

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

G-36

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

G-36

**Standing Committee on
General Government**

Better for People, Smarter for
Business Act, 2020

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Friday 27 November 2020

**Comité permanent des
affaires gouvernementales**

Loi de 2020 pour mieux servir
la population et faciliter
les affaires

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Vendredi 27 novembre 2020

Chair: Goldie Ghamari
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Goldie Ghamari
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-5218

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES**

Friday 27 November 2020

Vendredi 27 novembre 2020

The committee met at 0900 in room 151 and by video conference.

**BETTER FOR PEOPLE,
SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020
POUR MIEUX SERVIR LA POPULATION
ET FACILITER LES AFFAIRES**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking a regulation / Projet de loi 213, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau administratif qui pèse sur la population et les entreprises en édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en abrogeant un règlement.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on General Government will now come to order. We're here to conduct public hearings on Bill 213, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking a regulation.

We have the following member present in the room: MPP Sheref Sabawy. The following members are participating remotely: MPP Bob Bailey, MPP Daisy Wai, MPP Peggy Sattler, MPP Catherine Fife. I have also noticed a few other MPPs have joined, so I'll just be confirming their attendance before we continue.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I am MPP Schreiner. I am present and I'm in my Queen's Park office.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. MPP Kramp, can you please confirm that you are MPP Daryl Kramp and that you are present in Ontario?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Daryl Kramp, here in Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. MPP Nina Tangri, can you please confirm that you are MPP Tangri and that you are present in Ontario?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good morning, Chair. This is MPP Tangri and I am in Mississauga, Ontario. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. Are there any other members?

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

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before

starting to speak. Since it could take a little time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning. As always, all comments should go through the Chair.

Once again, in order to ensure optimal sound quality, members participating via Zoom are encouraged to use headphones and/or microphones if possible. Are there any questions before we begin?

**MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT, JOB CREATION
AND TRADE**

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I will now call on the Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. You will have 15 minutes for your opening statement, followed by 45 minutes of questions from the members of the committee. The questions will be divided into three rounds of six minutes for the government members, three rounds of six minutes for the official opposition, and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent member.

I would now ask the associate minister to please state his name for the record, and then he may begin. You will have 15 minutes.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, Chair. I'm just setting up my camera in here; my apologies. I'm Prabmeet Sarkaria. I'm happy to begin whenever you see fit.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You may begin.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much.

Good morning, everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I'm grateful for the work that is being done by every member of this committee in support of the people and businesses in this province. I believe the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020, will help government deliver clear and effective rules that promote public health and safeguard the environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and opportunity. It will help make government work better for people and smarter for business throughout this pandemic and beyond.

Before I begin to explain how this proposed legislation is going to do all these things, I think it's important to look at how far we've come in such a short time. Before the pandemic, our government worked diligently to reduce unnecessary burdens so that more Ontario businesses

could compete and grow. When we took office, it cost Ontario companies an average of \$33,000 per year to comply with regulations. That was the highest of any province.

Over the past two years, we've been bringing that cost down. We have proudly taken more than 200 actions to reduce red tape, saving businesses time and money to focus on serving their customers and growing their companies. In fact, we recently released the 2020 Burden Reduction Report which highlighted that our actions had reduced regulatory requirements by 4.2% and that we've saved businesses, not-for-profits, municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals about \$331 million in compliance costs since June 2018. We have made tremendous strides, but now the demands on people and businesses have become more intense, more time-consuming and more costly than before.

It has also reinforced the urgency of our work to further modernize regulations, take more processes online and continue tackling obstacles to growth and success. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on people and businesses across Ontario, especially with the second wave, and that's why our government continues to work tirelessly to help people and businesses weather the storm. At the onset of the pandemic, we moved quickly to make over \$11 billion in financial relief available. We also made key regulatory updates to improve cash flow and help people and businesses adapt to the demands of physical distancing. Now, our latest budget sets the next phase in our response, with total support of \$45 billion over three years. That includes an estimated \$13.5 billion in total support for people and job creators.

At a time of unprecedented challenges, our focus remains on unburdening businesses, creating new opportunities and setting Ontario up for recovery and success in the years to come. This act will help us in this effort. The proposed act is the latest in a series of red tape reduction regulatory modernization efforts that is delivering meaningful results for Ontario. It also has the centrepiece of a larger, broad-based package of regulatory changes and announcements of supports for people and businesses.

The package features more than 65 actions that would, if passed, modernize and streamline regulations so that they better reflect the new reality we find ourselves in. It shows the importance of making regulations easier to understand and comply with so people and businesses can focus on what really matters: regaining stability, creating good jobs and preparing for the opportunities of the future.

The proposed Better for People, Smarter for Business Act contains amendments in 10 different ministries. These proposed changes would help strengthen Ontario's economic recovery, support businesses on the ground and help the government deliver clear and effective rules. They would do so in a way that maintains or improves protections that keep our communities and people healthy and safe.

Keeping strong public health, safety and environmental protections is very important to our government, and it is the first of five principles that guide our work in this area.

The second is prioritizing the important issues. We assess the regulation cost, the time and money, while looking for innovative ways to ensure that these rules are effective and efficient.

The third principle is to harmonize rules with the federal government and the other provinces where we can. We want to target duplicative red tape and align with other jurisdictions where it makes sense.

The fourth principle is to listen to the people and businesses of Ontario. We want to hear about what we can do to make the right conditions for businesses and communities to prosper.

The fifth principle is to take a whole-of-government approach. By working together, we can deliver smarter government for Ontario. It's these guiding principles that make sure we are taking every precaution in recommending the right proposals that will make life better for people and smarter for businesses.

Now I'd like to focus on a few of the proposals in the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act that would make a meaningful difference in people's lives. The first example I want to highlight would make a difference for anyone buying a new home, which for some is the most significant purchase they will ever make. Amendments to the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act would, if passed, pave the way to establish a separate regulator of new home builders. Amendments would overhaul Tarion Warranty Corp., which administers and enforces this act. These changes would strengthen consumer protections by focusing Tarion on new homebuyers rather than builders. This focus would support higher-quality new home construction, which would reduce defects in warranty and protection plans and better protect consumers from bad actors in the marketplace.

Next, I'll highlight an action that would protect communities by giving them more say when a water bottling company proposes to build a new well or extract more water. Our review of Ontario's water-taking program found that takings for bottled water are managed effectively under the current framework. However, local municipalities made it clear they want a more direct say in decisions to allow water bottling in their area. This proposal would require bottlers to have the support of the host municipality before they could apply for a provincial permit for new or increased water-taking.

0910

The next example demonstrates our efforts to update outdated regulations to provide payment options that weren't available before. We're proposing amendments to the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act that would introduce new options for child and spousal support payments.

Currently, employers must deduct support payments from an employee's pay and forward it to the Family Responsibility Office. While this was the best option 24 years ago when the law first came into effect, there are new, reliable, automatic payment options available, such as pre-authorized debit and online banking. This proposal would allow the Family Responsibility Office director to

determine the most appropriate payment options for a support payer to pay what they owe, and it would reduce administrative burden on employers.

These are just a few of the actions we're taking to help people in their day-to-day lives. I am now going to focus on some of the items in the act that, if passed, will help our job creators, the first being an action that would lead to a digital delivery system to provide environmental information on properties. Land developers use this information to help inform their decisions on real estate transactions and projects to redevelop brownfield sites.

Currently, this process is done manually, and typically takes from two weeks to a few months to complete. Moving property information requests online will reduce turnaround time by up to 20 days. That would reduce delays for property acquirers and real estate sectors, which would allow them to make faster and better-informed decisions to support property transactions. It would also support our move away from paper-based processes as part of our Digital First strategy.

Next, I'm going to talk about an action to create a more flexible regulatory framework for our province's growing aquaculture sector. The current framework doesn't address the diversity of aquaculture operations across Ontario or the varied risk associated with them. For instance, regulations on which fish species can be cultured must go to cabinet for approval. We're proposing to move this authority to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, which we expect would reduce approval time by three to four months, while maintaining oversight by the ministry. Speeding up approval times would allow aquaculture facilities to diversify and grow their businesses quickly.

The next proposal would reduce regulatory burdens on the mining sector by streamlining the Mining Act and making it more consistent. For example, when a claim holder makes a request to be part of a lease application, occasionally, small gaps of land are identified. These proposals would simplify the process for including these gap lands when a lease is issued. Another proposal would support our Digital First strategy by allowing lessees to apply online to have their lease renewed.

The next action would apply what public servants have learned from administering legislation on forfeited corporate properties to improve the system. When the Forfeited Corporate Property Act came into effect in 2016, it consolidated the management of these properties with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. This year, the ministry completed a review of 332 files on forfeited properties over the first three years under this act, and it identified ways to improve the regulatory process.

Our proposed amendments to the act would reduce burdens on people, businesses and the government. They would remove duplication, clarify requirements to make it easier for consumers and businesses to seek relief from forfeiture or to buy a forfeited property, and give the ministry new tools to manage and dispose of these properties more quickly and efficiently. This would help put forfeited corporate properties back into productive use

more efficiently, and that would support revived businesses and protect businesses legitimately operating on forfeited property.

What I've outlined today are just some of the proposals in the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. Through the 29 schedules, the act, if passed, will modernize significant statutes to remove unnecessary, outdated, duplicative regulations that get in the way of people and businesses in their everyday lives. These actions will also support businesses on the ground as we work with them to overcome challenges they've never faced before, and they will deliver clear, effective rules that will protect public health and safety and the environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and opportunity. By modernizing and streamlining rules and moving more processes and services online, we can help businesses and people while they manage the next phase of the pandemic.

As the government has noted, we have provided significant supports to businesses to help them weather the storm. Along with regulatory modernization, the government has doubled supports to \$600 million to help those impacted by new restrictions. The government has helped digitize businesses by introducing the Digital Main Street grant program, helping almost 23,000 businesses in the province of Ontario go digital, with some receiving \$2,500 grants to help with those processes. The government has put forward significant supports of \$60 million to help businesses offset the cost of PPE. We have put forward regulatory measures to help restaurants, whether it is permanently allowing them to deliver alcohol with their takeout orders or proposing delivery fee caps to ensure that small and independent restaurants can weather the storm.

We're going to continue to work with businesses and small business owners across the province to ensure that we can help them weather this storm, and we're going to work and do anything we can to help them prepare for the better days that lay ahead.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Back to you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much for your presentation. At this time, we'll begin with our first round of questions.

Sorry, before we continue, MPP Lindo, can you confirm you are MPP Lindo and that you are present in Ontario?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Yes. This is Laura Mae Lindo, MPP for Kitchener Centre, calling in from Kitchener.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. At this point, we'll now turn to the official opposition for the first round of questions. You will have six minutes. MPP Fife, you may begin.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Minister, for the presentation on Bill 213.

I want you to please walk us back and tell us how schedule 2 specifically got into Bill 213 and what it has to do with responding to COVID-19, to the challenges that businesses in the province have been facing, because this

has been, obviously, a point of contention, that this schedule is still in this piece of legislation. In your comments, you talked at length about the measures, be they small or emerging, that are part of Bill 213. But the fact that schedule 2 is in this bill really undermines even the small measures that are in this legislation to help businesses.

How were you personally involved in schedule 2 being in Bill 213? Did you support the inclusion of schedule 2 in Bill 213? And what does it have to do with helping businesses in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, MPP Fife, for the question. Whether it's schedule 2 or any of the elements within this legislation—if you can remember, last year, I also introduced red tape reduction legislation, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. Within that same legislation, I put forward measures that would help academic institutions like Algoma and OCAD—which is now officially a university. Algoma is still undergoing the process which the previous piece of legislation put forward.

But my approach to red tape reduction does not only focus on businesses; it focuses on the public sector, it focuses on all elements, because we understand that as a government, we can improve processes for our public. Whether it's our universities, whether for educational institutions, we can improve regulations and make smarter regulations for businesses, which we see much of in this legislation as well.

0920

But what we see in this legislation is no different than what we saw in a previous piece of legislation that I put forward last year in terms of granting the ability for institutions like OCAD and Algoma—very similar to the schedule 2 that we see here before us as well in this piece of legislation.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to push back on that. This is very different. The very fact that the Legislature has actually voted to condemn the direction that schedule 2 takes the province in is very different than the Algoma University issue, Minister. The fact that that motion actually passed this week is undermining the gestures that the province is taking to try to support businesses. Never before has a motion passed on the floor of the Legislature to condemn a direction or a schedule in a piece of legislation, and the government continues to move forward with it. I think you could alleviate a lot of people's concerns today by indicating that you will pull schedule 2 immediately, instead of us going through this whole process, which has turned into a huge distraction from support of businesses.

I'm challenging you on the contention that this is the same as Algoma University. It is most certainly not, because of the nature and the comments of Mr. McVety and because the Legislature as a whole voted to condemn the direction that this piece of legislation is taking us in. Please comment on that.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Minister, you have to unmute your microphone.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Sorry, my apologies there. Well, thank you, MPP Fife. Just to draw what this piece of legislation—if we compare it to the previous piece of legislation, all institutions are required to complete their PEQAB review before they can use the university designation. This enabling legislation, as it was for OCAD and Algoma, would allow the government to respond once the PEQAB review is complete.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: In short order—it won't be proclaimed until that process is complete. So from the element of the process, both if we look at this piece of legislation or a previous piece of legislation, it is no different.

The independent review by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board is, I believe, essential to ensure that the high standards of Ontario's post-secondary system remain the envy of the world. Enabling legislation for the three institutions that have been mentioned in this has happened under our government, has happened under governments of all political stripes, and also represents Ontario's long and proud history, when we speak to these institutions, of religious freedom as well.

So there has been nothing different that has happened between this piece of legislation and any previous piece of legislation that this government has put forward.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. That's all the time that we have. We'll now turn to the government for the first round of questions. MPP Sabawy, you have the floor. You have six minutes.

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: Thank you, Minister Sarkaria, for joining us today and giving us your insights about the bill and the different elements of that bill. Many Ontarians do not understand the expression “red tape” and how important it is for businesses to remove the unnecessary burdens of some of the regulations which are outdated or have been there for a long time—were put for a specific reason and that reason is not viable anymore.

Especially in the COVID circumstance, can you explain to us the importance of the red tape reduction and the work you're doing through this bill and other bills in getting the businesses back on track?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you, MPP Sabawy. I really appreciate the question. I also really appreciate all of your work and support, as you know. We've talked so many times on the red tape file previous to this legislation. You've done so much from the element of helping pharmacists in your community and across the province of Ontario. I know how much work you put into that.

When we look at red tape reduction and the unprecedented times that we're in right now, we need to give businesses the help to recover from the economic impacts from COVID-19 and help them prepare for the future. What I hear when I speak to small businesses and businesses in general across the province is burdensome regulation really hurts their ability to do what they do best, which is create jobs. We need to help businesses create jobs as we continue down the path of recovery now more

so than ever before. That's why we're introducing legislation like this, on top of the numerous supports, financially, for businesses.

When we look at the supports, the \$600 million that was just put forward in the past week to help those with new restrictions, or if we look a couple months before when our government made record-breaking investments to help businesses go digital with a \$57-million Digital Main Street program, this is all a part of a plan that, when we take the cumulative impacts of all of these together, will have significant economic impacts, not only to help businesses try to weather the storm currently but also to give them a strong foot to bounce back on.

Specifically in this act, it's about Ontario's economic recovery, supporting the businesses on the ground and helping to deliver really clear and effective rules that will also, then, promote public health and safeguard the environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and opportunity. Modern regulations are the way to do that; making them easier to understand and comply with would allow businesses to invest the time into what is important right now, which is recovering, rebuilding, re-emerging from this crisis stronger than before.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. Further questions? MPP Tangri.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good morning, Minister. We've seen throughout this pandemic that small businesses have been hit very, very hard, and it's of course through no fault of their own. They've undertaken very many significant changes to their business to try to weather the storm. We, as a government, need to create that environment for good jobs and opportunities for Ontarians.

Minister, can you tell me why the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020, is so important for our road to recovery, and how it helps businesses to retool and improve their capabilities?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, MPP Tangri. I appreciate all of the work that you have also been doing, especially on the med-tech sector. Especially in a sector like that, which is continuously innovating, the amount of modernization and support they need through changing regulation to make it better for businesses is a significant undertaking, so I want to appreciate all your efforts that you're doing there for that.

To the very point that you mentioned, the pandemic actually reinforces the urgency of our work to modernize regulation, take processes online and tackle those obstacles to growth and success. If you look back at what our focus has been since 2018, our government has digitized and streamlined processes, reduced duplication, modernized rules, which has amounted to a tax-like cut of \$338 million annually to businesses.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Now, that is a significant, I would say, support for those businesses across the province, whether you're a small business, whether you're a medium-sized business, and this Better for People, Smarter for Business package is just the next step in our ongoing plan to build an Ontario that truly does

that: just works better for the people of this province and smarter for businesses.

We'll continue to focus on cutting unnecessary costs on business and reducing those burdens to help people recover from the economic impacts that COVID-19 has had while also preparing them for the recovery in these uncertain times that we have going forward. I think now more than ever we need to ensure that we use the tools we have—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry, Minister, I have to cut you off. That concludes this round of questions. We'll now turn to the independent member for four and a half minutes. MPP Schreiner, you may begin.

0930

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for joining us today. It's important to have you here at committee. As a long-time small business owner, I wish I was spending all of my time asking you questions about how we can help small businesses, because I can tell you many of them are hurting and they need our help to get through this pandemic. But, unfortunately, schedule 2 has created a huge distraction, so I feel obligated to pick up the line of questioning from MPP Fife.

The one thing that concerns me is, we've all seen the amount of hate being expressed by this particular applicant to the PEQAB process, and given the controversy around that I'm wondering why the government didn't allow the PEQAB process to happen, have it be independent and then, if need be and they choose to move forward, introduce legislation, rather than introducing the bill before the PEQAB process had been completed.

Could you elaborate on the timing and the way the government has approached that?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, MPP Schreiner. To your point about small businesses, I'm happy to continue hosting or listening to small businesses in your community. I know we had a chance previously in the year to listen to them and so I'll continue, as I've hosted over 100 of those round tables. For anything specific to your community, I'm more than happy to have that conversation with you.

To the point about the process and what you have mentioned specifically: As I mentioned in my comments earlier, this is the PEQAB process in Ontario and how colleges apply and are assessed in our province. As I mentioned with Algoma and the Ontario College of Arts, OCAD, as I did in the previous legislation that I introduced last year, this will not be proclaimed until that process has been complete. The Minister of Colleges and Universities will take that same approach that he has done. If we look at Algoma, I believe they are still under that PEQAB process right now. What you see in this process right here is the exact same thing we saw in the process in the previous year. When we look at it from that aspect, it's no different and it has no difference in how we were moving forward.

All institutions are required to complete their PEQAB review before they can use that university designation.

This is no different, as it was for the institution that we did previously. The independent review by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board is essential, in my opinion, to ensure the high standards of Ontario's post-secondary education continue to remain the envy across the world. That's exactly what this piece of legislation is doing.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: With all due respect, Minister, I would not put the Canada Christian College in the same sentence with Algoma and OCAD, given the history of both this particular head of this college, the hate this particular person has expressed—and the financial irregularities that have been revealed. I would strongly encourage the government to simply remove this schedule from the bill, let us focus on small businesses and let the PEQAB process take place. I would strongly encourage the government, if you're truly, truly concerned about small businesses, to divorce this bill from schedule 2.

I believe I'm probably out of time, so I'll ask you some more questions in the next round. Thank you for being here this morning.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You are correct, MPP Schreiner. We'll now turn to the official opposition for six minutes. Who would like to begin? MPP Lindo, you have the floor.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister for joining us today.

I also have to focus on schedule 2, which is such a shame, because, as everybody has said prior, small and medium-sized enterprises are in dire need of as much support as possible, but schedule 2 being embedded in Bill 213 is actually putting them into such a difficult position.

I'm wondering, to the minister: If the changes in legislation are literally meant to help small and medium-sized businesses, then how is it that we can justify or that you can justify waiting to implement any of the changes that you have in this legislation until that PEQAB process has been determined? Doesn't that mean that you're waiting, and forcing small and medium-sized businesses to wait, so that we can actually find a way to have a college headed by somebody who is a known homophobe, Islamophobe, transphobe, become a university? Why should small and medium-sized businesses be penalized because the government feels like providing this favour to the institution?

Before I actually hand it over to you, I would appreciate it if we did not speak about Algoma and OCAD in the same breath, because those institutions fight to uphold the Ontario Human Rights Code, whereas Mr. McVety does not. It's really important for us to recognize that these are two very separate conversations. So if you can just let Ontario know why small and medium-sized businesses should wait because of that schedule 2, rather than just pulling schedule 2 and helping small and medium-sized businesses, I think the people of Ontario would appreciate that.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, MPP, and I appreciate your comments towards

those small businesses and your support for the measures in this bill. We've taken over 60 measures in this piece of legislation, and I didn't know that you approved of all the other schedules as well, but I appreciate that.

We have countless tools that haven't been updated or reviewed since the 1940s. What we see here in the process of schedule 2, as you're mentioning, is no different than any other institution that I supported, whether I say their name or not, which was Algoma or OCAD. This is simply about the process moving forward and ensuring that we need to enable that process—

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Sorry, I don't mean to be rude, but because—

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: —to be allowed to move forward.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Sorry, Minister, but because we have such a short time, I don't want you to repeat the same things that you've already said. The reality is that the Canada Christian College is run by a director who is known to be Islamophobic, homophobic and transphobic. That is not the same as OCAD or Algoma. In fact, nothing is being done to stop him from being able to build curriculum. In fact, you are reducing red tape so that hate can thrive in Ontario in our post-secondary institutions.

It is unfortunate that this is what we have to speak about first thing in the morning. It is not a matter of us being able to twist my words so that we can say I'm supporting other schedules. I'm talking about schedule 2, Mr. Minister, and I would like you to speak about why you think it's more important to have schedule 2 get the A-okay, rather than helping small and medium-sized businesses with direct support, which is actually not in Bill 213 either.

Over to you, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Well, thank you very much, once again. As the bill can pass into law, and as I have mentioned previously in my remarks, it won't be proclaimed until that process has been completed.

This is a process that is going to be undertaken by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, which I believe is fairly essential—

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm sorry, Mr. Minister. I have to—again, we have such a short amount of time. I just want to say on record that no small business should wait so that hate can thrive in Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I would kindly—

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As I have mentioned before—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry, Minister. Before you continue, I would just kindly remind the members not to speak over the witnesses for the purposes of Hansard. It's difficult to record when members are speaking over each other.

At this point, the official opposition has one minute left.

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Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm sorry, and thank you for handing it back.

Minister, the question is plain and simple: Can we remove schedule 2 and insert actual, direct support for small and medium-sized enterprises? Why muddy the

waters? Let's reduce red tape on the things that will help small and medium-sized businesses. Letting a homophobe and transphobe run a university and having that proclaimed by Ontario isn't going to help the small businesses in Kitchener that are shuttered because of the pandemic.

Can you please explain why we cannot just remove schedule 2 and focus on the work that is needed for small and medium-sized enterprises?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Passing this law and bill, as I've said, will support businesses immediately, and as I've stated previously in my—

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

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Minister, for the enlightening answers and giving us some of the insights of the spirit of the, I think, beneficial-to-small-businesses bill.

I just want to ask you to give us some opinion around sticking to the process, making sure we have a standardized process which any business can use to go through and get approved and do business, and how we, as a government, should not be interfering, based on any element other than the process and the requirements of the process.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I appreciate the question that you have put forward. Just to continue to speak on what we were just speaking to, as we put this bill and once it is put forward into the House, and if passed, those businesses will get the support they need immediately. As we've mentioned, when we look at a PEQAB requirement for an institution, that part of the legislation won't be proclaimed until that process has been completed. So I think the process as is should remain, as we have done in the previous.

We've had countless rules and regulations that have not been updated or reviewed since the 1940s. This is why countless studies have told us that we need to improve, and we need to ensure that we have modern regulations in this country. We need to support innovation. When we look at what we're going to do moving forward into the future, we need to ensure that we give our businesses the tools and resources necessary to compete in the competitive landscape across the entire world. When businesses are looking to relocate outside of Canada or outside of Ontario, we want them to think of Ontario as a place that they can invest in, and when they invest in it, the processes are going to allow for an easy transition to building thousands of jobs in the province, or building their province.

There's a lot of innovation within this bill—allowing renewable alternative fuels, regulations around that. We can ensure where hazardous waste is across this province at all times by digitizing that process. We're updating some processes in this piece of legislation that still require individuals and businesses to use carbon paper as their way and form of interaction with the government. We're

updating pension laws, we're updating accounting rules and we're digitizing countless processes that I just spoke to. We think all of these are changes that are very important when we look at the future, especially in the context of digitization and improving the experience of the end user with the government. Those are going to be critical steps forward in ensuring we have a strong backing to do that.

I always give the one example of the fax machine. There are still several government mandates for fax machines in countless sectors, but when is the last time anybody listening or anybody even on the committee has ever used a fax machine?

There is so much that we can do to improve how Ontario operates, and this proposed bill before you has 60 actions that really work on doing that and ensuring that we make those changes. The pandemic has really reinforced how quickly we need to digitize.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Before we continue, I just wanted to confirm MPP Piccini has joined us via Zoom. MPP Piccini, can you please confirm that you are, in fact, MPP Piccini and that you are present in Ontario?

Mr. David Piccini: Hi, it's MPP Piccini. I am at my office in Port Hope, and present, thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I saw that MPP Bailey had his hand raised. MPP Bailey, you may begin. You have about one minute and 20 seconds.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Okay. Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to thank the minister for being here this morning, and also for his visit to Sarnia—Lambton, where he had an opportunity in the recent past to visit with the chamber of commerce.

Maybe could you go on a little bit—I just toured a waste site the other day and they were telling me about their improvements. Maybe you can go into a little bit about the modernization to do with reporting on environmentally conscious disposal.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: MPP Bailey, first of all, you're a huge advocate on the alternative and renewable fuels side. I really appreciate your leadership, and I thank you for your leadership on that. Your community in itself is a huge leader in that sector, and you have championed that at Queen's Park in so many ways, and I appreciate that.

I mentioned the hazardous waste reporting modernization, which is actually a digitization of the province's—I'm trying to remember the name off the top of my head, but I believe Clean Harbors is the province's number one site for processing hazardous waste—

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

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Again, I just want to repeat how disappointed I am that schedule 2 is distracting us from having a full discussion about how we can best support small businesses.

Minister, you mentioned in your comments that we need clear and effective rules for small businesses, and I

agree with that. So one of the questions that many small businesses have been asking me is why the government has decided in the communities where we have a lock-down, essentially, or additional restrictions on business, big box stores can stay open and sell essential goods—which is fine—but also sell non-essential goods. Meanwhile, small retailers can't be open at all—especially since we have provinces like Manitoba that have come up with rules that require big box stores to seal off the non-essential aisles, so when people come into those stores, they're only buying essential goods. Most small businesses I've talked to have said, "If you're not going to support us, at the very least give us a level playing field and do not give big box stores an advantage over us." Can you explain how those rules are clear and effective for small businesses?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you, MPP Schreiner, for the question. I've had the opportunity to hear from hundreds of small businesses. I've done a hundred virtual round tables in the past couple of months. But of all the advice that we have taken, the hardest decision this government has made has been to close businesses. The advice given to us has come directly from the health table, the chief medical officer. All options were presented before the chief medical officer.

I'm not a doctor; I don't have a degree or a doctorate in epidemiology. When we look in my community, in the city of Brampton, we saw an article last week which specifically mentioned that there are positivity rates of 20% in the community. This virus continues to spread. We've had to take measures to control that. Health officials have advised us of this.

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This is an unbelievably hard time for them, but we also committed to doubling support for those businesses: \$600 million to those businesses that were impacted by lock-downs to help curb the spread of the virus; 100% of their energy hydro bills rebated; 100% of their property taxes. The federal government has put forward and launched a program just this past Monday: 90% of their rent will be covered. Digital Main Street is a program that I launched in July that many businesses across the province have benefitted from: \$2,500 grants that are received to help those businesses go digital.

I recognize that this is such a significantly challenging time for the businesses in the province of Ontario, but any decision that I have made and that our cabinet has made has been through the advice given to us by the chief medical officer. I think Dr. Yaffe also spoke to this very question just in her press conference, and I urge members to listen to that. When we look at public health advice, that is guiding our response to these measures being put forward.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate your answer, but you didn't really answer my question. I would encourage the government to come up with an answer to that question because many small businesses are asking.

I'm just going to quickly say it's fine that you've supported fixed costs for businesses that are closed, but Quebec is actually providing grants of up to \$15,000 because we know that for a lot of small businesses, December is a make-or-break month. Has the government considered direct financial support, similar to what Quebec has done, to help some of these businesses or help these businesses in closed areas get through December, which is their top month?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: MPP Schreiner—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Minister Sarkaria, my apologies. That's all the time we have for this round of questions.

We'll now turn to the official opposition for the final six-minute round. Who would like to begin? MPP Sattler, you have the floor.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to pick up on the same line of questioning as my colleagues. The questions are around schedule 2. Minister, you talked about the similarity of the process between Canada Christian College applying for this degree-granting opportunity and changing to a university, and you made the comparison to OCAD and Algoma. So just in terms of process, I'm curious to know, did OCAD and Algoma approach the ministry to ask for the legislation? And if that's the case, is that what happened with Canada Christian College, that they came to the ministry and requested that this legislation be put in place?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, MPP Sattler, for the question. So as to the process, any institution would have the right to access PEQAB if they wish to do so. Colleges propose to offer degrees and have done so for the past 20 years under different governments as well. All members and all parties of this House have supported faith-based institutions, whether it's been in the Legislature or whether it's been as parties.

Any college that currently offers a degree can apply to go through the process and ask for an expansion of their degree program. We trust the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board. It's an independent body. The Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board is essential to ensuring the high standards of post-secondary education, and from day one we've been committed to that process. Whether it was the institutions you mention in the previous year, we trust them and their advisory board to vet the schools, vet the programs. These schools offered degrees under different governments as well, and they continue to offer those degrees, and we'll do anything we can to continue to enhance whatever—Ontario as a province has a reputation for education excellence as well as protecting religious freedoms across the province.

Interjection.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I can't hear you, sorry.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Oh, sorry.

Is it PEQAB who notifies the government that there is an institution going through the process and that legislation is needed? I'm just trying to understand how this works. Does the institution come to the ministry and

the government to request the legislation, or does PEQAB alert you to the fact that there is this process going on and therefore you should bring forth legislation? Can you just clarify that for us, please?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Any institution that offers degree programs has the right to a PEQAB application, and like all others—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: How does it get into legislation? That's the question.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: There are various ways, as we have done for the individuals in the previous legislation put forward. The option that once the PEQAB process, before it is enabled—the legislation that we have before us enables us to respond once the PEQAB review is complete. And often, until that process is complete and PEQAB—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I will remind all members, when witnesses are speaking, not to speak over them because it's difficult for the purposes of Hansard, to record. Thank you.

Minister Sarkaria, would you like to finish?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: On this particular school, PEQAB has advised us that they are continuing to move through the process. As I mentioned before, Algoma, which was in a previous piece of legislation that was just last year—that schedule has still not been proclaimed because they haven't completed the process. They need to meet the requirements of PEQAB before their programs are allowed to expand. That is the process that every college or institution proposes. I work with every ministry.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: There are 10 ministries involved with this piece of legislation. The Minister of Colleges and Universities has worked with me. I've taken a whole-of-government approach to ensuring that, whether it's red tape or modernization of regulations, that we all work together to—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Can you just clarify? Did PEQAB alert your ministry to the fact that Canada Christian College was going through this process and that you should include legislation in Bill 213, or did Canada Christian College come to the ministry and say that they were going through this process and ask you to include schedule 2 in Bill 213? I want to understand how the process actually works.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: MPP Sattler, just on that process, as the ministry that is responsible for putting together this entire piece of legislation with 10 other ministries that are also involved—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time we have for this round. We'll now turn to the government for the final round of questions of six minutes. Who would you like to begin? MPP Piccini, you have six minutes. You may begin.

Mr. David Piccini: I appreciate that, Minister, and the work you're doing. I've got a question, but I just would

like, as the ministry responsible, if I may, Minister, to just address MPP Sattler's question. It's a good one.

It can be brought forward in three ways: via ministry consent, meaning the minister just signs off on it; via a private bill; or in a public, transparent way, via legislation and, obviously, going through the PEQAB independent process. Over the history, OCAD, Algoma and a number of others have gone through this process to expand degree-granting. Again, as the minister has alluded to, this could have happened via consent, but this government has ensured that things go through a fair, independent process, through a PEQAB process that for any institution applying reviews their organizational structure, reviews their ability to grant said degrees and then provides that advice to government. That's an independent process that's happening right now, and I won't comment any further on that.

Minister, this piece of legislation has been instrumental, I know, for our agriculture community, food terminals, and for supports for small businesses in rural communities like mine on PPE and things like that. Can you speak to the importance of this bill for members like me in a rural context with a heavily agriculture-based community?

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Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you, MPP Piccini. I think there are significant measures, as you mentioned, that are being put forward by this government to not only support small businesses that are being impacted right here in the GTA, but all across the province. When we look at measures like the expansion of the food terminal, it is very important to small businesses, especially any kind of grocers. When we get into those rural communities outside of the GTA, many of those communities rely on independent grocers. They rely on our farmers, and those farmers rely on the food terminal to make those decisions. So measures will allow items that are Ontario-made to be sold at the terminal.

I think that goes very well with many of the campaigns that we have launched. We've spoken to the Minister of Agriculture for any advice that he's been able to give us. We're really trying to focus on supporting local, not only during this pandemic. The Premier has launched the Ontario Made campaign with Minister Vic Fedeli to ensure that—if we can shift buying patterns to ensure that we're purchasing from locally produced, whether it's food or manufactured goods, that would significantly support us in our recovery from these very difficult times. We need to help those businesses, specifically the farmers, food producers and manufacturers, to get their products to market at a time when it's so critical to small businesses and their success.

We'll keep pushing forward on that. I appreciate all that you have done in your rural communities. You continue advocating for rural communities at Queen's Park consistently. I know the issues of broadband have been very important to you and your communities as well, and the government echoed that with the billion-dollar commitment by Minister Scott.

There's so much work that is ongoing, and I recognize the significant impact it has on rural communities. We

can't forget about them. We can't forget about supporting our farmers. We can't forget about ensuring that they have the access to the marketplaces they need.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Further questions from the government?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Time?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Two minutes. MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My final question about the same point is, I would like to ask the minister to give us a little bit of an idea about some of the points in this legislation which can help businesses to recover from the hit they got through COVID.

I would like also to mention that, irrelevant to any opinions I could agree or disagree with, I would like to state that we, as a government, should adhere to a process, irrelevant to my opinions about the specifics, because we still have to look into freedom of speech, freedom of religion—

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy:—and all aspects of our Canadian values, which we have to protect, even if we disagree or agree about opinions. Minister?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: You're very right, MPP Sabawy. We must always protect religious freedoms, protect free speech in this province. But more so—you know what? We need to really come together at this time and help strengthen, whether it's consumer protection, which I spoke to in my opening remarks, updating processes of financial assistance to help students or those that are in situations that use the Family Responsibility Office—we're updating land zoning and permitting for the province to get job creation and development. We're updating how energy is regulated—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much, Minister. That's all the time we have at this point. You may step down. Thank you again, and thank you to the committee members.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
CANADIAN MUSLIMS
PRIDE AT WORK CANADA

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to our next set of presenters. The remainder of our presenters today have been grouped in threes for each one-hour time slot. Each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation, and after we have heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee.

This time for questions will be broken down into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition, and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent members as a group. Are there any questions?

I will now call upon the National Council of Canadian Muslims. Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: Good morning. My name is Mustafa Farooq. I am the CEO of the National Council of Canadian Muslims. It's a pleasure and an honour to join with you virtually this morning.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization that protects Canadian human rights and civil liberties, challenges discrimination and Islamophobia, builds mutual understanding and advocates for the public concerns of Canadian Muslims. NCCM has a long-standing and robust public record of participating in major public inquiries, appearing before parliamentary and Senate committees, intervening in landmark cases before the Supreme Court of Canada, appearing at first instance at various superior and appellate courts, and providing advice to agencies, boards, commissions, corporations and parties around human rights, inclusion and Islamophobia.

Our focus in this brief is to shed light for the committee in its study on Bill 213. Specifically, we recommend that schedule 2 of Bill 213, relating to the Canada Christian College, is struck in its entirety. We take no position on any other provisions or schedules of Bill 213.

NCCM is deeply concerned by schedule 2 of Bill 213 and its effect to transform the Canada Christian College into a university. The president of the college, Charles McVety, has expressed deeply Islamophobic views inconsistent with Ontario's Human Rights Code. Mr. McVety has also expressed sentiments targeting other minority communities in ways that we find abhorrent and condemnable.

In 2010, the Christian broadcaster Crossroads Television System removed Mr. McVety's show, Word TV, after Canada's broadcast industry watchdog ruled that various statements by McVety violated its broadcast codes. Complainants to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council identified 14 programs from between July 19, 2009, and February 21, 2010, that disparagingly treated topics around Muslims and other minority groups.

Mr. McVety has also stated for the record, "We're all for freedom of religion, but when its mission is a hostile takeover, well that's a different story. Islam is not just a religion, it's a political and cultural system as well and we know that Christians, Jews and Hindus don't have the same mandate for a hostile takeover. Here in Canada there is a real, clear and present danger. And we're not even allowed to say anything about it." That was from an interview to the National Post in 2011.

To the best of our knowledge, Mr. McVety has never recanted or apologized for these views. Given this comment, amongst other comments, we are left with a reasonable apprehension of bias by Mr. McVety against members of the Canadian Muslim community. We are bound to wonder what graduates of a McVety university would think about minority communities around them as graduates. Given that, it seems relatively uncouth that Mr. McVety should be given expedited treatment in this bill. Given that the partial purpose of Bill 213 is to free up time and money for people and businesses to invest in what is so important right now—i.e., recovering and rebuilding

and re-emerging from this pandemic stronger than ever before—we find it difficult to understand how granting university status to this college, where the leadership has repeatedly expressed these kinds of bigoted views, is appropriate right now.

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I'd like to now move on to talk about the motion that was passed earlier this week. On November 23, a motion supported by Ontario's NDP and the Ontario Liberal Party condemning the accreditation of Canada Christian College was passed at Queen's Park by 29 for and 27 against. This motion specifically stated that in passing the motion, the Legislature would, in effect, "condemn the extreme and hateful invective of Charles McVety and oppose any efforts to make Canada Christian College into an accredited university."

We understand this motion carries no binding force. But given that the will of the Legislature has expressed that Canada Christian College should not be given unique treatment, we ask that this motion is respected by removing schedule 2 of the act in its entirety.

Now, in putting forward these submissions, it's important, I think, to reflect on the need of this time. Ontario is going through an unprecedented pandemic, and it's clear that our institutions need our support. That includes and must include religious institutions like mosques, churches, seminaries, synagogues, temples and other faith-based institutions that form the fabric of what makes Ontario as we know it today. We note that the Ontario government has indicated on numerous occasions its willingness to support diverse communities.

NCCM's concerns around Mr. McVety's views do not diminish our appreciation for positive work that has been done by the government as a friend of Ontario's Muslim community. For example, a unanimous consent motion to condemn Bill 21—

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

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: —was passed in the Ontario Legislature around Bill 21 last year.

Now, it's important to note that it is not our position that the government should preclude faith-based institutions from achieving university accreditation based on an off-hand remark or a social media comment from years ago by someone at the leadership level of the institution. However, we would suggest that processes like the PEQAB process and the protocols and procedures that have been associated with it should be followed.

Our suggestion is not that Mr. McVety's Canada Christian College never be allowed to receive accreditation. Rather, our suggestion is that given Mr. McVety's track record and stated positions, which he has never, to the best of our knowledge, apologized for, the institution he leads should not be given expedited treatment, as is the point of this legislation, through the inclusion of the Canada Christian College in schedule 2 of the bill. Thank you.

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

Our next set of presenters is Queen's University—my apologies, is Pride at Work Canada. Please state your

name for the record and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Colin Druhan: Hi, my name is Colin Druhan. My pronouns are he and him.

First, I'd like to acknowledge and thank everyone involved for the opportunity to introduce my organization's perspective to the discussion today. I'm pleased to be here, as we are indeed at a very difficult situation in Ontario. My organization believes that for Ontarians to face today's significant economic challenges, they need good jobs with rising incomes. If Ontario is to truly be open for business, opportunities to succeed in the workforce must be open for everyone.

At present, equal opportunity is not available for queer and trans Ontarians in the area of employment. I believe that my organization, Pride at Work Canada, is well positioned to provide advice and guidance on how to improve outcomes—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry, could you just speak up? I'm going to pause your time here so I don't eat into it. Could you just speak up a little bit for the benefit of the members on Zoom? Your voice is a little low.

Mr. Colin Druhan: Sure, thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. I'm going to start the time again.

Mr. Colin Druhan: So I believe that my organization is well positioned to provide advice and guidance on how to improve outcomes for queer and trans workers, and I'm pleased to say that the business community in Canada wholeheartedly agrees. We support a network of over 150 employers in their queer and trans inclusion strategies, mostly large, national employers with significant workforces in Ontario. It's based on this experience of developing policies and practices that have an impact on millions of Canadians that I am going to share some of the realities that are faced by queer and trans Ontarians today.

There's a widely held belief in Canada that queer people make more money than straight people. What we see from multiple studies is that queer and trans people, on average, earn less than cisgender and straight people in Canada. Even in queer homes with two incomes, whether it's a bisexual person getting married to a straight person or two people of the same gender, we see lower household incomes all around. We also know that bisexual people and trans people are far less likely to be employed full-time in Canada, if they're employed at all. More than half of trans people in Ontario make less than \$15,000 per year.

When it comes to hiring, we know from research from the University of Western Ontario that résumés that include work or volunteer experience with queer and trans organizations are 17% less likely to be invited for an interview than other applicants. From very recent data, we found that 73% of trans Canadians—that's three quarters—avoid public spaces out of fear for their physical safety. And we know that within the last year, a third of sexual minority Canadians—that's people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual—have received unwanted comments about their sex, gender or orientation while in public, and a quarter of the same group have experienced the same

behaviour while working. It would be irresponsible, of course, for me not to note that on every single metric, absolutely every metric that we see, we see these outcomes worsen for community members who are Black, Indigenous, people of colour and community members with disabilities.

I would very much like to underscore, and to underscore quite firmly, that none of the challenges that I'm talking about are a result of being a queer person. These barriers, these challenges and these issues are not a result of being queer or of being trans or being non-binary or being two-spirit. These challenges exist because of the assumptions people make about queer and trans people, the biases held against queer and trans people, the discomfort people feel around queer and trans people.

I consider these statistics, but I also remember the many people I and my colleagues have lost to suicide in my 15 years of working with queer and trans communities. We reflect on those experiences in our personal lives. In our work, we ask employers, "How did we fail to protect these people?" More importantly, we ask, "How can we work to start protecting others better?"

Every day, I see how the reliance on stereotypes and misconceptions about queer and trans people contributes to their marginalization in the workforce and how this impedes full and dignified participation in Ontario's economy. When I talk about these things with executives and business leaders, one of the frequent comments that I think is particularly relevant to the conversation today is, "Wow, you don't learn about this stuff in school, do you?" Too many Ontarians lack the knowledge that is required to dismantle the many barriers to employment I see for queer and trans people in Ontario.

Based on my experience and the evidence that I have available to me, I must suggest that the government withdraw schedule 2, the section of Bill 213 which grants university status to the Canada Christian College. Even the most casual observer will know that figures associated with the institution are supporters of attempts to erase queer and trans people from the Ontario public school curriculum and spread false information about and fear of queer and trans people. Legitimizing the rhetoric of institutions that seek to sow misinformation about communities that are already marginalized erodes the community's trust in the government and it discredits other universities in Ontario. Granting further accreditation to the Canada Christian College and allowing it to move up the food chain, so to speak, would be dangerous to the health, safety and financial security of Ontarians.

At Pride at Work Canada, we, in part, build our advice for employers on issues related to the intersection of sexual orientation, gender and religious faith on a foundation of legal assistance. We look to decisions of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Supreme Court of Canada.

I would like to end my comments today by stating that our organization does not teach or instruct employers to value the experiences and rights of queer and trans people over the rights of people of any faith. That would be

contrary to our values as Ontarians and Ontarians who hold deep respect for all religious freedom. It would be a disservice to the many queer and trans people of faith in our province and the many people whose faith guides them to serve the most marginalized members of our community. What we instruct is that the faith and values that dictate one's own path should not impede the path of others who are similarly free to allow their faith to guide them in their daily lives.

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

Mr. Colin Druhan: Despite progress, queer and trans people in Ontario remain overburdened by biphobia, transphobia and homophobia. If we're not being told what we can't do because of who we are, we're being told to stop complaining because things have gotten better than they used to be.

I'd like to acknowledge that things have been steadily improving, in part because of the good and kind actions of the government of Ontario. The opportunity before the government today is to ensure that it does not work against that progress by making things worse. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll now turn to our third presenter, Anne Cools. Please state your name for the record and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

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You may begin. Anne? Anne Cools?

Since our third presenter has not identified themselves and we can't verify their identity, we will now turn to our first round of questions. This round of questions will begin with the government.

Before we begin, though, I just wanted to remind all members that the normal process for questioning is that you are recognized by the Chair and then your microphone is unmuted. I have been giving a little bit of leeway in that when I do recognize you, your microphone remains unmuted in order to allow for a little bit of an easier dialogue between yourself and the presenters. However, I trust and I hope that all members will remember not to speak over the witnesses for the purposes of Hansard. If I do find that members are unable to wait until the witness is done or if there's too much overlap in terms of speaking, then I will go back to having each member be recognized and then having your mike muted and unmuted.

Having said that, we will now turn to the government for seven and a half minutes. Who would like to begin? MPP Piccini, you have if floor.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you to both presenters for your presentations today and for the work you do.

I'll start with questions to Mustafa. Mustafa, thanks again for joining us today and for your ongoing advocacy. I noted with great interest during your remarks that you said—and you made a point of clarifying. If you can just reiterate for the committee: Do you support the ability of faith-based institutions in the province of Ontario to offer diplomas or degrees?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. And would you support all of those institutions going through a similar process or the process that our [*inaudible*] go through?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: Obviously, we suggest—and I think the act gives a large amount of discretion to the minister. Obviously, there's a consent procedure that can be done. There is the procedure as we're seeing right now. But I think what distinguishes—and obviously, there are other faith-based institutions that are mentioned in Bill 213. We have no objection to those. What we have as a concern is around a particular institution that has demonstrated through its leadership a marked stance against marginalized communities, and we feel, given that, and given the fact that the organizational review of the Canada Christian College at PEQAB was filed on September 25, 2020, that there needs to be a full PEQAB process in the way that we normally would see it.

Mr. David Piccini: Sorry, I've just got to interject there, because that's an important point you brought up. You would acknowledge that the same process went forward with Algoma, for example, and that came through last year. Are you aware if Algoma is offering the expanded programming yet? Because that came through in legislation last year.

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: I can't speak to Algoma.

Mr. David Piccini: They aren't, because they haven't gone through the PEQAB process. That went through legislation last year, and they aren't offering that because they haven't completed the PEQAB process.

This institution here—what you're in effect asking the government to do is to avoid and to interfere in that process and pull something from legislation. Can we clarify that?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: Sure. What I'm suggesting is that Algoma and some of the other faith-based institutions don't have the same kind of public-facing stance that others do. It doesn't make sense to us that we're putting the cart before the horse—

Mr. David Piccini: I'm sorry, I've just got to interject there, because what you're saying is you're asking government to not view an institution but rather the individuals and interfere in the independent process. That's what you're asking us to do.

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: No. I think it's a fair question about whether we should make submissions in the Legislature as a referendum around a man's character. In this case, I think that it's warranted for two reasons. First of all, the McVety name is deeply associated with the institution. The history of the college is very well laid out with Elmer McVety. It's why, in 1983, the Davis PC government took away Canada Christian College's right to grant degrees. It's because when you look at the organizational chart of the college—again, filed on September 25—the McVety name is everywhere: Charles McVety is the president, Ryan McVety is the CEO, Jennifer McVety is the registrar of admissions, Lindsay McVety is the dean of online admissions—

Mr. David Piccini: Just going on that, because you said the organizational—and, Mustafa, I'm just trying to walk

through this with you, so I appreciate you giving me this ability here. You understand that, as part of the PEQAB process, an organizational review is part of that PEQAB process, correct?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: Yes, I understand, but what I was—

Mr. David Piccini: Just hear me here. PEQAB would then give its recommendations, based on a review of the—what you're asking is for government to interject in that organizational review and for the government members, politicians, to interfere in the process and pull a schedule of the bill. Just to clarify, is that what you are asking?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: So in my reading of the act, and please correct me if I'm wrong, there's no requirement of the government to include Canada Christian College in the schedule. The government is entirely within its bounds to let the PEQAB process fully take place, bring the recommendations to the minister and then decide whatever it wants to do. That's entirely within the government's—

Mr. David Piccini: That's what we have done through—

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: That's precisely what we're suggesting to do right now. That Mr. McVety—

Mr. David Piccini: Sorry, just to interject: That's what we've done for Algoma, and Canada Christian College is going through the same process. We've established that public and private go through the same process. What you're saying is, and we understand—I think you hit on it first that this can be introduced through three ways: ministerial consent, which wouldn't have this public scrutiny or conversations; private bill, again; or via legislation. I just really need clarity here: Are you saying we shouldn't put this through public legislation that we can all debate on now? Would you rather it goes through consent or private bill? Which, in your estimation, is the most transparent process? Just a quick answer on that. Consent or public process in legislation like we've done: Which is the most transparent of the three?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: If we're going to ask about most transparent, what's transparently obvious is that Mr. McVety's stances have been vile, they've been—

Mr. David Piccini: If you could answer that question for me—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Piccini, I would just remind you to please let the witness answer the question.

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: I don't think the question can be fully answered without understanding that Mr. McVety has held himself out to be a friend of this government. There is a grave risk that Ontarians can lose faith in their Legislature if there's this perception that if you happen to have bigoted views but have friends in the right places, you can get access to expedited processes.

I am sure, by the way, because I have faith in our Legislature, that this is not the case, but it's really important that government does not give off the appearance as such either.

Our recommendation is don't—

Mr. David Piccini: Sorry, I've got to—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry, I would also like to remind the presenters to please answer the questions that are being asked.

Mr. Piccini, you have 45 seconds.

Mr. David Piccini: Thanks, Chair. The question I asked you: Of the three processes—you've made your points on another thing. I'm just trying to stick to what this process is on an institution. When an institution comes to the government and a government says, "We're going to go through the process," of the three—ministerial consent, private bill or publicly in legislation—which of the three would you prefer? Let's say, if any of the presenters today were to come to government with the same process, which of the three is the most transparent, would you say?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: Subject to the concerns raised before, the latter.

Mr. David Piccini: So just to clarify, which one was that?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: Through public legislation, subject to the concerns raised before.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay, thank you.

Interruption.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. That's all the time we have. I think the noises will make it very clear.

1030

We'll now turn to the independent member for four and a half minutes. MPP Schreiner? MPP Schreiner is not present, so at this point, we'll turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Fife, you may begin.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to both presenters, Mr. Farooq and Mr. Druhan. I appreciate both of the perspectives that you brought with regard to schedule 2 of Bill 213, which is, as you both know, embedded in an economic recovery bill. Schedule 2, we would argue, has nothing to do with economic recovery.

Mr. Farooq, I want to go back to some of the comments that you made in your presentation, particularly around the motion that passed this week. It was, of course, the NDP motion that was moved to condemn the direction that schedule 2 was taking the province in. As you rightfully pointed out, that motion did pass. A number of government members chose not to vote against the motion, which would indicate that there are government members who are equally uncomfortable with the direction that schedule 2 is taking us in.

Your comments in your exchange with MPP Piccini expressed concern around losing confidence in a Legislature. This is a very powerful point for us, because that is why we brought the motion to the floor and we debated it in a very public and transparent manner. Can you expand a little bit about what that means, when a government continues to move forward, even though the Legislature has voted to condemn the direction that schedule 2 takes us in, please?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: We have full faith that this government will do the right thing, that condemning hate is not a partisan issue, and I think this government has

demonstrated that. Standing up for religious liberty is not a partisan issue. It's why last year this government, working with the Ontario Liberal Party and the Ontario NDP, passed the unanimous consent motion to condemn Bill 21, which, in our view, is the largest attack on religious liberty, and effectively the charter, in a decade.

But to speak to the main point, on the question of the motion, we would ask, of course, that government does respect this motion. It is the will of the Legislature. It is a non-binding motion, of course, but it is equally clear to us that the Legislature has spoken in its condemnation of Mr. McVety's views. And it's not just this Legislature; with the past precedent laid out by the Davis PC government, it seems odd that we would suddenly reverse course for a man who has not reversed course.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You did also make a good point about the process. The government would not have to interfere in this process had they not given priority status to this piece of legislation. I do thank you for that point. I also want to put on the record that you have more confidence, obviously, in the government doing the right thing with regard to schedule 2 than we do.

But next I'll move on to Mr. Druhan. Thank you so much for raising some very important points as they relate to how schedule 2 causes harm in the province. I think that that was very powerful, Colin, if I can call you that. The government has been very quick to protect or defend Mr. McVety even though the motion to condemn schedule 2 moved forward. But I just want to read a quote to you, and then can you tell us—the government, in particular—how this affects you and your community?

In the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council ruling, "McVety violated broadcasting codes by presenting 'distorted facts' and 'abusive comments about homosexuals,' specifically comments that 'suggested that homosexuals prey on children.'" Granting priority status to Mr. McVety, who is the CEO and the president of Canada Christian College, within the context of some of the language and the comments that he has made in Ontario—can you speak to the harm that that causes the community and province as a whole?

Mr. Colin Druhan: Sure. Thank you for your question. In addition to the quote that you read, I've also heard figures associated with the college use similar language around the threat that trans people pose to children. When I hear people make those comments, immediately I think of the fear of the unknown that drives a lot of that type of rhetoric.

As a person who knows a lot of queer and trans people and who works with a lot of employers on how to support both people who identify as queer and trans, but also the parents of queer and trans children, I actually find the opposite to be true. I speak with parents every day who are unequipped to support their children as they come out at a young age as queer or trans or non-binary. They fear for the safety of their children because they hear what their coworkers say when they're looking at applications, when they're talking about other people in the workplace. They worry about their children entering the workforce and being able to earn a living with dignity.

I do think when folks make comments about the threat that my community poses to children—I ask them to remember the children within our community and the needs they have, the support they require and the fact that our current education system, both public and post-secondary, doesn't prepare parents for the realities that these children face. That's what I think of when I think of the quote you've read to me.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for that. That's incredibly important to get on the record, Colin.

The government talks a lot about process, but clearly Mr. McVety has had unfettered access to the Premier as the government navigates through this first term, including weighing in very heavily—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: —on the physical and health education component, which he successfully lobbied against, overturned and then, of course, bragged about in public. Can you speak to that education component? Because that's in the same vein as Canada Christian College.

Mr. Colin Druhan: Yes. I can't speak to the political power that's held by individuals in Ontario. My expertise is on the impacts, as you said, of some of these measures in education.

As I said previously, I think when someone sort of denies facts and knowledge about a community, it brings that fear of the unknown. When we don't know a group of people, we fear them and we create all kinds of ideas about the threat that they pose to us and our children.

Any opportunity that we have to spread more positive information about the community that I work with—and there's plenty of positives, plenty of accomplishment to speak of—the more folks are afraid to do that and the more—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry. That concludes this round.

We'll now turn to the government for seven and a half minutes. Who would like to begin? MPP Piccini, you have the floor.

Mr. David Piccini: I'm just going to ask Colin a question here. Colin, I appreciate you coming before our committee today. I wanted to ask you—you asked about impact. I appreciate the work you're doing to assess the impact of government legislation on different groups within a society. My question to you is, what sort of impact do you think it would have on Ontarians if government deviated from a well-established process of the last 20 years and started assessing institutional applications for expanded degree-granting based on individuals and not on the institution, and we removed it from an independent process to a process dominated by politicians? Which do you think would be better, and what sort of impact would that have?

Mr. Colin Druhan: Thank you for your question. I wish I could provide you with a well-researched and educated answer. The question you're asking is outside of my expertise. I'm not somebody who focuses on the accreditation of universities and colleges as part of my

full-time job. You heard the remarks I made when I started: I have expertise on the impact that the spread of disinformation about queer and trans people has on economic opportunities for my community. That's really what I'm here to share my expertise on.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. When we talk about that expertise, part of the things we've been working on as a government is on a quality assurance framework, similar to PEQAB's, which assesses that sort of organizational review. We've been establishing that for our Indigenous institutes. I've had the opportunity, in my PA role, to travel to number of different Indigenous institutes that are delivering curricula in a culturally sensitive manner, and the government has been working with them to expand that. I think, just with your expertise, I'd love to hear your thoughts on that. In the context of reconciliation, is that something the government should continue pursuing?

1040

Mr. Colin Druhan: Yes, I have some experience working with colleagues at the First Nations Technical Institute, and I do know that they have been quite successful on a number of fronts in encouraging more participation from Indigenous communities in their courses. I know that in particular, too, they have also expanded opportunities for Indigenous women. I know that their flight school graduates, close to half are women, which is unheard of for flight schools in Canada. So, yes, I do believe that that kind of focused education that provides a culturally sensitive environment for folks does foster learning, based on the evidence that I have seen. Again, just reinforcing: I'm not an expert in post-secondary education—

Mr. David Piccini: No. I understood, and I appreciate that. One of the things we're working with is there's a quality assurance council now that's been set up by material experts to review what's being developed by our Indigenous institutes. Do you think that's a prudent step, to work with elders and others to assess the quality of that curriculum?

Mr. Colin Druhan: Yes. I'm not an expert in Indigenous inclusion. We rely on our partners, like Indigenous Works and other consultants, to lead our work in that space. From what I know from working with them, I do know that, again, providing an environment that is culturally sensitive fosters better learning outcomes.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. Thanks very much, Colin. I appreciate you coming to committee today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Colin Druhan: Thank you.

Mr. David Piccini: No further questions, Chair. I don't know if my colleagues have any.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Are there any further questions from the government? If so, please raise your hands. Seeing none, we'll now turn to the independent Green Party member for four and a half minutes. You may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair. I just want to apologize to both of the presenters. I missed your presentation because I had to briefly step out of committee

for another obligation, but I want to just thank you for being here today. It's really important to hear your voices as part of this conversation. So if I ask a question that you've already answered, I hope you'll forgive me.

Mr. Farooq, I quoted from your letter during debate on the motion condemning Mr. McVety's hateful views. So I want to thank you for writing that letter. It was very powerful. I want to thank you for being here today.

I'm curious: Do you feel that the human rights of the Muslim community are threatened that we have schedule 2 in a bill that would give special treatment to a college that hasn't even gone through the PEQAB process yet which appears to espouse views that violate the Ontario Human Rights Code?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: I think that all communities are threatened when hate and intolerance find special privileges. That's wrong, plain and simple. If there was an individual representing an institution and, over years, that institution developed a reputation of being wildly anti-Semitic, I would be here making the same kinds of complaints.

Whatever form of discrimination that takes, it is incumbent upon government to send the strongest signals of condemnation, not to think about, "What is the possible discretion that's allowed for us here?" The question is, what's right for the people of Ontario? And what's right for the people of Ontario is that an institution that has been preaching and where the leadership has been so dedicated to promoting these discourses of hate cannot be allowed to get special privileges. That's why I want to thank both the Ontario NDP for bringing the motion forward and the Ontario Liberal Party for supporting it and, of course, you as well for supporting it.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate that. It was a vote that I was very happy to make, and I appreciate my NDP colleagues for bringing forward the motion as well.

I actually wanted to turn to you, Colin, before I run out of time, and give you an opportunity to answer the same question.

Mr. Colin Druhan: Sorry, can you repeat the question for me?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes. Actually, I'll rephrase it a little bit. Does the LGBTQ2AI+ community feel that their human rights are under attack when the government brings forward a schedule in a bill to support a college, before it's even gone through the PEQAB process, whose leader espouses views that appear to violate or, I would argue, do violate the Ontario Human Rights Code?

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

Mr. Colin Druhan: I can't speak for the entire community; I wasn't able to check with everybody before today. But I can say that from my perspective as somebody who works with the community, it's less a direct violation of human rights, which would—I'm not a lawyer, so it wouldn't be my legal expertise here. What I feel is it erodes trust in government when there seem to be processes that some claim have been circumvented. I think that folks from our community have a long history of distrust of the government, so I do believe that sometimes

some of the things that folks are saying are going on with this bill can erode that trust even further and deteriorate relationships with a marginalized community.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Great, thank you. I'm probably out of time, right, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Yes, thank you very much. At this point, we'll now turn to the official opposition. MPP Lindo, you may begin.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you very much, and thank you to both of you for your presentations. I'm actually going to ask you both the same question, just to give you some time to make sure that you can put the views of your respective communities and allies etc. on record. I'll start with Mustafa. It's lovely to see you here. Again, thank you for all of the advocacy that you do, not just for Muslim community members but for others that are marginalized and impacted by what is happening right now.

Schedule 2 in Bill 213 sent a particular signal to the public, and I think that's part of why people were happy that the motion passed. The motion was an opportunity to send another signal to Ontario that we were, in fact, going to say no to hate and actively do the work that's needed to say no to hate and ensure that we don't legislate it.

But now here we are at committee, and schedule 2 is still in Bill 213. So I believe that there are some questions in the public about whether or not the motion could, in fact, become a stepping stone to do the right thing, to actually, with our actions, not just our words, actively fight against hate. I'm wondering if you can just take a little bit of time to explain the importance, the impact that it could have if the government did remove schedule 2 right now, right here.

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: First of all, I want to thank you for your advocacy over the years for marginalized communities. It's been inspiring to watch and it's been inspiring to see your work in the House.

In terms of the removal of schedule 2, I think it will send a very strong message that hate and standing against intolerant views is not a bipartisan issue; it's just something that the Ontario government does. I think it will send a strong message that when you take positions that are hateful, those will not go unchecked. I think it will suggest that when you say, as Mr. McVety did in 2009 in his interpretation of the Bible, that there is a conflict between Muslims, Jews and Christians, suggesting that Muslims believe that there is a "religious contest" between Allah, between God and the Judeo-Christian god, that's not the kind of rhetoric that should be getting any kind of government support, period.

If this government believes that it has discretion, which it does, it should use that discretion in the right way, and that's to stand with Ontarians, not with hate.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you so much for that. I'm going to move over to Colin now. I don't know if our paths have crossed. When I was at Ryerson, we had done some work with Pride at Work on leadership in the community in the Diversity Institute. But thank you for being here. Your words were extremely powerful to

explain the connection between allowing rhetoric that supports homophobia and transphobia and trying to do the work of ensuring that everybody has equal access to quality work etc., especially during a pandemic. The same question to you: Schedule 2 provided one signal; the motion being passed on Monday provided another. What do you believe the impact would be of pulling the schedule right now?

1050

Mr. Colin Druhan: Thank you for your question. I do believe, similarly to my colleague, that certainly, when rhetoric against the community that I work with is supported or seeming to be supported by the government, it emboldens other folks to engage in the same type of rhetoric.

While I have deep respect for everybody in Ontario to allow their lives to be led by their faith and guide their values, I also believe very strongly that members of my community, that we work with, have the right to lead their lives according to their values and their faith. I do believe that removing schedule 2 at this moment, as it has been discussed previously today, certainly does not remove the Canada Christian College from consideration or the opportunity to pursue accreditation further, through other avenues. But I do think that it would send a strong message to Ontarians who would like to believe that they live in a province that respects everybody's views and the faith with which they live their lives.

I'm not sure if that answers your question or not.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: It's fantastic.

Chair, how much time do we have left?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We have two minutes and 15 seconds.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Perfect.

I'm going to ask you, Colin, a follow-up to that. If we remove schedule 2 and instead insert direct supports for queer communities, for instance, who have lost their businesses during the pandemic, would that be something that you think would resonate with the communities that you work with?

Mr. Colin Druhan: Yes. We've seen research that shows queer and trans people in Canada have lost their jobs at a higher rate than other folks, directly related to the pandemic, and then we do know that a lot of queer and trans people are engaged in what we like to call precarious employment and hourly work. So I do think that measures that would help folks in both of those situations, as well as businesses that are owned by queer and trans people—I encourage you to look at some of the work done by Canada's LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce to support LGBT business owners. Certainly, we see a lot of need there. I certainly agree with any measures to support queer and trans people who have lost their jobs at a higher rate than others in Canada, the folks who are losing their businesses at a higher rate than others in Canada, and those who are engaged in precarious work at a higher rate than others in Canada.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you for that. I'm going to—

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: We've got one minute, so I'm passing it back over to you, Mustafa. A similar question: One of pieces that the official opposition, the NDP, have been fighting for are direct supports that actually help some of the most vulnerable people. One thing was, for instance, ensuring that there were funds available specifically for racialized communities that we are now seeing in report after report are more deeply impacted by the COVID pandemic.

Instead of having schedule 2 be the focus of these conversations from the government, can you talk about the impact that that might have: having direct supports for racialized or Muslim community members whose businesses might be facing steep challenges because of the pandemic?

Mr. Mustafa Farooq: Sure. I'm not an economist, so it's hard for me to think about the effects of particular—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time we have for this round. I want to thank both of our presenters for being here today. You may now step down, and thank you for your time.

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The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to our next set of presenters. We have Integris Pension Management Corp., Queen's University Faculty Association and Hammond Transportation Ltd. Each presenter will have seven minutes, followed by a round of questioning.

At this point, I would like to call upon Integris Pension Management Corp. Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Laporte: My name is Jean-Pierre Laporte. I am the chief executive officer at Integris Pension Management in Toronto. I'm very happy to be presenting today on, in particular, schedule 19 of Bill 213 that deals with the exemptions provided to individual pension plans in the province of Ontario.

My presentation is really focused on one single point. First of all, I want to commend the Ford government for bringing this particular piece of legislation to the forefront. It's wonderful news for the small business community across the province that a lot of the red tape that applies to registered pension plans and individual pension plans will now be taken away, as has been the case in a number of other provinces already for many years. Ontario is catching up to the rest of the country in this area, so we are very, very excited about that.

My only intervention today, and the only reason why I'm here, is because there is one small technical defect with the current bill that I'm hoping can be fixed by the standing committee and, of course, by the rest of the MPPs—

once it gets passed. It's the fact that right now, as the bill stands, creditor protection, which is provided under the Pension Benefits Act under sections 65 and 66, would be stripped away from people who have these types of individual pension plans if they decide to exempt themselves from the provisions of the statute.

The whole point of Bill 213 is to strip away all the red tape and to allow business owners to have true pension plans, just like civil servants, like teachers, like university professors and unionized workers. We're trying to level the playing field to give people in the private sector access to a true pension, but what is given by one hand is being taken away by the other, by removing the creditor protection provisions of the Pension Benefits Act. This is not necessary, because Quebec and Manitoba, our two neighbouring provinces, have found a way to continue to protect individual pension plans that are otherwise exempted from the various provisions of their local pension benefits statutes.

In a nutshell, I am only here for one single reason: to make sure that Ontarians who are working so hard in the private sector to provide jobs and pay taxes do not have their pensions stripped of the creditor protection features if they decide to use this opt-out mechanism to have the plan exempted. That's pretty much all I'm here for. I hope that's helpful.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Thank you for your presentation.

The next presenter is Queen's University Faculty Association. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard and you may begin.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: Thank you. My name is Elizabeth Hanson. I am president of the Queen's University Faculty Association, also called QUFA, and I'm a professor of English at Queen's University.

Today I'm speaking in opposition to schedule 2 of Bill 213, which would permit the Canada Christian College to change its name to Canada University and School of Graduate Theological Studies and allow it to grant bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees.

QUFA believes the intent of schedule 2 is to evade the legislative mechanisms whereby Ontario guarantees the quality of new post-secondary institutions and hence the integrity of its university system. Ontario universities rely on the system's integrity to protect our reputations in the world and our relations with each other, and evasions such as this one corrupt that system.

The committee is no doubt familiar with what has occurred in this case. Allow me, however, to recap events so we are on the same page. Under the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, institutions wishing to newly call themselves universities and issue new degrees apply to the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, which has the responsibility and resources for vetting institutions and their programs and for making recommendations to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

In early 2020, CCC—the Canada Christian College—applied for a name change and the authority to grant arts

and science degrees, as well as the Christianity-themed theology and music degrees it currently offers. CCC submitted an initial organizational review and name-change application. However, it never submitted applications for a review of the degree programs. Instead, the Ford government tucked schedule 2 into Bill 213, thus avoiding the quality assessment process of the PSECE act, which would likely have ended in the denial of these requests. CCC's president, Charles McVety, assisted Premier Ford in winning the Ontario Tory leadership in 2018. Schedule 2 appears to be a blatant political thank-you gift.

1100

Much opposition to schedule 2 has focused on McVety's odious beliefs and the fact that McVety is a high-profile homophobe and Islamophobe. My view is that his beliefs, if in fact he has any, are not the central issue. In real universities, organization, governance and training of faculty and staff, all of which would be vetted by the PEQAB process, defend the integrity of the institution against the moral defects of a deplorable leader, such as McVety. Publicly available materials, including the initial PEQAB name-change application, policies and other information on the college's website, as well as press reports, reveal that an outfit lacking all these safeguards should not be recognized as a university or permitted to grant bachelor of arts or science degrees in Ontario.

Let me start with matters that have been covered by the Globe and Mail, the CBC and other respected news media. Documents filed as part of the aborted PEQAB application and later removed reveal that Mr. McVety received a loan of \$500,000, and his son, Ryan McVety, chief executive officer, one of \$400,000 from CCC. When queried about these payments and removal of their documentation from the application, CCC's spokesman replied that the loans were in lieu of their salary. Such substitution of loan for salary, likely for tax reasons, is not how presidents of universities or other administrative officers are compensated in Ontario.

McVety's wife, Jennifer, also on staff, is styled "Doctor" in the application, but it would appear only has a bachelor's degree in Christian counselling from CCC. At Queen's, claiming credentials you have not earned is academic fraud, likely arising to gross misconduct. It gets you fired. Having the president's son be chief executive officer would not be permissible, as it is a clear conflict of interest.

I should add that the CCC is also the Canadian address of Global Evangelism Television, a registered charity that transferred \$1.3 million to the US, about half apparently to cover broadcast costs while the other half went to the coffers of Hagee Ministries, which spreads theories about the COVID-19 pandemic as a conspiracy to pave the way for global takeover by the World Health Organization.

Turning to the faculty, we find that both Charles and Ryan McVety are also "professors" of something called "systematic theology" and "Christian worldview," respectively. If you go to the Queen's University website and then to, say, the English department, click on "faculty"

and then click on my name, you will land on a page that includes where I received my doctorate—Johns Hopkins—recent publications, courses I am currently teaching and a link to my CV. These open, verifiable claims about who faculty are and what they have done are part of how universities establish their authority. None of the faculty names listed at CCC are currently hyperlinked. My understanding is that the links were deactivated because they revealed the absence of real academic credentials. The page does reveal that no faculty teach in disciplines that could lead to a bachelor of arts or science degree.

Finally, and most importantly, CCC has no academic freedom policy. While the name-change application claims that CCC—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): You have one minute.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: All right. I'm going to simply point out they have no academic freedom provisions. That is what would protect a real university from a leader such as McVety, who has no credentials and believes things that are contrary to modern knowledge.

The name-change application is explicit that the college designation is a branding problem for CCC. The proposed name, Canada University, is designed for Google, a blatant gambit to attract high fee-paying international students. Whether Canada Christian College is a grift or a blot on the ideological landscape is hard to say. Either way, this shop is not a university. The PEQAB process undoubtedly would have revealed that, and so Doug Ford is helping his backer in his quest for more income via an end run around the legislatively established process.

I call on you to defend the integrity of that process and Ontario's university system.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Hammond Transportation Ltd. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

Mr. Gregory Hammond: Gregory Hammond. Thank you.

Our family-owned business has been operating in Bracebridge since 1944, serving Muskoka, Parry Sound, Simcoe county, Haliburton and the Algonquin Park region. We operate motorcoach and charter bus services, motorcoach tours and school bus services. Our fleet includes 20 luxurious motorcoaches, activity buses, executive vans, school buses and mobility vehicles. At peak times we employ 250 people.

Today, our business is at risk due to the actions of the government of Ontario. We are very concerned that section 16 of Bill 213, Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, contains the repeal of the Public Vehicles Act and the dissolution of the Ontario Highway Transport Board.

This is a complex issue, and I understand that you will be hearing from a couple of my industry colleagues. If I can stress anything to this committee, I hope that you get answers to the following four questions:

(1) Is implementation of sweeping changes on an industry that has been devastated by COVID appropriate?

(2) Will this bill achieve the desired results?

(3) What are the unintended consequences of this bill on Ontario's motorcoach industry and Ontario jobs?

(4) Will modifications to the bill achieve the desired result and mitigate unintended consequences?

This bill is being enacted at a time when the Ontario motorcoach and bus industry has been devastated by the COVID pandemic. Our coach revenue has dropped from \$1.8 million to \$18,000, a 99% drop in motorcoach revenue. We do not expect travel to return to near-normal levels for many months after the pandemic is over; meanwhile, we've had to continue payments on our fleet, maintain our vehicles and facilities, retain critical staff, pay insurance, property taxes etc. The cost of maintaining our parked motorcoaches has been \$114,000; the monthly finance payments alone on our motorcoaches are \$65,000. As you can understand, the financial impact of COVID will continue to cripple our business and our industry well after travel returns to near-normal levels.

We see regular action by this government to assist businesses to survive the pandemic and keep Ontario jobs. Enacting this legislation will push Ontario businesses already struggling into bankruptcy and Ontario workers will lose their employment. Implementation of section 16 would be like assisting the restaurant industry by allowing people to serve meals to the public from their homes.

This is not just our opinion. The members of the Ontario Motor Coach Association are asking that your government withdraw section 16 of this bill at this time.

There are a number of issues that must be addressed to save Ontario motorcoach businesses and Ontario jobs before section 16 can be implemented. Failure to address these issues before implementation will result in the shutting down of Ontario-owned businesses such as ours and the loss of Ontario jobs. These issues are not new. They have been presented to the government as far back as Ministers Palladini and Clement.

(1) Safety to Ontario bus passengers and Ontario road users: We have seen fatal crashes from unlicensed carriers in the past. How does the MTO propose to protect passengers and other road users from new entrants who are inexperienced and don't understand how to properly maintain vehicles and/or don't have the capacity, skills or financial position to maintain vehicles to the standards required? It has been our experience that the MTO has great difficulty finding and enforcing standards on transient and start-up operators. What standards and regulations will be implemented to hold online bus booking agents to the same safety standards that Ontario bus operators are? Meaningful discussions must be held with Ontario's industry to ensure the safety of the travelling public in Ontario prior to economic deregulation.

(2) Unfair competition from carriers who operate in lower-cost and protected jurisdictions: There are significant competitive advantages for Quebec- and American-based carriers, including fuel tax rebates, lower insurance rates and lower wage rates that are not afforded to Ontario carriers. The unique geographical location of Ontario and the significant charter and tour operations that travel into

the US place a large segment of Ontario motor coach work and jobs at risk to Americans. Many jobs will be lost to Quebec as Quebec-based carriers use their lower cost base and the benefit of a base in a protected market to cherry-pick business in Ontario, whether that is intercity or charter.

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Given that Ontario operators will now be placed at a disadvantage in the marketplace, what plan does Ontario have to assist the Ontario industry? Reciprocity with neighbouring jurisdictions must be achieved before economic deregulation.

(3) Unfair competition from government-funded competitors and the likelihood that government subsidies will need to increase: The premise of a deregulated market is that it is an equal playing field which allows the market to operate, driven by market forces. This is not the situation when there are taxpayer-funded transportation providers such as GO, ONTC and transit operators, not to mention federally subsidized Via Rail. Will private carriers be protected from government-subsidized competition? Will transit agencies be operating charters and tours subsidized by the taxpayer?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): You have one minute.

Mr. Gregory Hammond: That process will restrict public agencies from operating over top of private carriers. You may recall an outrage a few years ago when the TTC owned a travel agency in British Columbia. And as taxpayer-funded operations expand, there is the likelihood that government subsidies will need to increase while driving private business into bankruptcy. US jurisdictions prohibit publicly funded transit operations from competing with private operations.

We would ask the minister responsible to delay implementation of section 16 until the industry has begun to recover from COVID and these other significant issues are addressed.

It will never be easier to get into the motor coach business in Ontario than in 2021. The market will be flooded with used buses at fire sale prices. So, we'll have new players with low knowledge of operating costs or having the capacity to achieve safety compliance. MTO has told us that it takes a year to train and put new compliance officers in the field, yet there is no plan to even hire more officers—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt, but that's all the time we have for your presentation.

Before we begin questions, MPP Bell has joined us on Zoom. MPP Bell, could you confirm that you are MPP Bell, you are present, and you are in Ontario?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm MPP Bell, I am present, and I'm in Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Great. Thank you for that.

We'll now begin questions. The first round of questions in this round will be with the official opposition, and you'll

have seven and a half minutes. I recognize MPP Fife—maybe not.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. There's a delay.

Thanks to all the presenters. I'm going to share my first section with MPP Lindo. I want to thank everyone for coming to committee.

Elizabeth Hanson, I could pretty much listen to you all day on schedule 2. Your presentation was very clear and very direct, and you spoke to process as being problematic. The government is defending schedule 2 because of process. I wanted to give you an opportunity, please, to really extrapolate why that is an issue. If you take two minutes to do that, then we'll throw it over to MPP Lindo because I know she has a question for you as well.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: The PSECE Act puts in place a rigorous process for vetting institutions that wish to call themselves universities, which means something specific in Ontario, and to deliver new types of degrees. As part of that process, institutions that wish to deliver degrees such as a bachelor of arts or science need to submit detailed representations of their faculty, the credentials of their faculty, the courses that they will offer and other materials pertaining to the actual substance of those programs. Those are then submitted to experts in the fields in which they propose to offer the degrees, to ensure that there is actual academic value to them.

This is an important process because it offers to the minister informed scrutiny of programs that the minister herself or himself or themselves may not be able to provide just with the naked eyeball. Schedule 2 avoids all of that, and it avoids it because of the process that has led up to schedule 2. It avoids it for the obvious reason that, having started the process, it was clear that Canada Christian College was going to do a face plant.

One of the most crucial elements when you are asking to be a university and to deliver degrees such as a bachelor of arts and science in Ontario is that you have to establish that you have academic freedom provisions. What the Canada Christian College did was direct the reviewers, as part of the PEQAB process, to a student plagiarism policy which has nothing to do with academic freedom, which is the mechanism whereby professors of actual disciplines are protected in the pursuit of their teaching and research in those disciplines from the interests of the administration of the universities, which can sometimes be distorted by monetary concerns and sometimes by ideological concerns. They have no policy of that kind, and that crucially distinguishes the Canada Christian College from other religious colleges in Ontario that have gone through the PEQAB process: Tyndale college and Redeemer University. This isn't even about religious versus secular colleges; it's about a process that vets the integrity of institutions and protects Ontario from shops that are—I look at this: It's a grift.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. Thank you very much for that. I'm going to throw it over to my colleague MPP Lindo, but that was excellent. Thank you very much, Elizabeth.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): I recognize MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: To Dr. Hanson: I just want to take that as the starting point and veer into one other aspect of the deputation today. You spoke at length of the reputation and the integrity of post-secondary institutions. Part of what we find challenging with schedule 2 is that by skirting this process that you've just spoken so eloquently about, the reputation of post-secondary institutions in Ontario is at stake, and that, in fact, actually helps to restart our economy, that brings in research dollars, that brings in all sort of things that this bill is saying it is supposed to be doing or wanting to do. Could you speak a little bit more about the importance of maintaining the integrity of our post-secondary system?

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: Yes. I think that one thing that I believe has not been teased out in the press around this issue is that I look at this and I think that Canada Christian College is trying to capture international students. One thing that has happened in the context of the pandemic is that Canadian universities, which rely on international students partly for monetary reasons but also to educate our own citizens about the world that they live in through encounters with students from other countries—that aspect of university education has been shut down because of the difficulties of travel and so forth in the pandemic. For that international aspect of Ontario university education to work—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): You have one minute.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson:—Ontario universities have to have reliable international reputations. What this does is open the door to the essentially fraudulent capture of international students. My concern is that once that word starts to seep out, there's a potential compromise to the entire system. Does that speak to—

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Yes, that is perfect. We've been trying to flesh out the idea of the importance of maintaining the integrity of our post-secondary institutions and the ripple effect—if we have one post-secondary institution that's known to not have profs that have the degrees required to grant bachelors of arts and science, other institutions will, in fact, also go down with that ship.

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There's only a little bit of time, but I'll let you talk until it's done.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): I'm sorry, that is all the time.

We will now turn to the government members for questioning. You will have 7.5 minutes. I recognize MPP Kramp.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thanks to all of our witnesses for coming in here today.

I would like to ask a question to Mr. Laporte, based on some previous experience I had. A number of years ago I was dealing with the Nortel circumstance, when the creditors' predictability went out the window and creditor protection was out the window, and all of a sudden, employees and people involved were asked to accept 5% of their eligible pension, which ended up being negotiated up and everything like that.

I take particular interest in your concern on this matter and in us finding the effective balance. I would really like you to send us a bit more of a wholesome thought process on where you believe we could or should go and where the errors or omissions are on this particular legislation. In particular, creditor status: The predictability and the preservation of pensions is incredibly important, but where do we strike that right balance in the creditor status, knowing right now that when protecting pensions, the governments always come first? Federal and provincial revenue departments always have first claim. Then, where does the actual individual's or pensioner's state—are they after financial institutions? Are they after individual suppliers? It's a very, very difficult and challenging thing to try to get the fairness and balance in there for one and all, given everything.

I'm wondering, could you please send to this committee your particular thoughts on this issue? Because I think it's very, very important going forward in our striking the right balance. Obviously, the elimination of red tape is incredibly important, but also the status of creditors and how we assess this is extremely important. I would like you to comment a little bit just on what I've stated.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Laporte: Yes, thank you much for this opportunity. The analogy that I use is we're throwing the baby out with the bathwater. We're doing such a great thing for business owners in Ontario by ripping away all the red tape, but one of the features of the Pension Benefits Act is creditor protection. It protects those monies that you've set aside for retirement from the claims of creditors, except family law creditors. If you divorce, then the Family Law Act might force you to part with some of your pension monies, for your ex-spouse. But generally speaking, pension assets are sacred. This bill, the way it's written right now, would strip away those protections from those people who have individual pension plans.

My concern—and that's why I needed to intervene, to remind the government, the committee and the House generally that there is a way to rip away the red tape and make these easier to sign up for without taking away the creditor protection. It has been done, as I mentioned in my introductory remarks, in the province of Quebec and in the province of Manitoba. The way that the Legislatures did it there is they said, "These plans are exempt from everything except the following sections." There are a couple of sections in each province that include the creditor protection provisions, which in Ontario, under the Pension Benefits Act, are section 65 and section 66. By keeping those there, first of all, there's no cost to the province, there's no cost of administration to the superintendent of financial institutions, and other provinces have done it for years.

It's really not magic, what I'm asking be done to this bill before it goes for final approval.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Okay, I understand that. Just a question, though, and I'm looking for clarity here: Businesses need financing. They need an opportunity to have access to capital to grow, to develop, whatever. But depending on, of course, that institution and/or the level of

creditor protection that is in there, if we take the equation and simply throw it straight over, if there's not an effective balance in there—access to capital is not going to flow if there's not adequate protection in there too.

How do you propose that we strike this effective balance between protection and yet access to capital?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Laporte: Well, you probably know that the Pension Benefits Act has had these creditor protection provisions in it for decades and it has never prevented small businesses from setting up pension plans. So we're saying, let's maintain those protections but rip away all the other red tape, all the filings and all the other things that are really not necessary when you're dealing with a single person who is the employer and the employee of the same pension plan. That's really what we're saying, is Ontario should copy Quebec and Manitoba in preserving the credit protection provisions, but stripping away all the other red tape measures.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you very much. I'm certainly pleased that you're in favour of reducing this dramatic red tape, which is really out of control in this province.

I'll pass it over to one of my colleagues now. Thank you very much to all of our attendees today.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): I recognize MPP Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to all the presenters. I'll get right to it. I wanted to ask Mr. Hammond a couple of questions. I don't know how much time I have—a couple of minutes, maybe?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): A minute and 30 seconds.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Okay. Well, I'll get right to it.

I wanted to ask you about a number of changes we're talking about with the Highway Traffic Act. Can you provide any comments on the current safety oversight and any possible improvements that you'd like to see? Or you can even add them later on to the committee. But in the time remaining, I'll leave it with you.

Mr. Gregory Hammond: As far as safety is concerned, the MTO really does a good job of finding operators like me. We have nice shops. We have mechanics in them. They come around. They know where we are.

A hockey team in Muskoka: A couple of years ago, a bus showed up from a limousine company in Ottawa. They had no experience. They bought it from a company in Quebec, had all the legitimate stickers on, but the stickers applied to the company in Quebec, not the people who were now operating the bus. They had no regard for the rules in Ontario. We complained to the MTO, so we had to pay \$500 to the Ontario Highway Transport Board to file a complaint, and they came back and said, "Yes, he was totally in violation. Now he realizes that and he won't do it again." So there you go.

The other issue is that this act is supposed to make it easier to get into the bus business and establish new routes. We established a new route a number of years ago between Huntsville and Barrie. Who was our competitor? Ontario Northland—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): I'm sorry to interrupt, but unfortunately, that's all the time we have for this round of questioning.

We will now return to the official opposition for 7.5 minutes, and I recognize MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to Mr. Hammond for your presentation about schedule 16 and schedule 24. As the opposition's transit critic, I did reach out to stakeholders asking for their assessment on what the impacts of schedules 16 and 24 would be on their operations. That included Greyhound, Ontario Northland and transit workers, and what I found is that there are not a lot of stakeholders that are in support of these changes. In two instances, I heard some stakeholders say that it was actually smaller operators such as yourself that were advocating for these changes. Hearing from you, it seems that that is simply not the case.

I guess my question to you is, what do you think the government's motivation is for bringing in schedule 16 and schedule 24? What stakeholders do you believe did ask for these changes?

Mr. Gregory Hammond: Well, I don't really know, to be honest with you. I assume transit really thought they could do more charter work. The big companies, the small companies—there really doesn't seem to be a groundswell of support that says, "Hey, this really needs to happen," except for maybe the online booking services and maybe some players that aren't in Ontario today. But in the Ontario industry, there doesn't seem to be a lot of pressure from any of the three segments, and it's so difficult.

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As I was telling MPP Bailey, we started this service, but we're competing against (1) everybody who has a car; (2) if your neighbour has a car or your best friend has a car, you have that access to transportation; and (3) Ontario Northland. Then we're competing against funded agencies such as Home Care Muskoka, then we're competing against Red Cross volunteer drivers, so it was a nightmare to even start this new route.

It seems that the government thinks that if you wipe out these rules, it would make it so easy for new players to enter the market. There probably are going to be a lot of new players in the market operating line-run service, but they're going to be on routes where one end of the route is Toronto. There just isn't a market that's large enough in Ontario anymore to justify the investment to put routes on between smaller centres, so you're going to see a whole lot of carriers competing against transit, say, from Brampton or Pickering into Toronto. They're going to show up 10 minutes ahead of the transit players that are there, they're going to charge a dollar less, they're going to fill up their old bus and away they go. We're going to see Quebec carriers in here, we're going to see American carriers in here, and we're going to see jobs migrate to those markets instead of staying here in Ontario.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Mr. Hammond. That is an assessment that I have heard other stakeholders share, and I appreciate you raising your concerns. I was taking notes. I'll read your submission carefully so that I can understand exactly what your concerns are.

I'd like to hand it over to MPP Lindo.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you again for the presentations. I'm going to circle back to Dr. Hanson in the hopes that you can use some of this time—as much of it as you need—to talk about the ripple effect on the integrity and the international reputation of post-secondary institutions if we don't pull schedule 2, and then, in effect, allow Canada Christian College to just call themselves a university. Over to you, Dr. Hanson.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: Well, universities are in many ways, I think, opaque institutions to the people who they serve, because their value depends on the fact that they cultivate knowledge that lots of people don't have access to in the normal conduct of their lives. That's particularly true with respect to students. Students who are applying to universities—particularly students internationally, but that's true domestically as well—by definition do not have the ability to do things like deeply, independently assess the credentials of professors, of programs and so forth. They don't have that precisely because they're in the position of applying to these institutions to learn the things that they don't yet know.

For that reason, there's a very important burden on regulatory practices and offices to ensure that the activities of universities are scrutinized in a way that ensures that students are not having their money taken and their time stolen for purposes that are either idle—which could happen, and I think sometimes people fear that that's what happens at universities, but that's not the case; in fact, it's quite the reverse—or—and this is what I think Canada Christian College exemplifies—being entirely about money capture: that what it is attempting to do is to sell itself—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): You have one minute.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: —to vulnerable future students who cannot assess that it is not a real university. That compromises what other universities are in Ontario or how they appear to the world.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: And so in the small amount of time that we have left, I also would like to give you some space to talk about the queer and Muslim students on these campuses and the impact of this schedule 2 on them.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: Well, this is an extremely complicated issue because it speaks to the intersection of the Human Rights Code, which policies that are available on the website of Canada Christian College clearly violate, and the desires of religious institutions—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): I'm sorry to interrupt, but unfortunately that's all the time we have for this round of questioning.

Before we move to the government, MPP Kusendova, have you joined us?

Interjection: I don't think so.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Okay.

Interjection: MPP Skelly.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Oh, MPP Skelly. MPP Skelly, can you confirm that you are indeed MPP Skelly and that you are in Ontario and present?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Hi. It is MPP Skelly, and I am in Ontario. I'm in Hamilton.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Thank you.

We'll now turn to the government. You will have 7.5 minutes for your questions. Anyone from the government side? I recognize MPP Wai.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I heard a lot of questions this morning or sharing this morning about Canada Christian College, which we in fact have also dealt with in a separate way, but I want to go back to the focus of this bill that we are discussing today.

I just want to see if the group here—do they have a clear understanding of what red tape is and what it needs to address in Ontario, overregulation, to help our small businesses? We are focusing on helping our small business so that we can be poised for economic growth, not only down the road but right now. I'd like to hear from some of them addressing this, please.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Do you want to direct your question—oh, go ahead, Mr. Hammond, or Hammond Transportation.

Mr. Gregory Hammond: Personally, section 16 doesn't help our business. It doesn't really remove red tape from our day-to-day. I'm very concerned about the safety issues, the impact on Ontario bus businesses that are reeling from the economic impact of COVID and what that means to our businesses here in Ontario and to jobs in Ontario. Frankly, I think this bill, while intended to increase transportation options for people to travel intercity within Ontario, is going to impact the charter bus industry significantly by exporting those jobs and businesses out of Ontario. So I am afraid I don't see any benefit in this bill in section 16 and I believe 24, someone mentioned.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I just want to go back to what the reduction of red tape is. It is not just affecting one sector. We are reviewing with a lot of businesses, large, small and medium, to see what the ways are that we can cut back on some rules and regulations that are hindering us to do business better, faster, approving things better and faster, so that things can move on instead of waiting for years. Would you agree to something like that that we're doing to help our businesses?

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Any one of you can answer this, if you don't mind.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Laporte: I think that the government is doing a fabulous job of getting rid of red tape, at least with respect to the pension chapter, chapter 19, of Bill 213. I haven't looked at the other chapters, so I can't comment, but when it comes to protecting small business owners and their retirement, I think this is an amazing job that the government has done. The only problem is the creditor protection provisions, which can be very easily fixed, as was done in Quebec and Manitoba. But other than that, I'm extremely happy with this, so kudos to the government.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much. Anyone else can add your comments on this, please.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: I'd say that red tape is an ideologically tendentious way of describing regulations that protect consumers.

With respect to the matter that I'm speaking to, it is such a profound confusion to conflate universities and small businesses that I hardly know where to start. It's to fundamentally understand what universities are and the good that they provide to Ontario society.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you. Are you aware of a number of round tables that we have held with businesses and with universities as well to understand what the concerns are and what regulations they find are tedious that we can simplify so that we can cut back on that red tape but maintain our protection for them? Are you aware of some of those round tables being held, actually, since we started our government?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Do you want to direct that question to any one presenter?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Sure. We can ask any one of them answer it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Go ahead, Mr. Hammond.

Interjection.

Dr. Elizabeth Hanson: Performance-based funding is the opposite of cutting red tape. It's constraining the universities by more red tape. There's nothing more to say.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Okay, thank you. Any other comments from you?

Chair, I can leave the balance of my time to other members that might—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Mr. Hammond, were you trying to answer? Are you able to unmute?

Mr. Gregory Hammond: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Go ahead.

Mr. Gregory Hammond: The Ministry of Transportation held some consultations last year around the province, and they were specifically directed at discussions about how to increase service: intercity service, intercommunity service. But there was no discussion about how they thought that they might improve that. This section of the act certainly doesn't work to improve access, except in between major points. What's the point of having GO Transit and Greyhound and Coach Canada as well operate between Niagara Falls and Toronto 27 times a day, and then have three more players on that route?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): One minute.

Mr. Gregory Hammond: It seems that the government wants more players to provide service between Huntsville and Barrie or North Bay and Mattawa. That's where service is lacking, and to provide it, government needs to step in and fund, because they're not economically viable services. So it seems that the baby is being thrown out with the bathwater in this case.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you for your comments. I understand you just highlighted on transportation, but the reducing of red tape is going across, and especially in the business area or communicating even with the government on various areas in order to process business faster.

I wonder if my colleagues have any other questions, please?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): I'm sorry to interrupt, but that's all the time we have for questions. That's all the time we have for this particular segment of our hearings today. I want to thank the presenters for joining us, and I also want to let the committee know that we will now recess this committee until 1 p.m. today. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1145 to 1301.

THE 519

MS. PAULINE CHRISTIAN

DR. CHRISTOPHER DICARLO

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on General Government will now resume.

At this time, I would like to call upon The 519. Please state your name for the record and you may begin your presentation. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Pam Hrick: Thank you and good afternoon. My name is Pam Hrick. I am chair of the board of management of The 519, a Toronto-based LGBTQ2S organization. I am joined today by our board's vice-chair, Paul Jonathan Saguil, with whom I'll be sharing my time.

For 45 years, The 519 has been responding to the critical and emerging needs of LGBTQ2S communities in Toronto. It delivers services for the most vulnerable and marginalized, and it leads advocacy, anti-violence and access-to-justice initiatives.

The communities we serve have survived generations of abuse and discrimination, survived with next to no legal protections, survived targeted and violent policing, survived public health indifference and survived religious persecution, psychiatric abuses, hate-motivated crimes and criminalization. This survival has come with the knowledge of unspeakable loss: lives extinguished as a result of indifference by our governments and state institutions and those who continue to believe we should not exist.

Against the backdrop of our lived reality, we are here today to ask this committee to excise schedule 2 from Bill 213 and prevent Canada Christian College from becoming an accredited university.

Earlier this week, the Legislative Assembly passed a motion to "condemn the extreme and hateful invective of Charles McVety and oppose any efforts to make Canada Christian College into an accredited university." We are deeply disappointed that many members of the governing party, including three members of this committee, opposed this motion.

Canada Christian College is run by McVety, a long-time supporter of the Premier and a notorious and vocal bigot who publicly perpetrates homophobia, transphobia and Islamophobia. Granting this accreditation only serves to give McVety a larger platform to spread hate at the expense of those who are marginalized within our communities.

Premier Ford and his government have one primary job: to keep people safe. Yet instead of focusing on that job, it slipped schedule 2 into omnibus legislation in the midst of a global pandemic, hoping we wouldn't notice. We did.

Ostensibly, Bill 213 is supposed to be “better for people, smarter for businesses,” but schedule 2 is neither. Granting accreditation to Canada Christian College only serves to promote hate.

In order to attend Canada Christian College, you need to submit a headshot, a letter from a pastor, and sign on to a code of conduct that prohibits premarital sex, among other things. The college's requirement that all prospective full-time and part-time students are required to submit a personal reference from a pastor with a church letterhead is nothing but a thinly veiled morality filter. The college's code of conduct requires all staff, faculty and students to refrain from practices that are biblically condemned, including premarital sex, adultery, all types of fornication and related behaviour. This is the same type of anti-queer dog whistle that our community has seen time and again.

If all of this sounds familiar and tiresome, it's because we fought this same kind of discrimination all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada in the form of the community covenant that was at issue when Trinity Western University, another evangelical institution, attempted to open an accredited law school. In that case, the Supreme Court of Canada held that regulatory bodies in Ontario and British Columbia were right to consider whether Trinity Western's admissions policy and code of conduct were contrary to the public interest that those bodies were mandated to uphold. Among other things, that code of conduct prohibited “sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman.”

The fight over Trinity Western's proposed law school lasted several years. At every stage of the legal proceedings, the court came to the same conclusion: This kind of language discriminated against women, queer people and religious minorities. In the result, the Supreme Court dismissed Trinity Western's challenge, the rejection of its application for a law school licence.

I will now pass the mike over to my colleague, Paul Jonathan Saguil.

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for having me. As my colleague said, I'm the vice-chair of the 519, but I was also counsel for a coalition of queer students and legal professionals that intervened in the Trinity Western case.

In my view, a ruling from the highest court in Canada should have settled the question about whether institutions of higher learning in Canada should be allowed to discriminate. Unfortunately, here we are again. Our submission is that unless Canada Christian College complies with applicable human rights principles, that government is basically inviting litigation over this issue. This is neither better for the people of Ontario, nor smart for business.

In closing, the 519 vehemently opposes Bill 213, schedule 2, as it relates to Canada Christian College. Federal statistics are alarming: 2014 reports show that

16% of hate crimes in Canada were motivated by sexual orientation; 65% of those were violent in nature. Our realities clearly demonstrate that these numbers continue to rise at alarming rates. If this committee endorses the legislation and the Legislature passes this bill, it will openly welcome homophobia, transphobia and Islamophobia within our province. This will result in further violence towards these communities. It will signal tolerance of anti-LGBTQ2S rhetoric.

Statistics from Stats Canada demonstrate that queer, trans, and non-binary individuals are experiencing violence more frequently, but report it less: “The rate of self-reported violent victimization of lesbian and gay individuals decreased by 67% between 2009 and 2014. This is compared to a decrease of 30% for heterosexual individuals.”

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

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: Accreditation of Canada Christian College puts our vulnerable communities at risk. This committee and this Legislature will welcome and promote hate. It will welcome discrimination, if it passes Bill 213 with schedule 2 intact. It will leave our communities vulnerable and unsafe, not knowing where to turn, because when they are facing blatant discrimination, the Premier, the Chair of this committee, colleagues of this government will show that they are welcoming further victimization. The 519 respectfully calls on this committee, Premier Ford, the government and this august Legislature to do the right thing. Our communities demand that you prevent Canada Christian College from becoming accredited as a university, degree-granting institution.

Thank you, and we welcome any questions.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. Before we continue, I just wanted to confirm: MPP Kusendova, are you present, are you MPP Kusendova and are you in Ontario?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Good afternoon, Chair. This is MPP Natalia Kusendova and I'm present here in Mississauga Centre. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. I'd now like to call upon our second presenter, Pauline Christian. Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Pauline Christian: Thank you. I am Pauline Christian. I am the immediate past-president of the Black Business and Professional Association. I'm also the president of the Educational Foundation for Children's Care Canada. I have been an advocate for anti-racism. I have also worked with different layers of government: with Mr. Tory and with Premier Wynne when she was in power. I'm now working with some key people within the Conservative Party on issues. I am non-partisan, I must say. I've worked with Mr. Trudeau on the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, with that whole proclamation—just to give you my position, that I will not tolerate any form or look of racism.

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My experience with Canada Christian College—I can only give my experience. This started in 2004-05, when I

was invited by Dr. McVety to host the Martin Luther King celebration on campus. I am the executive producer of the annual Martin Luther King celebration, which has been around for the last 22 years. Dr. McVety has always been welcoming to the Black Business and Professional Association.

For many who do not know what the Black Business and Professional Association is, it's the largest Black professional organization in Canada. We are in charge of the Harry Jerome Awards, which are the most prestigious African Canadian awards across the country. When we have the awards, all three layers of government are present. I was also able to travel with Mr. Harper to Jamaica on his first historic visit. I've had Mr. Trudeau at our events, being our keynote speaker, just to give you a point of being non-partisan. What I'm talking about is coming from a place of being open and being transparent.

In 2004, when I was invited by Dr. McVety to look at his facility to host the Martin Luther King celebration, I started going there, and he opened up the entire facility to have all our Black students at an HBCU in Alabama that we partner with. They patronize us, the Martin Luther King event. He opened up his college to have all those students there for the weekend. Up until his college moved to Whitby, and that was last year, we have been at his facility.

When he has new facilitators and they come on and they may be telling me about increases in price, I say, "I need to speak with Dr. McVety." Once I go to speak with Dr. McVety, he opens his doors and he says, "The Black Business and Professional Association, Pauline Christian, the Martin Luther King event is given privilege being in our facility, and there should be no added cost." He just gave us a fraction of his cost to have the event.

He has been hosting the event for over 15 years. He has also been awarded by the Black Business and Professional Association for the work and support he has given our organization.

When I go on Canada Christian College campus, all I see is a melting pot, which represents Canada. This is the Canada we're supposed to be, and it is a representation on his campus. I can only speak from what I see. When I need to speak to Dr. McVety, whether he's in a meeting or not, I will wait if I have issues with someone telling me about an increased cost. He has time for us. So all I can say right now is that this is the type of institution that we need to have. Because my kids went to an HBCU in Alabama, which is a Christian university, I see why we need a university like this that can house most of our minority students, because 65% to 80% of minority students, that's where they go. I have seen the product of the labour of love coming out of that university.

It's a Christian university, and we understand the whole thing on perception. But also, me being a Christian, me running the Black Business and Professional Association in Canada and having the opportunity to work across the room with all the parties—all the parties are represented at BBPA events when we have huge events. But we need to know that we open up our doors to have a Christian or a

spiritual type of forum where people can make their own decisions. I've never seen at any time when Dr. McVety has shown any sort of prejudice toward any particular race, whether it's Caucasian or blue, yellow, Black people.

For me, I would like to make it clear that I am in support that we grant Dr. McVety the accredited university status as requested, because it's needed in our country, just like the university that I sent my kids to in the United States of America.

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

Ms. Pauline Christian: I think I have staked my claim. Thank you so much.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. We'll now turn to our third presenter. We have Christopher DiCarlo. Please state your name for the record and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Thank you. My name is Christopher DiCarlo. I'm a philosopher, an educator and an author. I've taught at numerous colleges and universities throughout Ontario: the University of Guelph, Laurier, Waterloo, Ontario Tech, Ryerson and the University of Toronto, as well as Humber and Sheridan colleges. I currently hold the position of invited professor at the Life Institute at Ryerson University. I'm also a lifetime member of Humanist Canada and an expert adviser for the Centre for Inquiry Canada. I'm also the ethics chair for the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Over the past several decades, I've been invited to speak at numerous national and international conferences and written many scholarly papers ranging from bioethics to cognitive evolution. I have authored four books to date, including *How to Become a Really Good Pain in the Ass: A Critical Thinker's Guide to Asking The Right Questions*, which was released in 2011; a second edition will be released in the fall of 2021. My latest book, *So You Think You Can Think: Tools for Intelligent Conversations and Getting Along*, was released by Rowman and Littlefield Publishers in June of 2020.

I'm a past visiting research scholar at Harvard in the faculty of arts and sciences department of anthropology in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. There I conducted research for two major papers, entitled *The Co-Evolution of Consciousness and Language*, and *The Development of Memetic Equilibrium and How Problem Solving and Neurotransmission in the Upper Paleolithic led to The Emergence and Maintenance of Memetic Equilibrium in Contemporary World Religions*.

In April 2008 I was awarded TVOntario's Big Ideas Best Lecturer award and in August 2008 I was honoured with the Humanist of the Year award from Humanist Canada. In 2008, I was awarded the University of Ontario Institute of Technology's complementary faculty teaching award.

I'm the principal and founder of Critical Thinking Solutions, an educational consulting business for individuals, corporations and not-for-profits both in the private and public sectors. I'm also a developer of the first pilot project in Canada to introduce universal critical thinking skills into the Ontario public high school curriculum, which began in the Upper Grand District School Board.

I am a skeptic. I am apolitical and non-partisan, and I am an advocate of Enlightenment principles. I live with my wife, Linda, in Guelph, Ontario. We have two sons, Matthew and Jeremy, a daughter-in-law, Jennifer, and a dog named Hero.

I've examined the curriculum, the degree completion plans and many other aspects and functions of Canada Christian College. I've read and examined the president's message, the college's mission and vision statements, and the recognition status of ordaining and credential bodies, as well as the college's history, academic departments and degrees, calendars, course catalogues, degree completion plans, faculty and academic policies and conduct.

Based on what I have observed to date, the Canada Christian College curriculum offers a wide variety within their course catalogue dealing with numerous subject areas and topics. I was generally impressed not only with the wide variety of courses offered in so many subject areas, but with the liberality of the topics covered. Aside from the usual courses on biblical scriptures, hermeneutics and exegesis one would expect to see at any Christian college, I was genuinely intrigued to find courses covering such topics as love, dignity and respect; caring for the LGBTQ community; human sexuality; introduction to world religions; Islam; ministerial ethics; philosophy of leadership; introduction to philosophy, Eastern religions; critical thinking; psychology and religion; and ethnic diversity and social issues.

I was able to examine several individual courses, including GREK 400; THEO 320, Historical Theology; and MINS 220, The Jewish Roots of Christianity. From my experience as a professor, all outlines satisfied the standard description, expectations and evaluations of student performance. To be clear, at no time did I observe or witness any slanting or bias inherent within the Canada Christian College curriculum that might indicate signs of homophobia or hatred toward the LGBTQ community.

Based on my observations of the curriculum, I witnessed a far more politically progressive selection of courses and treatment of topics than I originally anticipated. As well, through my investigation of the CCC curriculum, I did not notice any suggestion or sign that would indicate any level of Islamophobia. I found quite the opposite; several of the courses offered at the college deal specifically with eastern religions, world religions and Islam. Although I cannot determine the nature of the content covered in each course, that is to say how they're taught, nor the manner in which that information is covered, I have not witnessed any overt degree or level of hatred towards other faiths, religions, sexual orientation or ethnicities.

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Finally, after having reviewed the Canada Christian College's degree completion plans, I noticed a fairly robust number of degree programs at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels offered in religious education, performing arts, contemporary music and psychological counselling. The college appears to be well positioned to take on the additional responsibilities of offering bachelor's

degrees in both the arts and sciences. This consideration, of course, is based on the college's adherence to requirements and benchmarks set out by PEQAB.

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

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Thank you. Let me conclude by saying that as an educator but also as one of Canada's most vocal atheists, I have debated the president of the Canada Christian College, Reverend Charles McVety, many times in the past both at live public events and on the radio, and I intend to do so well into the future. I disagree with much that Dr. McVety says about his beliefs in God, his understanding of science and many other areas of political and philosophical discussion. I cannot stress this enough: Charles McVety and I do not see eye to eye on many important aspects involving human behaviour.

To echo the timeless words of Evelyn Beatrice Hall, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." That being said, I will defend his or anyone's right not only to freedom of thought and freedom of speech but to legally pursue advancements according to their vocational aspirations. This is what our Constitution guarantees, namely a plurality of world views and the right to actively engage and educate according to those—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. That concludes your presentation. At this point, we'll now begin with the official opposition. You have seven and half minutes.

Sorry, before we begin, though, I just wanted to confirm: MPP Anand, are you present and are you MPP Anand and are you in Ontario? MPP—oh no, MPP Sabawy is back. No? Is MPP Anand still there? MPP Anand, can you please confirm, because you've just joined us on Zoom. Okay, we'll come back to that.

At this time, the official opposition have seven and a half minutes. Who would like to begin? MPP Fife, you have the floor.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the presenters. I'm going to begin with the delegations from the 519. Pam and Paul, thank you very much for sharing your concerns with regard to schedule 2 in Bill 213. I wish to tell you that we, as the official opposition, share your concerns wholly.

I do want to raise the one issue that has been emerging on a regular basis, and that is the special status that Mr. McVety has with this government and with this Premier. He was actively involved in pushing back on a very progressive physical and health curriculum. We felt it was very important that it be modernized and that it reflect today's needs of society. I wanted to address how important you think it is that Mr. McVety, who is a known homophobe and transphobe, actually has this special access to the Premier, that this application has been able to be fast-tracked in a piece of legislation which is designed to support businesses through a pandemic. Can either one of you speak to that, please?

Ms. Pam Hrick: I'm happy to start off. It's obviously very concerning for us. On that issue, I just want to tie in the mention of our fellow presenter at this committee with respect to Canada Christian College's course Love,

Dignity and Respect—Caring for the LGBTQ Community. We know that this institution is synonymous with Mr. McVety, and I just want to highlight some of the ways in which he has cared about the LGBTQ community. He has described same-sex marriage as a “dagger in the heart of man.” He decries sex education as a “militant homosexual agenda.” He preaches that homosexuals prey on children. And the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council reviewed his hateful program on the Christian CTS network, finding that it made “malevolent, insidious and conspiratorial” remarks about queer individuals. It is deeply concerning to us that there seems to be such a cozy relationship and access to the Premier on the part of an individual who has cared for the LGBTQ community in this way.

I’m not sure if Paul has anything to add to that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, Paul, I wanted you to address the litigation, because I think that’s a key piece. I mean, this is a government that has been in court almost since they were first elected on several other issues, be it municipal, environmental or contractual. Can you address where you think this is going? If schedule 2 stays in Bill 213, where is this going?

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: Clearly, the government has recognized or has been warned about the consequences of trying to ram through this legislation. What we saw in the Trinity Western case is years of litigation and public money poured down the drain about a very clear legal principle that the Supreme Court affirmed, the Court of Appeal for Ontario affirmed, the Divisional Court of Ontario confirmed. Every level of court confirmed that you cannot grant licences to educational institutions that discriminate.

Canada Christian College’s admissions policy, as we testified, plain-face discriminates, and that is going to invite litigation, is going to waste taxpayer money. It is not going to make Ontarians safer. It’s not going to make businesses better. Frankly, in the middle of a pandemic, it is the last thing this Legislature should be wasting its resources on.

Ontarians want to feel safe in this pandemic. LGBTQ2S Ontarians, in particular, have been vulnerable in this pandemic, and rather than focusing on protecting and keeping us safe, this government is rewarding its friends who have a history, a very public history of promoting hatred.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. I’m going to send it over to my colleague Laura Mae Lindo. Thank you.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Chair. Sorry. I always go too quickly.

I’m going to stick with The 519 as well. Actually I’m going to go to you, Pam, back to something you had said about showing care. When you do a lot of the equity work or work with vulnerable populations, there are often discussions about showing care to them in a way they want, as opposed to the way that we on the outside feel they should be cared for.

One of the issues that has been raised in our offices is that there was a particular signal to queer and Muslim

communities when schedule 2 was inserted in a bill that was supposed to help small businesses, and that the motion on Monday where 29 people said, “We are not going to support this kind of hate in Ontario,” was a starting point for a different kind of signal. Can you speak a little bit about the importance of pulling schedule 2 at this time in light of how queer communities want to feel cared for?

Ms. Pam Hrick: Caring for any marginalized community starts with understanding and hearing what they are saying; what they are saying to you about the way in which they need to be cared for, about their needs, about their experiences and about the impact that certain events, positions, legislation will have on them.

This is, once again, another signal, really regrettably, from this government—

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

Ms. Pam Hrick: —with respect to how it seems to view members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, and that stems back to the push-back on reforms to the sex ed curriculum at the outset of this government’s mandate, and here we are today, still, with another signal buried in legislation that is not meant to have anything to do with Canada Christian College and the accreditation of universities. We have another signal here about what this government’s priorities are and how it’s going to go about—I will use the word again: caring—for LGBTQ2S communities, which is, quite frankly, not very well.

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We were pleased to see this motion introduced by the official opposition earlier this week adopted by the Legislature. As I said in my opening remarks, we are very disappointed that a number of members of the government, including members of this committee, voted in opposition to condemn the hate that has been spewed by Mr. McVety and to—

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

At this point, we’ll now turn to the government. Who would like to begin? MPP Skelly, you may begin. You have seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good afternoon, everyone. My question: I would like to speak to Mr. DiCarlo. I was quite impressed with your list of credentials—you probably could have used up all of your time just going through your credentials—but I was also surprised at the comments you made.

Like you, as a former journalist, I’ve interviewed and had many conversations with Mr. McVety. I didn’t always share his opinion—on many occasions, I did not—but I’m a strong believer in freedom of speech, very much so. I worry about efforts by people to shut down anyone who doesn’t share their views, regardless of how much you may disagree with them.

I want to carry on that line. What could happen to our institutions—our publicly funded universities, our private universities or our private schools—what could happen to our independent media outlets and to our society if we push an agenda that shuts down people who have a different opinion?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Yes, that's an excellent point. I think George Orwell said it best: Freedom is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

What do we value? What do we value as a society? Do we value a plurality of views? I don't like a lot of the stuff Charles McVety says. I disagree with it. He knows that. He's my nemesis and I am his. But we have to live in a country where people are allowed to believe in different things. The man is a Christian. Of course he's going to have views that you consider to be hate-filled. They're not necessarily hate-filled; they're differing opinions and they're consistent with his Christian beliefs—which I disagree with wholeheartedly. I'm an atheist. I think his beliefs are just wrong. But why should I want to shut him down because of that? That leads to tyranny. That's not fair to him and it's not fair to anyone else. Show me the damage that he is actually doing. Why does any government body have the right, then, to close him down? And if they do, who's next?

Is this going to set a precedent? Now the next private, independent college that wants to become a university—“No, we don't like what that person says” and whatnot. Well, I'm sorry. If we value freedom of thought, freedom of conscience and freedom of speech, then we have to allow guys like McVety to have these rights. Those are the values that I hold in the highest regard.

Ms. Donna Skelly: And like you, as I said, I disagree with many things that he has said, but I also worry about stopping people from sharing their views, from speaking their mind, from having an opposing view. I worry that you can then not counter how people feel, if you're unaware of what their views truly are.

What happens if we stop people from having what isn't considered the politically correct viewpoint in our society? What happens to our society, in your opinion?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: It's just going to foment underlying dissension in various factions. It could come out in various different ways.

People want to be heard and they want to have the freedom to believe. Religious persecution has been going on for a long time. What happens historically is people end up leaving or relocating somewhere else in order to have the freedom to practise their religion.

Again, I'm an atheist. I don't care for particular world religious views, but I will honour them and I will respect them because that's the kind of society I want to live in. Many of my friends and colleagues share a plurality of views. We get together; we discuss them wholeheartedly. That's what the nature of this latest book of mine is about: How do you slog it out, out there on the pitch, and then go and have a drink with that same person? You have to know how to have discussions, disagree, and in the end be able to get along. That is the nature of civility, in my estimation.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I think we should all perhaps get a copy of that book at this Legislature. It might possibly tone things down sometimes.

What is your advice to people who are so adamant that this college has no right to seek this status? What do you say to people who are absolutely opposed to another's

perspective? How do you stop them without stopping their ability to speak?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Oh, goodness. How much time do we have?

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

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Okay, thank you.

This shows a failure in our education system, period. We don't teach critical thinking at any levels of high school or K-to-8, which facilitates people from a very early on period in their lives how to have these discussions, how to know how to think—not what to think; how to think. We don't teach people how to think. Part of that is fairness. The very cornerstone of critical thinking is fairness.

Are we being fair to a guy like Charles McVety by trying to shut him down because his opinions happen to differ with ours? I don't respect that. In order to have that conversation, we have to always return to the aspect of fairness as being the golden rule of critical thinking and literally the cornerstone, because without fairness and the application of—

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

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Thank you—fair rules across the board that apply to all people of varying opinions and a plurality of views, then we do have a singularity of thought. I don't think any of us really wants to live in a society like that; I know I don't.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Again, if we do, are we truly a democratic society and do we honour freedom of speech?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: No, not at all. I mean, we're defying the very essence and definition of what democracy means and those Enlightenment values which got us all here, which allowed for freedom of religious belief. If we shut him down now, who's next?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. At this time, we'll turn to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, you have four and a half minutes. You may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair, and I want to thank all three presenters for coming to committee today and sharing your views.

Mr. DiCarlo, it's always a pleasure to have somebody from my riding come to Queen's Park, so I'm going to start with my first question towards you. I'm wondering if there is a connection between free speech and being a degree-granting institution. I haven't heard anybody like myself, who has denounced Mr. McVety's hateful rhetoric—but I haven't said he doesn't have a right to say it. To me, that is separate from being granted university status and degree-granting privileges. Would you agree or disagree with that?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Yes, to me, it's just a matter of can they deliver the goods, and that just becomes a bureaucratic issue. That's not anybody's call other than those in the positions of power to be able to determine whether he can deliver the goods. Either he can or he can't. It should have nothing to do with his opinions, his differing views and whatnot.

Can he establish these two types of degrees, a bachelor of arts and a bachelor of science? Is he going to hire the right people? Is he going to be monitored by the right institutions, so in his biology classes he's not teaching creationism? He needs to teach biology. So if he's teaching creationism, then there has to be a process in place to monitor him, to have him under the magnifying glass, to make sure he's abiding by all the rules set aside for such institutions so that they become accredited. And if he violates those, then we have the legislative or bureaucratic right to speak up and say, "Wait a minute. We gave you this right and now you're not complying with it."

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Mr. Mike Schreiner: Would you agree, then, that if his college violates the Ontario Human Rights Code, he should be denied the ability to grant university degrees?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Well, to what degree is he in violation of the Human Rights Code—like, to what extent? And then to what degree does that play into granting an institution the right to offer these various degrees? That's a legal concern.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, of course, it's a legal concern—a very important legal concern, as The 519 community has highlighted today.

Next, I'd add, if he is engaged in financial irregularities—for instance, the institution granting loans to Mr. McVety and his family in ways that are highly irregular for a university—would that be grounds for denying university degree-granting status?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Again, that's something I really can't speak to. I'm not that familiar with what you're talking about, Mike. But again, we don't even need to be here; that just seems to be a legal issue. That's just a legal matter. Did he violate the law? Fine. Then what is the power of the law to be able to hold him accountable?

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

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: This seems like we're here on a moral basis. None of us have the right to judge this man. If he's violating laws, then take him to task. That's just what you do.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Would it make sense, then, to maybe have a bill focused on helping small businesses, which I want to do, and have a bill focused on that, and maybe remove this schedule from a small business bill and deal with it in some other way? Do you think that would maybe be a more appropriate process?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: You're just asking my opinion, Mike. I don't know. You guys are the politicians; I'm the philosopher, right? I don't want to tell you your jobs.

Politics is a messy game. I love watching you guys do your jobs and whatnot. It's a very difficult thing that you have to do, and I definitely don't envy you. But I really can't speak to that. If the man is in violation of any laws, hold him to task, hold him accountable. Otherwise, this just seems like a moral trial that—

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

the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Sattler, you may begin.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Chair. I'm going to start and then hand it over to my colleague MPP Glover.

I wanted to thank all three presenters for coming and speaking to the committee today, but I wanted to focus my questions with The 519, so Pam and Paul. You started your presentation by repeating some of the very disturbing, troubling comments that had been made by Mr. McVety. I wondered if you could talk about whether those comments caused harm and damage in the LGBTQ, the queer and trans community, and what that looked like.

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: Pam, do you want to go first? I'll talk about the freedom of expression issues.

Ms. Pam Hrick: Certainly. I'm happy to start. Of course it causes harm. Of course it does. We have somebody who is being given quite a platform from which to express his very bigoted views. Paul will talk a little bit about the freedom of expression rights not being limitless in our society, which is something that I think has been lost in public discourse over the last little while in general.

When we hear public figures like Mr. McVety express, espouse those views—those homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic views—and we see at the same time the close relationship that he has seemed to form with our Premier, whose government has, in the middle of a pandemic, in a bill that has nothing to do with the accreditation of colleges or universities, ostensibly, slipped in a schedule before any sort of non-political process or accreditation has even been commenced, let alone completed, it sends quite a signal to members of our community about our value, our worth, and, quite frankly, what this government thinks of us when we raise concerns like this and we hear members of this government effectively dismissing them.

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: Just to follow up, I'm going to take up the invitation about critical thinking here, because I want to paint the picture really clearly for this committee about what the issues are. Nobody has asked to shut down Canada Christian College here. What The 519 is asking for is to take out schedule 2 from this omnibus bill which has nothing to do with keeping Ontarians safe. It is simply to take it out from this process and allow the accreditation process to follow its course.

Second, what we are talking about is granting the right to an institution to issue degrees and therefore have a power that is reserved for the government to exercise in the public interest. That's what we are talking about here. If we want to have a 21st-century economy in this province, that has to be accessible to all Ontarians. It cannot be withheld on the basis of discriminatory policies, and that is what Canada Christian College stands for.

We're not just talking about Mr. McVety's personal views; we're talking about the policy of this college. It says in its code of conduct that all staff, faculty and students are to "refrain from practices that are biblically condemned." It says that you have to have a letter from a pastor before you can get into this college. How many

Ontarians would be able to pass that bar? And that is the problem.

If we are trying to build an economy, that has to have access for all Ontarians, particularly the vulnerable groups in this province. Education is a right that cannot be withheld on discriminatory grounds. This is not about Mr. McVety's personal views or his expression. They are odious, and they create a toxic environment for his staff, for his students, for his faculty and all the people who would participate in Canada Christian College.

But on top of that, the government should not be granting licence when being a degree-granting institution is a privilege in this society. It is a privilege that is granted, and it is a privilege that must be exercised in the public interest in accordance with human rights principles. So with the greatest of respect, we need to be critical about what issues are in play. They are not about Mr. McVety's views; they are about what is good for the public here in Ontario, and, with respect, Canada Christian College is not going to make Ontarians safer.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for that response. The government has indicated that they won't enact schedule 2 if Canada Christian College doesn't pass the PEQAB process. Do you think that that addresses the concerns that you've raised?

Mr. Paul Jonathan Sagui: Respectfully, they wouldn't have had to sneak this into the omnibus legislation if they, in good faith, were trying to follow the PEQAB process. There is no reason for this legislation to be part of a broader bill—which we will not comment on the merits of—to keep Ontarians safe. If they were true to their word, they would take this out, full stop.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: MPP Glover?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry, I'm just going to stop the time here for a moment so you don't eat up into it. MPP Glover, before you begin, can you please confirm that you are MPP Glover and that you are present and in Ontario.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, I'm MPP Glover, and I'm present and in Ontario. How much time is left on the clock, Madam Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute and 42 seconds. You may begin.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'll direct my question, then, to Mr. DiCarlo. Thank you for reciting your quite extensive academic background, including your family and everything. I assume that you're trying to establish yourself as a smart person who has got two kids and a dog.

But my question is actually on the difference between freedom of speech and hate speech. One of the things that Mr. McVety did is that he invited Mr. Geert Wilders, who is a Dutch parliamentarian who is known for saying that he doesn't hate Muslims but he hates Islam. I'll just read a quote here: "On Monday, Mr. Wilders is the marquee speaker at an invitation-only—"

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

Mr. Chris Glover: How many seconds, Madam Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Forty-five.

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Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Let's see. Mr. McVety said, "We're all for freedom of religion, but when its mission is a hostile takeover, well, that's a different story. Islam is not just a religion, it's a political and cultural system as well, and we know that Christians, Jews and Hindus don't have the same mandate for a hostile takeover."

My question, Mr. DiCarlo, is: Does that constitute hate speech?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: No. That constitutes an opinion. If we're going to call that hate speech, then everything Sam Harris says is Islamophobic and hatred.

Mr. Chris Glover: Right. Is there a continuum between words, actions and violence?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: There can be a continuum. What a lot of society doesn't understand is the distinction—

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

We'll now turn to the government for the next round of questions. MPP Kusendova, you may begin. You have seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Before I ask my questions, I would just like to state a few things for the record, because I'm getting a little bit tired of being accused of being a homophobe, an Islamophobe or a racist by my colleagues in the opposition.

This Premier has been unequivocal in condemning racism and hatred in all its forms. This Premier has actually marched and participated in a Pride Parade. Members of our caucus and our ministers have raised the Pride flag, as well as the trans flag, at Queen's Park. The Premier recently, in August, announced the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity to help him in guiding his policy with the voices of young people to ensure that our policies and our processes are equitable.

Furthermore, our Minister of Education, Minister Lecce, has been a leader in condemning all forms of racism, including anti-Black racism, especially here in my region of Peel. He's the first minister to appoint a new leader in this direction. It's really troubling to keep on hearing our members of the opposition attack our government and, frankly, tell us we're racist.

Also, another phenomenon that is currently happening on our campuses, which is an alarming phenomenon, is that Conservative campus clubs are being rejected and are not being given club status. Only left-leaning campus clubs are being approved. This is a phenomenon that is very familiar to many people.

Actually, I wanted to ask this question to Dr. DiCarlo. You are a professor at the University of Toronto. I graduated from the University of Toronto. When I was a student, there was not a Conservative campus club that I was able to join. Instead, I joined the Polish students' club, and I had some opportunities for networking there.

I wanted to ask you: Do you think it is an alarming trend to see that Conservative campus clubs are being denied status and a voice at our universities because the voice may not be one that is popular?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Yeah, for sure. That trend has been happening since the 1980s, really. I've been noticing it, along with the way in which faculty are hired as well. Just go to any sociology, English, philosophy—go to any of these departments anywhere in Canada or the US and say, “Who are your right-leaning professors?” and you won't find a whole lot of them.

When universities brag about diversity, they're talking about diversity of students. They're not talking about diversity of thought. There's a lot that has happened to universities—and colleges, for that matter—where those who are in positions of power tend to hire like-minded individuals.

We've lost a lot of plurality and diversity within our higher education institutions, and that's sad, that's unfortunate to see, because we lose the capacity to teach our students, then, that there are going to be differences of opinion. We've forgotten how to practise what C. S. Lewis called the art of disagreement, and that's unfortunate. Yes, I have been seeing that trend. Even though I might disagree with some of the ideas and the thoughts and the basic philosophies of some of these more right-wing organizations, I don't think we have the right to silence them. As much as that might pain us, we need to offer a forum in which to intelligently discuss these ideas.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you.

One more alarming trend that I have been noticing, for example, is the public endorsement during our 2018 election. The elementary teachers' association publicly endorsed the NDP. As educators, whether it comes to elementary school, high school or, frankly, university, we should offer our students and our young people a diversity of opinions. With a public endorsement of one specific political party, do you think that this is alarming for a union that should be representing teachers who, frankly, might have all kinds of political views, not just left-leaning views?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Yes, we've known since the 1960s that in higher education, and even amongst grade schools and high schools, a lot of educators tend to swing left. We know that. And that's fine; there's nothing wrong with that, provided there's an element of fairness there and balance.

Really, that's what it comes down to. Are we offering oppositions the chance to be heard, the chance to have discussions, to offer plurality and diversity of views? If not, it doesn't seem fair, and it seems that the scales are tipping maybe too heavily to one side than another. I think it's really important that we get back to understanding that there are going to be differences of opinion, even if we don't like what those opinions are. That's the nature of living in a free and democratic society.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you very much.

I'd like to direct some of my comments to Pauline, as she has stated that she is representing the Black community's entrepreneurs and business people. I've spoken to many constituents in my riding of Mississauga Centre, and part of our work as the government of Ontario is to reduce some burdensome red tape and allow our businesses to thrive, especially with a market down south which has less

red tape and is more welcoming to our small businesses. Can you tell us how this bill will help businesses and entrepreneurs in Ontario?

Ms. Pauline Christian: I think that, as you have said previously, we have to be more open to putting intentional bills in place that will create universal opportunity for people, whether they are Black, green, yellow or blue.

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

Ms. Pauline Christian: I think most of my kids—my kids went to university in the States. And the reason for that is I am a Christian, and in the States they're more open to have our culture, our kids be the best they can be.

I think that if we do what we want to do in stopping Dr. McVety's university—I have listened to all the conversations, from Dr. Christopher right across. We are doing ourselves a disservice. We have to provide an opportunity where opportunities will be there for Black, white, brown and yellow. That's why, for me, I paid millions of dollars to send my kids down south. We need to ensure that these kinds of bills, providing opportunities for those who think differently, will stand up in our community.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. That's all the time we have for this round. We'll now turn to the independent Green Party member for four and a half minutes. MPP Schreiner, you may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair. My next round of questioning I would like to direct to The 519, and specifically to Paul, if that's okay, Pam. I was hoping that Paul could elaborate a bit on the legal issues at stake in the Trinity Western case and how they directly apply to Canada Christian College.

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: Thank you for the question, member Schreiner. In the Trinity Western case, they were seeking accreditation from a regulatory body, very similar to what's at stake here, to open up a law school. What those regulatory bodies found was that the admissions policy that Trinity Western had, which is very similar to the code of conduct that Canada Christian College had, was discriminatory; it would exclude vulnerable populations from the law school that Trinity Western University wanted to open. So because legal education is an important right and an important privilege in this society, the regulator said that we can't allow a school to exclude people from this important public interest, and that's what the courts affirmed, all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I want to make this clear for the members of this committee and the Legislature: This is the law of the country. The law of the country is educational institutions cannot exclude people. So, with respect, I'll turn to the comments by other witnesses. What we're talking about here with Canada Christian College is an institution that will exclude people. It says in its code of conduct you are to “refrain from practices that are biblically condemned.” You are supposed to have a letter from a pastor to even be able to get into this college. Which Muslims, which queer people, which other people from various backgrounds, from various beliefs—atheists, like one of my colleagues on this witness panel has said—would be able to get into this college? That is the problem.

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That is the law of this land. If you are going to expand education rights, you better make it accessible, because in Ontario we do not exclude people. This is what we're talking about in this pandemic: We don't want to leave anyone behind. How do you keep people safe and how do you make sure that people are able to recover from this pandemic if you're going to leave them out of a public right such as higher education? That's what's relevant here, member Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I just want to be clear, given the nature of some of this conversation, that this isn't to deal with free speech or academic freedom; this is really clearly about discriminatory practices in the admission of students that essentially violate human rights non-discrimination laws.

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: That's absolutely correct. Everything that you've heard otherwise is a smokescreen for what Canada Christian College stands for. Everything that you've heard about free speech in the context of academic freedom—nobody is disputing that Mr. McVety can go on and spout his hate.

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

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: As long as he stays within the bounds of the Ontario Human Rights Code, he can spout what he wants to spout. The problem when he spouts that hate is he has obligations as an employer to not create a toxic environment for his employees, he has an obligation for his students to not create a toxic educational environment, and his institution has an obligation to not discriminate against potential students, faculty and staff who would participate in his institution. That's his legal obligation. The government should not be giving him a licence if he is violating the law, which he clearly does with the policies that his educational institution stands for.

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

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I was going to ask: Do you see discrimination in hiring practices as well as admission practices?

Mr. Paul Jonathan Saguil: Very clearly, yes. That's the time that I have, but yes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you for that. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. At this point, I'd like to thank our presenters. It's been a very informative discussion. You may step down and you are released from committee.

MISSISSAUGA BOARD OF TRADE
ONTARIO CONFEDERATION OF
UNIVERSITY FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS
CANADIAN FEDERATION OF
STUDENTS—ONTARIO

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to our next set of presenters, starting with the Mississauga

Board of Trade. Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. David Wojcik: My name is David Wojcik. I'm the CEO at the Mississauga Board of Trade. I feel right at home here having my MPPs with us: MPP Kusendova, Sheref Sabawy. I see MPP Deepak Anand—oh, there he is. I had thought he left, and I was starting to feel slighted in some way. Let me get my item up here; it's a good thing it's not seven minutes long. There's MPP Anand. Good to see you, Deepak.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, on behalf of the Mississauga Board of Trade, I would like to thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee today on Bill 213, Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. Since being established in 1961, MBOT has played an important leadership role serving and representing the interests of business of all sizes and sectors in our community.

Mississauga is Canada's sixth-largest city and the third-largest in Ontario, with a population of close to 800,000 residents and over 50,000 businesses employing more than 440,000 people, including 60 Fortune 500 Canadian headquarters. Mississauga's economy is very diverse. We have businesses in virtually every sector, and Mississauga is a net importer of jobs. While COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on Mississauga, like other parts of the province, we are confident that a rebuild of the local economy is doable and that Mississauga businesses can thrive once again.

We are particularly concerned about the region being placed in the grey lockdown zone, meaning many businesses are completely closed and others very restricted in their commercial activities. This is one of the key concerns for our Mississauga Economic Recovery Group, otherwise known as MERG. This is a six-sector initiative with Mississauga's best and brightest presidents and CEOs at the table to bring pre-COVID prosperity to Mississauga and Ontario.

The Mississauga Board of Trade has been providing leadership to support our business community during the COVID-19 pandemic and working with the federal, provincial and municipal governments to make sure their programs and supports meet the needs of business and workers during this unprecedented time. We've also worked with our colleagues at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the city of Mississauga's economic development office.

We'd like to compliment the federal and provincial governments for important programs implemented to support business. The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Canada Emergency Business Account and Canada Emergency Response Benefit have all been welcome programs and much-needed income support for both businesses and workers. We are optimistic that the new Canada commercial rent relief benefit will hopefully flow soon and help businesses to cover rent costs.

The government of Ontario should be complimented on initiatives around tax payment deferrals, WSIB premiums, regulatory changes and recently announcing \$600 million

in a program for businesses hardest hit by COVID-19 restrictions to help cover the costs of property taxes and utilities in regions like Peel. However, the Ontario government must do more to support businesses, particularly those in locked-down regions. Deferring tax payments and offering credit does not help with cash flow. Only direct financial assistance will help keep these businesses alive, and the government must act quickly to move regions out of grey lockdown and back into a situation where they can capably operate their business with in-person service in a responsible and health-conscious way.

But today, we are here to address Bill 213, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. Any bill designed to provide help and support, overhaul regulations and reduce red tape is always welcomed by the business community. This act, like Bill 215, is designed to continue on the path of regulatory reform, red tape reduction and more efficient processes in government to help support business.

Reform on the Business Corporations Act, including the repeal of the minimum Canadian citizen requirement on boards, is welcomed and in line with the recently approved policy request at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Changes to the Forfeited Corporate Property Act, Insurance Act, Mining Act, Planning Act and Ontario Energy Board Act will modernize these important statutes.

We are pleased to see amendments to the Private Career Colleges Act, as we see these career colleges as instrumental to the necessary training and skills development needed for the workforce today, and in support of skills upgrades for thousands of students in Ontario. Changes to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to exempt universities from paying development charges are welcome, especially as sites like the University of Toronto Mississauga continue to work on expansion opportunities in the future.

We encourage the government to continue to support business in Ontario by continually relooking at its programs and services and ensure they meet the needs of SMEs going forward. Again, on behalf of the Mississauga Board of Trade, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today.

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

We'll now turn to our next presenter, from the Ontario congregation of university faculty associations. State your names for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Jenny Ahn: My name is Jenny Ahn. I'm the incoming executive director of OCUFA, which is actually the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. With me this afternoon is Mark Rosenfeld, the interim executive director, and David Seljak, who I will introduce in more detail shortly.

OCUFA is the provincial voice for university faculties in Ontario. We represent 17,000 full-time and contract professors and academic librarians in 30 member associations right across this great province.

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Next, David Seljak will be presenting, and then after his presentation, David, Mark and myself will welcome your

questions together. I would like to introduce to you David Seljak. He is the president of St. Jerome's University Academic Staff Association, an OCUFA member. He's also the professor and chair of the department of religious studies in the faculty of arts at the University of Waterloo. In addition to this, David has written several reports for the multiculturalism and human rights program at the Department of Canadian Heritage and has served as a resource to the Ontario Human Rights Commission as it has revised its policy on "creed," which is to say, the freedom of religion.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about our concerns regarding Canada Christian College, and now I'll invite David to provide OCUFA's remarks.

Dr. David Seljak: Thank you. OCUFA is opposed to the government of Ontario extending university status and the ability to grant bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees to Canada Christian College. In urging the committee to remove schedule 2 from Bill 213, we wish to make three points.

First, OCUFA opposes the privatization of post-secondary education. OCUFA is concerned about emerging efforts to privatize post-secondary education in Ontario, and to give private institutions degree-granting privileges. These efforts have been shown to undermine the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education. Universities in Ontario follow strict standards to guarantee quality, consistency and accessibility. The guidelines and accountability processes by which Ontario's public institutions are bound often do not apply to private institutions. Let us make no mistake: Canada Christian College would not meet these benchmarks. Granting it university status would amount to lying to students about the quality of their education and the value of their costly degrees.

Second, granting Canada Christian College university status violates Ontario values. Giving private colleges like Canada Christian College degree-granting privileges is a case in point for how privatization erodes the standards upheld by public institutions. In its leadership, culture and curriculum, Canada Christian College violates the values enshrined in the Ontario Human Rights Code, something no public institution would do.

For example, we are concerned by the statement of faith and code of conduct that are required as a condition of employment for instructors. This requirement bans free speech on a number of issues and constitutes a violation of academic freedom, a principle upheld at all Ontario universities. In addition, the institution's code of conduct includes requirements that violate the Human Rights Code's protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and identity. If Canada Christian College wishes to join Ontario's public universities, it must respect the values of the people of Ontario as outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, Canada Christian College does not meet even this minimum standard. Its president, Charles McVety, openly promotes Islamophobic, transphobic and homophobic views. For example, Mr. McVety has called Islam a danger to Canadian society. He co-hosted an event

featuring Geert Wilders, an extremist Dutch politician known for attacking Islam and Muslim immigrants. Defending the invitation, Mr. McVety said that Islam had “a mandate for a hostile takeover” of the west. His promotion of conspiracy theories about Islam violates the values of multiculturalism of which Canada and Ontario are rightly proud.

Given the role that Mr. McVety plays in running the Canada Christian College, it is not surprising but still alarming that his discriminatory and hateful views also inform the curriculum at this private institution. For example, the college’s courses on world religions such as Hinduism and Islam instruct Christians on how to convert Hindus and Muslims to Christianity. The assumption behind these courses is that these religions are both faulty and inferior to Christianity. Does the government of Ontario want to be seen as putting its stamp of approval on this kind of Christian chauvinism?

Third, granting university status to Canada Christian College would misinform students about the quality of education and the value of the degree they will receive.

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

Dr. David Seljak: To start, OCUFA is alarmed by the lack of transparency in the accreditation process for Canada Christian College. As such, we have begun our own research, and what we found is alarming. Only a handful of the instructors at Canada Christian College have advanced degrees. Many claim titles and credentials they do not have. In fact, stated bluntly, Canada Christian College is not a university and is in no position to begin to offer university-level degrees. Its faculty are seriously underqualified and its curriculum would not pass muster at any Ontario university.

Calling Canada Christian College a university misinforms students as to the nature and quality of the education they receive as well as the worth of the diploma they will be granted. Moreover, it communicates to Ontario that its government is okay with the college’s message of religious intolerance as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation and identity. Respectfully, we call on this committee—

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

We’ll now turn to our third presenter from the Canadian Federation of Students, Ontario. Please state your name for the record and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Sorry, before you begin, you look familiar. I think we might have met in the past.

Mx. Brandon Rhéal Amyot: We may have. Aaniin. My name is Brandon. I use they/them pronouns. I am the constituency commissioner for the Canadian Federation of Students, Ontario.

Today, I’m here to represent the 350,000 students across the province who are members of the Canadian Federation of Students. Many of the MPPs on this committee and in the Legislature represent ridings of members of our organization: OCAD, U of T, the University of Guelph, Trent etc. Specifically, I’m here to talk about

students’ views on schedule 2 of Bill 213, which falls within the scope of the federation’s work as it relates to post-secondary education.

We have two key concerns about this legislation: first, the integrity of Ontario’s post-secondary education system; and second, the recognition and support of 2SLGBTQ people and Muslim people, as well as climate science.

We’re concerned that in this process, students have been left out of the conversation. That’s why I’m here today. Being myself a two-spirit queer student who attends Lakehead University in Orillia, Ontario, and who believes in the strength and importance of post-secondary education as well as the support of human rights and the various communities that attend our institutions, it’s been made very clear to us as students that this post-secondary institution, Canada Christian College, which you are attempting to award university status to, is not up to par with what our expectations are in terms of a post-secondary institution. It by no means meets the standards of a university, based on its current policies and current procedures as well as the rhetoric of its president, which cannot be disconnected from this. It does not meet the standards of a post-secondary institution that I would want to attend or most students would want to attend.

The second part is about the concern around recognition and support for various communities in Ontario and in our post-secondary institutions. We have seen harmful rhetoric coming from the college’s walls by its hosting various presenters who are not consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code in terms of protected status. It’s not consistent with educational standards and it’s not consistent with what we really need to be seeing right now during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our ask here is very simple today, and that is to withdraw schedule 2 of this legislation.

This act is supposed to be in response to a global pandemic. Students have been heavily impacted by this pandemic. We’ve seen increased mental health issues and a decrease in the quality of our education. We’ve also seen economic hardship and a lack of social cohesion and social connection. These are what we should be trying to address in legislation like this and in other policies and legislative processes.

We’re here today to encourage the following of a process that already exists, the PEQAB process, which gives or does not give powers to different institutions that are requesting that sort of status.

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The decision to implement schedule 2 into this legislation without the process and without proper consultation of students, particularly students who are impacted by the rhetoric of the institution and its president and various staff members, has a direct impact. It weakens our confidence not only in post-secondary education, but also in government processes. It raises concerns about the safety of students, not only at Canada Christian College but across the province.

This institution has spent years vilifying people like me, and my friends who are Muslims. It has spent years

denying the reality of climate change and the history of our earth, geologically and anthropologically speaking. We're expressing that students do not wish to see a backslide in the quality of our education, and we want the government to stand up for human rights, for the LGBTQ2 community, for Muslims, for climate science and for what's right. That's why we're making this recommendation today.

I thank you for hearing me today and for letting us speak about this issue. I am the first in my family to attend post-secondary education, and I have not been around all that long, but I have learned how important it is to a community and to people. That's why we're here today: to express that we want to continue to strengthen the quality of our post-secondary education, we want to strengthen human rights, and we want to ensure that in this pandemic, we're not only providing direct support to students, post-secondary institutions and communities, but building for better once this pandemic has been taken on. Thank you, meegwetch, for your time.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. At this point, we'll now turn to the government for the first round of questions. MPP Skelly, you may begin. You have seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: My first question is to David—am I pronouncing it correctly? Is it “Wojcik?”

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You might have to unmute your microphone.

Mr. David Wojcik: Very close, MPP Skelly. It's “Wojcik,” like those [*inaudible*] you used to get with your bank statements at the end of the month.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Mr. Wojcik, it has been tough. This past year, of course, has been tough, and you're probably hearing the horror stories that we all are hearing from our constituents. We're keeping our fingers crossed, of course, that we can quickly not only get the vaccine to Canada, to Ontario, but then distribute it, so that we can move forward with our recovery process.

In the meantime, as I mentioned, you are probably hearing from many of your stakeholders who are suffering through COVID-19. I want you to speak to some of the specific challenges that you think that small businesses in particular, if you will, will be facing once we actually get beyond to whatever a post-epidemic actually looks like. What do you think are going to be the biggest challenges that small businesses are going to face in terms of looking forward past the COVID-19 pandemic?

Mr. David Wojcik: Well, we've done a couple of surveys talking about that: What is the immediate need, and what is the sustainable concern? In both cases, they talk about cash; they talk about cash flow and they talk about regulatory burden—and of course, inconsistency right now, through COVID, so once we get past COVID, returning to consistency would certainly be helpful. But the main concern for the small businesses is cash flow and a return to revenue, the amount of time it's going to take them to return to pre-COVID levels of revenue.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Cash flow and just even long-term planning: When we were going through the SCOFEA

hearings back in the summer—I know you appeared before our committee—a member of my community from Hamilton was talking about the recovery process not ending in January, but probably an 18-month to two-year recovery process looking forward, trying to actually get back to some sort of normalcy, whatever that looks like.

You mentioned regulatory burden, and that is something that our government has focused on in many of the bills put forward, including the bill that we're talking about today. To the skeptics who think it's just jargon and really has no role to play in any sort of an economic recovery program or plan, can you speak to the real impact of regulatory burden, those cumbersome regulations that needn't be there but are, and hamper business?

Mr. David Wojcik: We've worked very closely with Minister Sarkaria on red tape reduction. We had him very shortly after he was named as a minister, and one of those things that we said to the minister was, there's no point in reducing regulatory burden on things that don't matter anymore. So don't tell us you're going to take out things like, “You can't hitch your horse to a fence post outside a bar Sundays at 2 p.m.” That doesn't do anybody any good, taking one of those out and then adding something in. He assured us that he wasn't going to do that, and he has kept his word.

The other thing that's been very important is his work across platforms. We find that inter-ministerial regulatory burden, where one ministry wants you to do one thing and another ministry wants you to do something different, has been problematic, and he's worked very hard to do that. Also, cross-governmental issues: He's worked very hard on that, looking at things that are at the federal level and the provincial level and how they might conflict or they might be in duplication.

So we've seen some really good progress in those areas, and as I said, we're in touch with the minister on a regular basis in order to continue that good work.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Madam Chair, how much time do we have left?

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you. MPP Anand, I think, is going to be splitting my time with me. There he is.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. I just have to stop the clock here because we need to confirm. MPP Anand, can you confirm that you are MPP Deepak Anand and that you are present in Ontario?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Yes, Madam Chair. It is always nice to see you in that chair. Yes, I am MPP Deepak Anand. I am in my community office in Mississauga, which is in Ontario. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. It is a very comfortable chair. You now may begin. You have three minutes.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I will be asking the question to my friend David at the Mississauga Board of Trade, who is doing an incredible job not just for Mississauga, but Mississauga as part of Ontario. When Mississauga grows, Ontario grows. So thank you, Mississauga Board of Trade, for doing that.

You touched upon something to do with the cash flow and return to the revenue for the small business, but it is again the same issues with the government as well, because government is made of people. The government also is going to have a similar issue with the revenue. We are already in a deficit, and we're going to be in a bigger deficit going forward.

David, there are a couple of things which I want to ask you. The first one: What is your suggestion in terms of policy advice, something which we can change, revise or add to get to that recovery—the time is now—rather than waiting? We need to plan now. We have to act now. And that should be without adding tax burden to the residents. That's number one. Number two: Can you touch upon—many times I hear many other parties talking about, “Tax the rich. Tax the rich.” Would that be a choice also? What is the problem if you tax the rich and just assume that the rich leave this province, [*inaudible*] can be. Back to you, sir.

Mr. David Wojcik: To address your first point: Good news, help is on the way for our friends at Queen's Park: our Mississauga Economic Recovery Group—I mentioned that in my opening—otherwise known as MERG. It's six sectors. We're looking at 36 of the best and brightest CEOs and presidents in Mississauga that—

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

Mr. David Wojcik: —are working tirelessly on bringing recommendations to the government on how to return Mississauga, and indeed Ontario, to pre-COVID levels.

To answer your second question about taxing the rich, I guess that depends on how you define “the rich.” I know that people that have means are very good at contributing to the community. We have many, many charities in Mississauga. I think we have every charity and not-for-profit in the city of Mississauga, and those organizations benefit generously from gifts from people with means. So while I think everyone should pay their fair share, I think if you unfairly tax people that do have excess cash you may actually cut off some of the—

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

We'll now turn to the independent members. However, before we begin, we just wanted to confirm: MPP Fraser, I believe, has joined us. Can you please confirm that you are MPP Fraser and that you are present and in Ontario? Oh, he has gone off the call. All right, so then we'll turn to MPP Schreiner for four and a half minutes. You may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank all three groups for coming today and presenting. I'm going direct my first questions to the Canadian Federation of Students. I love meeting with the U of G chapter. One of the issues that's been brought up related to schedule 2 and Canada Christian College is their discriminatory practice of admitting students that requires a letter from a clergy and also require students to adhere to biblical practices. I'm just wondering: From a student perspective, what does it make a student feel like knowing that the government would like

to see a college with discriminatory admittance practices become a university?

Mx. Brandon Rhéal Amyot: Thank you for the question, MPP Schreiner. That is really what we're here to talk about today: discriminatory practices. As a student, I should be judged on the merit of my application, not the merit of my beliefs. When I applied to go to university, I went through the universities portal; it simply reviewed my transcripts, and I was accepted or denied based on those transcripts. I didn't have to go through all these other processes. Of course, students who are applying for certain programs might have to add additional application forms based on what the criteria are, if they're going into social work, for example.

As a student, I think that this sends a message that we're not supported by the post-secondary institution in terms of having to go through the process of getting a letter from your clergy member, if you have a clergy member. For me, I wouldn't be able to go through that process. I don't have a clergy member. I also believe, based on perhaps their interpretation of biblical values, that I wouldn't meet those biblical values. What that says to me is that this institution is not compliant with the rights that we fought so hard for, not only as students but as Ontarians, as people who are deserving of human rights, respect and celebration. That's the message that it sends to me, that's the message that it sends to students, and that's what we've been hearing from our members and from people across the province.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you for that. Likewise, I'd like to just ask the university faculty association: There have been concerns raised, likewise, that Canada Christian College employs discriminatory hiring practices when it comes to its faculty members, and I'm wondering if this is a concern of yours and how it will affect faculty across the province.

Dr. David Seljak: If I could speak to that: Yes, it's a grave concern to us. Ontario does have Christian colleges and universities. I teach at one, St. Jerome's. When I applied for my position, I was never asked about my sexual orientation or identity.

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

Dr. David Seljak: I was not asked for a letter from a pastor. These practices at Canada Christian College are not the practices of Ontario's public universities, even those with religious commitments, and they are completely unacceptable to OCUFA and to all Ontario universities.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to be clear: Your concern is not that it's a Christian college, but that it employs discriminatory practices would be your concern?

Dr. David Seljak: I know many Christians who would be deeply offended by the requirement to get a letter from a pastor to apply to a university, even a Christian university. Christians are independent thinkers. They don't need approval from a priest or a minister to apply to a university or to say what they think. I'm speaking now as a professor at a Christian-identified university in Ontario.

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. Who would like to begin? MPP Lindo, you have the floor.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to everybody for your presentations. I'm actually just going to go focus on Brandon. Brandon, I wanted to say thank you for all of your advocacy. I have been seeing it, I've been seeing you and I've been seeing what you represent.

I've had a number of students and folks who are writing on behalf of students reach out to me in the last few days, especially since the motion was passed on Monday, and say to me that the signal of schedule 2 made queer students in particular feel less valued, despite the amount of fighting they've been doing on campuses to feel included on those campuses. I've had a number of students reach out and ask if there's any possibility of pulling schedule 2.

What I'd like to ask you, with that as the backdrop, is whether or not that is also what you are hearing from students, because you are bringing the students' voice to this hearing, and what the impact would be on the lived realities of queer students on university campuses, not just at Canada Christian College but across universities in Ontario, if the schedule was pulled and the government made good on the vote that happened on Monday.

Mx. Brandon Rhéal Amyot: Thank you for the question. We know that students already face oppressive barriers in communities and in post-secondary education. If we were to move forward with this legislation as planned, the government would be sending a message that they don't support the students who are doing the work on the ground to change those systems, to make communities more equitable, inclusive and celebratory of our identities and experiences. Passing schedule 2 would very likely embolden the actors who would seek to restrict or remove rights altogether for students like me.

However, if we were to see the government pull schedule 2 and comply with that symbolic motion that passed the other day, it would send a message that the province does not support Islamophobia, transphobia, anti-climate science, anti-evidence-based education. It would send a really strong message because it's not enough to just say that we don't support something. We have to actively condemn it and work on it.

Especially as we've seen during the pandemic—it's made our lives even more challenging. The last thing we need to be doing right now is making things harder for queer, trans, two-spirit and Muslim students. What we need to be doing is supporting them.

We can't legitimize this behaviour. We have to follow the proper processes and we need to stand up for students. That's what I'm hearing from students across the province. That's what I'm hearing from community members in the post-secondary sphere.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Brandon. Now over to MPP Fife.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. I just want to echo: Brandon, a very good presentation. Canadian students are in good hands.

I want to say a quick hello to David. We've seen a lot of each other on Zoom. We're still working very hard to try to make Bill 215 a stronger piece of legislation and try to get rid of schedule 2 of Bill 213 so it's focused on businesses, which is what it's supposed to be about.

I want to say hello to Jenny, Mark and David. David, I want to go quickly to you because your presentation echoed Queen's University's earlier this morning, especially around the lack of transparency in the accreditation process. The government is saying that they are removing the political side of giving Canada Christian College this new accreditation. Queen's University argued that this drops down the level of the educational experience and also addresses some of those discriminatory employment pieces.

I appreciated your presentation, but I want to give you another chance, please, to make it very clear to the government why schedule 2 of Bill 213 is in violation of the Human Rights Code and will likely actually end up in the courts down the line.

Dr. David Seljak: In Ontario universities, even religious ones, our public institutions serve the whole public. They do not exclude people on the basis of their sexual orientation or identity; Canada Christian College does. They do not promote religious intolerance; Canada Christian College does. Ontario universities are accountable to the public, whom they serve; Canada Christian College isn't.

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Let's talk about the quality of education, for example. I looked at the curriculum; I studied it in depth. Since I'm in religious studies, I have some expertise in the area. First of all, President McVety promotes creationism, which calls into question the college's ability to offer a degree in science. Why not have the University of Toronto's department of physics start teaching astrology? Secondly, in the counselling section, there is a course on spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is an evangelical Protestant practice of discerning demons and angels in the world that affect our decisions. So one doesn't look at the psychological processes or the problems of the client; one tells them that there are angels and demons. There are demons that are making them sick.

You can imagine the harm that this could do in terms of counselling. How do you ask the Ontario Psychological Association, for example, to accredit some counsellor who is practising spiritual warfare? One wonders what kind of job Canada Christian College is preparing students for when it teaches them about demonology and warfare against demons.

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

Dr. David Seljak: Finally, the faculty do not have proper credentials. Very simply, even President McVety, who calls himself a doctor, only has degrees from Canada Christian College, which, in 1983, was stripped of its ability to offer bachelors by William Davis—by the Progressive Conservative government of the day—because of these very concerns about the lack of quality and accountability.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. If there are no—

Dr. David Seljak: Then I could go on about the human rights thing, but I think I've—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): All right. If there are no further questions, we'll turn it over to the government.

Before we begin, though, I would just like to confirm: MPP Amarjot Sandhu, can you please confirm that you are present, that you are MPP Sandhu and that you are in Ontario?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Hello, Chair. It's MPP Amarjot Sandhu calling from Brampton, Ontario. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): And are you in—

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Yes. Brampton.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Ah, thank you.

At this point, we'll turn to the government. MPP Kusendova, you may begin. You have seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Hi. Good afternoon, and thank you so much to all of our presenters.

Today, I would like to direct my questions to Dave from the Mississauga Board of Trade. It's lovely to see you, Dave. I want to thank you and your organization for the excellent work that you're doing on behalf of businesses in Mississauga and advocating for various issues. Your webinars and your series are, I think, very helpful to the small businesses. I know recently, you had Minister Sarkaria on for a webinar, as well as Minister Surma. You're doing a great job, and you're frankly doing what you should be doing: You're engaging with different government members and different ministers, so thank you for that.

You talked a little bit about MERG. That's very interesting. Also, I know that, together with the city of Mississauga, you have launched #MississaugaMade to help support local businesses, products and services made in Mississauga. Can you talk a little bit more about the MERG program and why it's important now, more than ever, to support local businesses?

Mr. David Wojcik: Well, the MERG project initiative is important because it's focusing on a number of issues that are affecting not only small businesses, but all businesses. We know that businesses within the city of Mississauga are interdependent, so it's not good to pit business against business. We need to have all businesses functioning and open in Mississauga. We know that small businesses will support larger businesses, and we know that the larger businesses use small businesses for their services.

One of the things that MERG will be focusing on is, what are the tools that businesses need to return to those pre-COVID levels? We recognize that the government can't come up with all the money; we recognize that. But what we do recognize is that no matter what the stripe is, the government's responsibility is to create an environment that is good for businesses, and that's what we've advocated with the government. Certainly, reducing regulatory burden, that's creating an environment that is

beneficial for business. That's what we expect from governments at all orders of government, and we have four of them in Mississauga, as you know, so we look forward to that.

What MERG will be doing is they will be going outside of government agencies and looking for additional capital resources. How do we engage that? How do we engage innovation in Mississauga? How do we work with other organizations so that we're not, as we say, re-creating the wheel every time we come up with an idea? So we're working with the city of Mississauga's EDO, we're working with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, we're working with Life Sciences Ontario; we're working with a whole multitude of organizations in order to bring Mississauga back to pre-COVID levels.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you so much. Certainly, Ontario is known to be among the heaviest in terms of regulation in North America, and that's why, to date, our government has taken over 200 actions to cut red tape for businesses.

You talked about more tools for businesses and how to better support—so you're well aware, in Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover, which we recently uncovered, two key tools that I think will help support businesses in Mississauga are reducing the business education class tax permanently to 0.88% and a permanent reduction in the employer health tax. What do your members say about those two specific tools which will be instrumental in our recovery?

Mr. David Wojcik: Well, the employer health tax limit capping is extremely important for employers. Of course, any time that you can cap off taxation to a business is certainly beneficial for them.

The small business property tax rate that you're referencing, we're still yet to see that implemented. I know the city of Mississauga is looking forward to finding out how that's going to be financed before they implement it, because, of course, their funds are restricted in the amount that they can put forward. But that will certainly help small businesses in Mississauga to recover and protect their cash flow.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you. I'd like to pass it on to my colleague MPP Sabawy.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Sabawy, please unmute your mike and then you may begin.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, David. I'm happy to see you today as you have been working with all six MPPs from Mississauga multiple times, like we have. We have communication channels, and we are listening to the MBOT and the members of MBOT's feedback on how can we improve the business environment, as you said. As I mentioned, it's not only money, but it comes hand in hand with legislation, which can make the environment more appealing for businesses and help to alleviate some of the pressures on the businesses.

I would like to ask you, this Bill 213, which is removing some of the restrictions on businesses, how do you see this coming and how do you see this trend, and have you any advice, furthermore, for this type of legislation which can

help your members and all the small businesses in Mississauga, as we know that small businesses are the cornerstone of our economy?

Mr. David Wojcik: Well, I'll speak to one of the parts of the legislation, which has to do with removing some restrictions—

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

Mr. David Wojcik: —on corporations and the makeup of corporations. We recognize that there were some investments that may come into Ontario if the restrictions are lifted on the makeup of those businesses, and so, that is investment in Ontario, investment in Mississauga, that FDI movement, which we all require so desperately. Mississauga has been tremendous in this area, bringing in companies from Japan and Germany and Brazil into Mississauga under an FDI program. I think that particular item alone will stimulate investment in the city.

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Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, David. I really appreciate your taking the time to speak in front of the committee, and we appreciate your support all the time. We are all one—

Mr. David Wojcik: My pleasure. Good to see you all.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: David, I'm going to ask you a few questions, but I'm going to preface by saying it's unfortunate that business representatives like yourself—we haven't been able to focus these hearings on the supports that small businesses need, because schedule 2 has been such an unnecessary distraction.

I just want to say, and I'm asking this as a long-time small business owner myself: You were mentioning the need for direct financial support to help small businesses just get through this pandemic, because we know how crucial it is, not only to our communities but also to economic recovery, to make sure businesses are still in business. I know Quebec has a program offering grants up to \$15,000 to support small businesses. Do you have some thoughts around what are some of the direct financial supports that small businesses need to help, particularly in the lockdown areas, to just get through this pandemic and still be in business?

Mr. David Wojcik: Thank you, MPP Schreiner. We recognize your long-standing membership in the entrepreneurial camp, so for you, you understand exactly what is needed as far as funding. We applaud the provincial government for providing emergency funding, reducing areas of taxation, but there are things out there that many businesses have to maintain. It goes far beyond property taxes. They have websites that they have to maintain; they've got social media channels they have to maintain; they've got leases on photocopiers they have to maintain: all of these items, not to mention the amount of money that helps them pay their own mortgages and helps them pay their own utilities on a personal basis. There are all of these other costs that are involved that go far beyond the costs that they're being assisted with.

If we were to have a wish list and we were to say, "Can you help us with something else?", it would really be taking the laundry list or looking at the pre-COVID profit of these organizations and taking that into consideration. Not to say that the government should fund profits—we're not saying that—but the government should at least, especially in the lockdown areas, fund back, so that these businesses are not having to put more expenses on Visa or encumber their properties more or collapse their RRSPs early to support their business.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Can you expand a little bit more on the concerns around the lack of clarity around provincial funding for the business education tax? I've heard of municipalities interested in this, because almost every mayor or city councillor I talked to is like, "We're doing everything we can to keep our small businesses alive," but they're facing financial challenges as well.

Mr. David Wojcik: Yes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: And so the lack of clarity around funding is—at least I'm hearing—raising some concerns around how valuable that will be until the funding is clarified.

Mr. David Wojcik: Our city of Mississauga is preparing their budgets for the upcoming year. We just had the budget presentation from the city and the region, and of course this question comes up. Until they get numbers—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Forty seconds left.

Mr. David Wojcik: —until they get clarity on what this funding could possibly be, it's going to be very difficult for them to articulate that into small businesses within the city. Certainly that clarity in understanding when the funding is coming, understanding how much funding is coming, what's the formula, would certainly be helpful for the city, and then to articulate that to the small business community.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I know you represent businesses of all sizes, but can you talk about the importance of fairness for small businesses versus big box stores?

Mr. David Wojcik: Well, I've been asked this question by media many, many times, MPP. Of course, my feeling is that we have been advocating heavily—

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 Sattler, you may begin.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank all the presenters for joining us today and sharing your thoughts on Bill 213.

I had a question. I would be interested in hearing from both Brandon, on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Students, and also someone from OCUFA—maybe first OCUFA. But the question is, to your knowledge, are there other post-secondary institutions in Ontario that have the status of university and do not have to adhere to the Ontario Human Rights Code? And what does that convey to faculty and students when there is the prospect of an institution gaining the status of university and not having to adhere to the anti-discrimination and anti-hate provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code? Maybe OCUFA first.

Dr. Mark Rosenfeld: I was going to defer to David because of his expertise on the Ontario Human Rights Code. The short answer is no, but I'll defer to David.

Dr. David Seljak: I'll give the long answer, which is also no. There are Christian institutions and other institutions affiliated with a religious identity, but all of them embrace the values of the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as the multiculturalism act. None of them have these kinds of restrictions that are part of the Canada Christian College admissions and hiring practices.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Brandon, did you want to comment?

Mx. Brandon Rhéal Amyot: Similarly, I would answer, to my knowledge, no. If that was the case, I'm sure that the ministry and the province would have something to say about that. It's my understanding that St. Paul's, for example, is covered under the University of Ottawa and by SMA3. They can grant degrees as a result, and they're held accountable in that process because of the legislation the University of Ottawa is under. But this institution in question, Canada Christian College, does not fall within that same category. It has previously had degree-granting powers stripped, and it doesn't seem, from what we can tell and from research done by OCUFA and others, that this institution is up to the standards that we would expect of a university in 2020. That's why we're here today: to raise concern about that.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm going to turn it over to my colleague MPP Glover.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, MPP Sattler. I want to thank everybody for being here, first of all. And to David Wojcik, thank you for being here and representing the business community. It's absolutely vital that we do the right thing, because I know that 30% of businesses across the province are at risk, according to the Globe and Mail, and in my riding, I see even more.

Unfortunately, we've got schedule 2 in this bill as well, and I want to ask a couple of questions. I don't have too much time, so I want to ask a couple of questions about the PEQAB process. So Brandon and members of OCUFA, thank you for being here. My understanding is that even if the PEQAB rejects the Canada Christian College's application, that is not binding on the government, so the government can pass this legislation, and this could be binding. Can you one of you speak to the PEQAB process? Mark?

Mr. David Wojcik: I don't think that question is for me.

Mr. Chris Glover: Sorry, David. Do you know what? Let's have a conversation off-line.

Go ahead.

Dr. Mark Rosenfeld: The PEQAB process is supposed to be an academic integrity process where programs are reviewed. Academics and others who have expertise in the program proposal review it and ultimately decide whether it meets the standards of PEQAB, and then PEQAB makes a recommendation. So for example, if they say no, it's still up to the minister to approve or disapprove. Conceivably,

the minister can disapprove or approve whatever. Ultimately, the decision is with the minister himself or herself.

I know that there's some comparison to—"Well, what about OCAD? What about Algoma?" It's a totally different process. It's a comparison that is illegitimate. First of all, Algoma, when it did get independent status as a university, had already been granting degrees as part of the federated college of Laurentian University and, in 2008, there was also a separate bill; it wasn't buried in the clause of a bill dealing with something totally different. Similar with OCAD, it had been granting degrees since 2002 and changed its name in 2010. It was only recently in June 2020 that it could grant a whole range of degrees. They went through the PEQAB process, they went through the vetting process and it was approved by the individual ministers.

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This is totally different. Canada Christian College hasn't had PEQAB approval, and it was put in the legislation that they would be granted university status before they had gone through that process. So when you make that comparison and say, "Well, we're simply following what went beforehand," it's not the case.

Mr. Chris Glover: And when you see the political relationship between Charles McVety and Doug Ford, does it make you worry about the independence of the PEQAB process and the independence of the ultimate decision that's made?

Dr. Mark Rosenfeld: One can hope that the process will be independent. Yes, there are concerns there. I think if there is a situation where PEQAB says no and the minister says yes, then you're seeing a flawed process. We've already seen concerns about that process when they made a submission—

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

Dr. Mark Rosenfeld: —to PEQAB, then they submitted it again with 80 pages redacted or removed, which does create some concerns out there. But hope springs eternal. One can hope that the PEQAB process and the integrity of the evaluations will be in place.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. I don't think I have too much of my time left. I want to thank all of you for being here. This is an important bill, especially for businesses. I wish it did a lot more for businesses and I wish it didn't have schedule 2 taking up so much of the airspace in here. Thank you all for being here.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): At this point, I'd like to thank our presenters for their time and their presentations. You may step down. You are now released. Thank you very much.

CANADA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE AND
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL
STUDIES

KASPER TRANSPORTATION
MUSLIM SOCIETY OF GUELPH

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to our next set of presenters. We have Canada Christian

College and School of Graduate Theological Studies, we have Kasper Transportation and we have the Muslim Society of Guelph.

At this point, I'd like to call upon Canada Christian College and School of Graduate Theological Studies to please state your name for the record and then you may begin your presentation. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Reardon: My name is Michael Reardon, and I'm the academic dean of Canada Christian College and School of Graduate Theological Studies. I'm here today to speak in support of schedule 2 of Bill 213. Specifically, I'm here to implore the committee to protect the charter-guaranteed right of our faculty, staff, students and graduates related to procedural fairness and allow the college to pursue the same process that Algoma University and OCAD University underwent last year, despite our previous witness's allegations to the contrary.

Canada Christian College has been in operation for over 50 years. It currently has over 40 faculty members, 500 students and over 6,500 graduates. It is independently audited every year at a standard much higher than what is required for Canadian charity status.

Despite not being a publicly funded institution, we offer some of the most affordable tuition in the province, thus making degrees affordable and accessible to new Canadians. Despite what our critics may suggest, we've had graduates who received all of their degrees from Canada Christian College go on to further their education at top institutions, including Princeton University, the University of Toronto, Michigan State, Drew University and a host of other schools.

Despite what the Ontario NDP and their witnesses have alleged this morning, we have a robust set of academic policies, including an academic freedom policy, all of which are under review at PEQAB as I speak. We have a \$43.8-million campus overlooking Lake Ontario, an athletic centre with professional basketball courts and indoor soccer facilities and a 4,000-seat conference centre which is open to the community for graduations, public union worker conferences and cultural events, including the Martin Luther King celebration, which has been hosted by the college for over 15 years. All of this has been done with private money, and here we are today, not asking for government funding. All we're asking is for our charter-guaranteed freedom to operate.

However, I also stand before you today with a heavy heart. I stand before you today speaking on behalf of a student body of 80% visible minorities, 60% of whom are Black. I stand before you today speaking on behalf of thousands of racialized students and graduates who have had their mental health threatened and reputations damaged by the politicizing of their academic journey. I stand before you speaking on behalf of individuals who have been victimized by the politicians employing every smear tactic against them while being protected by parliamentary privilege. I stand before you today speaking truth to power.

In the past several weeks, I have watched politicians at Queen's Park call Canada Christian College an institute of

hate. I have watched elected officials declare we teach a homophobic, transphobic and Islamophobic worldview. I have witnessed the effect that this has had on our helpless faculty, staff and students, many of whom want nothing else than to serve the broader community in homeless shelters, long-term-care facilities, youth ministries and addiction treatment centres.

What is deeply saddening about these politicians' actions is that they have taken it upon themselves to demonize a school filled with visible minorities, refugees and new Canadians, without any regard for the truth. For example, they claim we have a curriculum of hate, yet in the past two months, I've not received one email or phone call from any MPP, including the critic of colleges and universities—not one phone call; not one email—to ask us about our institution or curriculum.

Rather, these politicians and all of the witnesses that have spoken against us are willing to crucify hundreds of students and thousands of graduates from every background to score political points against the Progressive Conservative Party. They're willing to espouse anti-Christian bigotry to spin a few negative headlines about Doug Ford. So let me correct the record concerning the most egregious claims.

Does Canada Christian College teach its students to hate, mistrust, mistreat or look down upon individuals who are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community? No. Does Canada Christian College teach its students to hate, mistreat, distrust or look down upon Muslims? No. Does Canada Christian College tolerate any form of bullying, bigotry or hatred within its community? No, and I can't say the same about the Legislature, unfortunately.

Until today, some politicians may have misrepresented the college out of ignorance or reliance upon second-hand information. However, after today, if any politician continues to repeat such hateful and fallacious claims against the college, its faculty, staff, students or graduates, they are doing so despite being informed of the absolute truth concerning our institution and curriculum.

However, I don't merely wish to correct the record. Rather, I want to inform you of what we do teach. At Canada Christian College, we teach students that all human beings are made in the image of God and are worthy of love, dignity and respect, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation or religion. At Canada Christian College, we teach students that the unique God-man Jesus Christ died for all human beings, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation or religion. We teach that he did this so that all human beings, and indeed all creation, may be reconciled with God.

The inclusion of schedule 2 in Bill 213 fits within the mandate of being better for people and smarter for business. The name "college" is no longer associated with degree-granting institutions. Our change of name merely reflects the reality that we have granted 14 degrees, including four doctoral degrees, in the province of Ontario since 1999, under Bill Pr4. This change is meant to help students who undergo the four years of rigorous study to receive a bachelor's degree and yet have to write "college"

on their CV. Where is the fairness, equity or justice in that? Why would politicians use their place of privilege to marginalize a school filled with visible minorities—

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

Mr. Michael Reardon: —pursuing degrees by disallowing this standard nomenclature change? Thank you, Chair.

I want to be abundantly clear. I hope this is abundantly, abundantly clear. All we're asking for is fairness. We are asking to continue the exact same process that Algoma University and OCAD U underwent last year, which is passing legislation first and then allowing the PEQAB process to follow. We're asking that our charter-guaranteed right to procedural fairness is upheld by this committee. We're asking that you please, please stop playing politics with our lives, continue to do the right thing with Bill 213 and demonstrate that all Ontarians are worthy to receive the same rights, benefits and privileges of charter-guaranteed procedural fairness.

I want to thank you all for your invitation and thank you all for your time. I'd like to pass on to the next testimony at this point.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll now turn to our next witness, Kasper Transportation. Please state your name for the record and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Mr. Kasper Wabinski: Hi, my name is Kasper Wabinski. I'm the owner and the CEO of Kasper Transportation, based in Thunder Bay, Ontario. We service routes in southern Ontario and all of northwest Ontario and into Manitoba. Our buses travel from 7,000 to 10,000 kilometres daily. We operate 20 buses and employed 42 staff, pre-COVID. In 2019, we transported 22,000 customers. We service people on the Fort William First Nation's traditional territory of the Robinson-Superior Treaty, and also Treaties 3, 5 and 9. We service 68 provincial and federal agencies. We provide access to persons with disabilities and transport many for employment and medical travel.

1510

I urgently request that the government withdraw Bill 213, schedules 16 and 24, at this time. I refer to the Ontario Highway Transport Board at the same time as I refer to the Public Vehicles Act, as they go hand in hand. When I refer to Bill 213, I specifically refer to schedules 16 and 24.

In 2020, ONTC and Metrolinx will cost \$963 million in provincial subsidies. Why pass the proposed bill if the above bus companies will kill any benefit of Bill 213? The bill is a significant conflict of interest. In order to pass schedules 16 and 24, the government must exit the commercial bus industry themselves. The Ontario government is falsely advertising schedules 16 and 24 as beneficial. These schedules are undermining all of the people of Ontario and the integrity of our government.

The issue here is not the present regulation, but unfair government-funded competition. The bill cannot accomplish the desired objectives when the province is protecting ONTC and Metrolinx with subsidies. They use

predatory pricing to make routes unprofitable, and the bill will add to their benefit.

The Ontario government's mandate must be safety, security and sustainability amongst all business sectors for Ontario residents. The commercial bus industry contributes to employment and millions of dollars into the supply chain. We also contribute to taxes for highway infrastructure for the safety of Ontarians.

We are not a monopoly. Private bus operators must compete with private car ownership, ride-sharing apps, public transit, ONTC, Metrolinx, rail and air travel. On the contrary, the Ontario government currently holds a monopoly of the bus industry. Only commercial bus operators are getting inspected regularly by MTO for compliance. We must protect the Public Vehicles Act. Ontario must ensure that all future operators adhere to strict and high safety standards to keep our customers safe. I want to refer us to the article written by the CBC on December 17, 2019, titled Cheap but Unregulated: Why Illegal Carpooling is a Growing Problem.

Without a regulator like the OHTB and the Public Vehicles Act, we have no licensing, therefore we have no oversight and we have a less safe bus industry. MTO must focus on strengthening their ability and resources to serve better and to protect public safety from unsafe, rogue bus operators and truckers. MTO must stop any operator that is operating illegally.

We operators are currently burdened with costly increases to our commercial insurance premiums. These premiums are very unfair, because they're grouping us into the same category as commercial truckers. I want to remind everyone of a perfect example of failed policy in the trucking industry: the Humboldt hockey team bus tragedy, respectfully.

The provincial governments have failed to regulate the trucking industry sufficiently; now the bus industry is paying the price for it through higher insurance premiums and our families losing their loved ones. Is the government of Ontario willing to put Ontario citizens at more risk and be responsible for the people who will die because of the bill?

Examples of failed deregulation in other provinces in Canada: Manitoba deregulated several years ago; since then, the number of accidents went up 400% due to unsafe, cutthroat behaviour, making it challenging to operate safe and reliable equipment.

The bill will allow for greater access for bus companies from Quebec and the USA. Quebec heavily funds their bus operators, who will receive millions in funding from their provincial government. This is exactly the same issue with our current situation with ONTC. Ontario bus companies are not allowed to do business in Quebec. These out-of-province bus operators will pick up the most profitable routes, leaving no room for Ontario companies to stay competitive.

Foreign companies don't have the best interests of Ontario; we must stand up for our own and protect our regional interest. Our province relied on other countries for PPE and vaccines. That did not turn out very well for

us. They left us behind during COVID. There should be a requirement for significant ownership by Ontarians. Since the airline industry deregulated in the 1980s, they must have 75% minimum Canadian ownership. It prevented its destruction. We must not allow foreign companies to take our jobs and kill the local economy and our businesses.

Maybe we should give back the mandate of the bus industry to the federal government. The feds would properly fund the bus industry and secure national interest in protecting the most critical transportation network.

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

Mr. Kasper Wabinski: With COVID ravaging our air transportation, a significant part of the bus network is still operational. The cost of protecting the bus industry is very cost-effective, and the bus network plays a critical role in national security.

Because of the conflict of interest regarding this bill, I would recommend that the government repeal the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission Act instead of passing this one. I also believe this bill requires consultation with First Nations of Ontario before passing. Please do the right thing to repeal schedules 16 and 24 from Bill 213. Thank you very much for your time and for listening to my thoughts.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll now turn to the Muslim Society of Guelph. Please state your name for the record and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Sara Sayyed and I'm here today on behalf of the Muslim Society of Guelph. Thank you for giving us time to speak before this committee regarding schedule 2 of Bill 213.

The Muslim Society of Guelph provides a place of worship and gathering for the Muslim community. We also provide much-needed social services both independently and in partnership with other community organizations. More so, we continue to help facilitate a greater understanding of Islam within the community, providing education and advice on issues surrounding Islamophobia and xenophobia.

The Muslim Society of Guelph takes pride in the work that we do with local school boards, the University of Guelph, various other faith groups and a multitude of other community-based organizations to promote equity and inclusion for all. It is from this involvement with community-building that we are so deeply disturbed by schedule 2 of Bill 213.

This bill, if passed, would designate Canada Christian College a university, granting an institution well-known for facilitating intolerance, hatred and bigotry the unique privilege of granting undergraduate degrees. Indeed, Canada Christian College and its president, Charles McVety, have a well-established history of Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia and racism.

Employing Islamophobic tropes to further fear and hate towards Muslims, McVety has described Islam as a "war machine" that has a "mandate for a hostile takeover." In

December 2010, so misleading and hateful were McVety's vitriolic remarks on his show, Word TV, that the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council compelled Crossroads Television System to take his show off the air.

In 2011, McVety only continued to promote hate against Muslims using his position and influence at Canada Christian College to host far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders, a politician well-known for his particularly racist views against Muslims and immigrants.

In 2017, Canada Christian College was also host to Rebel Media's so-called freedom rally, an event promoting hatred, intolerance, and included far-right speakers such as Kellie Leitch, Chris Alexander, Pierre Lemieux, Brad Trost, Ezra Levant and Faith Goldy, whose views have been described as far-right, alt-right, white nationalist and white supremacist. Media images would even reveal attendees giving what appeared to be a Nazi salute in support of views being expressed at this rally.

Individuals such as myself and organizations which we represent work day and night to refute the harmful and racist vitriol propagated by people like Charles McVety and the platforms and the institutions that enable them. This is the same vitriol that encourages and gives permission to those who carry out hate crimes and atrocities, like the Quebec City mosque massacre, the recent murder of a mosque caretaker in Toronto, the acts of arson at a Peterborough mosque, vandalism, bomb threats and, in my very own city, the assault of two Muslim men who were merely standing on their front porch.

Passage of this bill would be sanctioning a platform for hate, a situation made all more disturbing by having disguised this endorsement within a bill claiming to be better for people. More so, it's deeply disturbing that the government of Ontario would not only support this application for university status but attempt to circumvent any scrutiny and vetting through the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board. The overt bigotry, racism and blatant Islamophobic agenda of McVety are enough to prevent Canada Christian College from obtaining status.

1520

Today, the Muslim Society of Guelph is requesting that you reject the proposal to grant Canada Christian College university status, disqualify McVety from being able to grant degrees in sciences and arts and not endorse bigotry and hatred, but instead uphold values of inclusion and equity that the people of Ontario expect from their government.

Thank you for giving me a few minutes of your time this afternoon.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. At this point, we'll turn to the independent Green Party member for the first round of questions. MPP Schreiner, you have four and a half minutes. You may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank all three members for your presentations today. I just want to quickly acknowledge Kasper Transportation. I may not have an opportunity to ask you questions, but I've heard your

concerns, and others have raised similar concerns, and I'll certainly be following up with those.

I'm going to direct my first question to the Muslim Society of Guelph. As the MPP for Guelph, I just want to thank you, Sara, for coming to committee and thank the Muslim Society of Guelph for the valuable work that you do in our community. I'm just wondering what it says to the Muslim community to have a president of a college that now has an application to grant university degrees say things like Islam is a "war machine" and that it's a religion that has a "mandate for a hostile takeover." How does that make the Muslim community feel?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Thank you for giving me time, MPP Schreiner, and allowing me to speak today.

The work that I'm doing within our community is, constantly, we're trying to create safe spaces for people from all different backgrounds, minorities or whatever you want to make the designation or call the designation. We want a safe space for everyone.

We're a university town, so we have a lot of respect for our university and we are so proud when our university ranks in the top in Canada and internationally or we're well known or our professors are receiving these international acknowledgements for their work. Then you have this college that is trying to ask for the same status as people who are dedicating their life to research.

While you're also trying to create a safe space on campuses and around schools and within your community, to have the government, of all people, back somebody who is spreading these kinds of messages or this kind of hate—and just constantly having to refute that is mentally and physically exhausting for groups of people, whether they're Muslims, whether they're from the LGBTQ community, whether they're from the Haitian community, in particular, who were also on the receiving end of these comments. We just want to get on with our lives. We want to be contributing members, and constantly having to watch your backs or to have this coming from somebody that's supposed to be the head of an institution of knowledge is very exhausting, and it puts us in a very insecure place.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I can certainly understand that.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: The admission process to Canada Christian College requires a letter from a pastor. I'm curious if members of the Muslim community would see that as a discriminatory admissions process.

Ms. Sara Sayyed: It would definitely be discriminatory, even if you are not Muslim or you are not necessarily spiritual or not necessarily a believer but interested in taking courses from some place. Why do I have to get a particular group or a particular religious sanctioning of my ability to attend what's supposed to be—if it's a designated university, then it should be open to all people. There should be access to everyone allowed without these certain requirements mandated on them.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Sara, I'm probably out of time. I just want to thank you for having the courage to come to

committee today and for taking the time to share your thoughts with us.

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. At this point, we'll now turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Glover, you may begin.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the speakers for being here today. I'll address my first questions to Ms. Sayyed.

Before becoming an MPP, I was a school board trustee. It was in Toronto, and we have the most diverse student body probably in the world. One of our goals was always to make sure that every student who walked through the door felt accepted and welcomed. As a society in Canada, we've adopted a multicultural policy and we try to make sure that we're welcoming people from all parts of the world. It's what gives us our social and economic strength. We want to make sure that those people—everybody—feels welcomed and accepted.

When you hear the statements made by Charles McVety about Islam, how does that make you and your community feel?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Thank you for your time and for the question. Again, it makes us feel insecure. For me, I'm third generation, and I have four generations of family here. It's not like I just came to this country and I'm still trying to figure out what's going on or what's socially acceptable. I am a Canadian through and through, and I happen to believe in the religious beliefs of a Muslim. So it's frustrating. I believe that I constantly have to defend that or constantly have to explain to people that this is not what we are, what's been shown in the media or what people like Charles McVety and the people who he associates with are constantly espousing against us, pushing these claims that we're not Canadian or we're not Canadian enough. It's constantly having to back that up.

How many generations more do I have to do that? My kids and grandkids—my daughter just recently graduated from university. My son is on his way to university. After four generations of living in this country, should we constantly have to defend who we are and what we stand for? These are my personal religious beliefs. The rest of it is, I'm just trying to get educated and make my way through life, as is everyone else. So it is a source of frustration, to constantly have to put up with that.

Mr. Chris Glover: You also mentioned some of the attacks on Muslim community members and on the mosque. There's been an attack and threats against the mosque in my own area. Do you think there's a link between defending the words of hatred from Charles McVety and others against Islam and against Muslims and those acts of violence?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Yes, for sure. When you have people who are in high positions who are claiming to be political activists or are good friends with our politicians, and they are constantly espousing this kind of vitriol and very misleading and not even correct what they call "facts," it does give the average person who may have doubts or may have concerns—"Well, he's saying it. He's in the media.

He or she is calling themselves a political activist or a social activist.” We do have the freedom to speak our mind and to have the beliefs we want to have, but when you have people in positions of power, it definitely does influence others to make them bold, to do acts such as these atrocities that I mentioned.

Mr. Chris Glover: If the government passes schedule 2 and grants Charles McVety’s college the name of “university” and the right to grant degrees, what message would that send to the Muslim community in Ontario?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: I would think that their claim to be inclusive and to be looking towards equity for all would be a direct contradiction to that. It would be insulting to all of our universities that have worked so hard to maintain an international level of integrity. To the Muslim society, it would continue to make us doubt our place as Canadians and as part of this community and this society.

1530

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. You have a number of Conservative members here, from the government side. What would you like to say to them about schedule 2 and how you hope that they will vote?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: I would hope that they would use due process and any university or any college or institution, whether it’s religious-based or not, would go through the same processes, the same rigour, the same systems that everybody else has to go through. When there is known commentary and hate speech from these people, I think that process should be that much more rigorous before you’re going to grant somebody the status of university. In my eyes, and I think in many people’s eyes, the status of university for an institute is a very, very honourable position, which needs to be respected and upheld with the utmost integrity. If you’re going to be granting anybody that kind of status, there should be no circumventing processes, there should be no special favours, there should be no partisanship on this. It needs to go through process, and in this case, in particular, knowing his background and knowing previous comments and events that are being held on that campus, I would be very disappointed if it did go through.

Mr. Chris Glover: Right. Madam Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute and 10 seconds.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. You mentioned events on the campus, and one of them was, as you mentioned, Mr. Wilders, who is from the Netherlands and known for his anti-Islamic messages. Let’s see. Charles McVety is quoted as saying, “‘Geert Wilders has a warning for Canada, and his warning is about a lack of free speech here and the threat of demographic jihad,’ said Charles McVety, the president of Canada Christian College. ‘We’re all for freedom of religion, but when its mission is a hostile takeover, well that’s a different story. Islam is not just a religion, it’s a political and cultural system.’” Would you like to comment on that?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Yes. His statement is blatantly wrong. Islam is a religious system that people adhere to. If

you want to pick on a minority or events that are happening on the other side of the world due to various political issues and try to smear 1.7 billion people with those comments, then I have so much doubt in anything else that you’re going to be talking about or saying.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That’s all the time we have for this round. We’ll now turn to the government for questions. Who would like to begin? MPP Piccini, you have seven and a half minutes. You may begin.

Mr. David Piccini: To all the presenters, thank you for taking the time to present to committee today.

I’ll start my questions with Sara. Thank you, Sara, for coming today. I did some research on you before you started. I appreciate your advocacy in Guelph, and I know you’ve stood tall for what you believe and for religious equality in the country of Canada and the province of Ontario—something I support as well.

I know, working for the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, prior to getting elected, one of the things I loved about Ontario and Canada as I travelled the world, in the Gulf, Africa, Asia—some of those countries where I’d have to sign an attestation that I wouldn’t practise my faith in those countries, and many of those countries that didn’t have the same sort of tolerance for equality—was coming back to Canada, where we have that freedom to practise our faith.

So just on that, my first question would be, do you support Ontario’s long history, under multiple parties, of faith-based institutions?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Yes, I have no problem with faith-based institutions. I know there are a number of Christian colleges, as well as your Catholic school board. But I think each and every board, college, institution has to go through the same rigour and it has to stand by the standards of the human rights charter, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the multicultural act. We have to abide by those regardless of what religious affiliation you have. If tomorrow there was some Muslim institution that wanted university status and I felt they didn’t deserve it or they didn’t stick to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I would be back in front of committee advocating against that as well. I think we need to stick to the process. That’s the beauty of Canada, that we have this process and we need to stick to it.

Mr. David Piccini: Just on that, because I appreciate you mentioning that—you said, “If I didn’t feel they adhered to that.” So I just want to differentiate: The PEQAB process is not whether you or I feel an institution adheres to anything; it’s an independent process. Certainly, I’m unaware of any institutions, just because—section 319 of the Criminal Code talks about hate speech. I’ll admit that I’m not a legal expert. What I do support is a process here.

You mentioned the PEQAB process. Have you had a chance to visit the website? It’s peqab.ca/currentapplications. On there, you would see that Canada Christian College, like many of their peers, public and private, is going through that independent process. Do you support that?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: If they were going through the independent process, then I would fully support that. But what I'm hearing and what I'm seeing, based on the information I'm getting from media and various inquiries that I've made, is that by putting it in this bill, they are trying to circumvent parts of it, and that even if PEQAB said no, then this schedule would still allow our current government to give them university status. That's what upsets me, because—

Mr. David Piccini: That's one thing I'd clarify, because it's really important. Previous presenters were categorically false and misleading, actually, on that. In the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019, schedule 5 there spoke to OCAD and Algoma. In fact, one of those institutions still hasn't received approval through the PEQAB process. We brought it forward in enabling legislation as a government, and they're still before the PEQAB process. So just for clarity, Sara, because you raised a very important point there: This PEQAB process will go through its course, as it does for all institutions. That PEQAB process and its rigour applies to everybody equally.

One thing I also wanted to elaborate on is how we can bring that forward—because I'd just like your take on it. It can go through three ways. I asked the department to do some research for me on how many institutions were established through acts of the Legislature between 2003 and 2018. There were none, because they were all done through private bills. We can introduce this sort of thing through ministerial consent, through a private bill or through an act of the Legislature.

As I mentioned, OCAD and Algoma went through an act in the Legislature, as is this. Is that something you would support going forward, just independent of this issue, where we can all debate it, as we're doing today? Is that something you'd support?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: I think you're trying to isolate here. There is a process and we need to go through the process, but OCAD and Algoma were not known to have a director or a leader or a president who was known for very blatant comments made against our LGBTQ community, commenting that Toronto would be turned into a sex tourist place, calling Haitians practising Satanism, saying Islam has a war mandate. When you know that there is blatant hate coming from a person here, I don't understand how you can still say, "That's separate and it's not going to have any effect on the university." It's going to.

Mr. David Piccini: That's important. I just want to differentiate. We are looking at an institution here. Are you proposing, perhaps in the future, that government, before they put an institution through this rigorous independent process—are you asking now that politicians start identifying individuals in an institution or—I'm just trying to ascertain what you're looking for here.

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Well, if that individual in an institution has the ability to decide where the institution is going to go or what—

Mr. David Piccini: Who decides that, though? Is it me, the politician, you, or do we leave that up to the Criminal

Code of Canada, the human rights charter? Do we deviate from that? I'm trying to ascertain what you'd like us to do.

Ms. Sara Sayyed: My background isn't legal. I don't know. I feel like you're trying to push me up against a corner here.

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

Mr. David Piccini: No, I'm not. I'm just trying to ascertain. This institution, as are many others, is going through an independent process. What you are asking us to do here, Sara, is to remove that from the independent process. I've got to say, we have a 20-year history, supported by all parties, of putting institutions through the PEQAB process, enabling it via legislation—and as I said, it could go three ways: ministerial consent, where the minister signs with a pen; an act, a private bill; or through legislation that we all debate. That's what this government is doing.

1540

You said that they weren't going through the PEQAB process. I would invite everybody watching and in this committee to go to peqab.ca/currentapplications today and you'll see Canada Christian College there. I'm just trying to ascertain—have you had a chance to visit the PEQAB website?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: No, I haven't. If somebody is confident—

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 for four and a half minutes. MPP Schreiner, you may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair. I'm going to begin my first question with Mr. Reardon from the Canada Christian College and School of Graduate Theological Studies. The university faculty association of Ontario raised some concerns earlier today that the college's website doesn't really list the credentials of your faculty members like most other universities. I was just shocked and didn't really believe them, to be honest with you. So, I've gone to your website and it's true. I can't find the credentials of your faculty. Most universities and colleges list where PhDs come from, academic articles, peer-reviewed articles, books written etc. I'm curious as to why your website doesn't provide the same kind of information that other colleges and universities would provide.

Mr. Michael Reardon: Thank you, Vice-Chair. I actually very much appreciate the question because it allows me to get something off my chest. We actually did have biographies up at one point. After all of this kind of exploded in the media, due to irresponsible comments within the Legislature, we took down all biographies so that our faculty and staff wouldn't get doxxed. Actually, when PEQAB—there was an illegal leak. So everyone's making this out to be, "Oh, we redacted 80 pages of the document just to hide something." Actually, the PEQAB secretariat is required to not allow personal CVs and financial data to be released in our PEQAB documents publicly. That is specifically, in the manual, to be removed. So, all of our personal information was put up. All of our addresses and personal phone numbers were put

up along with our financial data. The college has received three death threats in the last three weeks, by the way, so out of an abundance of caution, we removed that information from the website.

So I thank you for drawing attention to this very important issue—and why I'm actually saying today that all of these baseless epithets, all of this really vitriolic language that's been happening, is kind of getting out of control.

I stand with Ms. Sayyed, actually. I think that we have a right to personal religious views. We have a right to live in accordance with what we think should order society. To have that, day after day, week after week, and again and again in the Legislature, to the point where now we're receiving death threats, now we have to remove the biographies of our faculty—yes, I find that quite problematic. Thank you for drawing attention to that.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Do you have a reason why you feel like this schedule should be in this bill prior to you going fully through the PEQAB process? Would you be fine with—if you did go through the PEQAB process and let's say you were successful—having legislation introduced at that time, rather than prior to you going fully through the process?

Mr. Michael Reardon: I have a question for you, Vice-Chair: Have you read the PEQAB manual, section 10.1?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: No, I have not.

Mr. Michael Reardon: All right. Section 10.1 specifically mandates that legislation is first passed for an institution to have university in their name before they go through the PEQAB process. Actually, what you're asking would be totally against what PEQAB is able to do.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Okay, I appreciate that.

Mr. Michael Reardon: So actually we have to have legislation passed, and therefore schedule 2 needs to remain in the bill.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: The Trinity Western legal case: The Supreme Court denied the law school because of their community covenant. Are you concerned, given your admissions and hiring practices and the questions around their compliance with the Canadian Human Rights Act, that you would face similar legal challenges?

Mr. Michael Reardon: No, I don't at all, because the Trinity Western case was separate. It was dealing with law societies, which are private institutions which have the right to discriminate against their membership. They have their own set of standards. But actually, Trinity Western, if it's in accordance with what you said, that the code of conduct discredits them from being a university, we wouldn't call it Trinity Western University anymore. So actually, Trinity Western University is allowed the standard of "university" with their covenant, but they're not allowed to have a law school, because law societies are able to set their own membership standards. So just to be clear, I'm not concerned about—

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

now turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. You may begin, MPP Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much. I want to say thanks to all the presenters for coming before us today, and apologies to Sara for the rather aggressive line of questioning that you were subjected to.

I did want to follow up a bit with you, Sara, on some of the questions that were asked. But first, I wanted to ask you if you were aware of the motion that was passed by the Legislative Assembly early this week to condemn the hateful invective of Charles McVety, the founder of Canada Christian College. That motion was debated in the Legislature. The government members couldn't find enough of them to go and oppose that motion, and so that motion passed with support from the NDP and the independent members of the Legislature. It's non-binding, but it expresses the will of the Ontario Legislature. Given that that motion passed, what would it say to you if the government now uses its majority to pass Bill 213, which includes schedule 2, which legitimizes and validates the hateful invective of Charles McVety?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: Yes, I was aware—thank you, MPP Sattler—of the motion that was passed. We were quite pleased with that, to know that the majority of MPPs were also opposed to this vitriol and the hate speech that has been documented. It would be very disappointing to know that despite the will of the people and the majority of the MPPs in Queen's Park, they were still trying to push through this legislation without regard for what the people felt or thought, or what the MPPs supported, as well.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you for that. The other question I wanted to ask you is around the fact that Bill 213 is presented by the government as a COVID recovery bill. It's called the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act and it includes a number of measures that are supposed to help Ontario's economy make it through this pandemic.

Now, we know there's lots of data out there that shows that the impact of the pandemic has been disproportionately borne by racialized communities, Muslim communities. The fact that this bill is supposed to be directed to assisting people to recover from COVID, and yet it includes a schedule that is going to make the Muslim community feel more unsafe, less welcome, less valued in Ontario: What does that convey to you?

Ms. Sara Sayyed: It's almost like we're holding everybody else—it's like blackmail: "Let's sneak this in." If you are against the bill, that means you're against COVID recovery, but if you're for the bill, then you're for COVID recovery, but you've had to overlook not only the Muslim population, but the LGBTQ population and other racialized groups, and had to forego their rights, or you had to put that aside in order to help the majority recover from COVID.

Again, why is it being snuck into here? If there's nothing wrong with the process, if we're confident that they're doing everything right and that they're confident that they have an unbiased or un-racist institution, then they shouldn't need to have this snuck in with COVID

recovery. COVID recovery is something that should be taking precedence right now, not something like this.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you for that. I wanted to ask a question or two of Mr. Reardon from Canada Christian College. I noted in your remarks your reference to the rigorous audit processes that are in place.

Mr. Michael Reardon: Indeed.

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Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am sure that you have followed the stories in the media. There was a story earlier this week in the Toronto Star, quoting a forensic accountant who has assisted in an audit of some of the financial practices of the institution and raised concerns about a charitable organization that has loaned almost \$1 million to members of the McVety family. I wondered if you could comment on that.

Mr. Michael Reardon: I would love to comment on that. First of all, that should have never been in the media to begin with, because it was illegally leaked by PEQAB, so let's begin there. So we're drawing on illegally leaked documents that are being decontextualized. Actually, through Julian Porter, who is on retainer with the college, we did release a statement to the media about the nature of the loans and, actually, the fact that both Charles McVety and Ryan McVety were underpaid for several years as a sacrifice in order to help the college both in its renovations of the old building and acquiring the property of our new building; so let's just start with that.

That being said, like I've already stated, there is an independent audit that is a higher degree of scrutiny than other Canadian charities that takes place every single year with this college. This college, with private money, has bought a \$43.8-million campus, with quite a small debt load, might I add—a small debt load, especially, even when you look at publicly funded institutions in Ontario—

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

Mr. Michael Reardon: —that have millions and millions of dollars. They're scraping by. COVID is such a big deal for them, because all of a sudden, now they're losing international students who pay three times the tuition.

For us, we charge \$6,300 for tuition for domestic students. Do you know how much we charge for international? It's just \$1,000 more. So we actually allow international students a greater entryway into the degree-granting process because we're so tight with our finances, because we take such—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: If I could just—

Mr. Michael Reardon: Wait, wait, no—if you're going to ask me a question, I would like to be able to answer it. Is that a fair statement, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Yes. I would remind members not to speak over witnesses, for the purposes of Hansard.

Mr. Michael Reardon: If I'm given a question, I'm going to answer. I'm going to answer very specifically that we take financial stewardship at this college very seriously because we're dealing with limited funds. We have done so without carrying a large debt load, with offering some

of the lowest tuition to all students in Ontario. By doing so and by having documents illegally leaked, now, all of a sudden, our president and vice-president, under some alleged scrutiny that's politicized, that's not going anywhere with the CRA, just to somehow delegitimize schedule 2 in this bill—schedule 2—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. That's all the time we have for this round. We'll now turn to the government for the final round of questioning—seven and a half minutes. Who would like to begin? MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: I'm going to start this round with questions for Michael. I think, Michael, we've seen—for other members here—we've talked a lot about things that are outside of the specific process in question; what is or isn't on your website. In fact, I visited it. I dislike a number of things on your website. The law schools within British Columbia—there are a lot of things that people say at institutions—faculty members and others—that I find morally reprehensible. My role as an elected member here, representing the constituents of Northumberland-Peterborough South, is to stand up for a fair and transparent process.

Prior to answering this first question, just quickly, do you support faith-based institutions in the province of Ontario, as parties of different stripes have done over the last number of decades?

Mr. Michael Reardon: Of course.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. Next, on the PEQAB process, because we've seen a lot of talk using very inflammatory language relative to introducing something via legislation that goes through an independent process. I've spoken a lot about ministerial consent, about introducing it via an act or about putting something through legislation. I think all institutions that I deal with, both public and private, would love for just the ministerial consent. That would make everything a lot easier.

But this PEQAB process: Can you clarify for everyone—because I am looking here on the website—are you going through the PEQAB process? Yes or no?

Mr. Michael Reardon: Yes.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. How long have you been going through the PEQAB process for?

Mr. Michael Reardon: Several months now.

Mr. David Piccini: Does it involve an organizational review that looks at the structure of your organization?

Mr. Michael Reardon: It does, and I stayed up till 3 a.m. many nights getting all the documents together.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. So you've gone through that. And do you have an understanding of when that process would conclude?

Mr. Michael Reardon: It's really hard to say. Like has been stated many times in the Legislature, as well as today, it's an independent process. We have no control over anything other than our submissions. Because of that, if they want to sit on something for a day, a week, a month or a year, I guess we can file a petition or something, but as far as I know, I don't think we have any ability to speed it up or slow it down.

Mr. David Piccini: Understood. Certainly, as parliamentary assistant to the ministry, I can't say when we'll get that response for our ministry, but I can absolutely say that I and my colleagues support the independent process. Again, I would remind others: As we've heard many criticizing you who haven't even taken an opportunity to visit the PEQAB website, I would encourage many to go and look at what's going before PEQAB now.

You talked a bit, though, about death threats, Michael, and I would hope everybody on can join me in condemning that, as I would in any other institution. What sort of toll has this had on your faculty and on students?

Mr. Michael Reardon: I don't even know where to start. First of all, we sent out a letter to the Speaker and a separate letter to all the MPPs to try to tone down the language and the vitriol about our college. We sent out a video with a woman who is blacked out. She's the mother of a student. She watched her father get murdered with an axe in 1991 and has suffered from PTSD ever since. And now this exact incident—she gave this whole statement talking about how this incident has triggered those feelings again. We sent that out to the MPPs prior to the motion and prior to the further debate on Bill 213. It only got worse.

I've watched our faculty cry. I've watched our students come up and wonder if their degrees are going to be worthless. I've had students ask me, "Why do they hate us? Why do they pick on us?" What am I supposed to tell them? For five weeks, I've had to be quiet. I've said nothing. I can't just walk in the Legislature and talk, so this is my only opportunity to speak on behalf of these students. The problem is, it seems like the opposition just doesn't care, because on Monday they're going to go through the same baseless attacks. Maybe even in the next question, they'll go through the same baseless attacks. So then what do we do? We just sit around and cry or hold hands, and we hope for the best.

Mr. David Piccini: Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You have two minutes and 45 seconds.

Mr. David Piccini: I certainly think all of us need to strive in the Legislature to try to find some consensus and to speak out against what has been the treatment of individuals, but I think that expands to everybody. Certainly, again, I really have to differentiate between the process that I really want to talk about here—we've established that you're going through the PEQAB process. You don't know when that will conclude. It does involve an organizational review. Can you just establish for us how long you have been granting degrees in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Michael Reardon: Bill Pr4 gives Canada Christian College and the school of graduate theological studies the authority to grant 14 degrees, including four doctoral degrees. So actually, every time it has been said—and every time it probably will be said on Monday, because people are not respecting what I'm saying and not respecting the truth of the process—we're already a degree-granting institution. This schedule doesn't give us

degree-granting privileges; we already have them. We are adding two bachelor's degrees.

Mr. David Piccini: I'm sorry, I'm going to interrupt you there. It probably won't add up to the Sattler test or muster of questioning.

What I'm going to just end on for all colleagues here is I think we have a PEQAB independent process, and maybe in the opposition line of questioning we can understand—certainly the NDP support independent process until they don't, and we've seen many fundamentally misunderstand enabling legislation, as has been the case with others who have had enabling legislation. They're still before PEQAB, so they haven't been granting any degrees for what they want to grant until that PEQAB process—

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

Mr. David Piccini: I'm just going to end my comments there. I appreciate all three of you—Kasper, Michael, Sara—for coming forward today. I'm thankful to live in a province where all of us can come before committee to defend ourselves. Certainly we all feel strongly in what we're defending, and regardless of religion, political stripe, colour or creed, we have the ability to do that in the province of Ontario. As a legislator, I'll continue to stand up for independent processes. Certainly, the government here will not support applying institutions, public or private, through differentiated or special treatment. This will go through independent processes, as it always had. I'm just going to end my comments, and certainly, I wish all three of you the best. Thank you.

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The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. At this point, I'd like to—oh, MPP Glover, I see that you have raised your hand.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, I want to raise a point of process—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry, I'm having difficulty hearing you, MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: Can you hear me a bit better now?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes. Madam Chair, I don't know what the process is because we're muted and we can't unmute ourselves, but when we want to raise a point of order, what is the process?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You raise your hand and the Clerk notifies me.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. So I would like to raise a point of order—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): And the Clerk is confirming to please keep your hand raised until you are recognized by the Clerk and myself, so that could be part of the issue there.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. I'd ask, Madam Chair, that you ask MPP Piccini to withdraw his unparliamentary remarks in his last statement.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I'm not quite sure which unparliamentary remarks you are referring to, MPP Glover. However, I can say that throughout the proceedings today, all day, I have heard remarks from all MPPs on all sides of the House—excluding MPP Schreiner. I've

heard comments from both sides that I would consider to be borderline, and I would like to remind and encourage all MPPs to remain civil and to keep their questions directed at the witnesses. I'd like to thank everyone and commend everyone for working very collaboratively up until now, and I hope that we can continue. Having said that, MPP Glover, there's nothing I can do about your point of order at this point, but we'll move forward.

I'd now like to thank the witnesses. They've been released.

ONTARIO WASTE MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION

TISDALE BUS LINES LTD.

GREAT CANADIAN COACHES INC.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Our next set of witnesses are now here. We're going to begin with Ontario Waste Management Association. Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Mr. Mike Chopowick: Thank you. My name is Mike Chopowick. I'm chief executive officer of the Ontario Waste Management Association. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting us here today to be part of this important discussion. I know that Fridays are usually the day that MPPs spend in their ridings, so I'm grateful that you're taking the time to conduct this committee business.

First of all, very quickly, OWMA is an association that represents both public and private sector companies and organizations that are involved in recycling, waste collection, operation of landfills, hazardous waste, food and organic waste composting and energy from waste. Our membership includes large, nation-wide companies and also municipal waste departments.

I'm here today specifically to talk about some of the red tape reduction and regulatory measures in Bill 213. First, a bit about waste generation: Waste generation, as you know, touches every Ontarian. I bet every single member on this committee threw something out in the garbage at one point today, or in a recycling bin or in a food waste bin. Everything that you put out in the waste is part of a 14-million-tonne waste management system across the province, with over \$3.9 billion in annual public and private expenditures.

We estimate that waste generation in Ontario has a total economic impact of \$4.2 billion in GDP and 33,000 jobs across the province, and also over half a billion dollars in tax revenues every year. Waste is often trucked across municipal and regional boundaries, using over 3,700 collection and haulage vehicles. One third of Ontario's waste even finds its way across the US border, with over 3.5 million tonnes of waste per year destined to landfills and energy-from-waste facilities in Michigan, New York and Ohio.

You might think that, over time, we've increased the amount of waste that we're diverting from landfills; in

fact, this is not the case. According to Statistics Canada, Ontarians sent a record 10.1 million tonnes of waste to landfills in 2018. That's over 750,000 tonnes per year more than we sent to landfills in 2008, just 10 years earlier, and every bag and item of garbage that you throw out, that we all throw out, brings us one step closer to running out of landfill capacity.

There are two main solutions to this problem: first, to get more aggressive with producer responsibility and improve recycling in Ontario. Our producer responsibility regulations and programs need higher collection and diversion targets, and more materials included in programs such as the electronic waste program, ensuring that retailers and brand owners do more to recover the materials and products that they sell to us. It's not just good for waste reduction, it's also good for the economy and will attract investment in technology, infrastructure and jobs.

Just as importantly, we need more reduction in red tape and regulatory barriers facing the sector. We appreciate hearing, often, that Ontario is open for business, but I'll tell you, with my members, everywhere we turn, we're faced with unreasonable and outdated regulatory barriers that prevent us from investing in new waste diversion recycling and disposal infrastructure. We can build new landfills and recycling facilities, and food waste processing plants and energy-from-waste facilities, but the regulatory and red tape barriers are very costly and take up a lot of time. I just want more recognition of this. Just as new roads, highways, transit, sewers and water mains are considered vital infrastructure for economic growth, so too should waste systems and infrastructure.

OWMA supports many of the measures that were announced by the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction when he introduced Bill 213. This includes improving hazardous waste reporting and creating a new digital registry for hazardous waste. Ontario's current system of registering hazardous waste requires over 450,000 paper manifests that are submitted to the Ministry of the Environment every year. This is outdated, cumbersome and lacks the transparency that the people of Ontario expect today. Better, modern and digital reporting services will allow for more efficient and timely compliance and monitoring of enforcement actions, and save waste processors time and money. We're also asking the government to ensure that replacing paper-based manifests with a new modern digital registry will help reduce fees for producers and haulers.

OWMA also supports a digital excess soil registry that could be managed by the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority, including integration of other third-party soil tracking systems.

When he introduced Bill 213, Minister Sarkaria also announced that the Ontario government will support renewable and alternative fuels and emissions reduction technology. This change will allow for businesses to invest in new technologies to adopt lower carbon fuels such as renewable natural gas. This is the type of new energy supply that's starting to be produced more and more by food waste anaerobic digestion facilities and also landfill

gas capture systems, something our members would like to participate in more.

We look forward to working with the government and all parties to ensure that future changes to regulatory and approval frameworks make it easier to build waste management infrastructure, not more difficult.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): You have one more minute if you'd like to use it. No? Okay.

Mr. Mike Chopowick: No, I'll leave the time for the others.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Great. Thank you for your presentation.

The next presenter will be Tisdale Bus Lines Ltd. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name clearly for Hansard, and you may begin.

Mr. Ron Malette: Good afternoon. My name is Ron Malette, and I am president of Tisdale Bus Lines Ltd. We are a bus operator servicing the Sudbury, North Bay, Timmins and Thunder Bay regions; in essence, North Bay to the Manitoba border. We operate both school bus and motor coach charter services, and have been doing so since 1962. The purpose of presenting today is to share concerns of the implications of Bill 213, more specifically section 16, the repeal of the Public Vehicles Act.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated many industries. Our business is no different. Charter revenues have dropped 95%. It is highly unlikely that we will see any sudden revival of this business. I need to tell you that we still have to satisfy the needs of our lenders, maintain these units, keep our shops operating and retain critical staff. We have had to dig into our war chest to remain solvent.

Given the large geographical area we cover, should we see new entrants into our district that would chip away at our revenues, it would be highly unlikely that we could maintain the same form of margin to maintain our infrastructure. This would leave northern Ontario with much reduced access to the services that we provide.

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To go further with that, if deregulation takes place, the province will also see significant loss of revenue from Ontario Northland, as carriers in other jurisdictions will come in and swoop the ridership on the most lucrative routes. I know for a fact a carrier from Rouyn-Noranda arrives at North Bay terminal daily. He would gladly leave the terminal five minutes before Ontario Northland and probably offer a little bit of a discounted rate to run that group to Toronto. From there, he'd go express and pick up another group in Toronto and probably then head up to Montreal. Not a penny of revenue would be spent in Ontario. Do these threats exist for Metrolinx groups? Possibly.

The repeal of the act would also mean every licensed carrier in Ontario will be subjected to carriers from lower-cost jurisdictions who have advantages such as fuel tax rebates, lower wages, lower insurance costs. Today I can tell you there are over 1,000 motor coaches sitting in the province of Ontario. Many of these carriers are hoping to

regain some revenue. These folks have invested in maintenance facilities and equipment. They have supported their communities and hired local people. We need to allow these operators a chance at recovery.

We all are aware of what is driving this change. Living in rural Ontario, I've seen first-hand how many communities have no service. When the US deregulated, 4,300 communities were abandoned through the deregulation. Allowing new entrants to fill this void is a very short-term solution. Many of these new bus drivers have limited experience and little knowledge, if any, on how to maintain a public vehicle and even have less knowledge when it comes to safety.

Many of these new entrants will not have the financial capacity to invest in new state-of-the-art units that provide safe travel. Many will purchase units that have passed their useful life, yet will attract passengers and put their lives at risk. One has no idea what may be put on the road: a van, an SUV, an old retrofitted school bus that is too old to do school bus runs. Let's think back to February 7, 2012, when 11 migrant workers lost their lives in a horrific crash in Hampstead. The vehicle was a 15-passenger van operated by a newly licensed driver. Need I say more?

The repeal of this act—we went through this for decades. I've brought my concerns forward, and each time it was decided that continued regulation was important. These were supported by Ministers Clement, Palladini, Del Duca, Klees, Wynne and Chiarelli, to name a few. If I could suggest, the approach would be to work with existing reputable carriers who would gladly work with the government to find solutions that will benefit the people of Ontario. On many occasions, I have shared ideas with how to best meet the needs with MNM, MTO, Metrolinx and MENDM that would benefit our seniors, those that need to travel for health issues and students trying to get to school.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to bring my concerns forward. We need to do what's best for the province of Ontario. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Thank you for your presentation. I will now call on Great Canadian Coaches Inc. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

Mr. Larry Hundt: This is Larry Hundt, Great Canadian Coaches and Great Canadian Holidays. We are located in Kitchener and have other terminal points in Toronto, Niagara Falls and London.

Our company, first of all, started in 1984. I've been involved in the coach business all my life. I started in 1969 as a student. My wife is my business partner. She got involved in the industry in 1976. We operate a fleet of 55 coaches. They're blue in colour and they have beautiful Canadian themes on them; some of you I'm sure have seen them. We also operate eight vans. We serve a wide range of clients, both here in Canada and also international guests that use our coaches when they come to Canada. We're the second-largest charter coach operator in the

province and we're the largest tour company on the motor coach side.

I personally have been involved in the industry south of the border, with the United Motorcoach Association. I've been a board member there for over 10 years; I'm the Canadian board member. There are 800 companies in that organization. I'm also a board member of Trailways, and there are 70 companies involved with that. I've been a founding board member of Motor Coach Canada and also involved in the Quebec bus association and bringing a special insurance program to the industry.

I personally support deregulation, but I do feel it's a very big mistake at this time. We're going through this COVID pandemic, and it is devastating our industry, as Ron mentioned. A lot of the companies are just hanging on. They're desperately trying to stay afloat and get through this COVID thing, because business has basically been shut down. I think we've operated three trips since March. The Ontario coach industry, I think, at this point in time is very ill-equipped to take on the challenges of deregulation.

The industry has been shrinking. I can look at western Ontario from the Kitchener-Waterloo-Guelph area west, and I can count 25 companies that used to exist that no longer are in business. In places like London, there are only two of us there serving the market. In Windsor and Sarnia, there is only one carrier there.

Just to give you a reason why we're struggling, today people are not grouping and travelling on coaches as much as we would like them to. They have a love relationship with their car and they're not giving up that steering wheel very readily.

Despite the fact that we're the greenest mode of transportation—we can replace 56 cars and take them off the road—we do not, as an industry, get a single break or a bit of help. We don't get a single dollar in government help or subsidies. For example, when the carbon tax, which we're pretty excited about, came into play and was supposed to help green businesses and green initiatives, I thought that our industry would be on the receiving end of that. We've received absolutely zero help from the carbon tax. We really are part of a green solution and can really diminish greenhouse gases. Like trains and transit, we provide critical transportation that people really depend on for their form of transportation.

I have to say that GO Transit is killing our industry. They run right overtop of many of our popular routes. They are heavily subsidized. They don't charge HST; unfortunately, we have to. And they're not required to follow even some of the safety requirements that we have to follow. It's a huge and very sloppy operation that wastes an awful lot of tax dollars. I believe there was another participant who spoke earlier today, a coach operator from the north, who talked about Ontario Northland and the huge, wasteful spending that was taking place up there in the north; I'm sure that Ron can address some of that as well. But Ontario has, as we all know, a growing debt load, and I think that contracting out could be one of the solutions. In fact, I think there could be a savings rule of

thumb of at least 30%—it could be as much as 40%—if they started to contract-out some of the GO Transit services. It would also improve the health of our coach industry.

With deregulation, my big concern is what's going to come out of Montreal. Montreal does not have GO Transit. They have contracted out all of their service into the city. There are 300 coaches that operate commuter service and there are 15 independent operators that provide that service. These 15 operators have a real distinct advantage over us. The reason why is that from Monday to Friday, they have their coaches working, providing service to the Montreal residents and the people who are going into Montreal. On Saturday and Sunday, those expensive vehicles can be used in a very lucrative charter market, so those vehicles are working at least 95% of the time. Ontario operators, sadly, will only operate their vehicles for about 50% of the time, so we don't have the benefit of the reduced costs and all that extra revenue that these Montreal companies have.

The sad thing is that if we open our borders, the Quebec operators will be able to come in and do service here, and we will not have the same privilege—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): You have one minute.

Mr. Larry Hundt: Okay, thank you—of going into Quebec. In fact, the two most lucrative line-run services in this province come from Montreal to Ottawa and also to Toronto. The Quebec operators would be able to start service and compete with us. We, unfortunately, would not be able to offer that service and compete with the Quebec operators.

Really, what I'm saying is that the playing field is not very fair. This industry has really struggled and we need some time to rectify some of the problems. I think the elephant in the room can often be deemed as GO Transit. Certainly the Quebec operators will, I'm sad to say, eat our lunch if deregulation happens, and we're going to lose a lot of Ontario jobs. Thank you.

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The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mike Schreiner): Thank you for your presentation. You ended right on time.

The first round of questioning will be with the official opposition. You will have seven and a half minutes. I recognize MPP Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to all of the presenters who have joined us today.

Larry, it sounds like you are from London. Is that true?

Mr. Larry Hundt: London, but I live in Kitchener and that's where our head office is.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Well, I suspect you may be familiar with some of the issues that we have had in London for a long time. The issue of these ghost routes that surround the urban centre, but there's nobody running them. There are few intercity options to get people from outside the community into London, where the bulk of the services are.

I just wondered if you would comment on whether what's proposed in schedules 16 and 24, dealing with

intercity transit services, will address any of those challenges, whether it will help create a robust intercity transit network.

Mr. Larry Hundt: There is some service that is being initiated and it's being contracted out from some of the municipalities around London and into the city of London. That is being offered by those communities, and I think that that's a positive step in the right direction.

I think that a lot of the line-run service—I think Ron alluded to that in his comments—unfortunately has not been operated and some rural service and communities have not been served. I think that it's very hard when all of the money goes to transit and nothing goes to help support some of those rural communities.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you for that. Either Ron or Larry, I think you mentioned having listened in to a previous presentation that we had, specific also to schedules 16 and 24. One of the recommendations of that presenter was around the need for consultation, he mentioned, with First Nations communities, which I think is absolutely essential.

Ron, you would be in an area where there would be a lot of First Nations communities, where you provide your services. Can you comment on whether there was consultation with the government prior to introducing schedules 16 and 24? Was this something that bus operators had brought to the government's attention and had requested that the government move forward in this way?

Mr. Ron Malette: If I may, Peggy, I've been going to government since the mid-1990s. We've always had an issue where deregulation was coming forward. We try to emphasize the importance of continuing to service our customers as best we can. There was always going to be a place for them in the marketplace, but if the province wanted to be serious about this and maintain a good level of service for every person in Ontario, I think that companies such as Ontario Northland or Metrolinx need to work with the private sector and find a solution.

I think we all know that the cost of operation for the private sector is so much different than it is for the public sector. We can offer a service, as an example, from Timmins to Thunder Bay. That whole Highway 11 corridor is unserved. Many people have tried it—Ontario Northland was there; Greyhound was there; Caribou Coach was there; Kasper, who was a previous presenter, was there—and they've all withdrawn because there's absolutely no ridership. The ridership from Timmins to Hearst, as an example, I think averages about 3.5 passengers per week. That is unsustainable.

However, if they're serious about doing this, they go to the private sector, to someone such as ourselves who can come up with a business plan and a model that works, which I've shared with MTO and I've shared with MNDM. It's leaving from Timmins. There's a large flow of traffic between Timmins and Cochrane to catch the Polar Bear Express to go up to Moosonee and Moose Factory. That ridership would assist us and help reduce the burden of covering the rest of the highway from Cochrane to Thunder Bay.

I ran into this poor old individual in Longlac, a Mrs. Gauthier. As you can appreciate, in northern Ontario there's a lot of out-migration. She had two children; both decided to move away. She has a son who lives in Oshawa. This poor lady from Longlac needed to get to a medical appointment. Her son had to leave work in Oshawa, drive to Longlac, pick her up and bring her to Sault Ste. Marie. I think we need more for the people of Ontario than that.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, Larry, did you also want to comment on that?

Mr. Larry Hundt: No, I think that Ron covered it pretty well.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay, thank you. I also wanted to get your perspective on the kinds of supports that have been provided for businesses that are struggling to deal with COVID-19. Both of you commented in your presentations about the challenges that you've been having as business owners as your business has been gutted by COVID-19, and that the kinds of things that have been brought forward by this government have been mainly around tax deferrals with a bill that will come due eventually, a loan that will have to be repaid eventually. We have been advocating for more direct financial supports for small businesses, and I wondered if you would comment on that, if that would have been something that you would find helpful.

Mr. Larry Hundt: I'll start, if that's okay. Peggy, I love your thoughts about some more direct support—

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

Mr. Larry Hundt: —because, sadly, we have tons of debt. Our coaches are very, very expensive—\$625,000 each. We have payments to make, and we just can't keep going without some direct support. I know the airlines have asked for it. We are a critical transportation need for a lot of people, too, and we need that support.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Ron, did you want to comment?

Mr. Ron Malette: I think Larry covered it. Thank you.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. What about your staff? Have you had to lay off all your staff? Have you been able to keep any staff on payroll? I'm just curious to hear your perspective on that side of things, because I've talked to business owners who have had to let go of their staff and they're very worried about how—if we do come through this recovery, they've lost these staff and what are they going to do to move forward when their employees have all left.

Mr. Ron Malette: We've had to maintain a certain amount of critical staff, such as mechanics to keep our buses safe, administrative staff, our operational people, our dispatchers; we've had to retain them all. We can't afford—

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

At this point, we'll now turn to the government for seven and a half minutes. Who would like to begin? Government members? MPP Skelly, you have the floor; seven and a half minutes.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Yes, your video is turned off. All right, thank you.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Yes, sorry about that. I had my video off.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That's okay.

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for Larry. Larry, over the past several decades, the current economic regime has led to carriers dropping previously serviced routes and it has increased gaps in service between communities right across the province. Now, you have expressed support for the current market entry controls to remain in place. I was hoping that you could comment on how preventing new entrants from servicing those gaps is, in your opinion, a good system for Ontario.

Mr. Larry Hundt: Donna, I think that what will happen with deregulation is that the main routes, routes like that to Ottawa, to Montreal, Toronto-Montreal routes, are the ones that everybody is going to be chasing. Sadly, some of the routes where there is not near the activity that we can generate will be the ones that people will be jumping at—or they would be doing that today. Some of those routes are going to need government subsidy and support, just as we support transit and the federal government supports rail. Some of these areas just cannot sustain any kind of service without some government help. GO Transit gets it all, and unfortunately the hinterlands out beyond there don't get the subsidy help.

Ms. Donna Skelly: As a current licence holder, can you provide any insight on the process that is available to you to oppose new market entries and competition in your particular service area? What process is available to you to oppose competition?

1630

Mr. Larry Hundt: I can't really speak, Donna, about the line-run service in the charter market, which is really the area that we're involved in. Of course, the Ontario Highway Transport Board is there for people to apply for licences.

Quite frankly, on the charter side of the business, most charter applications go unopposed. I think that deregulation will spearhead activity in the line-run service, and that will be on these major routes. People aren't going to be fighting for some of these secondary markets or they would be there today, unfortunately.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I think there are something like 400 charter services in Ontario already. Is that accurate?

Mr. Larry Hundt: I think that's the number. I don't know how many of those are active companies.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Can you provide some idea to us on the level of protection that the OHTB licencing system actually provides you against increased competition from anyone who wants to service your area?

Mr. Larry Hundt: Again, going back to the fact that we're in the charter market, there have been a lot of new entries. That's why we're talking about 400. How many of them are very active is questionable. A lot of them are operating much smaller vehicles and doing service from Toronto to Niagara Falls for sightseeing tours. There are a lot of those operators that have surfaced. But I would

say—and Ron, I'm sure you will agree—we haven't seen a lot of additional competition in terms of the charter market; we've seen decreases in operators, because the business just isn't there.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Ron, did you want to add anything to that?

Mr. Ron Malette: Sure, I'd love to speak to that. In northern Ontario, where I'm from, there is a need for continued regulation. Why? The market is so sparse that it has to be consolidated. If there are more entrants, it's going to become too difficult to maintain some sort of profitability to be able to maintain the services we currently have. We have three maintenance shops that we operate in northwestern Ontario. There are miles and miles of geographical road to cover to get from point A to point B. It's 800 kilometres from Timmins to Thunder Bay, we've got 350 kilometres to Sudbury or North Bay, and we have shops in all those locations. If more entrants come in and they chip away at your margins, you've just got to shut down, and then all these communities are going to be without service.

If I could add on something you had asked Larry about, the scheduled service, the rural communities: I think it's important for this committee to know how we got to this position. I've been at this for 42 years, and I've got to tell you, I've been following this file forever, and I love it. It's a passion for me. But decades ago, Greyhound ran across Canada. They ran five full-time runs daily to and from Vancouver, and they serviced all those small rural communities, and they did a great job. They were willing to do that because they were making money. They were making money on the Toronto-to-Niagara, Toronto-to-London and Toronto-to-Ottawa routes. They were making money. But what's happened—Peterborough-to-Toronto, as an example: Metrolinx has decided that they want to get into that commuter service, and they took profitable routes away from Greyhound. When Greyhound was operating these routes, they were more than happy to cover those other areas, but when the money pit for those good runs disappeared and went to Metrolinx, they had to make some tough decisions, and unfortunately, people in rural Ontario are suffering because of it.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Ron, I'm just curious: You said you were from northern Ontario. What part of northern Ontario?

Mr. Ron Malette: Timmins.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Oh, from Timmins; okay. I would say, I'm from northern Ontario as well, but closer to Sudbury, a little town. I'm from Capreol, so it was a [inaudible] but we did rely on the bus service. I'm just curious, when did you notice the turn? What era? Was it in the last 10 years, 20 years, or five years? When did it change?

Mr. Ron Malette: I would say, within the last 10 to 20 years, we saw a shift change, where Metrolinx took on a more aggressive strategy with trying to reach out to the commuter traffic in Hamilton, Peterborough, Whitby. These were all serviced by carriers that were in the private sector, and they did a great job.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Larry, would you agree with that? About 10 years? Oh, your mike is off. You'll have to unmute him. There you go.

Mr. Larry Hundt: I totally agree with Ron. It's been a gradual demise in our industry. We look after Greyhound here in Kitchener. They used to have 17 or 18 coaches here. Now, with all the competition from Metrolinx, they might have maybe six of them that are active. They might have eight or 10 here for the weekend. It's a huge decline, and it's because Metrolinx is running right overtop of them. They're heavily subsidized. They're not charging HST. That's just so unfair.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you both. Those are our questions, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. 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. Being the MPP for Guelph—and Larry, you can probably relate to this—I can't tell you how many of my constituents are asking for intercity bus service between Guelph and Kitchener and Waterloo as well. My daughter, when she first went to Laurier, I told her to come home for Thanksgiving. I said, "Just take the bus," and she told me, "Dad, it's going to take like two and a half, three hours. What are you talking about?" I'm like, "You've got to be kidding me." I realized. "Oh, yeah, you're right. It would take that long." There are also a lot asking for Guelph to Hamilton, Guelph to Elora and other spots in the region, so I keep thinking about how we do that.

Both of you, Larry and Ron, have brought forward a lot of interesting and very valuable information today. The one thing that is loud and clear, though, is that, right now, schedules 16 and 24 are just the wrong schedules at the wrong time. Would that be the best way to summarize those? Larry, do you want to start?

Mr. Larry Hundt: You're right on. I think you heard me loud and clear. This is a very bad time. Ontario operators are very vulnerable because of what the Montreal operators can do to us and what GO Transit is doing to us on a daily basis by competing with us. They're heavily subsidized, and we just keep losing more and more of our market share to GO Transit.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Would you agree with that, Ron?

Mr. Ron Malette: I agree wholeheartedly. I live up in northern Ontario, as I said, and Ontario Northland is, again, highly subsidized. There's a great opportunity to do things for the people of Ontario at a much better rate with less impact on the taxpayers. There needs to be a willingness for them to come together and say, "Yeah, let's do something. Let's make this better." People across Ontario need to travel.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes. To me, it seems obvious in the short term just to get rid of these schedules and start over. So let's say we did that, and I know you've raised a lot of concerns around public versus private and the subsidization issue. I realize we have a very short amount of time here, so if we could sit down and start a proper

consultation process, what would be some of the solutions you would be looking at to government to improve intercity bus service, particularly for connecting rural communities? Larry, do you want to start?

Mr. Larry Hundt: Sure. We do have to have a comprehensive look at transportation in this province because it is broken. We can't revolve around the city of Toronto and the GTA. That can't be just our only love. There are other communities that are suffering because of all of the money that's going into GO Transit.

If we could contract out some of GO Transit and take that huge savings, we would be able to offer service to a lot of other communities and help subsidize their service. Why should all the subsidies go to just getting people in and out of Toronto?

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

Mr. Larry Hundt: Other people have needs as well. I think we're narrow in our approach, and I think that GO Transit is just a sloppy operation, and I've seen it because we've worked with them.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Ron, do you have any thoughts in my final 30, 40 seconds here?

Mr. Ron Malette: I just agree with Larry that we can work together and come to a solution that's going to benefit everybody. Ontario Northland and Metrolinx are two stumbling blocks that are taking away all the resources.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks. I think that's probably all the time I have; right, Chair?

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Twenty-five seconds? During the next round of questions, I have some for you, Mike, so you can prepare, because I have some on waste management, but I'll wait till the next round.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. We'll now turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. You may begin. Who would like to start? MPP Glover, you have the floor.

1640

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you. I'll just turn on my timer so I can keep track here.

Ron, I heard at the beginning of your presentation—and Larry as well—that your industry is really hurting with the pandemic because people just aren't travelling. I've spoken to a dozen business operators in my riding over the last week and a half, and a few weeks ago I spoke with a bus company owner as part of the tourism and event industry. You know, storefronts, tourism industries and event industries, they're all really suffering. A lot of them are on the brink. The Globe and Mail reports that 30% are at risk or are already under. Certainly, the storefronts in my riding are really, really precarious. What kind of support do you need for your industry to get through the pandemic?

Mr. Ron Malette: I think what's most important, as you know, is a vaccine. We've got to get people healthy and people willing to travel. The roadblocks that are before us—there is so much negativity in our industry

about travel. Until that turns around, we're just dead in the water.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. The business owners that I've talked to, they've all said, "Look, we don't want to be made whole. We don't want all our lost profits or anything, but we just want to remain solvent so that when the pandemic is over we can bounce back and refloat the economy." So, what does your business, your industry need to just survive and remain solvent through the pandemic?

Mr. Ron Malette: Cash is always king, but we're not looking for a handout here. We're looking for a solution to get people moving again.

The media are so negative about travel. They say, "Who would want to get on a plane? Who wants to get on a bus?" That just kills our industry, and these are deep wounds that won't go away any time soon. It's going to take a while for people to become comfortable with travel. So maybe we need money for marketing that busing is a very safe way to travel.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you. Actually, I will say I'm very familiar with your routes. I used to live in Geraldton, Ontario. I had a girlfriend in Toronto at the time, so I've driven that route many, many times, and the first couple of years I was going up there, I didn't own a car, so I was taking buses and planes at the time. I'm just shocked that there aren't buses available now. It really does lock everybody in.

I'll turn it over to Larry now. The thing about Ontario is—I used to teach a course at York University on the history and economics of Ontario—Ontario is enormous. It's one million square kilometres. I used to do this at the beginning of class: You can fit Germany in northwestern Ontario, you fit France in northeastern Ontario, and you can fit Britain all in southern Ontario. That's how big it is, and yet our population is 17 million, and most of it is concentrated in the south. So we do need to make sure that we have public transportation available in all parts of the province.

You were saying, Larry, that schedule 16, and 24, in the middle of this pandemic is like another blow to Ontario's bus industries, because it's going to open it up to Quebec markets, which have lucrative routes into and out of Montreal. So it puts you at a competitive disadvantage. If schedules 16 and 24 pass, will it mean a death knell for many of the Ontario bus operators?

Mr. Larry Hundt: It certainly can lead to that, Chris. I think you're reading that very well. It is very scary. I'm not sure that when this was put forward we really thought it through because, like I said, those two major routes—Montreal to Ottawa and Montreal to Toronto—are the routes that everybody wants to do. The Quebec operators can do them, but there is not a single Ontario operator that's got pickup rights in Montreal to compete with that. They will run roughshod over us. It's not going to be pretty, and I think that somebody is going to have a lot of egg on their face if we don't solve that problem.

I know that I've reached out to Marc Garneau, and I think in my notes that I may have sent to you, I've asked

him for some support, because Transport Canada has got to get things on an equal playing field, because if they're going to have the Quebec operators come into our market, we've got to be able to go into their market. This is not going to be fair if that's not the case.

Mr. Chris Glover: Right. I'm looking at the time. I want to thank you so much for that.

I want to ask Mike a question as well. Mike, I didn't get the first figure, but you said that we're producing 10 million tonnes of waste per year in Ontario. Is that right? And that it's scaled up over—

Mr. Mike Chopowick: No. Mr. Glover, I apologize for not having a written submission. It's just verbal. What I said was Ontarians send 10.1 million tonnes of waste to landfill. We actually generate about 14 million tonnes of waste in total, and that 10.1 million tonnes of waste in 2018 was a record.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay, and where are the other three coming from? Is that recycling?

Mr. Mike Chopowick: Yes, the remainder of the waste is sent to recycling, food and organic waste diversion and some of the other diversion programs, like tires.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, and you were talking about how this has grown so much over a short period of time, so—

Mr. Mike Chopowick: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Go ahead, yes. We've got a couple of minutes.

Mr. Mike Chopowick: It's just one fallacy we wanted to dispel. A lot of people are under the impression that through all our efforts with blue box and green bin—despite those best efforts, we are not diverting more waste from landfill; we're doing the exact opposite. That's important, because under the best case scenario, the absolute best case scenario, in 12 years, in 2032, we run out of every cubic square meter of landfill capacity in Ontario. Frankly, I've been asked this question before. We don't have a solution other than to say that that's when garbage starts piling up in parks and on street corners.

Mr. Chris Glover: Right.

Mr. Mike Chopowick: That's my message today—

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

Mr. Mike Chopowick: —is that we need infrastructure for waste.

Mr. Chris Glover: I've seen that in my lifetime, too. We run out of landfill space, and then there's a crisis, and we don't actually plan for it. You're giving us a warning 12 years out: We need to reduce the amount of waste that we're sending to landfills, we need to divert more, we need to reduce our overall waste, and we need to plan for the future. Is that basically your message?

Mr. Mike Chopowick: Absolutely true. Mind, though, that it takes years to get these new facilities approved and built. Whether it's a recycling facility or a landfill or energy from waste, it could take five to 10 years for the planning and approvals and construction of these facilities, so we need to start now. The message is that unfortunately we face a tremendous amount of regulatory barriers and red tape to doing so.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Thank you for being here and thank you for your presentation. Thank you, Ron and Larry, as well.

Mr. Mike Chopowick: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. At this point, we'll turn to the government for questioning. MPP Bailey, you may begin. You have seven and a half minutes.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You have to unmute your mike, MPP Bailey. I have stopped the clock until we figure this out.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Bailey, you muted yourself again, so just unmute yourself now. You're unmuted on our end, but we cannot hear you. Is there some audio setting on your Zoom? Have you disconnected the audio?

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): No, we still can't hear you, MPP Bailey.

Okay, well, let's see if we can work on that, but in the meantime, are there any other government members? MPP Bailey, you could also try dialing in, as well, by phone. You don't have to disconnect the video from your Zoom, but you can try dialing in to ask your questions that way.

In the meantime, is there any other government member who would like to proceed until we—no? Okay, then, I think we'll just—should we wait a few moments, then? Let's try one more time. Can you unmute on your end, MPP Bailey?

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): No, we can't seem to hear you. You can dial in. I can take a one-minute recess, MPP Bailey, and then you can call in. No? All right. If there are no other questions, then we'll turn to the independent member for four and a half minutes. You may begin.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair, I appreciate that.

1650

I just wanted to ask the Ontario Waste Management Association: Mike, you have been sounding the alarm bells for a while now. I'm curious about how well you think producer responsibility will work in terms of waste reduction and diversion, and if you have some thoughts about how we can best implement producer responsibility in Ontario.

Mr. Mike Chopowick: Thank you, Mr. Schreiner. First I'll say absolutely, yes, a producer responsibility framework can be a tremendous catalyst toward increasing recycling and waste diversion. One thing I absolutely applaud the current government for is starting to move the ball in that direction. We've seen the producer responsibility framework set up for tires, batteries and electronic waste; the new Blue Box Program is transitioning in that direction and hopefully hazardous waste as well.

The only caveat is, what makes those programs successful is if the recovery targets—essentially, the

percentage of materials that are required to be collected and recycled, those targets have to be aggressive. I actually liked it when Minister Yurek, for example, said with the Blue Box Program that he wanted to set the highest recycling targets in North America. That's great. That will help move us in the right direction.

I don't think that was the case, for example, with the electronic waste program. I think that was a tremendous missed opportunity to increase diversion recycling targets for things like old cellphones, iPhones, laptops and tablets. There's a lot of high value in recycling those types of materials and products. I think those targets should be higher.

As well, the number of products which they call "eligible materials" for those programs has to be expanded as much as possible. Again, I think back to the electronic waste program. That's great that we're including things like cellphones and laptops and tablets. We should also be including things like power tools and battery-operated toys, for example. They would be ideal to include in that program as well.

It's those two components, Mr. Schreiner, that could help make producer responsibility more successful. It is the right direction, though, and we commend the government for going in that direction.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I've been a long-time supporter of extended producer responsibility. My biggest concern is exactly what you've articulated: For it to really work, you need aggressive targets. I guess the takeaway message I'm hearing from you is, yes, it'll work, yes, it's a good program, but we have to make sure we have aggressive targets to make it effective.

I want to switch over to renewable natural gas for a bit because I see that as another real opportunity, and something I've been advocating for, for a while. Can you talk about the economic opportunities in renewable natural gas as well as the opportunities around waste reduction or how that fits into the whole process?

Mr. Mike Chopowick: Thank you. We had a huge opportunity in our sector to help contribute—

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

Mr. Mike Chopowick: —to reducing the reliance on fossil fuels and those types of emissions. Currently, I think in Ontario we generate almost four million tonnes of food and organic waste per year; we're currently collecting for compost about one million tonnes of that. Anaerobic digestion of food waste is a terrific way to help generate renewable natural gas and inject that into the natural gas pipeline system. Again, it's from food waste; it's not getting natural gas from fossil fuel sources. It's a huge opportunity to grow that as well as capturing renewable natural gas from existing landfills.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: What's the barrier to making it happen?

Mr. Mike Chopowick: A couple of things: number one, it's the approval framework for building these facilities. It's the approval process for—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. That's all the time we have. I'd like to thank our

presenters for joining us today. You may now step down. You're released from the committee.

CLEAN ENERGY FUELS

MS. IRENE ANGELOPOULOS

DR. GEOFF SCHOENBERG

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I'd now like to call upon our final group of presenters for the day. We have Clean Energy Fuels. Please state your name for the record and then you may begin your presentation. You will have seven minutes. Thank you.

Mr. Wade Crawford: Good afternoon. Thank you very much. My name is Wade Crawford and I'm a Mississauga, Ontario, based employee for an alternative energy company in Newport Beach, California, called Clean Energy. We operate and maintain over 550 natural gas fuelling stations across North America, including three public truck stop stations in Ontario, at the Esso station in Windsor and the Flying J truck stops in London and Napanee.

Today, I would like to take the time to thank the current Ontario government for their efforts on Bill 213, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020. The positive impacts included in Bill 213 regarding the requirement to have an operating engineer present at compressor operations over 150 horsepower will significantly improve our bottom line and our station performance. This will also trickle down to improving our customers' experience and their bottom line as well.

Back in 1962, a law was introduced in Ontario regarding the operation of mechanical compression equipment for boilers and air and gas compressors. The law required that operating engineers be on-site to monitor the operation of any compressor over 150 horsepower, in some cases for over eight hours per day; in others, for 24 hours a day. For the most part, the operating engineer sits in a chair, watching the temperature and pressure gauges of compressor equipment. As a point of reference, the output of the engine in a brand new Honda Civic is 154 horsepower, so that's four horsepower more than we allow to operate without having an operating engineer on-site.

For compressor equipment operating between 150 and 400 horsepower, we are required to have an operating engineer on-site for eight hours per day. To put the range of 150 to 400 horsepower into perspective, think of a four-to-eight-cylinder car engine like a Honda Civic right up to a large pickup truck like the Ford F-150. For compressor operations on 400 horsepower, we're required to have an operating engineer on-site for 24 hours a day. Back to car engines: A typical Corvette would have over 400 horsepower.

These regulations are enforced by the TSSA. Ontario is the only state or province in North America to have this antiquated law in force today. Can you imagine having to pay an operating engineer sitting in a chair, watching the temperature and pressure gauges of a compressor putting out the same horsepower as a typical car engine? In order

to have 100% coverage for a 150-to-400-horsepower set up for eight hours a day, allowing for vacations, benefits and sick leaves, it amounts to an additional \$125,000 per year, per station. For us to have 100% coverage 24/7, the cost would more than triple, to over half a million dollars per year, per station. Our three public truck stops [*inaudible*] two 300-horsepower compressors at each station.

With respect to a customer's experience, more compression horsepower means our customers can fill up their vehicles faster. Alternatively, lower horsepower means a longer time for the customer to fuel, a worse experience and a negative impact to their bottom line.

Clean Energy operates three stations in Ontario, so depending on our economics, we can choose to run our stations anywhere from 149 right up to 600 horsepower. Unfortunately, if we run our stations at full power, we would be obligated to employ operating engineers in our three stations for an additional one and a half million dollars per year. There are 14 public-access compressed natural gas fuelling stations in Ontario, including our three, so these impacts impact the other stations as well.

Back in 1962, when this legislation was put in place, we didn't have the technology that is available today. Another aspect of having a human operating engineer on-site is the safety aspect. Clean Energy remotely monitors a total of 49 compressor station parameters besides the temperature and pressure, at speeds much greater than is possible by humans at most of our stations, including the ones in Ontario. Our remote monitoring allows us the capability to shut down a station when equipment goes out of range or before a catastrophic event happens. God forbid a human operating engineer being at a station and missing an event where equipment went out of range because they were taking a bio break or another absence, and they weren't there to push the big red button to shut down the equipment. Even worse, if there was a catastrophic event, we wouldn't want to put the operating engineer in danger.

We're doing our best to encourage the heavy duty fleets to adopt clean-burning natural gas, but due to the lower price of diesel these days, the higher cost of the natural gas trucks and the cancellation of the Ontario Green Commercial Vehicle Program back in 2018, it has been very tough, so we've decided to de-rate our stations to 149 horsepower.

With respect to our customers' experience at 149 horsepower, I'd like to share a story of the United Parcel Service demo, which ran for two and a half months back in 2019. From September to December, during UPS's busiest time of the year, they rented two of the heavy duty tractors we have available for demonstrations. At the time, they were considering adding 12 CNG tractors and up to 25 package cars to their fleet, based on the results of the demo. The demonstrating trucks run dedicated runs every day: one truck running from Windsor to Toronto and back; the other, from London to Toronto to Barrie and back.

While UPS was satisfied with the performance of the trucks, the fuel economy and cheaper fuel price, the biggest disappointment was the performance at the CNG stations and how long it took to fuel the trucks. Typically,

it would take eight to 10 minutes to fuel a regular diesel truck, and it was taking 20 minutes to half an hour to fuel the natural gas trucks.

1700

In the delivery business, UPS refers to packages that the drivers are carrying as “hot loads.” This means that they must get to the next destination within a very tight timeline. It could be a plane that’s leaving or another truck that will carry the package to its next destination. The driver winds up spending an extra 15 to 20 minutes getting fuel at our slow CNG stations, and they miss the next connection in the delivery relay. That can mean delaying the delivery of a package for an extra day, in some cases. This results in a bad customer experience for everyone and potentially lost revenue. Unfortunately, UPS decided to cancel their order for trucks and package cars in 2020, as they’re waiting for a time when we can increase the horsepower performance for a station.

I was contacted by Minister Lisa Thompson’s office back in July of this year. Minister Thompson wanted to have a tour of one of our compressor stations to review the safety controls we have in place. We arranged a site tour at our London Flying J station—

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

Mr. Wade Crawford: Minister Jeff Yurek attended the meeting as well. We showed both ministers the station controls when the station was up and running and how it worked. We also showed the ministers the status of the hundreds of stations we run across North America. We’d arranged to have one of the rental trucks on-site and we fuelled it up at 149 horsepower.

After 15 minutes, when the truck was half full, they got tired of waiting so we decided not to continue fuelling. We asked Minister Yurek to push the button and shut the station down, and it shut down immediately. We showed the ministers the alerts on our computer software, and both ministers were satisfied with our safety controls. Our technicians reset the station.

On September 25, I received a letter from Minister Thompson’s office thanking us for the station tour and for providing her with a greater appreciation of how we are adhering to public safety in Ontario.

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

We’ll now turn to our next presenter, Irene Angelopoulos. If you could please state your name for the record and then begin. You will have seven minutes.

Ms. Irene Angelopoulos: Hi. My name is Irene Angelopoulos. Thank you for letting me speak today. I am here to stand up for Ontario, which would be adversely affected by schedule 2 of Bill 213. I love this country, I love this province; I’m heartbroken and disturbed to see that so many of the people elected to make this place better, including and starting with our Premier, are trying to sneak a favour in for a prejudiced millionaire whose business model is to create division and institutionalized hatred.

Doug Ford and his Conservatives are doing this under the cover of pandemic aid and just to benefit one of Doug’s

biggest donors and personal friends. The Conservatives want to quietly give Charles McVety and the Canada Christian College he inherited from his dad, Elmer, the right to call itself a university and award degrees, a right they previously lost in 1983. It’s unquestionably a political favour.

McVety’s ties to Ford are well documented, as is McVety’s reprehensible reputation for practising and preaching hate, Islamophobia, homophobia and other bigoted ideas. He was so hateful that the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council had to boot him off the air for his “malevolent, insidious and conspiratorial” remarks about the LGBTQ+ community. He invited a notorious Islamophobe, Geert Wilders, to be a special guest to his college to spew hateful nonsense about “demographic jihad.”

On top of inviting this kind of hate speech to his campus, the college’s code of conduct regulating sexuality goes against our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We’ve had rulings come down on people distributing hate flyers, and McVety gets a whole campus to spread his hate? I’d challenge any of the Conservatives who support him to prove that this is for the purpose of higher learning. But I’ll save you the trouble: It’s not. He profits off of divisiveness, plain and simple. This is the man Doug Ford calls a friend. In fact, Doug sent him a birthday video.

It’s one thing to sneak political favours into an omnibus bill, but it’s a whole new level when it’s for one of the most actively racist and divisive people in our nation. Then again, Premier Ford appears to have a soft spot for rich men who inherit their wealth and businesses from their dads and who pay for political influence.

Charles McVety’s agenda is to legitimize discrimination and profit off of spreading hate. His agenda is to erode democracy by using his wealth to buy political favours. By granting McVety this favour, the Ford government is condoning hatred and they’re proving they’re the party of the elite.

Nothing about this college merits being called a university, let alone a college, and it’s being opposed by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. Charles McVety’s college teaches creationism. That means he believes dinosaurs and humans walked the earth together and that the world was created in six days. He’s a climate change denier who has called carbon pricing the Antichrist. How can this man grant a bachelor of science degree when he doesn’t believe in science? This is an honest question.

His curriculum violates the Ontario Human Rights Code, which says that degree-granting institutions recognized by the government must meet anti-hate and anti-discrimination standards to ensure that our post-secondary system is accessible and equitable, and that students, faculty and staff of religious and other equity-seeking groups feel safe and valued within our system.

Does Doug Ford support the Ontario Human Rights Code? By doing this favour for McVety, he’s sending a message to Ontarians that he doesn’t. That’s a problem, considering his job as Premier is to represent all Ontarians.

If McVety gets this favour, I'm certain one way or another something involving his school will end up in the Supreme Court and it will waste taxpayer money through lawsuits—which Conservatives love to do anyway. In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Law Society of Ontario, denying Trinity Western University accreditation based on its discriminatory policies. Why aren't our MPPs heeding this ruling by the country's highest court? Does Doug Ford even believe in the rule of law?

The Conservatives supporting this McVety favour are balking at our Constitution, our charter—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry. MPP Piccini, I see your hand raised.

Mr. David Piccini: Yes, just on a point of order, I think this is bordering now on unparliamentary language here and substantively beyond the subject we're here to debate: this bill.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. I'd like to remind all presenters to please keep their comments parliamentary and to refrain from making accusations or imputing motive, and just stick to their presentation and what they would like to share with the committee. Thank you. You may continue.

Ms. Irene Angelopoulos: Thank you very much. I was going through the Supreme Court ruling to show that discriminatory policies in higher education are not—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry, MPP Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: Point of order, Chair. I believe you hit the nail on the head there when you said impugning motive. There were a number of occasions in which they impugn motive, which as we know goes against our procedures.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you for your point of order, MPP Piccini. I'd like to call upon the presenter to continue her presentation.

Ms. Irene Angelopoulos: Okay, thank you very much. I'll just continue with the facts about Bill 213 and schedule 2. The NDP motion to condemn this bill passed 29-27; interesting, considering Doug Ford has a majority. So only 27 of his MPPs voted in favour of McVety, including Piccini, who is in attendance today.

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

Ms. Irene Angelopoulos: And not every Conservative voted. Doug Ford couldn't even get his party to support the political favour for Charles McVety.

So I guess I'll conclude my presentation with this: The message that Doug Ford is sending Ontarians is that he chooses to be part of an elite club over doing his job as Premier to serve all Ontarians. He and the 27 other Conservatives—like Dave Piccini, Donna Skelly and Goldie Ghamari, who are present today—are showing their disdain for Canadian values, selling out average Ontarians and our human rights for political favours to rich guys who have inherited their wealth from their daddies.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Skelly, I see your hand.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Madam Chair, this is beyond parliamentary language, and you talk about impugning motive, this is—you've stated it. We understand that there are differing viewpoints, and we've heard from many people throughout the day. But there is a line, and I believe that this presenter is crossing that line and it is absolutely unparliamentary and unacceptable.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you, MPP Skelly. MPP Glover, I see your hand. I'll get to your point in a moment.

I want to remind all members that just because you disagree with a presenter—they're not held to the same standard as parliamentarians. So while we do have, all of us on all sides, an obligation to keep our comments parliamentary, we cannot hold presenters to that standard. If you disagree with them, you disagree with them; that's why we have an opportunity for questions.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I would also ask members to refrain from making hand gestures unless it's to raise their hand in order to get the attention of the Chair.

At this point, I'd like to thank the presenter. Her time is—yes, MPP Glover, you had a point of order as well?

1710

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, a couple of points, Madam Chair. When the point of order was being considered, was the presenter's clock stopped?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Thank you.

The other point of order that I'd like to make is on the gestures that MPP Bailey was making. The thumbs down to the presenter is rude and—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Glover, I have already commented on that. So for you to raise that at this point—I've already dealt with that issue.

We'll now move on to our third and final presenter. We have Geoff Schoenberg. Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: Thank you. My name is Geoff Schoenberg. I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee today.

Ms. Angelopoulos—I apologize if I mispronounce your name—your words provide a compelling and well-documented argument against schedule 2.

I wish to provide, in my time to debate, a personal reflection. Today, I speak about the values of Canadians, Christians and colleges—or universities—in an effort to highlight how the well-published actions and statements of its president are an antithesis to each of those domains.

Let's start with the university. I love universities. I've studied at six universities in four different countries. Following my PhD, I worked at and am now an honorary fellow at the University of Melbourne. In grade 12, I went on a high school trip to England and Scotland. Oxford was one of my favourite stops, and I, of course, bought the ubiquitous sweater. When I visited my grandma in North Carolina, I borrowed her car for a day so I could go and

visit the campuses of Duke University and the University of North Carolina.

I have many stories of my love for universities, but I think you get the point. University campuses hold a special place in my heart. Why? Because of the cross-cultural experiences they facilitate. One such group of experiences occurred during my PhD. I was elected as the inaugural president of a student association for graduate students at Griffith University's Gold Coast campus. This campus, so close to Surfers Paradise, naturally attracted a wide range of international students. As president of the student body, I got to meet a diverse group of people and implemented ways to provide support and assistance to improve their student experience. I was invited to participate in a walk with the Indigenous communities as part of that university's reconciliation action plan. I worked with members of different faith communities to ensure that the food and beverage options at our functions would meet their needs. I learned how to be more inclusive, directly as a result of being on a campus that was deliberately welcoming to all.

Let's talk about being Christian. One of my first jobs after high school was as a youth leader for the United Church in Calgary. One of the most popular programs my colleague and I led involved inviting faith leaders from other communities to speak about their religions with the group. It was fascinating to watch teenagers engage with and learn about different religions and how that fostered a better understanding of the community we all live in.

Another story from my experience in the church: I met my very first girlfriend through the United Church. Then years later, when we had broken up, I got to see the wedding photos of her and her trans partner in the very church where we had met. Being Christian means being inclusive.

Finally, I want to talk about what it means to be Canadian. I have lived in Australia, Denmark and the United States. I've experienced life outside of Canada, and so have gained a perspective on what Canada stands for in the world. Canada is not a perfect country. There is systemic racism in our society, but at least there are efforts to be better. When I arrived back in Canada this year after a decade of living abroad, I could see diversity in ways I didn't see in Australia: on TV programs, in media, in language. There's a long way to go, but progress is being made. Globally, Canada is seen as a place of kindness, diversity and inclusion.

I do not know the president of Canada Christian College. I've only read the news articles, and what I've read hurts me. It hurts because his words and the actions of the college don't represent what universities mean to me, his words don't represent what being Christian means to me, and they don't represent what Canada means to me.

I've spoken thus far from my heart and my experience, but prior to concluding, I want to speak as an expert. I have a PhD in organizational governance. I've conducted postdoctoral research on the links between organizational governance and the legitimacy of an institution. I've won awards from academic bodies for my work, and I received

the young alumni of the year award from Mount Royal University. This expertise in governance leads me to ask why now, and why this bill for schedule 2.

Why now? There is a Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board that, as of today, is still actively assessing two applications made by the organization. Why should the government seek to pass this legislation when these applications are still under consideration?

Why this bill? This bill is ostensibly a COVID-related bill. How is granting Canada Christian College university status and the right to provide arts and science degrees related to COVID recovery?

Proceeding with Bill 213, particularly schedule 2, while these assessments are in progress contradicts good governance, which in turn threatens the perceived legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the public. MPPs can read the articles. They can speculate on why the government is pushing this to go forward despite the lack of good governance practice.

In concluding my time today, I want to ask: Does the proposed candidate university represent the ideals of Canada? Does it represent the ideals of Christianity? Does it represent the ideals of a university? And has this bill been done in a proper manner? Has the government acted in good faith on this? The answer to all these is clearly no.

That concludes my presentation. Thank you kindly.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. At this point, we'll turn to the government for the first round of questions. Seven and a half minutes: MPP Piccini, you may begin.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate all the presenters. My first question is for Geoff. Thanks for your presentation today. I appreciate all of the things that you've accomplished. Thanks for taking the time to come to committee, to depose before committee as an Ontarian. I greatly appreciate it.

Geoff, you spoke about how one introduces enabling legislation. I'm sure you saw last year that in the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, enabling legislation was brought forward for Algoma and OCAD. Are you aware of if either university started offering those degrees or programs prior to the PEQAB process being complete?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: I am not, no.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. It has to be complete, the PEQAB process. Are you aware if Canada Christian College has brought theirs before PEQAB and are you aware of what they're seeking, as identified on the PEQAB website publicly for all Ontarians?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: When I went to the PEQAB website, I saw what they're seeking for a name change, a nomenclature change. As well, they had an organizational studies review about what they're looking to do.

Mr. David Piccini: I'm glad you brought up the organizational review and I appreciate your expertise in it. Are you familiar with what PEQAB sets out as requirements in their organizational review, their standards?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: I am not, no.

Mr. David Piccini: Because I think it's important here, Geoff. It's not about your or my feelings of what the

standards are here. It's about an independent process and what the standards are.

I'm just going to read them here for you. They include a mission statement and academic goals, administrative capacity, ethical conduct, academic freedom and integrity, student protection, financial stability, dispute resolution and organization evaluation. It's pages 21 through 29, as listed on the PEQAB website for all Ontarians to read. I would encourage you to go and read that standard, and I hope that you and many other Ontarians would support that independent process.

What I would suggest is, of the things I listed, if there is something you feel is not exemplified in that process, we can look at talking about how one might want to change that process, as a government. But that's not what's being asked here. What you're asking us to do is, according to your own personal feelings, intervene as a government in an independent process. That's highly problematic.

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: I'm asking why the government is proceeding before the independent process has been completed.

Mr. David Piccini: But it's the same—I mean, as I said, can you point to other examples previously? I told you OCAD and Algoma underwent the same thing via—it's enabling legislation. It can be brought forward three ways: either via consent, via a private bill or open to the public in a bill, as we've done before. So again, I would encourage you to review—in 2019, we introduced the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. In schedule 5, we brought forward for Algoma and OCAD the same thing that's being done here with Canada Christian College. Can you point out to me the difference there?

1720

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry. Before we continue, I just wanted to remind our presenters that their role here is to make a presentation and then respond to the member's questions. They're not here to ask questions of the members, so I would like to ask our presenters to simply stick to responding to the question that's being asked. Thank you. You may continue.

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: I only moved to Toronto in April of this year, so I have not made myself familiar with the actions of the government in the past and the way things have been done before this. In my opinion, I would think that the independent process would make sense to go ahead beforehand, and if that's the way it has been done in the past, so be it.

Mr. David Piccini: Thanks, Geoff. Look, I appreciate it and I appreciate you bringing your perspective, as you're entitled to do. My problem here with yours and many others is you haven't reviewed the PEQAB process. You're not familiar with the previous legislation that sets out precedent over the last 20 years, which the government is continuing to follow and we're opining on—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry. MPP Glover, your hand is raised.

Mr. Chris Glover: Point of order, Madam Chair. The presenters are not here to be cross-examined.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Glover, the presenters are here and MPPs have an opportunity to ask questions of them. I would say that is not an appropriate point of order, MPP Glover. We're going to continue—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): —unless you have a different point of order. Yes, MPP Glover?

Mr. Chris Glover: It's unparliamentary for members to chastise presenters.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you, MPP Glover. We're now going to continue.

MPP Piccini, you may resume, and you have three minutes and 23 seconds left.

Mr. David Piccini: Thanks very much, Chair. I think I've made my point. I would just like to thank all the presenters today for coming forward to committee, and I'll turn it over to my colleagues for any other questions. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. Are there any further questions from government? Seeing none, we'll now turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. Who would like to begin? MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, my first question will be for—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Glover, your voice is kind of low. Could you maybe turn up the volume? Thank you.

Mr. Chris Glover: Apologies. My first question is for Ms. Angelopoulos, and it's a point of explanation about imputing motive. As an MPP, I had to learn this: As parliamentarians, we're not allowed to impute motive, so we're not allowed to say that the Premier has brought forward this legislation because of donations or because of friendship. Those are the statements that were being questioned in your presentation, but you don't have the same bonds on you.

I thought you presented a very good, rational argument about why schedule 2 should be removed from this bill. If you were to summarize it in just one minute, what would be the main message that you would like to give to the government members on this committee, especially about why they should not vote for this bill with schedule 2 in it?

Ms. Irene Angelopoulos: Thank you very much for the question. My main point is because Canada Christian College does not, by Ontario's educational standards and by Ontario's human rights standards, deserve the designation of a university, nor do they deserve the right to grant degrees at all. It doesn't matter what the procedures are; it's based on the quality and content.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you. And my next question is for Mr. Schoenberg. I should have started by thanking all of you for being here. I recognize that it's a lot of work to prepare a presentation to come here, so thank you all for being here.

Mr. Schoenberg, I wanted to ask you some questions about the process that the government is going through. They brought through this enabling legislation. That was a choice of the government, to bring it forward. They're

comparing it with legislation they brought forward for Algoma and OCAD universities, which are both public universities and, as we heard from a presentation earlier, are bound by the Ontario Human Rights Code. There is a question about whether Canada Christian College is also following the Ontario Human Rights Code.

We had a professor from St. Jerome's University earlier today. He's part of a public Christian university, but he's not asked to present a pastor letter or to refrain from non-Biblical practices as part of his hiring process. That's why they're saying that Canada Christian College could be seen as in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code, because those could discriminate against non-Christians and those regulations could discriminate against LGBTQ2+ members.

What is your view on this process?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: I recall—this is a few years ago now—Reza Aslan, I believe is his name, who is Muslim, was doing a lot of research in the United States on Christianity. He really recognized that there's a difference between your faith and your research and teaching. Your research and teaching can be on any subject and on any matter, and it does not need to be guided by your faith. Academics, people with PhDs like myself, spend our time being guided by our research, being guided by what previous work has been done. Bachelor of arts and science degrees need to be grounded in academic thinking, not within what a professor's personal beliefs, standards, values or morals are. They need to be judged on the basis of their academic work, and so hiring somebody based on their faith does not really align with the human rights act or the good practices of universities.

Mr. Chris Glover: When you're talking about the good practices, do you mean academic freedom?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: Correct.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you. I've just got a couple of minutes left. Thank you both.

I want to just ask a question of Mr. Crawford. Thank you for being here. If I understand correctly, what you're saying is that your business is being hampered by an antiquated regulation that should be changed. It would actually be safer for the workers, and it would save money not only for your business, but it would make Ontario more competitive. Is that correct?

Mr. Wade Crawford: Absolutely. In other provinces or states, we don't have this issue. For someone going from, say, Quebec to the US, they might choose to fuel in Quebec and then again in the US, bypassing Ontario because our stations are slow, running at a quarter of the—

Mr. Chris Glover: Is the change that you're looking for in this bill?

Mr. Wade Crawford: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: It is. So you're speaking in support of the regulatory change?

Mr. Wade Crawford: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. I just wanted to clarify that. I still have another minute, don't I?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You have a minute and 25 seconds.

Mr. Chris Glover: A minute and 25 seconds? Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Crawford, for clarifying.

I'll go back to Mr. Schoenberg for my final question. The risk with this is that even bringing forward this legislation has led to a public debate about Mr. McVety's statements and the restatement of those statements. My fear is that we've already got extreme Islamophobia in our province. We've got acts of hatred and violence against Muslim community members and mosques in our communities. Do you think that giving him a platform as a university would further that Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: Yes, universities carry a weight with them. Being a university plays an important role in society. I know that in Australia—I don't know the familiars here—universities are expected to be able to self-accredit in terms of their sponsoring permanent resident staff etc. So there are a lot of responsibilities given to universities. Giving responsibility of a university here to somebody who has, in the past, expressed Islamophobia, homophobia—

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

1730

We'll now turn to the government members for seven and a half minutes. MPP Skelly, followed by MPP Piccini. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you to all the presenters this afternoon. It's been a very long day, and sometimes a contentious and heated debate throughout the day.

I wanted to ask my first question to Geoff. Geoff, earlier today, we had a presentation by a gentleman by the name of Dr. Christopher DiCarlo. Dr. DiCarlo is a philosopher, educator, author. He has extensive credentials. I just wanted to refer to a few of them: a former professor from the University of Toronto, Ryerson; he is a lifetime member of Humanist Canada and an expert adviser for the Centre for Inquiry Canada. He has received numerous awards—TVOntario's Big Ideas Best Lecturer, as well as Canadian Humanist of the Year award, and the list goes on and on and on. He's a published author and a lecturer and, like me, has often had the opportunity to challenge Dr. McVety. He doesn't agree with many of the things Dr. McVety says, but he said, "I will defend his right to say them." He called this entire process and this specific issue and all of the challenges to Canada Christian College attempting to pursue two degrees in science and whatever the second one is—I forget—nothing more than a moral trial.

I guess my question to you—and one of the reasons I did not support the NDP's motion is I really am a believer in freedom of speech. I am. I'm a former journalist, and I believe that regardless of your stance, unless you have been convicted by a judge and/or jury, you have the right to an opinion in Canada. It is an integral part of our democratic society, and I will stand by anyone sharing their views. I'm just curious: Do you believe that?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: Thank you, MPP Skelly. I should probably clarify, if we're going to be formal with

these things, it's actually Dr. Schoenberg, not Geoff there, so I'd appreciate that recognition.

In considering the question, yes, I believe in the freedom of speech, but I also recognize that where and when, as you document, people have been found to have committed—

Ms. Donna Skelly: I understand you're probably saying that you don't want to support people who incite hate. But my issue is, where do we as politicians—who are we to determine what you can say and cannot say? Unless a court deems something criminal, do you not believe people in Canada, in a true democratic, free society, have the right to freedom of expression?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: My answer to that would be, I think politicians are exactly the people who should be—given they have the power of the legislation—

Ms. Donna Skelly: But do you want us to now act as judge and jury?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: You're not being asked to act as judge and jury.

Ms. Donna Skelly: You are. You're asking me as a parliamentarian to say, "You're making a criminal comment. You can make that comment because you share my similar views, but I don't share your views, so therefore, I think it's crossed the line. And even though it hasn't gone in front of a judge or jury, as an elected official, I'm going to override your privileges, your rights as a Canadian, and tell you have no right to that view." They haven't been charged and they haven't been convicted in a Canadian court, but you want me to somehow tell them, "You can't share those feelings. You can't have those feelings."

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: There is nothing in the response that I've given about whether Mr. McVety has the right to express those views or not. My response is on whether those views deserve to be acknowledged as a university, and under that, in that, whether a university should represent those values to Canada and to the world. There's a lot of money to be made in international student recruitment, international education. The ability—

Ms. Donna Skelly: Earlier today, the university—and I'm not here to defend the university, believe me. I'm here to challenge the assumption that we, as parliamentarians, have some sort of God-given right to tell people how they can think and that that is the Ontario standard, that your views—you share a certain view and I share a different view, and simply because I have been elected to Parliament, I can shut down your views. You haven't been charged. You haven't gone in front of a judge or jury, but you want me to tell you you can't share those views, you can't operate a university or an institution and have those—

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: In my view, a judge and jury are the ones who reflect on and decide whether the legislation has been infringed or has been broken. It's up to the Legislature to determine what goes into that legislation.

I find it interesting the use of the term "God-given right" in this matter when, really, what we're talking about for politicians is a people-given right. You've been given the right and the decision by the people to make those

judgments on our behalf as to what the government and legislation should be doing.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm going to share my time with MPP Piccini.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you. MPP Piccini, you have one minute and 15 seconds.

Mr. David Piccini: Thanks, Chair. Just about what my colleague Skelly said to Dr. Schoenberg. The question is: You said, "I don't think they deserve to be acknowledged as a university," so do you think that decision is up to you, or PEQAB via the process?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: I think there's two: the decision by PEQAB and there's also the decision—in this case, the government has made it clear that they want to advance this case, and so that's what I'm speaking to.

Mr. David Piccini: Dr. Schoenberg, just quickly there, because ministerial consent can affect this, but the minister has put this to an independent process for review and enabling legislation, as has been the case for the last 20 years. I'm just unclear as to what you're asking for. Are you asking the people of the Legislature to deviate from standard practice here and to go with what Dr. Schoenberg or someone else would prefer on how we assess university nomenclature as per the PEQAB process or organizational review? Do you want us doing that?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: I think there's a history of poor governance being grounded in, "Well, we've always done it this way and so let's continue to do things that way."

Mr. David Piccini: Ah, so then—

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

We'll now turn to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Lindo, you may begin.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to both Dr. Schoenberg and Irene for your presentations. Before I even ask you a question, I want to apologize for the fact that you are being treated in this manner at this committee. To be brutally honest, this is a difficult conversation that we are trying to have and it isn't up to you to have all of the answers about the internal processes that we now know but the regular public don't know. I think that was just wrong-headed, and I want to make sure to put that on record.

My question to both of you, though, is that there is a very serious delineation between hate speech and freedom of speech, and what is worrisome to me in this conversation throughout the entire day of committee has been that the government has put it back on people that are deputing to try and justify hate speech being legislated. There was no reason for schedule 2 to be part of Bill 213. I'm going to start with Dr. Schoenberg and ask you to just take a little bit of time to speak to the difference between hate speech and freedom of speech and the importance that we have as Legislative Assembly members, the people that you have elected, to ensure that we do not legislate hate, or empower people who are known to have hate speech and not go back on their decisions to speak hatefully about others to now have the power to offer degrees in Ontario. We'll start with you, Dr. Schoenberg, please.

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: Thank you, MPP Lindo. I'm very well aware that oftentimes, having in my previous role as an academic and presenting different ideas—often the conversations to the presenter are actually conversations between the people asking questions themselves, so no problems on my end from anything thus far.

1740

Freedom of speech is the ability and the right to be able to speak what you feel and what you believe. It turns into hate speech when it starts to affect the safety of others. Promoting hate speech puts different communities at risk. We just have to see what's been happening with our neighbours to the south over the last four or five years.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you very much for that.

Irene, would you like to weigh in on the difference? Because what we have heard throughout the day is that the potential of allowing the Canada Christian College to grant degrees and legitimize the hate that the director has made public will actually put queer communities at risk, trans communities at risk and Muslim communities at risk. They have written to us and said that they feel unsafe. I'm going to pass it over to you, Irene, to comment on that as well.

Ms. Irene Angelopoulos: Thank you very much. Yes, I'd like to echo that I do feel that legitimizing this college legitimizes hate. In Canada, yes, freedom of expression is something that's protected, and freedom of speech, but it's within reasonable limits. No one is stopping Mr. McVety from his having his own beliefs, but at the point that he wants to legitimate his college and grant degrees that are based on a hateful agenda, that's when I feel it is the government's duty to step in and say, "Listen, this violates some of our Human Rights Code." That is part of your job. Referring back also to MPP Skelly: Yes, it is the government's job to look at that.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Chair, can you let me know how much time we have on the clock?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Three minutes and 25 seconds.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you so much.

I want to take that last comment, Irene, a little bit further as well, and I'll give you both some time to comment on that. There has been a lot of discussion about the need to step in as the governing body to help small and medium-sized businesses. That is the purpose of Bill 213. There has been resistance when we have to step in and stop hate. That, I think, is part of the tension that you were feeling and likely experiencing with the opposition members and the government members.

Can you speak a little bit about why it is important for us to use our power and privilege in ways that shut down hate, rather than perpetuate it?

Ms. Irene Angelopoulos: Absolutely. This is important, because when you're elected to Parliament or the Legislature, you're entrusted with helping those who don't have a voice—those who are not in privileged positions,

aren't wealthy and can't buy universities—to make sure the laws act like hedges, as well, that it's not just a free-for-all. Hiding behind this "oh, freedom of speech, freedom of speech"—it's really not about that. This is about curbing hatred in our society and divisiveness that's completely unnecessary.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Irene.

Dr. Schoenberg, if you'd like to use a bit of time to comment on that as well?

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: We have governments to help people, to protect people, to do things that are in the interest and the common good of all. That's one of the main and big reasons that we have a government. Protecting all people, and particularly the most marginalized, is a critical role of government. If we're not going to stand up against hate speech toward the LGBTQ2S communities, toward the communities which are marginalized based on religion or racialized communities, then what is the point of having government?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you both very much for coming to committee, for your courage to speak out and to discuss with us the important role that we play as the elected officials in Ontario. Thank you very, very much for that.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Oh, there's one more minute? Okay then, I'll shoot you another question, because I didn't realize we had that much time.

I'll let it end with Irene, if you'd like. Just reiterate again why it is important to protect the integrity of our post-secondary institutions and the impact that that has on the most marginalized and vulnerable community members.

Ms. Irene Angelopoulos: I think this echoes what Dr. Schoenberg was saying: Our Canadian institutions are places where people learn about Canadian values and where these ideas and our ideals are legitimized, so having a university that's based on hate, I think, is very detrimental to Ontario and to Canada as a whole.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Irene.

Dr. Schoenberg, if you want to take us home. I don't know; we might have just a couple of seconds.

Dr. Geoff Schoenberg: When students travel somewhere internationally, they experience the culture, they learn about a country and they bring it back to them. One university can jeopardize all of that—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much. That concludes this round. I'd like to thank our presenters. You may now step down and you are released from the committee.

This concludes our business for today. As a reminder, the deadline to send in written submissions is 7 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2020. The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Monday, November 30, 2020. Thank you, everyone. Stay safe and be well.

The committee adjourned at 1746.

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Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo (Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre ND)

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Mr. Isaiah Thorning

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Ms. Sude Beltan, research officer,
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Mr. Michael Vidoni, research officer,
Research Services