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**Official Report
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Tuesday 29 April 2014

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 29 avril 2014

**Standing Committee on
Social Policy**

Learning Through Workplace
Experience Act, 2014

**Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Loi de 2014 sur
l'apprentissage par l'expérience
en milieu de travail

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

Tuesday 29 April 2014

Mardi 29 avril 2014

The committee met at 1602 in committee room 1.

LEARNING THROUGH WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE PAR L'EXPÉRIENCE EN MILIEU DE TRAVAIL

Consideration of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to establish the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités pour créer le Conseil consultatif de l'apprentissage intégré au travail.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): I call the Standing Committee on Social Policy to order, the meeting for Tuesday, April 29. We're here this afternoon to do public consultation—

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Chair, before the meeting, I have a motion that I'd like to put on the floor.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): First of all, I need to say what we're here for.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm sorry, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): We're here to have public hearings on Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to establish the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning.

We have a full afternoon of committee, so the motion that you have will not be able to be put and dealt with until we finish the hearings because the meeting is set up to have public hearings. So we have that. You can table the motion with the Clerk, but it will not be dealt with today.

The second thing is, we have an issue that we need to deal with very quickly, and we will do that after the hearings are finished. Hopefully, we'll have a minute or two. The Clerk needs to address the committee in camera for just a few minutes.

STUDENTS AGAINST UNPAID INTERNSHIP SCAMS

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): With that, our first presentation is Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams, Josh Mandryk, co-chair.

Josh, have a seat there. Thank you very much for taking the time to come and speak to Bill 172. You will have 10 minutes to make a presentation, and then we'll have 10 minutes to have questions and comments from the committee.

With that, the floor is yours for the next 10 minutes.

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Thank you. Members of the committee, it's an honour to be here before you today. It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 172, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act. My name is Josh Mandryk, and I'm the co-chair of Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams. We're a group of students, youth, labour activists and others working to address the problem of unpaid internships in Ontario.

The focus of my presentation today is going to be on unpaid internships run through post-secondary programs in Ontario and the pressing need to take action to narrow the scope of these programs and the over-broad exclusion from minimum wage which they enjoy.

Experiential learning programs may offer invaluable experience to students in many cases, but may also offer little more than free labour to employers and the exploitation of young workers in many others. Unpaid internships, both inside and outside of the context of post-secondary educational programs, are displacing paid, entry-level jobs and are contributing to the growing youth unemployment crisis.

The youth unemployment rate in Ontario fluctuated between 16% and 17.1% in 2013, which is significantly higher than the national average. Addressing exploitative unpaid internships that are run through post-secondary educational programs must be part of a broader strategy to address youth unemployment and support young workers.

Section 3(5) of the Employment Standards Act provides that the act does not apply with respect to an individual who performs work under a program approved by a college of applied arts or technology, or a university. This provides a full-scale exclusion from minimum wage for all internships run through post-secondary programs. Our organization has a serious concern about the breadth of this exclusion.

This year, the Ministry of Labour began to take actions to proactively enforce the law and crack down on illegal unpaid internships run outside of the context of post-secondary programs. These are positive steps, but the Ontario government has failed to address the second pillar of the unpaid internship crisis, and that is the

proliferation of unpaid internships run through post-secondary programs.

Universities and colleges have failed to adequately exercise control over internships connected with academic programs. Recent media coverage has shown that it is not uncommon for college students to work as unpaid interns cleaning hotel rooms as a requirement of their academic program. These types of programs raise serious concerns about exploitation and the displacement of paid work.

We are concerned that as post-secondary educational institutions face their own budgetary crises arising from inadequate provincial funding, they are increasingly turning towards experiential learning programs as a way to collect tuition fees without having to spend funds associated with classroom instruction.

Furthermore, Ontario's colleges and universities are simply not doing enough to ensure that these programs are paid. When institutions do not push for paid programs, the inevitable default is that these programs will be unpaid.

Yesterday, April 28, was the National Day of Mourning for thousands of workers across Canada who have been killed, injured, or suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents. Today, as we consider the path forward for the regulation of experiential learning programs, we feel it's necessary to recognize the recent passing of Aaron Murray.

Aaron Murray was a 21-year-old Loyalist College student working an unpaid practicum placement as a security guard at Trent University. He was on his way home from an overnight placement shift when he crashed his car at 5:30 a.m. on April 3, 2014. Mr. Murray was the father of a three-week-old son at the time, and his situation highlights the double burden placed on unpaid practicum students, who are forced to work for free yet still have to earn an income to get by.

As the Toronto Star's Zoe McKnight reported, "The day before the crash, Murray had slept for a few hours after his overnight shift before heading to an afternoon shift at a Trenton McDonald's, where he is a manager. After a short break in the evening, he made the hour's drive back to Peterborough to check in for 9 p.m."

Mr. Murray's tragic death also raises other important concerns surrounding unpaid internships run through post-secondary programs. As the Star's Zoe McKnight reported, Mr. Murray's unpaid placement was as an overnight security guard at Trent University. The fact that this type of work would be conducted by an unpaid intern highlights both the displacement effect of unpaid internships as well as the shocking lack of oversight and regulation over what is and what is not an appropriate unpaid internship through an academic program.

Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams welcomes Bill 172 as having the potential to help the Ontario government address the proliferation of exploitative unpaid internships run through post-secondary programs. We welcome the proposed advisory council as an important opportunity for input from students and labour

organizations, but caution that the advisory council must immediately address the proliferation of unpaid internships through post-secondary programs and work towards increasing the share of these programs that are paid. The status quo on experiential learning programs is not working.

As part of the advisory council's mandate, the proposed section 3.1(6)(a) states:

"The council shall,

"(a) advise the minister with respect to ways to increase work-integrated learning opportunities, particularly paid opportunities;"

We appreciate the emphasis placed on paid opportunities in this section. In our opinion, however, it does not go far enough. Accordingly—and this is in our submission, which has been given to all of you—we propose the following amendment to the proposed section 3.1(6)(a). As we would prefer it, it would state,

"The council shall,

"(a) advise the minister with respect to ways to:

"(i) increase paid work-integrated learning opportunities, and

"(ii) improve the regulation and oversight of unpaid work-integrated learning opportunities, with the aim of limiting the overall proportion of work-integrated learning opportunities that go unpaid;"

This amendment will empower the proposed advisory council to effectively address and make recommendations regarding the rise of unpaid internships run through post-secondary programs.

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More broadly, we stress that the advisory council's focus should not simply be on expanding the number of experiential learning programs, but also ensuring that current programs are meritorious, that they are beneficial to students and young workers, and that they come with appropriate remuneration. Strong evidence suggests that this is not the case in many instances.

In conclusion, I'd like to stress my strong belief that the biggest issue surrounding experiential learning programs in Ontario right now concerns the rise of unpaid internships that exploit young workers and displace paid employment. The Ontario government must provide greater oversight and shift towards a paid-first approach that reduces the proportion of students forced to engage in unpaid labour through their academic programs.

I'd like to reiterate our organization's support for Bill 172. We welcome it as having the potential to help Ontarians take a step in the right direction regarding experiential learning programs. In order to fulfill this potential, however, the proposed advisory council must be given a clearer mandate to address unpaid internships run through post-secondary programs and to work towards increasing the share of these programs which are paid.

Thank you very much, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll start the questions with the third party. Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for the presentation.

As you know, and as the legislation describes, there are a number of different kinds of opportunities that can be defined as work-integrated learning, internships being one. Your presentation focused on unpaid internships. Would your concerns apply equally to the other types of work-integrated learning—field placements, practicums, service learning, all of those other things?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Not all are created equal. That's why we have to be careful and that's why our organization certainly isn't advocating for you to ban completely all unpaid experiential learning programs. That's certainly not the case.

I'm a law student, and I know that at our school we do placements at legal aid clinics. These are volunteer placements or credit placements which are not paid, and I feel that's appropriate, that they're unpaid there.

So certainly we're not pushing in all circumstances for these programs to be paid, but we do think that greater oversight needs to be made, because in a lot of these circumstances, we're seeing positions arising which would have traditionally been paid and are now not, and there is a problem about displacement. I think this bill intends to look at that stuff, and I think there is language around there about preference to paid positions, but in our position, we would like it to be just a bit clearer.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you. You mentioned at the beginning about your focus on unpaid internships, both inside and outside post-secondary education. Do you have a sense of what the prevalence is of unpaid internships inside the post-secondary sector versus outside?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Unfortunately, there are not official statistics on this. I know your colleague Jonah Schein has put forward a bill to track the number outside of post-secondary programs, but we're not certain.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Now, you mentioned the actions that have been taken by the government to enforce employment standards for interns. Can you talk a little bit more about what other actions you think should be taken to address those concerns?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Outside of the post-secondary context, we've seen some measures of proactive enforcement, and we've seen announcements that there will be more. We think that's all positive.

Turning more towards the content of this bill, as mentioned, there's a broad exclusion for all unpaid internships run through post-secondary programs. We have a concern that there is not enough oversight and that more guidance needs to be put forward about what is and what is not appropriate for an unpaid position. I think this bill can step us towards having that oversight, and I think the advisory council could be a useful tool for doing that.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: How much more time do I have?

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Just about a half a minute left.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The legislation defines or gives some characteristics of work-integrated learning in

section 2. Do you feel that those characteristics are appropriate to define work-integrated learning?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Yes. I think that it's very important. I think also, the parts in that section about having the requirements spelled out beforehand and the expectations—I think that's all very important.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for that.

We'll go to the government. Mr. Balkissoon.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you for being here. I'm glad you mentioned the internship of yourself in the law program, in the legal aid clinics, because my own son did it. It was a great learning experience, and I don't think money was the factor at all for him. So now that you've clarified that, can you talk about what you mean by oversight in the cases where it's unpaid? What are you expecting to achieve and what can be done?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: I think the advisory council can be a useful tool for spelling that out exactly. Given the mandate, the advisory council can help clarify that. But what we're seeing is that the current exclusion pretty well leaves it to the colleges and universities to figure out what is and what is not an appropriate unpaid position. Particularly in the colleges, you're seeing positions that are just clearly inappropriate, as the Star's Zoe McKnight has reported, positions in hotels doing cleaning jobs and things like that, which certainly most folks would agree aren't appropriate for an unpaid internship. That's just work that's being displaced by a student, and even worse, the student is forced to do this and, often, has to pay tuition for it.

Guidance needs to be done, but we think that the advisory council could help provide some of that guidance and flesh out better what is and what is not appropriate. But certainly, from the ministry, there needs to be some clear guidelines.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But what if it's a case—I know of an example with a community college that I'm familiar with, where the students who are in the hospitality program often will work on a banquet, they organize the banquet, they actually serve the patrons and they do all this stuff. They have a post-mortem where they actually look at all the logistics they went through and critique what they've done. What happens if those students volunteer because they see it as a good learning experience? Are you saying that that should not happen? How is that any different than your law program?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Well, again, some of the specifics and the really close details do need to get fleshed out, somewhere other than at this committee. But I think, speaking to hospitality and things like that, a lot of these positions are not what you're talking about. They're not a one-off thing, where folks reflect on it after, but rather, they're positions where folks work in a hotel or work as a dishwasher or work doing laundry for hundreds and hundreds of hours. That's just displacing paid work. Look at Aaron Murray, who recently passed away. He was working as an overnight security guard on a univer-

sity campus. To me, that's shocking that that was an unpaid internship. You would think that would be a good-paying job.

I'm not here advocating that every single unpaid position become paid. That's not feasible and, in many cases, it's not appropriate. But certainly, it does need to be narrowed.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: But who will be the judge and jury to determine which ones should be paid and which ones should not be paid?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Well, I think it would be fantastic if this advisory council could put forward some very clear guidelines and regulations, which colleges and university programs could then apply.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. Mr. Chudleigh.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thanks for coming in today. I think what you're advocating for is oversight, and it's where that oversight should take place that kind of interests me. If the college or university or the learning facility—they certainly should have some responsibility for that oversight. Are you suggesting the government should have the oversight of the university or college and program that they do?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: I think we're seeing that a lot of especially college programs, but some university programs, have proven themselves irresponsible in this manner and have, in many cases, proven themselves a partner in these programs which appear to be very exploitive. As I touched on before, I think a lot of colleges in particular are feeling squeezed and they're seeing these programs as a way to reduce their own costs and to get tuition fees at the same time. We're certainly seeing a rise of a number of programs which are deeply problematic, and that suggests to me that the colleges on their own have failed in the regulation of these and that they need greater guidance.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Have you seen any of these examples in, for instance, private colleges?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: I have not been in contact with folks in private colleges. I'm here in Toronto, so I've been talking mostly with folks in Toronto colleges and universities.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: There's a huge number of private colleges in Toronto.

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Yes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: So the initial responsibility, you think, lies with the universities and colleges, but is the ministry of universities and colleges not exerting any oversight in those areas?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Not sufficiently.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Not that you're aware of?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Not sufficiently. I think we looked at the broad exclusion from payment for all of these internships, which is too broad and needs to be narrowed.

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Obviously, this is an issue that overlaps between post-secondary education and labour and employment, and the

ministries need to perhaps work together on this, but certainly the MTCU needs to provide more guidance.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Your main thrust, though, is oversight?

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Yes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Good. Thank you very much for coming in.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for your presentation. It was much appreciated.

Mr. Josh Mandryk: Thank you.

ONTARIO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ALLIANCE

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Our next presenter is the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance: Sean Madden, executive director. Thank you very much for joining us this afternoon. As with the previous presenter, you will have 10 minutes in which to make your presentation, and then we'll have questions and comments from the caucuses, this time starting with the government caucus. With that, the next 10 minutes is yours.

Mr. Sean Madden: Good afternoon. Thank you for having me, and thank you for having the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance before you today.

My name is Sean Madden, as mentioned, and I am the executive director of OUSA. We represent over 140,000 undergraduate and professional students through our eight member institutions across Ontario.

OUSA advocates for an affordable, accountable, accessible and high-quality university education in Ontario. This mandate has expanded into easing the route of students out of post-secondary education as well as in. Students, more than ever, are concerned about parlaying their education into a job or career upon graduation. They're also very interested in strategies for paying for school and mitigating debt while doing their studies.

Work-integrated learning, or WIL, represents an important opportunity to address both of these concerns, particularly in disciplines where existing WIL opportunities are lacking. Research indicates that students who undertake a paid work-integrated experience have better employment outcomes, earn starting wages that are \$2 to \$3 higher than those with unpaid placements or no WIL experience, and, unsurprisingly, graduate with less debt than their peers.

Among employers who offered work-integrated learning and were able to hire full-time employees, 82% hired someone who had completed a WIL experience with them. Of all employers who hired college or university graduates, over 60% offered employment to candidates who had some form of work-integrated learning experience.

Just as importantly, OUSA focus groups have found that students who had undertaken even one work-integrated learning experience told us that they felt more confident in applying for work through an enhanced understanding of the skills developed by their education and a stronger ability to communicate those skills to employers.

Work-integrated learning has proven successful in those university fields that you might already associate with it: engineering, finance and accounting, computer sciences. Further, the largest provider of university co-operative education in our province, the University of Waterloo, has been able to provide well over 90% of their placements as paid opportunities, with a commitment to reach 100% in just a few years, showing that it is possible to find good paid experiences.

If I might address MPP Sattler's earlier question about internships within institutions, a recent OUSA survey found that of all people who had undertaken a work-integrated or experiential learning opportunity, 12% reported one of those experiences being an unpaid internship.

Bill 172 sets a positive direction for work-integrated learning in Ontario. We want to thank MPP Sattler for undertaking this bill and for consulting OUSA as part of the process.

Delving into the bill itself, the principle of ensuring that each student in a program offering work-integrated learning is given an opportunity for an appropriate placement is important to a more equitable and economically strong society, as low-income students, aboriginal students, students with disabilities or otherwise disadvantaged students can be under-represented in work-integrated learning while simultaneously having the most to gain.

We want to again thank Ms. Sattler for recognizing the importance of student representation on the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning and to express that we look forward to doing our part in fulfilling its mandate as a member.

Further, work-integrated learning opportunities are a core component of many college programs, and we expect that their example and the inclusion of the College Student Alliance in these discussions will offer some positive lessons in growing work-integrated learning within the university.

The committee's mandate contains many activities that OUSA has identified as important to enhancing and expanding work-integrated learning. In particular, a focus on paid opportunities should remain a priority for the council and the province. Recent findings indicate that not only do unpaid internships create situations favouring students from higher-income backgrounds, thereby creating inequities in important industries, but they also do not provide a lot of the opportunities that they are purported to. In fact, students who have undertaken unpaid internships were only marginally more likely to be employed than those who had undertaken no work-integrated learning, and the average earnings were actually slightly less.

In the interim, however, we want to recognize the government, as well as all engaged MPPs, including MPP Jonah Schein, for expanded enforcement in illegal internships, as well as seeking to expand protections for legal unpaid interns. I think the spirit of Bill 172 is to ensure meaningful opportunities based on learning out-

comes for all students, and it's heartening to see that spirit broadly embraced by all parties. We want to encourage that continued direction.

We also believe the bill does a good job of recognizing the informational barriers that remain a leading cause of an employer deciding not to offer a work-integrated learning opportunity. Both the mandate to increase awareness amongst employers and to contribute to the design of a Web resource are important steps to reaching into an untapped group of potential employers, including those who are unaware of the existence of such programs altogether; those who might not know the benefits of taking on a co-op or other work-integrated-learning student, or the supports available in doing so; or even those who simply might not feel that they're equipped to provide an impactful educational experience.

One of the most promising areas of the bill is empowering the council to explore incorporating work-integrated learning across disciplines. We have identified that the arts, humanities and social sciences, as well as hard sciences, are underrepresented among Ontario students who have experienced a work-integrated learning opportunity and may be over-represented amongst unpaid work-integrated learning placements. There is a belief among university staff who facilitate work-integrated learning that a lot of the easy placements have been made and that programs in engineering and finance have achieved a much higher degree of interest and outreach from employers, and that in turn contributes to their continued existence. Professionals in this area note that small to medium enterprises, and in particular those that might benefit from a student from one of these under-represented disciplines, may be even more unaware of work-integrated learning placements, their benefits and programs of support, and are almost certainly less able to facilitate such placements.

Of all the students participating in co-operative education, for example, nearly half are engineering or business students, while only 4.5% are from the hard sciences and 12% are from the arts, social sciences and humanities combined. Expanding the capacity of these small to medium enterprises to take on even one student as a trial, or expanding opportunities for these underrepresented disciplines in larger enterprises, has the potential to vastly improve the educational employment prospects of these students.

Finally, better monitoring and reporting in the area of work-integrated learning in Ontario is key to making effective decisions and remaining responsive to the problem of youth employment. OUSA fully supports a comprehensive and transparent treatment of data relating to any education initiative in the province and eagerly awaits the findings of increased oversight of WIL.

Based on everything I've said, it's probably no surprise that OUSA acknowledges Bill 172 as an important step in enhancing not only the educational experience of students but also their employment prospects. We also firmly believe that broadening the availability and accessibility of work-integrated learning will have positive

impacts for those enterprises that participate and the province as a whole.

We look forward to this bill's passage and to working with the advisory council in the next steps.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you all today. I would welcome any questions that you might have.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. The questions, as I said, are with the government. Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Welcome, Mr. Madden. Thank you for coming today. With respect to your organization, what are some of the successful examples of work-integrated learning, that you would like to share, that we should be advocating and replicating across the province?

Mr. Sean Madden: Wherever possible, a work-integrated learning opportunity—I guess this isn't a specific example, but rather a specific practice. Any work-integrated learning opportunities that clearly establish learning outcomes to be met by both the employer and the participant tend to be those best ones, ones with frequent check-ins, ones that identify activities based to those learning outcomes.

In some of the ones we've seen, a relatively high degree of independence tends to be helpful. Some of the most encouraging ones we've heard about, particularly related to this idea of under-represented disciplines, are actually in the not-for-profit, or NGO, sector, where these work-integrated learning opportunities allowed them to build capacity in a direction that they previously didn't have, and a lot of that ownership belonged to the student participating.

Ms. Soo Wong: I believe your organization shared with the committee a couple of recommendations here. In one of them, you indicated that you want to amend the Employment Standards Act related to protecting students in work-integrated learning. Has your organization spoken to the Ministry of Labour and the minister with regard to this recommendation?

Mr. Sean Madden: Yes, both. I know there were to be some working groups going forward with the Ministry of Labour. Understanding that there was some change over there recently, we're looking forward to moving forward with those.

We've had discussion with all parties about these. In general, what we're asking for is the removal of the blanket exemption that exists within the Employment Standards Act for university- or college-facilitated unpaid internships and, rather, the application of the six-point criteria that already exists in determining an unpaid internship within the Employment Standards Act.

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Ms. Soo Wong: Now, the other recommendation you put out to us is the fact that you put a target of the co-op placement opportunity by 10% over the next five years, specifically dealing with the under-represented disciplines. How do you come about with this 10%?

Mr. Sean Madden: That was actually a topic of some discussion. We had originally started with addressing the

idea of a hard number of participants. What I mean by that is matching the amount of participants from these under-represented disciplines to the actual hard number of participants within the business and engineering fields. We realized that that might be a little bit too small. So we looked at matching participation rates, and we decided that might be a little bit too big.

The incentive program that we had discussed, as you see before you, was to provide funds for the creation of placements in each of these disciplines. But with, of course, arts and humanities being a bigger discipline, getting that participation rate up to, say, that of business or engineering would be prohibitively expensive. So after some back and forth, our students decided that 10% growth would go some way towards matching the frustrations we hear from students in those disciplines about limited availability. The number was meant to be both economical, from the province's perspective, in not costing the same as bringing all participation rates up to high-participation disciplines, while still, we think, addressing some of the need.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for that. The official opposition: Mr. Chudleigh.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thanks very much for coming in. I think what I'm hearing from you is that you think that there should be a better job done of matching students to the experience. Maybe that's the universities' problem, maybe it's the colleges' problem, maybe it's the government's problem, or maybe it's the students' problem. Heavens, we don't know about the students' problem.

I had a student from Ryerson University who came in as an intern. She was here for 10 weeks, about one afternoon a week, about four or five hours. The first day we went through a little bit of work organizing 10 different areas she would look into and have some experience in in this Legislature. She got an A in the course, but I never had any contact with the university or its professor or any of his assistants. It was entirely up to the student. What would be your comments on that?

Mr. Sean Madden: That's certainly not the ideal. Certainly, students have some idea of what they hope to take away from it. But when you're talking about as part of a complete educational perspective, there are some end game outcomes that a university or college would like to see the student get. It's unfortunate that you didn't have that contact. It sounds like you did a good job of addressing learning outcomes, and it is our hope that any employer would, but a lot of employers are a little bit freaked out or unsure about how to frame those learning outcomes. Certainly, there's a little bit more room, and hopefully the advisory council would help universities to better communicate that.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: There comes a time in every student's life where they can't rely on other people to do what they have to be doing, eventually, themselves. You're suggesting that this isn't one of those times.

Mr. Sean Madden: Well, in terms of an employer relationship, I don't know if you want the majority of

situations to be the employee determining their outcomes either. We see that relationship being designed and creating the expectation and the understanding that you can effectively communicate with an employer to produce what's needed. I don't think that's any different in the work or university environments.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: There's an intern program—different than the one that I was involved in—in the Legislative Assembly here where there are 40 or 50 interns who come in and spend three or four months with an MPP with the government and then they spend three or four months with an MPP outside the government. In my experience, over almost 20 years of being here, I think none of them have ever become MPPs. They've had a wonderful experience, and they've decided to go elsewhere in their lives.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes your time, and you didn't leave an opportunity for an answer.

The third party: Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for the presentation, Sean. You talked about focus groups that you've organized through OUSA with the students you represent. Do you have a sense of what kind of level of interest there is among students more generally? Also, what are some of the barriers that students face if they are interested in participating but haven't?

Mr. Sean Madden: Absolutely. I can definitely say that there's some frustration that placements aren't available in these under-represented disciplines or in a particular area of study, or even in a particular course that seems to sort of be begging for it. We've definitely heard that. Sometimes that's motivated by, as MPP Chudleigh pointed to, figuring out what it is you want to do or not want to do, whether it be an MPP or not. Sometimes it's a financial frustration.

Some of the barriers, then, are similar. Sometimes a professor doesn't have sufficient resources or sufficient understanding, or even efficient communication with the people responsible for arranging co-op placements, and so may not be proactive in seeking that out for a particular course or area of study.

Other times, a student might feel that they don't have the financial resources to undertake it, as sometimes co-operative fees, as mentioned by the preceding speaker—sometimes it's expensive to participate in these programs, whether it be a co-op fee or the expectation that you're going to give up some income in order to undertake an unpaid, but educationally impactful experience. Other times, the students themselves might be hesitant to undertake this experience, thinking that they're not equipped to work in that environment or learn in that environment. I think probably two thirds of your barriers are informational and one third is probably financial.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. You mentioned that in these focus groups, students that you talked to reported that even those with only a single experience still felt that it was a valuable part of their post-secondary program. Those aren't all with co-op experiences, though, I gather.

Mr. Sean Madden: No.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Your recommendations on the sheet that we've been handed refer specifically to co-operative learning, but is it your sense that the other kinds of work-integrated-learning programs offer benefits that are comparable to co-op?

Mr. Sean Madden: Absolutely. As I mentioned, sometimes unpaid experiences don't seem to translate to an employer in terms of value, but from the students, we hear quite clearly that a small placement, be it one to five hours a week, an experiential learning opportunity, be that in classroom or field placement or a community service learning or service-based opportunity, all contributed to helping them figure out what they wanted to do, allowed them to apply their education in sometimes surprising ways to themselves, and to feel a little bit more comfortable in any sort of work environment.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the time. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Sean Madden: Thank you.

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS—ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Our presenter is the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario: Anna Goldfinch, Ontario national executive representative. Welcome, and thank you very much for being here this afternoon. You will have 10 minutes to make your presentation. That 10 minutes starts right now.

Ms. Anna Goldfinch: Thank you. Hello, my name is Anna Goldfinch, and I'm the national executive representative with the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario. Our organization represents full- and part-time college, undergraduate, graduate and professional students from anglophone, francophone and bilingual institutions across Ontario. We are the oldest and largest student organization in the province.

In my work with the federation, I travel from campus to campus talking to students about their experiences within the post-secondary education system. More and more, we are hearing that students in Ontario are working for free. It seems that it's now only every few weeks that we see another personal interest story about some poor student working two jobs, going to school and holding an unpaid co-op, who has hurt themselves on the job because of exhaustion, is filing a complaint for back wages or has to drop out of school because they just can't afford it.

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Today, students in Ontario pay the highest tuition fees in the country. To finance these ever-increasing fees, they are more in debt than ever: \$37,000 is the average debt for those who take on student loans in this province. That's the average. And now, increasingly they are expected to work for free.

A recent study published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has shown that it takes 2.7 times as many hours worked at minimum wage to pay for a year

of university in Ontario than it did in 1975. This means that what took my parents around a month to earn when they were in university now takes me an entire summer working at full-time minimum wage.

When students can't even earn enough to pay for tuition after a whole summer of work, it comes as no surprise that they struggle to pay for everything else, like books, rent and food. We only have to look at the skyrocketing number of students frequenting campus food banks in Ontario to know that this is the case.

I paint this picture not to be the bearer of bad news but to articulate the importance of paid work for students at a time when they desperately need to finance their education but are consistently being asked to work for little or no compensation.

It has become all too common in all sectors to expect this kind of free work from students during their degrees. Sometimes working for free is a required credit course that students must take if they want to graduate. Time, for students, like all of us, is a zero-sum game. Being forced into unpaid internships and co-op placements means that we have less time to work at paid employment.

Unfortunately for most students, working to be able to afford school is a non-negotiable, so they must work the same amount of paid hours plus the additional unpaid hours at their placement or practicum. You can only imagine what type of pressure this puts on the remaining time that students have to study, not to mention eat, sleep and fulfil family obligations.

This bill takes a step in the right direction to begin the conversation about increasing paid work-integrated learning. Students in Ontario would benefit from work where they are gaining important hands-on experience without being expected to work for free.

This conversation is an important one. Up until December 2013, interns, trainees and co-op students were not even covered under occupational health and safety laws, putting the health and safety of thousands of students at risk. We need to be doing more to ensure that students are not exploited through unpaid internships, placements, practicums and co-ops.

Now, not only are students working for free, they're currently paying to work for free. Many institutions charge tuition fees for placements because they are for-credit courses, despite the fact that students are working and not going to school. Additionally, at some institutions, the co-op or placement office is a cost-recovering service and students are charged astronomical fees to simply gain access to their database of job postings. These fees, whether they are charged through tuition or a service fee, are a barrier to experiential learning and should be eliminated.

Our first recommendation would be to eliminate these fees associated with experiential learning.

One of the places where students work the most for free happens to be in the broader public sector. Students in a wide variety of social service programs such as nursing, nurse practitioner programs, social work, educa-

tion and community support work, often complete mandatory unpaid work terms within the public sector in order to receive their degrees, diplomas and certification.

Many of these placements are run through academic programs at public colleges and universities. And even though they're run that way, the Employment Standards Act does not govern them. Many institutions also force students to pay partial or full tuition fees in order to work for free. In other situations, students already working in paid positions related to their field of study are told that they must log a certain amount of unpaid hours at their job before graduating.

While institutions and government contend that these unpaid internships are crucial to train various public servants, it is extremely uncommon for any employer to decline paying workers while they are training for a new position.

The broader public sector can lead by example to ensure all students training to work in the public service are paid for the work that they perform. By instituting paid internships, placements, co-ops and practicums in the public service, the government would be supporting a generation facing unique challenges and obstacles while setting an example for the private sector employers to follow.

Recognizing that the scope of this bill is solely within the purview of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, we would recommend that the council created through this bill would be able to work with other government departments to eliminate unpaid co-ops, placements and practicums in the broader public sector.

This bill and the council it creates is a step in the right direction. Students welcome amendments that will strengthen its mandate and widen its scope to eliminate all unpaid internships, co-ops, placements and practicums not only in the broader public sector but for all students in general.

Representing over 350,000 students in the province of Ontario, with undergraduate, graduate, college and professional students, the federation is extremely familiar with the effects of unpaid co-ops, placements and practicums and the effects that they have on students. We will be happy to continue to consult on this bill and participate in the committee when it moves forward. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. The questions will start with the official opposition. Mr. Chudleigh.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I take it your position is that all interns should be paid?

Ms. Anna Goldfinch: That's correct.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I thought so. No further questions.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Okay. The third party: Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Your organization represents both undergraduate students and graduate students. I wondered if the issues around work-integrated learning are different from the perspective of those two groups of

students. Are there differences between undergrads who participate in these programs versus graduate students?

Ms. Anna Goldfinch: There are some differences, but primarily there are a lot more similarities than differences. For example, students who might be taking a master's of social work program will also have to engage in co-op work, as well as whether they were doing a bachelor's degree. Usually, when you're moving forward, you need to log more hours.

For example, at the co-op office at my alma mater, Carleton University, both graduate students and undergraduate students use the exact same service and pay the same fees. If you wanted to engage in a co-op placement, you would have to pay the fees in the cost-recovering program to access the job bank and then pay an additional amount of money every time you accessed a job. It was \$400 to access the job bank and then \$400 every time you succeeded to gain employment, and that was for graduate students and undergraduate students.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: And that's an example of the kind of fees that you would like to see eliminated around work-integrated learning.

Ms. Anna Goldfinch: Yes, absolutely. That's a perfect example. These aren't just tuition fees; they're additional service fees.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Right. Now, you talked about the need to ensure that students who are participating in these programs are not exploited. The legislation refers to the mandate of the council to work with post-secondary institutions to ensure the quality of these placements. Is that enough, or do you think that the bill should do more to address the potential for exploitation of students?

Ms. Anna Goldfinch: I think it's a step in the right direction. Using an example from OCAD, just down the road from here, they've actually instituted a policy whereby they won't put up any co-op placements for their students if they're unpaid, which means that they are promoting the fact that their students are very skilled, and if they're going to put them out there, they should be paid for that work.

I think it's a good start to be asking post-secondary institutions to set a good example, but oversight from the province would be able to ensure that no student is being overlooked just because their institution decided not to go that way.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. You said that CFS would obviously be very eager to participate in this council, if it moves forward. What kind of work do you see your organization doing if this council is created and you would have a voice at the table?

Ms. Anna Goldfinch: Well, what we do best is representing students. I spend each day—most days—on the ground, talking to students.

Bringing the fact that we are the largest student organization in the province and we represent all types of students in the province, we would be able to bring a perspective for undergraduate, graduate and professional students both from universities and colleges. As well, the fact is we do a lot of our own research on unpaid internships, work terms, that type of thing.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much for your presentation. I just want to go back, because you made a comment with respect to some of the health-related professions. With respect to the nurses, I want to have a conversation with you with respect to—has your organization checked with the College of Nurses with respect to the fact that the nurses in Ontario must have X number of hours of training before they can graduate?

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Ms. Anna Goldfinch: Yes, absolutely. We understand how the policy works, but we're looking for a shift in the way that we conceptualize the practicum work that nurses do in our health sector. What we believe, and what nursing students believe, is that the work that they're doing is contributing to our health sector. Although they do need to log a certain number of hours in their practicum to become a registered nurse, it's very important as well to be compensated for the work they're doing and the contribution they give to our health sector.

Ms. Soo Wong: Can I get some clarification? Who should be compensating? Is it the employer where they get the training from, or the university or colleges where they're currently a student?

Ms. Anna Goldfinch: It would be through the employer. I think that this goes to show and sets up exactly what I'm saying: that these students are contributing to a workplace while they are being trained. In a lot of cases in the private sector as well, when employees are being trained, they're also contributing to that workforce and so they're paid by their employer.

It's important that, especially in the health sector and in all of the broader public sector, we're recognizing the work these students are doing and that their employers are paying them for it.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay. The other thing I was going to ask you is: How do you work collaboratively with the employer with respect to giving students opportunity, because there's that whole gamut of education and where not all employers would be supportive of having students in the workplace because they may see that as adding extra work? So how is your organization advocating in terms of educating, an improvement of that awareness, the importance of work-integrated learning?

Ms. Anna Goldfinch: I think that's a great question. I think it's something that this committee, when set up, would be able to work on and be able to produce some sort of guide that allows educational institutions to work with employers, to give them a set of best practices. We have those six criteria around internships, but I think we need to go further than that. I know that some co-op offices do workplace check-ins. That's something that should be available to students.

It should be an environment wherein the employer going into this co-op or placement or practicum is clear on what the work-integrated learning is going to be, and it's the same on the side of the students, so that there's some sort of mutual understanding.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for making the presentation this afternoon.

COLLEGES ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Our next presenter is Colleges Ontario: Bill Summers, vice-president of research and policy; and Cheryl Jensen, vice-president, academic, Mohawk College.

Thank you very much for being here this afternoon. As with the previous delegations, you will have 10 minutes for your presentation and then we'll have questions and comments from the caucuses. This time, we will start with the third party. Your 10 minutes start now.

Mr. Bill Summers: Thank you very much for having us here today. We're delighted to be able to talk to the committee about this bill. My name is Bill Summers. I'm vice-president of research and policy at Colleges Ontario. With me today is Cheryl Jensen, who's vice-president, academic at Mohawk College. As you may know, Colleges Ontario represents the 24 publicly funded colleges throughout the province.

Before I begin my remarks, I'll mention that we're just tabling a report with you that we released last fall. It's really an overview of much of the great work that the colleges do throughout the province to develop a skilled workforce. Because experiential learning is at the core of everything we do, you'll find that many of the examples involve working with employers to have a workplace component of the program. So I'll just leave that with you as background.

On behalf of the 24 public colleges, we are delighted to be here today to talk with you about Bill 172 and the importance of experiential learning in Ontario. We'd like to congratulate MPP Peggy Sattler on the introduction of this important piece of legislation and would like to commend the committee for your work.

This issue, as you know, is very important to students, parents, business leaders and the province as a whole. As you know, we face significant challenges in Ontario. We are struggling with a youth unemployment rate that is much too high. We also have a significant underemployment problem. Far too many young people are working at jobs that don't properly utilize their talents and skills, but we can't ignore the fact that, even in this economy, there are many good-paying positions that can't be filled. Quite often, that's because the young people seeking work don't have the necessary qualifications and advanced skills. There is a significant skills mismatch problem in this province. We know that there are many young people who could be making more of a contribution to Ontario's prosperity. With the right skills and the right education, many of them could find work that is even more meaningful than what they're finding now. So it is important to focus on experiential learning and to determine what Ontario can do to strengthen our workforce through this strategy.

Ontario's colleges, as I'm sure you are very aware, are leaders in this area of experiential learning. Work-integrated learning is at the very core of the education delivered by the province's 24 public colleges. We believe that integrating classroom academic learning with real-world experience encourages active learning and equips students to realize their personal and career goals, making them productive, civic-minded members of society.

Colleges offer many forms of work-integrated learning, ranging from, of course, our great role in apprenticeship training in many, many occupations; co-op placements in business and technology; clinical placements in our health science and social service programs; and a growing number of applied research projects with industry partners in many of our degree programs.

We recognize that successful work-integrated learning depends upon a three-way partnership between the employer, the college and the student. Colleges have established practices to create positive partnerships that value and aid student learning. I would like to just take a couple of minutes to highlight a few of those practices that colleges follow.

We want to ensure that students are fully integrated into the full environment of the workplace. This means, for example, that students should be included in many of the activities that regular staff would be involved in, including training and other opportunities. Colleges work with employers to ensure that the students receive orientation at the start of the placement and, at the end, an evaluation that reflects the progress that the student has made in meeting the established outcomes. We believe that students are active participants in work-integrated learning and should have a clear understanding of the expectations of both the employer and the college. So we welcome the introduction of Bill 172 and the move to highlight the importance of work-integrated learning.

We do, however, have at least one reservation about the bill—a small one, though. We do wonder whether there are some risks, in terms of using limited resources effectively, about the creation of the website to list post-secondary programs and courses that have this component. It's not clear to us what added value the website in Bill 172 would bring to students. Such a website would not likely be the primary source of information on work-integrated in the post-secondary sector, and there's the risk that it would only duplicate the information that is already available and would, of course, add a workload burden both because of the need to upload, but more importantly to maintain, the information in a current format.

More broadly, it will be important for MPPs and government to look at how Ontario can strengthen education and training to create a greater emphasis on experiential learning. We must promote the full range of careers available today, including the many well-paying careers in technical areas and the skilled trades.

We believe that one of the most important steps that Ontario can take is to look at the credentials that are

granted by the colleges. Ontario is somewhat unique. While our colleges offer some four-year degree programs, most of our programs grant diplomas and certificates. In fact, we must award diplomas to graduates of our three-year programs. This situation in Ontario is unusual. In most OECD countries, graduates of three-year post-secondary programs, including career-based programs, earn degrees rather than diplomas.

It is not clear why Ontario is different. In fact, many of our three-year programs are already aligned with provincial and national standards for degree programming. The students are meeting degree-level standards; they deserve to earn credentials that properly reflect their achievements and allow them to be competitive both within Ontario and beyond. A growing number of employers are seeking graduates who have degrees and who also have the advanced career-specific skills.

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We know that Ontario is aware that Ontario's colleges have the capacity to deliver high-quality degree programs. Several years ago, the province engaged a consulting firm to examine the role of colleges in degree granting. The study found that college degree programs were exceptionally strong in providing graduates with access to challenging careers in many fields, such as aviation technology, software development and industrial design, and that all of these programs included a core workplace-integrated learning component of at least one to three semesters.

We believe that Ontario should build on those successes, and we think that post-secondary education in Ontario should move to international standards by allowing colleges to offer three-year degrees. We believe that this will attract a greater number of students to colleges and thereby help produce more graduates with high skills in programs that include experiential learning as a core component.

I'd now like to ask Cheryl to take a few minutes and talk about her experiences at Mohawk.

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: Thank you, Bill. Just to give a couple of points on what we do at Mohawk: Mohawk is a leader in work-integrated learning. Many colleges focus on this as well. We were one of the first colleges in Canada to offer co-operative education, in the early 1970s. We currently have 27 programs with formal co-ops and manage more than 2,900 students in co-op work terms each academic year.

One of our leading examples is a partnership that we have with ArcelorMittal Dofasco in Hamilton, where we have co-op diploma apprenticeship programs created by Mohawk, our industry partners and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. These meet the needs of students, employers, our college and the government. Mohawk is the largest trainer of apprentices among Ontario colleges, and ArcelorMittal Dofasco is one of the largest trainers of apprentices in Canada. This is a very successful consortium where our students get paid co-op experience that also gives them their apprenticeship on-the-job learning competencies.

Another partnership that is well known in Ontario is the Hydro One consortium. Four colleges joined forces to meet Hydro One's workforce training and development needs in 2008. Since 2008, Hydro One has invested \$6 million to develop curriculum, to fund scholarships and bursaries, to equip labs and to give co-op placements. Enrolment and graduation rates from the electrical engineering programs have doubled since this partnership began. This is an example of a partnership that could be a model for others in the sectors.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for that. We'll start with the third party. Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you so much for taking the time to come here today to give your input into the bill.

Before I was elected, I was involved in a research project that looked in depth at these issues around work-integrated learning. Oftentimes, the feedback I would get from staff who worked at institutions who were trying to find placements was that it often became challenging to get enough employers on board who would be willing to host a student, as MPP Wong had pointed out. Sometimes there is additional work created such that employers may be reluctant to take on students.

I wondered if you could talk a little bit about if that has been your experience. Does it remain a challenge? Do you have ideas as to some of the strategies that might be useful to help enlist more employers to be involved in providing these placements?

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: I can give an example. The apprenticeship technician program partnership with ArcelorMittal Dofasco would be a good one. That's a huge company with lots of resources. We formed a consortium in Hamilton that includes smaller employers that don't have those resources. Through that consortium, the college and larger employers assist the smaller employers to take on co-ops and apprenticeships through this model. Through this consortium, we provide those resources that smaller employers don't have.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: You mentioned a concern about the creation of the website. Just to provide a little bit of context, in my community in London, there are a number of public colleges, that take students from the London area, as well as a number of private career colleges, and then, of course, there's Western University.

I was doing research with employers. Some of what I heard from employers was that they didn't know about the programs that were available locally or regionally, the specific programs that would have students available for them. Would it make a difference if this website was positioned more as a local or regional resource, so it's not sort of trying to get all programs on a provincial basis, but has more relevance from a local perspective to serve the needs of local employers?

Mr. Bill Summers: If I could make one comment and then ask Cheryl. That's interesting to hear your perspective. We were mainly thinking from a student perspective and hadn't thought of it from an employer perspective. So—and this is sort of an off-the-cuff reaction—I think

the idea of something that is more locally, regionally based might make more sense. But it also raises the question of whether there needs to be greater co-operation between all the educational providers in a region to focus on more of a single voice towards employers so that they have the sense of what the opportunities are.

Certainly, your earlier point about the challenge of finding sufficient placements is absolutely true. I think it continues to be a challenge for at least the colleges.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That does conclude the time for that. Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you so much for coming. I just want to go back to, Ms. Jensen, your comment about the consortium at Mohawk College and working with small businesses to provide students with a learning opportunity. Has your model been replicated elsewhere in the province?

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: It has. It's used in Sudbury with Cambrian College, as well. It's worked very well in both locations. What seems to be the success is to have a champion, which in this case has been the college that's taken on the role of coordinating all of the stakeholders and bringing them together in these meetings.

Ms. Soo Wong: So you need a willing host—

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: Absolutely.

Ms. Soo Wong:—meaning the community colleges in their area where it's located. Okay. I'm glad to hear that.

The other piece I heard—I wanted to get the feel from either one of you, Mr. Summers—do you believe, in your organization, Colleges Ontario, that the government should be involved in regulating work-integrated learning in terms of providing directions etc.? Does your organization, Colleges Ontario, have a position on that?

Mr. Bill Summers: We don't have an official position. I think one needs to segregate workplace co-op opportunities that are part of the academic requirements of the institution and those that are beyond the academic requirements. Our concerns would only be with what's part of the academic requirement.

I think the advisory council idea has sort of a soft way to get into this. I don't know that we'd see a need for the province to start regulating how we do it. The advisory council would be one way to bring stakeholders together to talk about best practices, sharing experiences, without moving into a regulatory framework.

Ms. Soo Wong: The previous witness talked about every co-op/experiential learning being paid. Can I get an opinion from you, Ms. Jensen? You're working in that sector fairly hands-on. What would you think the small businesses or the broader public sector would consider this? Would that become a hindrance for those kinds of experiential learning?

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: I think it's something that we would have to really study based more on discipline rather than on whether it's a co-op or an internship. For example, our co-op programs at Mohawk are all—if they're mandatory co-op, they're expected to be paid. We

have many clinical placements in our health-related fields that are not, and so that would have to be considered as a separate initiative in order to see what that would mean in terms of the players at the hospitals, the clinics, the private clinics that hire our students for those clinicals.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. The official opposition: Mr. Chudleigh.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Ms. Jensen, you suggested that Mohawk is one of the largest co-op colleges in Ontario. Do you find the employers that would offer positions for students?

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: Yes, we have a co-op office with consultants that work with employers, find new employers and bring those employers to the college or the students to the industry for interviews. As was said earlier, those consultants then follow up with the students when they're out on co-op, visit them, visit the employer, and then the students write a report for their co-op term at the end that is evaluated.

1710

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: And the number of employers you find is sufficient to cover all of the students at one co-op?

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: In general, yes. It depends on the market. It depends on the economy at the time but, in general, yes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I understand. This report they write, is there part of it that is similar to an exit interview? Do they rate their experience in the—

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: Yes. The students rate their experience and the employer rates the student's experience. It's like—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: How long have you been doing this?

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: How long have we been in co-op?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: No, you personally. A long time?

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: Over 25 years, yes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, okay. You have some experience.

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: A little bit, yes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yes. Have you noticed a change in the general sense as to the student comments over that period of time regarding their satisfaction with the experience?

Ms. Cheryl Jensen: I think the students, over the time that I've been involved with them, for that length of time, have always been very satisfied with their experience. The benefit that we have of having co-op consultants is if the experience isn't working out, we can pull a student out of an experience and get them into another one.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Good. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes your presentation. We thank you very much for taking time to come in and speak with us this afternoon.

Mr. Bill Summers: Thanks very much.

MR. ANDREW LANGILLE

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Our next presenter is Andrew Langille. Thank you very much, Andrew, for coming in this afternoon. As with the other presentations, you'll have 10 minutes to make your presentation, and then we'll have questions and comments from the three caucuses. Your 10 minutes start right now, sir.

Mr. Andrew Langille: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee on Social Policy to comment on the proposed Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, 2014.

By way of introduction, I'm a lawyer who practises mainly in the areas of employment and human rights law. I hold a masters of law degree from Osgoode Hall Law School and my graduate research there focused on the legal regulation of the school-to-labour market transition. I have always been a strong proponent of work-integrated learning, and I welcome this chance to offer comments on the legislation.

I'd like to commend the member on the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, 2014. It's a well-conceived piece of legislation, and I'm sure that it will receive support from all parties.

The critical thing that this legislation does is set up an Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning. This is a sorely needed development, given the growing prominence of work-integrated learning in Ontario's post-secondary education system. Simply put, currently there isn't a forum that brings together stakeholders to specifically address a multitude of issues arising from work-integrated learning.

This legislation is a step forward in getting a handle on work-integrated learning and bringing together key groups within the post-secondary education system. The Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning would be a welcome new voice in post-secondary education in Ontario.

I want to comment on the lack of workplace law protections for students. Students engaged in work-integrated learning and experiential education often lack critical workplace protections. I'm going to run through a high-level overview of these exclusions.

Under the Employment Standards Act, 2000, students are targeted by two exclusions. The first, under subsection 3(5) of the ESA, completely excludes high school, college and university students from all the protections under the ESA when they're undertaking work-integrated learning as part of an academic program. The second, under subsection 2(1) of Ontario regulation 285/01, excludes professional trainees in enumerated professions, such as teaching, from ESA protections related to minimum wage, overtime pay and hours of work.

Students engaged in unpaid labour are completely excluded from the Occupational Health and Safety Act due to the need for a worker to receive monetary compensation to attract protections granted under OHSA. This exclusion under OHSA is extremely powerful and

excludes a large number of young people engaged in the school-to-labour market transition from critical protections.

It should be noted that Minister Naqvi, in his previous capacity as Minister of Labour, did include reforms aimed at ending this exclusion in Bill 146, but I would submit that this legislation has not yet passed the House.

Workers' compensation protections for secondary and post-secondary students are spotty in Ontario under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. While students receive protection under WSIA for mandatory work-integrated learning and experiential education activities, any non-mandatory or voluntary programs do not attract protection under WSIA. This creates a situation where students are being left vulnerable to the possibility that critical injuries would go uncompensated in certain cases, or they would have to resort to litigation to recover compensation.

The deaths of Aaron Murray here in Ontario and Andy Ferguson in Alberta highlight how students undertaking unpaid internships in the context of school programs face heightened risks within the workplace.

I want to run through some overarching concerns related to work-integrated learning. Already, employers are replacing paid employees with students required to undertake unpaid labour. This is most evident in the hospitality industry, but it's certainly a growing problem that needs to be addressed immediately.

Work-integrated learning has grown in popularity over the past few decades in Ontario, but one wonders why students need to take unpaid internships or other forms of unpaid labour which involve cleaning hotel rooms, busing tables or conducting security patrols at night. It strikes me that a fair amount of the work-integrated learning requirements are excessive and unnecessary.

There's a reality that students from historically marginalized communities have a reduced ability to undertake unpaid labour and face a new glass ceiling in entering certain industries. There are also deep gender divisions within work-integrated learning. Certainly one sees this with excessive demands for unpaid labour in traditionally female-dominated academic programs like teaching, registered dietitian programs, social work and nursing.

There is also the issue that work-integrated learning is shifting training costs onto the backs of students and their families. Canadian employers already are spending half of what American employers do. This shift towards unpaid positions further exacerbates this long-term trend, and I wonder about some of the problematic issues arising from it.

All of these concerns give me pause when contemplating how work-integrated learning is currently being deployed in Ontario.

I want to end with providing a few comments on the overarching position that young people are facing in Ontario. The exploitation of students and young workers who are in an unequal position with respect to bargaining power and thus relatively defenceless against a denial of

a living wage is not only detrimental to their health and well-being, but casts a direct burden for their support upon the wider community.

The rise of unpaid internships, temp agency and low-wage service jobs all represent aspects of the increasingly rocky school-to-labour-market transition that youth endure in Ontario's post-financial-crisis economy. This economy is characterized by high youth unemployment, a disturbing level of underemployment, stagnant wages for most young workers, growth in precarious employment, heightened insecurity about employment prospects and a pervasive sense that things are getting worse.

Young people fear that they have been deemed expendable as they fall further and further behind what previous generations have achieved. This fear is justified, as so many young people struggle to secure a steady toehold in the labour market and cannot achieve any semblance of social or economic security.

Beyond the worries arising from the labour market, young people have a range of deeper pressures in their lives. The cost of housing is skyrocketing, tuition fees for post-secondary education have risen unabated for the better part of two decades and child care remains unaffordable for many young families. All of these trends point to an abject lack of intergenerational equity in Ontario. This generational spending gap is becoming more pronounced, and there is a distinct possibility that Ontario is setting itself up for further economic damage arising from the failure to make the necessary investments today in young people and their families.

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Going forward, I urge all of you and your colleagues to address the growing structural problems related to the school-to-labour-market transition. Furthermore, I urge the political parties here in Ontario to consider implementation of ameliorative policies to address Ontario's growing deficit in intergenerational equity and begin to close the intergenerational spending gap. A critical piece in addressing intergenerational equity is ensuring that young people have access to adequate protections during the school-to-labour-market transition, something that they do not have right now.

Thank you. Those are my comments for today. I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll start the questions and comments with Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Langille, for coming here today.

I asked a question of previous witnesses: In terms of education for the employer—because you mentioned the safety issue—can you elaborate a little bit further? What mechanisms would you suggest to this committee in terms of educating the employer about the workplaces, to ensure safety? You commented about the potential tragedies and what have you. So how do we educate? Especially some of the smaller employers don't have the resources to deal with that piece. As a human rights lawyer but also as a lawyer dealing with employment

law, could you give us some examples that we could do in terms of improvement in this area?

Mr. Andrew Langille: I think passing Bill 146 is an absolute necessity. Beyond that, the Ministry of Labour needs to have additional funding for occupational health and safety inspectors, so that they have the ability to do proactive education campaigns, visit more small employers and educate employers about the requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

I think there's a definite role for the Chief Prevention Officer in educating employers. I think some of the steps that the Ministry of Labour has taken as of late are good, but clearly, much more needs to be done.

Right now, employers are utilizing students in high-risk situations. They're sending them up on ladders, 30 feet up. They're simply not covered under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It's bizarre. I want to address this point: Students are not covered under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but if they fall and they're injured, they're covered, in certain cases, under WSIA. So you have a situation where somebody can get injured and not have any protections there, but then, once they're injured, get compensation for their injuries. I think that's somewhat ridiculous.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay. The other question I have for you is this: What do you think, in your opinion, would need to be done to improve the way we deal with work-integrated learning in our post-secondary and to provide opportunities? Because at the end of the day, you want to provide opportunities for all students. Would you suggest some of the various best practices out there that we should consider?

Mr. Andrew Langille: Simply put, we don't have a lot of information about how these programs are being deployed currently at colleges, universities or in private career colleges. I think that your point earlier about private career colleges is important. There are a lot of issues in that area.

In the wake of Aaron Murray's death, I think it's incumbent upon Minister Duguid and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to conduct a full audit of every single work-integrated learning program in the province. In the wake of Andy Ferguson's death, in Alberta, the Alberta government ordered a complete review of every program in the province. I think something like that needs to happen here, very quickly. Young people are dying because of these issues.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. The official opposition: Mr. Chudleigh.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You were concerned about the protection of students when they are working in a co-op position. The colleges, I think, would suggest that they have some responsibility in protecting the students. You would disagree with this?

Mr. Andrew Langille: Colleges, universities and private career colleges certainly have a role in protecting young people. I would not dispute that. The question in my mind is, are they properly protecting young people right now?

I think, in the wake of Aaron Murray's death, there are some very difficult questions that have to be asked. But placing somebody in a position where they're working upwards of 20 hours a day between an unpaid internship as part of an academic program and then paid employment to fund themselves—I think that raises some very difficult questions. I think there's a role for government to provide some oversight to colleges, universities and private career colleges, something that isn't being done right now.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you. Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much. I was interested in your observation that work-integrated learning shifts training costs to students and their families. But you're not opposed to work-integrated learning. I wonder, would you see a role for government in providing employer subsidies so that the employers can hire more students in work-integrated learning programs? Would that address the concern about this shifting the burden of training costs?

Mr. Andrew Langille: It comes down to this in my mind—you have a couple of options here. The burden is being cast too heavily on the backs of students, so I think a number of things have to be considered. You could look to cutting out tuition for periods where students are engaged in unpaid labour as part of an academic program and then compensate the colleges and universities accordingly, or you could move to a system of grants to provide young people with the ability to provide for the necessities of life while they're undertaking unpaid labour as part of academic programs.

The issue, in my mind, in the case of Aaron Murray's death, is that he was working as a manager at a McDonald's during the day and then going to work as an unpaid intern at Trent University at night. That raises any number of questions around hours of work and whether somebody is getting too tired to think properly. I think exhaustion was a critical factor here.

Simply put, you need to strike a balance between the needs of the employers, the needs of students and the needs of the wider economy. I don't think the balance is necessarily being struck right now with the current situation. The status quo simply isn't working, and I think the extended amount of attention to issues related to unpaid labour and unpaid internships and precarious work related to young people is a testament to that.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The legislation, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, talks about one of the mandates of the council is to identify resources and supports for post-secondary institutions to "facilitate the effective delivery of work-integrated learning programs." Do you see that aspect of the mandate—is that where some of these very critical concerns that you've raised about ensuring protection for students when they are doing these programs would be addressed?

Mr. Andrew Langille: Certainly, I think there's a role for the council, but at the same time, there needs to be

greater oversight from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour in this area. The school-to-labour-market transition for students in Ontario is becoming very rocky. All parts of government need to do a much better job, be it in the public sector directly or broader public sector organizations such as colleges and universities.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That does conclude the time that was available.

Mr. Andrew Langille: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): We thank you very much for your presentation this afternoon.

EDUCATION AT WORK ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Our next presenter is Education at Work Ontario: Lisa Whalen, manager, co-op and career services, and Kirk Patterson, member, government relations committee. Good afternoon, and thank you very much for making time to be here this afternoon with us. As with the previous delegations, you will have 10 minutes to make your presentation and then we'll have questions and comments from the committee. Your 10 minutes starts now.

1730

Mr. Kirk Patterson: Thank you very much. First of all, I'd like to thank the committee for this opportunity to make comments on Bill 172, and I would like to thank the MPP from London West for proposing this legislation. My name is Kirk Patterson, and my colleague to my left is Lisa Whalen. I work at the University of Waterloo in the co-op department, and Lisa is from Georgian College, at the co-op department. Between us, we have over 50 years of co-operative education, and we want to comment on work-integrated learning in respect to co-operative education. This form of work-integrated learning, or co-op as we refer to it, is not only offered provincially and federally; it is one that's offered internationally and worldwide, and as such has certain standards that we try to meet under the federal association for co-operative education.

We are here, as you mentioned, on behalf of Education at Work Ontario, which represents the voice of co-operative education for colleges and universities across the province. In Ontario, there are over 40,000 co-op students, 800 co-op programs and over 37 post-secondary institutions, and being part of the largest post-secondary co-op province in Canada, this number continues to grow. Co-operative education in Canada began at the University of Waterloo, as many of you may know, in 1957, and in the community colleges began in Georgian in 1968; Fanshawe and Mohawk started in 1969. Co-op is "learn as you earn," and is an integral part of students' learning and career development and success.

Education at Work Ontario strives to promote and foster co-operative education of the highest quality while ensuring an integral partnership between the students,

employers, and post-secondary education institutions. The mission of EWO is to advocate and facilitate co-operative education as an essential component of post-secondary education while providing quality service and support to its stakeholders. EWO will succeed in this mission by commitment to ongoing professional development of the co-op education practitioners, who are accountable, supportive, and sensitive to the current needs and issues and education of the co-op stakeholders; promotion of ethical and professional standards for co-operative education programs in Ontario; and responsibility for the relevance and integrity of the organization's purpose, goals and objectives.

EWO was previously known as Co-op Ontario. And Co-op Ontario was formed in 1997, through an amalgamation of the University Co-operative Educators and the College Co-operative Educators of Ontario.

EWO abides by the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education definition of co-operative education. A co-operative education program is one that formally integrates students' academic studies with work experience. The usual plan is for students to alternate periods of experience in career-related fields according to the following criteria:

- each work situation is approved by the co-operative education institution as a suitable learning experience;
- the co-operative education student is engaged in productive work rather than merely observing;
- the co-operative education student receives remuneration for work performed;
- the co-operative education student's progress on the job is monitored by the institution;
- the co-operative education student's performance on the job is supervised and is evaluated by the employer; and
- the time spent in periods of work experience must be at least 30% of the time spent in the academic studies.

My colleague Lisa will continue on with our presentation.

Ms. Lisa Whalen: Thank you, Kirk. EWO supports Bill 172 and the establishment of an Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning in principle and spirit. It has the potential to push a solid co-op strategy along with other forms of WIL. We have many questions. We wish to stress, with the forming of this council, the importance of clear definitions and standards. These are vital.

Institutions, students and employers need to have a clear understanding of what each type of WIL is and isn't. The HEQCO study on work-integrated learning defined the terminology of types of placements and work terms. This could be used as a reference. We all know of institutions that use the term "co-op" as a marketing tool—but is it a true co-op by definition? This could lead to implications with the CETC, which is the Co-operative Education Tax Credit, which clearly states that a qualifying co-operative education program generally parallels "those established by the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education for defining a co-operative education program."

Our association worked diligently and hard in lobbying and meeting with our government to initiate the CETC. EWO would not want to see this advantage for employers with the CETC undermined.

Also in the MYAA report, the annual multi-year accountability agreement, it indicates under work-integrated learning the government's interest in expanding WIL, but the only definition given is for co-op.

Internship—well, we could talk about that one for hours—paid or unpaid? How is it determined? Definitions are convoluted and vary from institution to institution. Employers are confused.

Programs with a WIL component: Guidelines need to be put in place to help determine the best type of WIL to be offered in a particular post-secondary program, i.e., co-op is paid. Not all employers, especially NFPs, can offer remuneration. What WIL component is the best fit for a particular program and its employer recruitment? What incentives—and it doesn't always need to be financial—would encourage more employers to become involved? We asked most students what their definition of "success" is. Their response was, "A job." Where does entrepreneurship and applied research fit in? Many institutions are offering entrepreneurship co-ops. Is TalentEdge viable for these types of co-ops? What about start-up funds for new programs with a WIL component? What type of career advising and employment preparation would be provided to students in these WIL programs?

Another one of our issues and questions is the membership of the council. The need to bring together an advisory council with appropriate stakeholders from WIL employers, associations, PSE institutions, HEQCO, students involved with WIL, graduates, economic development and labour market sectors is crucial in order to make informed recommendations to the ministry. A concern is members on the council who may not know or understand the managing and sustaining of work terms and placements with universities and colleges. EWO co-op institutions work closely in partnership with employers and associations and have the ability to provide necessary co-op stats and data.

Under mandate item 3.1(6)(d) in the bill, there has been concern expressed regarding the statement, "Further, it is in the interest of the people of Ontario that no student enrolled in a post-secondary program that includes a work-integrated learning component is denied the opportunity to take part." In many co-op programs throughout the province, there are enrolment guidelines and academic standards to participate in co-op.

We believe that the implementation of this advisory council falls into place with Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education, including section 3.3.1, "Jobs, Innovation, and Economic Development." It is a known fact that students who have experience in their field of study through co-op work terms will more likely obtain a graduate position because of their experience, which in turn leads to an increased grad employment rate, employer satisfaction, student

satisfaction and an increased number of graduates employed full-time in a related program.

Section 3.3.3, “Student Population”: Student demographics are changing. Colleges and universities are seeing an increase in the international student population. These students want Canadian work experience, so many enrol in co-op programs. How do we encourage employers to hire?

A student is not always young. We have many mature students returning to school, with the main goal being to obtain employment. How can we assist and again encourage employers to hire? What incentives could be provided?

Council could investigate and recommend changes on co-op students not covered under the Employment Standards Act. Most employees and employers in Ontario are covered by the ESA. However, the ESA, as the gentleman before us said, does not apply to certain individuals and persons or organizations for whom they may perform work, including individuals performing work under a program approved by a college of applied arts and technology or a university.

EWO strongly urges the council on work-integrated learning to identify effective strategies, advise and recommend to the ministry on what are WIL-experiential learning opportunities really intended to provide to a participating student; how much WIL do our programs already offer to students, and are those WIL opportunities that already exist actually fulfilling their promise and intent? We definitely need clarity on WIL definitions and standards; marketing and promotion on the benefits of WIL; resources, start-up funds and incentives; and utilizing existing organizations such as Education at Work to ensure there is no duplication of resources. EWO has its own Web portal that reaches out to institutions and employers.

Again, we thank you for listening to our questions on Bill 172. The importance of being transparent and including the right stakeholders is imperative for the success of this council. Co-op does make education work. With collaboration on definitions and standards, WIL programs will give students quality work experiences, the tools, knowledge and skills they need to become contributing members of society.

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We’d also like to thank Peggy for bringing this bill forward. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes the time. We start with the official opposition.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We’ve heard today that there are a number of concerns regarding co-op programs and they seem to focus around oversight, as to who exhibits the oversight to make sure that the students are safe, they’re getting an experience that is beneficial to them, along those lines. If oversight was the issue, where do you see that oversight taking place? Is that the responsibility of the colleges or universities? What responsibilities do the students have towards that oversight? And what responsibility does the government have towards that oversight?

Ms. Lisa Whalen: The colleges’ and universities’ co-op is paid, so we make sure that that employer does have WSIB. We have approached the Ministry of Labour to look at co-op students being involved in the Employment Standards Act.

Mr. Kirk Patterson: As far as individual work terms, I think most, if not all institutions—I know at our institution, we vet each employer. We make sure that the employer is offering a viable learning experience. Even this morning, I was in discussion with a prospective client who wants to hire co-op students, so I have a number of questions I go through with them: pay; coverage; what’s the work experience; supervision; how are they going to be trained; what type of work term are you offering them; and what are the duties. Then we go through the list. I think each institution knows that we want to get the best for our students.

I don’t like using the term, but we’re not there offering slave labour to employers. We are there offering students who are bringing current knowledge to apply to the workplace so these employers can advance themselves, advance their business. It’s a two-way street. They’re getting the youth and talent of today and tomorrow’s generation of leaders. We also want to make sure they’re giving our students the best that they can offer.

As I said, we’ve been around for over 50 years. We’ve worked on developing co-op programs from the bottom right through to monitoring. In my current field as business development for co-op students, I have a very large territory, and I only want to bring in the best for the best students that we can offer.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you. It’s wonderful to see you both again.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the lack of clarity on definitions around WIL. Co-op is actually one of the forms of work-integrated learning that is probably the most spelled out, as to what it’s supposed to involve. As you know, Lisa, from the research project that we participated in, there was a wide variety of student reports about their experiences in co-ops. Some said they weren’t paid; some said they weren’t evaluated, they weren’t supervised. Their placement did not meet many of those conditions or characteristics of what a co-op work term is supposed to involve.

I wonder, within the sector, have you had a discussion about how this can be? Why are students reporting that they’re doing these co-op work terms and yet they’re not falling within the definition of co-op?

Ms. Lisa Whalen: I could go on for a while about that one, but students, even if they’re in a field placement or a practicum or a clinical or an internship, they still call it “co-op.” I can give a prime example of when we did the KPIs, and what came back was a program, general arts and science—it got rated high on the KPIs for its co-op program. It’s not a co-op program. So employers don’t understand the differences; students don’t understand the differences.

Co-op is the only work-integrated learning that has a definition that has remuneration in the definition. Field placement is not paid. Internship is paid sometimes, and sometimes not. Clinical is not paid. Practicums are not paid. In-industry placements are not paid. Co-op is the only one that has that.

We're the only one with a really clear definition, and that's because of the lobbying and a lot of work our provincial association has done, our national association has done and our worldwide association has done.

So, being a little biased when it comes to co-operative education, a lot of other forms of work-integrated learning can look at what we do and maybe learn from it. Our students are expected to complete learning outcomes when they're out in their co-op. They are expected to submit a work-term paper, with a reflection paper on what they've learned while they were out there. It is part of their credit.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. I just want to slip in another question before my time runs out.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Make it quick.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: You mentioned a concern about "no student enrolled in a post-secondary program ... is denied the opportunity to" participate. If that was amended to say "no qualified student," would that address the concern you raised around the academic standard?

Mr. Kirk Patterson: Yes, I think so.

Ms. Lisa Whalen: Yes. That came from quite a few universities and colleges.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: But we could address it by just adding "qualified." Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes your time.

Ms. Wong?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much for your presentation.

I just want to hear from your organization: Does your organization have an opinion about colleges and universities in terms of their role in improving the work-integrated learning, in terms of opportunity for students? Does your organization have an opinion for colleges and universities on this particular file?

Ms. Lisa Whalen: I'm not sure if I understand your question. Sorry.

Ms. Soo Wong: Does your organization have an opinion for colleges and universities—because much of this co-op or work-integrated learning comes from the post-secondary. Does your organization have an opinion

in terms of how the colleges and universities can improve this type of work-integrated learning in their sector?

Ms. Lisa Whalen: Yes. I think there are three issues that we mentioned in our presentation, one being the definitions and standards, and another being marketing, which includes a one-stop, right-stop Web portal. Another one includes—sorry.

Can you help me with that one?

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa Whalen: Definitely, I think we emphasized a makeup of the committee, of the advisory council, if it goes forward.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay. In terms of the private sector—because at the end of the day, many of the employers out there are not large businesses—how do we educate and work with the small businesses, and then work with them in terms of accommodating the learning needs of the student learner but also meeting the needs of the work-places? Is there anything that you could suggest to this committee?

Mr. Kirk Patterson: When small businesses want to hire, the biggest gateway they have to get through is the wages. You have many start-ups and not-for-profits that would love to participate in co-operative education, but if they're not-for-profit, they're not-for-profit. I deal with a number of not-for-profits, and one thing they would like to see out of the government is some type of wage subsidy program or some incentive that allows them to do more hiring.

For start-ups, it's the same thing. That's why they're a start-up: They don't have the money, but they wish to hire. I think if there's a pool of funds developed that allowed the institutions to manage it for start-ups in their area, that would go a long way to improving numbers of employment.

As far as the quality of the employment, if the institutions are following the guidelines that are out there and have the art of searching out qualified and quality placements, then it will fall into place.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for your presentation this afternoon. That concludes the presentations.

As I mentioned at the start of the meeting, we do need to have a very short meeting in camera before the bells quit ringing for the vote. So if we could just adjourn this part of the meeting, then we will go into in camera to do the other issue.

The committee continued in closed session at 1749.

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