

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

G-3

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

G-3

**Standing Committee on  
General Government**

Supporting People  
and Businesses Act, 2021

2<sup>nd</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament

Tuesday 16 November 2021

**Comité permanent des  
affaires gouvernementales**

Loi de 2021 visant  
à soutenir la population  
et les entreprises

2<sup>e</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature

Mardi 16 novembre 2021

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Chair: Logan Kanapathi  
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Logan Kanapathi  
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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



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Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES**

Tuesday 16 November 2021

Mardi 16 novembre 2021

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

**SUPPORTING PEOPLE  
AND BUSINESSES ACT, 2021  
LOI DE 2021 VISANT  
À SOUTENIR LA POPULATION  
ET LES ENTREPRISES**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on General Government will come to order. We are here for public hearings on Bill 13, An Act to amend various Acts.

We have the following members in the room: I recognize MPP Sandhu, MPP Sabawy, MPP Catherine Fife and MPP Guy Bourgouin. The following members are participating remotely: MPP Daisy Wai, MPP Mike Harris and MPP Chris Glover. Thank you for joining. Also present in the room is MPP Mike Schreiner. Thank you for being here. We are also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard and broadcast and recording.

Please speak slowly and clearly, and wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Please take a brief pause before beginning. As always, all comments are to go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin, to the members of committee? MPP Harris, go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I believe MPP Bailey is trying to join on Zoom but seems to be having some trouble.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** We will reach out to him. Thank you.

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

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Our first presenter today is the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. She will have 15 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 45 minutes for questions and answers, divided into three rounds of six minutes for the government members, three rounds of six minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent members.

Are there any questions? Seeing none, I will ask MPP Nina Tangri—Associate Minister, thank you for being here and thank you for your presentation. Please go ahead.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Good morning. Thank you, Chair, very much. Thanks for the opportunity to speak with all of you today. I'd like to thank each and every member of this committee for your hard work to support people and businesses in our province.

If passed, the Supporting People and Businesses Act will help our government deliver clear and effective rules that promote public health and safeguard the environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and economic stability. It will also help to make government services easier to navigate and provide modern and efficient guidance for people and businesses as we strategically plan for the world beyond the pandemic.

Before I begin to explain this proposed legislation, I will take you back to just a few short years ago to show you how far we've come. One of the most important promises our government made to the people of Ontario was to work hard every day to cut red tape, and that's what we've been doing. When we took office in 2018, it cost Ontario companies an average of \$33,000 per year to comply with regulations. That was the highest of any province or territory in the country. Since then, we've been bringing that cost down. We've done it by eliminating unnecessary regulations while maintaining standards to keep people safe and healthy and to protect the environment.

To date, our government has taken over 300 actions to reduce red tape. If passed, the act and its associated regulatory and policy package would take that number above 400. That's 400 actions to save businesses time and money so they can focus on serving their customers and growing their companies. As documented in our 2021 Burden Reduction Report, Ontario reduced its total number of regulatory compliance requirements by 6.5% over the first three years of our government, and businesses, non-profits, municipalities, universities and colleges, school boards and hospitals have saved \$373 million in annual regulatory compliance costs since June 2018. We have made tremendous strides, but the pandemic has put great demands on people and businesses, and those demands have become more intense, more time-consuming and more costly than before. And it has reinforced the urgency of our work to further modernize regulations, take more processes online and continue tackling obstacles to growth and success.

Our government continues to work tirelessly to get our economy back to full strength, and as the Minister of Finance said in the recent fall economic statement, our government has a responsible and prudent plan to create conditions for an economic fiscal recovery driven by growth. It's a plan to protect the progress we've made, build for the future and work for workers who make it all happen. And through sensible red tape reduction, this bill would help lighten the load for people and businesses as we are planning now for the future.

The proposed act contains amendments from 13 ministries. These proposed changes would help strengthen Ontario's recovery, support businesses on the ground and help the government deliver clear and effective rules, and they would do so in a way that maintains or improves protections that keep our communities and people healthy and safe. Keeping strong public health, safety and environmental protections is important to our government, and is the first of the five principles to guide our work in this area. As I've said before, this means doing the appropriate studies and assessments on the impacts our changes could have. Our government wants to make sure we are making changes that benefit Ontarians and not harm them.

The second is to prioritize the important issues. Here, we assess which regulations cost the most time and money while looking for innovative ways to ensure the rules are effective and efficient. Some of these changes are simple solutions, such as using plain language in legislation, while some are more extensive and require consultations. But the goal is to do things that make life better, not worse, for people and businesses across the province.

The third principle is to harmonize rules with the federal government and other jurisdictions where we can. Where policy aligns across jurisdictions, our legislation and regulations should also align. It's a responsible approach that saves businesses money and time, with less paperwork needing to be completed.

The fourth principle is to listen to the people and businesses of Ontario. We want to hear about what we can do to make the right conditions for businesses and communities to prosper. We know interacting with government is not a smooth process in many situations. We also know that government doesn't have all the answers. That is why it's so important to listen to others for ideas and suggestions to the problems they are trying to navigate.

The fifth principle is to take a whole-of-government approach. We're using a broad, informed perspective to deliver a smarter government for Ontario and higher economic growth to match. It's these guiding principles that ensure we are taking every precaution in recommending the right proposals to support Ontario's people and businesses.

Now, I would like to focus on a few initiatives in the proposed Supporting People and Businesses Act that would make a meaningful difference in people's lives. Smart, modern regulations can improve how people go about their lives and make it easier for them to interact with government services. That's why we continue to update regulations and remove burdens in ways that save people time, money and frustration.

This bill is about helping to rebuild our economy by providing support for the workers behind it. As part of this support, we would make changes to the Professional Foresters Act to improve the delivery of professional forestry in Ontario. Amendments would modify the act's scope of practice to more clearly define professional forestry and reduce overlap with other natural resource professionals like arborists. The goal is to support professional foresters in the province with improved oversight by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association.

We're proposing to reduce barriers to police record checks for volunteers to boost a valuable source of talent for communities and to save money for people looking to volunteer. This change means volunteers requesting certain types of police record checks will no longer have to pay for them, reducing administrative time for police services and costs for prospective volunteers. And you'll note, the desire to volunteer in Ontario is great. We call it the Ontario spirit. This spirit is one of Ontario's greatest resources. That's why in the fall economic statement, we've committed to a \$1.6-million investment over three years to create a database of diverse skilled volunteers to be called upon to better assist in times of need.

#### **0910**

The next item I'd like to discuss are changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. These would benefit businesses by modernizing references to engineers in the legislation. This proposal will give a broader group of qualified, licensed engineers the ability to provide advice and certification as required under the act and its regulations, making it easier for businesses to comply with requirements. With the competition for talent heating up around the world, broadening the pool of qualified engineers to provide necessary technical expertise and advice to businesses will help keep our economy running and more people employed.

The next proposal would provide regulatory authority to permanently allow licensed restaurants, bars and other hospitality businesses to extend their licensed outdoor patio spaces, subject to municipal approvals. We're proposing this in response to positive feedback from businesses and consumers to the government's regulatory updates that allowed restaurants to apply to temporarily expand patio spaces.

I know there are countless sacrifices on the road to success: long hours, hard work and so much invested in the present to yield returns for the future. But then you can see success, like that of one of many of my constituents, Maryam. Maryam opened her restaurant in 2019—of course, not knowing that in a few short months COVID-19 would hit. Faced with having to find new ways to serve her customers, Maryam was so relieved to find out, thanks to the extended licensing of patio spaces, she was able to continue to grow her customer base. It's examples like this, despite the demands of a global pandemic, that showed our government is committed to making strategic investments and working hard to help more people and businesses like Maryam's succeed.

This modernization initiative helps businesses adapt to the demands of COVID-19. Making it permanent would

open up opportunities for how restaurants and bars serve patrons well into the future. We are also proposing to help streamline the planning system, which may in some cases shorten approval timelines. This item would give municipal councils greater authority to determine which decisions could be made by committees of council or staff. Beyond shortening approval timelines and streamlining the planning system, this change would provide municipal councils with additional flexibility to focus their time on strategic items for the benefit of their communities. This is critical, especially given the incredible housing shortage we are experiencing right across our province. By allowing councils to give decision-making authority to staff on minor planning changes, affordable housing could be built that much quicker instead of getting caught up in time-consuming approvals. The benefit for businesses could include lower costs and incentive to move forward with innovative plans and reduce frustration thanks to shorter approval timelines.

Our next item would help keep a major Ontario economic hub running and help grow a vibrant community. We know investing in better, faster transit can unlock sustainable growth, so we are working in partnership with York region to expand the subway network in keeping with our commitment to build the Yonge North subway extension. Through this bill, we're proposing changes to the Development Charges Act to help York region fund its portion of the subway. These changes would enable the region to recover more of the eligible growth-related cost of the extension through development charges while also protecting taxpayers' best interests. This would also ensure we can remain on schedule to build this necessary infrastructure, connecting residents of York region to reliable transit in Toronto to get people moving.

The Yonge North subway extension will strengthen connectivity across the region, reduce travel times and greenhouse gas emissions and provide more people with access to rapid transit. This transformative project will create thousands of jobs per construction year and drive regional investment for decades. Along with improved rapid transit for the people of York region, the proposed transit-oriented communities along the line will bolster housing supply, including affordable housing, and support economic development by creating thousands of jobs and new employment spaces.

As part of Ontario's ongoing work to modernize the environmental assessment program, or EA, our government is proposing a minor amendment to the Environmental Assessment Act. The idea is to clarify the minister's authority to make changes to the types of projects that can follow a class EA, helping to increase transparency. In fact, to protect the environment, projects that follow the class EA process would still require consultation with Indigenous communities, the public and other stakeholders to develop mitigation measures and document findings in a report.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Minister, you have two minutes to go.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** We remain committed to seeking input before allowing other project types to begin following a class EA process.

Our next two proposals would benefit Ontarians by helping to keep public lands for public use. Amendments to both the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act and the Public Lands Act would prevent people from claiming ownership of public lands by unlawfully occupying a public space in a provincial park or conservation reserve. This would help to ensure that this land remains available for public use and outdoor recreation.

I'd like to now discuss a proposal that would further Ontario's Critical Minerals Strategy and, at the same time, minimize its environmental impact. It's a great example of how regulatory modernization and red tape reduction can create sustainable, economic growth that serves or, in this case, enhances the public interest.

What I've outlined today are just some of the proposals in the Supporting People and Businesses Act. Through the 25 schedules, the act, if passed, will modernize significant statutes to remove unnecessary, outdated and duplicative regulations that impede people and businesses in their everyday lives. These actions will also support businesses on the ground as we work with them to overcome challenges they've never faced before, and they'll deliver clear and effective rules that will protect public health and safety and the environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and economic opportunity. By modernizing and streamlining rules and moving more processes and services online, we can help people and businesses while they manage this next phase of the pandemic and prepare them for the brighter days ahead. Thank you very much, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you, Minister, for that presentation.

Before I start with the questions, I would like to confirm some of the attendance. MPP Bailey, please confirm: Are you a member and are you currently in Ontario? MPP Bailey—also we have MPP Andrea Khanjin present in the room. Thank you for being here.

We'll start with the questions, and this round of questions will start with the official opposition. MPP Catherine Fife, please go ahead.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much, Associate Minister, for being before us this morning. We do have some questions and the questions shouldn't be a big surprise to you because we raised some of the issues during the debate.

One of the schedules, particularly: schedule 2, the Cannabis Licence Act. The government says that this will provide that retailers may sell products in the immediate vicinity of the store or by delivery. You're acknowledging that there have been some accommodations that were made during COVID, and so you've adapted this schedule as part of this omnibus piece of legislation. But what we were wondering, and actually what councils across Ontario are wondering, is why you didn't address the elephant in the room with regard to cannabis store locations.

As you know, last week, two city councillors are putting forward a motion to push for a one-year moratorium

on new cannabis retail stores. This is in the city of Toronto. Kristyn Wong-Tam and Paula Fletcher tabled a motion last week to ask your government to pause the issuing of new licences for one year or until Bill 29 is passed, which is the private member's bill that's been brought forward by our member for Davenport.

**0920**

There are a lot of cannabis stores popping up around Ontario on our main streets. In Waterloo alone, we have seven, and we don't have a very long main street. There doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason around the location of these stores. As a government, you did give municipalities the opportunity to opt in or opt out, but that is very final, and you didn't give municipalities any say over the location of the cannabis stores or even the number of them that can be located in any single neighbourhood. Councillor Fletcher has said that this has led to the Wild West, if you will. Relating it to small business and economic recovery, they also mention that these stores are also driving up the rents so high that many other businesses are having to leave. Landlords aren't renewing the leases of long-time tenants. If these cannabis shops fail, then who's going to pay that kind of rent? So it's setting a very high bar and actually making main street rents more competitive and more difficult for small businesses to locate in those locations.

The motion that city council brought forward says that municipalities already have the ability to weigh in on the location of other businesses, like the LCBO, that sell controlled substances. So municipalities are wondering why you are giving them the ability to determine where LCBO stores are located on main streets, but not giving them the autonomy and, I would say, the respect of determining where cannabis stores are located on main streets. In Toronto, here, in one two-block section, there are seven cannabis stores.

You've talked in your opening comments about being open and responsive. This is a fairly major issue for major cities across Ontario. Why did you not incorporate that in schedule 2 of Bill 13?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I appreciate the questions and the comments.

I'm going to speak to the bill as it is because this is what we're here to do today. The proposed changes—what they're intended to do is also the safety. When we think about, throughout the pandemic, and as we've seen—because we're proposing to permanently enable cannabis retail stores to offer the very popular curbside pickup or delivery. It's also a safety issue, when you think about it. If you think of someone who's going out to purchase cannabis—if they're having it delivered to their home, they're not potentially driving to a cannabis store impaired, and I think that is even much more critical.

I understand that you're talking about where they're located. We gave the opportunity to municipalities to opt in and opt out and then utilize that as part of their model. I know that the Attorney General's office is looking at the cannabis legislation as a whole to do more.

But today we're talking about what is in this legislation right now.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This is my opportunity as the official opposition, Minister, to question why you have left such a major gap in Bill 13. There is obviously a need for municipalities that have articulated their concerns. You have addressed a small piece of adapting through COVID-19 as it relates to cannabis, but you have not addressed—you said this is not about this or that. Actually, this is about the location of cannabis stores—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Fife, you have 30 seconds left.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:**—and the inconsistency in this government's policy as it relates to cannabis stores.

I haven't heard a good rationale from you, and so I hope that the government will be amenable to an amendment on this issue, because if you are going to address so-called red tape, then you have to address the ongoing issues that are facing businesses in Ontario.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** The next round goes to the independent member. MPP Schreiner.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thank you, Associate Minister, for being here today.

I'm going to direct my first question regarding schedule 20. I think most non-profit organizations are pleased that the government is going to cover the costs of level 1 and 2 volunteer police record checks. But many are asking why not cover all three and include vulnerable sector checks as well. Obviously a number of organizations require those types of police record checks, so why wouldn't they be covered under this bill?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Schreiner, for the question. I think I've spoken about it in the past. I think we all agree that one of our best resources are our volunteers, right across this province and probably globally. What was critical, and it's something that came from the Solicitor General's office—and I know a member of our independents has been pushing for this, MPP Karahalios. It's something she's been looking to do and that we've worked together on. But what is important is that we allow those people to have a free police record check, with five additional copies as well.

Under the vulnerable sector, it's actually very time consuming to put that record check together and it would be quite a burden on our police forces to do that for free. So at this time, it's still being charged for, but for the regular police record checks for volunteers and judicial checks, they're going to be free if this legislation is passed.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I would hope the government would be open to an amendment on that, because I absolutely agree with you that we want to support the volunteer sector. The volunteer sector has been particularly hard hit during COVID and the demand for volunteer services has gone up, so making it easier for people to volunteer, I think, is a good thing for Ontario, and I think including all three levels would be a positive step forward.

I want to shift just briefly to schedule 10. The government has made pretty significant changes to the Environmental Assessment Act, giving the minister pretty unprecedented and extraordinary leeway in determining what will be included in an environmental assessment and

what will not be included. This particular bill makes additional changes, and I'm curious what your reasoning is for giving the minister even more power. What are you hoping to accomplish in Bill 13 that you weren't able to accomplish in—I think it was Bill 197, the previous changes you've made to the Environmental Assessment Act?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you once again, MPP Schreiner, for the question. Over the past two years, our government has been working to modernize our environmental assessment programs to maintain what—and I'm sure you agree with this; we want rigorous environmental protections. But we also have to support economic recovery and reduce red tape in this area.

The amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act in 2020 provided the authority to amend class environmental assessments to allow us to better ensure that the appropriate level of assessment was conducted for projects with predictable environmental effects that can be readily managed. The minor amendment that we're making here clarifies the existing authority that allows for the amendment to the class EA to occur, and it allows the changing of the types of project that will be eligible to follow that class EA process.

So it continues to make sure that we do the full consultations as needed, as you know, with Indigenous communities and all stakeholders involved to make sure that it is being done properly. But it's just to modernize it, to fix that and clarify that process.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Are you comfortable giving the minister such extraordinary powers to make those kinds of determinations? I mean, obviously, you are in the current government, but think of future governments where you'll have ministers that likely will not have the same political philosophy that you would have. Do you feel comfortable with the minister having that kind of power?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Twenty-six seconds left.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Well, I think what is most important is that the correct process is followed and that we do rigorously protect our environment. By doing this, it will streamline to allow, for example, affordable housing to get built much faster, and we all know that we desperately need affordable housing as soon as possible. We have a huge lack in housing as a whole, but to find affordable housing—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you.

This round goes to the government members. MPP Harris, go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Thank you so much, Minister Tangri, for being here today. I think there's a lot of great things that are contained within this bill and it's great to hear you talk a little bit about them today.

**0930**

I wanted to kick things off by saying thank you for extending the liquor licensing to patios. This is one big thing for our municipality in Waterloo region. I know the city of Kitchener and the city of Waterloo were two of the first municipalities to actually go ahead and adopt this. It's been a saviour for many of our small businesses through the pandemic.

I was hoping maybe you could talk a little bit more about how this came about. I know, myself, I had an opportunity to work with Minister Downey to look at some ways to put this together. But maybe touch a little bit more on some of the conversations that you've had. I know you mentioned a constituent of yours—I think it was Maryam—who has really benefited from this as well. Maybe give us a little more highlights on how this is going to continue to be good for small businesses across the province.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you very much, MPP Harris. Like businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced our government to look at different ways of doing things. We made several changes throughout the pandemic, many in the justice sector or related to government services delivery. But we also looked at how we could work better for businesses and ensure that they were supported during these difficult times.

In late 2020, regulatory changes were made to provide the AGCO with the ability to set policies related to temporary licence extensions. The AGCO's current policy allows liquor sale licences, such as a licensed boat operator, to temporarily extend or add a temporary physical extension of their licensed premises until January 2022. As we saw that that was coming to an end, we have now allowed for the creation of extended patios not just during the pandemic, but if this bill passes then that will allow—of course, with the approval from the municipalities themselves, it will make that permanent.

As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, this temporary change has really helped business owners like Maryam, who is in my riding, and other businesses across the province stay afloat. I've been touring across our province quite a lot, MPP Harris. I visit many bars and restaurants, and they have said that that one part throughout the pandemic has actually saved their businesses—but one part of many changes that we made. It has been so successful throughout the pandemic. It is something that municipalities agree with, that they really want to continue and extend.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** That's great. Thank you, Minister. I think there are some other folks on the line here who want to chime in.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Sandhu?

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you, Minister, for your presentation. First of all, I would like to thank you for supporting our small businesses, because they are the ones who are most impacted by this pandemic, and also for the great work your ministry is doing to cut red tape. You mentioned in your remarks, Minister, that Ontario has taken over 300 actions to reduce red tape and if this bill is passed, along with regulatory amendments, this will bring that number to 400. So when your ministry is putting these packages together, how are you determining what your priorities are? Does consultation with industry or those affected by a change occur?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Sandhu, for the question and your comments. The bill we're discussing today is designed to reduce burden for people and

businesses in forward-thinking and very responsible ways. Ones that would maintain or enhance health, safety and, of course, our environment.

Currently, so many of our regulatory requirements in Ontario, they're either inefficient, they're inflexible, they're very out of date or they're duplicative, because there is that same regulation federally or municipally. They're the ones that we are really looking at in this bill to eliminate, while protecting health, safety and the environment, as always. Some of them are very costly. They're very burdensome regulations, and they're squeezing people and businesses throughout the province and across all sectors.

Cutting red tape, however, frees people and businesses from wasting time and resources filling out forms, going beyond what's necessary to achieve the regulatory goals that we need. So what we're doing is we're trying to minimize that frustration. We're saving money, and it gives more time to allow businesses and people to do what they do best, which is either continuing with their everyday lives or running their businesses.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have 56 seconds left. I see MPP Bailey. Go ahead.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Welcome, Minister Tangri, to our meeting today. My question is about volunteers. I've worked a lot with volunteers over the years, and I see that you've made proposals, I think under schedule 20, to amend the police record checks. I think that's something that's come up a number of times in the House since I've been there. I would like to see if you can elaborate on what your goals are and what you think it would mean to the volunteer community in the province of Ontario.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you so much, MPP Bailey, for that excellent question. As I mentioned earlier, volunteers really do strengthen Ontario's social fabric right across all of our communities. Especially as we've seen throughout COVID-19—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Nine seconds left.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** —proposals to reduce barriers to volunteers who require police record checks have been raised repeatedly in the House. That's something that we're working hard towards, to make sure that we can support our volunteers by making those police record checks—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you.

This round of questions will start with the official opposition. MPP Fife, please go ahead.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I have to go back to the theme of—the promotional piece around Bill 13 is that this is about supporting businesses. Aside from cannabis home delivery and bigger restaurant patios, there are some missed opportunities in here. I do want to better understand why you haven't addressed them.

In my first section, I talked to you about that the prevalence of cannabis stores on our main streets and across our cities is driving up the cost of rent. We also know that during the pandemic, commercial rents were out of

control. I learned a lot about the Commercial Tenancies Act and how little control tenants have in that relationship with their landlord. All of us received complaints from businesses where rents were hiked up, along with insurance rates, along with ancillary fees including cleaning and key fees.

Why did you not address, in a massive way, I would say, or at least recognize the need to modernize the Commercial Tenancies Act to address some of these high rents? Or why didn't you use this opportunity, if you were going to open up an omnibus piece of legislation, to address the ineffectiveness of the small business grant that you rolled out during COVID?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Fife, for the question. I understand the concerns, but throughout the pandemic, we had to quickly manoeuvre as a government—all of us, I think—in supporting our businesses. We had to be very quick. We've seen what the impacts have been, through public health measures, to our businesses—and to make sure that we could immediately give our businesses support.

What we did, as far as the small business grant, was to get that money to businesses as quickly as possible because we did recognize that huge shock that was there by closing them down. The small business grants delivered, I think, close to \$3 billion in urgent and unprecedented support to over 110,000 small businesses right across our province. In 2021, in the budget, we doubled that payment to eligible businesses so that they could receive up to \$40,000.

But let's look at how different this has been from what other jurisdictions have done. We gave it as a grant and we ensured that they were able to use those funds as they saw best fit, whether it was to pay rent, pay wages or pay suppliers—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you, Minister. I just want to say that I only have six minutes, so I have to—you intentionally left out a whole section of businesses that didn't qualify for the first or for the second round. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has criticized the government for not being more inclusive in the small business grant. If you're going to call a piece of legislation “supporting people and businesses,” then I would think that you would be changing and adapting the legislation in that regard.

There are unintended consequences of policies. I just need to put that on the record. Right now, there are 163 cannabis retail outlets in Toronto. As I pointed out, when these cannabis stores come in, they pay very high rent. This drives the market rate of rent up. But there doesn't seem to be any overall accountability on this file. How is the government determining what the appropriate number of cannabis stores is in Ontario? Mayor John Tory said last week that it's time to take another look at this matter, because councils are struggling with maintaining the integrity of our main streets. I just need to ask you, why do you not support municipalities having a greater say in where cannabis stores are located in their uptowns, and why would you not use Bill 13 to align the liquor licences

with the cannabis licences? These are two issues that have a lot of attention right now in the province of Ontario. Why a special set of rules for cannabis, where municipalities are sort of left in the dark as to where these stores are located? And will you support Bill 29 and give municipalities that support?

0940

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Fife, for the question. I understand all of your concerns. When we were putting together Bill 13, it was put together after extensive consultation through 13 different ministries, each of them doing their part to put it together.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** One minute left.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** The intention was to make sure that we could have parts of this to help us recover from the pandemic, and that's what we're addressing in Bill 13—and not just coming through the pandemic, but moving forward to ensure that our businesses can move forward and recover and excel.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you. It's 30 seconds?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Forty seconds.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Oh, I was told I was out of time.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Pardon?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I thought you said I was out of time.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Forty seconds.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Just very quickly: Schedule 10 further expands the minister's or the LG in C's power to exempt types of projects from a full environmental assessment. Would this include highways like Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass? Obviously, we have major concerns about the environmental integrity going forward with those projects. Can you answer that question?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** How much time do I have?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Fourteen seconds.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Forty?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I thought you said 14.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Fourteen.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** That's a lot to put into 14 seconds.

A clarification is what is in this bill to allow what can be put forward into a class EA. But that's after all the thorough consultations have taken place.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Sorry to cut you off, Minister. I'd like to let the committee members know, if you want to interrupt the conversation, please go through the Chair. That's the way we conduct smoother conversations. These are committee meetings. Thank you.

The next presentation starts with the independent member. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Through you, Chair, to the associate minister: I want to follow up on that last question and follow up on my previous line of questioning. The government has already made changes to fast-track environmental assessments, particularly on major infrastructure projects like Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. How will the changes in schedule 10 of this bill affect the government's environmental assessment of major highway projects?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Schreiner, for the question. As you know, we're just proposing a minor amendment to the Environmental Assessment Act, to clarify—and it's just for clarity—the authority to make changes to the types of projects that are covered by the class EA. In the past, there were many projects that could take upwards of 10 years to have that environmental assessment completed, and this will help reduce that timing for certain types of projects to approximately three years. By doing that, we're able to make sure that those projects can get developed faster to make sure that we can have more housing that we desperately need, that we can get that affordable housing built that we desperately need to get people into those homes. Right now, we have a massive shortage of housing, but the processes right now for individual environmental assessments are very slow and they're very ineffective.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Schreiner—

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Like we said, sometimes it's 10 years. It's definitely upwards of six years, and I've seen this first-hand through many people that I know who just want to get those projects made, whether it's for seniors' homes—

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thank you, Chair.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** —or affordable housing for families—

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Excuse me, Chair, may I—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Schreiner.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thank you, Chair.

Sorry, I just have a limited amount of time, and obviously you don't want to talk about highways, so I'm going to switch to schedule 21. Under the changes made, you've eliminated the word "conservation" under the role of the scope of practice for professional foresters. I'm curious, at a time when we're making significant international commitments to conserve forests, that we would take the word "conservation" out of their scope of practice.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** How much time do I have, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have two minutes.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you once again, MPP Schreiner, for the question. Understanding this is just separating professional foresters from other professions such as arborists. Arborists have a specific—what they are meant to do, and this was just clarifying the professional foresters through the act. It's just making that clarity that they've been asking for. The arborists are asking for that and the professional foresters are asking for that, just to make sure that that clarity is in place.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate that. I've been meeting both with the foresters and the arborists, but I'm curious why the word "conservation" has been taken out, because I haven't heard any of those organizations suggesting that they shouldn't be conserving forests. I'm just curious if there's a rationale behind that.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I'll get back to you on that, because I don't have an answer.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate that. Thank you.

How much time do I have?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have a minute and eight seconds.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Oh, good. Okay.

The other line that was taken out of the scope of practice for professional foresters was the assessment of impact from planned activities on forest and urban forests. That, again, seems like an important point of our efforts to conserve and preserve forests. I'm curious why that would be removed from the scope of practice for professional foresters.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I need to pull out the legislation part up here. I apologize.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I understand.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** As you know, like I said, there are 100 additional parts to this legislation. Predominantly all of it is taken from listening to stakeholders in the areas where they just want to have that clarity in place, and some of the legislation and especially some of the regulations are extremely old and they don't really work with today's real world that we're living in. So that's what this bill is pertaining to; we're looking at removing duplicative regulations.

For example, if the federal government has that, we want to make sure—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you, Minister. Sorry to cut you off.

The next round goes to the government members. I see MPP Daisy Wai. Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Thank you very much, Minister Tangri. I was a business owner myself. Red tape has really suffocated a lot of business development that I have gone through. I really appreciate what you're doing with 13 different ministries, evaluating on red tape.

I still want to know exactly what the red tape reduction—it is a very friendly word and I understand it, but if the minister can let us know what red tape is, how it affects people and businesses, and why it is so important when we remove it.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Wai, for the question. Prior to coming into government when we ran in the election in 2018, we heard time and time again from many stakeholders and from consumers how difficult it was working with government on being able to do business. Filings have to be—they're duplicative: There's a federal regulation, there's a provincial regulation, there's a municipal regulation that all deal with the same issue. Rather than have them be duplicative, we want to remove those provincially if that federal one is there. Of course, everything has to have the lens of the health, safety and environmental protections on it.

One thing that we're doing for this legislation and any legislation going forward is, if it is brought—I have what we call a regulatory impact analysis that's provided to me, so any time we want to add a regulation or legislation, or take it away, we want to know what that real impact is on either businesses or the people of this province.

For example, if there's new legislation coming in or regulations coming to us that are going to cost our businesses or cost the people of this province a significant

amount of money, we need to think that through very, very carefully, and vice versa. You don't remove red tape for the sake of removing it; you do it because it really is the right thing to do, and if there's a cost savings to the people of this province and to businesses, we need to know what those cost saving are.

As I mentioned earlier, we've saved over \$373 million so far in the first three years of government for businesses. Our aim is much higher, and we're pretty optimistic that we will reach that because we are doing what the people of this province need us to do. They need us to help them make sure that it's easy to do business here. The ease of doing business in Ontario needs to be there, and it's the government's responsibility to create that environment.

**0950**

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Thank you, Minister.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** To the minister: There are, certainly, some schedules that are so big and some schedules are very, very tiny and small, like, for example, schedule 5—it's only three lines long. If you can enlighten the committee about what the impact of even those small changes can be on businesses to make things easier and business more doable in Ontario.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Sabawy. Many of the things that we have in the bill are small changes. Some of them are just to make the language easier in some parts of the legislation, just to bring that clarity so it's easier to understand for the layman. It shouldn't always be in legal jargon because it's difficult for the everyday person to understand.

What we want to do is to make sure that throughout this legislation and this bill, by making those minor changes, even though they seem small, they are very impactful for people, for those stakeholders involved and, frankly, in the long term, it's very impactful for everyday Ontarians. That is the ability that we have throughout this legislation to make sure that that happens.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you, Minister, for the answer. I would like to also clarify one part. We know that with every change that comes, there is fear and there is uncertainty from businesses. We know the nature of business: Any change could impact them, could they bring them out of business sometimes. Can you tell us a little bit more about the amount of consultations the ministry did with the businesses that are going to be affected by the changes?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Sabawy. That's a great question, because legislation is not just brought about—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you. Legislation is not brought about just at a whim. It's done after extensive consultation with all stakeholders, so with businesses, with consumers, with anyone that has any area that is involved in this, we have to make sure that they are at the table. We have to ensure that they have a say in all of this, as we're doing here in committee. We've proposed this

legislation. We're going to be hearing from members and many stakeholders will be coming, starting today. From that, we will have more feedback, even though we made sure that we did that prior to doing this.

So it's not a process of doing something very quickly. This is something that's been done after much thought, after years of work, and we're proposing this to put it forward, to make life that little bit easier for people and for businesses of our province.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have 11 seconds.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you, Minister. I don't think 11 seconds will be enough to ask a question, but can you give us even one example of the consultations we did?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

This is our final round of questions. We'll start with the official opposition. MPP Chris Glover, please go ahead.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you to the associate minister for being here and answering our questions today. My question is going to be about the section of the bill that deals with schedule 10, which gives the minister greater powers to exempt construction projects and other projects from environmental assessments.

Today in the news, we're seeing that British Columbia is inundated with landslides and floods. Last summer, they had a record forest fire season, and we had a record forest fire season in northwest Ontario last summer as well. A couple of years ago, we had record flooding all along the Great Lakes and the Ottawa River in Ontario.

Climate change is here, and extreme climate events like this are going to become more and more frequent. So my question is, why has the government chosen this time to strip the Environmental Assessment Act of some of its power and give the minister the power to override the Environmental Assessment Act and exempt projects from environmental assessments?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Glover, for the question and your participation today.

The current process that we have for individual environmental assessments is very slow and it's sometimes very ineffective. It can take upwards of six to 10 years for the most complex of projects to go through, and that really slows down important infrastructure projects that help Ontario's communities.

Following a class EA process, instead of completing an individual or comprehensive EA, will help municipalities, businesses and all of the proponents save time and money, getting their projects built much, much faster. Still, we have to maintain—and we will maintain—strong environmental oversight, while supporting our economy at the same time.

We have to protect and safeguard our environment, as I mentioned earlier, so projects that do follow the class EA process will still require consultation with our Indigenous communities, the public and stakeholders; assessments of environmental impacts; development of mitigation measures; and documentation of the findings in a report. That does not change. That will remain very, very extensive.

But as part of this ongoing work to modernize the program, our government is proposing to clarify the authority to change which classes of projects can use a streamlined class EA process and start following that comprehensive—

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Mr. Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Yes, MPP Glover? Go ahead.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. Yes, I've just got a couple more questions, and I want to make sure I get them in.

I respect the response that we've been given, but this government's track record on the environment has been really abysmal. They gutted the Endangered Species Act. They stripped the conservation authorities' power to protect watersheds. The danger is that if you fast-track a bunch of projects that have environmental implications—especially in the future, when there are going to be even more floods and forest fires—you could be endangering future generations of Ontarians.

The other question that I have has to do with small businesses. There are many, many small businesses that are still extremely precarious. There are many live music venues, for example, that are barely open. There are a number of musicians and artists who have not been able to work for the last two years and are desperate to get back to work. But at the same time, a lot of these businesses need a third round of support, and many businesses were not eligible for the first and second rounds of support to get through the pandemic. Just in 2020, we lost 25,000 small businesses in Ontario during the pandemic. We are in danger of losing more businesses.

So when you've got a bill that's called the Supporting People and Businesses Act, why isn't there, and would you be open to considering, a third round of funding for small businesses to get through the rest of this pandemic?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you, MPP Glover.

May I ask how much time we have remaining?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute and 54 seconds.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Okay. So I'll be very quick.

As I mentioned earlier, as soon as the pandemic hit, we wanted to get the money into our businesses' hands as soon as possible, which is why we issued it as a grant and not a loan. We wanted to make sure that those who received the funding could use it in any way they saw fit, whether it was paying for rent, paying for supplies or paying for wages. It was completely their choice.

But we also offered \$1,000 for PPE. We gave energy rebates. We supported them with property tax. There were so many ways that we were able to support our small businesses. Do you know what? We've had, I think, something around a \$51-billion action plan in response to COVID-19.

As we are reopening, as we are seeing our numbers be steady, as we are seeing our hospitalizations and ICU capacity remain fairly stable—that's why we've been able to reopen as we have, and we're very much looking forward to those venues reopening. I have seen live music since we've reopened, and it's great. I'm glad that they're able to get back to doing what they love to do, which is to perform for us.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have 40 seconds left.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I believe my colleague Guy may have a question.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Guy Bourgouin, please go ahead.

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** So it's a short question, but you mentioned that—we know that a lot of First Nations have a moratorium on their traditional territories. I'd like to know: You say we're consulting with First Nations; which First Nations are you consulting with?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I can't give you the individual First Nations—I don't have them listed here today—but as this process was going through, we ensured that First Nations were consulted before any of the legislation as far as especially the class EA. But the class EA will take—

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** But will you consult with the ones that have moratoriums on their territories—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. The time is up. Sorry to cut you off.

The next round is the final round. We'll start with the government members. MPP Andrea Khanjin, please go ahead.

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**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you, Chair. My question to the minister: She got to come to Barrie first-hand and really see how small businesses are stepping up and how they utilized the previous supports. But of course, things are obviously changing. It's the holiday season, and many businesses get involved in charitable efforts.

So, I just wanted to ask you, how are you making this holiday season a little bit easier for charitable organizations and people who want to volunteer and give back to their communities?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you so much, MPP Khanjin, and thank you for your hospitality out in Barrie. I just wanted to say that when I was out there—it was soon after the tornado hit. It was just so devastating. Your work out there with your constituents, helping get accommodations for them, for their families, I saw that happen first-hand. That's what community is all about, and that is something that the MPP did as a volunteer, not something that she did in her role.

So taking that and looking at the volunteers and the work that volunteers do and they provide—we just came through Remembrance Day and we saw all of those wonderful volunteers standing outside in the cold, asking us all to purchase poppies to support our Legions. Being able to allow all of those volunteers to do what they do and what they love to do, and just giving them a free police record check to do that, I think, is a small thing for us to do. We worked with the police associations to make sure that they were not too hampered by that and that the costs weren't going to affect them too much, and they were very supportive of this. Now, with the holiday season coming upon us, to allow that to happen—should this bill pass, that will happen very quickly. And all those people that were sort of thinking or having second thoughts about volunteering may now come forward and really step up and help

us throughout the season, really help those who desperately need their help, whether it's in shelters or helping in a food kitchen. I think that's really something that we can commend our volunteers for.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much, Minister. I know we talked about the different businesses and how removing red tape helps businesses. I would like to touch on the example I asked you about in the last round. I would like you to elaborate a little bit more about the change on the patios which helps the restaurant businesses to survive during the pandemic, and reopening. Can you please elaborate a little bit about that?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you very much, MPP Sabawy. When the pandemic hit and restaurants were closed, our government had to look at ways we could support them. For some pizza stores, for example, delivery and takeout were a big part of theirs, but many of the licensed restaurants, where they depended on the summer patio season, which is peak time for them, had no options but to close.

So we very quickly amended the legislation temporarily to allow the extension of those patios, to allow the municipalities to do that. It was such a tremendous success throughout the pandemic that we've been hearing from restaurants and consumers alike saying they really felt that this was life-saving for them throughout the pandemic, that they'd like to continue that and make it permanent. And we listened, which is why this is being brought forward in this legislation. It has made a tremendous difference.

I think all of us here, from all sides of the House, have had the pleasure of being able to sit on a patio and enjoy a drink and a meal. To allow those businesses to do that and continue to do that after the pandemic is over, I think is a small thing that we can do for them.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much, Minister. Again, on the same question, on the same side, do you think that by adding that schedule you help the businesses, especially with some of them having some challenges with their municipalities? Would the province stepping up help those businesses in their struggle against some of the municipalities?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Yes, MPP Sabawy, as we know, many municipalities asked for this, too. It was something they wanted us to allow many of their restaurants to do. So it was very important that we listened. Minister Clark, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, together with Minister MacLeod and your ministry: We were able all together, collectively, to listen to those stakeholders and it's something that they asked for. I think it's just one of the small things we've done, amongst many others, that we can help our businesses and consumers as we recover from the pandemic.

How much time do we have?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** One minute left.

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I'll talk a bit now about some of the other things.

We mentioned the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and our boards of trades, and I'll speak a little bit about the rapid testing. Businesses have gone through so much, but as we've partnered with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to distribute the rapid antigen testing to any businesses with 150 employees or less—that has been a huge success, as we've seen as we visited our Mississauga Board of Trade location where they were being picked up. I've met with many other chambers across the province to see how they are doing the pickup of the rapid antigen testing and the explanation of how to do it.

It has been very well put together and is a tremendous success. We're hoping that we can continue to use that as one of the tools to help us get us through this pandemic and beyond.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you, Minister. Thank you to all the committee members. That concludes our business for this morning. The committee is now in recess until 3 p.m.

*The committee recessed from 1006 to 1500.*

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on General Government will come to order. We are here to resume public hearings on Bill 13, An Act to amend various Acts.

Our remaining presenters have been scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot. Each presenter is allotted seven minutes for an opening statement, followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses, divided into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent members of the committee. Are there any questions? None?

MPP Will Bouma, please confirm that you are in fact the honourable member and that you are currently in Ontario.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Yes, thank you, Chair. I am indeed MPP Will Bouma and I'm in my office in the Frost building.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Marit Stiles, please confirm you are the honourable member and also that you are present in Ontario.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Yes, this is Marit Stiles, MPP for Davenport, and I'm joining you from my office in the Legislative Assembly.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you.

I'd like to let the committee members know that the Ontario College of Teachers cancelled.

Also, I'd like to recognize that MPP Sam Oosterhoff is here in person in the room. Thank you for being here.

ONTARIO HOME BUILDERS'  
ASSOCIATION

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL  
TEACHERS' FEDERATION

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** I'll now call on the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. You

will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin now.

**Mr. Paul Kossta:** Mr. Kanapathi, my name is Paul Kossta. My president and one of our executive assistants are trying to enter the room, but they're not being allowed in yet. Can you please ask the screener to allow Karen Littlewood and Lisa Black-Meddings to enter the room so that we can start our presentation? Thank you, Mr. Kanapathi.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. However, you call me Chair. I am the Chair of the committee.

**Mr. Paul Kossta:** My apologies, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** That's okay. Thank you. We'll look into that.

We're currently on the call. We'll start with the other group; is that okay? We'll allow more time. We'll give you more time.

I'll call the next presenter: Ontario Home Builders' Association. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard purposes, and you may begin now. Thank you.

**Mr. Alex Piccini:** Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Alex Piccini and I am the manager of government relations with the Ontario Home Builders' Association. Just to confirm my audio is good, can everyone hear me okay?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You are good, sir. You are good.

**Mr. Alex Piccini:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, Vice-Chair and committee members. I want to start by quickly thanking the committee, staff and all the presenters today for taking the time to review this important piece of legislation.

I'm glad to be with you today to speak to Bill 13, the Supporting People and Businesses Act, 2021, specifically schedule 19, related to the Planning Act. I'm also joined today by my colleague Mr. Mike Collins-Williams, the CEO of the West End Home Builders' Association.

This legislation that we're looking at today, introduced by the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and the MPP for Mississauga–Streetsville, the Honourable Nina Tangri, is an important bill, as it helps make critical changes that make it easier to conduct commerce and navigate provincial government processes for both individuals and businesses in the province of Ontario. There's an awful lot to unpack there, but, put simply, Bill 13 brings forward a number of common-sense updates and changes long called for by job creators in our great province.

Back in December 2020, the Ontario Home Builders' Association and the Ontario Professional Planners Institute joined other leading industry associations to identify a number of measures to make municipal planning approval processes more efficient and more responsive. I think this is important to note, because it's actually rather rare for government to have such a well-rounded consensus among impacted stakeholders. The OPPI, the professional planners institute, letter was co-signed by OHBA, BILD, the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario, the

Ontario Building Officials Association, the Residential Construction Council of Ontario and the Ontario Real Estate Association, a number of different groups coming together to support a common-sense solution to a challenge that the industry was facing.

One of those key measures included in that letter was providing municipal councils with the ability to delegate additional Planning Act approvals to the heads of planning departments. This change may seem minor, but when you consider the full cost and time impacts of the development approval process, it's made extremely clear how over many years, this process has become increasingly cumbersome, bureaucratic and costly. I'm going to unpack those two pieces in just a moment here.

Let's take the cost first, for instance. The average government charges for each new single detached home are roughly \$186,000, or roughly 21% of the average price for a new home in the greater Toronto area. For a condominium, the average government charges per apartment are approximately \$122,000, or roughly 23% of the average price of a new condominium apartment in the GTA. That data is from an Altus Group report done by BILD for the GTA back in 2018.

Then take into consideration the time. There was a CMHC report done, again, with Altus Group back in 2018 that identified that in the GTA, often it can take upwards of 15 years to go from dirt to door; that is, acquiring land, working through the development process and finally delivering keys to waiting Ontario families.

Combined, the increasingly excessive cost and time to bring new housing to market continue to undermine the ability for our sector to deliver keys to waiting Ontario families. With the time and cost challenges associated with delivering keys, it is clear that the development process is lengthy and cumbersome, which is why changes such as those outlined in schedule 19 of the bill are welcome, as they streamline the development process and help municipal councils focus on the big decisions that are needed to support the 2.27 million more people who will call Ontario home by 2031 and need places to live.

This change to delegate minor planning measures to municipal staff at the option of councils provides more flexibility to every Ontario municipality. We at OHBA welcome this change and strongly support schedule 19 as a measure to streamline the development approval process.

I want to thank all the committee members for your time today. I look forward to any questions you may have. I'm now going to turn things over to my colleague Mr. Mike Collins-Williams.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, Vice-Chair and committee members, and thank you, Alex. Thank you to all the committee members, staff and all of the presenters preceding me today for taking the time to review and speak to this important piece of legislation.

My name is Mike Collins-Williams and I am the CEO of the West End Home Builders' Association, which is based in Hamilton. I'm glad to be with you virtually today

to speak to Bill 13, Supporting People and Businesses Act. I'm going to be very focused and only speak to schedule 19, related to the Planning Act.

As a registered professional planner by trade with two decades of planning experience and as a long-serving member of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, I can attest to some of the challenges posed by some of the processes and requirements set out in the Planning Act that result in lengthy and unnecessary delays within the residential construction sector.

The measure outlined in a joint December 2020 submission by the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute and the other stakeholders that Alex previously mentioned, to provide municipal councils with the ability to delegate additional Planning Act approvals to the heads of planning departments is strongly welcomed by the residential construction sector. This change would permit municipal councils to delegate approvals to a committee of council or an individual—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** I'll try to go fast—an employee or an agent of the municipality for some minor variances: temporary use bylaws, limiting of holding provisions and parkland control and technical amendments of zoning bylaws.

On an issue-by-issue basis, these items could save months in the approvals process for individual applications. Municipalities across Ontario have professional planning staff in place who are well situated and knowledgeable to deliver on these measures and free up council's focus for the significant major decisions instead of being overwhelmed with minor administrative decisions. I want to emphasize that these are not major decisions again, but rather minor technical items to implement already council-approved policies within their official plan and framework that was set out by elected officials. The idea here is to move some—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

**1510**

The next presenter is the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin now. Thank you. Welcome.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Good afternoon. My name is Karen Littlewood. I'm the president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. I am pleased to present before you, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here. I am speaking, as my colleagues before me spoke, to only one section, and that will be schedule 17 of the bill. This has to do with the Ontario College of Teachers. I am a little befuddled to consider why this is part of a small business and red tape bill, but I will go ahead anyway and express my interest on behalf of our 60,000 members.

The College of Teachers is a body that was determined to be a self-governing body, created in 1994, with the purpose of giving teachers the power to regulate their own

profession. As was said in 1996, by Toni Skarica, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education at the time, “We are putting the responsibility for excellent teaching in the hands of those who are best qualified to know what a teacher should and must be today and in the future.”

Now we’re looking at taking a College of Teachers that’s been changed a few times over the years—we’ve had some changes, most recently in 2018, where we went to a smaller council. The changes now, though, are really quite concerning. We’re looking at moving from 18 members to 12. Of those members, half will be made up of teachers in the profession and the other half must have no connection at all to education—concerns about just that reduction of numbers. If we’re looking at the ability to have diversity in the teaching profession, I can’t help but wonder how, by reducing the numbers, we’re going to increase diversity and representation on the College of Teachers—and concerns going forward, from them being a self-governing body when, really, the majority is not held by teachers.

We’re looking at other concerns just with regard to the transition and the supervisory officer and the governing council, reducing, really, the idea of self-regulation.

But one of the most concerning features is the fact that members who are actively involved in the federation will be barred from representing on the College of Teachers. I want people to just consider the fact that, as a federation, we have people who are involved in many different aspects, who might be involved on human rights committees, who might be involved in excellence in education committees. Because of the virtue of their involvement in those federation activities, they would not be able to be part of the College of Teachers or that governing body. It seems to me to be quite restrictive. If we’re looking at an act that is going to reduce red tape, I think we’re actually causing more problems than anything here, and it makes me just question why this change has been done.

It also makes me question why it has been presented as part of an omnibus bill which—really, there is very little in it to do with education. In fact, it’s really just schedule 17. Why is it there and in the midst of an omnibus bill and not something that’s stand-alone that could be debated, could be presented, could be questioned? There has been really very little information or rationale for why these changes have been proposed. So, as an organization, we are really quite concerned about this going forward, and the ability to actually be a self-governing body.

We’re also looking at the possibility, in northern boards, where there will be very little representation because they will have, obviously, fewer members and smaller populations—it’s really some massive changes that we’re looking at to the College of Teachers, and I’m not really sure for which benefit.

There are also a couple of sections that are looking to be struck. One in particular is that a supervisory officer would potentially be able to also have employment elsewhere. The regulation in the Education Act right now says that they may not be employed elsewhere, but if these changes pass, we would be looking at the ability for

supervisory officers in school boards to have employment in other areas, which, again, would be quite concerning. I believe it probably would be a conflict of interest, depending on the type of employment that they would have. So that would be of great concern to us.

We really, truly believe at OSSTF that this type of legislation should be stand-alone and should not be part of an omnibus bill. We also believe that there should be diverse representation on the College of Teachers in order to better represent the members and the profession as well.

We do not want to limit the engagement of diverse and active members. Again, there’s great concerns that anyone with any involvement in federation activities of any sort would be barred from participating on the council.

We’re also considering that the ministerial oversight with regard to approving supervisory officers to remove that would really be questionable, in our opinion, so we would hope that going forward, these sections of the Education Act would not be repealed and that we would be able to have a body that would be representative of our membership, we would be able to have active participation and not see our members excluded from their participation at the college level.

I cede the rest of my time.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you for your presentation. At this time, this round of questions will start with the independent member. You have 4.5 minutes.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that, and I appreciate both organizations for coming to Queen’s Park today to present on this bill and all your other advocacy work that you do here throughout the year.

I’m going to direct my first questions to the OSSTF representative related to schedule 17. My first one is, are you aware of any other self-governing or self-regulating professions where the board composition is what’s being proposed in schedule 17?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** The proposal is to continue as a self-governing body, but I would argue that we’re not necessarily going to be if we’re going to have half of the members not come from education. I would also be concerned about the representation of women. We are a woman-dominated field, where the majority of our members identify as women, and there would be less representation and there would be no guarantee of any sort of representation like that. In my estimation and my knowledge of other professional colleges, that would not be in line with them. This really is not an effective way to manage a professional college. It seems to me, even in a bill where we’re looking at reducing red tape, we’re actually increasing restrictions and the ability to participate.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I’m going to ask my staff to do little comparisons with other self-regulating professions, because it does seem to be outside of the norm.

Could you elaborate a bit on how the proposed changes to the composition of the board could potentially affect diversity? I’m thinking not only diversity of gender and race, but you also had suggested geographic diversity, particularly northern members.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** The composition previously was done by elections, and members were nominated and

could seek from different areas from different school boards and representations to be on the College of Teachers and to have that ability to have a voice. We would be looking now at half of the members being from the teaching profession and the rest being from outside, having nothing to do with education at all, which is, as I mentioned earlier, a really great concern for us. And yes, we had regional representation before, and that would no longer be in effect. So it's really going to be quite random without it being representative of the body of people working in education in the province.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Could you elaborate a bit more on the restrictions around teachers who are engaged in federation activities? I think some people in the public may say, "Oh, the union president," but it goes much beyond that. Maybe you could just elaborate on that a bit more.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Teaching is much more than just going in the classroom and being in front of students. We have members who are involved in many different levels, and as I mentioned earlier, we have people who are on human rights committees. We have people who are on joint committees with the board, working together—the New Teacher Induction Program. We have educational excellence awards. We have a really well-rounded student achievement award program, where people are members of excellence in education committees, recognizing the work of students working to recognize excellence amongst the staff.

1520

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** They would not be permitted to be represented on the College of Teachers. It doesn't make sense to me. And without it being a stand-alone bill, it becomes really hard to question.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Yes—I have about 40 seconds, probably—this casts a pretty wide net in terms of restricting potential participation on the board. Would that be correct to say?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Absolutely. It's restricting by numbers; it's restricting by the diversity that could be there. It really is taking numbers down so there is less representation instead of more, in an effort to reduce red tape. I'm not really sure how one is the same as the other.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate that. Thank you. I'm probably out of time, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you, MPP Mike Schreiner.

The next round of questions will start with the government members. I think it's MPP Will Bouma.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Yes, thank you, Chair. Through you, I was wondering if I could ask the home builders—just curious, have your members experienced benefits in municipalities where they take advantage of the opportunity to delegate certain planning approvals, and will the increase in the suite of available delegated authorities be favourable to your members?

**Mr. Alex Piccini:** Mike, did you want to take that one? Or I can start.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** Sure. There are a number of current aspects within the Planning Act that can be delegated, such as site plan approval delegation. I believe around two thirds of municipalities in Ontario do take advantage of that. There are a number of other ones. It's a bit of a mixed bag, in terms of what municipalities take advantage of these tools—everything from patio approvals, street closings, I think demolition control, licence of occupation permits, parkland control. But, MPP Bouma, it's really a mixed bag.

We're certainly pleased by the proposed amendments to the Planning Act to allow for additional delegation, but, for better or for worse, it's up to each individual municipality to choose. So the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has provided municipalities with, I would say, a fairly significant tool box—some take advantage of those tools, some do not.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you. I appreciate that answer. I think one of the biggest things that I've noticed—through you, Chair—is that we did quite a bit with our More Homes, More Choice Act, and we're doing more here. And it's so critical that we have willing municipalities.

You know, it's an easy thing to say we need to remove red tape barriers in the province of Ontario so that we can build more housing—and the province needs to do those things; it's critically important that we do that—and, yet, it also takes willing municipalities to make that happen.

I was wondering, if I could ask, you, Mike, through the Chair: Obviously, we're moving in the right direction this way, and I'm a big municipal guy, coming from my background in municipal politics as a county councillor, but how far, in your opinion, should the province be willing to go to ensure that the municipalities are there to back up what the province is trying to try to do in creating that space where more homes can be built and more things can be done in order to work on our housing crisis, if I could ask that?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** That's a great question, and there's probably no perfect answer. I would say that your government has been extremely forward-thinking in terms of the Housing Supply Action Plan, amendments to the provincial policy statement a couple years ago and a series of amendments to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, both in 2019 and 2020. All of these amendments were sort of quite focused on increasing the amount of housing supply and increasing the ability of the private sector to deliver more housing supply.

I believe last year was the highest number of housing starts in Ontario in about a decade. Despite the pandemic, we're on pace to possibly top that this year. I also understand it has been the highest number of purpose-built rental housing starts since the 1990s, and that's certainly an area within the housing sector that has been neglected for a number of decades. We absolutely need more supply of all types and tenures, rental being very important, especially for young people.

You asked the question on, I'd call it, a fine balance between local control and provincial control, and I'll even extrapolate that across North America. This is an issue

seen in jurisdictions across North America of finding that balance between local control of planning and provincial or state control of planning. We just saw a few weeks ago the state of California eliminate single-family-only zoning, so that's to eliminate exclusionary zoning whereby vast swaths of many municipalities—in the city of Toronto it's a term, the yellowbelt—where the only thing that can be built is a single-family home. You can tear down an old home built in the 1940s and build a monster home just by pulling a permit, but good luck trying to build two semis or a quadplex or a small townhome that provides a number of units that may be much more affordable or accessible or attainable to the public.

I think the current government has done a lot of very positive work in terms of creating a policy framework to allow for more housing supply to be delivered. Your municipal partners, just like I said with the previous question, it's a mixed bag across the province. There are about 400 different municipalities. Some of those municipalities are using the tools and trying to deliver more supply, and others, for better or worse—local control over planning is a challenge because local political councillors often receive a lot of heat from their constituents when approving additional housing units within existing neighbourhoods, and those municipal councillors are facing re-election in the fall. It's always easier to say no than it is to say yes to a housing application.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I appreciate that.

How much time do I have left?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have a minute and 26 seconds,

**Mr. Will Bouma:** With that left, I think that last point you said, Mike, is critical and that we need to focus on: It is always easier to say no than it is to say yes, and that's something I've realized so much in this job also. We all identify the problem—we have this problem with housing—and too often I think we get caught up in what's the easiest thing to do as opposed to making the tough decisions.

The reality is that we're missing 250,000 to 500,000 homes in the province of Ontario over the next decade, and I think we all need to be cognizant of that and looking for ways in order to build that.

I was wondering, in the last dying seconds, if you have anything else to add to that, Mike.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** I'll add an anecdote that refers to the comment on, "It's easier to say no than it is to say yes." In my many years of experience being a planner working with different builders, it is surprising how often I've heard the anecdote that, in a private conversation, a councillor will tell a builder or developer, "Look, I'm going to have to vote no against your application for political reasons at council, because I'm getting a lot of heat from the ratepayers' association, but don't worry. Appeal to the OMB or the LPAT"—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

This round of questions will start with the official opposition. I see MPP Stiles. Please go ahead.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you very much. I'm going to address my questions to OSSTF.

Thank you, Ms. Littlewood, for joining us today and for your comments. We really appreciate them. I thought you raised some very important points. My colleague in the Green Party asked a few questions that I had similarly about how the changes to what is supposed to be a self-regulatory body will, I think, lead to less of a diversity of membership.

I was just going to ask you, though, if you could expand on that just a little bit more. When you talk about how this affects the representation of the diversity of the teaching profession, I wonder if you could expand a little on that, because I think that people tend to think that there's just one kind of teacher—there's just one teacher. I wonder if you could explain a little bit more about what you meant by that.

1530

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Yes, absolutely. By reducing the numbers, of course, you have access to fewer individuals. You would have fewer voices at the college. When we're talking about the inability to participate at the college level, if you have any experience with the federation, obviously that's going to be an issue. When we look at northern Ontario where we still have smaller bargaining units and groups, where we still have the same number of active committees and we're doing excellent work for our members and for our students, there would be less opportunity for people in that group to serve on the college and have that voice forward.

You have to consider that we're in the midst of a bill here where we're talking about business and cutting red tape. Education is not a business, and we should not be treating it as a business. It certainly is an investment, and we need to remember that for every \$1 you spend on education, you get \$1.30 back. But we are not a business, and we shouldn't be treated as such. We need to be recognized for the value that we bring as educational professionals across the province.

That diversity and level of diversity is really important, and we should have that voice. I am a teacher, and I should be represented on the council. It shouldn't be a random number of half of the members being from the teaching profession; it should be a self-regulating, self-governing body that makes sense—and this does not make sense. And, again, to have it hidden in a bill like this does not give us the opportunity to speak about it or to challenge it.

We just heard about saying no. We hear that a lot in education. We also heard about a crisis in housing. We have a crisis in education, and we need to look at the \$500 million that's been cut and what we need to do, going forward. But let's look at this body, the College of Teachers, and have it be truly self-governing and self-regulated.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Absolutely. I think it's really hard not to look at these changes and consider, you know, the context of this government's now three years of attack on teachers, on education workers in this province.

I also want to note—I appreciated the quote you gave earlier from the Conservative MPP in the past—the Royal

Commission on Learning, of course, came in under the NDP government. Some of those recommendations, of course, were implemented under the previous Conservative government. The Royal Commission on Learning was very clear on the constitution of this self-regulating body and what it means to be self-regulating, and so it's a little bit confusing why this was changed.

I also noted there are changes to the supervisory officers, which I think you mentioned in your submission as well. It's not really clear here what the government is trying to achieve. I want to ask you: Why do you think the government has buried all these changes in this omnibus legislation? What do you fear, I guess, is behind that?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Obviously when you don't want to talk about something, you try and hide it and have it be covered somewhere else where nobody is going to notice, and you can have it be passed.

To remove the responsibility for the ministry to approve a supervisory officer taking on that position means anybody can just step in and step into the role without any sort of backstop—is this the right move to make? We need to have supervisory officers, and we need an expedient process. We don't need to be caught up in that red tape. But I think we're just opening the door here.

As well, when we look at the fact that now a supervisory officer would be able to hold employment elsewhere—where else are they going to be working? Textbook companies? Pearson, Nelson? Why do we have that? We have a really distinct fear of privatization of education in Ontario. Is this where we're headed? Are we looking at these types of collaboration, where this is where we're going to be headed? It's absolutely a concern.

I do want to thank you as well for pointing out that the Ontario College of Teachers Act was initially brought in and discussed by the NDP, and that's very important. But it's another example of where you take an idea and you turn it around to what you want, and it doesn't end up being what the initial intent was. That's really very challenging for us.

We are professionals, as teachers. There are other areas of jurisdiction in the country where they would love to have a college of teachers, and our caution to them is, please do what you can to ensure that you're going to be a self-regulating, self-governing body, and not going to be controlled with additional red tape, instead of removal of red tape.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Right. And, really, at the end of the day, what we're seeing here today with this government and this legislation is a good example of what happens when politics is at play in a really important body like the Ontario College of Teachers. I'm sure there are some changes that the Ontario College of Teachers has made, or in the past, that federations wouldn't disagree with, but when you bring in a government that clearly wants to attack teachers at every opportunity—I think this is the situation we find ourselves in.

I do want to also note that if folks were looking to reduce red tape or hurdles and obstacles in education, they might want to take a look at the Minister of Education's

desk right now, because the pile of projects, education capital repair and new builds that is piled up on his desk—it's got to pretty darn high, waiting and waiting and waiting.

Finally, what I wanted to ask you is, what could this government be doing right now that would be really supporting people in terms of education, generally?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Yes, absolutely. I have to say, as I sat here and listened to the initial submission from the home builders, I'm jealous; there's consultation there, there are talks, there are discussions. That doesn't happen in education right now. We don't have those conversations back and forth. As the people working in education, we know what should be done, we know what could be done to deliver the best possible education in a pandemic, out of a pandemic—all of those times—but we're not being consulted, and it really is a big concern for us. We'd like to be able to at least have a seat at the table and to say, "Yes, this is a good idea," and to not have bills like this pushed through, with something in education thrown in amongst other businesses. It's not the right place for it. It's hidden, and you have to question why it's there.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** The next round of questions will start with the independent member. MPP Mike Schreiner, please go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Through you, Chair, I want to ask the OSSTF one more question. I'm just saying that because I want to ask the home builders a few questions as well, so just in terms of time.

For people who aren't into the nuances of how self-regulating bodies, and in particular, how the College of Teachers works, could you maybe explain the role for the public that the College of Teachers plays and how these proposed changes could affect the way the college works?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Absolutely. There are a number of committees at the level of the College of Teachers. Where you are a self-governing, self-regulating body, that's what you would want to have. We would have people who would be elected and chosen by their peers to serve on those committees and to be able to determine going forward what is best for the profession, but also for the public. It really is a body that does protect the public too. It's a way for us as individual teachers to keep track of our qualifications and to know what we're able to teach or not able to teach. Those are really important things going forward when we talk about school boards and employers.

But to have our voices limited and to not be able to serve on those committees really is a problem for us going forward.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate that, Karen.

I'm going to direct my next question to the Ontario Home Builders' Association and really take an opportunity to allow you to expand a little bit on the conversation around single-family housing zoning, because I think one of the biggest challenges we're facing in Ontario is we

have a housing affordability crisis; we need to increase supply. But we're also facing challenges of where that supply is going to go. Is it going to go on farmland? Is it going to go on greenbelt land? Is it going to go on wetlands etc.? Maybe you could explain a bit more about this delicate balance between the province, municipalities and zoning, and how we could increase supply while also maintaining other protections, if that makes sense.

**Mr. Alex Piccini:** Thank you, MPP Schreiner. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you virtually today.

I would just start by pointing to a number of measures that were outlined in the housing supply action plan this government brought in to enable density, gentle density, throughout the province in ways that can be incorporated into existing communities in really effective and meaningful ways. The one thing I'd point to are things such as laneway suites, garden suites and other measures that provided for gentle density in existing communities to increase the supply.

Currently, no one on this committee would be surprised to know we're in a housing crisis, right? From Thunder Bay to Niagara, from Windsor to Ottawa, we're seeing issues all through the province, and the single biggest way that we're going to—sorry; let me rephrase that. The approach has to be holistic in ensuring that we have a planning regime that provides municipalities the tools that they need to execute at the local level, but at the same time making sure that those tools are utilized in effective ways.

1540

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** One minute left.

**Mr. Alex Piccini:** Thank you.

I think that the key thing that we should be focusing on is: How are these tools being implemented? If we look at schedule 19 being proposed in Bill 13 here, this is at the option of the municipalities. Like Mike said earlier, it really is a mixed bag. Some municipalities will utilize this kind of tool a lot better than other municipalities may, so that balancing act is certainly something that we have to keep in mind and work through.

I would throw the rest of my time over to Mike, to maybe add any other points that I missed there.

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** On the exclusionary zoning question, I'll be a little less politically correct than my colleague Alex. It's going to require provincial intervention. The state of California finally had to prohibit municipalities from basically having these zones that exclude everything except for single-family—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

The next round of questions will start with the government members. MPP Oosterhoff, please go ahead.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Thank you so very much, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to those who are presenting today for speaking to this legislation. I'm going to begin my questioning this afternoon with the OSSTF, and I want to, first of all, thank you for the work that you do on behalf of your members each and every day. You represent world-class educators and so many others who do fantastic work in our education system across this province, and I know

we're very thankful for that work. So thank you also for your continued advocacy and work on behalf of your members.

I'm going to ask a little about the clauses that are being added to the act with regard to holding out as a member of the college. Here it reads:

“(6) No person except a member of the college shall use the English title ‘Ontario Certified Teacher’ or the French title ‘Enseignant(e) agréé(e) de l’Ontario’ or an abbreviation of any of those titles to describe themselves or their profession....”

“(7) No person except a member of the college shall represent or hold out expressly or by implication that they are a member of the college.”

I'm just wondering if you could speak a little bit about the importance of and the achievement in reaching the place where you are a certified teacher here in the province of Ontario: what that means, what an accomplishment that is and, really, why it's important to ensure that that is something that is protected and that is not being taken in vain, if you will.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Thank you for the question. I am a teacher. I've been a teacher since 1991. I'm very proud of the profession that I chose. I've taught in many different jurisdictions, all the way from three-year-olds up to 21-year-olds, and I'm proud of the work that I've done.

We have people across the province working in multiple school boards, in different subject areas. We have people working in very small classes and very large classes, meeting the needs of the students of the province.

I can do all of those things and be proud of my profession. I don't necessarily have to have the letters after my name to be proud of the profession that I have or the service that I deliver. I often gauge the value of what I delivered as a classroom teacher by the comments I had from my students. I also taught students with extreme needs, significant needs, and the expressions of appreciation from their parents were really what helped me to continue to go on as a teacher.

It's important that we have that diversity of representation across the province. It's important that we have that diversity of representation at our college. It's important that women members are identified and have the ability to speak and to be represented.

This is an important profession. It is not going to go away. It may change forms over the years, but it's important that we are respected as a profession, and to have a self-governing and self-regulating body would be a way to have that.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** First of all, thank you for your years of service. I can definitely understand, as you mentioned, that this is an evolution, as well, where we're seeing the changing role of teachers, even with regard to throughout COVID and online learning. I don't think any of us anticipated—I'm sure most of the teachers in the province didn't anticipate that they would be teaching fully online for an extended period of time. Of course, there are challenges that have come with that, and we've seen the resilience of our educators.

But I guess my question was just more if you think it's important to ensure that we don't see people portraying themselves as teachers when they are not, or as OCT-qualified teachers, and if you think it's appropriate that there's a protection of those letters, that particular title, and the work that's gone into being a certified teacher—if you think that's appropriate.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Well, yes. I have to have an undergraduate degree. I had to go to teachers' college. It was one year when I went in 1991; it's two years now. I think that's really important.

But I think you need to listen to the voices of people across the province who, while they were at home with their children trying to deliver education—I think one of the most commonly uttered phrases was, "I'm so glad I'm not a teacher. I have no idea how they do this." I don't find that we will have people saying, "I want to use those OCT letters behind my name to represent myself as a teacher." More so, we have people saying, "Thank goodness for the service that you deliver and what you do for the province of Ontario."

As I said earlier, education is an investment and we need to treat it as such. We need to respect those people who are working in education, whether teachers or education workers. It's important that we have a fully funded, robust system, and the College of Teachers or the College of Early Childhood Educators or any of the other professional colleges are ways to ensure that we have that professional designation. But more important is the service we deliver to the students of the province.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Oh, I can definitely agree with you that we should all thank God for good teachers in the province and for all the work they do, especially over the past couple of years, but moving forward as well.

One other question I just had is if you could walk through and speak to some of the differences between the OCT and the union, what that difference between that self-regulatory body is and the advocacy that is provided through the union and—yes, what those key differentiators are and what those roles should look like.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** They're two incredibly different bodies. The one commonality is that I'm legislated to be a part of both the union, depending on where I get a job in Ontario in a publicly funded school, and I'm also mandated to be a member of, and to maintain my membership in, the College of Teachers. They have very different roles.

As I said, there are jurisdictions across the country that would like to have a college of teachers. I would caution them to ensure in any of their lobbying or consultations with their governments that they're looking to have something that truly would be self-regulating and self-governing.

The unions provide so many different services. We often have people who believe that we're just people on a picket line. That's absolutely not what we do. The services that we provide for our members that spill over to the students of the province are really the most important work that we do, having that collegiality and solidarity. We have

to be able to represent our members, but as I said, we're legislated to be part of a union and I'm proud to be the president of OSSTF.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** How much time do I have left, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have a minute and 12 seconds.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** The question I wanted to ask as well, with regard to this amendment that really came forward as a housekeeping amendment of sorts and out of a desire to ensure that there is good governance at the OCT—and I've heard your perspective today that you don't believe this change should be brought forward at this point. I wouldn't, respectfully, agree with that, but I appreciate that you've been very frank about that.

But I do have a question: What would you say would be an appropriate number? If you think this is too small, how many do you want to see?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** If we're looking at the fact that we have a number of boards across the province, we have French, French Catholic, English Catholic boards—we used to have representation where you could put your name forward to be a representative of a geographic area, of a certain school board, of elementary or of secondary. Through that, we would end up with a diversity of the membership, not just from geography and from the teaching profession, but across the province and also diversity of the individuals. If we were to count and to look at the numbers that we should have: 25, 30 would be great.

We've had interest in the past where people want to serve on the College of Teachers. This is not something that people are saying, "I want nothing to do with." In fact, it's something where we had—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

Next round of questions: We'll start with the official opposition. I think it's MPP Chris Glover. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you to all the deputants for being here. I've got just seven minutes; I'm going to try to get through a number of questions.

Karen, I appreciate what you were saying about being a teacher. I was actually a high school teacher at East York Collegiate when the College of Teachers was created back in the late 1990s, and I am concerned about these changes.

**1550**

I want to get a little bit of a clearer understanding of what exactly the changes are. What is the structure of the council of the college right now, and what will be the structure when this legislative change is made?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Right now there are 18 members, and it will be reduced to 12. Half will be from the general public, with absolutely no connection at all to education, and half will be from the teaching profession; however, a large proportion of our membership will be exempted from that, unable to participate. Because of their involvement in the union at any level, they are not allowed to be involved in the college.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. And what is the makeup of the current 18 members?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** So the 18 members are either being selected right now—there have been some changes over the years as well. That reduction to 18 happened, I believe, in 2018. The college has been something where, over the years, it's just been changed over and over and over again, every time without consultation of people who are working in the profession.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Right. And so again, this is not self-regulatory. Were OSSTF or any of the teaching federations across the province consulted about the changes that are in this legislation?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** I can speak on behalf of OSSTF and say no. I'm pretty sure if my affiliate colleagues were consulted and this came out, that they would have said, "Yes, we had a say in this." That is not the case.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. You have got real concerns about it. My colleague MPP Marit Stiles was talking about this as well. Teachers are effectively banned. There are going to be 12 members. Teachers are effectively banned from holding six of those seats, and teachers who are serving on a committee of a federation or in any role in a federation are effectively banned from the other six members' seats. So what we have is just a very small, select group.

How will the other six—the six non-teachers—be selected? Is that specified?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** They're going to submit their names. They will put in some form of qualification or application and, as I understand it, they will be randomly selected for their positions.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Randomly selected by whom?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** By the college. So they're in the process. They're kind of in a transition phase, where they have a supervisory officer overseeing the process and going through who is going to end up serving on the college.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Right, and you suggested that there are some people who may have a vested interest or potentially a conflict of interest in serving. If you're in a company that actually provides services or sells products to the education sector, you could effectively be on the council. You're not banned from those six seats on the council for non-teachers. In fact, you're not banned from any of the 12 seats.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** That's right; absolutely. And while the college doesn't make decisions about curriculum delivery or purchase of curriculum, they do have a huge influence. They have a magazine they put out full of nice, glossy ads. They do have influence across the province, and now if we have people with other vested interests, it's going to be a problem. Again, I'll express the concern about supervisory officers, superintendents and school boards who would be able to have jobs elsewhere, could be contracted by whomever—Nelson, Pearson, any sort of ed tech program. It really could be problematic.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** And how is that change being made for these supervisory officers? Is that in this schedule in this bill?

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Yes, it's a deletion to the Education Act that would prohibit them from having other

work, so they would be able to, by virtue of the fact that it's removed, have other employment.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. So they're effectively removing a section of the Education Act that prevents conflicts of interest amongst supervisory officers, and then—

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** In a bill that is supposed to be reducing red tape—sorry, a little bit of irony there.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Yes. Well, it is deeply concerning, the changes that are being made, because it does mean that the system isn't going to be self-regulatory. My colleague MPP Schreiner was talking about looking at this in comparison with the College of Nurses and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I think that would be a worthwhile endeavour, and we will be looking at that as well, because the College of Nurses—I was just checking out their website. They actually do promote themselves as a self-regulatory body, and this College of Teachers obviously is not.

And I'll say the other thing: The reason that I'm here as an MPP is that after teaching, I left to do research, but I started to get involved in fighting for education. I was deeply concerned the last time the Conservative government was in power, because they were actually privatizing our public education system. I'm concerned about anything along these lines that could lead to further private sector involvement in the education system, and especially those conflicts of interest.

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** Yes, MPP Glover, I'm also concerned about the fact that this is a women-dominated field, and this type of legislation is being pushed in, in the midst of an omnibus bill, so what is the message that's being sent here about women and respect for the profession?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** You're absolutely right. You're right. These omnibus bills are made to bury things, and it's very difficult to have a proper debate on any of these issues, because there are 26 schedules in this bill, and that's—

**Ms. Karen Littlewood:** That's right.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Anyway, I want to ask—Michael and Alex, thank you for being here, and I appreciate your deputation. I am also concerned about the housing supply over the next decade. As you said, there are 2.24 million people coming in. The report that I've seen recently says that we're going to need another million homes over the next decade, and we need to get those built. So what we're talking about—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Will this increase the housing supply? And the biggest issue for people in Ontario is that, although there is a housing supply, it's unaffordable. So how do we leverage this legislation to build affordable housing in the province of Ontario?

**Mr. Mike Collins-Williams:** I'd caution that while we're supportive of these amendments to the Planning Act, these are technical amendments and they are minor in nature. The idea is to not, I guess, take democratic control away from elected councils, and try to speed up applications on the technical side that can be delegated to staff.

So while we're supportive, I certainly hear you on the challenges for below-market affordable housing or market housing in terms of delivering that necessary supply. Today's legislation is helpful, but it's one small piece to a big puzzle. It's about speeding—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you for your presentation.

## ONTARIO NONPROFIT NETWORK

### ONTARIO SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

#### HIGH TIDE INC.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** We will now move into the next presentation. I will now call on the next presenter, Ontario Nonprofit Network. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard purposes. You may begin now. Please go ahead. Welcome.

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** Hi there. My name is Cathy Taylor, and I'm the executive director of the Ontario Nonprofit Network. I'm here today with my colleague Liz Sutherland, policy adviser for ONN and also from Perth, Ontario. We represent the Ontario Nonprofit Network, which is a network of 58,000 non-profits and charities that serve Ontario communities. Our job is to bring their voices to government and stakeholders.

All of you know how vital non-profits are to our communities. Many of you have been involved in our sector through volunteering, so you know communities could not function without the supportive web of non-profits that contribute to our quality of life. This has never been more true. In the pandemic, non-profits have stepped up and have been the glue that is keeping communities together.

At the same time, our sector is facing a volunteerism crisis as a result of the pandemic, with 61% of organizations in our recent survey reporting losing volunteers since COVID-19 began. Before the crisis, five million Ontarians donated 820 million hours. That's the equivalent of 400,000 full-time jobs in Ontario as volunteering. But according to Volunteer Canada, 57% of previously active volunteers decided not to volunteer during COVID because of age or health-related concerns. By fall of 2020, we were already experiencing the pandemic fatigue of volunteers and staff in the non-profit and charitable sector. Volunteer Canada's survey shows a level of critical concern about the long-term impact to volunteering on non-profit operations, so we need to do everything we can to reduce barriers to volunteering in Ontario to get these levels back to where they should be.

Today we are here to express our support for schedule 20 of Bill 13, which eliminates the fees for certain police records checks for volunteers. This is an issue that we have been advocating for for almost 10 years, actually, most recently in our 2020 budget submission. We would also

like to offer three recommendations to this committee for consideration, one regarding the wording in Bill 13 and two for the Ontario government to consider as next steps.

#### 1600

But before I get to the recommendations, I would like to express our thanks to the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, both current Associate Minister Tangri and former Associate Minister Sarkaria, who have been open to discussions with us about how we can reduce the regulatory burden for the non-profit sector. We'd also like to note that Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, who has responsibility for police record checks, has been a long-standing champion of volunteering and had a previous private member's bill on this issue.

With that said, allow me to present a friendly amendment to Bill 13: wording in schedule 20 that would be really helpful to our sector and to government. You may be surprised to know that there is no legal definition of "volunteer" in Ontario legislation—in any legislation. There are scant references to volunteers in provincial legislation in Ontario and no formal definition. So Bill 13 actually includes a definition of "volunteers" that will set a precedent across all of government legislation; for example, in employment standards legislation, potentially. For that reason, we want to ensure that the definition of "volunteers" in Bill 13 is both appropriate and effective for the work that we need to do.

For context, there are numerous types of unpaid work—high school students performing community service hours, court-ordered community service—and there are also issues and misunderstandings around whether a person is to be paid or not. This results in the misclassification of workers. So it's really important to make the definition of "volunteering" more robust to distinguish it from other types of unpaid work. For example, the RCMP, in the context of criminal reference checks, explicitly excludes court-ordered community service from the definition of "volunteer."

In our written submission, we provide a definition that takes these factors into account and builds on recent legal research in this area. We would suggest three key parts of the definition of "volunteering": that a volunteer is performing unpaid work; that they are motivated to carry out this work for civic, charitable or humanitarian reasons; and that they are engaged by a not-for-profit or public organization. We've also shared this wording suggestion with the Office of the Solicitor General, and we hope you will consider it a friendly amendment.

I mentioned we had two recommendations for the Ontario government for future consideration. The first is to recommend that free police record checks are available to all volunteers. By that, I mean those including the level 3 vulnerable sector check, for example, if they're going to work with children or vulnerable adults. Level 3 checks include carefully screened information about non-convictions, and these vulnerable sector checks actually represent 80% of all checks run by municipal police forces. These checks are not included in schedule 20 as part of the free checks for volunteers.

Our network has told us it is really important to address the cost of vulnerable sector checks in future to ensure that barriers to volunteering are lowered. We urge you to continue working with the police on modernizing the record check system so that this barrier can be addressed as soon as possible.

The second recommendation for future consideration is to address the processing timelines for police record checks in regulations under the Police Record Checks Reform Act. Timelines remain a pressing issue. We have heard from non-profits that some police services can process checks in days while others take 10 weeks or more. This doesn't work for volunteers in drop-in centres. It certainly doesn't work for little leagues trying to screen dozens of volunteers at the start of a playing season. In the absence of reasonable processing timelines, organizations will often pay a third-party private firm for the record checks. This adds to organizations' costs—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** —and defeats the push to reduce barriers to volunteers. We urge you to tackle processing timelines in regulation as part of your commitment to reducing barriers to volunteering.

In conclusion, I would emphasize that we must work together to do everything we can to rebuild the levels of volunteering we saw before the pandemic. Volunteers are mission-critical to communities through non-profits and charitable organizations in your community.

We are concerned about the impact of the drop of volunteering; for example, the increased burnout amongst non-profit staff, which is already at high levels; reduced programming; hours of service; and outreach in your communities. Free police checks for volunteers will not solve the volunteering crisis, but it is one barrier we can address.

Thank you for including this provision in Bill 13. We urge you to consider our friendly amendment on the definition, and we look forward to working with government to support volunteering through other steps so that we can make Ontario communities great places to work, live and play. Thank you for your time.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you for your presentation.

Next presenter: I will now call on the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard. You may begin now. Welcome.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Good afternoon. My name is Sandro Perruzza. I'm the chief executive officer of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, or OSPE, as we like to call ourselves. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today to the proposed Supporting People and Businesses Act. For those who don't know us, OSPE is the advocacy and member services body for the engineering profession in Ontario.

As you are well aware, the engineering community is vital to the economic recovery efforts, as well as establishing Ontario as a global innovation and technology leader.

Engineers work in several of the most strategic and influential sectors of Ontario's economy. They are inventive thinkers who develop comprehensive solutions that consider costs, benefits, risks, sustainability and public safety—the complete life cycle and integration of projects. You'd be hard-pressed to find a sector of the economy that isn't impacted by engineers or engineering. Quite simply, engineering is the cornerstone of our economy.

This bill has been designed to reduce regulatory burdens for people and businesses in responsible ways while maintaining or enhancing health, safety and environmental protections, and this bill also presents the case for regulatory modernization, all of which we support, and yet we believe that the government has missed a tremendous opportunity to include revisions to the Professional Engineers Act as part of this effort. When discussing how regulatory burdens impact businesses and individuals, strong consideration must be made on how ineffective regulation hinders professional occupations and negatively impacts the economy and the environment.

Our message today is clear: Ontario needs an effective and focused engineering regulator. Changes to the Professional Engineers Act will help get us there.

The regulator, Professional Engineers Ontario, or PEO, is currently undergoing a change effort to respond to recommendations contained in an external regulatory review. The review was conducted by the internationally renowned Professional Standards Authority. This is only one of several external reviews conducted for this regulator in the past few years—including reports from the Ontario Fairness Commissioner, the Elliot Lake Commission of Inquiry, the coroner's inquest from the Radiohead stage collapse, and the recent anti-racism and anti-discrimination report—which have outlined serious concerns with PEO's ability to effectively regulate the practice of professional engineering in Ontario.

To support this change effort, the Professional Engineers Act must be amended. OSPE has presented this government with several recommendations for changes that will protect the public interest and reduce red tape for applicants and for engineering businesses. These changes fall under the following areas: increased regulatory focus; reducing administrative burden for consulting engineering companies; backstopping PEO accountability; eliminating non-regulatory member services programs and defunct committees that no longer exist.

In your package, you should all have received a copy of the suggested changes and the rationale for each recommendation, as well as supporting documentation included in an appendix, taken from PEO's own chief legal counsel, on the non-regulatory activities that add no value to PEO's regulatory role. Also included is a supporting letter from the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies-Ontario.

I want to emphasize that we're all deeply concerned regarding the government's inaction on this issue. Ineffective regulation hurts us all. It is a public safety concern. It is an economic risk to companies and individuals. It impacts professional liability insurance rates,

which have been increasing significantly. It acts as a gatekeeper for the profession, discriminating against members of under-represented communities. And it maintains a status quo that is inefficient, ineffective and, simply put, dangerous.

There are significant issues with the enforcement and discipline areas as well. It has taken, on average, 575 days to process a complaint file. The external regulatory review highlighted issues with council interference into ongoing investigations and hearings.

More and more engineering employers are coming to us and expressing an inability to find licensed engineers to hire for projects. This is placing a strain on project timelines and budgets, impacting costs for companies and consumers, including this province, and ultimately negatively impacting economic growth and development. We know that hundreds of candidates sit and wait for their licensing process to move along.

Let me tell you a story of Alex. Alex is an engineering intern. He graduated from a Canadian accredited engineering program here in Ontario. He has six years of engineering experience, working on a variety of infrastructure and energy projects right here in Ontario while working for WSP, a well-established global engineering company. He is being supervised by fully licensed professional engineers on all these projects, and these engineers have completed all the required attestation forms for Alex. Yet Alex has been waiting for over 18 months for confirmation that he has met the requirements to obtain his licence. He cannot proceed to the next stage in his career without his PEng designation, and his employer is getting increasingly frustrated with the process, the regulator and with Alex.

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The problem is simple to diagnose, as many of these external reviews have highlighted a similar cause. Sir Harry Cayton of the Professional Standards Authority wrote, “PEO is simply a big association with a small regulator attached to it, and not a particularly effective one at that. PEO’s non-regulatory activities and ongoing governance issues are distracting it from its core regulatory mandate.”

As stated in the package provided, we have presented you with a set of recommended changes to the Professional Engineers Act. But if you had to include only one in this bill, we would ask you to consider including recommendation number 1.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** This recommendation would refocus the provincial regulator on its core regulatory mandate. We believe this will significantly improve outcomes for all of us. If, for whatever reason, even this is too complicated, then I present a more basic solution: A simple edit to the Professional Engineers Act can be introduced as a stopgap measure until a full review of the act can be initiated in the near future. We recommend that you replace the word “association” in the act with the word “regulator”; change “member” to “licensee”; and in section 2, subsection (4), clause 4, change “promote public

awareness of the role of the association” to “promote public awareness of the regulatory role of the regulator.” This would send strong direction to council on the expectations from the members of this Legislature.

It is time for this government to lead, before there is another engineering failure that impacts the health and safety of Ontarians and costs lives.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The next presenter I will call on is High Tide Inc. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard. You may begin now. Welcome.

**Mr. Omar Khan:** Thank you, Chair and members of the Standing Committee on General Government, for allowing me the opportunity to present to you today regarding Bill 13. My name is Omar Khan, and I’m the senior vice-president for corporate and public affairs with High Tide Inc., which is Canada’s largest non-franchise leading cannabis company. We currently operate 104 stores across Canada, with 31 retail cannabis stores in Ontario. We employ over 400 people across the province of Ontario, primarily under our Canna Cabana banner, and plan to continue growing our investment and footprint in this province.

As legal cannabis retailers, we are proud of the role that we and our industry peers play in contributing to local economies, shrinking the presence of the illicit cannabis market and ensuring that products which we sell are kept out of the hands of underage individuals. In order to achieve these aims, it is critical that companies like ours are able to work collaboratively with government and regulators to balance high levels of consumer accessibility to retail cannabis stores with sensible regulations seeking to uphold the public interest.

I’m appearing in front of your committee today to offer support for Bill 13 on behalf of High Tide. This legislation, if passed, will permanently allow retail cannabis stores to offer curbside pickup and home delivery to our customers—measures which had previously been authorized on a temporary basis as the provincial government responded to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our sector. We believe that this is a common-sense measure that will allow us to serve our customers in more convenient ways. It also has the added benefit of ensuring that Ontario is in alignment with the rules regarding curbside pickup and home delivery which are either already in place or will be in place in the coming months in other provinces that allow for private sector cannabis retail.

Throughout the course of the pandemic to date, cannabis retailers have benefited strongly from the allowance to offer curbside pickup and home delivery. To be blunt, in at least some cases, this measure has almost certainly prevented local cannabis retailers from going out of business when they otherwise may have been forced to. However, even when retail stores were permitted to begin allowing in-person shopping once again, we noticed that a decent proportion of our customers continued to utilize the options of curbside pickup and home delivery, primarily

due to convenience and customers' personal shipping preferences. By allowing cannabis retailers to continue to offer these options indefinitely, a more supportive operating environment for businesses like ours can be sustained.

Beyond this, and even more importantly, I want to highlight the fact that allowing cannabis retailers to continue offering curbside pickup and home delivery will be a critical tool in helping the legal cannabis sector compete with, and ultimately limit the scope of, the illicit market. Although progress has certainly been made in the three years since legalization, it is no secret that the illicit market has continued to thrive. It was only this year that Canadian household expenditures on legal cannabis surpassed those of illegal cannabis, and the illicit market still brings in at least \$3 billion annually.

According to the most recent Canadian cannabis survey from Statistics Canada, 45% of cannabis users reported purchasing at least some, if not all, of their products from illicit sources. This is a serious problem that all orders of government, as well as licensed cannabis businesses, share—a significant responsibility to collaboratively address. As we know, illegal products are much less safe than legal products. Illicit actors do not have any qualms about selling to underage individuals, and the proceeds of illegal cannabis sales often end up with participants of organized crime.

The ability for legal retailers to permanently offer delivery, in particular, will eliminate a competitive advantage which illicit retailers previously enjoyed, which drew some consumers to remain committed to purchasing from the illicit market.

Unlicensed retailers, with no qualms about operating outside of federal and provincial regulations, have offered home deliveries since before cannabis was legalized. If someone was to go online and search for home delivery of cannabis products, it would not take much time to find illicit retailers, such as Canopy or Duber, offering that exact service.

Research from Deloitte has highlighted that location and convenience are amongst the most important factors which can keep consumers attached to the illicit market, unless legal retailers have the necessary tools to compete on these measures. The same research has also found that the ability to order cannabis products online and have them delivered to a customer's home is one of the top reasons why consumers who currently purchase from the illicit market would choose to convert to the legal regulated market.

It is also important to note that by being able to permanently offer home delivery, legal cannabis retailers will be much better positioned to compete with illicit market retailers for market share in municipalities that choose to prohibit bricks and mortar cannabis stores within their areas of jurisdiction. In the greater Toronto area alone, over two million Ontarians still live in communities where physical cannabis stores are not permitted, which has left unlicensed retailers as the only convenient option for consumers in those areas, particularly for consumers who do not own personal vehicles or who face other mobility

challenges. By permanently allowing legal retailers to offer home delivery, these consumers will be able to order products for delivery from a store in a nearby municipality—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Omar Khan:** Thank you—which does allow the operation of retail cannabis stores, thereby impeding the reach of illicit retailers that were previously able to thrive in such communities.

In summary, the proposed legislative changes in Bill 13 pertaining to the legal cannabis sector will not only be beneficial for private retailers, but will also help to serve the public interest by impeding the ability of the illegal cannabis market to compete with licensed retailers. I and my colleagues of High Tide strongly encourage members of the Legislature to support Bill 13 and see that it is passed as soon as reasonably possible.

Thank you for inviting me to present to you today, and I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you for your presentation.

This round of questions will start with the government members. I see MPP Mike Harris. Please go ahead.

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**Mr. Mike Harris:** Thank you very much, Chair. I hope everyone is doing great this afternoon.

Omar, I had a few questions for you. I think there is a lot that we can speak about here today when we're talking about convenience for the people of Ontario and reducing red tape and regulation. Really, that's what this bill is all about. It was great to hear your testimony here this afternoon.

I would like you to touch a little bit on what we've learned from the pandemic from a retail perspective and a lot of your clients and folks you represent in the cannabis industry. When we look at what's happened, from having to shift from a bricks and mortar retail presence to being able to do curbside pickup and being able to do deliveries, similar to how the LCBO has positioned themselves over the last little while—quite frankly, most of the businesses here in the province being able to offer curbside pickup and delivery to clients directly. What does this mean to cannabis retailers and, I want to be very clear about this, small business owners in the province of Ontario?

**Mr. Omar Khan:** I'll give you some real-life examples. Early on in the pandemic, I think everybody was rushing and trying to figure out what to do. Our stores had to shut down, had to close their doors. There was maybe a couple of weeks where the regulation hadn't adapted to allow us to do the temporary delivery and curbside pickup. During that time, we had illegal delivery services poster-ing our storefronts, putting posters for their illegal delivery services on our legal storefronts which had been forced to shut down. Luckily, the government moved relatively quickly and listened to the industry and brought forward the temporary provisions, which are now proposed to be made permanent.

But we at High Tide were a little bit fortunate in that we're a relatively large chain operator. There are hundreds of independent cannabis operators in this province, many of whom would have had to shut down, would have had to shut their doors, and would have had to lay off their employees. I mentioned we employ about 400 people in the province. I think if you take the 1,200 or so retail licensees that are operating right now in Ontario, that employment footprint—you can do the math. If we have four or five employees per store, you can do that math across all of those stores. There would have been a lot of employment loss and there would have been a lot of independent operators, small business entrepreneurs, who would have lost their shirts.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Yes, and I think you make a good point. I'm not sure where the opposition is going to go in the questioning here today, but there has been a lot of talk about too many cannabis retailers in certain environments. I know MPP Fife and I share a similar constituency and we have seen some, we'll say, increase in cannabis retailers along our main street corridors. Certainly, there is maybe some work to do there and figure out how we look at that, but we're going to probably see some market corrections over the next little while. We'll see good retailers stick around, and retailers that maybe aren't as good as some others maybe phase out of the environment.

From a perspective going forward, I would like to hear a little bit more about what you think about where the industry is going and how we're looking at trying to reduce black-market sales and make things more appealing to the mainstream, and get people moving over from that traditional way that everything had been—kind of under the rug, if you will—and quite frankly trying to fit in with the federal government's perspective on how things need to be rolled out here provincially. They have kind of left it up to us. They haven't really provided much guidance as to where we need to move.

Where do you see things going in the future, building on top of what we're doing now?

**Mr. Omar Khan:** Look, I'll be honest: The issue of cannabis clustering, particularly in certain downtown neighbourhoods in Toronto, Ottawa, Kitchener-Waterloo and other municipalities, is an issue. Let me be clear, though. We don't necessarily have an issue in Ontario of too many cannabis stores writ large. I think most of the academic studies that I have seen indicate that the best store-to-population ratio is about one store for every 10,000 individuals in the province, and we're still over that in Ontario. If you look at comparable jurisdictions like Alberta or Colorado, they still have a much lower percentage of stores as a percentage of population as compared to Ontario. We do absolutely believe that there is a serious problem with clustering in certain neighbourhoods. So we would actually support if Ontario, down the road, were to take a look at provisions like we face in Alberta, where municipalities have the power to enact distance limits in between stores. We would be open to that conversation and would probably support it.

What we think everyone should be very reticent about is any notion that we should be applying overall caps to

the number of stores in the province, that we should be allowing for blanket exemptions across municipalities. That will only serve, as I've mentioned, to bolster the illicit market.

We would love to have a conversation with MPP Stiles about her bill. I think we've requested a meeting, so we'll look forward to hearing back from her. But we want to have an open dialogue with everyone. Clustering is an issue. It needs to be addressed. We just need to have a very well-thought-out solution, and one solution could be to allow municipalities to apply minimum distance requirements in between stores.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Yes, I think it's definitely something that can be looked into and, like I said, I know MPP Fife and I share some of the same—believe it or not, if you can believe it or not, Chair—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** —we do share some of the same concerns in our community. But we are looking forward to seeing a thriving small business sector and want to make sure that people are able to continue their business operations but it's done in a sustainable and, we'll say, community-friendly way.

Speaking of ways, MPP Daisy Wai, I think, wants to highlight a few things here with our remaining time, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thirty seconds left.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I just want to say thank you to Cathy. I really appreciate you sharing your challenges about the record checks and your volunteers' concerns. In fact, I'm in the process of passing a private member's bill on appreciating all the non-profit organizations.

I just want to ask one more: How many other organizations have you worked with, and what are the challenges and changes that you see?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you, MPP Daisy Wai. Sorry to cut you off.

The next round of questions will start with the official opposition. MPP Catherine Fife, please go ahead.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'm going to pick up off a little bit where MPP Harris was going.

Omar, I want to thank you for your candour on this issue. I did raise this issue this morning with the minister, because I feel like if you open up a piece of legislation like this and you address the delivery piece and the patio pieces—like expanding patios for restaurants and small businesses—that we should be looking more holistically at small businesses on those main streets. And clustering is a problem for us; we also raised the issue that municipalities wouldn't put seven LCBO stores side by side.

There needs to be some local autonomy for municipalities. If you get that meeting with MPP Marit Stiles for her Bill 29, I think I would love to be part of that so that we can find some common ground.

Our main streets are changing drastically. And I think that there are now 163 cannabis stores in the downtown core of Toronto. We also, as MPPs, hear from those communities who want to have a mixed node of businesses

on their main street. So I just want to say thank you for going on the record, but also highlighting your concerns.

With that, I just want to move quickly over to OSPE. Sandro, very good to see you, if virtually. I did want to give you an opportunity to quickly talk about the health and safety concerns specifically that you raised in your opening comments and around enforcement, because this is an ongoing issue in Ontario around enforcement of health and safety. So please go ahead.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Sure. Again, if you read the external review done by the Professional Standards Authority—again, an internationally recognized organization—one of the things that they identified is the interference from councillors in ongoing investigations and hearings, where they’ll often speak up and support someone who has a complaint against them. That has a tremendous effect on the impartiality of the hearing.

1630

Again, it’s taking 525 days for a hearing to happen. There are 89,000 professional engineers in the province of Ontario, and the enforcement staff at PEO is three. So if you want to file a complaint against an engineer, you have to do all the work. You have to file the complaint. You have to do the research. You have to do the investigation. You fill out all the paperwork you’ve provided to them, and if there’s not enough information there, they don’t instigate an investigation and find further information; they don’t even reply. If you don’t provide enough information, it goes to the committee, and the committee says, “Well, there’s not enough information here,” and then they put it aside.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It sounds like a red tape issue.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** There are not enough resources, and the reason there are not enough resources is because they’re spending millions of dollars on non-regulatory activities. It’s part of the culture issue, but it’s also, “Where are we going to put resources? Are we going to put resources into serving our members or are we going to put resources into protecting the public?” Twenty-one years ago, this government directed Professional Engineers Ontario to stop all non-regulatory activities, and that’s when OSPE was born. But 21 years later, this is still happening.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thanks for that. We’ll look at your submissions, Sandro, and go from there.

Cathy, thank you very much to the not-for-profit sector. You’re essentially holding together whole communities across this province, especially during these challenging times.

The fact that the vulnerable sector volunteer checks account for 80% of the criminal record checks for volunteers—can you give us any sense as to why this was left out? It could be inadvertently—but also, were you consulted? I think that if you were consulted you would have made sure that that 80% was captured in this piece of legislation.

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** We were certainly disappointed that the vulnerable sector checks were not included in the legislation because it represents such a big portion of the checks that are done.

We do know, however, that those checks require a lot more person power on behalf of police services and an additional cost by municipalities. I think there are solutions, if we had some time to work alongside our colleagues at police services and municipalities to figure out what a solution could be. We do know that those particular checks take exorbitantly more time than the other kinds of checks, so I suspect at this point that it was too difficult to put in this legislation. But we’d certainly like to see it in the next legislation around reducing red tape, and we think that it’s an important step to go forward.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** You’re quite right.

We’re going through our police services budgets right now, municipally, and there’s a lot of focus on those budgets for a lot of reasons.

On a go-forward basis, and if we can get the government to amend this component of the legislation, would you like to see a component of the funding envelope specifically for this sector so that it doesn’t get pulled out into other jurisdictions?

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** Great question. In fact, some jurisdictions have done it that way, where the individual police services—it’s part of their budget to ensure that police record checks are free in their communities. Across Ontario, maybe one third to one half of police services have free police checks for volunteers, and the rest charge, so it’s very inconsistent. So, first of all, having a provincial playing field is really important. That is one way that some individual police services have done it.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** One minute left.

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** It’s a budget discussion every year, so it would be better if it was in the legislation so that every year non-profits and charities didn’t have to fight for that small piece of the budget.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Yes. You make the point around it being a return on investment to the overall community. The evidence, the research, is there. In the broader spectrum of the budget, it’s a small amount, but the return to the whole community is there.

I just want to say thank you to you and to Liz for the work that you’re doing. The not-for-profit sector is going to figure very heavily in our platform going forward because we see the potential of that sector. Thanks so much.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you.

This round of questions goes to the independent member. MPP Mike Schreiner, please go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thanks to all three presenters for coming to committee today and taking the time to participate. I’m going to start my first round of questions to the Ontario Nonprofit Network. I want to preface by just giving a big thanks to all the non-profits across the province. This pandemic has been tough for everyone, but especially hard for non-profits. I know many have seen significant revenue drops, volunteer decline, yet demand for services has gone way up, especially for those non-profits that serve the most vulnerable in our communities. So I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank you for all the work you do.

I’ve had more than one non-profit organization reach out to me and say, “Hey, we’re thankful that schedule 20

is in the bill and happy to see level 1 and level 2 checks covered, but concerned that level 3”—the vulnerable sector checks that MPP Fife was asking about—“are not covered.” That represents 80% of those checks. I’m wondering what a difference it would make on the ground for non-profit organizations to have those vulnerable sector police record checks free for volunteers.

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** It’s a great question, Mike, and I wish we could answer that with an actual number. Unfortunately, there’s no collective reporting of how many police record checks there are in communities and who charges and who doesn’t. That information is a bit piecemeal across the province, so we actually don’t have a number. But we know that there are five million volunteers in Ontario. We know that those volunteers, a big portion of them, work with vulnerable adults, coaching, work with children, and so there’s a big portion of those—especially in the sports community. Almost entirely, the sports community, which is the bulk of volunteers in Ontario, requires vulnerable sector checks.

So it’s tens of thousands of vulnerable sector checks that are done each year. At a cost of \$20 to \$30 a check, it really is costing organizations a considerable amount of money—money that they don’t have right now. There are no sponsorships. There have been no fundraising events. There’s been very little stabilization funding available to non-profits and charities. It might seem like a small amount, 20 bucks per volunteer, in the grand scheme of things, but it’s a significant amount when it’s totalled.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I asked the associate minister about this specific issue this morning, and her response was similar to your previous response, MPP Fife, that it would place too big of a burden on local police forces etc. and maybe have budgetary implications.

I don’t want to put you too much on the spot here, but you talked about some possible solutions to get around that. Do you have some ideas that you can share with the committee? Because I think you’re right. The budgetary challenges non-profits are facing right now are significant. Stabilization funding has not been provided, and every little bit will make a difference right now. And so I’m trying to think through what are some things that we could do to solve this challenge, to make life a little bit easier for non-profits.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** Education and collaboration are two key things. For example, a lot of non-profits and charities require vulnerable sector checks, perhaps when they don’t have to—if that volunteer isn’t going to be alone with a child or a vulnerable adult—because of liability concerns. There’s a lot of education that can be done about who really needs that vulnerable sector check, and that can be done in partnership with police services.

The second thing is: There are some creative things that we can do at a local level. Guelph is one of those communities that had local solutions for organizations partnering with their police services and kind of doing a bit of pre-screening to save the police time, because we don’t

want police services to waste their time on administrative costs either. Our sector wants them to be doing the important work they’re doing. But we also need to protect the vulnerable populations that we serve.

So I think between education and collaboration, there are some really important lessons that we’ve already learned that work, but having a—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. Thank you, Mike Schreiner.

This round of questions will start with the government members. I think it’s MPP Daisy Wai. Please go ahead.

**1640**

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I was hoping to ask Cathy—I understand you have concerns about the checks that they will have to go through. Are there any other changes that you see that we have already covered in this bill that will support or help what you’re doing?

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** There are no other areas of this particular bill that affect non-profits and charities. That’s the only part of this particular bill that affects non-profits and charities today. There are other red tape reduction issues that we’ve identified for the associate minister, which include how funding is provided to organizations, so transfer payment and how to modernize the transfer payment process, for example; other pieces of legislation, like employment standards, that can be improved to support non-profits and charities, but nothing in this particular legislation.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Thank you very much, Cathy. I’m happy that we’re already working on something that you support.

I also have one very quick question for Sandro. You mentioned how this is affecting the engineers, and it can be so dangerous. Can you elaborate a little bit more on that?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Sure. It’s not dangerous for the engineers; it’s actually dangerous for the public. When you have unqualified engineers, engineers who aren’t being checked—their qualifications aren’t being verified—doing work, and work that isn’t qualified, work that hasn’t been reviewed properly, that puts the public at risk.

I’ll give you the example of the Elliot Lake mall collapse. I’ll give you the example of the Radiohead stage collapse. The same engineer that was responsible for the Radiohead stage collapse was the same engineer that was responsible for the Garden City Skyway scaffolding collapse 10 years prior to that, and it’s because they don’t do proper enforcement and discipline, and that puts the public at risk.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** And how does this bill support and facilitate this?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** It does not support or facilitate it, and it should. One of the things that we’re hoping that the bill can address is to encourage PEO to eliminate its non-regulatory activities so that it is focused on its regulatory duties to the people of Ontario.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I’ll pass my time to MPP Sabawy.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Sabawy, please go ahead.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** My question is for Cathy. I understand that you submitted a request during the 2020 budget consultations to have the fee removed for records checks. How long has your organization been pursuing or trying to get that done?

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** Over 10 years, MPP Sabawy. We've been actively advocating for improved timelines and fees for volunteers for over 10 years. We highlighted it in 2020 because we knew it was an issue that came to the forefront in the pandemic, so we're really pleased to see some action on it this year.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you for the answer. I have one more question in the same direction. How many organizations that you work with or you know of might benefit from that change?

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** Oh, tens of thousands. There are 58,000 non-profits and charities in Ontario. Every single one of them has volunteers. Not everyone requires police records checks, but at least half would. So that would be 25,000 to 30,000 organizations probably.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** So you agree that this is a very impactful change which will help the organizations to get more volunteers involved in the process?

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** Yes, for sure. It's a very impactful change, having level 1 and 2 no fees for those police checks. Those are about 20% of overall police checks, though. So we would like to see the rest of the police checks, that third level of vulnerable sector checks, also be provided free to volunteers in the future.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** One more question also in regard to adult students: Do you think that adult students should be classified as volunteers, and if not, why?

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** If they're a student and if they're doing placement hours to get their credits—for example, they're doing a placement for a credit—then that's not considered a volunteer. That's a student placement. It's the same with high school hours, same with community court-ordered hours. So I think there's a difference between getting credit and placement students in exchange for your diploma or for a course credit, and volunteering of your own free will for the benefit of your community.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you. Do I still have time?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have two minutes and 10 seconds.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Okay. Thank you very much, Ms. Taylor.

I will direct my questions now to Mr. Perruzza. How does the expansion of engineers who can contribute to the critical pre-start reviews impact the industry, in your opinion?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Sorry, can you repeat the first part of the question?

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** How does the expansion of engineers who can contribute to critical pre-start reviews impact your industry?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Okay. I think that, obviously, engineers have a tremendous impact, because as much of the equipment is maybe designed overseas and then brought in to Canada to be assembled, whether it's from

the US, from Germany or from other parts of the world, we have to make sure that—those engineers who design it outside of Canada don't understand the Canadian standards and Canadian requirements. So we need Ontario engineers to make sure that when that equipment is assembled, it's inspected. It may be modified to ensure that it meets all Ontario regulations so that the workers are safe, but also so that the environmental impacts are minimized.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** So you think the impact is going to be positive?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Oh, extremely positive, absolutely.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Okay. So from your opinion, what would be the proposed solution to address those concerns that we raised?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** One minute left.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Very quickly—ensure that the engineers who are doing this are actually qualified to do it. Let me explain what I mean by a “qualified engineer.” It's someone who has a mechanical or electrical discipline background. Right now in Ontario, there's no requirement to practise within your discipline, so you can have someone who is an environmental engineer or someone who is a software engineer do that work. That is obviously a concern for us. We want to make sure that people are qualified and competent to do that work. One of the things that we want the professional engineers to put in place is actually practice standards per discipline. Currently that does not exist.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** And you don't think that this proposed bill covers that?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I think it hasn't been addressed by PEO.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

This round of questions will start with official opposition. MPP Chris Glover, please go ahead.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you all for being here. I've got questions for all of you, all of the deputants, so I'll ask you to try to keep your responses as concise as possible so I can get through the questions.

Sandro, my first question will be for you. Am I to understand, from what you just said, that if I have an electrical engineering ticket, I can sign off on a bridge? Or did I misunderstand that?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** No, you understood that.

Now, one of the things—these big companies like the WSPs and the Hatches are large enough and their liability is strong enough that they don't do things like that. But in some of the smaller projects, that is something of a huge concern.

I'll give you a great example: In Barrie, when you had the tornado go through, there was a shortage of qualified engineers to do the work. The insurance bureau, again, is unaware of some of these requirements, so they had unqualified engineers—professional engineers who, maybe their background was in civil or structural engineering—do some of the assessments. When the insurance bureau

saw the assessments, they raised some concerns; they approached me. We are now putting a process in place right across Canada where we will identify qualified people to do this.

The same thing happens in the environmental sector. The Ontario Environment Industry Association has taken upon itself to develop its own qualified professional network, because we can't rely on the regulator to do their role.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you for that clarification. I guess what it means is that regulators really do save lives in some cases. We need some regulations that are going to do it, and we need greater regulation around the engineering field. Is that correct?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Yes, you need—so you can remove red tape to help businesses and help individuals; however, you have to then rely on a regulator to do their role and to actually enforce on the bad apples. Without that backup, without those checks and balances, then you're putting people at risk.

1650

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Right. Thank you very much. It's very helpful. We'll be looking at this when we're developing amendments for the bill.

Cathy, thank you so much for your work with the volunteer sector. Before this, I was a school board trustee at the TDSB, and I was the chair of the Community Use of Schools Community Advisory Committee. We had about 30 members with all volunteer organizations—sports, arts, every kind of organization that was there. It was in 2015 when the government brought in the police check bill. It created some issues for us—and I'm wondering how that has played out over the years, since then—because a lot of the volunteers couldn't afford it; it was taking too long, depending on different jurisdictions; and different police departments were taking longer. So it actually impeded some people from volunteering. Is that still the case today?

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** Yes, unfortunately it is still the case. Even back in 2015—and we were involved, actually, in deputing on that bill as well. It didn't address fees or timelines at all. Those issues of having to wait forever—especially in big communities like Toronto, we see longer delays. If it takes four weeks, five weeks, eight weeks to get a police record check back, you'll lose a volunteer who wants to volunteer on the weekend for the Scouts camp or the soccer tournament. So it really does harm the ability to recruit volunteers.

In 2015, one of the important things that act did was, it really clarified mental health information and what could be released as part of a vulnerable sector check. We were very supportive of that. That has helped all of us.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I think, overall, it was good to have the information—it's just the way it was rolled out.

You're still talking about scheduling. There should be a turnaround time, and there should be government support to actually pay for it so the volunteers aren't asked to pay for it out of pocket or the organizations that are running on a shoestring don't have to pay for it.

**Ms. Cathy Taylor:** Exactly.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Chair, how much time do I have left?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have three minutes and six seconds.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Everybody has been so concise. I've got lots of time.

Omar, my next question is to you. I'm interested in this delivery model. Obviously, the first concern that would come to mind is, if you've got somebody delivering cannabis to a household, how do you make sure that the purchaser is of age, and what are the safeguards put in place to make sure of that?

**Mr. Omar Khan:** There are pretty strict protocols in place now.

First of all, under federal and provincial law, nobody can actually purchase cannabis unless they are of legal age. The minimum federal age is 18. Ontario has kept the minimum age at 19, to be aligned with beverage alcohol.

Under Ontario regulations, the delivery of the product must be executed by an employee of the store. That employee must be CannSell-trained and certified—CannSell is like the Smart Serve program, but for cannabis—and no delivery can be handed to anyone who is under the age of 19. They must present government photo identification at the door before being given the product. For example, if I were to order CBD capsules online and there was an underage person at my house and the doorbell rang, that underage person would not be able to accept the product, because they would need to show government identification that proves they are 19 years of age or older.

Anecdotally, I've heard that there are certain beverage alcohol delivery services out there that don't necessarily have as strict protocols as are currently in place for cannabis delivery.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** There must be an incredible liability if you're selling cannabis or alcohol to somebody underage.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Omar Khan:** Like I said, we have 31 stores across the province, 104 across Canada. We've never had an issue like this. To be frank, we've worked hard to earn our licences from the AGCO. I can't imagine any licensed cannabis operator doing anything to jeopardize those licences that they've worked so hard for.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Actually, I find some comfort in your response.

The other question that I have—and this is going on a bit of a tangent, and I'll just get the question out; I don't know if you'll have a chance. When cannabis was being legalized, there was a lot of discussion about hiring employees from vulnerable communities, from local communities, communities that don't necessarily get employment as easily, including people with disabilities and BIPOC communities. Is there, within the industry, a push towards that?

**Mr. Omar Khan:** There is a push among certain sectors. I think there needs to be—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you, MPP Chris Glover. Sorry to cut you off, and the presenter.

The next round of questions will start with the independent member. MPP Mike Schreiner, please go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Before I forget, just in case I don't have a chance to go back to the Ontario Nonprofit Network: Cathy, can you send your friendly amendment proposal, like, write a written submission to the committee, just so we all have that, as well as Hansard? It could be nice to hopefully get that right, and hopefully we'll have some all-party consensus on that.

Over to Sandro and the professional engineers: I'm looking at my notes, and it has been a while since you said this—and it has been a while since we met virtually on this issue—but I think you said there are three inspectors for the entire province of Ontario from the regulator? Did I hear that correctly?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** No, there are no inspectors. It's three people in the enforcement branch.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Oh, three people in the entire enforcement branch—for how many engineers?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** About 87,000 or 89,000.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'm standing here basically like, how does the enforcement even work, given those numbers?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** I guess they rely on myself to pester the registrar to actually do some work. It's not his fault; he follows the direction of the council.

I'll give you an example, actually, in your neighbourhood, in southwestern Ontario. You may have read in the news that about 10 years ago there was an engineer who had his stamp digitally copied and used by non-engineers for about 40 to 45 buildings in southwestern Ontario, around Brant county, Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo. He contacted PEO and told them about it. They told him, "Great. Go do the investigation and send us all the paperwork."

So he kind of gave up on that and went to the OPP. The OPP did the investigation and sent it to PEO. The OPP prosecuted. PEO came at the end and the person—nothing really happened to them. I think they were fined \$10,000, and you have 40 buildings that never had a writeoff done by a professional engineer to make sure the building was safe.

About eight years later, so about two years ago, the exact same thing happened, and there has been no action from PEO on this. When he contacted PEO and told him that his stamp—they said, "We're looking for this documentation." He said, "That wasn't me. My stamp was copied. I told you about it six months ago." They followed up with him again and said, "We still want you to send us this documentation." So then he approached me, because he was a member. I had a conversation with the registrar, and then, again, they got the OPP involved.

Now only in rare circumstances do the OPP get involved, and of course, it's only if they have capacity. He had to wait nine months until an OPP investigator finally contacted him to follow up.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Wow. So this is somebody using a stamp to say, "This building is safe," fraudulently? That's what you're telling us?

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** Yes. They hired an engineering company, but the company didn't have any engineers on staff. The person who owned the company did the work—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** One minute left.

**Mr. Sandro Perruzza:** —wasn't a professional engineer. He used my member's stamp on those drawings.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Wow. Okay. I know we only have a minute, and this conversation probably needs about three or four hours, but thank you for bringing it to our attention.

I just wanted to say to Omar that the question I wanted to ask you would probably take an hour or two as well. Maybe you could actually just supply a written submission at some point of some thoughts you have around how we can eliminate the illicit market, just given your experience in the profession.

**Mr. Omar Khan:** I'd love to talk in more depth on this issue with you, Mr. Schreiner, as well as with MPP Glover on his question, so I will reach out to your offices.

Ultimately, with respect to the illicit market, we see progress. It has gradually eroded. It is still just under 50% of sales. But what we need to do is provide the legal businesses, the legal retailers, the tools they need—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you to all the presenters and thank you for all your presentations.

1700

#### ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO

#### FRIENDS OF KENSINGTON MARKET

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** We will now move into the next presentations. The next presenter I will now call on: the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin now. Thank you. Welcome.

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Thank you. My name is Karen Brown and I am president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. Good evening, everyone. I'd like to start by thanking the committee for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of 83,000 public elementary school teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators, education support personnel and professional support personnel who are members of ETFO.

Bill 13 proposes legislative changes to 25 different acts. I will focus my remarks on schedule 8, which introduces amendments to the Education Act, and schedule 17, which introduces amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act. In addition, ETFO will follow up with a written submission to the committee.

Schedule 8 of Bill 13 introduces several amendments to the Education Act. Section 4 of the schedule would remove the requirement for school boards to seek confirmation from the Minister of Education that a person is eligible to be appointed as a supervisory officer. The removal of this requirement is concerning since it opens the door to the potential appointment of supervisory

officers without the necessary qualifications and removes an important safeguard and accountability measure. ETFO believes that this safeguard should remain in place.

Section 5 of the schedule would remove the requirements for a supervisory officer to seek approval from the Minister of Education to hold any additional office or have other employment or profession during their tenure. The current requirement provides a mechanism to evaluate the impact of other activities on the role of a supervisory officer. The removal of this safeguard is concerning and can lead to supervisory officers having competing priorities that would undermine their ability to fulfill the responsibilities of their roles. ETFO believes that this important accountability measure should remain in place. It is ETFO's recommendation that sections 4 and 5 of schedule 8 be withdrawn.

With regard to schedule 17 of Bill 13, it is important to consider not only the changes being proposed to the governance of the Ontario College of Teachers, but also the context under which this is happening. The Ontario College of Teachers was established in 1996 following the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, which recognized that the teaching profession should be self-regulated. The royal commission stated in one of its recommendations: "Professional educators should form a majority of the college with a substantial representation of non-educators from the community at large."

Up until April 2019, the composition of the council of the Ontario College of Teachers achieved this balance between self-regulation of the profession and community representation, with 23 members of the college who were elected by their peers and 14 people appointed by the government. With the adoption of Bill 48, the current government provided itself the authority to determine the composition of council by dictating the numbers of elected members and numbers of government appointees.

In December 2020, the current government made further changes to the governance structure of the college with the adoption of Bill 229. Bill 229 dissolved the previous council and put a single person chosen by the government in charge of all the decisions of the college, and so a new council was formed. This person was also expected to appoint nine members of the college to the new council to join the nine not appointed by the government.

After the transition, the council will be composed of nine members of the college, selected by a nominating subcommittee and by nine government appointees. Members of the college who would sit on the council would no longer be elected by their peers.

ETFO spoke against the changes to the governance of the Ontario College of Teachers that were introduced by Bill 48 and Bill 229. These changes represented unprecedented interference by the government in the college and undermine the self-regulation of the teaching profession.

This brings us to schedule 17. Schedule 17 would further reduce the size of the council of the college from 18 to 12 members. Six of these council members would be members of the college appointed from a list of nominees

prepared by a nominating subcommittee. The remaining six persons on the council would not be members of the college and would not be appointed by the government.

Schedule 17 would remove the authority from the council to appoint one or more deputy registrars, placing this authority on the college registrars, further centralizing authority and reducing accountability and transparency.

Schedule 17 would amend the composition of panels performing adjudicative work and the way they are selected. The new rules will allow panels with fewer members of the college than members of the public. The changes also allow for panels to be constituted without any committee members. These changes undermine trust in the work of the adjudicative panels and raise significant concerns about procedural fairness and representations.

If adopted, schedule 17 would complete the transformation of the college from a professional regulatory body to an extension of the Ministry of Education in all but name. This transformation threatens the quality of Ontario's public education system, undermines the trust of teachers in the college and devalues the teaching profession.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Thank you. Adopting these changes would further reduce confidence in the college from teachers and the public at large. Future decisions made by the college would surely be perceived as politically motivated and indiscernible from the direction of the government of the day.

Teachers would be right to question why they pay fees to a regulatory body in which they have no democratic representation and which is set up to serve the direction of the government of the day.

ETFO recommends that schedule 17 be withdrawn. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you.

For the next presenter, I will now call on Friends of Kensington Market. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard and you may begin now. Welcome.

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** Thank you. My name is Serena Purdy of Friends of Kensington Market. I'm the chair of an organization devoted to preserving the market's unique character and place in the fabric of the city.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee on General Government for the opportunity to speak today on Bill 13. While this bill is expansive, today we will be focusing our comments on schedule 2, regarding the Cannabis Licence Act of 2018.

We applaud the efforts of the government to capture the specific challenges of delivery of cannabis after the point of sale; however, given that this legislation has been in place for three years now, we hope that this can be an opportunity to amend the act, given what we have learned in that time.

I want to be clear that Kensington Market has been a cannabis-friendly culture for generations. Our concerns arise from the current density of retailers as well as from the impact that this industry has had on our community.

Kensington Market has now been through two waves of cannabis speculation and seen commercial competition that has been described as a bloodbath by cannabis retailers themselves. The first wave happened prior to legalization and even then we saw small businesses being displaced. Those spaces remain empty after the businesses left or failed, because landlords have come to expect higher commercial rents. We warned of the same thing happening again, but our concerns have so far gone unheard.

When you walk through Kensington now you can still see the empty storefronts left behind after the first wave, alongside the opaque walls of the cannabis retailers of the second wave, alongside the devastation of COVID-19 on so many small businesses. We have taken to calling these the missing teeth in the smile of Kensington Market.

Right now in our area, there are 11 cannabis retailers within 450 metres of each other. That is too much for any community to bear. We have had to obtain legal support for at least one small business that was illegally evicted from their commercial space to make way for another cannabis shop. They were badly hit by the pandemic, but they had a valid commercial lease, and arrived one day to find themselves locked out of their own business. We have lost shoe repair shops, fresh fruit and vegetable grocers, vintage clothing shops, all to cannabis retail. And for those arguing that they will compete each other out, the insides of those shops have already been changed and the rent has gone up.

1710

At the heart of this issue, we have competing ideas of what this Kensington Market should look like. On the one side is the argument that if these small businesses can't compete, then they should go under, but what we have then is only addictions-based industries—bars and cannabis shops—because they're the only ones that can afford the space. Frankly, I can't get my groceries at a cannabis shop. I can't repair my shoes or buy clothes at a cannabis shop. That is not a vision of a healthy or vibrant community or city.

One solution that is within the power of cabinet to determine under the current framework would be a density requirement restricting the number of cannabis retailers that can be within a given geographic area. This may be helpful, but we urge two additional considerations: that this may promote a cannabis monopoly, which should be avoided if it's possible, and that additional supports would still be needed to re-establish independent businesses in the spaces left behind.

This power of cabinet to regulate also introduces further opportunities. While there are regulations regarding proximity to schools, perhaps we can also introduce a regulation regarding proximity to mental health or addictions facilities. In addition, hundreds of our neighbours and supporters wrote the AGCO opposing many of the cannabis retail licences. Every one, to my knowledge, simultaneously received the same form response, regardless of their concern or its relevance to the criteria listed on the AGCO website. This does not reflect true public consultation in good faith, and it raises the question of if anybody

is aware of any licences being denied by the AGCO, and is this perhaps because they do not yet have the appropriate tools to enforce?

Finally, and perhaps most seldom discussed, is the involvement of organized crime elements in the cannabis industry. The RCMP first started noticing signs of this involvement as early as 2013. According to their report to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, there is no shortage of organized criminal groups who have applied to produce medical marijuana, including self-proclaimed Hells Angels and associates of transnational organized crime. We have noted a significant increase in motorcycle gang presence, including visible insignias of affiliation, and if you were in the market throughout the summer, you likely noticed the long lines of bikes parked between Hotbox café and One Plant on Augusta Avenue. At the same time, neighbours have reported an increase in violent incidents and an influx of harder drugs, including meth, which has tragically resulted in a number of overdose deaths that have been devastating for the community.

Most disturbingly of all, we have seen an increase in the number of attempted abductions of women, likely for the purpose of sex trafficking. Our organization has had to share warnings of vans parked at Dundas and Bathurst with multiple men trying to drag women inside, among other incidents. It's so disturbing that many of us would prefer not to think of it or don't want to believe that it's real, but we must acknowledge their involvement. Organized crime is not something that any one community has the capacity to address, and it's not something that my organization—imagine a residents' association trying to take on the Hells Angels. It's not something we can do. We need help.

These are complex issues to address, but in many ways, they are simple. Corporate cannabis has been the new Walmart for Kensington Market. It has devastated small businesses and reshaped the face of our main streets.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** We are one of many communities that have been under a second siege, in addition to the pandemic. It is time now to listen, learn and amend this act to defend Kensington. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you for your presentation.

I can see that MPP Bell has joined. Can you confirm you are present and that you are an MPP, and can you confirm whether you are currently in Ontario, please?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I'm Jessica Bell, MPP for University–Rosedale, and I'm at Queen's Park this evening.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you.

We are moving into the questions. This round of questions will start with the independent member. MPP Mike Schreiner, please go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thanks to both presenters for coming to Queen's Park today and providing very important information, deputations. I think I'll start my first question to the Friends of Kensington Market. Would you

be supportive of empowering municipalities to be able to bring in regulations around clustering of cannabis stores to address some of the concerns you've brought forward?

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** Yes. Either empowering the municipalities to be able to do that or having a provincial standard of some kind would both be useful, but, as I said, unless it comes with those additional considerations in mind, then it may have the unintended consequences of enforcing monopolies and it wouldn't provide the supports the small businesses need to be able to re-establish their main streets.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Yes, I certainly appreciate the delicate balance there. I don't think any of us wants to see monopolization, but we also want to make sure that we have diversification on our commercial retail areas as well.

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** It's very much a "yes, and" situation.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I hear you. It's more complicated than you can probably put together in four minutes. I think it actually would be helpful if you'd provide a written submission as well that would provide some additional details to committee, because I think this is an important issue and there's complexity associated with it.

I want to leave a little bit of time to ask ETFO some questions as well, so I'm going to shift over. I'm concerned about the issues you've raised about undermining the self-regulation of the college of teachers, and I'm wondering what you think the implications of that are for the quality of public education in Ontario.

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Can you please repeat the question?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Yes. You had talked about how this bill, or the changes of this bill and preceding bills, is undermining the self-regulation of the teachers' college. I'm wondering if you could elaborate on how you think that will affect the quality of public education in Ontario.

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Thank you. When we look at other professional bodies that have the ability to be self-regulated, whether it's our nurses, whether it's our doctors or lawyers, we see that they have their peers who are part of that body establishing a standard, upholding the standards of the profession. By removing the ability for teachers to have a self-regulatory body, it removes the professionalism of that. It starts de-professionalizing that, and that takes away from the impact and the way public education is viewed and those who are delivering it, that they're not qualified professionals who are able to self-regulate, who understand the complexities of the profession and who can maintain the standards.

They have been doing this for over 20 years, and for the government to come in, to attempt to take away their ability to engage in a body that's supposed to be reflective of them—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Yes. Why would our members continue to say that this is a body that reflects them and their profession when they don't have representation and a democratic process, when there are individuals who are

appointed by a government, that their peers have not elected and selected them as we see in other professions? They need to have that same dignity and respect afforded to them so that they can carry out their work with the same level of professionalism.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate that. I'm assuming my time is up, Chair? Yes, thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you.

The next round of questions will start with the government members. I can see MPP Sam Oosterhoff. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** My thanks to those who have presented with such passion and commitment to your communities and your members. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to have heard some of that feedback on this legislation.

I want to perhaps begin first with a couple of questions to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. I have to begin, as I did with OSSTF as well, by just thanking you and your members for the work they've done over the past—well, the history of public education in Ontario. But really over the past couple of years, we've seen how crucial and important educators are and how resilient and innovative they are as well when it comes to situations that I'm sure none of them ever anticipated—teaching online for extended periods of time in the middle of a global pandemic and being able to pivot in remarkable ways to provide our children just a fantastic education. So my thanks and gratitude to you and your members for that work, and please pass that along as well on behalf of Minister Lecce and our entire government.

1720

I really appreciated you sharing your perspective on this and some of the concerns that you've raised, and I guess my question would just be—first of all, we recognize that public education and a public system that serves the public is so key. I guess I'm asking, isn't it important that the public is involved then also in that regulation and that that public interest is being represented when public-system teachers are being governed through the OCT?

**Ms. Karen Brown:** First of all, I want to thank you. It's great to have actually some public recognition of the work that our members have been doing during this pandemic: that they have been innovative; that they have been resilient; that they have led to keep our students, our children safe through this pandemic time. So I will convey that appreciation to our members, but I also want to be able to convey to our members that they do have an ability to have a voice as part of their college. There has always been public accountability. There has always been public representation.

What is different is my members' voices have been diminished. They are equal partners in this process. That is what has changed. The government needs to also recognize that they are valued players like every other college that has been established. The same respect that's given to our lawyers, our dentists, our doctors and our nurses needs to be given to our educators. They are professional as well

and they also have the ability and should be allowed to have a voice.

That's what I would like to convey back to our members: that you're in agreement with that; that you understand that that it's no different; and that throughout the history of public education, since the inception of the college and the purpose of the inception of the college, it was recognized at that time the importance that teachers are part of a self-regulatory body. That's what I think the public would also like to see and understand why there is a difference.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Another question that I had, and it builds off that recognition of just the unique strengths that our educators in the province of Ontario bring to the table and indeed all those who work in education have a unique ability, I believe, to be willing to give, to be able to contribute, and we see that.

My question is just about that use of the phrase "OCT." As you may have seen in section 14 of the act, it's amended by adding a number of subsections, including the use of title subsection which states that: "No person except a member of the college shall use the English title 'Ontario Certified Teacher' or the French title 'Enseignant(e) agréé(e) de l'Ontario' or an abbreviation of any of those titles to describe themselves and their profession...."

"No person except a member of the college shall represent or hold out expressly or by implication that they are a member of the college."

This is, I believe, something that's important because many of your members have worked very, very hard to be able to become teachers here in the province of Ontario, and that's a uniquely qualified role. So could you perhaps speak about the importance of ensuring that the brand, if you will, of OCT-certified teachers is protected and that support is also seen in that we don't have others portraying themselves as OCT-certified when they are in fact not?

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Thank you for that question. I have been focusing my comments specifically on the composition of the council in regard to the supervisory officers. What I will say to your question is that, in any profession, it's important to maintain the integrity of the profession and what is necessary to ensure that those who are teaching or designated early childhood educators have the qualifications as would be expected in any other profession.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** One other question I had that I also asked earlier—and I understand that you've been sharing your perspective on the composition, and I respect that and obviously where that perspective comes from also with regard to your role as an advocate for the labour movement and, of course, your membership in that particular composition or the particular role that you hold, that office.

I'm just asking if you can lay out for us here that difference between the labour union side of the educational regulation space and then of course the OCT and the role that they play and how teachers can be represented through both. I know you're speaking about the impor-

tance of representation on the OCT board, so I'm wondering if you can lay out some of those differences and what the advocacy looks like through a union versus the importance of regulation through OCT.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Karen Brown:** I'm not quite sure I understand your question.

Our members are educators and, yes, we are part of the labour movement. I'm here representing educators and the impact of the college—and their voices would be there as educators. So their voices, as members of the labour movement, are amplified in other areas. Right now, we're talking about a body which they're paying fees to and dues to, and their voices and their concerns also need to be articulated at that table. I'm here to articulate that voice as far as education. When it comes to labour, I have other platforms to articulate that voice.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I really appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts today.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Right on time.

This round of questions will start with the official opposition. MPP Bell, please go ahead.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you, Karen, for being here and expressing your expertise.

I have two children in the TDSB public school system who are taught by elementary school teachers, and I thank them every single day for the work that they do. It is exceptionally difficult work to teach kids in this environment right now, and my kids are learning and thriving because of them.

I want to address my questions to Serena Purdy, who kindly came here to represent Friends of Kensington Market. Kensington is a unique and special neighbourhood in University–Rosedale. To say that it is an open-minded community is an understatement. This is not the kind of community that says no to cannabis. So when a residents' association comes forward and identifies that there are 11 cannabis stores within a 450-metre radius and expresses some concern about that, it is very important that all members, especially government members, listen carefully.

Serena, I want to summarize your ask to us and make sure that it is an accurate summary. You are, in general, in support of giving municipalities and communities greater say over where cannabis stores are located, especially when there is clustering and significant density in an area, but you also want us to recognize that there might be some unintended consequences of that, that we should also look into—the "yes, and" approach. Those consequences are a concentration of cannabis stores being owned by corporate monopolies and that there continues to be an issue with organized crime within the cannabis sector that also needs to be addressed.

Is that a reasonable summary, Serena, or is there anything else that you'd like to add?

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** I think there's also the question of the proximity to addiction and mental health spaces. We

do have an overdose prevention site, and we are right by CAMH. So these have raised additional concerns, given that it's, in many cases, not just cannabis that's coming in due to the organized crime elements, and we have seen a significant influx of harder drugs that are affecting already vulnerable populations. We are seeing targeting of people who are housing-precarious, who are street-involved, and it's devastating. People are dying as a result. We see it every day, and we have had too many memorials in our park as a result. So I would say that is actually a very significant piece, and I hope it doesn't get lost.

When it comes to the density, I would love to have a longer conversation about what that looks like, because we've thrown around some ideas about—maybe you add a surcharge on top and you try to prioritize; you reduce those surcharges for single-site spaces, but then you're really only protecting independent cannabis dispensers. You're not really doing anything for independent stores of every other stripe.

1730

Certainly we've initiated that conversation with TABIA and we've had ongoing conversations on this issue. So, yes, I think it's going to be an innovative solution to an ongoing problem, but we need to start putting something in place and that likely involves density restrictions.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay. Thank you for that summary.

I've got a few additional questions, just so all committee members have a good understanding of what it's like to express some concerns about a cannabis store—in your case, the 12th or 13th store being opened up in an area. In your experience, what is it like to engage with the AGCO to express some valid community concern around a cannabis location, as well as concern around a cannabis licence being given? Can you walk us through that process a little bit?

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** Sure. I think as an organization we work very hard to be a policy-informed and evidence-informed group of people, and we put that up front. Usually when we're engaging our neighbours in something like this, we'll lay out—from the AGCO website, “These are the main points that you should be hitting on. This is where you send it. These are the deadlines.” We had a number of neighbours—in this case, hundreds of neighbours—and supporters write into the AGCO with their concerns along those lines, as they were instructed.

Because I sent in a letter personally, and because our board and organization sent in a letter—we got the response simultaneously. We got the notification at the same time for them coming in. It was this form letter signed by Shady from the AGCO, and it was laughable. It felt like no one was being taken seriously and no amount of care or paying attention to the process or doing your job to detail the impact that this has on the community—none of that was being considered. Now it just feels like the AGCO is this impervious agency that you can't really get anything through, like there's no point in saying anything. I don't think that is the point of public consultation or consideration in a democracy. That's ridiculous. It should

go somewhere and do something, and you should have clear guidelines on how that works. And we should see a result.

We should also be able to see if licences have been rejected. I couldn't find that information anywhere.

Obviously, we will see this process improve. We have to get better at this, not worse, but at this point in time it's not looking good.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you for raising that. That's also been our experience with the AGCO. We've communicated with the AGCO many times when another additional cannabis store had been proposed in the neighbourhood. Like I said, University–Rosedale, the Annex area and the Kensington area are not traditionally opposed to cannabis, but there comes a point when it gets a little bit too much. Unfortunately, we have received pretty standard responses that haven't been accommodating or responsive to pretty valid concerns that the community has raised.

I want to talk a little bit about the small business community in Kensington. I have reached out and gone door-to-door to almost all of the front-line retail stores in Kensington—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** —and like you, Serena, I have seen the impact of the pandemic on the small business community. What do you think the government should do to help small businesses in Kensington?

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** We'll take as many supports as we can get, honestly. But one of the things that I would not like to see is continuing to shovel money at landlords that may not actually pass on those benefits to the front-line companies themselves. We need supports that are direct to the businesses.

It's also harder and harder for businesses to organize when they continue to be displaced. So this needs to be very urgent, otherwise, we will see a much, much longer recession, and we will see the impact on other—having an empty main street is not good for the one or two stores left.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you for your work, Serena.

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** The next round of questions will start with the government members. I see MPP Sam Oosterhoff. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I am appreciative of the continued opportunity to speak with you. I wanted to get a better sense from Serena with the Friends of Kensington Market and speak a little bit about what that experience has been. Could you speak about—through the process of initial legalization, if you saw some changes in the neighbourhood, what that looked like, and then of course the increase once there were a few allocated. Now you're saying there are 11 within a very dense neighbourhood. Obviously, that's quite a rapid shift. I'm just wondering what transition points happened. I'm sure it didn't get to this point overnight. There were obviously different evolutions of what was happening there. So I'm wondering if there was, from your perspective, an optimal level or if there was a particular moment where it became, “Okay, things are going too far.”

In my riding, I have six municipalities, and four of the municipalities have opted out of providing the option for cannabis to be sold within our municipalities, and two of them have decided to opt in. Now we're seeing in one of my municipalities a substantial number of cannabis shops actually going up very close to my constituency office, but that's purely a coincidence.

I'm asking what that was like. We're now five years into this legalization—four years, really—and there has been a little bit of time to get to see some of the impacts. If you could say there was anything that the provincial government should be raising with the federal government, what would that be?

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** In many ways, Kensington Market inadvertently became ground zero for this, and a lot of speculators tried to call us the new Amsterdam even though we were very happy to be the old Kensington Market.

The dream, I think, was to decriminalize, to end a lot of race-based discrimination and end criminalization of racialized communities and vulnerable folks in the neighbourhood based on minor drug charges and the result that would have on their future prospects in life. It was also to empower the people who were already involved in advocacy on the subject, which is now fairly well acknowledged to be medicinally useful and also in many ways culturally embedded in various communities that have been here for a long time. So the hope was that that's what we would see, but instead we've seen a sort of two-stage gold rush. We've seen the first wave of businesses coming in before legalization even came through, as I mentioned during my talk, and then we saw the second wave. What we tried to do was advocate for changes before the second wave hit us, but we weren't successful in getting real changes in before that hit.

Many of the things that I'm saying now are not going to save Kensington Market, but they might save another community like it. We also acknowledge that there are many communities that don't face any of these issues because they haven't been the centre of questions like this.

We have more experience than I think most communities would have in this area—and for us it has been the initial shock of how much money was coming in, how much power was coming in with that money, who was involved. In many of those situations, if it's your own neighbourhood—they don't live there, they don't care about the neighbourhood, and they really just see it as a place to cash in. They're not going to treat the neighbourhood as well as they would their own home. That has been, largely, the experience. I think much of this we do—and have always wanted to get back to the history of this market. It's a historically immigrant neighbourhood. It's a historically vulnerable neighbourhood. It's where people can go to get their feet under them, start a new business, start a life and contribute to the city, contribute to the nation. This is what has been our point of pride for a long time, and we really just want to get back to that.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I'm going to turn it over to MPP Harris now, who I believe also has a number of questions.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** MPP Mike Harris, please go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Ms. Purdy, I want to build a little bit on what you were saying. You keep talking about the market pre the first round of licensees. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

1740

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** A little bit, yes. Even before the pandemic hit and before we were hit by this wave, we kind of saw it coming, but we didn't. Our organization was established initially in 2014 to fight a Walmart that was coming into the area, because we saw the establishment of a big box store having a serious impact on a lot of the smaller grocers in the neighbourhood. We have places like Sonya's Park up the street that is named after a woman who just started selling groceries on the side of the street. That's part of our—

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Chair, I don't want to interrupt, but I just wanted—Ms. Purdy, if you can focus on, in what you're talking about, the cannabis industry coming into Kensington Market—

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** I am. I'm talking about what was displaced.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** —before it was legalized in the province. We have a very small amount of time left.

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** Yes. And I am talking about what's being displaced. I'm talking about what is at the core here. In my talk, I did talk about in the first wave what got removed for cannabis dispensaries was a shoe repair shop, was a greengrocer. These are places that are difficult—

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Chair, again, if I may: We're talking about an industry that wasn't even legal yet in the province, right?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I'm out of time?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left, one more minute.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** We're talking about an industry that wasn't even legal yet in the province, is that correct? We were already seeing people moving in and positioning themselves, or how was that working?

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** Yes. What we already had in Kensington Market was a long-standing Rastafarian, Afro-Caribbean community, a very cannabis-positive culture here.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** But we're talking about illegal cannabis sales.

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** I'm talking about a cannabis-positive culture that has been here since the 1970s. What we're talking about is—

**Mr. Mike Harris:** So there were people selling cannabis in Kensington Market illegally, is what you're saying.

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** What we're talking about is a culture that we now acknowledge to be a very valuable part of our—

**Mr. Mike Harris:** So is it not better—

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

This is the final round of questions. We will start with the official opposition. I can see the hand of MPP Chris Glover. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Serena, thank you so much. You've presented the case about Kensington very well. My riding borders Dundas Street so it's right across the street. I'm in Kensington Market all the time and I can see the changes you're talking about, and they are very concerning.

One of the things that hasn't been brought up here in this—and I'll ask you to keep your responses quick, because I've got some questions for Karen as well—is the impact on tourism. Kensington Market is a tourism magnet for the city of Toronto and there are 27 million visitors a year to Toronto. The tourism industry has a \$10-billion economic impact on the province. Are you seeing a decline in the number of visitors to Kensington Market or a change in the visitors to Kensington Market because of what's happened with the cannabis retailers taking over some of these spaces?

**Ms. Serena Purdy:** Yes. There was already the impact of COVID and the lockdowns on tourism that has shaped it, so it's little bit tough to pull apart. But, ultimately, if people are coming to the neighbourhood for a proliferation of small businesses and for the history of Kensington Market, then a lot of that is being eroded.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay, thank you. You know what, I'm going to leave it there and I do appreciate what you've been saying.

I want to ask a few questions to Karen. Karen, I was a high school teacher at East York Collegiate when the College of Teachers was created in the late 1990s, so I've got a bit of a history with this thing. What you've pointed out is the steady erosion of teachers' voices in that institution. The one question I have—and I'll start off with this one: What percentage of the college's budget is from members' fees?

**Ms. Karen Brown:** I don't have that exact information, but it's a lot. We pay quite a hefty fee for very little voice and little representation.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Right, yes. There used to be a campaign in the 1800s: No Taxation Without Representation. I'm worried about this.

The other thing I'm worried about with this is the de-regulation of potential conflicts of interest by supervisory officers. Can you just comment on that? That's a section of the Education Act that's being deleted with this bill. What do you see as some of the implications or potential implications of that?

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Part of that—and thank you for just recognizing some of the erosion that has occurred, first of all. With a supervisory officer, yes, you need to ensure that they are someone who's qualified, who has the background and experience in education, first of all, and also that they're focused and dedicated to that, so there is no conflict of interest as far as outside bodies or organizations that they're connected with, that they're working with, and also working within the system, whether we're looking at things where a government might be looking at more

privatization and outsourcing of things, moving to maybe certain online venues, where someone could have a potential interest in that. So you really need to ensure that they're dedicated to the system, to education, to the board that they're working with, and that that's their focus, that there's no competing focus because of the next great educational tool that they can profit from.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** This has been one of my greatest concerns. After leaving teaching in 2000 to do research, I became an activist, and I was part of the campaign for public education. What I came to realize is that the Conservative government, at that time, was actually trying to privatize our public education system. They had underfunded our public and Catholic schools by \$1.2 billion and they'd introduced a \$700-million private school tax credit, so there was a direct transfer of funds. What we've seen here and what we're looking at here is potential conflicts of interest, so a supervisory officer coming into education not with the students' best interests as top of mind, but as potential profit or creating a market for a good for another industry that they're working in. Is that what you're describing?

**Ms. Karen Brown:** That's exactly what we're describing: looking at education more as a commodity and not looking at building someone who's going to come and try to establish a good foundation for students to learn and grow on. That's important; not someone that might be coming in looking at other avenues, as I said, to further remove funding from the education system and providing the resources and energy and time towards further privatization of our education system. That's exactly what we don't need. We need people who are committed to a fully funded public education system and who are going to work to advocate for that and have the surety of the public, that the public has confidence in those individuals and what they're doing.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Right. I'm hearing that ETFO is asking us to remove this schedule for two reasons. One is that it's disrespectful to the teachers in that it takes away the teachers' voice and the ability to self-regulate through the College of Teachers, and the other is that it opens up to conflicts of interest and the potential of utilizing our schools as a marketing opportunity for people with private sector interests. Is that accurate, and is there anything else that's of concern in this schedule?

**Ms. Karen Brown:** I think those are things we need to be concerned about. Both are potential areas where things could move in that direction. Also, I think it's important to know that, right now, with the power of one individual to appoint who's going to be the representative of the college, this person was appointed by the government. It's an extension of the Ministry of Education, where you have government people appointing non-government people and appointing other people. Where is that independent voice? Where is the voice of the profession that's there?

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Karen Brown:** So, absolutely.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. And do you know how this compares with other self-regulatory colleges, like the

College of Nurses of Ontario, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario?

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Our understanding is that they have a majority voice; they have the voice of their members. It's heard throughout that process. They sit there; they're part of the panels and whatever is required. It has been established that they do have a voice, they have input and they have oversight. They bring that professional expertise in regard to the standards of their profession. That is not being afforded for teachers, and that wasn't the model which the college was established on. Really, what we're seeing here is a government attacking teachers, attacking women primarily—

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Yes, I hear you. I'm almost out of time. I just want to say before we go, thank you for what

you are doing. My daughter is now a grade 4 teacher, so she has followed in these footsteps.

**Ms. Karen Brown:** Excellent. She'll make a great impact. Thank you for that.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I think she will.

**The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi):** Thank you, Chris Glover. Thank you to all the presenters and thank you for all your presentations.

As a reminder, the deadline for the written submissions is 6 p.m. on Thursday, November 18, 2021, and the deadline for filing amendments to Bill 13 is 12 noon on Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, November 17, 2021.

*The committee adjourned at 1751.*





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### **Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes**

Ms. Jessica Bell (University–Rosedale ND)  
Ms. Marit Stiles (Davenport ND)

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