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Mardi 24 octobre 2006

**Standing committee on
estimates**

Ministry of Training,
Colleges and Universities

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de la Formation et des
Collèges et Universités

Chair: Tim Hudak
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 24 October 2006

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The committee met at 1545 in room 151.

MINISTRY OF TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The Chair (Mr. Tim Hudak): Good afternoon, folks. The standing committee on estimates is back in session for our second day of hearings with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, good to see you again. Deputy, as well.

We have a total of five hours and 28 minutes remaining in the estimates proceedings for MTCU. As folks will remember, the committee was adjourned and the official opposition had 16 minutes remaining in their rotation. Then we will have 20-minute rotations until our time is exhausted, with Mr. Marchese following the official opposition. So it's the official opposition and we will begin with Mr. O'Toole. The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I thank Mr. Dunlop for giving me a chance to represent the documented concerns of the two fine post-secondary institutions in my riding of Durham: Durham College and the newest university in Canada, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

I've had the privilege, Minister, of meeting both the new presidents. You would know that Dr. Polonsky has just left that post after a great and illustrious career, and after developing a plan and getting it through cabinet. When we were government, I can recall the excitement of that new university. Jim Flaherty had a lot to do with that; you would know that. It was Gary Polonsky working with him and the community. It is a real asset. I commend you and encourage you to work along with them, because it is one of the most important pieces of human infrastructure that Durham has achieved in the last—well, since the region was formed, I think. It's probably more important than 407, technically. It's the type of infrastructure that you can't compete without in a knowledge-based economy. I can't stress that enough, and I mean that respectfully. Whoever is government has to recognize that with over 500,000 people in Durham region—and Wayne Arthurs knows this. We did serve together—pretty well on the same team, which is surprising—at Durham region at that time. That's kind of the way it is.

The next step, of course, is to make sure that university matures. Dr. Ron Bordessa is the new president and

just a tremendous and delightful person to meet and to listen to, a very pleasant and passionate person who brings a lot. He did some time at Royal Roads in British Columbia and other assignments as well. But in speaking to him and to the provost as well as other members of more or less the academic—there certainly was no politics in it at all. They're happy and quite willingly looking forward to being more of a productive gateway to post-secondary education, which is a big part of your plan—more students than ever, and all this in post-secondary.

At the same time, I'm going to stress—and I hope I get around to it in the very limited time I have here—the important role of the college in this Bill 52, staying in school past 18. OYAP, the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, is an excellent program; I'd expand it. It's an important part, working in partnership with—the problem there is how the money flows. Technically, if the student is registered in the school board, the money flows through there, and it's hard to transfer that over to the colleges. So if you could sort that out. That has been brought to my attention by both educators in the elementary and secondary panel as well as at the college level.

And you might know that the president of Durham College is Leah Myers, just a terrific person and a great author of the Rae report. Although Bob Rae did the consultation, she had a very important role in that, as you would know. Just while I'm on the whole Rae report thing—and this is sort of my preamble into some real questions, actually, which is surprising—I was impressed by the Rae report, but more importantly, when the council of university presidents awarded him the Smith award maybe—I'm not sure what the award was. The council met and he created a videotape from that, and in it he said the best universities in the world are private—Bob Rae, potential candidate. He was referring to Harvard, MIT, UCLA and some of the other great institutions in the world. And it's that new partnership that I think brings me back on topic.

The University of Ontario Institute of Technology was founded on a somewhat different mandate, empowered to act and create the synergies and necessary partnerships with other community players. The first question I have is, when it was founded—I think that Michael Gourley, who was a former Deputy Minister of Finance, was part of the business plan to make the case for the new university—one of their business arguments was the discount grant rate. I know your staff would be working on that. I

need some assurance today that the beginning pieces mature into becoming a more capable, fulfilled institution, that they're on a level playing field with Laurier and the other important universities—Brock and McMaster, not to mention U of T, Queen's and Western. They have lots of money and lots of foundation money and stuff like that. They kind of run the university business, no question about it. That's the first question. Are you familiar with the issue and are you committed to resolving it for the next budget cycle?

1550

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Thank you very much. I think you're right to be proud of the institutions that are in your jurisdiction, UOIT and Durham College, both very fine institutions providing excellent education not only for the students in Durham region but for students who come from all over Ontario, as you would know, for those institutions. I'd say a couple of things. First of all, for the college and university there—and for everywhere else in the province of Ontario—I'm very pleased to be part of a government that in the past two years has increased the funding support for all students by about 20%. That is a substantial infusion of funds, which will certainly support quality education everywhere, including Durham and UOIT.

To address specifically UOIT and some of the issues that you alluded to, it was established—and you're quite right that the now Minister of Finance was one of those who had advocated for its establishment—as I understand it, on a slightly different approach to funding than every other, and that was one of the selling points of its being established in the first place. From time to time, since we became the government, various groups have come to point out some challenges—and I'll put it gently—with respect to the funding approach that supported the establishment of that university. What we're determined to do as a government is to ensure that students in the province of Ontario are properly and fully supported through their university and college education. We'll continue to address the challenges wherever they may be found throughout the province.

Mr. O'Toole: Great. I appreciate that and I'll certainly be sending a copy of this—not in any threatening or intimidating way.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Oh, absolutely.

Mr. O'Toole: It's important to them, and I'm here to be a productive, non-political voice for them in today's proceedings. These are known, ongoing challenges with the new university.

As you would know, I think right now their enrolment stands in the order of about 4,300 or so. I've been there just as recently as Monday. I met with the provost on a whole technical—they have some brilliant people. The academics there are first class, no question. I'm not prepared to assess that, but judging by some of the awards they've received, some of the research grants they've gotten, their peers and those that are qualified to assess these are quite—they've got a lot of research grant money. In fact, that leads to my second question.

During your announcement at Trent University about graduate funding, which I attended—you're going to increase the amount of money for graduate programming, which I think, when you look at the double cohort, was a natural outflow of more students, more graduate programs and more enrolment capacity there. This university was founded, as you've described, in a somewhat different footprint. It's pretty aggressive on the science and technology side, which are more expensive facilities to operate. They're not just lecture theatres; you need labs and other capacity. I think it's the first campus, certainly in Ontario if not Canada, that's a completely wirelessly interconnected, laptop type of environment for students, which is exciting—and expensive. When it comes to the graduate program, they have about a hundred professors. More recently, one professor got a Premier's excellence award for hydrogen. They're about to announce, it's my understanding—they're waiting for you to clear your calendar, I think—a great partnership on the nuclear side, looking at hydrogen being created from some sort of nuclear thermal process. It will be another significant award working with the academics, and I hope you make that announcement quickly.

But the thing is, when you announced, they made application for 260 graduate spaces at that time, and I think they only got 60. In fairness, there was no threshold, there was no benchmark for the university and what its capacity and competency was. But I'm here to tell you, from all the evidence, some of this year's graduates are just dynamic students. They're right into that nuclear engineering and all that very high-tech stuff. It would be good to have more capacity there and I just draw it to your attention. It's an ongoing concern. Although it's refreshing for me, I think I need to make sure that you understand that they're looking for not 60 spots, which you awarded them, but they're looking for 260 spots. They have that type of capacity in the research environment and they have some of the funding on the grant side, and the professor capacity to work with graduate students is there, I'm told. As recently as today, I talked to experts—the provost and a few other people at the university—to make sure I was being productive.

The other issue is tied into the last, and I'm going to put it on the table. You can respond in the time that's left, perhaps using some of Mr. Marchese's time, I don't know. Quite frankly, the other one is really important. We have made a tremendous start. I think there was a very ambitious program. There's a bond out there for some of the buildings; the Beacon project with General Motors is there; and OPG gave them \$10 million to build some capacity there. So it's a huge and very vibrant academic community.

I don't want to interfere in the politics, but here's the problem: They have a footprint today that is pretty well crippled because they've got a growth plan going to 6,500 students; that's another 30% increase. They're already in portables because you have frozen their access to capital or raising capital or raising borrowed capital. I need you to commit today to work with the board of

governors as well as the university to make sure that we have not only the human capacity but the physical capacity to provide the highest and best-quality education at the undergraduate level, at the graduate level in the province of Ontario, because Durham is poised to overtake Hazel McCallion as the leader not just in autos but in energy. We're going to be the energy capital of Canada. We've got the capacity; we just need you to sign the cheque.

I'll give him a couple of minutes there to wrap up. I'm very excited about this. I'm not trying to be artificial. This is the best thing that's ever happened. Is it a bit over-acting, sort of sounding like George Smitherman, maybe?

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): No, you sound excited.

Mr. O'Toole: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much. Just let me take a few minutes on the graduate piece, because I think you make a very good point. I was very pleased to make the announcement with the Premier that we're expanding graduate education by 55% over the 2002-03 levels by 2009-10. In fact, by next September, 2007-08, there will be 12,000 more grad students than in 2002-03; 14,000 by 2009-10.

To determine how the allocation was made, the first thing that we did was ask who was interested. Of course, just about every university stepped forward and said they would like to take a lot more grad students, some more weighted to masters and some more weighted to PhDs, and UOIT was one of those. So we had a starting point and we took a look at who'd been in the business of graduate education from the beginning. I think you make a good point about UOIT, as with all of our universities, having an excellent professoriate, having distinguished professors. You could probably say the same in many respects about any institution you chose in the province of Ontario.

The one thing we wanted to make sure of, as we undertook such a large and rapid expansion of graduate education in the province of Ontario, is that absolutely nobody was going to suggest that we were doing it in a way that undercut the very high quality of grad education. At the end of the day, we wanted to make sure that we were not only increasing the opportunities, but every new student received the same high quality of grad education they've come to expect in the province of Ontario. Because if you undercut that mark, then you undercut the degree that every other grad student has ever received from an Ontario institution. So we did look, first, at who'd been in the business of grad education, for how long they'd been in the business, and to what degree. So what we did in allocating the spaces was to build on history. UOIT did not have a history, so what we said to them was, "You have no program. We'll provide you with 60 opportunities." That's sixty over zero. But there's going to be another allocation of the last 2,000 of the spaces, so let's build up the capacity and build up the programming and then, by all means, as we roll out that

second allocation in a couple of years' time, then I expect UOIT will be at the table saying—and they'll probably be joined by others—that they would like to do more.

1600

So I think the future for UOIT is as bright as it is for any institution, and that future will be illuminated in part by the history that they are developing with their grad programs. I know you are very proud of UOIT. You know what? You should be. I know the students are very proud of the education they get there, and absolutely they should be. We just want to make sure, as we develop the programs, that they have the time to be fully supported by the faculty, the staff at UOIT, as at every other institution. It's no different an approach, let me assure you, than we're taking anywhere else. It's quality first, opportunities as we go along.

Because I'm not sure how much time I've got, let me briefly address the capital issue at UOIT. I think you make a plea from Warren.

I'd say a couple of things. When the university was established, there were a number of assumptions that were made by its proponents about its future in terms of how it would be funded and what types of monies it could rely upon. We have heard, from time to time, that a number of those assumptions may not be borne out.

I think the other thing that happened when it was established is that the government of the day did not set aside a substantial capital fund for future building. So there were a couple of things that came together. One was a desire for expansion, but without necessarily the capital support. I would simply say on the funding side in the future that, as you know, we're having discussions with the federal government. You know who the Minister of Finance is federally. We're trying to get them to forward the money through the McGuinty-Martin agreement for post-secondary education and skills training, and I think when we do that there will be more for every post-secondary institution in the province of Ontario, including UOIT. Because you know that the present federal Minister of Finance was very much involved in UOIT, I'm sure you'll want to deliver the message to him that he could be of great assistance in that regard.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, and Mr. O'Toole. Thank you for your time. That does conclude the 60 minutes that you had. There will be another 20-minute rotation in 40 minutes.

Now we turn to the third party. Mr. Marchese, you have 20 minutes, sir.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Thank you, Chair.

Minister, last year a number of institutions were frustrated with your ministry's inability to flow allocations in a timely manner. Seven months after the May 2005 budget, universities were still waiting for the government to release vital funding allocations. A few questions: What happened? Why did it take so long? What steps are you taking to ensure it won't happen again this year?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: As you know, last year we launched the Reaching Higher plan, 6.2 billion extra

dollars over five years, a substantial increase in operating funding for post-secondary institutions. We said that funding was necessary to support quality and access for all post-secondary education. We also said something else. We want to make sure that the funding is nearest to the benefit of the students at the institutions. So we said we would enter into one-year interim accountability agreements with the institutions whereby the government would commit to flow money over the course of the year once they entered into an agreement on how it was going to be spent and how it would be used to improve quality. It's a very new process. In the past, governments have announced programs, some targeted, some not targeted, left the money at the door of institutions, and not that type of—

Mr. Marchese: Okay, so—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm just finishing the question.

Mr. Marchese: I have a lot of—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Let me wrap up in 10 seconds.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Chair, please. Hold on, Mr. Bentley. Mr. Chair, I have a few questions. If it takes too long, I won't be able to get my questions in.

The Chair: No. I understand and I'm watching this closely. I'd ask the minister to give a brief answer and we can move on.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: So we signed the interim accountability agreements in the fall. We flowed the funding. As soon as they signed, they got the money.

Mr. Marchese: All right. So you announced in 2005 a certain amount of money, but after you announced the money, you entered into a one-year interim agreement. What you're saying is, that one-year interim agreement was complicated, it took a long time, and that's why the money flowed late. Is that what I'm understanding you to be saying?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. What we said was that this is a new approach, and what we wanted to do was discuss with the institutions our demand or requirement for accountability and the institutions' need for flexibility, and to come up with what the agreement should look like. So that did take a while.

Mr. Marchese: All right. So the institutions were saying that the release of the money took a long time and that complicated their ability to do things accordingly. You're saying, well, yes, because we used a new approach and the new approach involved a delay of the release of the money. Is that what I'm understanding you to be saying?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. What you should understand is that the substantial increase in funding forwarded under the—

Mr. Marchese: No, no. I understood you.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm going to answer the question if that's okay, because you asked it and I'm sure you would want an answer to the question. The question—you posed a position and I said no, that's not the case. We announced a substantial increase in funding. What we wanted to do was to ensure accountability for the flow of the money, and we said that institutions wouldn't

get it until they signed an interim accountability agreement covering the year. It did take a while to negotiate the terms of what that agreement would look like. Obviously, we wanted accountability, and they wanted flexibility in some cases, and that's why it took a while.

Mr. Marchese: Okay. Now I understand. So I'll make a statement that you don't have to respond to. You announced in May a certain amount of money and then you made a certain request in terms of accountability. That involved some delay. Therefore, because you used a new approach, too bad, so sad; the universities had to wait seven long months to be able to get the money. Okay?

The other question: Many observers were underwhelmed with the result of last year's interim agreements. The Toronto Star observed that U of T was only gaining 26 net new professors in their interim agreement. They hired 145, but they were losing 119. How many net new professors will Ontario gain in 2006-07? Can you provide a best estimate? And if you know how many net new professors we gained in 2005-06, that would be helpful: net, new gain.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Our approach is, I think, a little different than you outline. It's true that our universities and colleges have been starved of resources for many years, and it's true that when they got an infusion of cash, it enabled them to stop the bleeding. It did enable them to start building the new programs and start hiring. Our estimate of what the net hires were for colleges and universities over 2005-06 was about 800 in total. We don't have the numbers in for 2006-07. So about 800 over colleges and universities over the course of the year. Those are the professors, and they would be on top of the support services, the investments in equipment, the updating of the classrooms and the like.

Mr. Marchese: Okay. So when the Toronto Star says U of T was only gaining 26 net new professors in their interim agreement—they hired 145 but they were losing 119, presumably because they retired, so the net new number was 26 for U of T—can you respond to that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, you know what? I wouldn't respond to the U of T's position specifically. I would say system-wide we estimate there were 800 net new hires, which I suspect was substantially more than in previous years. In addition to that, the Reaching Higher money enabled institutions to invest in support services—as you know, they were probably the first ones that were cut during the lean years—

Mr. Marchese: Yes, I understand that. Okay. I asked you a specific question. If you can't—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —updating classrooms and the like.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Bentley, I asked you a specific question and you said you wanted to respond generally. But can I ask you, do you have a list of every university system in terms of how it compares to—not how it compares to each institution, but I gave you the example of U of T and showed that only 26 professors were new. Do you have a list, university to university, in terms of

how many net new professors we have? And if you don't have it today, can you get it to us?

1610

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The interim accountability agreements were posted on the Net, and I'm reasonably certain that the numbers of net new hires for institutions are available through those interim accountability agreements.

Mr. Marchese: Can I get them from you?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: They're posted publicly, and you could look at them just like everybody else.

Mr. Marchese: I'm asking you to give it to us. I'm asking your ministry to give it to us.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: With respect, I don't know we need to run off the interim accountability agreements. You can take a look at them; they're publicly posted on the Web.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Chair, I'm making a request; he's asking me to go on the Web. I'm making a request of him to get those numbers through his ministry. We usually get them when we ask.

The Chair: Fair enough.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We'll get you the numbers.

The Chair: A formal request through the Chair to the minister; we'll distribute them to all members of the committee.

Mr. Marchese: I have some research from OCUFA, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. They point out the following in their introduction:

"For generations, Ontario has played the role of Canada's economic powerhouse. Yet, when it comes to ensuring its universities are functioning at the level of excellence required to draw the best and brightest, there is a yawning quality gap. Simply put, Ontario holds the dubious distinction of maintaining the worst student/faculty ratio in all of Canada. The gap is large: On average, there are 24 students for every university professor on campus. In many classrooms, the gap is much greater. In all three of the university groupings employed by the Maclean's rankings, for example, Ontario universities displayed a greater use of large classes than did their counterparts in the rest of Canada. In both 2003 and 2004, more than half of the first- and second-year students at Ontario's comprehensive and medical/doctoral universities were in classes of at least 100. In Ontario's primarily undergraduate universities, more than 35% of students were in classes of at least 100 last year, a figure almost three times higher than that for non-Ontario universities in the category...."

"The net result has been an increase"—in terms of our underfunding, generally—"in the student/faculty ratio to the level of 24:1—up from 18:1 in 1995-96. Ontario's ratio is 15% higher than any other Canadian province, and 35% higher than that of public universities in US peer jurisdictions. Ontario is scraping the bottom of the barrel in comparison."

They say, "Without a plan to close Ontario's growing student/faculty gap, the quality in university education in

Ontario threatens to decline, putting into question our province's economic competitive edge."

We're in 2006-07. You have less than one year left in your mandate. Can you tell us how you would respond to their comments?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's interesting that you refer to publicly funded American institutions, which, of course, increase their tuition. One of the points that have been made quite often by the advocates of increased tuition is that it is the only way to get the necessary resources to move the student/faculty ratio. I don't share the view that it's the only way, but it is interesting that OCUFA's position is that tuition should be frozen. It's interesting that you compare to publicly funded American institutions.

Mr. Marchese: I didn't talk about tuition at the moment. Could you respond to what I asked you?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm getting to your question.

Mr. Marchese: I'll get to tuition in a moment.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: If you get to ask the question, I should be able to answer it.

Mr. Zimmer: On a point of order, Mr. Chair: With the greatest of respect, I have practised before administrative boards and tribunals for 25 years, and the courts and so forth and so on, but particularly administrative boards and tribunals, where we had this sort of examination of witnesses. The principle has always been, and remains, that a witness is entitled to answer the question as he or she sees fit, allowing, of course, that the witness obviously—

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Chair.

Mr. Zimmer: You'll get your chance in a second.

Mr. Marchese: This is not a court, for God's sake.

Mr. Zimmer: It's a tribunal.

The Chair: Let's let Mr. Zimmer finish. I'll give you the time he's taking up.

Mr. Zimmer: The witness is entitled to answer the question as he or she sees fit, allowing, always, that the witness can't deliberately avoid answering the question. When the question is framed, the answerer has the right to respond in a meaningful way as he or she sees fit. That's just a general principle.

The Chair: I appreciate Mr. Zimmer's intervention. I've been here a number of years, and been at the committee a number of times. This is members' time as well, and members' chance to ask questions of a minister. If a minister before the committee is not responding to the question or delaying and taking time away from members to ask their questions, I'll step in. I'm doing my best to make sure I moderate this discussion.

Mr. Marchese has asked a question; the minister is responding. If I feel the minister is not adequately addressing the question in a timely way, I'll intervene and give Mr. Marchese back the floor. Mr. Marchese sometimes asks specific questions and sometimes general questions. This one is a bit of a general question, so I'm giving the minister a bit more time to respond. You asked for his response to the particular report.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The Reaching Higher plan investments will in fact enable us to address what has been a

long-standing—this is not new—student/faculty ratio issue. They'll enable institutions at the university level to hire more profs. They'll enable them to invest in the student support services that are an essential part of a student's education. I think the Higher Education Quality Council we're establishing will also enable us to determine the indicia of quality and how to move the quality markers as we march into the future.

I'd say that the foundation has been well laid, through the Reaching Higher investments, for improvements in the student experience and in the quality of their education as we move forward.

Mr. Marchese: This report was written in 2005, and since 2005 there has been another year. Can you tell me whether the ratio that OCUFA put forth has been improved, given your Reaching Higher plan?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't know whether the ratio has moved over the past year. I am confident in saying that with the new profs, the investment in student support services and related equipment investments, the quality of education is improving—

Mr. Marchese: I understand. I'm talking about the ratio.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —through the additional investments we're making.

Mr. Marchese: Since last year's report and since we have the worst student/faculty ratio in all of Canada, which should concern you, you don't know whether we've made any headway from 2005 to 2006-07?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Obviously, I don't have updated statistics from 2006-07. I think the challenge you outline is one that Ontario has had for a long period of time—

Mr. Marchese: We know.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —made worse by the lack of funding over the years. The additional funding will improve the student experience substantially, but there is more work to be done.

Mr. Marchese: Of course there is. That's why I asked you. You introduced the Reaching Higher plan as a way of dealing with the question I asked. Given that you introduced the Reaching Higher plan, we should see demonstrable evidence of this ratio improving, but you don't know because you don't keep track of it. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. I think what we've always said is that the funding will improve both quality of education and access to education. The student/faculty ratio is one element that helps determine the quality of education. It's not the only element. The student experience is part of the element. That includes whether there are small or large classes as part of a student's package.

Mr. Marchese: That's a different question.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It also includes support services and related equipment investments.

Mr. Marchese: Are you making lowering the ratio a goal in the three-year agreements?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're not making that a specific goal. We're making ways to improve the quality of education the goal, as well as access to education.

Remember that running along with the agreements is the Higher Education Quality Council, which will give us good, research-based advice on what markers actually move and improve the quality of education, whether it's student/faculty ratio, as some would argue, or whether it's that as part of a basket of other factors.

Mr. Marchese: In last year's interim agreements, we did require universities to provide information on student/faculty ratios, is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes, we did.

Mr. Marchese: So there's been a change in practice. What's going on?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Sorry? We asked them to report on—

Mr. Marchese: In the interim agreements, we did require universities to provide information on student/faculty ratios. We do not any longer. Why?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're not asking for that in these three-year agreements. What we're asking for are ways they are going to demonstrably improve the quality of education, which may or may not involve student/faculty ratio targets. It may involve other factors.

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Mr. Marchese: As far as I know, they do not require—you don't see that as a problem?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't see that as a problem. We're trying to improve the quality of education by whatever means possible.

Mr. Marchese: Of course you are. My view, as a former teacher, is that the ratio is a big deal. It's a big, big problem. In the same way that you proposed to cap class sizes in grades 1, 2 and 3, I see the ratio as an important thing. You obviously are arguing that it's not.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm arguing no such thing. The capped class size—

Mr. Marchese: But you—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm going to answer the question. The capped class size for the junior grades was supported by research. What HEQCO, the Higher Education Quality Council, will do, I expect, is provide good, research-based advice on what leads to high-quality education. Is it, as some would argue, student/faculty ratio, and a certain number? Is it, as others would argue, outcome-based, less-targeted factors, such as student support services, such as a variation of the education through different classes?

Mr. Marchese: Thank you. That's fine. OCUFA argues, as I do, that the ratio of students to faculty is one of the most widely used quality measures in higher education. Is the ratio of students to faculty a quality measure in higher education for you?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You know, I think one would instinctively say that if you can be in a smaller class rather than a larger class, that's a good thing. Is it what moves and improves the quality of education? It may be the factor; it may be one of the factors. I think we have to figure out what all the factors are. We've asked, in the multi-year accountability agreements, how the institutions would invest the additional money to improve the quality of education.

Mr. Marchese: Right.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm sure investments in faculty are part of the approach.

Mr. Marchese: I'm amazed that the multi-year accountability agreements do not require universities to provide information on student/faculty ratios. It's amazing.

I have another question for you. You're asking colleges and universities to sign multi-year accountability agreements that will lay out what the institutions plan to do with the funding they receive. How many have you signed to date for this year?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I don't have that number. I think we're still concluding negotiations with most of them.

Mr. Marchese: So you don't know whether it's one, two or three? You just don't know?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Not specifically, in terms of the number. We can get you the number.

Mr. Marchese: When could you table them for us?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think we could provide however many we've got relatively quickly.

Mr. Marchese: "Relative" for a lawyer could be relative—indeterminate.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's tough to guess, because I don't know where we're at.

Mr. Marchese: Do you have any timelines in terms of when you think these interim accountability agreements should be in your hands?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: What we said to the institutions is, the sooner we can negotiate and sign off on them, the faster we can flow the money.

Mr. Marchese: There is no timeline?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that provides a pretty strong incentive to institutions to do it as quickly as they're able to. We'd like to flow the money as quickly as possible.

Mr. Marchese: By chance, do you have any draft proposals from any of them?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There is an ongoing back and forth between the institutions and the ministry as to what the agreements should look like, but there is a process for concluding them at the end. We have to be prepared to sign off, and the institution, through its formal process, has to be prepared to sign off.

Mr. Marchese: I understand. The Peterborough Examiner reported that Trent University would be submitting its agreement on October 18. Did you get it?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We'll find out for you.

Mr. Marchese: The deputy doesn't know these things? I'm surprised. The deputy would know all these things.

The Chair: A question to the deputy.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: He doesn't have that information, I understand.

Mr. Marchese: According to the Toronto Star, all colleges and universities were required to conduct satisfaction surveys as part of the accountability agreements. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes, to participate in the NSSE process. Is that what you're referring to?

Mr. Marchese: Is that what the satisfaction survey is, the NSSE process?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I can't guess at what the Star article was referring to, but what we've asked is that the universities, as part of the multi-year agreement process, participate in what all American universities are participating in, which is the National Survey of Student Engagement. It measures student engagement on a number of different factors at the end.

Mr. Marchese: Right.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's an end-of-education process.

Mr. Marchese: Do we have time?

The Chair: One minute left, Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: What are the findings and can you table them?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: They're agreeing to participate, so we don't have the findings yet. The challenge historically is that there has been no broad-based, research-based approach to improving quality or access to education. That's why participating in things like NSSE is so important.

Mr. Marchese: I thought they were part of the accountability agreements.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The agreement to participate in, but you have to administer the survey to the students and then you get the results. They haven't administered the survey yet.

The Chair: That concludes that 20-minute segment. I think, Mr. Marchese, you had a question about the accountability agreements that had been signed as of today. You'll report back through the clerk?

Mr. Marchese: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll now go to the government side for 20 minutes. Mr. Arthurs.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): Minister, it's good to have an opportunity. I know that the last few hours have been yours and the opposition's, so we're pleased on this side to have the opportunity to have some dialogue around estimates. Estimates are interesting, I've found from my time here, because they talk not only to the financial capacities of a ministry, but it's a chance to have a dialogue around some of the priorities, some of the opportunities that exist.

Your ministry, as I understand it—and I stand to be corrected—to a large extent is one, from a financial standpoint, where there is a lot of transfer payment activity, supports to the colleges, supports to the universities, supports for training and the like.

Mr. O'Toole spoke for some time about UOIT. I'm going to do something similar, only because that happens to be in my neck of the woods as well. It gives me an opportunity here to do that which might not otherwise arise. I'm not going to reiterate the things he was saying about the importance of UOIT. You've had the chance to be there on more than one occasion. Fairly recently, we had a chance to be there at the same time, along with others.

The reason I'm referencing that—I'm going to back up—has to do with a private sector engagement at that particular institution. Some many months ago in the early stages of our mandate, not your ministry but economic development was working at that point more directly through them on the Beacon project with General Motors and the federal government—at least a tripartite kind of activity, including the universities, I would say. I can't recall how many are engaged with GM. There are certainly a number of them that are engaged with GM, but I think the importance for me is that UOIT, as a new university, was taking a very strong leadership role in that engagement.

To have the level of success we wanted to achieve through the Reaching Higher plan and establishing the skilled, knowledgeable, innovative workforce that this country's going to need to remain competitive in a global context, as the Premier is known to speak to on a pretty consistent basis, we're going to need to have those partnerships with communities in the context specifically of the private sector—the GMs working on the Beacon project and talking about wind tunnels, being able to have the newest and best wind tunnels probably in the world, being able to do things there and to have the capacity to lease that kind of space out to other private-sector initiatives.

The capacities of those types of initiatives negotiated by governments with the universities and with the private sector, in my view, led to the type of commitment we saw from Windfields Farm and Tribute communities. It's my view, though, that they would be at the table because of their community engagement and their land ownership, but they wouldn't necessarily have been there as publicly and in such quantum of dollars and with the commitment to longer-term commitments in the absence of the government coming to the table.

In this instance, the government was able to come to the table, not only in support of the university but in support of the partnerships that leverage multiple-fold dollars back to an institution, and thus support the objectives we all have of a highly skilled workforce competing in the global economy.

I know that UOIT is not unique in that regard. I'm not particularly familiar with other examples, other initiatives that are happening in other jurisdictions. Members here on our own side and elsewhere have within their own jurisdictions the University of Windsor, the University of Toronto—Erindale or Sheridan College on the college front—and I go down the table to the University of Toronto. So there are probably multiple examples, most of which you are familiar with, or familiar with some, but you have more fulsome knowledge by virtue of the activity you may have engaged in at the level of briefing you had.

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I'd be interested in your comments on that UOIT situation, the success that I think has come from Beacon in leveraging other interest, what you're seeing in that regard and where you see that happening in other juris-

dictions in Ontario as a result of the engagement of the ministry, your engagement and/or others' with those institutions and with our community and private sector partners in trying to build the post-secondary opportunities that we all so desperately want to see as a success.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you for your support for Durham and UOIT. Long before today, one of the first things we spoke about after the two of us were elected was UOIT in Durham, and when I became the minister, we renewed that discussion in quite a direct way.

I think you make a very important point, which is that our universities and colleges are an essential part of a community. They are the knowledge centres in the community. We have to encourage and support the development of the community, the development of the community infrastructure, the development of the economic infrastructure, and one of the ways we can do that is by developing, supporting and enhancing our college and university support.

Let's just talk about Beacon for a second. Beacon involves a partnership between a university, a private enterprise and another government program. Without the auto strategy, I don't know where we'd be today in the province of Ontario in terms of our auto and related investments. But in the Durham region specifically, the auto strategy has enabled a very special partnership based in research, based in knowledge to be developed between GM, UOIT and the government of Ontario.

All of the partners know that, apart from the funding specifically related to that, the university is being supported by increasing investments from the province of Ontario, investments which are going to ensure that all the students receive a level of support that they hadn't before, and they'll be able to work on updated equipment in updated classrooms, and UOIT is able to do that at least in part because it's a very new institution, but also, as you've heard, because there will be a flow of graduate students which is going to start at the UOIT and will be there to support the development of that special research centre in Durham region related to the auto strategy.

That type of thing goes on in many different ways at institutions across Ontario. There are private companies involved in health-related research at our institutions. There are companies involved in infrastructure-related research, engineering-related research. It's essential to the success of the partnership between a business and a university. Business knows that when they're investing, they're investing in a university or a college where the students are going to receive the proper level of support so that sufficient resources will be devoted to the students with which the business will be working, so that sufficient resources are devoted to the professoriate with which the business will be working.

When we made the grad student announcement, it was at Sanofi, which is a pharmaceutical business north of Toronto. You'd know it well. They use grad students from the University of Toronto, among other places, and have for years. They were very excited by the prospect of

the government of Ontario increasing graduates' opportunities by 55% over the next several years because that means an ever-increasing flow of excellent students and postgrad students to involve themselves in their specific programming.

You're right that business-government-institutional collaborations are essential to economic success. We're fully supporting them and in fact we're encouraging them.

Mr. Arthurs: Mr. Chair, a number of our caucus members have some questions and our time is somewhat limited with the numbers we have.

The Chair: Certainly. Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Minister, perhaps reflecting a lot of us on all sides of the House, when we went through our post-secondary education, I know in my own case, although I managed to graduate without debt, I certainly graduated broke. That was then and this is now.

Today's students in many ways don't have the luxury of graduating broke. A lot of them are carrying a great deal of debt. One of the things I've heard you talk about in a very impassioned way is the assistance that Ontario can offer to students to help them get perhaps what is the most precious thing they will ever do for themselves in their life, which is to upgrade their Ontario secondary school diploma and turn it into a career college certificate, a community college diploma, a university degree or a postgraduate degree. But it's expensive. Even though students understand intuitively that for every dollar they put in, the province is putting in another three, it's still expensive.

Two years ago we began a process that started with a very historic budget that dealt with measures to assist students in taking this great gift of post-secondary education and making it affordable. Could you elaborate a little bit on how we're doing on this, what progress we've made, and some of the challenges remaining in implementation?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The goal, of course, for post-secondary education, as you rightly outline, is to provide access to an opportunity for every qualified Ontario student so they can find a place in college or university, and that, if they don't have access to the resources, resources will not be a barrier to getting in.

Unfortunately, for many years not only did governments not invest in the operating side of colleges and universities, but the student aid that was available to individual students did not increase at the same time as tuition was substantially increasing. From about 1993 till 2003-04, we saw student aid that was available to individual students flatlined. In some cases it was reduced, but tuition, the cost of going to school, has skyrocketed more than 150%, up to multiples of hundreds of per cent for graduate programs. So we did a couple of things.

First of all, we doubled the student aid budget, which enabled us to do the following: increase the amount of student assistance that any one student qualified for by about 30%—the first increase, as I say, in more than a

decade. It also made many more resources available to an individual student. But we did something else. We did not increase the amount of repayable assistance. It remains at \$7,000. So even though an individual student's potential assistance went from about \$9,300 to \$11,900, every dollar over \$7,000 per year was a grant. So you increase the number of grants that way.

We did something else, though. In about 1993, the NDP had eliminated the upfront tuition grants, which are essential to the poorest students in of Ontario to gain access to post-secondary institutions. Over the course of two years we restored those grants, so they now cover between a quarter and all of a student's tuition. They're available to first-year students, up to half the tuition for second-year students, from families with up to \$75,000 in income.

The bottom line: This September, there will be 60,000 students eligible for grants covering between a quarter and all of their tuition. That's real access. Two years ago there were none. That's real access, and we have something else. It's called a student access guarantee. What we've said to students and to the institutions which may be able to increase their tuitions is that you can't increase your tuition without complying with the student access guarantee, so that no student will be denied access to a program for which they're academically qualified because they can't find the financial resources. That, at the heart of it, is our guarantee.

Mr. Delaney: In Mississauga, one of the issues I discussed with the principal of UTM, Ian Orchard, had to do with some of the multi-year agreements the government has implemented. One of the issues that colleges and universities have long had is this uncertainty, first of all, that you're probably going to get your allocation late in the fiscal year and you're going to have to operate by guess and by God as to how you're going to spend the money that you think you have, if in fact you actually get what you think you have. Secondly, it was very difficult to do any sensible long-term planning. The wonder is not that our post-secondary institutions managed as well as they did during those many years, but in some respects that they managed at all.

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For the first time, I know our government has implemented a three-year funding allocation to colleges and universities. Could you describe to me in a little bit of detail how that works, what the response has been and, now in the second year of it, what are some of the outcomes we've seen?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You've hit on a very important point, and of course it is something we've heard all across government in many different departments and from many institutions within the post-secondary sector: How are you supposed to appropriately spend money—spend it to its greatest advantage and make the money go furthest—if you don't know from year to year how much there will be? I think that's why the five-year investment plan under Reaching Higher was so important, because we actually knew, on a global basis, how much the

government was committed to spending over a period of five years, and we broke that down to the institutional level.

Last year, we gave them one year's allocation and asked them to sign an agreement, but this year, we're signing three-year accountability agreements, which you specifically referred to. So for a period of three years, the institutions will know what funding they're getting from government. This has not happened in the past. They have gone from budget to budget and been subject to the vagaries of budgetary timing and the vagaries of what governments decide to spend extra money on at any one point in time. So we're negotiating three-year accountability agreements with the institutions. They'll have certain commitments in terms of access and quality and reporting to the government, and we will have commitments in terms of the funding that they're going to be able to get. This will enable them to do the long-term planning that's necessary for the success of many post-secondary programs.

As I mentioned earlier, as soon as they sign the agreements, the money starts to flow, and we're looking forward to concluding that process as quickly as possible. But you're quite right: If you're going to plan a post-secondary program, you don't want to just plan it for a year and you don't want to start planning it after any government's budget comes out. You want to be able to plan it for a multiple of years.

The Chair: Mr. Delaney, there are about four minutes left, noticing that your colleagues also have questions to ask.

Interjections.

The Chair: Mrs. Van Bommel, you have about four minutes left.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): We can share this, I'm sure. We'll work this out.

Minister, definitely in terms of the job market, things are changing greatly in Ontario. We certainly have a greater skills-based economy. What I see in many of my constituents is adults who qualified or were employable with a grade 10. Those positions, those kinds of jobs, are disappearing from our landscape, so to speak. I'd just like to know what your ministry is doing in terms of programs and services to help these people upgrade to get their grade 12 and beyond, to retrain in the high-tech and higher-skilled jobs so that they can compete with recent graduates from our colleges and universities. As I say, I think there are a number of adults who need that kind of assistance, and I'm wondering what programs and services you're providing.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you for that. Of course, we were together in Wallaceburg not long ago holding a skills forum to identify needs in local communities, surrounding communities. We had training providers from not only Wallaceburg but as far away as Chatham, Sarnia and all institutions in between come together and identify the issues, including the issues that you outlined. So we're very pleased that we're investing in literacy and related services, including an investment in academic

upgrading, which this year increases by \$10 million over what it was just a couple of years ago. This will enable those who didn't quite get to the end of high school to benefit from the type of academic upgrading and improvement that's necessary in order to go on to a college program or, equally well, an apprenticeship program or get the types of jobs that are now developing in industry. Of course, as you say, the job you could get 20 years ago without high school is not there anymore. Those jobs are requiring ever-increasing levels of expertise. So we're investing in literacy and we're investing in training.

One of the reasons we had that skills forum is that we were able to sign a labour market development agreement with the federal government, which will see over a half-billion dollars of federally controlled employment and support services transfer to the province on January 1. So we were having the forum, in part, to make sure that we can properly and fully integrate those services to the benefit of Ontarians such as the ones who live in your communities; to make sure that those services provide the academic upgrading that's necessary, in the way and where it's necessary; to make sure nobody is getting missed out; and to make sure that the delivery of service is sensitive to local needs.

I remember we talked about what I think are called the GAIN centres that are in your community, which have a special relationship specifically targeted to the needs you find in the smaller community or the rural sector in your riding. You've spoken often about those centres and how important they are and the approach they take for rural members who don't have instant access to the services that we might take for granted in larger communities. I thought that was very helpful in terms of making sure that as we integrate the federally controlled services, we make sure that the training network is even stronger than it was when it was provided, as it is now by the province, and the federal government separately.

So we're continuing to make investments and we're continuing to integrate the services. We do wish the federal government would flow the labour market partnership money, which would provide enhanced services to not only individuals but to businesses such as in your community. I know they desperately need it, and I know we're waiting for the federal government to start flowing that money, because we could put it to good use instantly to benefit your constituents.

The Chair: That does conclude our time in this rotation. Thank you, Mrs. Van Bommel.

To the official opposition: I think it is Mr. O'Toole.

Mr. O'Toole: Not only is it a surprise for me, it's a distinct pleasure to have this chance to speak directly with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I say it's a surprise because Mr. Wilson isn't here today. I think he has the flu, or something like that.

In the broader sense, we've been focusing most of our time on just the local issue of the importance of Durham and the UOIT. I commend Mr. Arthurs for working alongside co-operatively. We tend to do that, which is good. The reason I say that is, it is actually my riding.

The other day, when they were inducting the new president of the college, Leah Myers—Wayne was fortunate because he's a member of the government caucus; he's not a member of government. You're a member of government. He's a member of the government caucus and I'm a member of the opposition caucus. But it's my riding, and he was on the stage. I was somewhat taken aback. I just want to put it on the record, because I feel very proud of that, and so does Wayne, but it's my riding. I expect to be on the stage at the swearing in of the new mayor in the next municipal election in his riding. It's sort of treacherous humour, if you will. The irony of it is, when he was speaking I think he recognized me, but he also said, I believe, that it was Jerry Ouellette's riding, which it isn't. It's all Inside Baseball.

Anyway, you were there, and I commend you as well for being there for the Taylor family and for Howard Sokolowski from Tribute Homes—the \$2-million donation, the most recent capital donation there. That's just behind OPG—\$10 million—and, as Mr. Arthurs says, the Beacon project. So there's great community support.

We do have the kind of economy—unlike Hazel, we're a lot of green space and we've got real opportunities for the future. We don't quite have the development, but we have the population, and it's going to be a very diverse community.

There are ongoing discussions with Rick Lea, who is the executive director for the Durham region local training board, and they're doing consultations. Part of that is—I am on topic here, actually—probably part of the labour market agreement that you're working towards and the federal-provincial relationships that have to solidify to make that money flow. If there's anything we can do there, certainly in opposition I'd be pleased to do it where it favours working with the market conditions in the area. First of all, they do a great job in identifying the market needs. I support them. It's a multi-partied organization, representing labour groups, trade groups and farmers. All of the various employment areas are represented. I think they do a great job in a fairly non-partisan way, too.

Are they going to be qualified for any of the settlement funding that Mr. Colle always talks about? There are a lot of people—certainly more in Ajax-Pickering—newer Canadians, coming to our area who need some of this support. How does some of the settlement money flow?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's somewhat outside the purview of my ministry. Minister Colle and I, the ministries, are working together quite well to make sure that the funding we invest, for example, in the new Job Connect centre services for new Canadians in Brampton—we made an announcement there just a few weeks ago—we make sure that those investments from MTCU actually support and enhance the additional investments that he's making. But I don't control the access to his funds.

Mr. O'Toole: I know. That's kind of where I'm going. I've just recently met with Job Connect and

JobsNow people as well. I'm sorry to bring it all back to the recent discussion about making sure there's one window unless—it's more seamless for resourcing these very fragile employment entry points, if you know what I mean. Then you get into the real funding, which flows to the institutional side, whether it's the college or prior learning assessments with the ministry for the professionals.

Do you have access to money directly for doing credentialing for new Canadians, like someone who states they're a doctor or a nuclear engineer or something? There's federal money for that—it's quite expensive—to validate these credentials for new Canadians.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The—sorry.

Mr. O'Toole: Go ahead.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Can I just respond to a couple of points? I won't try to use up your time.

I think you're very right: It is important to try to make sure that there is an access point for all of these various services, because there are a lot of them out there. We're working very hard to make sure that happens. The labour market development agreement gives us an opportunity to do even more of that with federal services. But even within the government of Ontario, we've been working hard to make sure that there's increased coordination between the services, and we'll continue to work hard toward that.

You mentioned the training board. I'm very supportive of training boards throughout the province of Ontario, and I'm pleased to hear that you've been having a meeting with your local training board. I'll certainly be interested in finding out what their suggestions are for improving either the coordination or services that they don't have in the future.

The specific bridge training programs are something that the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration controls. I know they have introduced many bridge training programs, and I know that they are funding many bridge training programs. They also have a loans program out so that new Canadians who wish to enter these types of bridge training programs who don't have access to the funds can borrow, I believe, up to \$5,000 to actually enter and benefit from the bridge training programs and credentialing programs that are out there.

In terms of anything you can do, there is something you can do, and it's in terms of the labour market partnership agreement. That was the additional amount of money, through the McGuinty-Martin agreement, that now-Prime Minister Harper, when he was in the throes of an election campaign, agreed to honour.

The partnership agreement recognizes that historically the government of Canada, of any stripe, has spent less on labour market training in Ontario than elsewhere because of the employment insurance rules. So that additional funding, which grows to \$314 million a year in the fifth year of it, but would be about \$180 million this year, is necessary to bring us up to average—just average. That would mean a lot for your community. It would mean a lot for the businesses in your community,

which are served, as you say, by the training board and others. It would mean a lot for the workers in your community, and you're trying to build a strong economic base in the community, whether it's in auto or in other areas. It would mean a lot to workplace training. It would mean a lot to literacy enhancement services. I think your support, with the federal MP from the region and with the current federal government, in asking them, telling them to flow that money as quickly as possible, would be enormously supportive and helpful to the government of Ontario and, more importantly, to the workers and the business in the province of Ontario.

Mr. O'Toole: That's very good; actually, a pretty honest dialogue here. That's surprising.

Part two, the other partners working in this multi-faceted entry point to jobs are basically the John Howard Society—they have a role in that—as well as the YMCAs. I find that important, because they're all fragilely funded. They're not huge, core-funded organizations. I think that if you're going to come out of this whole labour market strategy exercise, it would be important to make use of Job Connect and those programs working with some of the other delivery partners. So thanks for that discussion.

I think one of the more important areas that's sometimes neglected is, what is the real strategy on skilled trades training? I recall, early on, most of the apprenticeship programs were four-year programs. We had an apprenticeship reform bill, which ended up getting chewed up; nothing ever happened to it. The trades themselves are pretty adamant about how to streamline and become more efficient and competitive. Maybe I'm not picking the right words, and I'm not criticizing them, but here's what I think. There are certain skill sets within each trade. Most trades are four years. If you look at an electrician, a millwright, a tool and die maker, whatever, in those specific skills there is convergence in many of the areas, because almost all have an interface at some point with high-tech or technology. So to assume that someone with a trade today is ready to continue tomorrow is not correct, because the trades themselves are changing dramatically because of the new types of tools, software etc.

Have you got any strategy in that area? It's a little far-reaching, but it means poking into some of these very scripted—here's the number of training modules; here's how it's funded. One of the rules I found rather prohibitive—this isn't criticism, it's an observation; we're not being political here—is the ratio of the skilled trades to apprentices. It's prohibitive for some small business to have an apprentice, because they've got to have five skilled trades on staff to have one apprentice.

I have a perfect example. There is a skilled tradesperson in my riding. For anyone who has a very high-end European car, there's one place; I won't bother, for commercial reasons, mentioning it. This guy is renowned. He can fix anything from an airplane engine to—and he's trained in another country. I don't know anyone with one of those expensive foreign cars, but a

friend of mine told me that this is the only place to go. So I went there to talk to him about this, and he said that he can't have an apprentice, because he has to have so many skilled tradesmen on payroll.

Now there's a rule. Have you looked at that rule as being one way of working with the skilled trades organizations—to change those, for their advantage? We're going to be out of business. We're going to have to bring all these skilled tradespeople from other countries.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you very much for that. There are, as you outlined earlier, two different apprenticeship acts, one that was introduced by the government of which you were a part.

Mr. O'Toole: I was in the caucus; I was never in the government.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I won't go there. We'll just move on.

We're working hard to make sure that the province of Ontario has the trades that they need for economic development today and into the future. One of the things we did was to set up the apprenticeship action table. We brought together business and labour, we brought the educators together, and we said, "What does the apprenticeship system look like? What are we doing well as a province? What are we not doing well? How can we improve it?"

We're having a good, thorough discussion about the ratio issue, among others. That's an issue—as you can appreciate; you've probably heard it before, because you've been a member for longer than I have. There are issues on both sides. There's a necessity to have the appropriate degree of training. There's a necessity to ensure that workers are not being just hired on because they can be hired at a cheaper rate. There's the necessity to ensure we have the trades into the future. So we're discussing those issues, among others.

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In the meantime, of course, we brought in the apprenticeship training tax credit, a \$95-million program to encourage businesses to take on apprentices, because one of the issues is that relatively few businesses actually take on an apprentice, whatever the ratio. We want them to take on an apprentice. It's \$5,000 a year, up to \$15,000 over three years.

We're also investing in programs such as the pre-apprenticeship program and the co-op diploma program and the OYAP, as you mentioned earlier, to smooth the entry into apprenticeship programs wherever they happen to be.

So I'll be awaiting the various recommendations of the action table. I'm sure we'll have more—

Mr. O'Toole: It tends to be somewhat controversial, as you say, but I encourage you to continue working through it, for the right reason: having the right number of skilled trades to meet the economy's needs.

I don't like to interrupt too much but, as the Chair has mentioned, it is my time, and I'm enjoying it, actually.

The apprenticeship thing does fascinate me for other reasons. If I recall, when Ernie Eves—pardon me. What's her name? Who was the minister there?

The Chair: Sorry. Which ministry? Finance or—

Mr. O'Toole: Anyway, TVOntario got into training.

The Chair: Isabel Bassett.

Mr. O'Toole: I was only kidding. I think you get that. I was trying to make the point without using that. But TVOntario had a very important responsibility on the whole development of skill set modules and online training. What's the status of that? To me, considering the geography and the diversity and all these other barriers to employment, this kind of delivery of technical information online is absolutely critical, for distance reasons and a lot of other reasons too. Are there any updates you can give us on that? I think this is part of the pre-assessment, prior learning, getting up to speed on certain things. If people have been out of a trade for a while, they may know how to spell "electricity," but with all of the new digital widgets, maybe they're not up to speed.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: As you know, the responsibility for TVO and its program content was transferred over to the Ministry of Education. In terms of the delivery of apprenticeship training generally, we do have, as you know, advisory committees at the provincial level under both acts which bring business and labour together and give us good advice on how to streamline, improve and enhance the training system, both the in-class portion of the training system and of course the practical side of the training system. At the end of the day, an apprenticeship is a job and it's a training position. So we're looking for good advice there. If there is an online component that can be taken, if there are programs online that are generally accepted and that will improve and enhance the training process, I'm certainly prepared to take a look at that. If you have some specifics, forward them on to my office; we're interested in that.

Mr. O'Toole: I appreciate your response. The reason I say that is I didn't agree when that function was transferred to the Ministry of Education. I still think it's part—or at least a good relationship should be in any job strategy. They tend to perhaps think that all that training has to be done with OSSTF and OECTA and stuff, and you get into a whole bunch of other different rules which aren't really particularly helpful, and you find that works more in the college sector. There are lots of people there who are actual tradespeople who may have a degree or may not, but they have passed all the acid tests of legitimacy and being able to communicate the knowledge. So I think it works quite well there. That's just another resource that could be put together to work to—because there's no doubt our economy is going to be dependent on having the right people with the right skills, and they don't all have to have a PhD in electrical engineering. They have to have some practical skills in many cases.

Just one last thing, because I am trying to fill in all the time that I've been allocated. I don't have any notes here, so I'm just going by memory. One of the best reports I ever read on post-secondary reform, prior to the Rae report, which I've not read—I did have the pleasure of

meeting with Bob Rae in the drafting of his report and looked at certain recommendation sections in it. It's a very optimistic outlook. There are a lot of challenges there, when you look at Ontario compared to other provinces.

But the report I found the most insightful was the Smith report. It was about 1997, I think—1997-98. It's worth looking at. It was quite provocative actually in terms of the funding mechanism.

Have you looked at anything outside of the Rae report or is that going to be the template for funding education into the future? Even now when you made your announcement, some of the students are still arguing about the tuition side of it, their own contribution portion. It seems to me that has been a perennial argument when you look at some other jurisdictions like—I'm familiar with Ireland, where they had the free tuition thing, using that to boost them into the next century, I guess. That's the template that's going to be handled and in place? You've got more money, more loans. I don't know if that really helps the problem, if they've got more debt when they finish. Do you understand?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Absolutely. What we're determined to do is increase the number of spaces and increase the assistance available for students who don't have the money to get into those spaces so that we can improve the participation rate by students in the province. It's fortunate that the participation rate in college and university has gone up 5% over the last few years.

I just wanted to add, without taking up your time, in terms of online delivery, we expanded the Contact North system, which is not TVO but it is online, real-time delivery. It was at 67 communities; we expanded it to 87 communities and enhanced services to 12 more. Also, they have an eDome, as you know, at Cambrian College in Sudbury and they can use that to deliver—real time but over the Net—trades training to different locations. Your idea of using the online Internet or other electronic means to deliver training I think is a very good idea. It is expanding, and we'll always look for opportunities to do more where appropriate.

The Chair: To the third party. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: I want to read something from OCUFA's research paper, May 2006. It's around performance indicator use within Ontario universities. It says:

"Universities have long been accountable. Almost every university in Ontario has a university senate and a board of governors charged with the task of ensuring that the university is fulfilling its mission, meeting local needs, and implementing quality education, and making fiscally responsible decisions.... There are university community relations committees, university websites, as well as annual reporting requirements to the MTCU, which include:

"Enrolment target agreements; audited financial statements; audited enrolment reports; capital plan investment reports; major capital support program reports; facility renewal program reports; Ontario student opportunity

trust fund status reports; access to opportunity program reports; Ontario graduate scholarships in science and technology reports; bilingualism grant reports; tuition fees set-aside reports; tuition fee survey; tuition fee monitoring reports; accessibility funding for students with disabilities reports; quality assurance fund reports; audited OSAP compliance reports; reports on special purpose grants to individual universities, including aboriginal education and training strategy program reports; education reports, interpreters fund reports; women's campus safety grant reports; nursing; compressed master's expansion/collaboration reports; reports on programs of French as a minority language; graduate survey (for the KPIs) ... new program approval submissions."

"The Council of Ontario Universities has noted universities have been tracking their performance for years. All Ontario universities are required to report on the province's three system-wide KPIs to the MTCU. There are performance indicators at every Ontario university to measure student recruitment, selection, admission, and retention efforts. As for public accountability, Ontario universities are required to publish annual reports, will be subject ... to freedom of information ..."

They argue, "Despite all of this rich and varied activity, there has been growing pressure on Ontario universities to develop additional performance indicators." That's true, I'm assuming, in terms of additional pressures to introduce other indicators.

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: I wouldn't describe it as such. I would describe it as: We want to get the right indicators to improve access and quality.

Mr. Marchese: What would they be?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's why we've got the Higher Education Quality Council to provide some good research. I think everybody has an opinion as to what some of them might be. More faculty is a good thing, not a bad thing; better student resources—good thing; more support staff, so better access to support staff; updated classrooms and equipment.

Mr. Marchese: Do you not think that the list you mentioned is part of a long list of research that's been done already? Do you think that we need more research on the list that you added? There could be more, of course.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think the point has been made, and you make it again today, that there are many different reports that institutions at the university or college level engage in with the province of Ontario. The question has always been: Are we measuring the right things for the right reasons, and how many things should we be measuring?

So what we're trying to do in the multi-year accountability agreements is focus the measurements on access, on quality, to ensure an appropriate level of accountability. At the same time, we're looking at all those different reports that you outline and others to determine: Do we really need them all, or will they be subsumed in the multi-year accountability agreements?

In fact, there's a joint MTCU/COU working group on the reporting requirements. There's an agreement to streamline them, and we're working to achieve that process.

Mr. Marchese: They say the following, which is a strong point: "[T]here appears to be no uniform approach, no institutional standard, no widespread agreement, no one-size-fits-all formula. Each university is unique. Each has its own definition of quality and how to measure it." Do you agree with that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Every institution is unique, but I would not want to suggest that there might not be some quality indicators that would be the same for all. They may not be applied the same in each institution—we spoke about one earlier—but there may be some quality indicators that would apply to all institutions and that we should measure, and measure rigorously.

Mr. Marchese: I agree with that. You agree with me, for example, that there should be more faculty, and they agree.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Absolutely.

Mr. Marchese: And there should be better student resources. Universities agree and you agree. I'm not sure what we disagree on, except, I guess, they're waiting for the money to make some of these things happen, I suppose.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're pleased to be part of a government that is investing in colleges and universities, and we're determined to flow the money. We just want to make sure, as I'm sure you do, that when the money flows, it actually goes for those things that we agree it should be invested in, such as more faculty, better student services, better student resources.

Mr. Marchese: Bob Rae does say that the pendulum can swing too far in the other direction, and you can expect too much from spending additional money, saying, "We'll spend additional money, but only if we get X." Then there is the culture of filling out forms and producing documents. We've all been through it. It becomes very time-consuming, and I'm not sure how productive it really is at the end in terms of the result. He says "I worry about that." Do you worry about that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think you've hit on one of the reasons why these multi-year accountability agreements, like the interim ones, take some time. You're trying to obtain, as a government, the necessary balance between the accountability that everybody would expect and you would demand in the House, and the flexibility that institutions need, institutions which are—yes, all universities maybe, or all colleges, but they're not instinctively or intuitively the same. So we are taking some time to get that balance right, and I expect it'll take a while.

Mr. Marchese: I'm sure it will.

In May, you announced that Frank Iacobucci, chair of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario—in the estimates briefing book, you note that HEQCO will support improved quality in the sector, access to post-secondary education and accessibility of institutions. What's the budget for the council for the coming year and the previous one?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: For this year, I believe the budget is \$3 million, which is expected to grow to \$5 million, and expected to grow to \$8 million.

Mr. Marchese: Okay. Mr. Iacobucci will receive \$50,000 in remuneration. Is he already receiving it? Has he received it for last year?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That's an excellent question. I expect the money has started to flow, or has flowed, because he's already been working since his appointment, yes.

Mr. Marchese: So since his appointment, he's being paid.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Oh, yes.

Mr. Marchese: How many staff does HEQCO have? How many staff?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's still being set up. We're finishing the appointments. We're starting to build the infrastructure around it, so it's not there yet. I can tell you we've got five staff, so we've got a budget for five. There's a budget for five staff. I expect most of the money will be in the research.

Mr. Marchese: So we do have five staff?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We have a budget for five staff. We don't have five yet.

Mr. Marchese: Ah. So we have a budget for five. Do we know how many we have already, Deputy?

The Chair: Sir, that was a question to the deputy. Deputy, could you please respond into the microphone?

Mr. Philip Steenkamp: We are in the process of recruiting the CEO, and then the CEO will have the responsibility for recruiting the staff.

Mr. Marchese: Does it have an office yet?

Mr. Steenkamp: They are in temporary offices at the moment. We are in the process of working with Ontario Realty to secure permanent space, and that should be a matter of a number of weeks.

Mr. Marchese: Does it have a phone number at that temporary office?

Mr. Steenkamp: They do have a phone number, yes.

Mr. Marchese: Do you know the number, by any chance? I'm sure it's posted on some website. Is it posted anywhere?

Mr. Steenkamp: It is posted. I don't have it with me.

Mr. Marchese: It is posted. Does it have a website?

Mr. Steenkamp: We're in the process of setting up the website.

Mr. Marchese: And it hasn't produced any reports yet, obviously.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, because the research hasn't been started. What the chair has been doing is meeting with a lot of stakeholders. I expect you will learn from OCUFA and OPSEU and others that they've been meeting.

Mr. Marchese: Sure. In terms of ensuring accessibility, since May we don't have anything, but we will in the future.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No. As I say, he's been meeting with quite a number of the stakeholders and stakeholder

groups. I expect he will continue that to get input, and then the research will start.

Mr. Marchese: We're raising these questions because if he's dealing with accessibility, we can't find a website, a phone number or any staff in the online directory. It was established almost a year ago, but nothing seems to be going on. But obviously things are slowly unfolding.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: They're under way. They're being developed.

Mr. Marchese: Are there any students or faculty on the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We'll be making the announcement soon as to the rest of the appointments. What we've said is that we're looking for a diverse group of individuals, not necessarily stakeholder groups. We're looking for people who can provide some good advice on what quality and access is. We regularly receive submissions from stakeholder groups, whatever they are, whoever they happen to be, about how to improve access and quality and what the issues and opportunities are in post-secondary education.

Mr. Marchese: Right. So the diverse group does not include faculty?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The diverse group will be announced when we've completed the process. I think it will be a group that will be reflective of different backgrounds so that the chair and HEQCO generally can benefit from a good, diverse exchange of ideas on not only what should be researched but the quality and what the research actually means.

Mr. Marchese: Are any students part of that diverse group?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We'll be anxious to announce that in the near future when the process is completed.

Mr. Marchese: So we're assuming this diverse group, of which we know nothing, will be sensitive to students or faculty, even though they may or may not be part of that board.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I absolutely expect that whoever is appointed will be sensitive to the essential role of post-secondary education in the quality of life of all Ontarians and be sensitive to the fact that students have issues and concerns and would want to hear what they are and—

Mr. Marchese: Yes, of course you do. You're the minister, and you talk about wanting a diverse group. You must have a sense of what this diverse group is going to be or what it consists of, do you not?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: When we complete the process, which I expect will be soon, we'll be in a position to make those announcements, and they'll be subjected to the judgment of you and others in fulfilling their mandate.

Mr. Marchese: So you have no interest in telling us who this diverse group is going to be?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think we should complete the process and be able to present the names to the people of Ontario. Obviously, I would expect that everybody in the

province of Ontario either does or should have an interest in post-secondary education.

Mr. Marchese: Sure. Of course.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We're expecting a board that will not include everybody in the province of Ontario, so by definition there are going to be people who probably come from diverse backgrounds but don't include all of them.

Mr. Marchese: When do we expect you to complete this process?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I expect a matter of weeks.

Mr. Marchese: Okay. So it's going to be a diverse group, we don't know what they are, and when you decide then we will know and then we will judge you on that basis. In the meantime, we don't know what the diverse group will be, even though in a couple of weeks you'll tell us.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I look forward to the opportunity.

Mr. Marchese: And we look forward to the opportunity to respond.

You've guaranteed that no student will be turned away based on need. What measures have you taken to ensure that you know when this occurs?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We've done a couple of things. We're in the multi-year accountability agreements with the institutions. We have said that they have to participate in the student access guarantee. We're working to make sure that the institutional aid programs and the governmental aid programs are actually linked and work well together. We're working with the institutions to make sure that they comply with the student access guarantee and that students don't fall through the cracks, that they have access to the resources they need for their tuition, books and mandatory fees.

Mr. Marchese: How would you know if this doesn't happen? They're expected to comply, but how would we know if something doesn't happen? How would you know?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, two things—

Mr. Marchese: Who would tell you?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, two things, of course: The institutions who actually participate in the process will be required, under the multi-year agreements—there will be a reporting on that. That's one of the things we want to make sure we get right through the reporting.

One of the issues the Higher Education Quality Council will be monitoring and assisting us with is compliance with the student access guarantee for the purpose of ensuring access to those students with limited resources.

Mr. Marchese: You've said that the Higher Education Quality Council might review tuition frameworks to ensure accessibility.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Sorry. They will help monitor the student access guarantee.

Mr. Marchese: Who's "they"?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The Higher Education Quality Council. Certainly, part of that—

Mr. Marchese: Were you answering my question? Sorry.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I thought so.

Mr. Marchese: Ah, I see. You've said that the Higher Education Quality Council might review tuition frameworks to ensure accessibility, and you were answering that question; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes. They will actually monitor the student access guarantee to ensure that students are not being denied access for lack of financial resources and that the institutions are complying with the student access guarantee.

Mr. Marchese: So the Higher Education Quality Council will monitor this. But nothing has happened yet—right?—because they're not up and running.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: They're getting up and running, just as we're negotiating the multi-year accountability agreements so we can put in place and bring life to this determination that we have to ensure students can get into post-secondary education—

Mr. Marchese: We have no CEO, we have no staff. We have Mr. Iacobucci, but he's monitoring this? Because remember, there's no CEO or staff.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There are different levels of monitoring. The Higher Education Quality Council will be the longer-term monitors of this, because they'll be doing it on a research-based basis. The multi-year accountability agreements and our integrating and bringing live the integration of the institutional aid programs and the governmental aid programs will give us the short-term ability to make sure that students aren't falling through the cracks for financial reasons.

Mr. Marchese: When HEQCO, which is part of the long-term solution to this question, gets up and running, will they be tabling reports?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Yes. The body is to conduct good research in areas such as access and quality so that they can give us advice that's based on research on how to improve access and quality in our post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Marchese: And that will start as soon as we have the CEO and staff?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The determination of what should be a subject of research I expect Justice Iacobucci is already receiving advice on. I expect when the appointments to the board are concluded, the research will start to be allocated from there.

Mr. Marchese: Last year, you abandoned the tuition freeze and allowed fees to rise. Have any colleges or universities opted not to raise fees?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We were pleased to have been the first government in the history I can find to actually have frozen tuition fees, and we did it for two years. We did bring in a regulated, predictable framework last year. To my knowledge, nobody has, overall, chosen to continue the freeze.

Mr. Marchese: Does the deputy know? Deputy?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: He confirmed that to me.

Mr. Marchese: Have any colleges or universities opted not to raise fees?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I just answered that question.

Mr. Steenkamp: No.

Mr. Marchese: To your knowledge?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: There aren't any.

Mr. Steenkamp: There aren't any.

The Chair: Please, he's asking the deputy a question. I'd appreciate if the deputy had a chance to respond.

Mr. Marchese: If the minister doesn't mind, of course. Have any opted not to raise the maximum allowable level, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think my recollection is that there are a number. I don't have all of the specifics. Of course, whatever they did on average, there would be programs within each institution where they either chose to raise them the maximum or didn't choose to raise them at all.

Mr. Marchese: Deputy, have any opted not to raise the maximum allowable level?

Mr. Steenkamp: We're in the process of collecting the information on exactly what institutions did on tuition fees.

Mr. Marchese: We wouldn't have it yet, I guess?

Mr. Steenkamp: We have most of the information. It's a matter of compiling it right now.

Mr. Marchese: Once you have it compiled, can we have a copy of that, please?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Sure.

Mr. Marchese: We'd like a breakdown of colleges and universities and the percentage amount they have increased fees in each program.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think you can find that from the institutions. They're in charge of their programs. There are probably—I don't know—1,000 or 2,000 different programs from the institutions. We'll give it by institution.

The Chair: Last question, Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: I was asking to table the breakdown of colleges and universities and the percentage amount they've increased fees in each program. That's what I was asking the minister.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: We don't compile that.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Chair, does the ministry not compile that?

The Chair: The question is the increase in fees?

Mr. Marchese: Yes, the breakdown of colleges and universities and the percentage amount they've increased fees in each program. I was asking the deputy that, and the minister has helped the deputy to give an answer.

Mr. Steenkamp: We don't compile it by program. We get it in—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Don't characterize what I said. I was asking the deputy a question and he's about to give you the answer, but don't provide an inaccurate characterization of a conversation you didn't hear.

Mr. Marchese: Why would you have the need to pass on to the deputy what he would want—

The Chair: Gentlemen, let's—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I wasn't doing that—

The Chair: Gentlemen, order, order.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: —and I resent the implication that I was doing any such thing. I was in fact asking, "Do we compile that type of information?"

The Chair: Minister, please come to order. When the Chair calls for order, please oblige immediately. The member had asked a question about the amount of increase in tuition across institutions—

Mr. Marchese: He's answered it. The minister has answered and so has the deputy now.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: With the greatest of respect, Chair, three times now the member has said something that's absolutely incorrect.

Mr. Marchese: What are you talking about?

The Chair: Gentlemen, hold on. Order.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: He was incorrect.

Mr. Marchese: What are you talking about?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The suggestion that I had given the answer to the deputy.

The Chair: Order. Guys, order. Please respect the Chair. I'm cutting off debate. We'll move to the government side. The government has 20 minutes.

Mr. Arthurs: Mr. Chairman, if we could, the government is planning to take 10 minutes of the approximately 20 minutes, stand down the balance of their time and allow for a complete rotation by the official opposition. I believe Mr. Zimmer's going to take the questions from our side.

The Chair: Agreed then, Mr. Zimmer?

Mr. Zimmer: Yes, thank you. I have two questions, so probably five minutes each, I guess.

Minister, can you explain the process of how colleges and universities—Seneca and Fanshawe or the University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto—engage the ministry when they're competing for approvals of programs and the funding of those programs? A lot of the MPPs, I rather expect from all parties, get lobbied by respective colleges or universities in their area: "We've got a great program. Why can't we have the program? We'd like the funding." I'd be very interested, as would a number of other MPPs and their constituents in the college and university community, to perhaps have some insight into that process.

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: Let me answer generally, and then I'll give you a specific example. Generally, in order for the ministry to fund a program, it has to be approved through an approvals process. We want to make sure the college or university is actually able to provide and support the type of program that's outlined. So there's an application process; there's a review process by the ministry, if the college or university has not previously been offering the program; and then there is an approvals process.

When it comes to some specific program—for example, medical school education; we have a number of medical schools in Ontario—in order to increase the number of spaces at those medical schools, for example, you need approval not only from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, but also more generally

from the medical accreditation boards, because at the end of the day, a med school is only as good as its accreditation. If it loses its accreditation because it's not living up to standards or because it's taking on too many students and diluting the standards, then it's no longer able to graduate students who can go on to become doctors. So there is a multi-party process of approval.

When we increased the number of med school spaces by a total of 23% earlier at certain institutions, we had to do so not only in conjunction with the accreditation body for the new Northern Ontario School of Medicine, but also in conjunction with the accreditation process for each of the med schools that got the extra spaces, so that not only would we provide the funding for the spaces, but the accreditation body would recognize those additional students as eligible to become doctors in the future when they finish their education.

Mr. Zimmer: My second question has to do with what the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is doing to assist the government with its initiative in the recognition of foreign-trained individuals; more often than not, foreign-trained professionals. I see a lot of that in my constituency of Willowdale. I have foreign-trained medical doctors and engineers who consult with their regulatory body, which analyzes their degrees and professional training and often recommends an additional course of university training. How does your ministry budget for that? Do you work closely with the ministry that's the regulator? Where does the money come from, or how do you make those decisions?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think what happened, when the government enhanced the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration on the appointment of Minister Colle, is that many of those programs were transferred to that ministry so that they're formally approved and regulated either by that ministry or by the Ministry of Health.

The process, briefly, is that the initial assessment tests have been greatly expanded, and Minister Colle made an announcement a little while ago essentially saying that funding would be increased and those assessment tests expanded—this is generally available information—that the number of residency spots for IMGs would be expanded from 90 to 200, that they would create a new physician practitioner stage so that they could practise with a practising doctor even if they had not become fully accredited to get the training.

We fund the medical school spots and the med school programs, but the accreditation of foreign-trained physicians and the provision of additional bridge training is really within the purview of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Zimmer: If I can just go back briefly to this idea of the competition between colleges and universities for program dollars and so on, does your ministry ever take the initiative and approach a college or university with the idea: "At your initiative, would you take on this program or would you increase that program"—that sort of thing—or does it always generate from the university or college?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: No, no. It's often a two-way street. I wouldn't want to characterize one as being the greater suggester than the other. For example, with the teacher training spots, we not only fund teacher training spots but are funding an additional thousand teacher training spots. Some years ago it was identified that, because of the demand over the course of a number of years, the ministry should actually approach the institutions and see if they would teach extra teachers over and above what they'd been teaching, and they received extra funding to do that. So we provide extra teacher training spots and we've continued the thousand extra spots to make sure that we have enough teachers for our smaller class sizes in the younger grades and other initiatives. It is a two-way street.

Mr. Zimmer: A very short question, more out of curiosity than anything: How have the changes in mandatory retirement affected the availability of professors? Are they leaving the university? Are they hanging on? What's the situation there?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: That goes live on December 12 of this year, of course. That's when mandatory retirement officially ends. It is something that professors throughout the province of Ontario asked this government very strongly to do. We're pleased to have been able to do it. We know there's going to be a shortage of faculty in the future. This may help address a little bit of the shortage, but on the basis of experience elsewhere, whether in other provinces of Canada or in the United States, we don't expect that there will be a huge uptake by professors to stay on for long periods after age 65. That just hasn't been the experience elsewhere. But it certainly is nice to be able to have the option.

Mr. Zimmer: Thank you, Chair. I make that about 10 minutes.

The Chair: Pretty close; you've got eight minutes. We're all good over there? Okay.

To the official opposition. Mr. Dunlop, you have 20 minutes.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I do appreciate the fact that you're here. I want to put a few comments on the record about post-secondary education in my riding. I have a few people I'd like to thank and a couple of questions to you, so I'm going to kind of drag it out a little here. I don't mean to bore you and not let you have a lot of answers or anything like that.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: You never bore me.

Mr. Dunlop: I was elected in 1999. At that point, Georgian College, our campus in the city of Orillia, was about 800 students shy of capacity. Our campus in Midland was just part of a building, a unit behind the radio station in a commercial building. One of the things I'm most proud of is the fact that I was able to work with the very bright young president of our college. I know that you know Brian Tamblyn, a go-getter who has done just amazing things with Georgian College. This year we've finally got enough so that the Orillia campus is at

full capacity now. We have made a financial arrangement on the purchase of a building in Midland—the old Industrial Research and Development Institute building, just a beautiful institutional type of building—and we're running a lot of trades out of that building today, something very near and dear to my heart in terms of where we're going with trades. I just want to put on the record how pleased I am that over the last eight years, through you as a minister and through Dianne Cunningham and also Minister Chambers—our thanks for the fact that you've all worked hard to help Georgian College out.

One of the things we're very impressed with there is the fact that, in the Orillia campus in particular, we have the college-university degree programs now. Earlier this spring I was at the first graduation of Laurentian at Georgian; our first 18 students in the city of Orillia graduated from that particular course. It's been successful, the programs that Laurentian operates at Georgian, as does York, I believe Windsor, and also an American university runs a few programs out of there as well. We've come a long way.

On top of that, we've also got—and I'm sure you're familiar, and I know you've been asked this question in the past—a presence now of a major Ontario university in Orillia. I guess it started four or five years ago, when a committee in Orillia went on a search for the possibility of a major Ontario university having a satellite campus in Orillia. Of course, the first one we chased down was Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. They looked at it, of course, and after a couple of meetings with Minister Chambers, she gave us a couple of hints that there might be a potential in looking at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. The mayor set up a task force, and we actually are very pleased that we were able to work with Lakehead University and that there is now a satellite campus in the city of Orillia. It started just this past September. It's operated by Dr. Sally-Ann Burnett. She's the director of education, or the dean of education, I guess you would say.

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It may sound small in terms of numbers of people that other universities have, but this campus has about 120 students now. We think that's an amazing start for this particular satellite campus in Orillia. A lot of them are local students, people who might not have been able to travel a long way. I can tell you that under the leadership of Dr. Fred Gilbert, another person I'm sure you've met a number of times, we're extremely pleased that we've got that up and running.

One of the predicaments we're in, Minister, and I think you probably know where I'm going with this question, is the future of both Georgian College and Lakehead University in Orillia. Right across the road from Georgian College is the Huronia Regional Centre property. Only 13 hectares or 14 hectares of a 300-acre site are available right now. It's used by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The Ontario Provincial Police, through the Ministry of the Solicitor General, have an academy there. The Ministry of the Attorney

General has a courthouse on this property as well, buildings that they've renovated. But I can tell you that both Georgian College and Lakehead University are looking at this institutional property of 300 acres as a potential for future expansions in the next few years.

I'm just wondering: Is there any way that you can put on the record or give us an indication of any support you would have for either or both of those two institutions actually acquiring land or being able to make some kind of arrangement with the provincial government to possibly have land to be used for educational purposes in the future?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I think that would be a question better directed to the Minister of Community and Social Services or the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, who would be the ones directly involved in that.

What I am pleased to say is that the province will ensure that a student going to a publicly funded institution in Ontario is fully and properly supported. As you've heard me say in the past two years, we've increased the funding support for those students by 20%. So whether they're going to Georgian, whether they're participating in that college/university program you talked about or whether they're going to Lakehead, wherever they happen to be going in Lakehead, they'll receive good funding support on the operating side.

Mr. Dunlop: Okay. I do appreciate that.

I can tell you that our community, north Simcoe, is excited about these two institutions working together now. It's been a lot of years. We started looking at the potential of a university called Simcoe College 30 years ago. Property was acquired and eventually that never worked out, but there seems to be a new excitement about the expansion of both these facilities. Both Dr. Sally-Ann Burnett and Brian Tamblyn at Georgian seem to be young people who are driving this as well. I just want to say that for me it's a pleasure to work with them.

I have directed this question before to the Minister of Community and Social Services. She tells me, or it's our understanding now—I don't have anything in firm writing on this, but my understanding is that the ministry is willing to declare some of the property surplus at some time this fall. I'm asking you, Minister, is there any way you could give any kind of moral support? I'm not asking you to write a cheque or to say that they should be there for sure, or yes or no, or whatever. I'm just wondering if there's any moral support you can give these two institutions that would like to acquire land just immediately across the road from the Ontario Provincial Police headquarters and Georgian College.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: As I said, I think that's a conversation that's more properly held with the two other ministers, including the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, who's responsible for land such as that when a particular ministry, as I understand it, declares that they no longer have an interest in it. I haven't been following the line-by-line details in that.

What I am pleased to say to the students of Georgian and to any of the Lakehead students or other university

students there is that this government is firmly committed to supporting them on the operating side. We are greatly increasing their support. We're making additional opportunities available so that universities and colleges can expand programs. Obviously, your community has benefited from the expansion of programs in part, I suspect, because of the good funding support they've received from the McGuinty government through the Reaching Higher plan.

I think you're right to be proud of the institutions there. I've spoken with President Brian Tamberly on a number of occasions and toured the site. It was actually the Orillia part of the site that I toured. They're doing excellent work there, a very good tie-in, as you say, with the police foundations courses. I look forward to continuing to support the students who go to those institutions and take the programs that they do in the future.

Mr. Dunlop: So the next time I'll ask that question, it will be to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. I've been trying to get that out of all of you.

I have to tell you, Minister—I keep wanting to speak very close to this, and I know you don't have to.

I come from a construction background. I haven't gone to Osgoode Hall Law School or done any post-graduate work or any of that sort of thing. I spent most of my working life in a plumbing, heating and mechanical company, our family business. One of the things that's out there today, and I know that it has been there for decades, is the stigma attached to being a tradesperson, as opposed to someone who has graduated from a university program or whatever.

I've told this story a few times before. I've got a daughter who graduated as a nutritionist from Western University in London, and my son graduated as a plumber from George Brown College. This is where I think the stigma begins. I was just wondering about your comments on this and how we as a society, as ministries, can improve on it. When my daughter graduated, we had this great convocation ceremony at the beautiful campus in London. She got roses and a beautiful folder for her degree, and her gown and all this sort of thing. The place was full of people. It was a wonderful ceremony. I can tell you that to this day she has never used one minute of that degree. My son, however, graduated as a plumber, and seven or eight weeks later, his certificate arrived in the mail. It looked like it had gotten wet. The envelope was all scrunched. I think that says it all. Now, he has done extremely well, makes very, very good money. But there was nothing there for the tradespeople. They went to their courses, they passed, and there was nothing there from anybody at the end of the day like my daughter got from hers.

I'm just wondering—it's kind of a comment question. I think it's an area that we should be ashamed of ourselves about, that we've let that happen, and yet I see it as an opportunity for the future, how we can help attract young people. Maybe if all of the electricians or the auto mechanics or the tool and die graduates had a nice ceremony or had some kind of attention paid to them, it

might attract more people to get into these very, very important trades that, even today, we're finding shortages in as many of the people grow older. Kind of a comment, but any questions on it?

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Hon. Mr. Bentley: You know, I think that's a good observation and good advice. For many years, we did try to steer people just into university programs, and then a couple of those programs, and away from the trades. And yet, as you correctly say, we need the trades. You can get a great income, job security, and they're in demand everywhere in the world, although we want them to stay in Ontario.

We've done a couple of things, but I think your advice that we need to keep doing even more is good advice. You heard earlier that we had invested in the Ontario youth apprenticeship program in high school to try and raise the profile of the trades, give people an idea of what the opportunities are. We sponsor, directly and indirectly, a lot of job fairs, not only for high school students but even for some elementary students, through, for example, local training boards like the Elgin-Middlesex-Oxford-London local training board in my community.

We also have a number of different awards. We have the apprenticeship awards provincially to recognize good employers and apprentices who have succeeded, to thank them for taking on those graduates of programs such as the one at George Brown that you outlined. We have the minister's college awards, which every year recognize colleges for their excellence in programming, including their trades-related programming. But I think the point you make is a reminder to us all that trades are one of the three great destinations we should be encouraging people to go on to, whether it's university, and that's great, or college, and that's great, but also the trades. I think I'd like to work with you in finding new and innovative ways to get not only to the students but to their parents the idea that the trades are a great destination. I'll look forward to your advice.

Mr. Dunlop: Minister, I appreciate that, in that one of the things that I find in almost every community—at least up in our part of the province, I'm finding that there always seem to be one or two companies that take a true leadership role in promoting the trades. I know we've got up in Midland a young guy by the name of Ed Garraway, Garraway's Electrical Services. This guy has just bent over backwards to try to promote the trades to the chamber of commerce, to the construction association. He's the guy who hired the first three female apprentices in the area. They do phenomenal work, and he's proud of that. Sometimes, these people who play leadership roles in their community sort of run into obstacles as well. A lot of it is just the time; they don't have the time to devote to it. But I think—are we just about done?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Wayne Arthurs): No, we're okay. On our clock we're still good. We have four minutes left.

Mr. Dunlop: Okay. I guess all I was saying is that I would appreciate anything I've sent to you working that

way. I can tell you that one of the things I did do when my son graduated, because I was kind of disturbed at the thought of this certificate coming in the mail, is I went to my caucus colleague Dianne Cunningham at the time, who was the minister, and I said, "Look, Dianne, you've got to do better than this. Could you draft him a nice letter and I can frame it for him?" That meant a lot to him as well. Very few kids would have that opportunity, to have their MPP or their dad do that for them. But I can tell you that those are the kinds of things where I see opportunities for the future. I don't think this should be anything partisan. I think that if we're going to build Ontario, we have to do even a better job than we're doing today of promoting young people and getting them into these skilled trades areas. If you understand some of the—

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): We need more accountants.

Mr. Dunlop: Well, I don't know about that. But I can tell you that it's important to me. I think it's just really important that we zero in on the salaries some of them are able to make.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Well, as I say, we've got the action table provincially where we're getting the big-picture advice, but if you've got some people locally who have some ideas, if they can bring them through you and provide my office with information as to what they think we could do to promote the trades generally, I'd be delighted to work with you on opportunities to do that. I think that's a very constructive suggestion.

Mr. Dunlop: Okay. That's all I have for now.

The Acting Chair: If you want to stand down the balance of your time, three minutes, that would allow us to complete our day on the rotation we had agreed to.

Mr. Dunlop: I'll stand it down.

The Acting Chair: We will stand adjourned until tomorrow following routine proceedings, at which time the minister will be with us, and we should complete, ideally, our time with the minister tomorrow. I think we're going to be okay for that, certainly with some co-operation from the government side in particular. Thank you. We stand adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1755.

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