



Representing the Districts of Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay

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April 19, 2021

Minister Ross Romano
Ministry of Colleges and Universities
438 University Ave, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3
VIA: Email

Dear Minister Romano,

We are deeply concerned to learn of your decision to dissolve the partnership between the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) and Lakehead and Laurentian Universities. A strong, equitable, and mutually beneficial relationship has been formed over many years between these organizations. This is an established network of highly educated and informed individuals that have a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges experienced by Northern communities. It is short-sighted to sever this union without consulting the respective parties or considering the ramifications of this decision and the negative impacts it may have on Northwestern Ontario Communities and our already vulnerable health care system.

There is a desperate shortage of physicians and health care professionals in Northwestern Ontario. The global pandemic has put a microscope on the inadequacies present in the health care system in northern communities with limited access to physicians and specialists. Northwestern Ontario is a vast geographic region, and many smaller communities are not equipped with their own hospitals or trained professionals. Therefore, residents from many municipalities must travel long distances to access health care services.

Procuring and retaining skilled physicians that can respond to the unique and multifaceted health care needs of Northern communities is of vital importance and will translate to lives saved. NOSM, along with Lakehead and Laurentian universities, has developed a unique and successful curriculum that has resulted in highly trained physicians and specialists. A large portion of students complete their training in rural communities in Northwestern Ontario and many choose to stay and develop their practice here.

There are numerous positive impacts resulting from this partnership and there is value in continuing collaboration efforts as the North is stronger when we work together. NOSM and Lakehead University are instrumental to attract and retain physicians in Northwestern Ontario and their partnership has been proven effective. We do appreciate there may be something to be gained by NOSM's separation including autonomy to expand their programs and grant degrees. However, we want to be fully engaged in the decision-making process and guarantee that there is sufficient Northwestern Ontario

representation on the School of Medicine governance Board to ensure our concerns are addressed and that NOSM is stronger than ever in our region going forward.

There are numerous unanswered questions due to the lack of consultation. We need a comprehensive understanding of why this decision was made, who was involved in the decision-making process and what the projected outcomes will be to ensure that Northwestern Ontario will not be negatively affected. Historically, Lakehead and Laurentian universities provided funding to NOSM. It is now unclear how this funding will be supplemented. Additionally, with NOSM being a separate entity, their presence in Northwestern Ontario could be limited if they were to decide to move to Northeastern Ontario.

Having NOSM associated with Lakehead University in Thunder Bay is important to regional and indigenous jurisdictions and our economy. We are deeply concerned that this decision was made without proper consultations with key organizations that could provide valuable insight. We are strongly opposed to the decision made by government to sever these institutions and ask that you reconsider your decision and seek consultations prior to making decisions in the future.

We appreciate your time with this matter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wendy Landry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy Landry, President, NOMA
Mayor, Municipality of Shuniah

CC:

Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health

Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development & Mines & Indigenous Affairs

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction

Michael Gravelle, MPP Thunder Bay—Superior North

Judith Monteith-Farrell, MPP Thunder Bay—Atikokan

Steven Davidson, Secretary of Cabinet

Shelley Tapp, Deputy Minister of Colleges and Universities

Helen Angus, Deputy Minister of Health

Giles Gherson, Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

His Worship Bill Mauro, Mayor of Thunder Bay

Dr. Moira McPherson, President & Vice Chancellor, Lakehead University

Dr. Sarah Newberry, Marathon

Northwestern Municipal Association Mayors and CAOs

AMO President