l'avouerai, pendant une grande partie de ces années-là, et on est toujours resté connecté à notre environnement. C'était nécessaire de l'être, prêt à nous adapter aussi comme université pour offrir un service de qualité, même si on avait souvent des ressources assez limitées. On a toujours été dans une situation où il fallait constamment faire la preuve ou la démonstration qu'on était pertinent puis qu'on méritait d'exister, ce qui n'est pas toujours facile quand on est occupé à s'occuper des vraies choses : d'offrir des services universitaires. Donc cette résilience fait qu'on est encore là aujourd'hui pour profiter d'une charte autonome, on espère.

Le quatrième point, c'est que je veux vous partager la capacité qu'on a eue d'être innovant, d'innover au fil des années, parce qu'à plusieurs reprises on a traversé des crises qui nous ont obligés à repenser notre modèle. En 2014 c'est la dernière fois qu'on l'a fait. On a innové par rapport à—on a commencé à enseigner nos cours en blocs; c'est-à-dire que les étudiants ici font seulement un cours à la fois au lieu d'en faire cinq par semestre comme ailleurs. Il y a juste deux institutions au Canada qui font ça. On a ajouté des stages obligatoires dans toutes nos formations pour les rendre plus concrètes. On est les seuls à faire ça. On s'est ouvert à la clientèle internationale. Il y a sept ans, on n'avait aucun étudiant international. On a maintenant 60 % de notre clientèle qui vient de l'international, de 25 pays différents. Le résultat de tout ça : on a eu une augmentation de nos inscriptions en équivalence en temps complet de 125 % jusqu'à cette année-là, l'année de la COVID.

Mon avant-dernier point vers la conclusion : notre nouvelle identité. L'Université de Hearst est connue par ceux qui la connaissent comme étant la petite université du

nord-est ontarien francophone, etc. Mais je veux juste vous faire remarquer qu'on est devenu beaucoup plus que ça, même si ça, c'était déjà très bien. Oui, on se distingue par notre francophonie : on offre uniquement des services en français. Oui, on est très enraciné dans le nord de l'Ontario, mais on est aussi ouvert maintenant sur le monde francophone de l'Ontario partout et d'ailleurs aussi, comme je l'ai mentionné. Au plan pédagogique, on a fait des paris importants, on a été très innovants. C'est un modèle engageant et unique. Puis on a été capable d'attirer une immigration francophone dans le nord de l'Ontario, ce que beaucoup de gens doutaient qu'on serait capable de faire. Donc ça, ça contribue au développement. Puis on travaille aussi étroitement avec l'Université de l'Ontario français. On a des ententes de partenariat avec eux pour aider l'ensemble de la francophonie ontarienne.

En conclusion, l'Université de Hearst, comme vous pouvez voir, en 70 ans, a connu une longue maturation, une longue évolution, mais on est arrivé à des résultats que je juge personnellement assez impressionnants. Pour continuer à se développer, par contre, on a besoin de notre autonomie totale, comme les autres établissements avec lesquels on est comparé, comme les autres établissements qui signent avec le gouvernement une entente de mandat stratégique puis qui sont évalués sur leur rendement puis sur l'atteinte de leurs cibles. Donc depuis 2014, on est—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

M. Luc Bussières: —une des universités qui signent ces ententes de mandat stratégiques. Par contre, on n'a pas la même autonomie pour nous développer. Il y a des choses qui sont des irritants, des choses qui nous retardent et qui alourdissent les processus. Alors que, comme petite université—même s'il y a des désavantages à être petit, il y a aussi des avantages, parce qu'on est plus agile, plus facile de bouger puis de développer des choses quand il faut les développer puis d'innover, comme je le disais tantôt. Donc notre petitesse, en bout de ligne, n'est pas un handicap. C'est une opportunité à saisir pour nous autres en étant plus agile. C'est ce qu'on espère que la charte autonome va nous permettre de faire encore mieux à l'avenir. Merci beaucoup.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Merci beaucoup.

We'll now go to our next presenter. We'll now go to Angela Browne. Please state your name for Hansard and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Ms. Angela Browne: Okay. My name is Angela Browne. I live and I work in St. Catharines, Ontario. I own a legal firm. I'm not necessarily speaking for my legal services firm; I am speaking from my own experience over the years.

I notice that Michael Harris, son of Mike Harris, is here, as one of the people on this committee, and I go back that far when Mr. Harris was the Premier and I was also presenting before various committees under his leadership.

One of the things here I want to speak about is I want to focus my discussion on social assistance amendments that are put under this bill, an omnibus bill that's very hard to respond to because you're putting so many changes to many very different types of legislation. One of the things I am very concerned about is that this is a merger. Behind

closed doors, this is a merger between Ontario Works and ODSP. Although the paperwork and the background state that this is not a merger, it is a merger, because its activities, if everything goes as stated, will effectively make OW and ODSP recipients do the same thing and have the same experience and the same platforms.

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For example, people on OW and ODSP will be seeing the same caseworkers at the municipal level. People who are on OW and ODSP will be dealing with provincial administrative management and reporting provincially, and OW and ODSP will be also dealing with the new employment program, which is set up as a pilot—I guess maybe something a little further than that. In Niagara and Hamilton, we have a pilot called Fedcap, which is managing all of our provincial and municipal resources.

The concern I have with a merger is that each of the communities, prior to this, had these discretionary funds that people on Ontario Works or ODSP could tap into. What is going to happen to that? Up until now, these differed from one city to another. In one city you could get coverage for orthotics; in another city, you could get coverage for volunteer pay; in another city, you could get coverage for home repairs. These things are all balkanized into different municipalities, and it's always, "Where you live is what you get." That's not fair, and that should be brought up to the provincial level, if you're going to do anything to the provincial level. Regardless, anybody should be able to access these programs at the provincial level and have it evenly spread through the provinces.

That being said, I have a problem with a merger because having a merger of any sort was opposed. When the original Lankin and Sheikh report came out in 2012, everybody started opposing it. From legal clinics to municipalities to trade unions to social assistance groups to social services groups, everybody opposed it, and I don't think that the circumstances now are any different than the circumstances then that would create problems if such a merger were to occur.

What a merger does is, it doesn't only create a merger of needs, but it also creates a merger of expectations, which means that people who are on Ontario Works are assumed to be needing certain things, and then it would be assumed people on Ontario disability will be needing the same things. People on Ontario disability have very different needs. Many of them will be on for life. Some of them may never be able to get work. Some of them may work part-time. Some of them may try to get out of ODSP. But their needs are different. People on ODSP are very concerned. They're afraid that somehow this is going to be a backdoor way to get them all to work or to get them cut off ODSP.

This has been tried in the UK. I've read all about the UK, and I'd be very happy to provide some research that I've done into the programs in the UK. Over 120,000 people have died—and this was printed in the British Medical Journal, which is not exactly your liberal-left publication—because people were deemed fit to work and they were not. A lot of them ended up committing suicide.

A lot of them ended up dying because of health issues. They got cut off and they weren't able to survive. There are a lot of different things that that has led to.

The rules for Ontario disability and the rules for OW need to be different. That's why they need to be different programs. People on Ontario Works are people who have fallen on hard times, but they're expected to go back to work. Many of them have gone back to work, and some haven't. The program itself needs to be looked at if there aren't enough people getting back into work. But that has nothing to do with Ontario disability. There are a lot of different supports that people on Ontario Works need, but first of all, Ontario Works isn't paying nearly enough money as it should—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Ms. Angela Browne: Okay—and Ontario disability doesn't pay enough either. The people on Ontario disability need the laws changed so they will not discourage them from entering into relationships, from saving money, from supporting their own retirement, from working, because after the first \$200, they get a clawback. If they marry somebody, they get a clawback. That shouldn't be there, particularly if there's somebody there who's going to be on this for life or for many years. There has to be a way so that this could be dealt with so that people are dealing with very different circumstances.

In terms of case management, I have an issue with the municipalities taking this. Who is going to pay for all the extra caseworkers who are going to go down to the municipalities? What's going to happen to the ODSP workers who are specialized in dealing with their client group? It just doesn't make any sense. There's a lot of work that needs to be done with this and—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. We'll now turn to our third and final presenter, from the Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers and Businesses of Canada and Automatic Coating Ltd. Please state your names for Hansard, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Ms. Jocelyn Bamford: My name is Jocelyn Bamford. I'm president and founder of the Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers and Businesses, and I'm vice-president of Automatic Coating Ltd., which is a company in Scarborough that employs over 90 full-time employees.

I wanted to thank you for having me present today. I'm here to support the red tape reduction in Ontario. Ontario is one of the most restricted and regulated jurisdictions for business in North America, and a lot of it is completely unnecessary and duplicated. The reason that is so impactful is that that prevents expansion of our businesses here in Ontario and also leads to businesses relocating to other locations because rules and regulations are very difficult here.

I'll point the committee to a small bakery that's grown into a large bakery right here in Scarborough that has been trying to get a third shift on for their growing business. They are the premier Indian baked goods company in Canada. They have locations in Canada and are looking to relocate to the United States. Why are they looking to

relocate to the United States? Because the expansion and regulations on their business here in Canada are so onerous. The ECP requirements require them to be quieter than a bird, and it's very onerous. So they are looking at relocating their growth to the United States, and that is jobs that we could have here in Canada and employment that we could have in Canada.

I think the importance of that for people to understand, especially in the public sector, is that if you don't have a strong private sector, you don't have a strong public sector, and then you don't have the health care, you don't have schools, you don't have hospitals, you don't have bridges and roads. Because if you don't have taxpayers to pay for that and the jobs are leaving for the United States, you have a void.

For all the public sector employees who think that it's none of their business if the private sector is flourishing in Ontario, I would point out to Detroit and look at the fact that people thought they had these public sector pensions; they were worthless because the city eventually ran bankrupt. That's a cautionary tale for Ontario. We need to make sure that we keep jobs here, that we keep companies here.

What are the challenges of companies? A competitive landscape for starting their business. We don't have competitive energy pricing. We saw some relief from the changes to the energy act, because under the Green Energy Act in Ontario, a small manufacturer like myself was paying \$35,000 on a \$3,000 bill for electricity—of global adjustment. The global adjustment was unfairly burdening the small to medium-sized businesses to pay for the wind and solar contracts. While we've seen some relief from electricity prices from the provincial government, we've also seen the federal government double our carbon tax, bring on clean fuel standards and declare plastics as toxic, and that drives business from Canada.

What we're requesting—we support the reduction in red tape that will keep some businesses here, but there's more work to be done. We need to have a manufacturing plan to bring back manufacturing to Ontario. We saw how vulnerable we were during the pandemic with not having ventilators, gloves, masks and gowns produced here in Ontario, and we could see a resurgence in manufacturing if we had a solid manufacturing plan that included affordable energy.

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That brings us to our resource sector. I don't think that many politicians around the table realize that manufacturers fabricating for the resource sector are almost as many as that contribute to the automotive sector in Ontario, so we need a plan to support our resource sector and to get our clean, natural resources to market so that we can have prosperity in Canada and a cleaner world. Fossil fuels will continue to be utilized around the world. They'll either buy them from us, who have the highest standards, or they'll buy them from somewhere else that doesn't have clean standards. If we got our liquefied natural gas to market, we could have China and India reduce their coal and reduce their GHGs. So it's a win-win solution, and we

need the provincial government to push back on the federal government and some of their policies that are preventing us from having prosperity.

“Open for business” means that we need to support business, we need a manufacturing plan, we need to understand our competitive marketplace and how many companies are being recruited to the United States to move their businesses there or move their growth there. That means that we move jobs to the United States and we move prosperity to the United States. We need to really understand how manufacturing and innovation in Ontario is world-class, and if we don't support manufacturing by having affordable energy, we will see our innovation be another country's success story, and that would be a tragedy.

The amount of companies that are moving their growth to the United States is astounding, because we're not competitive.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Ms. Jocelyn Bamford: There are a number of companies that hedged their bets and had a location here in Canada and the United States, and now that they're seeing the federal government load on their costs, they are ramping up their production into the United States. So reducing red tape is a great start; there's more to do. We need to understand how we rank in terms of competitiveness, specifically against the United States, and we need to ensure that our great Canadian companies do not leave.

We need to understand that the federal government declaring plastics as toxic is going to impact a \$35-billion industry, of which 55% is located right in Ontario. We also need to be conscious of the Blue Box Program and the impact it's going to have on costs for many food manufacturers, which have very slim margins, and we need to understand—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time that we have.

We'll now turn to the official opposition for the first round of questions. Who would like to begin? MPP Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you to all the presenters for all the information and your presentations. I think they're well-made and informative.

Mais ma question est pour Luc. Premièrement, Luc, bienvenue, puis merci pour tes commentaires. Puis aussi, écoute, je suis l'un des premiers à être content de voir que tu vas avoir ta charte pour l'indépendance, mais c'est sûr qu'il y a eu des questions qui sont venues avec l'annonce puis avec d'autres clarifications qu'on a entendues—l'APUH a présenté, puis il y en a d'autres aussi qui ont parlé—quand ça vient à comparer la régulation versus la législation.

Ma première question, Luc, serait plutôt sur ce sujet-là. J'aimerais t'entendre : es-tu concerné un petit peu avec la différence—quand c'est la législation, le gouvernement, pour faire des changements, il faut que tu l'amènes en Chambre, où c'est amené à l'attention, tandis qu'une régulation, ils peuvent changer ça. Ça peut affecter, veux, veux pas, l'Université de Hearst. J'aimerais t'entendre sur ce point-là.

M. Luc Bussières: Merci pour la question. C'est certain que, de mon point de vue, puis du point de vue de l'université que je représente—puis vous avez entendu, je pense que c'était hier, des représentants de notre syndicat des profs. J'étais au courant qu'ils présentaient et tout ça. On a eu des discussions ensemble, avec toute la communauté universitaire, d'ailleurs.

Dans un monde idéal, je pense que c'est beaucoup mieux quand les choses peuvent se passer devant le Parlement, avec une loi qui est complète. Quand on a eu l'annonce qu'on aurait une charte, que ça se serait présenté à l'intérieur d'un projet de loi omnibus, évidemment on était très contents. J'avais hâte de voir le texte de la loi. Je connaissais bien le texte qui a créé l'Université de l'Ontario français. Ça fait que je connaissais les détails qui sont inclus habituellement. Là, j'ai été un peu surpris puis, je dois avouer, un peu déçu aussi de voir que dans le fond, on a un squelette de projet de loi qui identifie toutes les sections qui sont requises sur—par exemple, le projet de loi, quand il sera terminé, il y aura une mission qui aurait été précisée; il nous donnera l'autorité de décerner des diplômes; on y précisera la composition du conseil des gouverneurs, du sénat, les instances habituelles qui sont importantes dans une université. Puis là, tout à coup, on arrive à l'article 17, qui précise que beaucoup de choses vont être décidées par voie réglementaire. Autrement dit, ça ne se passera pas devant la Chambre, devant le Parlement.

Évidemment, j'ai posé des questions au ministère des Collèges et Universités, et aussi au ministère des Affaires francophones. Les réponses que j'ai entendues sont rassurantes sur les intentions, mais je comprends—oui : la réponse à ta question, si je comprends la différence entre les deux façons de procéder, dans un monde idéal, j'aurais mieux aimé l'autre façon de procéder. En même temps, on attend une nouvelle comme celle-là depuis longtemps, donc on la prend quand elle arrive. Mais oui, je comprends bien la différence.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Écoute, je peux comprendre, Luc, que ça te met un peu dans une situation assez difficile. Ça fait, je pense—quoi?—20 ans que tu te battais pour avoir l'indépendance. Puis finalement elle arrive, puis on voit que dans le projet de loi, à part de dire que tu vas avoir l'indépendance, ça ne mentionne rien. C'est un peu ce que l'APUH essayait de faire comprendre et qu'ils ont témoigné pour dire dans leur présentation, que la reconnaissance du français comme la langue officielle de l'université n'est pas mentionnée dans le projet de loi.

Il y a la deuxième qui dit que la composition des pouvoirs du conseil des gouverneurs et du sénat : non plus mentionnée dans la loi. Puis il y a aussi des droits de successeur pour l'APUH, qui représente.

Ça fait que, ces trois points-là, c'est sûr que ça doit te concerner que ce n'est pas mentionné. Je sais que tu l'as mentionné un peu. Mais à quelque part, le gouvernement a dit : « Bien, écoute. Inquiétez-vous pas, là. On va s'arranger. On va tout structurer ça de même. » Ça te fait peur, ou ça ne te fait pas peur?

M. Luc Bussières: Il y a deux choses : je compte sur—bon, le fait qu'on m'ait rassuré dans les deux ministères, c'est une chose. C'est une forme d'assurance. Le fait qu'il y a une tradition dans les universités canadiennes puis ontariennes aussi qu'on ne peut pas faire—il y a une tradition, par exemple, sur le respect de la collégialité dans la gestion des universités. Donc dans les conseils des gouverneurs, dans les sénats, il y a toujours des profs—et des employés, d'ailleurs, les autres employés administratifs—qui sont représentés. Ça fait que, je compte sur cette longue tradition-là dans les universités pour que, cette fois-ci, je ne vois pas pourquoi le gouvernement procéderait autrement puis arriverait avec un projet de loi où le conseil des gouverneurs serait un peu n'importe quoi ou le sénat serait un peu n'importe quoi. C'est—

M. Guy Bourgouin: C'est vrai que—je ne voulais pas t'arrêter, mais c'est limité. Mais avec toute la situation qui se passe—on sait que les francophones veulent avoir une université à Sudbury indépendante pour et par. Sur ce sujet-là, avec ton indépendance, crois-tu que ton université peut répondre aux besoins de la communauté—juste à ton besoin de la communauté—ou que non, ça nous en prendrait une autre à Sudbury aussi qui pourrait venir agrandir les besoins de la communauté, avec une à Hearst, une à Sudbury puis une à Toronto?

M. Luc Bussières: Dès la création de l'UOF, c'est ce que j'avais dit aux gens de l'UOF : « Moi, je voudrais travailler avec vous, mais je voudrais avoir un statut juridique égal. Donc je serais indépendant; vous seriez indépendants. » On formerait un début de réseau. Moi, c'est ma vision depuis toujours—je l'ai souvent dit dans les médias—un peu comme les universités du Québec, à une échelle pour l'Ontario pour la francophonie. Et là, on avait déjà Toronto : le projet de loi viendrait renforcer la situation de Hearst, puis là, il y a une situation qui se passe à Sudbury qui appelle à une solution aussi. Puis une de ces solutions-là, c'est certain que moi, je m'imagine qu'on pourrait avoir à ce moment-là un grand corridor de Toronto jusqu'à Hearst, en passant par Sudbury, où il y a trois institutions qui sont les mieux placées dans leurs régions respectives pour bien desservir les gens, puis qui peuvent travailler ensemble sur des projets conjoints chaque fois que c'est possible. Ça fait que, pour moi ça serait une—

La Présidente (M^{me} Goldie Ghamari): Une minute.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci, Luc. Je vais donner la parole à Gilles, parce que je sais qu'il va vouloir poser des questions.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Bisson?

M. Gilles Bisson: Oh, there we go. On peut parler. Deux affaires : Monsieur Bourgouin, l'université est aussi à Timmins. Tu as oublié Timmins.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ah, Timmins. Excuse-moi.

M. Gilles Bisson: Prêche pour ma paroisse, OK?

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Luc, je ne vais rien que te dire que, comme tu le sais, nous autres, comme famille, on est bien content avec l'Université de Hearst : Natalie, notre fille, qui a gradué de

l'Université de Hearst, qui a travaillé pour l'Université de Hearst et est, là, en pratique privée elle-même dans l'ouvrage qu'elle fait, elle a été un succès de l'Université de Hearst. So, de la part des parents de Natalie, des parents à travers le nord et le nord-est de l'Ontario, comme francophones, on vous remercie, parce que sans l'Université de Hearst, tout ça aurait été fait en anglais, et ce serait cette partie de notre patrimoine qu'on perd. So on va vous remercier.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Five seconds.

M. Gilles Bisson: Merci, Luc. Continue le bel ouvrage.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Merci beaucoup. We'll now turn to the independent member for four and a half minutes. MPP Schreiner, you may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three presenters for coming in today. Merci, tout le monde.

I want to direct my first question to Angela. I believe most of your presentation was referring to schedule 21. There have been previous presenters who have come and raised some concerns about the downloading of service providers to the municipal level, and that the municipalities may not have the capacity to provide service for people on Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support. I believe you were starting to talk about that and you ran out of time. I'm wondering if you have that concern and if you could explain the implications related to that concern.

Ms. Angela Browne: Absolutely. These ideas look great on paper, about life stabilization, about bringing mental health, wraparound services, housing supports—different things to people who need help.

First of all, we don't have mental health supports in Ontario. We don't have a mental health system. I used to work in mental health in the 1990s. Today I don't work in mental health, but from my understanding it's the same way it was when I was working in the 1990s. Nothing has improved, and people are still having problems connecting.

So where are all these workers going to come from? Where are all the programs going to come from? And who's going to pay for it? Are the municipalities going to have to pay for it? Municipalities don't have any money other than property taxes and user fees. Or is the province going to be funding the municipalities and handing down a lot of money for what they need?

These caseworkers are going to be having a lot of cases that they're going to manage. Right now, Ontario Works caseworkers usually manage about 100 to 120 cases each. Taking in Ontario disability, taking in other people who have issues—because the caseworkers are not limited to those on social assistance. Bringing in these people as well as bringing in, somehow, some substance of mental health—the province just recently called in the military, called in health workers from all over the country, registered nurses, people who are retired, so they could help in hospitals in dealing with this COVID-19 situation. We're short. We don't have the people. We don't have the resources. So where is all this going to come from?

And then, on top of it, when people are dealing with these situations and trying to get the help, you're not giving them enough money.

First of all, having a basic phone service—you're not giving them enough money to even make a phone call or to even look for work, or to call a number that they're referred to, to make an appointment. Some of my people can't even Zoom in because they don't have the technology. So they have to consider that they're in a completely different world.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes. There has been a lot of talk about reducing red tape, and I think everyone would like to see less red tape in their lives. People on social assistance probably face more red tape than most people in society, with all the forms they have to fill out, all the different agencies they have to go to for support, managing caseworkers etc.

The irony of this proposal is that it actually seems that it might increase red tape for people on social assistance. Would you agree with that?

Ms. Angela Browne: Absolutely. Right now, they work on 800 rules. Probably these new changes will add 200 rules to the 800 rules they already follow. First of all, people on social assistance—I'm talking mostly about ODSP, because that's who I usually deal with—can't get married without losing their assistance. They can't even get into relationships. They even question roommates; they ask if they're lovers. This is intrusive. How many other people go through this? And if they get into relationships—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time that we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the government for 7.5 minutes. MPP Crawford.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the three presenters for being here today.

My first question will go to Jocelyn. It's interesting to hear your perspective on things, and I want to hear a little bit more.

Certainly, our government has been committed to red tape reduction. Many people are aware of the fact that Ontario has 380,000 regulations, which is the most of any jurisdiction in North America. BC, for example, has 190,000, half the number of regulations, and BC is a pretty good place to live. The goal—and that's why we actually created a ministry, and why we have this bill here to begin with—is to reduce the burdensome regulations. Obviously, we all know there are regulations we need—health and safety etc. The goal is to reduce regulations that are burdensome and cumbersome for consumers, businesses, individuals.

I want to hear from your perspective, for the companies you represent, what the importance is of reducing these regulations and if you could give us some insight into a couple of examples of where the government can make a difference so that our companies can compete both within Canada and abroad.

Ms. Jocelyn Bamford: One of the major impediments to growth is getting equipment certified. Not a lot of the equipment is produced in Canada, and when you bring equipment over that you cannot source in Canada, there's a lot of red tape to get that certified, exacerbating that.

I'll give you a prime example of ridiculous red tape. We have in our coalition a woman who owns a little area which is closed down because of COVID-19—but it was where you'd bring your kids. They have a bouncy castle. It's an indoor playground. She was a stay-at-home mom who did it to start a business, hire a few people and be able to have a business where her children could be. The regulation for that bouncy castle—she has to have somebody from the TSSA, so someone from the airport, an engineer, go to her location up north, at a cost of \$10,000 every single year, to make sure that her indoor bouncy castle doesn't blow away. It's an indoor bouncy castle. This is an example of a cost that's ridiculous. She has a brother, a mechanical engineer, who would be willing to investigate and sign off, or she could get somebody local, but because it's regulated in a manner that's ridiculous—and it has nothing to do with safety; she's happy to have her bouncy castle inspected every year. This is an example of ridiculous red tape and cost that does nobody any good.

People getting third shifts and having to go through ECC evaluations that treat them like they're criminals—they want to expand their business so they can hire more people, so that they can pay more taxes, so that we can grow our economy. The hoops that you have to go through for a standard ECC really need to be re-evaluated, because there's not common sense. For example, one of the ECCs that I've said said that you have to be quieter than a bird. That specific business spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in noise and order reduction, but it seemed like everything that she did was not good enough for the Ministry of the Environment. They just added new regulations.

I think there needs to be a different approach. The approach that we see in Ohio—and a great approach that we have seen, a change from the previous government, was in health and safety. The health and safety officers we see now are very much telling us how to be better, and we all want to be better. No one can afford a workplace accident. Some 92% of all businesses in Canada are 100 people and below. Our employees are family. We know our employees; we know their families. The last thing anybody wants is to have an employee hurt. As I say to my team, if we lose a customer, we'll recover; if we lose one of you, we'll never recover. The emphasis and the change has been to help us be better. I think with expansions, we need to see a change, to say, "How can we help you grow? Keeping with the regulations, let's tell you how you can as opposed to how you can't."

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We had a very positive interaction with a new product that we wanted to have, and it was just because one of the bureaucrats gave the instructions of, "Tell her how she can and what she has to do to be able to do this, as opposed to telling her why she can't." If we all have that attitude, we'll have more prosperity, and folks like Angela will have the ability to have more services for their people. We have to stop treating businesses like they're criminals. We have to stop driving businesses out of Ontario, because if

we don't, we're not going to have the ability to offer services to people Angela supports.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Absolutely. Obviously, it's all interlinked. The wealthier our society, the more prosperous, the more we can support social services, education, health care.

Your point about manufacturing is important. The good news is, I think we are in the midst, even in COVID-19, of a bit of a manufacturing renaissance, which is the very beginning of it, I think, in Ontario. As you know, our government did put some policies in place to reduce the cost of electricity for manufacturers. There was horrendous, horrendous mismanagement of the electricity system before, some of which we're not able to change, because we've got some very long-term contracts, but we are able to help business, to support.

I know a lot of businesses throughout Ontario are looking to the States because the cheap costs—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: —and fortunately, we're keeping Ford of Canada in my home riding of Oakville, but that was certainly one of their issues as well.

With the very limited time I have left, I'll go to Luc from Hearst. I just want to get your thoughts on how independence will grant more autonomy to make decisions about programs and degrees—what effect that will have on you and, actually, even broader in your community of Hearst, because I think that's important too.

M. Luc Bussi eres: Merci. Le fait qu'on soit affili e c'est—quand on parle d'un bill sur la r eduction du « red tape », cela a un effet l a-dessus. En  tant affili e   Laurentienne—j'ai dit tant t qu'on est autonome financie rement, mais on ne l'est pas au niveau de notre programmation. Quand on a voulu changer nos programmes en 2014 pour faire face   une r eorganisation avec la d emographie—on perdait des joueurs dans le Nord; il fallait se renouveler, trouver des  tudiants ailleurs. Pour pouvoir avancer de nouvelles id es, on fait tout le travail   l'interne avec nos d epartements, nos professeurs, notre s enat, notre conseil des gouverneurs. Ensuite, le travail fait juste commencer, parce qu'il faut s'en aller   l'Universit  Laurentienne, avec qui on est affili e, pour faire—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Merci beaucoup. That's all the time we have.

We'll now turn to the official opposition for the last round of questions. MPP Bisson, you may begin.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to Ms. Bamford. I'm going to disagree with what you said. You're saying that your sister has to pay \$10,000 to get a bouncy castle inspected. I just got on the phone and called an operator in Mr. Bourgouin's riding—and we're not going to say who it is. It's \$250 per bouncy castle. Who is your sister calling?

Ms. Jocelyn Bamford: No, it's not my sister; it's a member of our coalition. I will send you the documentation that she sent to me that she has to have someone from the TSSA. If that has changed now—that was the rule going back a year. I have all the documentation. I'd be

happy to provide it to you along with her invoices. That's what she sent to me.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to ask you, what could possibly go wrong if her brother becomes the inspector of her bouncy castles?

Ms. Jocelyn Bamford: It doesn't have to be her brother. She could have a mechanical engineer who's not from the TSSA, who wouldn't have to travel from Toronto. She could have a local person, a mechanical engineer, provide that same service, who she doesn't have to pay. I am very happy to present to the committee her name, her contact number and her invoice to demonstrate that that is what she has had to pay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am sympathetic to lowering the cost to small businesses when it comes to their interaction with whomever, be it government or whatever. But some of the claims that you make—I was just sitting here, because I've dealt with people who had problems with the TSSA and bouncy castles, and price was never an issue. We had some issues in regard to getting the inspector to go to places in Mr. Bourgouin's riding—that used to be my riding, once upon a time—and we had some issues in regard to some of the inspectors and how they dealt with things. But we got them worked out, and price was never an issue—

Ms. Jocelyn Bamford: Well, I'm happy to share with you her information. This is going back a couple of years. I don't know if that has been adjusted. That is why she joined our coalition—because she couldn't get anybody to help and support her with that.

Remember that 92% of—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Tell her to call me and I'll—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Bisson, I would just like to remind all members to not speak over each other. I'd also like to remind members to allow witnesses to respond to the question. For the purposes of Hansard, it's difficult to record conversations when members are speaking over witnesses.

Ms. Bamford, would you like to continue?

Ms. Jocelyn Bamford: Yes. I am happy to submit the name and the member. She had such a hard time getting any traction to this. I'm happy if these rules have changed. This is going back a few years ago.

We need to remember that 92% of all businesses in Canada are 100 people and below, and we need to support them, because they're the lifeblood of our economy. If we don't support them because we have regulations that are difficult or overly costly, then we strangle the lifeblood of our economy, and that doesn't do good for anyone.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would just argue that there's a reason why regulations come in place. They come in place because there have been accidents and coroner's inquests when it comes to those accidents. So we try to make things safer for people, and \$250 for a bouncy castle, to me, seems reasonable. Should it be done in a timely manner? Yes. Should there be some sort of ease of making the process—absolutely, I agree.

I'll move on to Angela Browne. This merger of ODSP and OW: I, like you, am a little bit worried. There have

been some people who fear that there might be some privatization of the system. Do you see that in this legislation? I haven't read it in detail.

Ms. Angela Browne: Absolutely. This is the—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can you elaborate on that? My understanding, as I was explained by constituents—but go ahead.

Ms. Angela Browne: In the UK, they hired a group called Atos. It was an insurance company from France. These people were responsible for determining whether somebody was able to work or not. They were determining people who were able to work—they said they were fit to work, people who were in a coma in a hospital, people who had severe diabetes, people who had just amputated their limbs, people with severe mental health issues. These people were determined fit to work.

There was a whole lot of stuff done. I'd be very glad to send to the committee a lot of the research that I've done on the UK project. I do not want a repeat of this in Ontario, because all that's going to do is create a lot more problems.

If this is a reduction of red tape, let's reduce red tape for people who are on ODSP and OW. Stop the 800 rules. Let people marry and not lose their benefits. Let people work and earn more money and keep it in their pocket and stop being taxed more than billionaires. We need to have a lot more freedom. Let's reduce red tape. If you want to reduce red tape, that's what we need to do. Let's look at where it's really hitting people.

I agree a lot with Jocelyn. As a small business owner myself, I see a lot of issues with small business, and I think we need to listen to the small business community as well, because people are not getting heard in that sector. I think there's a lot of favouritism towards large businesses, maybe because they employ more people or whatever; I don't know. But the small business sector is the lifeblood of the community.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I agree with you.

I got disconnected there, but I take it the incentive for the private sector to get into the business—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —is that if they disqualify somebody, then they get more profit.

Ms. Angela Browne: It is, and they're not going to send people to jobs that are good jobs. They're going to be sending people to Tim Hortons, Walmart and other places. I'm talking about people with a career trajectory. They came from high-paying places, they became disabled, and they're trying to work themselves off of disability. That's not going to get people off of disability. It's going to have people return to the social assistance sector. I think that it needs to be thought out carefully.

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People with disabilities, ODSP and social assistance recipients, advocates like myself, policy analysts—we need to be the ones who drive the process and co-design this process with the government that wants to implement this. I don't know what it's doing in an omnibus bill. I really think that this should have been brought into a bill of its own and examined carefully.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That's all the time that we have.

We'll now turn to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, you may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair.

Ma question est pour Luc. Pardonne mon français. Mon français n'est pas bon. Je vais parler anglais.

Congratulations on your 20-year battle for the Université de Hearst. One of the concerns that's been brought forward, though, is that in most legislation for universities, the structure of the board of governors and the senate is in legislation, not in regulation. I know le député Bourgouin brought that up in his questioning as well. You had said that you were reassured by the government, or by the minister, around concerns related to that. I certainly appreciate that, though I think one concern could be that a future government that doesn't provide the same level of reassurance could more easily change regulation, rather than—legislation is more challenging. There's more accountability and transparency. I'm just wondering if you would feel more comfortable if those structures, particularly around governance, were in legislation.

M. Luc Bussi eres: Oui. Comme j'ai dit tout   l'heure, c'est s ur que dans un monde id al, j'aurais aim  mieux que tout soit l  d j , que tout soit clair, puis qu'on sache exactement   quoi s'en tenir. Donc, les seules choses sur lesquelles je peux m'appuyer maintenant, ce sont les r actions du gouvernement actuel. Par le pass ,   la fois, les gouvernements lib raux et le NPD ont  t  sympathiques   notre cause,  taient pr ts   consid rer de nous accorder une charte ou d' valuer la question. Donc j'imagine qu'une fois que  a sera fait, c'est un souhait que je fais, que peu importe le gouvernement qui serait en place, on verrait le caract re positif d'avoir non seulement une universit  francophone, mais deux, puis peut- tre d'autres  ventuellement.

Donc, dans un monde id al, j'aimerais mieux que  a soit dans la l gislation, comme tout le monde, mais on se retrouve dans une situation diff rente maintenant.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Merci. I understand the challenge you face and I certainly appreciate that you would like to see this legislation move forward. I think it would be good for the long term health of the Universit  de Hearst to have it in legislation, and maybe we have an opportunity to do that moving forward through the committee process.

Thank you. Those are my only questions, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. We'll now turn to the government for the last round of 7.5 minutes. Who would like to begin? MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much, Chair, and again, thank you to all of the presenters today. I'm going to start with Luc. Before I start, thank you, again, to everyone. Angela, certainly, I share in your passion for reducing red tape. As an MPP, newly elected—I guess "new" is relative, given the pandemic; it seems like it's been for ages we've been in this—but I struggle to navigate the system. I live in Port Hope next to rent-geared-to-income and a number of ODSP recipients, and have sat down on

the front porch just chatting with them about the challenges. As an MPP who isn't navigating those sorts of disabilities, I can't imagine what it's like navigating it when you add the added stress of a career-limiting and/or life-limiting disability.

Certainly, the one piece I'll just add as a comment with respect to municipalities: AMO was very much supportive of the government's position paper. They've been actively consulted through this and did put out some supportive tweets and commentary on this transformation, which I think we can all agree has to ultimately benefit Ontarians and the end user. So, certainly, we appreciate everything. I took strong notes from your presentation, and I appreciate it.

Luc, une question pour vous—I again apologize. Like MPP Schreiner, I'm still studying my French and hope to be fully bilingue soon. But for you: Again, one of the things your faculty members alluded to—and I was just wondering if you could speak in a bit more detail on this. It was on a point that really hit home to me. I think three years ago, we had no universities governed by and for francophones. We're now on the—very much, two strong universities. Diane mentioned having independence, allowing you to move a bit quicker. Speak to me about that importance for francophones in the north, for our fast-growing Indigenous population in Ontario, the important role you play with Indigenous partners and just ultimately being responsive to jobs and labour needs in the north.

M. Luc Bussi eres: Premi rement, peut- tre juste par rapport   la question des Autochtones, comme notre universit  offre des services seulement en fran ais, on re oit parmi nos  tudiants des gens qui sont des M tis qui parlent fran ais. Mais beaucoup d'Autochtones du Nord ne parlent pas fran ais, donc malheureusement on ne peut pas les desservir dans l' tat actuel des choses avec notre mandat.

Pour ce qui est de l'impact sur nos communaut s, j'ai mentionn  tant t la capacit  qu'on a eue, la d monstration qu'on a faite de pouvoir accueillir des immigrants dans le Nord par le canal des  tudiants qui arrivent avec des visas d' tudes, donc beaucoup d' tudiants, en effet. Pendant qu'ils sont ici comme  tudiants, ces gens-l  veulent travailler, donc ils occupent des emplois   temps partiel que des gens avaient de la mis re   combler avant. Par exemple, ici, une organisation qui s'appelle La Maison Verte, une p pini re qui s me des arbres pour le reboisement, disait que l'ann e derni re elle avait embauch  19 de nos  tudiants   temps partiel, puis que si elle ne les avait pas eus, cela aurait compromis sa saison parce qu'elle n'aurait pas  t  capable de semer les petits arbres au moment o  c' tait n cessaire.

Donc nos  tudiants aident les communaut s au niveau  conomique pendant qu'ils sont  tudiants, puis, selon les statistiques qu'on a, depuis qu'on les a fait graduer, presque 100 % d'entre eux font demande pour un permis de travail post-dipl me. Presque 100 % l'obtiennent et 50 % d'entre eux restent dans le Nord. Les autres s'en vont ailleurs en Ontario ou au Qu bec.

Donc on a tout un impact sur nos communaut s on disait au niveau social et culturel, mais beaucoup aussi au niveau  conomique, puis on est en train de faire la

démonstration qu'on est aussi un moteur de développement économique, un joueur qui est reconnu dans notre région puis qui y amène des gens d'ailleurs. On n'a pas démissionné devant le fait que des immigrants peuvent aller juste s'installer à Toronto. On fait la preuve que c'est possible de les attirer dans le Nord puis qu'ils viennent contribuer au développement du Nord.

Mr. David Piccini: Yes, thank you. I appreciate what you mentioned about attracting international students to the north, La Maison Verte and other important initiatives. I think, certainly, it was this government—and we're continuing these discussions about the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program and how we can greater incentivize those international students to study and stay, and incentivize through the points system, outside of the GTHA. I'm a rural representative, too, so I appreciate this and appreciate the formative role you're going to play in the north—continue to play, I should say—and commend you for that.

You mentioned the structure. We discussed that at great length, about the board of governors and senate. Certainly I want to again reiterate something I know Minister Romano has mentioned: the position of the government is maintaining that governed by francophones for francophones and that inherent nature. Do you have any specific recommendations, composition or what you'd like to see going forward?

M. Luc Bussièrès: Oui, on a présenté au ministère, on a eu des questions sur la composition actuelle de notre conseil des gouverneurs et de notre sénat. Donc on a répondu à ces questions-là, puis dans le fond, ce qu'on dit c'est « n'importe quoi qui ressemble à ça en termes de proportion ». Par exemple, notre conseil des gouverneurs actuellement compte 10 membres votants. Il y a six bénévoles, qui sont des gens de la région qui travaillent, qui ont un emploi quelque part; il y a deux employés de l'université, un professeur puis un membre du personnel administratif; il y a un étudiant; et il y a moi comme recteur

qui avons le droit de vote. Donc c'est un petit conseil de 10 membres qui est facile à réunir, qui travaille bien. On pourrait être un peu plus nombreux. Ça pourrait être OK aussi d'avoir plus de ressources de ce côté-là.

Du côté de notre sénat, on a huit membres votants : le recteur, le vice-recteur, quatre professeurs et deux étudiants dans ce cas-là. Donc l'idée c'est de—

La Présidente (M^{me} Goldie Ghamari): Une minute.

M. Luc Bussièrès: L'idée, c'est de maintenir une représentativité des différents groupes pour que l'on continue d'avoir une gestion collégiale. Ce n'est pas seulement les administrateurs qui gèrent; c'est en collaboration avec les employés et aussi les étudiants, dans le cas du sénat et aussi des gouverneurs.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you. That's excellent, and I appreciate that and your guidance on this.

Just in closing: Do you support this legislation in principle, to give that autonomy and that ability to pivot in the north? And just, again, to hit home, can you speculate on what is the net economic benefit and the social benefit from doing this?

M. Luc Bussièrès: Oui, j'appuie le projet de loi qui nous donne une charte, parce que ça va retirer toutes sortes d'étapes ou d'irritants qui nous empêchent de jouer le rôle, qui nous empêchent d'être aussi innovateurs qu'on le voudrait. Puis dans ce sens-là, n'importe quoi qui va nous aider comme ça va être très positif. On a besoin de pouvoir être—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Merci beaucoup. That's all the time that we have. At this point I'd like to thank our presenters. Merci beaucoup. You may now stand down.

As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 19, 2021, and committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, May 19, 2021. Thank you, everyone. Have a great day and be safe.

The committee adjourned at 1801.

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