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(Hansard)**

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Jeudi
9 mai 2024

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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 mai 2024

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. Let us pray.

Prières.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we'll have a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 190, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'emploi et au travail et à d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 190, the member for Sudbury had the floor. I recognize the member for Sudbury to continue his remarks.

MPP Jamie West: I spoke very briefly, maybe about five minutes or a little less, before question period yesterday on this bill. Mainly, I was able to mention to the Minister of Labour that, while at FONOM, I was able to speak with two wildland firefighters about the bill, and they were very excited about the presumptive coverage. It was actually during question period that I was able to go over and show the Minister of Labour the photo we took together. I'm glad that we were able to work on all sides to have that pass. I think that's a wonderful thing to be able to have.

There are six schedules to this bill. I'm going to try to touch on all of them, but some of them are a little lighter, so I'll skim over them.

For example, in schedule 1, there's a section that just corrects French language. As long as my colleague is happy with the translation, I'm not going to overrule him; his French is obviously much better than mine.

There's a subsection in schedule 1 about high school apprenticeships, and I think there's potential with this, and I know there is some legislation that has to be built in around this. I think it's really important.

As a high school student, I was steered away from shop classes. My best friend really loved auto shop; I wanted to

take auto shop just so I could have a small conversation with him. My guidance counsellor said, "Well, you've got good grades; you don't need shop," and steered me away from it. And then after I graduated from college and graduated from university, I started taking an apprenticeship as an electrician.

So I think there is a missed opportunity for a lot of our students. Also, I have some concerns about this—because, as you can tell, Speaker, I'm not an electrician today. It wasn't a good fit for me to be an electrician. I realized during my apprenticeship that many of my colleagues loved doing their job, and I just was going to work and getting a paycheque. So my concern for these students is that, when you pick a career path early on in your life, maybe it isn't what you want to do; it doesn't mean it's a bad career, but it's not a good fit for you. I want to ensure that our students are set up for success so that they are not pigeonholed into one career, so they don't have to backtrack and upgrade if they want to switch careers. I'm also concerned that it could limit their possibility to move forward. Before starting here, I was hired at Vale, and one of the requirements to work at Vale was to have post-secondary education or to be a tradesperson. Many, many workplaces have functions in place where you're unable to climb the ladder if you don't have a post-secondary degree. There's an expectation. So it may limit you in terms of being a foreman or moving on in your career, past that.

I think these are things that we can resolve, but I think this is the time, during debate, where we could talk about, what are things that we want to do and will this pathway allow people, if they decide trades isn't for them, to move into different career paths?

I'm also concerned when it comes to trades. I've been hearing more and more conversations about unscrupulous employers—not the largest employers, but there are smaller employers that are using a black market economy, where the journeyman is going out with helpers or people who are apprentices but who are not registered to be apprentices, and then they find out after working for two or three years that they have no hours, even though they've worked thousands of hours. This is something we have to focus on as well—these workplace helpers, these undocumented apprentices.

Yesterday I was meeting with the carpenters union and we talked about the black market that has arisen on the trades side. We have to focus on that, not just because it's exploitive of those workers, but because there's a lot of tax theft that happens through the black market, where people are paying with cash. I know people are trying to cut corners and save money, but the reality is that when you

are paying with cash, if someone gets hurt, there isn't WSIB for them; when you are paying with cash, you may or may not have a qualified tradesperson.

When I was an electrician, we went to a house where they did renovations and someone unqualified had wired it with speaker wire. Speaker wire is not designed for 120 volts to run through it, and pretty much you've created a fire hazard in your newly renovated rec room.

There are things that we can do when we ensure that these trade jobs—and as the minister often says and we all say, these are good-paying trades jobs, but they're not good-paying if you're paid under the table; they're not good-paying if you're not recognized as a real apprentice; and they're not good-paying if you never have that pathway to becoming a Red Seal tradesperson or journey-person. In order to do this, we have to increase inspections and enforcement. In 2018-19, there were 2,345 proactive workplace inspections; by 2022-23, the number had dropped down to 788. We went from more than 2,000 inspections to less than 1,000. That is a really precarious drop, and I think this is why these workplace helpers are rising up and this underground economy is rising up. We really have to have people going out into workplaces and talking to people and checking for their apprentice card and making sure the documents are there. If we're promising people this pathway to a better future with these good-paying jobs—as the carpenters union tells me all the time, they always get their apprentices to go back and show the guidance counsellors their first paycheque. If we're trying to get people into these good-paying jobs, but they're being exploited by bad bosses, it's our responsibility as legislators, as the people who make the laws of the land, to ensure these laws are enforced.

Schedule 2 has to do with advertising job postings. If you publicly advertise a job, you have to declare that it's for an existing vacancy or not. I'm not aware of issues when people are putting out jobs that don't exist, but I suppose it's happening. Then it requires the employer to respond to applicants who have applied for the job and who have had the interview and just let them know they weren't successful. I think that makes sense. I know it's a standard that we have as New Democrats. Our workers are unionized. We have OPSEU and we have COPE workers—OPSEU workers here at Queen's Park and COPE workers in our constituency offices. When we have job postings, it's all very regulated because we work very closely with our unions about the job postings and procedures, and one of those things that HR ensures they always do is respond to the people who have applied to let them know if they've been selected or not. It also requires the employer to retain copies of all the prescribed information for three years, I guess so they can prove—or if they're audited they can show it. I think this sounds good; I'm just not sure how many employees out there are putting this at the top of their job hunt wish list in terms of what they want. It's great that if you applied for a job, someone is going to phone you and say, "Hey, you didn't get it," but the reality is that a lot of people would figure that out when weeks go by and they didn't get a response.

It's a nice, polite thing; you can't really argue against it, but I don't know how much it helps people at the end of the day.

For example, something that would help people is enforcing wage theft—in 2018, it was about \$10 million, and that wasn't collected.

The Workers Action Centre sent a quote to me: "There's an epidemic of wage theft in this province. Increasing fines will not, by itself, address the crisis...."

"We need effective collection of stolen wages when the Ministry of Labour has ordered an employer to pay back workers' wages."

I thought this was fascinating, because I've always had this number of \$10 million of wage theft in my head, because that was the number in 2018: The Toronto Star did an investigation on wage theft, and between 2020 and 2022, in those two years, there were more than 8,000—almost 8,500—successful claims for workplace violations for wage theft. If you calculate all those together, workers in our province are owed more than \$36 million by employers who have stolen money from them, the wage theft employers. And by the end of 2022, the government was able to recover less than half, less than 40% of that. So if you're into the numbers, \$36 million was owed to Ontario workers, and the Ontario government was only able to collect \$13 million, so these bad actors who are ripping people off, these bad bosses we hear about when the Conservatives speak about being tough on bad bosses, got to keep \$23 million of stolen wages from employees—\$23 million in wage theft they got to keep in their pockets, that they stole out of the pockets of workers. That's something we need to resolve.

0910

What we need is a way to protect workers from reprisals, as well, because that wage theft number that I spoke about earlier—the \$36 million that was stolen from workers—that's only from workers who were able to report this and tell people what happened. That number is probably a lot higher, because a lot of employees are afraid to report anything because they will be fired, and it's better to at least have some money in your pocket to pay your bills, especially with the cost of everything going up. Many people, because of the high cost of living, because of the rent going through the roof, can't afford to report it or say anything. And there are a lot of newcomers to our province who are waiting for their Canadian citizenship to come through, and they are not going to say a word to wreck any of that.

So what we need are those proactive inspections. We need to get those workplace inspectors back into the workplaces. We need real protection from wrongful dismissal, not two or three years from now, when we make it up to you but—that real strong protection for those workers.

And honestly, we need to start collecting the money. There's an incentive. If you're a bad boss out there and you know that less than half, less than 40% of that—\$23 million is what they got to keep—of the \$36 million was taken back, that incentivizes you to continue doing what

you're doing because they're probably not going to catch you, and if they do, you don't have to pay it back anyway.

We have to be united on this, and I think the Conservative government would be—but I've been saying this for a long time. I've been saying this for six years. I've been asking about estimates on this. Instead of that \$10 million going down, it's increasing. We cannot have the amount of wage theft climbing on a regular basis.

I'm skipping over section 3, but I'll go back to it. Section 3 is about sick notes.

Section 4 has to do with fines. Section 4 is about these higher maximum fines for individuals who are convicted of an offence. If you were convicted of an offence, your maximum fine used to be \$50,000, and it's now going up to \$100,000. Again, this is an example of the Conservative government saying that we're being tough on bad bosses, we're sticking it to the bad bosses.

But I've asked in the past, during estimates and other meetings: How many times has the maximum penalty been filed? How many employers have gotten this maximum penalty? Surely, if you're raising it from \$50,000, it must have been handed out time and time again, and these bad bosses are continuing to do it, so you've got to raise it to \$100,000. The reality, though, is that fines of the previous maximum of \$50,000 are almost never levied. I tried looking for data, and the highest fine I could find, from 2022, was \$31,250. For individuals, we've increased their maximum fine, from \$50,000 to \$100,000, but we've only ever had them pay about \$33,000, so we never hit that maximum of \$50,000 in the first place. And corporations—their fines start at \$100,000 and go up to \$500,000, but the maximum fine that anyone in Ontario, in 2022, was ever given was \$31,000. So why are we raising the maximum fines—my gut is so that during press conferences and headlines, they can say how tough they're being on these bad bosses, but the reality is, it doesn't look like they are at all. This is meaningless if you're not enforcing. It's meaningless if you're not doing the maximum. If the highest fine is almost \$20,000 less than the previous maximum, what's the point? How is that going to hold anyone accountable, and what's the point of raising this?

So there's this theme of being tough on bad bosses, but if you look into that—I mentioned wage theft earlier. The last bill had a section on wage theft. I'm not going down the path of how it was already a law and they added another law to duplicate it. But it was already a law. Ontario workers had to come together and prove that \$36 million was stolen from them, but the bad bosses got to keep \$23 million of that, of wage theft. This bill is increasing the maximum bad-boss fine to \$100,000, but the highest fine levied before was \$20,000 less than the previous max of \$50,000. That doesn't make sense.

It's not in this bill, but there's a section on penalties in the Employment Standards Act that says if you're a bad boss, you get a penalty like a fine, like a ticket. In 2018, the Conservative government decreased those administrative penalties, if you violate the Employment Standards Act. It used to be \$350, but that was dropped

down to \$250, and the \$700 penalty was dropped to \$500, and the \$1,500 penalty was dropped down to \$1,000. In reality, it's an incentive to be worse, because the higher the penalty was in the past, the more that these bad bosses will save under the Conservative government. You would save a hundred bucks if it was a small penalty of \$350, but you'll save 500 bucks for the \$1,500 penalty. So I don't buy into this. It's a smokescreen.

I've said this before on these bills—that these are headline bills. They sound good at a press conference, but if you scratch beneath the surface, there's not much there about what's happening.

So, section 3—I said I'd come back to section 3, about sick notes. This is an example of that. It sounds great in a statement. You get to come forward and say, "We're ending sick notes"—something we've been calling for for a very long time. But when you read the section, it says the new subsections 6 and 6.1 would allow employers to retain the right to require evidence reasonable in the circumstances of entitlement to sick leave, but they would prohibit employers from requiring a certificate from a qualified health practitioner as evidence. So you can ask people why they're sick and how they're sick and to prove that they're sick—but technically, they can't ask you that, because you can't ask for the health requirements of it. It feels very murky to me, and maybe, through committee, this will be straightened out and clarified. But when I read this, it sounds like you technically can but you technically can't—so, ultimately, what you'll have is people asking for sick notes because the law isn't clear. If it was just, "You can't do this anymore. You can't ask for sick notes," that would be very clear for people, and people would understand. It would help employers, who need that clarity. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction was always talking about how there are too many rules and people are getting confused. Don't write a complicated rule that you can ask what you can't ask; just make it clear. Sick notes are a waste of time. Just get rid of it.

The thing, too, with sick notes is that in 2018, when the Conservative government was first elected, one of the things they did was table Bill 47. It removed a ton of worker rights and workers' abilities. It turned back the clock on a lot of things that employers were able to do, and one of those things was about paid protection leave—it used to be paid sick days, and they had 10 of them; they peeled that back to three PEL days. And so now we're at a point where Ontario is the third-worst when it comes to job-protected sick leave days. We're behind Nova Scotia and Nunavut, but we're the third-lowest when it comes to protective job leave. That alone is a little bit embarrassing, but on top of that, we've just come through a pandemic, where we all recognized that if you isolate yourself when you're sick, it's going to be better off for your family and community; it's actually going to be better off for your workplace. We have all been in that meeting where the person comes in the room and they're like, "I've got a bit of a cold." The first thing you think is, "Thanks. Now I'll have a bit of a cold." I'd much rather the person stay home and get well and not share the cold with me, so I don't

share it with the family, so I don't share it with my co-workers, so I don't share it with a person when I'm going to pick up groceries. We know it's better to stay home.

The other thing with sick notes is that there's this mythology that the sick note is magically going to root out people who are lying about being sick. But that isn't what happens with a sick note. When you need a sick note, you go to your doctor, and they write a note that says, "The patient claims they were sick. They're not sick anymore." They don't diagnose you. They don't prove it to anybody. It's just a formality. So if you're somebody who's lying about being sick that day, the sick note is just an obstacle; it's a formality. I don't know what it is now—it used to be 15 bucks—but you pay a couple of bucks, you come in and you give it to them. It doesn't prove anything. And that's for people who are breaking those rules and using it unscrupulously. There are some people who would do that. But the majority of people, when they're sick, they're sick—legitimately sick.

0920

With sick notes, what we're doing is, we're telling people who are sick, "Don't stay home and take care of yourself. Bring yourself somewhere where other people are sick and vulnerable. Share your cold or whatever you have with those people. Go in that waiting room where everyone is right beside each other and coughing on each other. Go there, where moms are with their babies, and spread whatever cold you have that you'd normally get over in a day or two. Spread it around and share it with everybody else, and maybe get part of their colds too, so that you can get a piece of paper that says you were sick—"I saw the doctor. I showed him my runny nose, and he said 'Yep, you're sick. Go home. Have an Aspirin. Get some sleep. Have some soup.'" This is nonsense. Or, you can't go because you're so sick you can't make it—if it's anything gastro and you've got to be minutes to the washroom because you're going to be physically sick, you'll wait till you're well, and you'll miss another day of work because you've got to sit around in a busy walk-in clinic or doctor's office or emergency room, which are clogging up for people who are actually sick that day, who were in emergency, while you're waiting there, flipping through your phone and killing time, saying, "I used to be sick, but I'm not anymore. But my boss said I've got to be here. So, sorry, everybody else, I'm in the queue." It makes no sense. It's bad business, and it's costly.

Section 5, I'll just briefly skim over, just because—it will allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations. I'm not really sure what the intent of that is, but LGIC tends to be thrown in a lot of Conservative bills, and so I just thought, "Ah, another thing for the LGIC to do."

Interjection.

MPP Jamie West: Cabinet; sorry. Yes. It's fine. I'm making a note of it. I just don't want to be skipping over stuff.

In schedule 3, they're making changes in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act. I sort of like this. It's not completely clear to me, but

I think it's a step in the right direction. My colleague from Scarborough Southwest has been doing a lot of work about recognizing qualifications from people who are coming from other countries and living in Canada and becoming new Canadian citizens. We all know these stories. You go in a taxi or an Uber or something and the person driving the cab has all these qualifications, but they're not recognized here. The wording is "to set out requirements for 'reasonable alternatives' to documented proof of qualifications." I think this is a way for people to prove that they could be tradespeople or doctors or dentists. I shared a story a while ago about a dentist from India going to school at Cambrian College and taking the dental hygienist program because their qualifications aren't being recognized locally.

We need to fix this stuff, and if this helps fix it, I think it's a really good step in the right direction. It's just not as clear in here—this is probably something we'll be able to work on in committee and get some clarity in committee. But if that is the intent, I think that's a very promising thing, and I think that's going to help people in Ontario, and people will be more successful. Hopefully, that's the intent, because if it is, I think that's wonderful.

Schedule 4 goes into the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I'm a bit of a safety nerd, so I apologize if I bore everyone with this. I've always been passionate about health and safety. I got involved, when I was working at Vale, back when it was Inco, in health and safety when I first got hired and I kind of fell in love with it. One of the reasons I'm not an electrician is because I wasn't super-passionate about being an electrician. My colleagues all loved being journeypeople, and I knew it wasn't for me. I enjoyed the work, but I wasn't as passionate as they were. But when I got involved with health and safety, I understood what they saw in the work they were doing—it has always been something with me. I've had a lot of time to instruct others. I've done safety investigations. Unfortunately, I've been involved with fatalities, as well. Before I got elected, I taught health and safety to second- and third-year students at Laurentian University, which I always enjoyed.

Section 1 of this schedule is going to update the definition for "industrial establishment" and clarify that it refers to an office. I think that helps people and office workers, because the way health and safety legislation works is, there's the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which is the basic ground rules for everybody, and then there are regulations for all different workplaces, and this one clarifies for office workers that the regulation you should be following is industrial. I don't know if office workers see themselves as an industrial place, but at least there's a place they can point to. It helps clarify for them, and also for Ministry of Labour inspectors, what regulation to follow.

So you'd have the Occupational Health and Safety Act—and then, in my workplace, we were a mining site, and so we would be regulation 854, which is mines and mining plants. It gets even more confusing because, if there's a construction project at my work site, then we

follow the Occupational Health and Safety Act, we follow regulation 854 for mining and mining sites, and then we have to follow regulation 213/91, which is construction regulations. That gets a little weedy, but it scratches that safety nerd itch of mine, to be able to explain all that. I think the idea of that is really, at the core, to help workers in an office when looking at regulations, so that they can open up the industrial regulations and see what applies specifically to them, because it can be confusing if you're looking at the wrong regulations.

Another section is going to update the definitions for "workplace harassment" and "workplace sexual harassment" to include certain virtual activities. I think this is important, as well. There's a lot in here where it talks about moving things online-only, and I'm not a fan of moving stuff online-only, but I think we need to recognize that the world of work has changed and a lot of stuff is happening virtually. We know this in this room, but all over the place things are changing, and I think you need to be clear about this.

Many of us—maybe all of us—have spoken with representatives from the Women of Ontario Say No. It has to do with workplace harassment for Legislatures and the accountability for them at all levels of government and how, for some reason, if you're in a normal, regular workplace, there are very clear rules about harassment, and it doesn't seem to be as clear if you're an elected official—federal, municipal or provincial—and so this isn't a thing that has been addressed just because workplace harassment and sexual harassment were introduced in the act maybe 10 years, probably 15 years ago. It needs to be resolved.

Just a few weeks ago, all of us were united in recognizing that intimate partner violence was an epidemic. It has gone on to committee, and I want to thank our colleague from Windsor West for the work, and all of our colleagues who moved that. I also want to recognize the Conservative government, the independent Liberals, the Greens and independents for the unanimous recognition of the importance of this—intimate partner violence and concern for it. I really want it to come back quickly but stronger than ever to ensure we start holding people accountable and making life better for these—primarily women who are being hurt.

It's also going to provide a new definition for "washroom facility." I don't know what the definition is going to be. It's weird; every Working for Workers bill seems to have something about a bathroom in it. I think it's important. You can't really argue about, you should have a clean bathroom, whatever else—but a lot of workplaces already do, and if they're not, you could actually complain under the general duty clause, which I'll get into later. There's a requirement to keep your stuff in working order already.

Then there's a bunch of sections about having things in accessible electronic formats. I am fine with having that, but I want it to be a "yes, and" conversation. I think that if we're telling people that it only has to be online—we saw this, for example, when they changed updating your health

card and your driver's licence to online-only and not mailing out the records. Now people are getting tickets, or people are going for health care and they can't get health care because their health card is expired, but they didn't get a letter reminding them; or being pulled over—and not just a ticket for maybe running a red light or speeding or whatever your traffic infraction is; you also get a ticket because your licence expired, but you didn't know because the online version is there now.

0930

We all know people who are not tech-savvy. We all know people who are not good on their phones. There are people in the Legislature who are not really great on their phones or computers—the Premier, for example. I can't remember when it was, but I remember they were rushing to get him a laptop—and I guess he has a stash of BlackBerrys because he prefers the BlackBerry and moving over to a new type of phone is difficult.

In my workplace, we used Apple phones forever, and I wanted to get an Android phone when I got here, and I couldn't make that connection; it was too steep of a learning curve. I could figure it out eventually, but life is busy, and so I went back to Apple on it.

So saying things are online and it will be okay—it becomes sort of that point of view where it works for you but it may not work for others. Workplaces are comprised of people from all different backgrounds. I'm not against having things in electronic format, but I am concerned if we're not going to have the paper versions.

I really think a way to get around this and a way to resolve this is if we amend this section to say that the committee can make this decision—the joint health and safety committee. I think that's a smart way of addressing this, because the Occupational Health and Safety Act—the core of it is what's known as the IRS, the internal responsibility system. Not to go too far back, but the idea after the Ham Commission was that they had recognized that it's the workers, the employers and the supervisors in the workplace who know the work best. So instead of the government Legislatures and the government agencies coming out and telling people, "This is what's best," they do a framework with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the regulations, but they allow the committees to work together through the internal responsibility system to spell out what works best for them.

So if you have a workplace where it's all digital, where everyone is working digitally all the time, it doesn't make sense to have a paper copy in an office if everyone is working from home anyway. But in other workplaces where your workforce wouldn't be successful on a computer or you don't have access to computers in the workplace, which could be just not set up for it or because there isn't the connectivity, especially in northern and rural areas; or maybe, for security reasons, you're not able to access computers or anything like that—those committees can make the recommendation that the paper copies continue to be in place. That's how you resolve this issue, depending on what committee it is.

I'll give you a simple example about this. Section 3 repeals the requirement to have the names and work

locations of the joint health and safety committee members posted in the workplace as a paper copy. Workplaces are supposed to have a bulletin board somewhere, and there's a bunch of stuff that will be posted there that workers can easily access. They could pull the minutes down. They can look at who the committees are and who represents them. This act would remove that requirement to have that billboard in place and to know who represents you. The reality is, most people aren't safety nerds like me. Most people don't know what JHSC stands for, and when you tell them that's the joint health and safety committee, they don't know what that means either, because they just don't know. So if we are removing even saying, "Here's who your safety people are. You could talk to them if you have questions," in a visible spot, they won't even know to look online for it because they don't know what a joint health and safety committee is. They don't even know there are meetings. I know this from a workplace that takes health and safety really seriously—that some people, they just don't know, and they aren't aware, so as we remove things from their line of sight, we make it more difficult for them.

Two weeks ago, we had the Day of Mourning, April 28, and one of the things I've noticed about the Day of Mourning is that we've sort of flatlined when it comes to workplace injuries across Canada—it has plateaued at about a thousand; it goes up and down a little bit, but it sort of floats at around a thousand. If we want to bring that number down, we have to have improved communication, more effective communication. If we want fewer workplace injuries and deaths, we need workers, supervisors and employees to have easy access to that information.

That's why I was suggesting that a good way to get around this is to have the joint health and safety committee decide what the best format is, and then you tweak, through committee, the wording of this, so instead of "shall," it will be "may"—"may" be provided electronically. Those committees can decide; the workers, the employers, the supervisors can decide what works best for them—paper only, online only, a mixture of both. I think that would make a lot better sense to me.

The other thing about when you remove these paper documents—for example, one subsection would remove the reference to "in a workplace" so people can have virtual meetings. I think that's fine, but I think the committee should be able to choose if they're going to do them virtually or in the workplace. More and more workplaces are becoming virtual, but my concern is that if you start having only virtual meetings, you don't get to have that sidebar conversation and you don't get to see the confusion on someone's face on a Zoom screen. We've all been there with people in a meeting and you don't get the reference that's happening in there. In in-person meetings, someone can say, "It looks like you're not aligned with us. Do you have any concerns?" It's easier to pick up in a room.

The other part of it is that there's this term in health and safety that's known as the "imbalance of power." It recognizes that employees are not on the same power level; they don't have the same ability as the supervisor

does or as the employer does or as the instructor does. The employees, basically, can be fired. I know that management can be fired, as well, but it's difficult to be on a one-to-one footing when you're arguing about the solution to control a hazard in the workplace. It can be intimidating for people, if your job could be on the line. Section 50 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act is supposed to protect you from that, but there are a lot of people who still get fired, and a lot of people don't know about section 50. Even when it's filed, it's not always enforced.

As we talk about moving things more virtually and moving things online, my first-hand concern from people who are being hurt in the workplace and who are being killed in the workplace is that the less information that people have, the more likely we're going to have repeat incidents. There's an expression in health and safety that you become safer because something bad happens to you or because someone tells you about something bad that happened to them. I want to ensure that people have more safety awareness and more health and safety training as they go out there.

In fact, before I got elected, at Vale, Bryson Gray, who was the safety supervisor, and I would go in the plant and do these virtual walks with supervisors. I want to compliment Bryson for doing this. It was his idea. We would go out and Bryson would be a Ministry of Labour inspector, I would be the worker rep—it wasn't hard for me because I was already the worker rep—and we would walk around as if he was visiting with a Ministry of Labour inspector. This was helpful for these supervisors to understand what that experience was like and what to do. Through that, Bryson was able to provide a lot of education. Previously, we would do a safety inspection with a supervisor, and the inspection basically was us saying, "Oh, this is wrong and this is wrong and this is wrong." Basically, we were just saying, "We're smarter than you, we're smarter than you, we're smarter than you, we're smarter than you."

But when Bryson took on that role as Ministry of Labour inspector, it was more educational and informative. He would randomly ask questions about stuff, and he'd ask questions about things that weren't unsafe—just randomly, "How much does that weigh?" The supervisor would get all stressed out, and then we'd explain to him it's just that sometimes they have questions about the structure of the building. There's nothing wrong with answering the questions. You're not always in trouble. That creates a dialogue where people become safer because the supervisor has a better understanding of the rules and why the rules exist and what they mean. They don't feel like someone is talking down to them. They feel like someone is helping them get better in their career—because if you're good at health and safety, you have a better chance of climbing that ladder; because as you climb the ladder, you become more involved with health and safety and you become more responsible for more people in your workplace not getting hurt.

Section 5 talks about washroom facilities. It's weird, because the Occupational Health and Safety Act is going

to have a section about washrooms for construction projects, but the construction regulations already have a really thorough section about washrooms. It's amazing how detailed it is. The previous bill had a whole section I called "this is already a law," and this is one of those areas where this is already a law. The construction projects regulation 213/91 has a whole section about bathrooms. It's a little weird to put this into the Occupational Health and Safety Act. You can make the argument that, well, it's better to be there twice because then people would be even more aware of it. It's under the duties, but the duty of the constructor, the duty of the employer and duty of a supervisor, duty of an employee—there are all these sorts of requirements. You have a duty to follow the act. You have a duty to report hazards. You have a duty to ensure that the procedures are followed. You have a duty to post your harassment policy in the workplace. It's not really where this should be in the act. You can make the argument because we wrote "duty" beside it, but it's not the same thing. So it's a little confusing, a little bit of a bizarre thing for people who write regulations and legislation to do, to sort of muddy the water. Also, like I said before, it's already a law. This already exists, and it's spelled out a lot more clearly than this add-on would be. It goes back again to the sort of headline section—"Look what we're doing. We're ensuring that construction projects have washrooms." But there's already legislation that does that.

0940

And then they have—I'm just going to go through a couple of these "this is already a law."

Section 5 will have a requirement that a constructor shall ensure that, on a project, washroom facilities provided to workers by the constructor are maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. I know I keep saying this a lot, but I just want to prove it. In the construction regulations: "The facilities shall be serviced, cleaned and sanitized as frequently as necessary to maintain them in a clean and sanitary condition"—already a law.

This bill is going to ensure that we "keep, maintain and make available records of the cleaning of washroom facilities."

Construction regulations:

"The constructor shall keep at the project for the duration of the project,

"(a) a record of the servicing, cleaning and sanitizing of the facilities; and

"(b) a copy of the document required under subsection"—23.1 of the act.

It's weird to keep tabling legislation duplicating existing legislation—and the existing legislation is actually written better than this.

Subsection 23.1(3) of this act will add "may establish new or modified requirements with respect to washroom facilities."

I couldn't find the exact wording to spell it out and I didn't want to read the whole section—there are a couple of pages about washrooms—but in the construction regulations, it spells out all the different types of

washrooms requirements. It spells out, for the number of employees, the number of toilets you need, the number of urinals that are required, the number of sinks. It spells out how much hot water you need, wash facilities, soap and water, hand sanitizer—all of that is spelled out in way more detail than I could—I bet you I could fill the hour just reading that section of the construction projects.

Why are we doing this? Why are we writing legislation that already exists and duplicating it? My two thoughts are, one, it's about headlines, so when you have a press conference for people who are uninformed, you can say, "We're ensuring that you have the right amount of washrooms in construction projects," and most people who don't work in construction projects wouldn't know, and they'll say, "That sounds good." But they don't say, "Oh, we're holding a press conference to let you know we're tabling legislation that already exists—just as a duplicate of what's already there. It's actually a little weaker than what's already there, but hopefully we're going to get in the news on this. We don't have any other ideas, so we're just duplicating what already exists out there."

I'm starting to wonder if this is a make-work project for the minister of red tape reduction. The Ministry of Labour duplicates legislation, and then that ensures the minister of red tape reduction is never out of a job because then he gets to look unhappy and say, "Oh, my God, there's all this duplicate legislation. I'm so busy." It's a little sarcastic, but how can you have a minister talking about reducing red tape and saying, "There's too much legislation. There's too much duplication," and then at the same time, you have another minister going—and every single one of these bills—tabling legislation that's already law. It boggles the mind.

Speaking of "already law," I had a whole section, last time I debated the bill, that was called "this is already a law." I have a section in this one—and I went through the parts that were already a law, but I have a section in this part that—I just want to clarify to people who are watching this and maybe my colleagues, when they ask me questions afterwards, that this is not in the bill.

At the press event that led off the kickoff of this bill, there was a lot of conversation about the requirement that sanitary products will be available on all construction job sites. That was in the press conference, but it's not in this bill. Two bills ago, it was about firefighter coverage, and people kept asking me—my colleagues were asking me during the Q&A portion of the debate, "Will you support firefighter presumptive cancer coverage?" It was two bills ago. They didn't exist in that bill; it came in the following one. So if there are questions about sanitary products available on construction sites—I think it's an amazing idea; I think it's a wonderful idea. We have tabled legislation about having free access to sanitary products on a regular basis. We will pass them in a heartbeat any time you want. But it's not in this bill.

At a different press event, the Minister of Labour said that this bill would bring in job-protected leave that's in line with federal levels. The minister, I think, actually

spoke about this yesterday during his debate, but it's not in this bill. It's a good idea; it's not in this bill.

At another Bill 190 press event, the minister announced that there will be a new secondary-school-to-trades program, but I don't see that in this bill. There is some stuff about changing ways for people to graduate and get into trades school, but it's not in this bill. And so, schedule 1, I think, can move towards that. This could be the first step of that happening.

I also want to be clear that the firefighters—I talked about two bills ago, that the firefighter presumptive cancer coverage wasn't in the bill; it was in the next bill.

I'm not saying these are bad ideas. In fact, I agree with most of these ideas. But when you're having your press conferences, maybe talk about what's in that actual bill—not on the to-do list at some point, because that's confusing for people.

If you're very excited about sanitary products being available on construction job sites, and we're trying to attract more and more women to construction, and you're thinking this is going to happen—we're all busy. It's only us in this room and maybe the people who work with us who know, day to day, what legislation is going on and talk about it. Everyone else is busy with their job, and they're busy with getting their kids to practice and everything else, so they're just hearing the headlines. So if you heard this and you show up at work and they don't have it and then you're frustrated and upset—one, you're upset at all of us, because they don't know it's a Conservative bill, and they think it's all of us; we're all “government.” Secondly, you're upset with your employer or supervisor because they're not following the law—the law that doesn't exist. So we have to get this right. Hopefully, it will come in the next bill and we could be supportive of it then.

I'm going to skip over the electronic format because I've talked about that already and why I'm against it.

There's going to be a change to the Occupational Health and Safety Act that requires the employer to ensure that the washroom facilities provided to the workers by the employer are maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. Like I said before on the constructors, it's a weird thing to put in the Occupational Health and Safety Act and not in regulation, but because it's all-encompassing, I think it's fine to do this. You spell it out. It becomes a weird thing to do, as well, because there's already a section—it's called the general duty clause. Anyone who has taken any health and safety knows clause 25(2)(h). Not everyone knows all the sections, and they might look through the book and flip around, or they probably scroll on their phone now, but everyone tends to know clause 25(2)(h). It's known as the general duty clause, and it basically says that the employer must take every precaution reasonable in the protection of the worker, and it lists a bunch of things that they have to do.

Under “Duties of employers” under section 25, it says—and this will get a little bit dry:

“An employer shall ensure that...

“the equipment, materials and protective devices as prescribed are provided;

“the equipment, materials and protective devices provided by the employer are maintained in good condition;

“the measures and procedures prescribed are carried out in the workplace....”

If you translate that just to human English, it basically says that the building infrastructure—that includes your washroom—has to be there and it has to be provided and maintained in good condition. That means it has to be cleaned and it has to be taken care of. It also says that the employer is responsible for creating measures and procedures to ensure they're kept in good condition, which means that it's the employer's responsibility to ensure that they're cleaned and that there is toilet paper and soap and all the things you expect in a washroom. It's not magic that this happens in workplaces. There's not a dying need for this to be out as new legislation—because there's a washroom just down the hall here; if we go there, it's going to have all these things in good condition, and if it's not, you let someone know and they get it cleaned. And this applies to all workplaces. It's already there. It's not spelled out specifically, and I guess, how can you argue that it would help to have it spelled out?

0950

But again, if you compare this—spelling out that the bathroom has to be cleaned and maintained in good condition—to \$36 million of wage theft, and you ask the employees of Ontario which one they'd put at the top of their priority list, I think they would want their money back. Speaker, 36 million bucks—that's a lot of cabbage that has been taken from their pockets. And the focus for the Conservative government? Cleaning bathrooms.

The general duty clause, 25(2)(h), I talked about: If an inspector were to come into a workplace—and there are not enough inspectors going into workplaces. But if they came into a workplace and they saw a washroom that wasn't maintained, or someone had made a complaint—which you can do anonymously; there's a complaints line, a 1-888 number. If you look it up online, you can find the number and you can make an anonymous complaint about your workplace. If the inspector came in and saw a washroom that wasn't clean, that was filthy and wasn't maintained in good condition and didn't have the services in place and the paper products and the sanitary systems in place, they would write an order under 25(2)(h). Whenever there's not a specific rule, they write it here. So it's not like these bad bosses could get away with this if the legislation didn't exist. If they were doing it before, they're going to continue to do it.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Health units address it too.

MPP Jamie West: And your health unit would address it.

In terms of every other complaint—I'm not against this. It's kind of like putting salt on something; I guess it will help a little bit. But I'd be interested to know how many people have called that 1-888 number for a Ministry of Labour inspector, complaining about their washroom facilities, as compared with other health and safety concerns.

My colleague from Kiiwetinoong was talking about a town that he represents where there was a carcinogen being emitted from a workplace, that was affecting workplaces next door. I'm sure they would like that addressed long before ensuring that we've clarified that the general duty clause also applies to bathrooms.

Keeping on this theme, it also requires them to make records of this. It's fine—the records of the washrooms being cleaned. You see this in a lot of places. You see this in department stores and gas stations—the last time it was checked, and there's a little record of it. This is clarifying it, I guess, to be in the legislation. There are some regulations that have this already, but it just says “as prescribed in regulation.” It has to be done as prescribed. Earlier, I talked about how, if you're in an office workplace, now you're part of the industrial regulations that provide that clarity. The industrial regulations don't really prescribe this checklist from happening. So it's not really that great of a new legislation to put in place, because what you're saying basically is—it sounds really good that you have to have this checklist and keep paper records of it, which is helpful, but only as prescribed. And in your case—office workers—it's not prescribed, so it doesn't really make sense.

I promised I wasn't going to talk too much about electronic copies of things, but I want to emphasize: Workplace violence and workplace harassment policies—we need to have those more visible and more readily available to people. If you're being harassed or something physically violent is happening to you in your workplace, you need to know who to report that to; you need to know how to get it resolved. Sometimes harassment is happening and the people doing it aren't aware, because it's how we've always done things or how we always spoke. There is an opportunity to make your workplace better, and having less information about how to make a better workplace is not helpful to anybody and really is something we should reconsider ensuring.

Similarly, with inspection orders, you can learn when the inspector writes orders if they're posted in the workplace. People will grab the orders and read them while they're having their lunch. If it's online, it's out of sight and out of mind, and there's no opportunity for you to learn from what the inspector has written down.

I'm running out of time. I did want to get to the wildland firefighters. One of the things that we said when we were applauding the good work that was done by members of our party and the Conservatives, about helping these firefighters who have presumptive cancers—the family was in the gallery, and I actually went up, because I had just started my debate, and then we ran out of time for question period, very similar to what happened here. Just before question period, I went up and talked to the family and said, “I want you to know that we're going to be passing this, because this is very important.” There are parts of this bill that are broken in the previous bill. The digital workers' rights protection act is a perfect example, where it's actually removing rights from workers who are Uber drivers—and Lyft and SkipTheDishes; it's actually

making them make less money. But I wanted that family to know before they left that we'd find a way to ensure that their family members would have that presumptive coverage. While we spoke about the firefighter presumptive coverage, we also said we need to include these wildland firefighters, as well, and so I'm really happy that this bill, which is only—I think the previous one just passed a month ago, a month and a bit; the time slips together when you're busy. In this bill that we're going to be passing, the wildland presumptive coverage and PTSD coverage—I think that's really important for those workers.

I had shared with the Minister of Labour—I had the opportunity to go over and talk to him just before question period, when debate had ended, and I showed him the photo of Gabrielle Ayres and Shayne McCool, who are wildland firefighters. They were at FONOM, and I was talking to them about the bill. They knew about the bill. They knew the work that New Democrats had done, and they knew the work that the Conservatives had done, and that we were going to work together to ensure this was happening. That doesn't happen a lot in the Legislature, and so I think it's good to share with people, and to encourage the Conservative government to work with us on more things, because I think it's a wonderful thing for them.

Also, on a bit of a tangent, I think that Shayne may have the coolest last name I've ever heard—Shayne McCool.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It doesn't get any cooler than that.

MPP Jamie West: I would hate to run against Shayne in an election, because I think everybody would want a sign that said “McCool” in their yard.

It was great to see the two of them there. It was great that they knew already—because a lot of times people don't know what we're doing here. We know, because we're immersed in it, but to see people who are being directly impacted and to work with people who are directly impacted—that's really meaningful to all of us.

I have less than a minute, and I want to get into my recommendations for what we should be focusing on in the next workers bill.

Speaker, 40% of occupational lung cancers are related to mining, and 11% of occupational bladder cancers are connected to mining. These occupational cancers are 100% preventable. We should be looking at occupational cancers; we're doing it for firefighters and wildland firefighters, and we've got to tackle mining. When you see a number like 40% of occupational lung cancers happening in mining—these are workers who are part of that Critical Minerals Strategy, and we have to ensure that they're going home safe to their families, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member opposite for his comments and remarks this morning.

We all agree that our province is facing a shortage of skilled trades workers, so alongside our partners in education, this legislation, if passed, will help students get on a fast track for a career in the skilled trades. Under the Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training program, students

can focus their senior-level co-op placements in areas that will accelerate entrance into apprenticeships in the skilled trades.

Does the member opposite think that we should help facilitate pathways for students to get into these types of careers?

MPP Jamie West: The question was about getting our students into skilled trades, and I spoke about this—that I wanted to take auto shop in high school, and my guidance counsellor steered me away from it. I ended up working on—I was an electrician’s apprentice. I never wrote my final, because it wasn’t a fit for me.

I think we need more pathways. We need more shops in our schools, with updated equipment. We need more shop teachers who are qualified to teach shop. We need all of these things in place, and I think this is a good first step for that.

At the same time, I want to ensure that students who decide that they want to become an apprentice and get involved with the trades—if they decide that’s not the career for them, we don’t limit their potential in the future if they choose another career path.

I think this is a good first step, for sure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgoïn: You were an electrician. I was a millwright, and I went through an apprenticeship program. My son is a certified electrician, and he also did an apprenticeship.

When I was a millwright and I was a crew leader—there’s maturity that becomes involved when bringing students and co-op students in the workplace. I’ve lost friends; they were just cleaning in sawmills. They died because the maturity was not there.

1000

You talked a lot about safety. That’s why I’m asking the question. We want to promote trades. That’s not even the issue. I think we need to promote trades, and trades are a good pathway, but how do we protect that so that—because with kids, the maturity may not be there and it could put them in serious, dangerous positions.

MPP Jamie West: This is really important and near to me—when it comes to workplace health and safety. As I get older, everyone seems younger when they’re starting at the workplace. We know that when high school students have injuries in the workplace, they tend to be pretty bad. These are the people who are working at fast-food places who get grease burns.

When you’re putting power tools in people’s hands and when you’re working with heavy equipment and stuff, there are a lot of hazards. We have to ensure that in that program for high school people—taking on apprentices and getting into the trades—health and safety comes first. That first year of an apprentice, for most people, is mostly—you carry tools, and you watch. We have to ensure this happens. We know there are some bad bosses out there, and we have to ensure that they’re not getting people to do stuff when they’re unqualified. We don’t

want people who aren’t electricians working on live power, for example.

So health and safety has to be at the core of this, because we want the trades to grow, and we don’t want—any tragedy is going to have parents telling their kids, “No, no, don’t do this.” So we have to ensure they’re very safe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for his participation in debate this morning.

One of the pieces in this legislation that I believe is very beneficial is that this act will direct Ontario’s Chief Prevention Officer to conduct a comprehensive review of the causal factors in traumatic workplace injuries—a construction fatality, specifically—drawing on stakeholder evidence and jurisdictional research. We know that this is important for the development of prevention strategies and future regulatory proposals to strengthen our current safety standards and also do more to prevent fatalities and workplace injuries.

I’m wondering if the member opposite supports this particular piece of the legislation and if there’s anything he wanted to say about the way that work should unfold.

MPP Jamie West: Yes, this resonates with me a lot, because the first Chief Prevention Officer who was brought in place, Mr. Gritzotis—I’m going to mispronounce his name. I ended up working with him with the mining regulation changes. We had a double fatality at Vale that killed Jordan Fram and Jason Chenier. There are serious things in the mining regulations that had to be updated, because we found out other people had been killed or injured in similar ways. Really looking at these incidents through the Chief Prevention Officer is going to help the construction industry have a better safety record and ensure people are safer in the long run.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to my colleague from Sudbury.

With the increase in fines for ESA violations being a stand-out feature for this bill, and given our historical reluctance to collect even a fraction of what’s due, could the member from Sudbury highlight why it is so important that laws reflect a genuine effort to enforce—or merely a case of increasing numbers on paper for optics?

The reason I’m asking this question is because I recalled, during the pandemic, the surges of inspectors that would fine and did fine a 16-year-old worker in a grocery store over not wearing the proper PPE during a weekend blitz, if we recall—more show than substance, may I say.

How important is trust and funding for rules in order to ensure they are enforced in Ontario?

MPP Jamie West: Before I became an electrician, I took psychology, and there are a lot of behaviours—that carrot and stick.

Penalties are one way. I think if you can incentivize people, it’s a better way of changing behaviour, but sometimes you need the negative enforcement of a penalty.

If you're having a press conference to talk about raising the minimum penalty from \$50,000 to \$100,000, but you have never charged any employer with the \$50,000, what's the point? If you're hitting that ceiling and you're not seeing the behaviour change, then for sure raise it. But if you've never hit that ceiling at \$50,000, saying you're going to double it to \$100,000 is meaningless to those workers who are being affected by these bad bosses. You really have to use the tools that are available and not just pretend that raising them is going to make a difference if you're not using the minimum as it is, or the maximum as—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you.

Further questions?

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you to the member for his comments this morning. It's interesting—his background in labour as an electrician and direct experience in the sector.

If we look at the objectives of what this bill is trying to achieve with putting in new supports and stronger protections that would safeguard health and safety and dignity of workers, addressing online harassment at work, ensuring workers are protected; changes to regulations to address women's needs on construction sites, conduct a comprehensive review of the facilities in the construction sector—a large number of major objectives here, which I would have thought were very practical and supportable.

Does the member not see these as objectives that are worth supporting?

MPP Jamie West: The items the member is speaking about already exist as legislation, except for the sanitary products on construction sites.

As I said in the debate, sanitary products on construction sites aren't in this bill—it was in the question that was asked, it was in the press conferences, but it's not in the bill, so it's not going to become a law. Maybe it will come in the next bill. I said very clearly I'm in favour of that happening. I think it's a good step forward. I think we should include that at all workplaces, to ensure they're there.

The other ones in terms of health and safety are actually duplicates of existing legislation.

My frustration with these bills, although we do great stuff when it comes to WSIB for firefighters and wildland firefighters—there are, a lot of times in these bills, things that are headline bills, where it sounds like you're doing something, but all you're doing is duplicating existing legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): A quick question, quick response.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to ask a question of the member from Sudbury, who has been doing an excellent job across the province as our critic for labour.

There's not too much of substance to criticize in this bill; it's tinkering around the edges, as he talked about. Because this is the fifth Working for Workers act or whatever, I was hoping to see something protecting

workers on strike, something about anti-scab legislation—I was pleased to co-sponsor that bill, and I wondered if there was any signal in here that we would put workers at the fore.

MPP Jamie West: Anti-scab is near and dear to me. I spent a year on the picket line, with scabs crossing that line. ACTRA has just passed two years of scabs doing their work—ACTRA commercial workers.

We need anti-scab legislation—it is extending the length of strikes. It's important to have. It's a value of New Democrats. We're hoping the Liberals and Conservatives will finally join us and pass that legislation—like they did at the federal level, it's time to do it provincially, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. John Jordan: I want to start by thanking the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, because this is the fifth bill that has been brought forward from that ministry with hard work by himself and staff to bring these forward. We always hear from the opposition about what's not in the bill—and I think it's a great strategy of moving forward one at a time and really doing a deep dive into things that we want to address. So I thank him for that.

It's certainly an honour for me to rise today to discuss the Working for Workers Five Act. If passed, this bill would assist in making the workplace safer, introduce more young people to careers in the skilled trades, help new Canadians access jobs in their chosen fields, and support women working in the construction industry, among other sectors. This bill will expand on the progress made from the previous four Working for Workers acts by introducing amendments to further protect front-line workers, remove barriers to employment for new Canadians, open new pathways into the skilled trades, and support women at work. It would contribute to additional regulatory, legislative and policy actions designed to improve workplaces for employees and help employers fill vacant positions.

We know that we need more people working in the skilled trades. To help attract more young people into careers in the skilled trades, this bill proposes to create a new educational stream called Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training, as part of our government's plan to ensure all students learn about the opportunities in well-paying careers found in the trades. The new stream will give students the opportunity to receive instruction on technical skills and be given the opportunity for hands-on learning experiences in secondary school systems.

1010

Further, this bill provides a new online job-matching portal in order to help students find apprenticeship opportunities and network with employers; it's also a great opportunity for employers to connect and do recruitment. This new online job-matching portal streamlines the process of finding opportunities faster, which will be important as they transition from education to the workforce. This government wants to put hard-working youth on the fast track to a well-paying career. Not only is this

an endeavour our government wants to encourage, but it's what the youth of Ontario want, as well.

Schools in my riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston are already recognizing the value of this government's vision. Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute is incorporating a Specialist High Skills Major program that works in company with the requirements stipulated by the Ontario secondary school diploma. The program will let students focus on a career path that matches their skills by earning valuable industry certification in co-operative educational placements. The program has received positive commentary and demonstrates how our ministries are working together.

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and the ministry of women's and social economic opportunity are all working together to increase our sources for human resources in the trades.

Former Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute principal Terry Gardiner said, "The Dual Credit Program represents an outstanding opportunity for students, whether entering trades, or trying a college course in their area of interest. It allows students the opportunity to 'try on' college and many students see that they can be successful."

Speaker, students are inspired and excited about their education and future. Janet Sanderson, former principal of Granite Ridge Education Centre in Sharbot Lake, said, "It gives our students a chance to make informed decisions about their future. They get a taste of the college life. It gives them a chance to explore their post-secondary options and test the waters...." One Granite Ridge student said the Dual Credit Program gives him a reason to like school again.

Students will have the ability to make informed decisions about their future, through the introduction of a variety of careers—be that skills, trades, colleges or universities. Our government is ending the stigma of working in the trades. We hear the voices of Ontarians telling us there is a need for more skilled trades workers, as Minister Piccini mentioned yesterday. We hear them, we value them, and we are creating new paths for youth to become them. This stigma existed when I was in high school and trying to decide what to do. My parents said, "You need that university degree"—and I'm guilty of the same stigma with my kids. But there are now so many pathways to success, and the students need to explore that when they're in their high school years. Through the Working for Workers Five Act, alternative pathways for people interested in the skilled trades would be opened up.

In addition to getting young people into the skilled trades, this government wants to help mature workers leverage their existing skills, education and work experience to land a position in the skilled trades sector. We want to give Canadians who are looking for a second career in the skilled trades a chance at a better job with a bigger paycheque. Through this bill, our government will work on removing barriers to entry into the skilled trades as a second career and providing avenues for a career transition. By doing this, our government will address labour

shortages and drive economic growth through those seeking a second career in the skilled trades, regardless of their educational background—new opportunities, a brighter future.

Recent immigrants and international—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): It is now time for members' statements.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Sudbury on a point of order.

MPP Jamie West: Earlier, I had mispronounced George Gritziotis's name. I was trying to be formal and use his last name. I was calling him "George" all the time. I was guessing at his last name, but it's George Gritziotis. Hansard has the correct spelling.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): It is time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LOIS HUNTER

Mr. Steve Clark: Today I rise to honour Lois Hunter, a giant in my riding, who passed away in her 100th year, on April 27.

To quote Judy Drummond, a friend of Lois's and the president of the Lombardy Agricultural Society: "Lois was a lady of grace, respect and a great friend to many. Her interest in the Lombardy Agricultural Society continued over the years and was a part of her life even into her 100th year. We certainly appreciated her work and advice in the district and provincial level of the Ontario agricultural societies. We will miss her guidance and support, but her legacy will live on into the future."

Her granddaughter Shannon Miller used the word supporter—"whether it was of her family in their business or personal endeavours; of the many local organizations she belonged to; of her husband as he served his many years in municipal politics; or of any and all friends, neighbours or members of the farming community in whatever situation they may have been facing at a given time."

My predecessor, Bob Runciman, summed it up best about Lois when he told me, "Lois, with all her family and community commitments, her energy and enthusiasm ... well into her nineties was a never-ending inspiration to me and many others. And with her unbridled love for and devotion to her family, she was the epitome of the wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother we should all have in our lives. Her passing is an enormous loss; she did so much, so well and for so many. Rest in peace, my friend."

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: The agri-food industry is one of the premier industries in this province—some \$45 billion, \$50 billion to the provincial economy, and 800,000, 900,000 people work in it. This is one of the most important times of the year because regardless of what you grow, regardless of where it's processed, this is the time of the year when the seeds go into the ground. Of the 200 crops that we grow in Ontario, the vast majority go in now; there are different times across the province.

On behalf of the entire Legislature, I just want to give a shout-out to the farmers who are making those decisions right now. This is an incredibly stressful time of the year because sometimes planting conditions aren't right; in many parts of the province, they're not right right now, and that farmer, whether he has 10 acres or 1,000, has to make that decision when he puts that soil in his hand to see if it's dry enough. He or she has got thousands of dollars on the line. On behalf of all of us, farmers take the risks so that we can eat. That's something that we can never, ever forget. And farmers who make those decisions need to have control of their own land—the land that they have built and conditioned so that they can grow the food for us. They should control their land.

BIRCHMOUNT GREEN

Mr. David Smith: I am pleased to announce Birchmount Green, a significant partner in Scarborough Centre's innovative affordable and supportive housing at 1236 Birchmount Road in my riding of Scarborough Centre. After my visit to Birchmount Green, I realized that our government is getting it done with its action call for affordable housing.

Birchmount Green Inc. and Chamberlain Architects designed the 15-storey residential building with 220 mixed affordable and supportive rental units. This thoughtful and inclusive state-of-the-art design philosophy meets aesthetic and functional needs with 45 fully accessible homes, outdoor greenery, a rooftop garden, library, accessible shareable workspaces, indoor and outdoor children's play areas, bicycle storage, dedicated offices for support service organizations, a social enterprise, and many other amenities.

1020

They deserve praise for their collaboration with many partners seated in the gallery here today: Tim Neeb, president, Birchmount Green, and project developer; Maureen Houlihan, city of Toronto; Michelle Nanton-Whyte, Community Living Toronto; Heather McDonald, LOFT Community Services; Jessica Whelan, Fred Victor; Abi Ajibolade, the Redwood; Abi and Rima Goldshmidt, Birchmount Green property managers.

Please continue the wonderful work you're doing in Scarborough Centre and across Ontario.

LA FRANCOPHONIE À THUNDER BAY

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Aujourd'hui, j'aimerais rendre hommage aux francophones qui vivent, travaillent et font

du bénévolat dans ma région de Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord.

Il y a des francophones qui vivent dans le nord-ouest de l'Ontario depuis très longtemps, et ils continuent de travailler dur pour rendre l'enseignement en français disponible dans toute la région. Mais, aussi, depuis quelques années, il y a des francophones de différents pays d'Afrique qui vivent dans notre région et qui sont bien établis dans nos communautés. Par exemple, cet automne, il y a eu la toute première célébration des entreprises africaines, qui comprenait un grand marché et un merveilleux dîner de gala.

Pour soutenir toutes ces activités et accueillir les nouveaux arrivants est le Centre francophone de Thunder Bay. Cet organisme travaille très fort pour rassembler les francophones et bâtir une communauté. Ils offrent leurs services et accueillent autant ceux et celles qui apprennent le français ou qui essaient de récupérer leur héritage francophone, comme moi, et ils contribuent au développement des activités sociales, culturelles, éducatives et socioéconomiques en français.

Je tiens à remercier tous les francophones de Thunder Bay pour la richesse des cultures françaises que vous soutenez dans notre région. Merci beaucoup, meegwetch and thank you.

MAVERICK'S DONUTS

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Today I rise to recognize a very new business in the town of Ajax called Maverick's Donuts, located at Randall Drive just across from Pickering Village, which creates custom doughnuts baked fresh every day. I've discovered that my favourite flavour is the Oreo nirvana.

Interjection: Who could not like that?

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Who could not like that?

This story is an amazing story. I highlight them because these are two young people who moved to Canada in 2018 and 2020—Krishna and Mansi, who had a dream to start a business and establish a life in Canada and have done just that. They have stuck together through the challenges of being new to the country, navigating on their own and banding together to create a new business and be one of the newest residents of Ajax. This is what Ontario is about. This is what Canada is about. We provide opportunities for our immigrants to come and create a life that they are proud of, where you can have a dream and achieve it.

Our government will continue to stand behind new entrepreneurs.

Congratulations to Krishna and Mansi, and to Maverick's Donuts.

INJURED WORKERS

MPP Jamie West: There were a lot of milestones in health and safety this year.

April 28 was the 40th anniversary of the Workers Day of Mourning, and I've always been proud that it started in Sudbury.

It was also the 50th anniversary of the Elliot Lake uranium miners' wildcat strike. That strike led to the Ham commission, which led to the backbone of our Occupational Health and Safety Act. Because of those workers, every worker in Ontario has the right to refuse unsafe work, to participate in workplace safety as part of their committee, and to know about hazards in the workplace. That's something that—they struck for safety, and it didn't just apply to the miners or people in Elliot Lake, but everyone in Ontario, which makes me very proud.

Last year was the 40th anniversary of Injured Workers' Day. A fascinating story for you, Speaker: In 1983, the Legislature was doing some work on workers' compensation—the predecessor to WSIB—and over 3,000 injured workers showed up at Queen's Park to talk about this. The committee had to leave the committee room and do the deputations on the front stairs of Queen's Park. The following year, in 1984, they had Injured Workers' Day, the very first one—and they've been doing this for 40 years. The thing that's surprising about this is that it has never been formally recognized in the Legislature as an official day. So I am hoping, before the 41st anniversary on June 1, that we will recognize this.

I have a bill that's coming for debate on the 30th. It's my bill, but it's all of our bills. We all go to Injured Workers' Day ceremonies. We all recognize the importance of helping injured workers and ensuring they're taken care of effectively. So I'm hoping that all my colleagues will join me so that we can support the bill to officially recognize something that started here on the front steps of Queen's Park over 40 year ago.

YOM HAZIKARON AND ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mrs. Robin Martin: Yesterday, I spoke about Yom ha-Shoah, the Holocaust Remembrance Day, which fell on May 6 this year. Starting this Sunday, and within only one week, members of the Jewish community in my riding, in Ontario and throughout the world will soon observe two more significant holidays connected to Israel, the Jewish homeland. The first of these is Yom Hazikaron, Israel's official day of remembrance, which honours both the sacrifice and courage of Israeli soldiers, over 20,000 of whom have been lost in defence of Israel, as well as the memories and lives of innocent civilian victims of terrorism. With the conclusion of Yom Hazikaron on Monday evening, Jews will celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, which celebrates the Israeli declaration of independence in 1948.

This unique week takes observers from profound sorrow to profound joy. Our Jewish friends and neighbours go from reckoning with the Holocaust and reflecting on the extreme cost to their families and community caused because they did not have a homeland, to remembering the profound costs to the Jewish people of maintaining their homeland, and finally, they conclude with the celebration of the creation of their homeland. It's a highly emotional and profound journey in the space of one week—a journey

that will be particularly poignant this year, in the aftermath of the October 7 terrorist ambush on innocent civilians, the ongoing war and ongoing plight of some 133 hostages still being held by Hamas terrorists in Gaza.

Ontario is proud to be home to one of the largest Jewish communities of any Canadian province, and the observance of these days is particularly significant to them.

To the Jewish community in my riding and across Ontario: I want to share my profound sorrow for your loss, my profound support and respect for your struggle, and my sincere congratulations for the great future that you are building.

GUILDWOOD DAY

MPP Andrea Hazell: Mr. Speaker, June 1 isn't just any old day; it's Guildwood Day. The weather is warming up, and it's time to take to the streets to celebrate one of the best neighbourhoods in Ontario. For five decades, the Guildwood Village Community Association has been throwing the greatest party this side of the Rouge River, and for this 50th anniversary, they're going bigger than ever.

We'll start off bright and early with a pancake breakfast at the Guildwood Presbyterian church. We will all need a big breakfast, because it's going to be a huge day.

Next, it's the Parade on the Parkway. The whole street will be full of that famous Guildwood spirit. If you're marching along or just taking in the view, it's a good time for all to be there.

Following that, we'll have the community marketplace, with face painting, games, food, prize draws, and more.

We will top it all off with the Guild Park evening barbecue, with musical performances by local artists Sonic Square and Tug-of-War.

Guildwood Day is fun for the whole family, so I hope to see all of you there. Bring your friends, bring your family, bring your constituency staff, because everyone is welcome on Guildwood Day. I'm happy to be your host.

ERIE SHORES HEALTHCARE MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Today I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate one of our local heroes in Essex county: our friend Kristin Kennedy. She's the CEO of Erie Shores Healthcare. She helps run the mobile health clinic. It's a special mobile health clinic that helps provide care for people who are typically not visiting their primary care service provider.

The mobile health clinic provides regular health check-ups, but it also can provide some basic dental health care, some mental health resources, and it now even offers vaccinations. It's open during evening hours and on weekends.

1030

Of course, this is all made possible by a special program offered by this government through the Ministry of Health.

The mobile health clinic is helping to keep people out of the emergency room and helping to provide care where and when they need it.

I want to thank the Minister of Health for this important program and also congratulate Kristin Kennedy, her staff, and the local health heroes at the mobile health clinic.

FREEMASONRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to rise in the Legislature today and officially recognize a very special anniversary. This year, 2024, marks the 150th anniversary of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Canada.

Central to the tenets of Scottish Rite Freemasonry is a belief in brotherly love, relief, truth and charity to all mankind, no matter an individual's race, nationality, sect, age or condition.

Their charitable endeavours fund nine Scottish Rite learning centres for dyslexia across Canada, with four of those located in Ontario itself. They also fund, under what they call Solving the Puzzles of the Mind, Alzheimer's and autism grants.

As we enter the 150th anniversary of the Supreme Council of Canada, may we continue to celebrate their vision and leadership across Canada in its 45 values and at the Canadian headquarters, just down the road, of the Scottish Rite of Canada in Hamilton, Ontario.

With more than 10,000 members across Canada, the good works of the Scottish Rite can be seen in every corner of our province and this nation.

Mr. Speaker, please join with me in congratulating the membership of the Scottish Rite on this, their 150th anniversary, as they continue to take good men and make them better. And may this great and time-honoured fraternity continue from strength to strength until time and circumstance shall be no more. So mote it be.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: In conjunction with my statement, I have three guests in the members' gallery today, in the persons of David Bennett, the sovereign grand commander of the Scottish Rite of Canada; Thomas Wills, the lieutenant grand commander; and their illustrious secretary, Terry McLean, who is the grand secretary-general.

Welcome to Queen's Park. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I was peeking around the room, and I see a familiar face from Oshawa, a strong voice: Kristen McKinnon is here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Stephen Blais: Je me lève dans la Chambre aujourd'hui pour souhaiter la bienvenue à Lise MacDonald et sa famille à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Lise est une étudiante à l'École secondaire publique Gisèle-Lalonde à Orléans, et elle est la capitaine des pages aujourd'hui. Je voudrais aussi souhaiter la bienvenue à son père, Anthony MacDonald; son oncle

Greg MacDonald; et un ami de la famille, Rod Lowe. D' MacDonald était un page législatif en 1991, donc c'est un plaisir de vous accueillir à nouveau dans cette Chambre.

Je souhaite à Lise et à toute sa famille le meilleur, et j'espère que tu auras une excellente expérience ici à Queen's Park. Merci, Lise.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'd like to welcome the excellent page Anika Karthik, who attends Macklin Public School in my wonderful riding of Scarborough North, and her parents, Karthik and Raghavi, to Queen's Park. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence; the Ontario Caregiver Coalition; Young Caregivers Association; Alzheimer Society; MS Canada; Community Living Ontario; Canadian Cancer Society; Ontario Community Support Association; AdvantAge; the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, Niagara chapter. I want to thank them personally for coming to our press conference this morning to talk about our caregivers motion.

Thank you very much, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, it's always an honour when my staff comes to Queen's Park. I want to welcome Quinn and Josh. One is a constituency assistant, the other is an executive assistant.

I just want to say thank you for all your hard work today.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to introduce my friends Candy Wang and Michael Yu, who are here today, sitting up in the public gallery. They are coming in from North York. Candy and Michael are the proud creators of the neighbourhood watch in their communities.

Thank you for working hard in fighting the auto thefts in the region and helping keep the neighbours safe. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: In honour of Mental Health Week, I'm pleased to welcome some of the champions of mental health care here in Ontario: Dr. Sean Kidd, chief of psychology at CAMH; Dr. Nadiya Sunderji, president and CEO of Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care; Kristin Kerr from Addictions and Mental Health Ontario; Michael Anhorn, CEO of CMHA Toronto; Karim Mamdani, president and CEO of Ontario Shores; and Tatum Wilson, CEO of Children's Mental Health Ontario.

Thank you, all of you, for your inspiring work here in the province of Ontario and for continuing to keep the province healthy and safe.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome Daunte Hillen back to the Legislature. Daunte is a former page and the brother of our current page from Hamilton Mountain, Charlise Hillen. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Today, I would like to acknowledge a young lady from the riding of Durham, from Harold Longworth Public School, who is today's page captain: Diya Gokul Nathan. Her parents are with us in the gallery: Lavanya Gokul Nathan and Gokul Nathan Chandran.

Welcome to your House.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I want to give a shout-out and say thanks to my long-time constituency staffer, Dechen Tenzin. Today is her last day, and my team and I want to give our best wishes. She starts a new chapter in the federal public service.

We will miss you dearly, Dechen. Thank you for everything.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome my childhood friend Jenny Mitchell. She's a great climate advocate, a wonderful friend and supporter, and a super-smart, awesome lady.

Thanks for coming.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce David Bennett from the riding of Nipissing. He's a great friend and a great volunteer.

Welcome to Queen's Park, David.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I would also like to extend my very warm welcome to all the members of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, including the chair, Bhavini Patel; general members who are here, Victoria Freeman, Mark Fawcett; as well as the CEO of Community Living Ontario, Chris Beesley; and a very good friend of mine, Liv Mendelsohn, the executive director of the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: It's my pleasure to welcome university student Asia Vrazalis and my high school friend Jerry Gain from Riverdale Collegiate, the best high school in the GTA.

Mr. Joel Harden: I think they're trickling into the gallery, but I want to thank ACORN, who are in the building today—an advocate for tenants, low-income Ontarians. I'm proud to be a member myself.

Welcome, ACORN, to your House.

Let's all get out to the reception at lunch.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to welcome Daniel Arbour from the region of Durham to Queen's Park. Welcome, Daniel.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't see them yet, but I want to welcome members of CareNow.

Sunday is international awareness day for myalgic encephalomyelitis, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, environmental sensitivity and multiple chemical sensitivities.

CareNow will be holding a Zoom meeting on Wednesday at 1 o'clock. Everyone is welcome.

1040

Mr. David Smith: I'd like to welcome to the House today Tim Neeb, Maureen Houlihan, Michelle Nanton-Whyte, Heather McDonald, Jessica Whelan of Fred Victor, and Abi and Rima Goldshmidt. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Chris Glover: I would like to welcome to the House my good friend Tyler Mackinnon, who was actually one of the first people to encourage me to run for MPP. He brought his class today. He's a teacher at Willowdale High School, and his class from Willowdale is in the House today.

I look forward to having lunch with you guys today.

Ms. Laura Smith: It is my very great honour to welcome our newest intern to team Thornhill and also a

long-time member of the Thornhill community, Ms. Emma Bellamy.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It is my pleasure to welcome MLA Lisa Lachance from Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our introduction of visitors for this morning.

PHARMACARE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health on a point of order.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Yesterday, the member from Toronto Centre raised a question regarding a constituent, and I committed to follow up. In fact, I have confirmed that the constituent was reimbursed, and the member from Toronto Centre was notified of that information prior to question period.

Thank you for the resolution.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That is not a valid point of order.

It is now time for question period.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier.

Brighton council approved a six-month agreement for \$60,000 with Atlas Strategic Advisors. I want to remind everyone, Atlas Strategic—or Atlas Strategies—is a company led by the Premier's infamous Las Vegas-massage-table-loving principal secretary Amin Massoudi—boy, that's a mouthful. Atlas Strategies has now dropped the contract after they were exposed by recent reports for boasting about their relationship with the Premier's office.

The question is, where did this town in the Minister of Labour's riding—the same minister with connections to Mr. X—get the idea that in order to get action from this government they needed to hire a friend of the Premier to lobby for preferential treatment?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Frankly, I don't know where a town or any community in this province of Ontario would think that it would ever be a good idea to hire an outside lobbyist to try to connect with the government or members of this Legislature.

I would suggest to our municipal partners, should they want to meet with members of the Legislature, that they pick up a phone, go to a computer, or come to this place and talk to us. I know that members of this caucus are always available to our partners, and I think the dollars that are spent on outside consultants would be better spent on focusing on infrastructure and other things that move their communities forward, and not on outside lobbyists.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Interesting. The contract is for lobbying, for grant-writing support, for consultation and for advisory services to improve Brighton's chances for funding approval and provincial support. But a councillor said this: "Put plain and simple, it's a lobbyist to work the backroom. That's what we are getting. We are not acquiring them for their technical expertise."

I guess what happens in Brighton doesn't stay in Brighton.

Is the Premier really okay with his government's reputation of catering to insiders in the backrooms?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, let me be very clear to our municipal partners: They should focus on spending their resources, the resources of their taxpayers, on things that move their communities forward. I have heard, as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as have all my colleagues, the importance of building water and waste water and other infrastructure. So I say very clearly to them: Focus those resources on that.

Should you wish to reach out to members of this Legislature, do so. We encourage you to do so. We have ROMA. We have AMO. We have NOMA. Many of our ministers just came back from Sudbury, where they were meeting with municipal leaders. You have a Premier who hands out his cellphone number to every single Ontarian; I know that is the same process that many of our colleagues on this side do.

So, very clearly, again, to any municipal council that is watching, focus your resources on what matters to your people.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I have to say, Speaker, municipalities seem to have gotten a very different message from this government. This is a concerning pattern we are seeing from this government, and let me tell you, people across the province are indeed taking notice.

This government made such a reputation of catering to insiders and the Premier's friends that local governments are using it as a strategy.

One councillor said this: "This government sometimes talk to its friends more than other folks, it might as well work for us from time to time."

Backroom deals, Vegas massage tables, RCMP criminal investigations—I'm going to ask again, is this Premier going to tell us today whether he is okay with that being the legacy of his government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think what we will be proud of is the legacy of this government—the continued legacy of economic growth, job creation. We're proud of a legacy that is building more schools in communities across the province of Ontario. We're proud of a legacy that is building transit and transportation for the first time in over a generation across the province of Ontario. We're proud of a legacy that has brought over \$40 billion worth of

investment to the province of Ontario; a legacy that includes over 700,000 jobs in the province of Ontario; a legacy that is building hospitals in small and large and medium-sized communities across the province of Ontario; a legacy that is reducing the cost to taxpayers across the province of Ontario; a legacy that is opening up the Ring of Fire in the north so that the people in northern Ontario can help drive the prosperity that comes with the over \$40 billion of investment in the new auto across this province.

But what the people of Ontario know is that the job is not done. We inherited a fiscal and economic mess from the previous government. The work needs to continue. We're not done yet. We'll continue on that path.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is again for the Premier. A few weeks ago, ACORN organizers from across the province led funeral marches to mourn the death of affordable housing in Ontario. Over the last decade, the average rent in Ontario has shot up at least three times the guideline rate. And I tell you, Speaker, that is just too darn high.

One of the first things that this government did was to take away rent control for tenants living in new buildings, allowing these big corporate landlords to raise the rent to whatever they wanted.

Last year, a tenant here in Toronto faced a rent increase of \$7,000 per month. Why does the Premier think that corporate landlords should be allowed to raise rent by \$7,000?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: We've talked about this a lot, haven't we, colleagues? We've talked about a program that was brought in by the NDP government between 1990 and 1995, and that was to remove rent controls from new purpose-built buildings, because they were unable to get starts in the province of Ontario at that time, following a half decade of disastrous Liberal government.

What we are doing has seen the highest amount of purpose-built rentals in the history of the province, putting more supply online.

When you talk about affordable housing, colleagues, what we inherited in 2018 was an absolute disaster. We have had to focus the last six years on renovating, rehabilitating, restoring old, outdated affordable housing, to the tune of 123,000 units across the province of Ontario. Do you know why? Because for 15 years, they, supported by them, did nothing. They didn't care about the tenants who lived in those affordable housing units. We're investing billions to make sure that those units are up to code, and not only that; that they are beautiful places for people to move, live and create memories going forward.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd say the minister needs to get with this century and the reality of people today.

Do you know what happens when you get rid of rent control? Two things. First, corporations make more money off people who have no money, and then rent goes up and people lose their homes. That's what happens. Do you know why? Because unethical corporate landlords know that if they can get rid of their existing tenant, they can raise the rent to whatever they want. The NDP have called over and over for this government to take away this harmful incentive.

We need to protect the supply that we already have of affordable housing by bringing in stronger rent control.

Why won't this Premier ensure any new tenant will pay what the previous tenant would have paid?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Hon. Paul Calandra: What the Leader of the Opposition would do, and what they constantly do—they talked about this yesterday. They create enemies out of everybody. So if you are somebody who builds a home, you're an enemy; if you're somebody who builds affordable rental housing, you must be an enemy—because that is what the NDP want to do. They want to drive down the province of Ontario.

But what are we doing? We're building up the province of Ontario. The policies that we have brought in have seen the highest level of purpose-built rental housing in the history of the province.

More importantly, we inherited a province where affordable housing was on the brink of collapse, where so many of our units were outdated. They needed to be renovated. We had to move people out of those units across the province of Ontario because they were unfit to be lived in. Why? Because for 15 years, the Liberals, supported by the NDP, refused to make those investments. We have made investments so that 123,000 units can be lived in by people, in dignity, in communities that they're helping to build.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll tell you what we will never do, Speaker. We will never support anyone who exploits hard-working people in the province of Ontario. We will never be friends with them.

I want to talk about another loophole that is exploited, and that's the above-guideline increase, or what we call AGI.

Last month, CBC found that over half of all AGI applications came from just 20 large corporate landlords, friends of this government. AGIs are supposed to be used just for things like extraordinary and unexpected expenditures that aren't covered by basic rent. I'm explaining this to the members opposite so they can follow along. But the government is allowing AGIs for things like routine maintenance or for luxury renovations that aren't necessary.

I want to ask the Premier again: When will this government crack down on the unethical use of AGIs?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me go a step further, Mr. Speaker, because we've also talked about just how irrelevant the NDP have become.

Let's remember that Ontario has the strongest rent control guidelines in the country—2.5% is what we allow, right? We still have rent controls.

There is not one purpose-built rental housing provider in the province of Ontario that has done what she is suggesting has happened—not one. They are keeping rents down. They are within the guidelines. That is what is happening across the province of Ontario. Our purpose-built rental housing community is doing what they're supposed to do: provide affordable housing in communities where people want to live so that they can build better lives for themselves and, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, they can live in communities that they are helping to build. Do you know why? Because this government has removed obstacles.

We have put in place the rules and the guidelines and the supports brought on by this Minister of Finance that are getting people back into the business of building purpose-built rental housing. Imagine, under our policies, the highest level of purpose-built rental housing, not in a decade, not in two decades, but ever. That's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to talk about how the housing crisis is affecting people, Minister.

Maria is a senior in my riding. She looks after her disabled son. She pays \$3,640 a month for two rooms in a home, because it's all she can find in Toronto. She's due to be evicted in three days because she cannot afford the rent. She's looking to move into a shelter, but that means she will be separated from her disabled adult son. Maria is one of 65,000 people who are on a wait-list for an affordable home. She has been waiting 12 years.

Minister, do you think it's acceptable that a senior is being forced to move into a shelter because there is no available affordable housing?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The question in itself proves my point, doesn't it, Mr. Speaker?

For 15 years, they kept them in power. And for 15 years, this coalition here—the same as the federal coalition—refused to invest in affordable housing. In fact, what they did is condemn people who lived in that type of housing to units that were old, units that were outdated. They forced people to move out of those units because they were below code.

What have we done? We have renovated, across the province of Ontario, 123,000 units while unleashing the power of Ontario's building and construction crews so that

they could build the highest level of purpose-built rentals in the history of the province.

But she is right: The job is not done. And that's why Ontarians will trust us to move it forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister, Maria is not going to be able to afford to move into a new purpose-built rental that costs over \$3,000 a month to live in. It's not going to happen.

Minister, I want to talk about Helen. Helen is a new parent. A developer bought her home and the eight homes next to her, and now the developer is systematically kicking out the tenants one by one. The developer is no longer doing basic repairs like stopping sewage from leaking through the ceiling, making the homes unlivable, and the developer is also filing eviction notices saying family members are about to move in. These are clearly illegal actions.

Minister, do you think it's acceptable that big landlords are allowed to engage in illegal activity to drive out tenants from their homes?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Boy, that's a tough question to answer, isn't it, Mr. Speaker? Of course it's not. That's why we have rules in place in the province of Ontario that are simply the most difficult and most challenging rules in the country. If a landlord treats a tenant unfairly, the laws will deal with that landlord.

But what is more important—and again here, question after question after question—if you produce something in Ontario, the NDP don't like you. If you build something in Ontario, the NDP don't like you. If you drive on a road in Ontario, they don't like you. If you go to a school or university, they don't like you. The only thing the NDP want to do is drive down the province of Ontario. And how does the province of Ontario respond? They drive down the results of the NDP in every single election.

When you're fighting elections and "other" gets more votes than you do, you might be on the wrong path.

We'll keep on the path of prosperity.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy.

The federal carbon tax has been a failure on every level. It has not reduced emissions, and it has increased the cost of everything in the province of Ontario. To continue to drive economic growth and electrification in our province, we need better access to affordable and clean energy, not this punitive tax. The Trudeau Liberals, supported by the NDP and the queen of the carbon tax herself, Bonnie Crombie, felt no shame or remorse about hiking this tax by 23% last month. They will bring more tax hikes to the people of Ontario at every opportunity that they get. The Liberals and their carbon tax must be stopped.

Can the minister please enlighten the opposition members and tell them how we can build Ontario's clean energy advantage without imposing this regressive carbon tax?

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Brantford–Brant for the question.

Yes, we can. We have a plan called Powering Ontario's Growth, and it does not include a carbon tax. In fact, we are vehemently against the carbon tax, especially the one that went up 23% on April 1, supported by Justin Trudeau, Jagmeet Singh and, of course, the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, who leads the Liberal Party here.

We are bringing in clean, reliable, affordable energy by refurbishing our nuclear fleet. All the major component replacements are on time or ahead of time and on budget.

We know what Ontario needs to build the jobs and the future of the economy. Why do you think we're getting \$43 billion investment in our automotive sector? Because those people know we have a nuclear advantage and it will power Ontario for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for his response.

It is unacceptable that the federal Liberals continue to drive up the cost of everything and make our basic necessities unaffordable. That's why we need the NDP and Liberal members in this House to recognize these detrimental impacts and join us in fighting the carbon tax. Unfortunately, they just won't do it.

While the Liberals and NDP want to dive deeper into the pockets of Ontarians, our government will continue to get it done for the people of Ontario—meet our growing energy needs and deliver solutions with real affordability.

Can the parliamentary assistant please explain what steps our government is taking to build a clean energy future in this province without the carbon tax?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member for the question again.

As I said, our government's Powering Ontario's Growth plan—Powering Ontario's Growth. Everything in Ontario's future hinges on its ability to grow, to provide the jobs and the future for the next generations. How do you do that? You've got to make sure you have the policies in place.

We have the policies in place that are going to help us build 1.5 million homes. You're going to need energy for those homes. You're going to need energy for the people who are going to live in those homes and energy for the people who build those homes.

Our nuclear advantage, our clean energy advantage in Ontario is attracting attention all around the world. We are bringing back 700,000 jobs that the Liberals lost 300,000 of when they were in power, largely because of their failed energy policy.

Our energy policy will power Ontario today and power it into the future, and Ontarians will be better off as a result of that. And we won't have a carbon tax.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Last year, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing began an audit of municipal governments after the Premier claimed municipalities were wasting money. With seemingly no explanation, Brampton, Caledon, Mississauga, Newmarket, Toronto and the region of Peel were selected for audits. Then, just as quickly, without sharing any results, the audits were cancelled.

My question: Did the minister cancel and hide his predecessor's audits because they failed to find significant waste at city hall?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: When your leader starts the first question about a municipality wasting money on a lobbyist, maybe your fourth question of the day shouldn't be, "Our municipal partners aren't necessarily wasting money." Maybe that's why the NDP are so irrelevant in political discourse today, Speaker.

What we're doing across the province of Ontario is, we're working with our municipal partners to make important investments for them. They have told us that they need money for infrastructure; they need money so that they can build sewer and water capacity to build the 1.5 million homes across the province of Ontario. So we're getting that done for them. They have told us that they need assistance with infrastructure so that we can get those investments that have led to \$40 billion worth of game-changing investments across the province of Ontario, which has led to 700,000 jobs being created in the province of Ontario.

Do you know why we need to do this? Because we inherited an infrastructure deficit from the previous Liberal government. We're changing it, but the work is not done. More—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary question.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, no one has seen the results of these audits—not even the local governments that provided all the necessary documents that were to be audited. Freedom-of-information requests to see these reports have been denied by the ministry. We suspect the government is keeping the reports under wraps because they failed to find significant waste.

Through you, Speaker: What did the ministry find during those audits, and when will they release these hidden reports?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: First of all, no one can convince me that there isn't waste at all governments. The only difference is, our government—we're finding the waste. Think of this: We're the only region, the only province in all of Canada, in the history of Canada, that has never raised a tax.

We believe in growth. We believe in making sure that we have the buildings.

Here's a stat that just came out: Toronto tops the list of the most cranes anywhere—okay, so here we go: Toronto is tops, at 221, not including the GTA. That's just as many. We have more cranes in the sky than Los Angeles, at about 50; Seattle, 38; Denver, 14; Boston, 14; Washington, DC, 12; Honolulu, 12; Las Vegas, 10; Portland, nine; San Francisco, eight; Phoenix, seven; New York, five; Chicago, three; and Dallas, zero.

Something is going right, because we created the environment for companies—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The next question.

EDUCATION ISSUES

Ms. Jess Dixon: My question is for the Minister of Education. A few weeks back, I brought a motion to this House calling on the government to restrict the use of smart phones in classrooms and to also ban the use of vapes and other harmful products. That motion was passed unanimously after a number of my colleagues—government, opposition and independent—spoke very eloquently in support of it. I brought that motion because of what I heard from constituents and parents. More than one in four Ontario students have picked up vaping. As a former PPSC federal drug prosecutor, I don't really have a problem getting behind that—but it was also what I heard about smart phones.

I especially want to call out the work of a great Kitchener doctor, Dr. Alison Yeung, known online as @thesmartphoneeffectmd, who has really brought an evidence-based, one-woman advocacy attack on the impacts of smart phone use.

Following that, the ministry brought an announcement about new efforts to combat smart phones and vapes in classrooms. I would appreciate it if the minister could please elaborate on what the government is doing.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I do want to thank the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler, another fellow millennial—not ironically—taking action to restrict cellphones and technology in schools.

I want to note that two weeks ago, we announced a plan to get cellphones out of sight and out of mind when it comes to our schools. It's overwhelmingly supported by Ontario families; 87% of Ontarians agree we have a problem, and they support our solution to restrict cellphone technology during instructional time.

We have to empower our educators and give them the enforcement tools and the confidence that when they ask a student to remove their device, their superintendents and directors will have their back. This government will stand with our teachers.

We're asking parents to speak with their kids to recondition them to this behaviour, because the mental health data is clear; the academic data is clear. The impacts of technology and cellphones without proper safeguards are limiting the ability of children to learn and to develop in a positive way. It is impacting their development, so we've taken action. We've paved the way for national

leadership to restrict social media, to restrict cellphone use and to outright ban vaping in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Supplementary question.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I have to say, it was incredibly gratifying to see the ministry take such prompt action on something that really showed that they heard the concerns of the entire House, based on the unanimously passed motion. I have to say, I had never received more positive responses online until I brought that motion, and those responses really crossed cultural, religion and income lines.

This is something that Ontarians clearly care about. It's something that got cross-party support, and it's something that I really, really think shows the commitment this government has and this minister has to making sure that students have a safe and supportive learning environment.

I'm asking, Speaker, if the minister can talk about how the government is planning to continue this positive momentum that we have for something that it's so evident that all Ontarians support, care for and are marshalling behind.

1110

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is so important that we get this right, which is why we are announcing an expansion of mandatory learning in the curriculum dealing with the responsible use of technology, online citizenship, privacy, consent, and to further strengthen the knowledge on the perils of vaping, cannabis, nicotine—an illegal substance for a child under 18 in this province. We're announcing funding in partnership with the minister of mental health and addictions to leverage community-based mental health and addiction services. We are expanding mandatory training of our staff. We're empowering parents through parent involvement councils to drive localized campaigns at the school level. We're also investing \$30 million in vape detectors.

I am proud that today the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and I announced our intention to bring forth social media executives, tech experts and law enforcement to the government to meet with us, with one mission: to safeguard the algorithm, to safeguard the privacy rights of children, and actually improve the safety of kids in this province.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier.

If the Premier has been to a grocery store lately, he would know that groceries are too darn expensive. People can't afford to eat properly. Parents can't feed their kids nutritious food.

Ontarians are so fed up with the lack of action by this Conservative government that they've taken matters into their own hands and started a boycott against Loblaws, the largest grocer in Canada.

The NDP has long called for a consumer protection watchdog.

Premier, will you accept our call and restore integrity in the grocery sector?

Hon. Doug Ford: Let's start with restoring integrity with the NDP and Liberals, who are all for this carbon tax and have increased the cost of gas by 23%. You know, folks in the crowd, you go up and fill up your tank now—it's 23% higher. You know, when you deliver groceries, meat or produce, it goes on a truck. When they print something on those products, that gets taxed too, through the carbon tax.

The carbon tax is the worst single tax we have ever seen in this country. Even the Bank of Canada is saying it's driving up inflation. What we need to do is get rid of this carbon tax. It's the worst tax. It hits the people in their pockets. Let's axe the tax.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The supplementary question.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Back to the Premier: The Premier doesn't want to talk about price gouging, but that's what's happening. On the day the boycott began, Loblaws posted a first-quarter revenue of over \$13 billion, with profits going up almost 10%.

Your inaction will drive more people to the food banks, and you know that even food banks are running out of food.

What do you have to say to parents who struggled to pack a lunch for their children this morning?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will take their seats. Order. Opposition, come to order. Order. Order.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: And I hear it—if you're a farmer who produces food, the NDP thinks you're an enemy. If you're a grocer who sells the food, the NDP thinks you're an enemy.

I was at the Wellesley Fruit Market. It's on Wellesley, just west of Parliament Street, and there's a guy who goes every single morning to the food terminal—he buys all his produce. He's an extraordinary individual who works very hard. And do you know what he said to me? The exact same thing that the Premier is talking about. When he goes there, he has to pay a carbon tax to drive there, bring his produce back. Everybody who delivers—when he is at the terminal, they talk about the same thing. The farmers are talking about how expensive it has become to produce because of the carbon tax. We heard it from the greenhouse growers just the other day.

The cost of the carbon tax is incredible, adding extra cost to the price of food. So I say really to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The next question.

CITY OF OTTAWA

Mr. Stephen Blais: I wanted to ask my question to the political minister for Ottawa, but I realized he's not elected

to this place, Mr. Speaker. In fact, he has never been elected. So my question is to the Premier.

The person the Premier recently named as his political point man in Ottawa is the newest passenger on the Conservative gravy train—a former lobbyist and executive with Shoppers Drug Mart, and, of course, the failed candidate in Kanata–Carleton. The announcement was met with near universal criticism. Some people thought that hell froze over, because even the member from Nepean agreed with me on that one.

Ottawa is Ontario's second-largest city, with over a million people. We deserve an elected voice around the cabinet table; not a political appointee dispatched as if we were some far-flung place in need of an ambassador.

Will the Premier explain why his defeated candidate from Kanata is up to the job, when he clearly believes his three MPPs from Ottawa are not?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Ottawa is the second-largest city in the province of Ontario, one of the most important cities in the country, represented by Conservatives across the board, with the exception of the two there who accomplished literally nothing in the years that they were—do you know why we have an office in Ottawa? It should have been there many years ago, like the federal government has offices in every other major city. But do you know why? Because we are undertaking the largest expansion of health care in the history of Ottawa, because we've come to a new deal with the city of Ottawa to upload some of the roads, to ensure that they can progress. Do you know what the mayor of Ottawa said? That it is a game-changer for the city of Ottawa.

Do you know what the other people in Ottawa are saying? For so many years, they have been ignored by Liberal politicians, and finally, they have a Conservative government that cares about them, that is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Even the Ottawa Sun, not exactly a bastion of Liberal support, slammed the deal.

Let me quote the Sun—"Reports were coming in of a rare sighting of an Ontario Premier in Ottawa last week, like an errant booby bird accidentally blown in from the faraway tropics of Lake Ontario."

Let me further quote: "The mayor rolled out the welcome mat for the Premier ... but his announcement while in town suggests he still sees us as a doormat."

The Ford government ambassador to Ottawa was so committed to representing the voices of the people that he failed to attend all-candidates meetings during his own election in Kanata. If he wasn't willing to show up for the residents of the riding he was trying to represent, why should we believe he'll show up for the rest of us in Ottawa?

It's grasping at straws, Mr. Speaker, but the rest of us know better. This is just another gravy train appointment

putting a lobbyist and a Conservative insider in a highly paid position of power and authority over top of his three MPPs from Ottawa. When will the Premier recognize Ottawa as an important place in Ontario and designate—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Let me get this right. He has been an MPP there for years. Premier McGuinty was from Ottawa. You held a lot of seats in Ottawa until we came into play, and then we wiped you guys out.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South, come to order.

Hon. Doug Ford: Let's just run through this. What is it? Over \$10 billion, the second-largest hospital project in the country—making sure we get that done. We've put billions of dollars into transit that your previous mayor told me turned into a disaster.

We just announced the Barnsdale cut-off. I think I've been there four times in the last five—

Mr. John Fraser: You cut a ribbon, Premier. That's about all you're good for.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order.

Interjection.

Premier, please take your seat.

The member for Ottawa South is warned.

The Premier still has some time and can resume his answer.

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We sent hundreds of millions of dollars to Ottawa. We have an incredible relationship with the mayor of Ottawa and the people there. People realize that we're showing love to Ottawa that they've never seen in 15 years.

Your buddy sitting beside you is from Ottawa. You guys did diddly-squat—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara West will come to order. The member for Orléans will come to order. The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

The Liberal carbon tax continues to make life more unaffordable for families in Ontario and across the country. Ever since the introduction of this disastrous tax, the costs of food, transportation and everyday essentials have reached new heights.

1120

Contrary to what Liberal members in this Legislature have said, the carbon tax is not in the best interests of

Ontarians. But, Mr. Speaker, don't take my word for it; ask any Ontarian, and they will tell you the same thing. Even the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador opposes the federal carbon tax.

While the independent Liberals, under the leadership of the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, continue to champion this regressive tax, our government is standing up for Ontarians and calling for its elimination.

Can the minister please tell this House why the carbon tax needs to go?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills for his excellent question.

He spoke about essentials—driving up the cost of essentials. How much crueller can you get than when you're driving up the cost of essentials? All across the supply chain—our farmers don't just feed cities; they feed all of us, but the cities should understand it better than anyone. Everything that a farmer puts into those products, when they finally make it to the shelves or make it to your kitchens—those costs have been driven up by the carbon tax.

The Liberals and Bonnie Comrie—Comrie—

Interjection: Crombie.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Crombie—they are happy to let—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay, John. We'll get you. Thank you, John.

They're happy to let people suffer under the burden of that carbon tax, but we in the PC government, under Premier Ford, are not.

Farmers feed cities. Farmers feed us all.

Everything in the supply chain is driven up by the carbon tax. It is time to axe the tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair. We refer to each other by our riding name or ministerial title, as applicable.

Supplementary.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for the response.

The carbon tax is unfair to every Ontarian, including the hard-working men and women who grow high-quality, healthy food for our families. Not only does it hike production costs for farmers, but it punishes those who are already utilizing environmentally responsible practices.

The federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts need to step up and do the right thing: Stop ignoring families, businesses and farmers. Scrap this tax now.

Can the parliamentary assistant please explain how the federal carbon tax is negatively impacting Ontario farmers?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member again for the supplementary question.

Yes, this is all about farmers and the food supply, and what the carbon tax is doing.

On the farm—and I want to thank our Minister of Agriculture and how she continuously supports our farming communities out there—there are not many things that aren't driven by energy costs, as well.

Last week, we had the TOGA folks here—the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance—and their costs are driven up because of the carbon tax—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: By 30%.

Mr. John Yakabuski: By 30%, the minister tells me—because if you've got greenhouses, they've got to be heated. If you're drying grain, that requires heating. Whether it's propane or natural gas, it requires heating. It requires energy. Everything that happens on that farm is affected by the carbon tax.

For those people out there—they really have to focus on understanding what that tax is doing to the cost of food on their tables. It's an absolutely wrong-headed way to try to raise revenue—the federal government under Justin Trudeau.

Bonnie Crombie has to stand up—and the NDP. If you want to be recognized properly, stand with us and Premier Ford and be just like we are. Ask them to scrap the tax.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier.

Car thefts are on the rise, and we are not doing everything we can in the province. Recently, OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique told a House of Commons committee that inspections of vehicles with problematic VINs should be mandatory, but Ontario doesn't do it. In Ontario, someone can steal a car, register it, and no one checks. This isn't just a loophole—it's a drive-through lane for car thieves.

Will this government commit to VIN inspections and actually protect drivers from car theft?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: There's no government in the history of Ontario that has taken public safety more seriously than this government led by Premier Ford, and he leads it everyday by saying that it is absolutely crazy that our doors are getting kicked in at 5 in the morning and people are demanded to hand over their keys.

But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Our government is acting. That's why we came forward with two asks for the federal government in Ottawa: (1) have minimum sentencing on those people who think it's okay to steal our cars and (2) step it up at the Port of Montreal and at the rail ports and then the intermodals, where we are not inspecting the containers going outbound the same as they are inspecting them coming inbound. It's so simple.

The federal government has an opportunity. And do you know what? The NDP across the way can call their friends in Ottawa and say, "We stand for public safety. This is unacceptable."

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: People are understandably worried about having their vehicles stolen. Vehicle theft is so common in the province of Ontario that we were even a recent punchline on Jeopardy. But stolen vehicles in shipping containers make the news; 10% of stolen vehicles are staying right here in Ontario. They're being re-VINned, resold and re-registered at ServiceOntario like any other vehicle.

It has been reported that there is no VIN verification in Ontario and there is no system for flagging suspicious registrations for inspection. The integrity of the VIN database is not being protected, and it's currently being flooded with false records and stolen vehicles.

Can this government—this government, of the province—explain why Ontario does not have a system for VIN verification?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: So, let's get this straight. You're talking about the police. You're anti-police. Everyone knows the NDP do not support our police; it's a known fact.

You guys aren't too bad, but you've done nothing over the last 15 years. So that's why our government is—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the Premier to make his comments through the Chair.

Hon. Doug Ford: Sure, Mr. Speaker—that repeat violent offenders comply with bail conditions. I personally led the charge to the federal government about bail reform. I personally talked to the Prime Minister about mandatory sentences.

We want to make sure that we have scanners at the ports, as the Solicitor General said. Our investment is going towards the creation of a new Bail Compliance and Warrant Apprehension Grant; the expansion of a OPP Repeat Offender Parole Enforcement Squad; the establishment of intensive, serious violent crime bail terms; and teams and a new provincial bail monitoring system to allow police services to monitor high-risk offenders with the most—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The Premier will take his seat.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take his seat.

The next question.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health.

Speaker, with deep concern, I want to draw attention to the city of Toronto's application to Health Canada to decriminalize drugs for personal use. The drugs we are talking about here, shockingly, include dangerous opioids such as heroin, fentanyl and cocaine.

Speaker, we know we are in the midst of an opioid crisis. The experience in BC and Oregon shows that this

approach is a total failure, as the overdose deaths spiked high, as well as the street disorder and public safety concern. My constituents are deeply disturbed that the city is pursuing this action.

Can the minister explain what the government is doing to address this issue?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member opposite for that important question.

The Premier, last week, was very clear: We do not support Toronto's application.

As the member rightly noted, the jurisdictions that have attempted decriminalization both here in Canada and internationally are in full retreat from the policy because it does not work.

I also want to point out that what Toronto requested was even more extreme—I'd say bizarre—than what they had in BC. The medical officer of health's proposal is to decriminalize the possession of any drug, in any quantity and—are you ready?—for people of any age, and that includes children. This is known as the made-in-Toronto solution. I think it's more like the made-in-Toronto disaster waiting to happen. It's a completely reckless plan that would damage public safety, that wouldn't accomplish anything to help those struggling with addiction, and that is not supported by this government. Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The supplementary question.

1130

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thanks to the minister for his comments.

Speaker, my constituents are so relieved to see Ottawa's approval on BC's request for a ban on public drug use. The BC Premier said, "Keeping people safe is our highest priority. While we are caring and compassionate for those struggling with addiction, we do not accept street disorder that makes communities feel unsafe."

I agree with Premier Ford's comment. To give them treatment and support is the right thing to do.

Speaker, my follow-up question is, can the minister tell Ontarians what this government's plan is to help those who are struggling with addiction?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Once again, our approach is very, very clear: It's treatment, it's recovery, and it's prevention. In partnership with the incredible mental health and addictions organizations that are here today, we're making targeted, data-driven investments to build a recovery-oriented continuum of care.

As a government and as a sector, we are aligned. We're going to meet people where they are, but we're not going to let them stay there; we're going to help them get to where they can be.

We're opening new treatment beds in communities across the province, including in places like the north, where they were ignored for years and years under previous governments. We're also standing up new mobile crisis intervention teams like the one that was announced yesterday in Lambton county. And we're also standing up to do what is correct for the people of the province of

Ontario by looking after mental health and addictions and taking the issue seriously.

We will not leave people where they are; we're going to help them be the best they can be.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

I continue to hear from my farmers in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock that the federal Liberal carbon tax is sending their bills through the barn roof. I have seen on invoices from Midnight Acres farm in Kawartha Lakes and Dave Frew farms in Durham that the carbon tax on their bills is adding \$5,000 to \$10,000 per month, and that was before the most recent hike of April 1.

We know good things grow in Ontario, and all Ontarians rely on Ontario farmers to produce the food we eat every day.

The federal Liberals need to wake up and realize the detrimental effects that this punishing carbon tax is having on their farm operations.

Can the minister tell us what she has been doing to help make the federal Liberals listen to Ontario farmers?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: We're on the ground with our farmers, standing with them.

I have to reflect on the fact that, historically, in early April, 25 commodity and farm organizations joined me in writing a letter to the federal Liberal government, and we made sure our provincial Liberal counterparts were well aware of it as well. With this letter, we provided proof of how the federal carbon tax is crippling the production of food here in Ontario and across Canada. We have all kinds of references.

I have a bill in front of me right now—just earlier this year, before that 23% increase, a farmer was paying \$4,666 on his energy bill.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—she's on the ground too. She loves her farmers. She asked specifically, "What are we doing?"

We've introduced programs to help farmers cope with the devastating ideology that is crippling and causing the cost of production to go up. It's Mental Health Week, and I'm so proud that one of the many programs—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I thank the minister for her incredible advocacy for our farmers.

I know my farmers are frustrated that the federal Liberals won't listen to them.

A few weeks ago, when the Ontario Federation of Agriculture was here at Queen's Park, another local farmer from Cavan Monaghan told me that he paid \$20,000 in carbon tax in just two months to dry his corn. Again, that was before the carbon tax increased by 23% on April 1.

Farmers want to increase Ontario's market access, but the carbon tax is reducing their competitive advantage at the global level.

The impact of the federal Liberal carbon tax can be seen whenever you visit a grocery store or a gas station. This tax impacts every level of the supply chain and needlessly takes money out of people's pockets. Enough is enough. The federal Liberal government needs to scrap the tax now.

Minister, the question is, why will the federal Liberals not listen to you, the Premier and our farmers—and are so oblivious to how it's creating such hardship on the punishing—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Quite simply, Bonnie Crombie and her crew across the floor from us just don't get it, but more importantly, they just don't care.

Recently—and I'll never forget it—a Liberal member of Bonnie's crew stood up with conviction and said that a carbon tax is good for everyone.

I suggest, respectfully, when you look at your markets or you consume fresh produce, you think about that 30% increase in cost of production. It's time that you start caring. Demonstrate that you understand and will join us to scrap the tax—otherwise, they may just not care.

I want to share with the House an example of caring that came to us from Temiskaming Shores this past week. First responders and OPP officers made sure that a barn fire did not spread to our SPUD unit, saving valuable seed for potatoes, garlic, strawberries and raspberries.

Right now, on behalf of Hillside Farms and all of Ontario, I want to thank first responders, and I want to thank Mr. Aitchison, who ran into a burning barn with six OPP officers from the Temiskaming department to save 130 head of cattle—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The next question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: NOSIs are a type of lien against property commonly used today to scam and extort Ontarians across our province, especially our seniors. Earlier this year, the Ontario NDP tabled a bill to ban them and put an end to this abuse. The minister said he agreed with us, but here we are two months later, and we are still waiting while homeowners continue to get scammed.

Will the minister commit today to banning these secretive, harmful liens against homes in Ontario and, if so, tell us when he will make it into law?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: This government, under the leadership of our Premier, stands for promises made, promises kept. A promise was made in this House to eradicate NOSIs, to protect our seniors and our most vulnerable, and that promise will be kept.

There are many weeks ahead in this legislative spring session, so I say to the member opposite, thank you for the question. Stay tuned and always count on our Premier and this government to stand up for our seniors, for our fellow citizens in need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thanks to the minister, but we are in a race against time right now because every day, a new NOSI is being secretly laid, or a new homeowner is stunned and scammed when they try to sell or remortgage their home.

There are countless Ontarians with these secretive, harmful liens on their homes, including an elderly couple in my community with a dozen of them totalling more than \$100,000.

I recently tabled a motion calling on the government to immediately notify all homeowners who have these liens on their homes, because the people deserve to know.

Will the minister support this important motion?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

My ministry, so far, has brought forth two pieces of legislation that have gained the unanimous support of this House—of course, that includes the member opposite and his caucus.

When further thoughtful legislation is tabled in this House for further consumer protection, for further eradication of consumer harms like NOSI, I hope and believe that we can speedily pass it through this House with the support of the members opposite. I trust that they will thoughtfully consider their options in that regard.

1140

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Solicitor General.

It is clear to everyone except for the federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts that the carbon tax is detrimental to Ontario's economy. After last month's 23% tax hike, people are increasingly concerned about how this regressive tax is affecting our public safety system.

With reports of increasing crime levels troubling Ontarians across this great province, families in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora are concerned about the safety of themselves and their loved ones.

Speaker, Ontario depends on our police and our firefighters to protect their communities. It is critical for them to have the tools and the resources they need to do their jobs.

Can the Solicitor General tell the House how the carbon tax impacts our public safety system?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my colleague and friend from Newmarket–Aurora, and to also say that tonight, in the York Regional Police service, there will be a dinner honouring those from victim services who work hard every day to make sure that the victims are always protected.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in anybody's mind whatsoever that the carbon tax affects public safety. Let me give it by the numbers to the member opposite—in an average SUV that might consume 100 litres of fuel, at 18 cents per litre for gas, that's \$18 per fill-up. When you multiply it per year—because these cars are always on the road—you're talking \$6,500 a year just for the gas on the carbon tax portion.

Bonnie Crombie knows this because she served on the board of Peel police service. She should tell the truth and say she knows this is affecting our public safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the Solicitor General for his response.

It is essential that Ontario families feel protected and secure in their communities, and I'm proud that our government is supporting our first responders and calling on the federal government to scrap the carbon tax.

Speaker, Ontarians across this province want an end to this tax. As the carbon tax drives up the prices for fuel and equipment, people are justifiably concerned about how these added costs will strain police services. Our front-line officers keep us safe, and they deserve our support. That's why the federal Liberals need to listen to what Ontarians are saying and finally eliminate this harmful carbon tax.

Could the Solicitor General tell the House how the Liberal carbon tax is impacting the operations of our front-line officers?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: The member is right—every vehicle that is fuelled on public safety or on firefighting is affected by the carbon tax. And the numbers are substantial. Just to fill an average fire truck of 200 litres, with 21.5 cents for diesel—which is just the carbon tax portion—means that they're paying almost \$15,000 a year, if you can believe it, just for the carbon tax portion.

Mr. Speaker, do you know who knew about this? Bonnie Crombie. As the mayor of Mississauga, she knew the budget for the Mississauga fire department. She knew the budgets for the Peel police service, because she was on that board too. It's time that Bonnie Crombie tells the truth, owns up to it, calls her friend Justin Trudeau and says, "I'm not in favour of this tax."

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader under standing order 59.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to give the colleagues the order of business for next week.

Thank you to everybody for another productive week on behalf of the people of the province.

On Monday, May 13: opposition day debate number 5, which is a motion on more funding for education, and third reading of Bill 180, Building a Better Ontario Act, which is the budget measures 2024.

The morning of Tuesday, May 14, we'll be back on third reading of Bill 166, Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, and third reading of Bill 180, which is Building a Better Ontario Act. In the afternoon, we will be onto third reading of Bill 165, which is the Keeping Energy Costs Down Act, and we'll proceed to consideration of private bills. At 6 p.m., we will have private members' business standing in the name of the member for Don Valley North: Bill 183, Chinese Heritage Month Act, 2024.

On Wednesday, May 15: third reading of Bill 180, Building a Better Ontario Act; in the afternoon, back to Bill 180. At 6 p.m., we will be dealing with private members' business, Bill 189.

On Thursday, May 16: At this point, it is still to be determined what will be scheduled, depending on the order of business of the earlier days in the week. In the afternoon, we will go to Bill 190, which is the Working for Workers Five Act. At 6 p.m., we will move on to private members' business, Bill 178.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex has informed me that he has a point of order he wishes to make.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: In the House today, we have a barrister and solicitor, federal prosecutor and former president of the Essex Law Association, Jennifer Simpson-Rooke. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I adjourn the House, I have to say something. I want to draw the members' attention to standing order 35(a), which was brought to my attention today as well. It reads as follows: "The minister may take an oral question as notice to be answered orally on a future sessional day but where any reserved answer requires a lengthy statement, the statement shall be given under 'statements by the ministry and responses.'"

Therefore, the point of order that the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health raised this morning was in fact a valid point of order. I regret the confusion that I may have caused.

On the same point of order, the member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I would also like to bring to the attention of the House that, yes, my constituent was reimbursed by Shoppers Drug Mart after my office called and demanded a refund. My question, as Hansard will confirm, was about other people like my constituent who have had the same experience—the point being this is not a one-off; it is a systemic issue, because the government is allowing pharmacies to charge more than the ODSP list price.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

On the same point of order, the member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: On the same point of order, the Minister of Health mistakenly identified that the question came from Toronto Centre; rather, the question came from the honourable member—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You can't correct her record. No point of order.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Okay. Then, the minister is welcome to correct her own record.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Nepean will come to order.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good afternoon.

I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that tonight's meeting is cancelled.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 9, 2024, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy on the estimates selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Mr. Saunderson from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 63, your committee has selected the 2024-25 estimates of the following ministries for consideration: Ministry of the Attorney General; Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery; Ministry of the Solicitor General; Ministry of Francophone Affairs; Ministry of Indigenous Affairs.

Report presented.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I would like to ask for a point of order, please: a unanimous consent to have some grace around reading a petition and wearing the kaffiyeh at the time that I only read the petition on behalf of my constituents who are Palestinian in my community.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London–Fanshawe is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow her to wear a kaffiyeh while she presents a petition. Agreed? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

WEARING OF KAFFIYEHS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my honour to present this petition on behalf of the Palestinian, Muslim and Arab community in my riding of London–Fanshawe to reverse the ban on the kaffiyeh.

On Friday, I met with leaders from the London Palestinian community and I listened carefully how they talked about the importance of the kaffiyeh to the Palestinian people. They were very sincere in describing what it represents to the Palestinian people. It's part of their culture and it represents their identity.

The kaffiyeh was designed with the purpose of symbolizing fishing nets, the roads travelled to trade routes and olive tree plants. At one time, even the Palestinian flag was banned in Gaza and the West Bank and the colours of the flag—red, green, white and black—were not allowed to be even used in paintings. And because the watermelon has the colours of the flag, it became a symbol of Palestinian identity.

The kaffiyeh represents the Palestinian people's right to exist and their right to be alive. It represents their identity, and I am hopeful that if the members in this chamber hear why the kaffiyeh is a cultural clothing and has deep connection to Palestinian culture, we can surely come together and reverse the kaffiyeh ban in the visitors' gallery and in this chamber.

I would like to sign this petition and give the petition to page Norah to deliver to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind members of standing order 42(b), that "a member may present a petition in the House during the afternoon routine 'petitions'. The member may make a brief statement summarizing the contents of the petition and indicating the number of signatures attached thereto but shall not read the text of the petition."

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's not the text of the petition. It was just a summary—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm pleased to present today a petition from constituents in my riding outlining concerns that this government is undermining the five principles of the Canada Health Act, 1984, by promoting

and funding for-profit health care services at the expense of our public system, and asking this Legislative Assembly to stop plans to further privatize our health care and to make sure that public health services are for the people of Ontario; that they prevent the erosion of our public health system by funding our hospitals, because quality of care for Ontarians is the bottom line.

I'm happy to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Diya to take to the table.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my honour to present this petition entitled "Bring Back Rent Control," and it says to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that they want to bring back rent control on all units, after this government removed it from any building built after 2018, because the cost of a home in Ontario has never been higher. The average rent in Toronto is now \$3,000 a month, and most people cannot afford that, and so people are leaving the province. We have a net out-migration of 50,000 people per year in Ontario because of the cost of rent and the cost of housing in this province.

This government is not achieving its objective of building either affordable homes or building homes themselves—just building homes. They set this target of 1.5 million homes; in order to reach that target, they should be having 15,000 home starts per month and they're at 5,000, so they're only achieving one third of the housing starts that are needed to achieve their supply targets.

This petition asks for people to support and for this Legislature to support the Rent Control for All Tenants Act, 2022, which was brought forward by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, and it says that we need to pass this legislation because the people of Ontario need protection. The tenants of Ontario need protection from predatory rent increases, and they need us to pass the NDP's Rent Control for All Tenants Act today, to ensure that renters can live in safe and affordable homes.

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and pass it to page Victoria to take to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I have two petitions to read in today. First, I'd like to read in a petition from people across southern Ontario who are calling on an increase to ODSP and OW. The market basket measurement of poverty says that OW and ODSP fall far, far below what is needed to pay rent and pay for food. The government of Canada said that life in Ontario, life in Canada needs \$2,000 to pay the bills, so we're calling on this basic income.

Thank you to those across southern Ontario who are calling for an end to legislated poverty. I support this bill, and I give it to Alexander.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have a petition here entitled "Stop Bill 166." Thank you to the residents who reached out to

our office to explain your concerns with the bill and give us this petition.

There is concern with Bill 166 because it brings in political interference to university research and education. There is also a concern with this bill because the best way to ensure that every university has an excellent mental health and anti-racist policy program is to properly fund it, and this government has unfortunately not been properly funding universities. This petition calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose Bill 166 for these reasons and to restore funding to post-secondary institutions.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I, too, have a petition to read in to stop Bill 166. It draws attention to the cuts that this government made to anti-racism and anti-hate subcommittees, the funding cuts to these programs that happened six years ago, the cuts to university funding that affected the mental health services that are provided on campus. It calls instead for the funding to be restored and increased to allow for this mental health and hate-fighting anti-racism work to be done. Stop the political interference and stop the usurpation or concentration of power, giving the minister power to direct colleges and universities, which threaten their autonomy.

1310

I support this petition. I'll sign my name and give it to page Liam to bring to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm pleased to be able to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's outlining an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers that was signed by over 230 organizations, recommending that social assistance rates be doubled for both OW and ODSP. The rates for Ontario Works have been frozen since 2018, and a small increase to the Ontario Disability Support Program has left recipients struggling well below the poverty line here in Ontario. We advocate for doubling the rates of both OW and ODSP.

I couldn't agree more. I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer for sending this petition over to my office. Thank you, Sally. We'll continue to fight for you.

I'm affixing my name and sending it down with Antonio.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Joel Harden: On the occasion of nurses' week here in the province of Ontario, I'm very happy to be putting in a petition on health care privatization. I want to thank in particular Joanna Binch and Hoda Mankal, who are nurse leaders in our community. I want to thank Rachel Muir from Ontario Nurses' Association, Local 083, for doing a lot of the work in recruiting citizens to get their name behind this.

These citizens are concerned with the trend of health care privatization, which has been openly promoted by this government having private, for-profit organizations operating out of our public institutions like the Riverside campus of the Ottawa Hospital with nary a word of criticism from members of this government. It's unfortunate, because the nurses who are behind this petition and across our community that help people every single day are doing great work.

And in describing this petition—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford): To the member from Ottawa Centre: Your job is to read the petition and not give—

Interjections.

Mr. Joel Harden: I know this Speaker shares the passion for his community.

I am very passionate during nurses' week to be introducing this petition on health care privatization to the Clerks' table with page Lise.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to thank ACORN for collecting these signatures. This petition is called "Rent Stabilization Now." This petition is calling for rent control to be applied on all homes, including homes that are built after 2018, and for a system of vacancy control to be established so there is a cap on how much the rent can be raised if a tenant leaves.

The reason why this is so important—and they say this in the petition—is because rent is too high. It's too high. People in Ontario can't afford it, and it is important, in order for us to achieve affordability, that we stabilize rent prices so our province can be affordable for renters as well.

I support this petition. I'll be giving it to page Raisa.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition that is signed by hundreds of residents of the city of London, including many faculty and staff who work at Western University. This petition is calling on the government to stop Bill 166 immediately. It notes the cuts that were made to community mental health services by this government right after they were elected, which has increased the mental health demands on our Ontario campuses from students, and the impact of COVID on student mental health needs. It also notes the dismantling of the Anti-Racism Directorate, which affects the ability to implement measures to address Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism on our campuses and in our province.

This petition raises concerns about the political interference that is represented by Bill 166, which allows the minister to unilaterally dictate campus policies on student mental health and racism and hate, which represents a degree of political interference that undermines democracy and the autonomy of our academic institutions.

The petition calls on the government to stop Bill 166, to re-establish the committees under the Anti-Racism Act and, most importantly, to provide funding to our post-secondary institutions so that they can provide the mental health supports that students need and also address incidents of racism and hate on campus.

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Kai.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition that is titled “Invest in Public Education Now.” Thank you to the parents and teachers at Kensington school for collecting many of these petitions.

Kensington is losing 2.5 teachers, and the school is bringing in a 4-5-6 split, which means learning in that class will be severely impacted. This petition calls on the government to properly invest in public education so we can lower class sizes, address the mental health crisis and address the worker shortages that we’re seeing in our public schools.

I support this petition, and I’ll be giving it to page Harry.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 190, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l’emploi et au travail et à d’autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. John Jordan: This morning, before I ran out of time, I emphasized the importance of introducing careers in the trades at the secondary level. One student is saying that programs introduced by this government “gave him a reason to like school again”—my favourite quote. It’s so important to the future of this province.

I want to thank the Minister of Education, the Minister of Colleges and Universities and our Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development for continuing to enhance these career opportunities through the Working for Workers Five Act.

As I said, it gives students the ability to make informed decisions about their future through the introduction to a variety of careers in the skilled trades. Through the Working for Workers Five Act, alternative pathways for people interested in skilled trades will be open.

In addition to getting young people into the skilled trades, the government wants to help mature workers leverage their existing skills, education and work experience to land a position in the skilled trades sector. We want to give Canadians who are looking for a second career in the skilled trades a chance at a better job with a better paycheque.

Through this bill, our government will work on removing barriers to entry into the skilled trades as a second career and provide avenues for a career transition. By doing this, our government will address labour shortages and drive economic growth through those seeking a second career in the skilled trades, regardless of their educational background—new opportunities, a brighter future.

Recent immigrants and internationally trained workers would also benefit should this bill pass. This bill proposes to cut red tape and streamline registration for internationally trained workers. There are occasions when international workers have difficulty obtaining documentation due to circumstances beyond their control, be that natural disasters or—unfortunately, there are too many examples of war these days. By adopting alternative practices, we welcome those skilled individuals into our workforce. This bill will simultaneously remove barriers to employment and get workers back into the fields they are qualified to work in.

1320

The Working for Workers Five Act also aims to keep front-line workers healthy and safe. We need to take care of front-line heroes who become ill as a result of their careers and increase fairness for job seekers and employees. Firefighters—some of our highly valued and highly respected professionals—face risks and dangers continually. In the process of working to protect all of us, they often get exposed to many harmful toxins. As a result, firefighters can suffer from serious health-threatening conditions, including some cancers.

Therefore, this bill proposes to expand presumptive coverage to firefighters, fire investigators and volunteers for primary site skin cancer. This bill will also lower the required duration of service to receive presumptive coverage from 15 years to 10 years, giving Ontario the lowest required duration of service in the country to access this coverage.

Coverage for occupational disease, including some cancers and post-traumatic stress disorder, would also be expanded to ensure wildland firefighters and fire investigators will have the same presumptive coverage as municipal firefighters. Last year, Ontario and indeed the whole of Canada experienced a significant increase in wildfires. We owe a debt of gratitude to the brave men and women who are willing to go out and fight these fires. We also recognize that not all injuries are physical, and we want to ensure that those affected by traumatic situations on their job have the help and support that they need.

However, firefighters are not alone in needing a helping hand. Construction workers, one of the strengths of Canada’s workforce, also need strategies to prevent

injuries and a strong health and safety support system. Led by the Chief Prevention Officer, a review of the causes of critical injuries in the construction sector is being embraced. A consultation is being launched to explore the types of health and safety equipment needed on construction projects and to inform future prevention strategies. One of the objectives is to incorporate asbestos-related data into the ministry's Occupational Exposure Registry.

This bill would also build on our government's efforts to make the skilled trades more welcoming to female workers. We have heard in this chamber from the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity about the welcomed increase in women in choosing a career in the trades. In the Working for Workers Act, 2023, we were working towards requiring construction sites to have gender-specific washrooms. This bill would take that further by requiring those washrooms are maintained in a clean and sanitary condition and that the employer will keep and make available records of the cleaning. Just like when you go into the public washrooms here in Queen's Park—or in any other workplace—there is a card detailing when public washrooms have been cleaned.

Firefighters and construction workers are not the only focus of the Working for Workers Five Act. This government hears about the challenges being faced in the health care profession and the challenges many Ontarians face in getting an appointment with a doctor or a nurse practitioner. Working in health care, I'm well aware of the challenges. New software has continued to be developed to try to address the administrative burden put on our practitioners. I recall when we went to electronic health records, we had a huge room full of paper files. I recall the day—the week, I should say—when those were cleaned out, microfiched, and we moved on and moved forward. This continues to be a challenge, and we continue to work towards minimizing administrative pressures.

We have great respect for our nurses and doctors, who work to heal the sick and take on long and demanding hours to treat Ontarians. So it's a startling reality that our family doctors spend an average of 19 hours per week filling out forms and documentation, including sick notes. That is 40% of their workweek on paperwork instead of treating patients—and I have to say, from my experience, a lot of that work is done beyond the regular workweek.

The Working for Workers Five Act aims to put patients before paperwork. We are proposing to prohibit employers from requiring a sick note from a medical professional for a workers' job-protected sick leave under the Employment Standards Act. This would simultaneously relieve a burden felt by health care professionals and help patients access care. With this said, we will still deliver on the facilitation of accountability and trust in the office. Employers would still be able to request another form of evidence that is reasonable in the circumstances without creating unnecessary paperwork for health care professionals.

This step would complement the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's efforts to collaborate with health sector

organizations, offering the opportunity to explore additional measures to reduce the administrative burden for sick or injured workers and health care professionals. Future ministry guidance would also be developed to help this new relationship run smoothly.

Our government also aims to increase fairness for job seekers and employees. We want the process of finding, applying and obtaining careers and employment opportunities to be transparent and efficient.

Ontario is facing the largest labour shortage, with over 237,000 jobs going unfilled, costing major losses in productivity. We can probably thank our Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for creating some of those jobs; 700,000, I think, is the number.

This government understands that meaningful jobs and careers create stronger families and communities. Every paycheque not collected is a missed opportunity for Canadians and their families to build a better life. We know some employers post jobs even when they do not have a specific role to fill: ghost jobs. Therefore, we would require employers to disclose in publicly advertised job postings whether a position is vacant and respond to applicants they have interviewed for those jobs.

If this act is passed, the ministry would consult with stakeholders to develop an education-first approach to implement these changes in the recruitment process. Maximum fines currently set at \$50,000 would rise to \$100,000. These fines would be issued for reasons such as failure to pay wages, discrimination based on gender, or penalizing employees for taking pregnancy or parental leave.

As we all know, the workplace has changed since the era of COVID-19. We learned a lot. More and more jobs are expanding into online spaces and incorporating the use of technology in daily operations. Our legal protections for the employee and employer need to reflect that change. This is why this legislation proposes amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

It is necessary to protect workers, no matter where they work. As parliamentary assistant Barnes stated yesterday, harassment is unacceptable; whether face to face or online, it needs to stop. It is necessary to add virtual harassment to the definitions of workplace harassment and workplace sexual harassment. Workplace policies have an obligation to address and stop online harassment wherever it may rear its ugly head. The government will also engage with those who experienced harassment, legal experts and other stakeholders to identify the most effective means to stop and address online harassment. By modernizing the definition of harassment to include protections against virtual sexual harassment, this act responds to the ever-changing digital work practices and reflects on the future of work.

The protection of workers is an ever-present priority for our government. Through this bill, we aim to ensure Ontarians have a better working experience, no matter where they work.

So far, I've talked about the opportunities and advantages that will become available to workers here in

Canada. This act also applies to employers. Ontario has already delivered on its promise to incorporate a more streamlined and outcomes-oriented employment service in every region, but further improvements can be made.

By expanding the occupational eligibility for the in-demand skills stream of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, decision-making authority will be quickened and the paperwork burden for reputable businesses will be reduced.

This government would like to encourage more women to enter the skilled trades by making the construction sector more appealing to the gender. A survey was launched, with 50% of female respondents employed in the skilled trades and construction industry citing better washroom facilities as an appealing incentive. As previously stated, in direct response to the survey, this act proposes requiring clean and sanitary washrooms to be provided for workers. Records of the cleaning and sanitation will be mandatory. If passed, Ontario will be the first province in Canada to require a record of cleaning in its health and safety legislation.

To reiterate, Canadian women deserve a government committed to ensuring that their needs are being met in the workplace and the Working for Workers Five Act recognizes the demand to create a more inclusive working environment. We need and want more women in our skilled trades. Let's make them feel valued.

In tandem, we will deliver on this government's ambitious plans to build a better Ontario. This fifth Working for Workers Act, if passed, will continue to lead the country with a package of groundbreaking protections for workers. This new package includes new supports and even stronger protections for front-line workers. The act ensures tougher penalties on exploitative bad actors, protects the health and dignity of workers on the job site and allows more Ontarians to start a career in the trades. The stipulated changes would also address online harassment at work and hold employers accountable for providing sanitary washrooms. Lastly, this act supports incentives for women to participate in industries such as the construction industry. This act builds on the groundbreaking actions under the previous Working for Workers Act and will help millions of people here in Canada.

1330

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the Working for Workers Five Act, and I fully support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston for his remarks today on what's called the Working for Workers bill.

The government earlier this week was asked in this Legislature—the minister was asked—about the lack of preparation for this year's wildfires. They're 200 staff short; they're 200 firefighters short. There are three water bombers out of the six that are not ready to operate. Last year we had a record number of forest fires in Ontario, and yet this government is talking about this bill as supportive

of firefighters, but there aren't enough firefighters out there.

Will this government commit to increasing the pay and paying for the training of wildfire fighters so that we can recruit the number of firefighters that we're going to need for this season?

Mr. John Jordan: I also recall the minister saying, "We're ready. We're ready. We're ready" many, many, many times. We thank the minister for that update, and I have full confidence that this ministry and the firefighters—our wildfire fighters—are ready.

My son served a term in wildfire work up in Red Lake in his younger days. It is a very difficult job and a very demanding job physically. I know that the equipment needs to be in place, the readiness has to be there, and that those teams—they were ready then, and they're ready now.

The other thing that's very important as far as the number of firefighters is the ability of Ontario to share their firefighters and the ability of other provinces to share their firefighters as the needs arise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford): The member from Markham-Unionville.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thornhill. Markham-Thornhill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You are looking up there; congratulations. And thank you to my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston for that presentation.

The Working for Workers Act not only is a game-changer; it's humanizing so many Ontarian foreign workers, especially internationally trained workers in this wonderful province. They would have the opportunity to do their second careers, and also they could be able to settle into the system. As the statistics show, there are seven to 10 years for an immigrant, for internationally trained people to get into the system. That's not a humanizing system, Mr. Speaker. For example, my wife: She was a foreign-trained doctor, 25 years ago. She came here and started all over again. Then finally she started practising as a family doctor.

The system has to be changed. That's why our government, for the first time in history, opened the door for foreign-trained nurses, and also, we're working on foreign-trained doctors as well, Mr. Speaker.

My question to my colleague: Could he explain more about how this bill is going to humanize the foreign-trained workers in this wonderful province, giving hope and optimism for the foreign-trained credentials? Thank you so much.

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the member for the question. I think, especially during a time when our labour force is challenged, we really appreciate and acknowledge and value our immigrant workers. It's very important to continue to do that and to break down barriers for immigrant workers coming into the province. That's one of the reasons within this bill the number of occupations eligible for the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program is going to be increased. A number of barriers as far as getting health care, the expediency of getting health care and housing, have also been addressed in previous bills.

So I think the message from Ontario is, we respect and value our immigrant workers and we want them to choose Ontario as the place for them to come to work.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm glad to hear that the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston's son was actually a wildfire firefighter. I was a wildfire firefighter back in the 1980s. It was an incredible job, a very challenging job.

I want to just acknowledge that my colleagues on this side of the House, from Thunder Bay–Superior North, from Mushkegowuk–James Bay, from Timiskaming–Cochrane, from Kiiwetinoong, Sudbury and Nickel Belt, have been advocating for over a year for presumptive cancer coverage for the wildfire firefighters in this province, and I want to thank the government for finally listening to this side of the House and providing that with this bill.

The other thing that has changed, though, since the day when I was on the firefighting crew, was that at the time we were making in today's dollars \$28 an hour. Today's firefighters are making \$22 an hour and housing is far, far, far more expensive than it was.

We also were hired and then we were sent off to a camp for two weeks to get the training that we needed while we were getting paid. Today, firefighters are asked to pay for their own training in the hope that they may get hired for a job.

Will you commit your government to restoring the pay to \$28 an hour and to providing free training—in fact, not just free training; paid training—for all the firefighters that we have in this province?

Mr. John Jordan: I think the Minister of Natural Resources in his comments throughout this term has talked as well about the historic investments in our wildfire firefighter programs. I think—and I stand behind that—that there are historic investments, there is great equipment available to them, and the training is done usually on-site as they arrive—additional training, I should say, because the training that's done before they even go to a wildfire site is very extensive as well.

I'm confident in the system that we have, I'm confident in the system that we had when my son was there, and I know that continues to get additional investments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Hon. Graydon Smith: I appreciate the comments from my colleague today and the questions in the House. I think it's really exciting that this bill is coming forward. Again, it shows our commitment to workers in Ontario.

A lot of talk around wildland fire today, most of it completely inaccurate, from the other side in terms of the way we support our wildland firefighters. I want to clear up any misconceptions that may be lingering out there about our support, which includes \$5,000 of retention and recruitment money and also making sure that training costs are covered, and certainly much, much more.

I would ask my colleague just to explain more around wildland firefighters and what the presumptive coverage portion means, because I think it is very, very important that our firefighters and everyone in Ontario understand

not only all the things that we're doing for them in myriad ways to support them, but specifically, with this portion of the bill, what it will mean to firefighters.

Mr. John Jordan: I thank the minister for the question. There are really good things within this bill for the wildfire firefighters, and that is relative to the dangers they are exposed to with this type of work, the toxins that they can be exposed to. Similar to the work that we've done for our municipal firefighters, the wildfire firefighters are now covered under the same presumptive coverage that our municipal firefighters are. That's certain types of cancers.

PTSD is one that's important to have in there. The trauma that can be realized in this type of work is something that is acknowledged by this government. Support for wildfire firefighters is evident in this bill through the additional protections that they have for health and safety.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions? Quick question, quick response.

Mr. Chris Glover: To the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston: This government cut the wildfire budget by \$142 million in 2019. Last year, across Canada, we had 18.5 million hectares burned. Five per cent of the forest cover in Ontario burned in wildfires in just one year. We are already starting an early fire season and it's looking like it's going to be as devastating as last year, perhaps even worse.

1340

Will your government restore the \$142 million that was cut in 2019 to protect our—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Response?

Mr. John Jordan: There's a lot of stuff in this bill, but you seem to have really focused in on our wildfire fighters. I think they deserve the focus and, again, I'm confident in the resources this government has given and continues to give to the wildfire programs. I'm also confident with the shared arrangements that we have with other provinces, because we never know and we can't assume today what the wildfire situation will be through the year, but we need to be prepared and we need to share our resources with other regions so that we can respond when they experience a flash in wildfires and, vice versa, we can count on them to return the favour when we are in a situation. So we look forward—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member.

Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm happy to rise any time to talk about workers' rights in the people's House—critical subject. I'm glad the government is bringing forward an effort to address that.

Speaker, most of my remarks for 20 minutes are going to be based upon things I would like introduced into this bill by way of amendments to improve it. I'm going to talk about particular workers that are on my mind that I believe are in a uniquely difficult position because of the work they do. And the work they do in our communities is essential. I would call these workers essential, even though we don't always think of them that way. So, just so my

colleagues who are listening right now and people watching at home understand what I'm going to talk about, that's the premise of my contribution to debate this afternoon.

I want to begin by talking about delivery workers, particularly those working for the big dot-com companies, whether it's DoorDash or Uber, these organizations. As the active transportation critic for the province, I have met many people who are working in this critical occupation that deliver food, deliver all kinds of things to people all over huge cities like this one here in Toronto.

I'm sad to say we have lost lives in some cases because of how unsafe our roads are. I want to just read into the record a gentleman's name: Ali Sezgin Armagan, a 39-year-old recent immigrant from Türkiye who was killed at the intersection of Avenue Road and Elgin Avenue near a construction site. As is the case with all of our families—Speaker, I bet you in every single one of our families we could find this story. Mr. Armagan came to Canada to join his sister's family and to start a new life. And the way he was making ends meet, which is the case for a lot of new immigrants, was through the dot-com economy, through the gig work sector.

It is not safe to drive a bicycle, even in a city as modern as Toronto, in some parts of the city. I want to say for the record as well that this particular stretch of Avenue Road has had four fatalities in the last nine years. I'm very happy we have an administration in the city of Toronto under Mayor Olivia Chow that is putting some resources, finally, into looking at critical parts of the city.

But I find it very sad, and I want to read into the record some of the comments from Ali's family in retrospect of this. His sister Aysen said, "I'm broken inside... Nothing seems to calm me."

I was there the other night for a group bike ride put on by a number of different road safety advocates. As we rode around that area of downtown/midtown Toronto, a number of conversations were shared. And it's upsetting for me to hear that in the biggest city in Ontario, in the most modern city with the capacity for probably the most services to ensure safety, someone like Ali loses his life, not even a year after being here.

I invite members, if you have a moment, to look at the Toronto Star's article. I've shared it with the labour minister. And if they haven't already, I hope the government reaches out to this family because this shouldn't happen. Everybody needs to be able to get home safe, Speaker—everybody—but we also need to have the infrastructure, because one thing we know about human beings is that we make mistakes. We always make mistakes. That's part of being human. But we have to design our small towns, our suburban towns, our big metropolises like Toronto in a way that accounts for human error and makes sure everybody can get home safe, and I don't see that in this bill.

What I know in the record of this House, in the Hansard, is that a number of colleagues have tried, through different measures, particularly the member for University–Rosedale, to introduce a Vision Zero approach to how we deal with road safety in the province of Ontario,

and that requires significant investments in segregated lanes for people who use bicycles, strollers, scooters, so they can have that safety. And they exist—they exist in this city. I have ridden on them myself. They exist back home in Ottawa, but they're always competing with other infrastructure priorities. There's a number of countries around the world that have set that as the goal, Vision Zero.

The goal is no fatalities, because what happens right now with the Ministry of Transportation Ontario is they say we have some of the safest roads in the world because only this many people have been critically injured, only this many people have died. But I would like to set the bar in a different place, Speaker. I would like to set the bar in a place that everybody gets home safely, and before I move on from this to something else, I want to also acknowledge for the record how empathetic I am, and I'm sure everyone in this House is—not for Ali and his family, who are grieving the loss of his life right now—can you imagine how it feels to be the driver of the dump truck that was involved in this incident? To that gentleman's credit, he stayed at the scene. He stayed at the scene, he co-operated with police, he's being investigated, but can you imagine what his life is going to be like now?

When I was working on a road safety bill, I rode my bicycle from Ottawa to Toronto and met a bunch of really interesting people and talked about road safety. One of the people I'll never forget was a dump truck driver in Brighton, Ontario. He invited me up into his cab, asked me to check the mirrors and he asked me what I could see, and I couldn't see a lot, Speaker. I could see barely off the bumper. He told me that the technology exists for cameras to be in place, for sensors to be in place to make sure that he can see what's around that truck when he's off the construction site and moving around the community. His name's Ben, and Ben told me if he's on a construction site, there's a flag person helping him around, watching wherever the truck is going. He can see the flag person dressed very brightly with flags in hand, but that flag person does not follow Ben off the job site, and this critical incident where Ali was killed happened at the entrance to the construction site.

I want to believe that in a country as modern as Canada, a place as vibrant as Ontario, where we celebrate the need to have economic activity in jobs—we have to have more legislation on road safety.

I've been talking to the minister responsible, at transportation, and his parliamentary assistant, and I'm hoping we can collaborate together in the next year so we can send out a message to everybody, because we all have an interest in road safety, to make sure that's a priority, so no more tragedies happen that can be prevented.

I think what it would seem, Speaker—from what I know about this particular matter, because I met Ali's family—is this was a preventable accident if segregated lanes were possible, if better technology was available to the driver of that vehicle. We will see what bears out in the police investigation. I wanted to remember this for the record because it's 2024, and this is the fifth cyclist death in Ontario of which I'm aware—fifth.

I want to move off of talking about road safety—the need for us to protect workers, particularly road workers—and I want to talk about mental health and addictions workers because, as I see it, these are some of the greatest unsung heroes of our province. I've had occasion to talk to the minister responsible and I appreciate the audiences he's had with people all over Ontario on this matter. He and I share the belief that you don't go into this profession for the paycheque; you go into it because it's your calling.

I want to specifically talk about a particular place in our city, Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services. They serve over 3,000 clients a year, generally speaking, and they're people who are almost at the end of their rope, struggling with an addictive behaviour or, as a family member, trying to help someone in their family with an addictive behaviour. Recently, they were pushed right to the brink, if you can believe it, of a possible strike. Can you imagine what's going through someone's mind, working at that facility, knowing your critical role in helping that person in their healing journey, if you're staring down the prospect of having to close your workplace?

1350

Just for a little bit more detail, to actually get in the door at Rideauwood to meet with someone, for someone in a self-harm-crisis position, someone who has been in an emergency room, in a police cruiser, in a paramedic bus, there's a six-month wait for treatment—six months. If you're not in an imminent-risk-of-self-harm position, it's a year-and-a-half wait-list to get into Rideauwood. I am blessed to live in Ottawa, a place rather like Toronto, with a lot of resources. I know a lot of other communities represented in this House don't have the benefit of some of the resources we have, but that's the reality.

So you can imagine what was going through the minds of the Rideauwood workers when they were looking at a strike deadline of May 3 and realizing some of the families desperate to see them wouldn't get to see them and that potentially life-threatening situations could happen. That is a lot to handle.

I'm very happy to say that these workers, recently unionized, two or three years ago through OPSEU Local 454, secured, at the eleventh hour, a tentative agreement. I want to thank the minister responsible because I wrote him, and I expressed the particular role Rideauwood plays in our community. I encouraged the government to contact the parties; they don't have a role in negotiations, to be clear, but just to say, "You matter to this province. We really need these workers to stay on the job." I want to believe that played a role.

But do you know, just for the record, Speaker, what didn't play a positive role in this matter? I think it's a lesson for every other, frankly, public and private sector workplace. The employer in this particular matter had contacted an anti-union law firm. They are known as Hicks Morley. This is one of my least-favourite legal organizations in Ontario because I've run into them a number of times as a union organizer myself working in hotels, working in light manufacturing. Their sole pur-

pose, if you go to their website, if you read their materials, is union avoidance and preventing unions from being formed in the first place and, when you have a union, playing hardball tactics to create disputes.

Look, we're allowed to have our speech in this province. We're allowed to express ourselves. We're allowed to organize. These are all charter-protected rights. It doesn't mean I have to like the way some people use them. I certainly don't like the fact that this firm, Hicks Morley, for the record, I believe was playing a very negative role. I want to encourage every single employer across the entire province—because I believe the vast majority do—to take a constructive attitude to the bargaining table and to tune out, as much as possible, those voices that want to pick fights and cause lasting damage in a workplace.

I believe that has not happened at Rideauwood. I think they're going to grow out of this experience, but I really hope the Hicks Morleys of Ontario are not going to be guiding their future workplace decisions, particularly for harm reduction and addiction services workers.

In the time I have left, to benefit this debate, I also want to talk about what harm reduction and addictions workers in my city are doing for themselves because I think it's a phenomenal model that could be embraced by other particular funding agencies of the government that could grow in other communities. I want to talk about an initiative called Soul Space.

Soul Space is a non-profit that started up in our community devoted solely to the issue of respite and connection for harm reduction and addictions workers. So, you can imagine what you see on a regular basis if your job is harm reduction, if your job is addiction and mental health services. You're seeing traumatic cases every single day. Most people I know who get into this profession—again, as a vocation—they have lived experience themselves or their family. That's what takes them into the profession. But it doesn't mean you're not human, and it doesn't mean that when you see people hurting and struggling, that it doesn't stay with you, it doesn't follow you home, it doesn't impact your mental health.

Soul Space is a non-profit that was started up specifically to provide those outreach workers an opportunity to get out of the workplace and to connect with their colleagues in the wilderness, at conference retreats, to talk about what they're seeing. It is phenomenal. I have here, Speaker—it's not a prop. I have their annual report. I went to their meeting, and I listened to the good that this organization, Soul Space, has done. They operate out of First United Church in the west end of Ottawa Centre, and I think this is precisely the work that the province should be encouraging across every single community. We need to be able to have that opportunity for these folks to get out of these very intense workplace environments that they love, and we need to give them the opportunity to interact with each other, to vent, to grieve, to explore creative ideas about how their work could be done differently. In some cases, as I've heard through community organizations, there was a specific retreat for Black mental health workers recently: the Soul Sisters retreat, organized

though Soul Space. It was the first of its kind in Ottawa—and it's 2024. So, I'm very excited when I see initiatives like this.

The “working for workers” theme in this House is a good theme, but what I hope to do in the run-up to the next budget cycle in Ontario is to encourage this organization to be receiving regular public funding to encourage Soul Space to grow in other communities, not just in Ottawa and Toronto, but in Sudbury, in Windsor, in London, in Peterborough, in Belleville: places where I've heard that these are communities where the overdose crisis has been very, very present.

When we see those people running to the scene, it's like any first responder. When we see those people running to the scene and we thank them later and we salute them and we take off our hat to them, that's great, but we also need to remember that, long after we celebrate them, they also have to live with what they see on the job every single day. It's true for a police officer; it's true for a firefighter; it's true for a nurse. But it's also true for mental health and addictions workers, who are generally paid much below what a comparable worker in the hospital system is paid. So, we can work on the compensation piece as an employer of these great people, but we can also work on what we offer them outside the workplace. And that's a very positive story, I believe.

Let me shout out two more initiatives before my time is up, Speaker. I want to shout out the drug overdose prevention and education response team at the Somerset West Community Health Centre. This is an organization run out of one of our community health centres that employs people after hours, after the harm reduction facility in that centre is closed, between 5 p.m. and the following morning, to respond to incidents of mental crisis and potential violence for people—because we know the toxicity of the drug supply on our streets is leading people to act out in irrational and not socially productive ways. But if you know—and I've talked to police officers in detail about this, Speaker—that a community unarmed response is what you need, the question that is getting posed in our city is, who do you call?

Well, this particular program, which the government, to their credit, has funded, has been one of the numbers for small business owners and residents to call. And they've had over 35,000 interactions with people in crisis and they've been able to de-escalate an incredible amount of situations with which I'm familiar.

I want to talk for a second about Liza Sare from the Tamis café and restaurant. It's a beautiful Filipino restaurant, by the way, on Bank Street, if you have a chance to go there—Bank and Gilmour. But Liza called me apoplectic and upset because someone had broken into her car; someone had been wandering into the restaurant and bothering customers, making people feel unsafe, and she was asking me, “So, what do I do? How can I help? I see someone suffering, but I can't tolerate this behaviour in my restaurant and the staff are scared.”

So, we are developing right now, Speaker, based upon this program, the drug overdose prevention and education

response team, an unarmed crisis response system that is going to be coming on board this summer thanks to Somerset West Community Health Centre, thanks to the Centretown Community Health Centre, and they will be working with police as the first avenue of response for situations that don't involve potentially lethal incidents where we do need the police. But these folks are going to be coming on stream.

I just want to acknowledge that we have a new deal with the province. Part of that new deal is keeping the downtown of Ottawa safe: safe on transit, safe in our streets. We have \$28 million and we're working on a plan because we have 120 days to respond to the government about how we want the money to be spent. I, for one, having met the experts on the DOPE outreach team, having seen first-hand what people at Rideauwood are capable of doing, think we should be investing in employee compensation top-ups. I think we should be investing in respite agencies like Soul Space. I think we should be investing in the unarmed response teams because they are best poised, in my opinion, Speaker, to help our neighbours who are suffering and who are in crisis. And I know the issue of overdose affects every single member in this House. All of us have interacted either personally in our own families or with family members who have been at the end of their rope through a situation like this.

1400

So if, in thinking about how we work for workers, we can keep in our mind those people who, as they are working for us, are taking on enormous risk, and we ask ourselves, in a province with a budget of over \$200 billion, how can we allocate some of this to make sure there are alternatives for people—and the good news, Speaker, is that in the city I am blessed to live in and serve, there are alternatives. They have been created at the community level. Are mistakes made? For sure. Are there things to evaluate? Yes, but we know that if we put the money into the wise community voices that have been around in planning, we can turn lives around.

I want to shout out Bobby Jamison, one of the creators of Soul Space, who himself was homeless, who himself suffered with addictive behaviours, who has talked about Soul Space and the unarmed response unit as being a lifeline for people who have walked his journey, in the future.

So, this isn't just about numbers and metrics of interactions and diversions from prison or diversions from the emergency room or diversions from paramedics; this is about saving lives and not wasting the talents of people who could otherwise make this province incredible. I think about Bobby. I think of the Rideauwood workers. They are people with so much compassion and so much to offer. We can invest in them. The return will be huge.

Thanks for listening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):
Questions?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I wanted to say thank you for a very thoughtful presentation from the member from Ottawa Centre. I listened intently, obviously, because many

of the organizations he mentioned, in particular Rideau-wood as well as CHC in Somerset, are very important to the constituents that I represent as well, and I've had interactions with them over the past 18 years. I know our government has done a lot of work—and I appreciate the member opposite bringing the fact in that we have made some investments, including at Dave Smith treatment centre, including at the Queensway Carleton health unit and of course the nurse practitioner-led clinic.

But I do have a question for him, and that is, in his constituency he holds the Royal Ottawa hospital as well as the Roberts Smart Centre for very vulnerable youth. I believe both of those need expansions. In terms of the Royal, it needs an emergency centre, and certainly Roberts Smart, dealing with the most vulnerable youth in the province of Ontario—it's almost heartbreaking to see the place that they're actually encased in—and I call it "encased." I'd like his views on those two properties. Well, it's actually one property but two very different types of mental health institutions.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member from Nepean for that question, because she's absolutely right. In the 20 minutes we get for debate, sometimes we leave people out. I should have mentioned them. We need investment there, absolutely.

The member from Nepean will be able to remember, because you're a big hockey fan, the hockey-related initiative—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I've been forgetting hockey for the last couple of years.

Mr. Joel Harden: Oh, pardon me.

There was one of the Ottawa Senators players who personally made it a point of investing in the Royal, and I think it was great. That was an example where someone used their celebrity to give attention to an institution that sometimes doesn't always rank at the top. I salute that initiative.

I also salute the fact that what I've heard from the minister responsible, too—and he's absolutely right—we have to figure out a way to reach people preventatively, long before they end up in some of our tertiary care facilities. There's a lot we can do there, not only through mental health workers but through the arts, through sport, through various initiatives. If we can detect someone is having a very hard time, through someone they trust like a coach or a fellow artist, there's a way to reach people and work with people.

But the member is right; we need to invest in the Royal. We need to make sure that when people are at that crisis, life-threatening moment, the services are there for them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To my colleague: I listened. You mentioned about individuals who work for Soul Space with mental health and addictions. This government continues to put forward bills that help workers while we see time and time again that flat-out rejection of measures that we know are needed to support workers right now. This is clarity on application of the Westray law

and deeming and scab labour and increased sick days—a clear solution by workers, for workers.

In light of removing the requirement for sick notes—often mental health workers need sick notes because of what they have on their job, PTSD or other work-related illnesses, which seems like a belated nod to common sense. Why does this bill stop short of extending this to include more comprehensive job protection measures? What do you see is missing here?

Mr. Joel Harden: I think the member from Sudbury said it in his hour lead: It would be a shame if we had some people waiting in that primary care space for that doctor's note. It's a great idea to pursue some changes here because that jams up the system for other people who urgently need the help.

To the Westray act, I don't think you will find a person in this place who would not say that if you kill a worker, or if you're responsible for killing a worker, there ought to be consequences. And not just from a punitive standpoint, Speaker, because I don't believe anybody ever wins if it's always about consequences and fines. There has to be accountability, but we also have to learn. We also have to learn from the situations that I talked about, like Mr. Armagan, who lost his life recently, on April 30, delivering food for people. This is not necessary. We don't have to have five cyclist deaths in the province of Ontario.

These very, very wealthy companies with deep pockets and access to lobbyists that don't want the regulations, that don't want the obligation to look after employees working for them and making their companies successful—these are some of the preventative measures we can take. The Westray law was a historic law. It was clear that with that tragedy the country learned that there have to be consequences when workers die on the job.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate this. The last interaction we had was on mental health. Then the member from St. Catharines talked about Westray. I was 16 years old when Westray occurred on the other side of the town where I was growing up. My bedroom was in the basement and it woke me up. The horror of losing 26 men overnight in a small town of 10,000 people doesn't go unnoticed.

One of the things that really bothered most Canadians, not just the people from Pictou County, Nova Scotia, about Westray was the lack of accountability. The member opposite mentioned that. They evaded that type of accountability for quite some time. It was people like Vern Theriault, who is a friend of mine and who has written a book on Westray, that advocated for the Westray act in Parliament, where I was a staffer at the time.

What I would ask the member opposite is, does he have any further suggestion of accountability mechanisms that he doesn't see within this legislation, and if so, what are they? I'd be interested, not just as a member of this assembly but as somebody who comes from the community where the Westray mine disaster occurred.

Mr. Joel Harden: Great question. I spent some time working at the Canadian Labour Congress before I got

here, and one of the great things about working for an organization that represents public and private sector unions across the country is that you get to meet some of the experts in different fields. The member from Sudbury, just for the record, in case we all aren't aware, is one of the foremost workplace health and safety experts, going into a very dangerous workplace, in mining. He spoke in his hour lead about how every dollar we can muster, put into communities to make sure that they are safe and that the people who are on the job, seeing potential problems coming every day, get the money they need, is critical investment.

I would put it right back to those employer-employee communities. As I said, when the minister responsible for mental health and addictions talks about preventative measures, that is the preventative measure so the tragedy of Westray doesn't happen ever again. That would be my best response.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for your remarks. I want to go to the beginning of what you were talking about. You were talking about very precarious workers, racialized workers, immigrant workers working in very unsafe conditions that could be prevented.

I want to talk about commercial truck drivers. There are many, many immigrant commercial truck drivers and they are dying on the job. They are dying because they are not receiving any training. I know this because I've met with them. They are putting up as much as \$40,000 for training they never receive. They have very precarious immigration status, which is why they can be pressured. They're like indentured servants, really. Wage theft is rampant.

I see that higher fines are in this bill but I also know that those fines are rarely applied. It's also a complaint-based process, which puts the entire burden on the workers, who are already vulnerable. I think they're begging for inspections. So I'm just wondering if you see some way that we could be helping those workers in revisions to this bill.

1410

Mr. Joel Harden: Really great question. I know a little less about the trucking industry, but again, in that previous employment I had, I had occasion to talk to the teamsters' union and other organizations operating in that sector. They told me a lot about this, about how one of the ways in which companies try to save money is hiring folks with precarious immigration status. Now, let's be real: We want those folks to get those jobs, we want them to be employed, but we don't want them to be unsafe on the job.

I think the government could investigate health and safety rules, and if anybody who is working one of those jobs is watching this, an option you have with your colleagues is joining a union, forming a union or scoping into an existing union, because those are the organizations that are supposed to exist at a community level to keep you safe. It is your right in this province to organize a union without retaliation, and if that retaliation happens, the

system is going to be there to protect you. That's why I'm very proud to be a pro-union politician.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Hsu: It's a pleasure today to stand and speak about this bill. It has a number of measures to support workers in it, and many of them make sense. Almost all of them make sense.

I'm going to focus my remarks on schedule 6 of this bill, but before I do that, I just want to mention one measure which makes a lot of sense to me, and that is to get rid of family doctor notes and replace them with something else, like an attestation or whatever is decided in the future when it comes to justifying sick day entitlements. That's going to save valuable time for family doctors, something that we need to create more of to resolve our health care crisis. It goes back to the practice that was in place under the previous Liberal government, and I think it's a bit of red tape that this government should not have created in the first place.

Let me get to schedule 6, which modifies the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. It addresses wildland firefighters and fire investigators. This is a very seasonal kind of work. In the middle of the firefighting season, we could have around a thousand people in Ontario working in the ministry on wildland firefighting. It's good to know that the workplace safety and insurance coverage will be applied to these workers. We're talking about not only firefighters, but you've got helicopter and water bomber pilots and people who work with the radio, warehousing and logistics, as well as firefighting. What this bill covers is, it covers PTSD and it covers skin cancer, and it covers it in a way where there's a presumption that if you suffer from these things, you don't have the burden of proof to show that it was caused by your workplace.

We know that a lot of things that burn in fires are carcinogenic, and there's also an issue with protective equipment which contains these forever chemicals. I'll get to that a bit later but let me just say that I very much support the idea that Bill 190 would extend this presumptive coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder to wildland firefighters and wildland fire investigators, and as well extend the presumptive coverage for skin cancer.

One thing that I want to mention in addition to smoke and the carcinogenic effects of smoke is the firefighters' protective clothing. It's called turnout gear. It's essential for working in dangerous environments, like where there's a fire. You've got waterproofing, heatproofing, fireproofing and so on. The firefighting community has raised concerns about whether these chemicals—these per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, PFAS, otherwise known as "forever chemicals" because they degrade with great difficulty in the environment—can affect the health of firefighters. Some of them have been linked to cancer, and they're used in the current gear.

Until recently, there has been not that much information regarding the specific types of PFAS chemicals and the quantities and where in the equipment that was located. It was only last year in the United States that the National

Institute of Standards and Technology issued a report which studied this really, really carefully, where the PFAS chemicals were in the firefighting gear. So this is a relatively new thing, and because of that, we should be a little bit careful and realize that that could be affecting the health of firefighters.

I want to go on now a little bit past schedule 6, because I think it's important to cover wildland firefighters for skin cancer and PTSD, but there are a couple of things I think that this bill could have done to help with our ability to maintain a strong workforce to fight wildland fires.

When I went to visit Thunder Bay recently, I found out that in Thunder Bay, the Ministry of Natural Resources has been losing firefighters to the Thunder Bay city fire department because, again, fighting fires is a seasonal job. Because it's a seasonal job, a lot of the times the workers are finding other things to do in the off-season, or we hire a lot of students who then go to class. But then, if people are thinking about starting a career, they move to something like the city fire department, which was documented in Thunder Bay. That is not a good thing for having a strong, experienced workforce to fight wildland fires.

Something that could be done by our government to improve working conditions and to preserve that institutional wildland firefighting knowledge is to have more crew leaders who are full-time, year-round employees. They may not be fighting fires all year round, but the idea is that we can find other things for them to do in the government. This has been done in the past.

What are crew leaders? These are people who would lead a team of four people; get dropped, say, by helicopter into a fire area; and they'd be carrying equipment as well—maybe, I was told, a long hose, like a 2,400-foot hose and other equipment to fight fire. None of these crew leaders are full-time right now. It would be a good thing to make sure that they're full-time so they make a career of being a wildland firefighter and preserve that institutional memory, which allows them to fight fires more effectively and more safely for the rest of their crew.

This is not a trivial task. It will require a little bit of extra management effort to make sure that they have other useful things to do during the other parts of the year. But I think it would be something that would be good to do. Otherwise, we'll get more turnover than is optimal.

The government said recently that they would be creating 100 permanent positions. I think we're still waiting, if I'm not mistaken, for clarification about what exactly that means. Which jobs will become permanent positions? Does that mean year-round or what?

Another thing that's missing that I think could help that I discovered when I was speaking to a company in Thunder Bay, and also firefighters, is there's a shortage of helicopter pilots. There's a shortage of pilots but especially helicopter pilots.

I went and talked to a friend of mine who commanded a helicopter squadron in the Canadian Forces and was also a dean at a community college, so he knew a lot about training and about what it takes to train highly skilled

helicopter pilots. I asked him, "What is the barrier to getting people to go into a career as a helicopter pilot?" He said, "The barrier is it's very expensive to become a helicopter pilot."

First of all, you have to get your fixed-wing licence. You have to spend hundreds of hours to get your licence to be a fixed-wing pilot. Each one of these hours, you're operating a substantial piece of equipment, so that's a lot of hours of fuel and wear and tear on the equipment to get that experience. Only then can you go and become a helicopter pilot.

1420

And you can't just become any kind of helicopter pilot who flies from one airport to another airport; you have to have special skills. So, for example, you might have to hover over rough ground while discharging firefighters and their equipment, and that's not something that you would do if you're only trained to fly from airport to airport.

So one of the things that we need to do to relieve this helicopter pilot shortage—and I know that this government has looked into ways to get more skilled labour to help our economy, but when it comes to helicopter pilots, who are in short supply, are important for our mining industry and also natural resources, fighting wildland fires, we have to think carefully about whether we should be helping with the cost of training to become a helicopter pilot for these purposes.

I believe that this bill has a number of good measures. But, generally speaking, I think there are many other things that could be done, and I've tried to address a couple of them in my speech today. I look forward to answering any questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions? I recognized member from Toronto–Danforth—no, no, no.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Niagara Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Kingston and the Islands for his thoughts. You mentioned the presumptive list for cancers, and the government, to its credit, has done some work lowering some of the thresholds, but that's still a list that is arbitrary. It's not based on objective criteria, that presumptive cancer list.

I've always believed that there should be a reverse onus where the WSIB would have to prove that it does not have to do with firefighting if it's a cancer that is associated with firefighting. Is that something that the member would support?

Mr. Ted Hsu: That's a very good question, and I know that this idea of which kinds of workplace injuries or cancers, for example, and how long that person has been working—it has changed recently, but the answer is, I don't know. I don't have enough experience. But what I will say is that I believe in, as much as possible, facts and evidence.

Now, deciding who has the burden of proof, that's a different question. It depends on what kind of precautions

you want to take. I'd certainly be open to it, but I haven't really thought carefully about that, I will admit.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member opposite from Kingston and the Islands for some great remarks. I know the member comes from a science background.

Early in my career, I was unfortunately a witness to a construction accident. I got to know two workers, one of whom had died on the site, and I'll never forget the image of the last conversation I had with him.

This legislation has some supports for investigating a comprehensive review of fatalities in the construction sector and expanding on the types of equipment to be provided on construction projects. That's where I witnessed this particular accident.

So I would like to get the member's thoughts, his overview of this sector as it is today, when it comes to fatalities and whether or not he thinks this legislation goes in the right direction.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Let me just say that work is dangerous. That's why we have a whole day in the year, in the calendar, to remember workers killed on the job. I would just say that as we progress as a society more and more, we're able to devote more resources to make sure that workers are safe.

I would even go beyond construction sites. Another very dangerous occupation is agriculture. The very last trip I made to southwestern Ontario, I heard a story from somebody I was driving with about how somebody in their family died at a young age from a farming accident.

So I think that anything we can do—every generation, we're going to make improvements to workplace safety, and I support that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for your comments. Wildland firefighting—there used to be permanent jobs there, so I don't think it's going to be hard for them to figure out how to use them over the full year. One thing they could do would be to update the training manual so that workers aren't told to wear a bandana as a way of protecting themselves from smoke inhalation.

You're talking about retention, and we heard from the speaker earlier that the wages are actually quite a bit lower than they were years ago. They've been offered bonuses, but there's a difference between a bonus and a wage increase. I wonder if you could just talk about what that difference is in terms of retention and really attracting people to stay.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I think if we want to have a good, dedicated firefighting force, we want people who love the job. One potential danger of a one-time bonus is that you'll attract people and maybe in good faith they start out as a firefighter and then they decide later maybe this job isn't for them. I think just raising salaries generally is a better way to keep workers and keep them on for a longer time.

If you see workers moving from one job to another, like wildland firefighters to city firefighters, then maybe something is out of sync in terms of the balance between working conditions and pay. That should be a little light that goes off in your head: "Oh, maybe it needs to be adjusted."

It's really important to make sure that people just aren't attracted by the bonus, but they're attracted by the job and doing it well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Hon. Graydon Smith: I'm glad that wildland firefighting is getting such an airing of conversation today because it's certainly an important topic, and I appreciate the comments and remarks and Q&As from the member opposite.

I'm going to go ahead and make some assumptions here. I'm going to assume that you supported the 107 FTEs that we added to wildland firefighting this year, which I don't think you bothered to mention in your comments. I think you probably didn't bother to send out anything on your social media channels encouraging people to apply to be wildland firefighters in Ontario this year when we were offering that recruitment and retention bonus.

I am heartened that you're concerned so much about wildland firefighters, but I'd like to know, from the member, what exactly did you do to get more people to enter into wildland firefighting this year to keep Ontarians safe?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I don't know; I feel like that question deserves a rhetorical answer, which is, that is actually the minister's job, not mine. So I would respond to his question with another question, which is, when I talk to some of the firefighters, they would like to know, of the 100 or so permanent jobs the ministry announced, exactly what is the nature of these jobs and how is that going to affect the working conditions of people on the team of 1,000 or so staff who work together to fight our wildland fires in the fire season?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions? Further questions?

Further debate?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's an honour to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 190, the latest Working for Workers act, introduced by the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. This is our government's fifth Working for Workers bill and the fourth one that I've had the privilege to speak about in the House. If passed, Bill 190 would expand on the historic reforms in the first four acts, which are already helping millions of Ontario workers.

I want to thank the minister and his team, including his parliamentary assistant from Ajax and his two former parliamentary assistants from Mississauga–Malton and Scarborough Centre, for all their work on this bill. Of course, I also want to mention the incredible work of our former minister, Monte McNaughton. They travelled across the province to consult with workers, unions and

employers, advocating for the skilled trades and workers' health and safety and many more.

I also want to thank all the stakeholders who joined us at my own labour round table in January at Lakeview Village in Mississauga–Lakeshore, including Finn Johnson from the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario, Local 27; Moya MacKinnon from Achēv; and Artan Spahiu from Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services and about 20 more. Speaker, I know their feedback was invaluable in helping to shape Bill 190 and I know that, moving forward, we will continue to rely on their advice.

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Before I begin my remarks, the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured in the workplace was last week, on April 28. Thousands of people across the province held a moment of silence in memory of workers who made the ultimate sacrifice and as a powerful reminder of the ongoing need to improve workplace safety in Ontario.

I was able to attend an event at the Italian Fallen Workers Memorial at the Columbus Centre in North York with the Italian consul general Luca Zelioli, Vaughan mayor Steven Del Duca and many others to honour the memory of thousands of Italian fallen workers, including my own father, who was a welder at the old Texaco refinery in Port Credit. He died of lung cancer and asbestosis when I was only 18, so I want to thank the minister and his team for working to include asbestos in the Occupational Exposure Registry, which is expected next year.

Adam Melnick, the Canadian director of the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers, said, and I agree, that:

"We commend [the minister] and the government of Ontario, for recognizing the harm that asbestos continues to cause workers, and their families.

"The inclusion of asbestos in the provincial Occupational Exposure Registry is necessary to understand the ongoing dangers of asbestos in our already-built environment, and the destructive legacy" it has left for so many workers and their families, including my own. He said—and I agree—that this is a very important step towards a provincial asbestos strategy, so again, I want to thank the minister for this.

Speaker, I'll begin today with schedule 1, which includes amendments to the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act. Back in 2013, the Conference Board of Canada reported that the skills gap—the gap between the skills our students are graduating with and the skills that our employees need across the province—was costing Ontario over \$24 billion, or about 4% of the provincial GDP, because hundreds of thousands of skilled jobs are left vacant across the province. We've made great progress since then, but there are still about 237,000 jobs available, which is costing us billions in lost productivity. In part, this is because of the ongoing stigma against the skilled trades.

As the minister announced in Brampton last week, schedule 1 of Bill 190 would help to open new pathways into the skilled trades for older, experienced workers

interested in the skilled trades as a second career, but who might not meet the current academic requirements to register as an apprentice. They would be able to use alternative criteria, like professional experience, to give them a second chance at a better job and a bigger paycheque.

We're developing a new online job-matching platform to help employers and apprentices to network and share opportunities. And, Speaker, we're building on the successful Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program with a new stream, Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training, to help provide more opportunities for grade 11 and grade 12 students to get hands-on learning experience and learn the critical skills they need to succeed in well-paying careers in the skilled trades through co-op credits in high school.

Speaker, this delivers on a commitment that the Premier made over a year ago to expand options for high school students, beginning in grade 11, to help them enter the skilled trades faster and work towards a full-time apprenticeship. I'd like to thank the minister again, as well as the Minister of Education, for their leadership on this policy.

It is quite a contrast with some members of the other side. After the announcement, Cheri DiNovo, the former NDP member from Parkdale–High Park, shared her reaction on Twitter, which is now X. She wrote, "Who needs to learn history, science, reading when you can stay uneducated and vote Conservative?" As the minister said, there are many young people, including young women, who want to build a career for themselves in the skilled trades. The elitist attitude that the people in the trades are uneducated is exactly what has got Ontario into the labour crisis we face today.

As many members know, before I was elected, I was a dues-paying union member for 31 years at Unifor Local 707 and the Canadian Auto Workers before that. I worked for Ford Canada in Oakville for 31 years, most recently as a vehicle auditor. But when I was running for office in 2018, Michelle Baker, the Liberal chief of staff to Bonnie Crombie at the city of Mississauga, tweeted that I was just "a person who counts car parts." You know what? If they were able to count, we wouldn't have run the largest sub-national debt in the province of Ontario.

But I'm very proud of my career at Ford. Again, after my father died of asbestosis, it was an opportunity to support my family and build a better life, but it was a career that was in jeopardy under the former Liberal government as Ontario lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. The former Liberal Minister of Finance said that assembly line manufacturing was just "a thing of the past." This is why I ran for office against the former Minister of Finance, because the Liberals and NDP had abandoned working class people in Ontario.

Last week, I joined the Premier in Caledon to announce that the construction of the Highway 413 would begin next year, creating 3,500 more good union jobs. Victoria Mancinelli from LIUNA said that our government "has done more to advance skilled trades than any government in Ontario's history."

She said, “Careers in skilled trades have transformed lives. They have lifted individuals out of poverty, out of violence and difficult situations. They have empowered a sense of purpose, financial stability and a new outlook on life,” and, “Our province, our economy and our country can’t succeed, grow or function without” the incredible, intelligent and skilled workers in the trades. Insulting them is “appalling, ignorant and disrespectful.” I can’t say it better myself.

Next, schedule 2 of Bill 190 would amend the Employment Standards Act to make the hiring process more fair with several new requirements for employers. If passed, sections 8.5 and 8.6 would require job ads to clearly state whether a position is currently available or just for potential future needs. This was based on a story in the *Toronto Star* about so-called ghost jobs. Employers would also have to provide a decision within a reasonable time after a job interview.

We’re also reducing the administrative burden for sick workers and health care professionals and putting patients before paperwork. For example, Bill 190 would amend section 50 of the act to reduce paperwork burdens for health care workers by preventing employers from requiring sick notes for a worker’s job-protected leave. We know that family doctors already spend up to 19 hours every week filling out forms and other documents, including sick notes. That’s up to half of their work week spent on paperwork and other red tape instead of treating their patients.

The WSIB is also streamlining and modernizing their systems, enabling direct deposits, digital submissions and online claims. I know they’re working together with health sector organizations to explore even more options to reduce administrative burdens on workers and doctors.

Next, we would amend section 132 of the act to double the fines for individuals from \$50,000 to \$100,000 which would be the highest fine in Canada. We’re also proposing to increase the penalties for repeat offenders. Under the former Liberal government, penalties for repeat offenders who exploited their workers were only \$1,000, less than the cost of an iPhone today. Our government is raising this penalty to \$5,000 for each employee, each time, which again is one of the highest in Canada, because we know that it is completely unacceptable for bad actors to buy their way out of the consequences of putting their workers at risk.

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Finally, I want to thank the minister for consulting on potential future amendments to the Employment Standards Act. In particular, I know he is looking at including IT workers in certain sections, to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and every worker has a basic right for lunch breaks and overtime pay.

Schedule 3 and 5 of Bill 190 would also help to provide fair access to the regulated professions, including engineers, lawyers, teachers and so on, for internationally trained workers. If passed, these professions would be required to develop new policies to accept alternative documents whenever the standard ones are not available

for reasons beyond the control of a job applicant, such as a natural disaster or a war, like we’ve seen with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Ontario would become the first province in Canada to require these professions to have a policy in place to accept alternative documents and to allow job applicants to get through several steps of the registration process all at once, so they’re not held up at any part of the process, which would be another first in Canada.

The government is also increasing the number of occupations that will be eligible for our Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program’s stream for in-demand skills, and schedule 5 would allow reviewers appointed under the Ontario Immigration Act to delegate their authority to other public servants to help increase the decision-making capacity in the program and to speed up decisions.

I know that moving forward, the minister is also consulting on a new trusted employer model to help reduce the administrative burden on reliable employers that are working with the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, and I look forward to seeing this as part of Working for Workers number six.

Next, schedule 4 of the bill would amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to help make the skilled trades more accessible for women and to support women at work. For the first time in Canada, employers at construction sites and other workplaces would be required to keep their washrooms clean and sanitary and to maintain records on washroom cleaning. As well, menstrual products would be required on large construction sites with more than 20 people where the project is expected to last for three months or more.

Speaker, these policies are a direct response to the women in the skilled trades, like Michelle Small in Mississauga, who have told us we need to do this to encourage more women to join the construction industry.

Schedule 4 would also modernize the definition of workplace harassment to include new protections against virtual harassment, including virtual sexual harassment, to better reflect the nature of the modern workplace. And again, Speaker, the minister will consult with victims of harassment, legal experts and other stakeholders to identify potential future amendments to create a duty to act for employers where investigations find that there has been harassment in the workplace.

Lastly, I want to thank the minister for the amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act in schedule 6 of this bill that would help keep our front-line workers, including first responders, healthy and safe. This includes changes to section 14 and 15 of the act to improve coverage for skin cancer for firefighters, fire investigators and volunteers by lowering the current requirement from 15 years of service to 10. Speaker, this would be the lowest in Canada, and it responds to growing evidence that firefighters have an increased risk of developing cancer, and not just because of the exposure to toxic chemicals during emergencies. An audit in Mississauga in 2019 found asbestos in several of the fire stations where

firefighters live, eat and sleep during their shift, including stations 102, 103 and 104 in Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Again, I want to thank the Minister of Finance for the \$30-million Fire Protection Grant program that was announced in the 2024 budget. This will make a real difference to help protect firefighters from exposure to toxic chemicals like asbestos and many others.

Speaker, I was at station 104 in Port Credit just last night for a tour with the Mississauga historical society and a presentation by award-winning photographer Stephen Uhraney about his experience with the firefighters of station 104. I urge all members to visit the photo exhibit—it's called *On Duty*—if you have a chance to come to Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Speaker, schedule 6 would also expand the coverage for certain cancers, heart injuries and PTSD to wildland firefighters and fire investigators who worked so hard to keep Ontario safe last year, during the most difficult wildfire season in the province's history. These changes would ensure that they have the same coverage as municipal firefighters, so I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for all their work on this. Again, I know that the minister will continue to consult about expanding coverage even further; for example, for PTSD and for those who have to review body cam evidence. I look forward to speaking about that in *Working for Workers Six*.

Again, Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 190 this afternoon. As I said, this bill builds on the historic reforms that our government has already made. It is the next step to support workers, from our first responders to women in the skilled trades, to job seekers young and old, injured workers and everyone in between. I hope that all the members in this House will support this bill moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member for his comments. I found those very informative. I knew about your workplace history, but I didn't know about your dad. That's quite a story.

I had occasion to learn a bit about the Hogs Hollow tragedy of March 17, 1960, that involved five immigrant Italian workers. I'm sure that was part of what you were remembering at the celebration—sorry, not a celebration; the day of mourning that you referenced.

I just want to introduce for the record and get your reaction to the Heron Road Workers Memorial Bridge. That's our tragedy in Ottawa. On August 10, 1966, it killed nine workers and injured 60 others when an improperly built bridge collapsed and sent 183 to hospital. It was a real tragedy, Speaker, and I'm just wondering if the member, inspired by his comments on this bill—do you think this should be written into the curriculum, that the children in elementary and secondary school should be required to learn a little bit about these sacrifices that were made to build the infrastructure and how we should never be repeating these precedents again, to make sure everybody gets to go to work safe and gets to come home safe?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. Growing up like I did and knowing that your father had cancer, and you knew that there was no hope for him, and being at home watching him deteriorate every day was very hard on me. I believe that every worker should be able to come home every night and be with their family. So, yes, I believe we should do more.

And we are doing more. Over the years, you can see how we have improved our workplaces in Ontario. I wish other jurisdictions in the world would do what we're doing.

1450

There's always more work to be done. I'm not going to say there isn't. There's always more work to be done, but we are going in the right direction, more than I can say for the previous government, which did nothing for workers in the province of Ontario. So I know we have to do more work but we are doing work to get to that place.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I want to thank my colleague for speaking to the importance of this bill. You have a riding that's very diverse. The member represents a lot of people, especially young people. In your riding you know that young people are the future and there is a lot of development that needs to happen in your riding.

I'm just wondering if you could speak to how this bill is going to help encourage a lot of young people, but especially women. Being the minister for women, I think it's so important to see women get into the skilled trades. I just wonder if you can elaborate on how you think this bill is going to help support the many women and young people to engage in the trades and to help build Ontario.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the minister for that question. I think the skilled trades are very important. But you know what I do? I blame parents sometimes for the skilled trades, that they don't want their children in the skilled trades. We want our children to be doctors, lawyers and accountants.

I noticed with my sons—I have two sons. I have one that's 24 and one that's 21. One is becoming a CPA; the other one is becoming a mining engineer. All their friends who are in the skilled trades right now are already buying houses because the skilled trades are well-paying jobs. When we were working at Ford Motor Co., all our skilled trades workers were making way more than we make here in this Legislature. It is a future for our children.

What we have to do in Ontario—because there's been a stigma for many years for women, and young men as well, to get into the skilled trades—is we have to get rid of that stigma and have them come into the skilled trades so we can build the 1.5 million homes, we can build the 413 and the Brantford Bypass, we can build Ontario, build our hospitals and our long-term-care homes. Because without the workers we can't get to where we have to get.

So I want to thank all these young kids out there that are watching today. Get into the skilled trades—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you.

Further questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I just want to thank the member for that response he just gave. I wholeheartedly agree. The word that I'm familiar with is "parity of esteem." There should be a parity of esteem across critical occupations that keep our province going. I agree: Skilled trades are very important.

But back to my question, because I want to give my friend another chance to answer this, because I think this is something we can agree on in this House. I think elementary school kids and high school kids could benefit from health and safety experts—the member knows this well in the automotive industry—who have those lessons of history that we can teach young people in elementary and secondary school so tragedies like Hoggs Hollow, the Heron Road Workers Memorial Bridge, or, as I was talking about earlier in debate this afternoon, the 39-year-old Uber Eats driver who was killed on Avenue Road, the fourth cyclist killed this year—so all those people get to go home safe.

My question to the member: Would he support some collaborative work in this House to make sure labour history and health and safety are written into what the kids learn at school so that it becomes a priority for them too?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. I always say you have to look back to look forward. You've seen that Lincoln commercial by—I forget the actor's name, but he always talks about that. It's true, in history you have to look at what happened before to improve the future.

Interjection: Matthew McConaughey.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Matthew McConaughey, yes.

That's what I do. I always look at what happened before to what happens now. I can use the 2017 budget in this House. Spending was \$152 billion and today it's \$214 billion. I look at health care: Under the Liberal government it was \$59.4 billion. Today it's \$85 billion. I could go on—even education. It was \$23 billion. Today it's \$28 billion.

Yes, we can work with our young children in schools to have them know what happened before so they can move forward in the skilled trades and build Ontario. As I said, we need to build our hospitals, we need to build our long-term care. We need our highways and our transit. We need our skilled trades workers to build Ontario.

Every immigrant that does come into Canada, let's get them in the skilled trades as well so we can continue building the better province that we all believe in.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Hon. Rob Flack: I appreciated listening to my colleague's remarks. As I've travelled the province in the last couple of months visiting traditional home builders, modular or factory-built home builders, there's one common theme: We need 1.5 million homes built in this province and we need the people to build them. No matter how much automation we invest in, we still need the skilled trades' talent and expertise to get these houses built. The biggest concern these builders have is where we

are going to get the labour. It is the number one constraint to their capacity, their growth, their potential.

My question to my colleague is how is this bill going to help accentuate, facilitate and, most importantly, complement the capacity increase we need to get more homes built and faster in this province?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: The skilled trades—like you said, we need skilled workers here in the province of Ontario to build 1.5 million homes. I'll bet you we're probably going to need even more than 1.5 million homes. We have to get our children into the skilled trades. That's why in grade 11 and grade 12, they're going to be able to work on the job to learn the trades so they can get into those careers that are well-paying jobs here in the province of Ontario.

Like you said, not only do we need homes, we need highways, we need transit, we need pretty well everything that was neglected for 15 years under the Liberal government. We lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario at that time because Ontario was not succeeding, it wasn't punching at the level they should have been.

Right now, under this Premier and this Minister of Finance and yourself, we know that we have to continue to work together to get our young children and our immigrants who are coming into the country into the trades so we can build the 1.5 million homes and build the infrastructure we need to move Ontario to the place that it belongs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): We'll now move to further debate.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's always an honour for me to rise and add the voices and perspectives of the wonderful people of London North Centre here in this chamber.

As I rise today to debate Bill 190, I'm reluctant to use the title itself because I often find that with this government there are unintentionally ironic titles to pieces of legislation that they create. As I take a look at this bill, I want to consider following the money, because, quite frankly, with much of the legislation that this government enacts, they simply don't respond to the cost-of-living crisis that we see here in our province, and the plight of workers who are struggling to make ends meet, to pay for a roof over their heads, to pay their utility bills and to put healthy food on the table for themselves as well as their children.

The Fraser Institute actually just released a report just today that shows the trend of incomes in Ontario over the last two decades. It is entitled Ontario's Two Lost Economic Decades: 2002-2022. It finds, by using a big-picture perspective and using several key indicators, that minimal economic progress was made for Ontarians during this time and that we actually lost ground relative to the country. It found that the GDP per-person growth was the second worst nationwide; business investment per worker over the 20-year period was only 61% of the national average. Here in Ontario, businesses are not investing in their people. The report was created by Ben Eisen, senior fellow from the Fraser Institute, and Eisen states, "On a number of important economic metrics, Ontario is lagging

the rest of the country, which ultimately means Ontario workers are falling behind, along with opportunities for them.”

As we follow the money, I can't help but also need to communicate to this government, despite their ideological opposition to health care workers as evidenced through Bill 124, as well as their ideological opposition to education workers with the bill that was until it wasn't, we see a lot of really punishingly low wages for people across health care sectors.

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I had the opportunity with the MPP from London West and the MPP from London-Fanshawe to meet with the RNAO and Janet Hunt, who spoke about so many issues that are facing nurses in the community sector. They gave us really harrowing stories about trying to struggle to meet clients' basic needs, while being paid dramatically lower than their peers.

I should also point out that when we consider wage parity, that the Ontario Nonprofit Network pointed to a number of different places in which the province is a laggard and is making sure that people aren't being paid what they deserve. For registered early childhood educators, if they work within a school board or a municipal centre, they will make roughly \$25 an hour whereas those working in a not-for-profit licensed child care will earn \$18 an hour.

In home and community care, PSWs are paid a fraction of what they deserve and what they're worth. In home and community care, they earn 17% less than those in long-term care. But also, those home and community care PSWs earn 21% less than hospitals.

The list goes on: child and youth workers, disability support service workers, language instructors, settlement counsellors, social service workers—all in the community-based non-profit sector—earn \$10 an hour less than hospitals, school boards and child welfare.

When you consider drop-in and shelter workers, those who are employed in not-for-profits will earn roughly \$15 an hour, whereas those in municipal respite centres will earn \$30 an hour, twice as much.

The Ontario Nonprofit Network has shown through its reporting that when you consider pay and benefits all together, people earn 30% less than they ought to be. And that's something that this government could answer.

Recently, CUPE had actions trying to show this government how little they were being paid as a result of Bill 124 and seeing real degradation of their pay over the last several years. They've been handed excuses and delays. I would like to quote CUPE Local 8916 president Shaun Steven who said, “Our members work very hard behind the scenes to ensure that members of our community have access to health care and support for their needs at home and in community clinics, and we deserve a settlement that takes our hard work and the cost of living into account.” I could not agree more, Speaker. This is something that the government could act on, should act on, yet has chosen not to act on.

The RNAO has provided the following quotations, and this is from front-line workers: “In the community, we

have clients who are waiting weeks to get routine procedures done because we are so short. Sometimes, the wait is so long that the client gets an infection or cannot wait any longer and must go to the ER to get care. This is a cycle that repeats.”

And another RNAO member stated, “We are struggling to find people who want to work in the community because their pay is so much lower than bedside nurses', yet they are expected to do the exact same work. Our patients in the community are sicker than before.”

And from a veteran nurse who stated, “Historical decisions made in the 1990s are showing now, everywhere from changing how we fund health care from a nursing-hour model to a per-bed model. Nurses have been calling for change and warning about this for decades, and now, we are stuck having to pay for it.”

And another health care provider: “In the community where I work, I am frequently given a list of up to 14 patients to see in a day. It is often impossible to see all the patients in a day without going over my time but then I don't get compensated. I get paid per visit but the patients they send to the RN are some of the sickest and need thorough assessments. Often I am called at the end of my day to go see someone whose condition has changed and family have called in looking for help. I then must call my other clients and tell them I can't make it to see them. It often leads to angry words as they feel abandoned, and they then have to go to ER for whatever it was I was meant to do for them.”

Speaker, this is unconscionable that workers are being treated in this way, and this government is well aware of the plight of wage parity, and yet they simply choose not to act. During the tour for the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we heard again and again and again that wage parity is an issue affecting people across the province, yet we see legislation that's titled purporting to support workers and yet ignoring their inability to pay workers properly.

But if we also follow the money, taking a look at the way this government has ignored some of the systems that they are responsible for, I also think about injured workers in this province. I think about the WSIB that has long not stood up for people who have become injured on the job. There was a 2015 study, and it found that 46% of injured workers will live in poverty nearly five years after their injury; 46% of the workers who really need the help, who are disabled, are stuck in poverty. Speaker, that was not the system the WSIB was created for. It was created to support workers, not to deny them.

There's also been many, many recent studies showing that—and this is actually studies done by the Ministry of Labour that have shown the WSIB's claims allowed rate has fallen from just under 2% of employed workers in 2004 to just over 1% in 2013. The number of fatalities and the number of critical injuries is going up, and yet there has been almost no change in the amount of claims being allowed by WSIB. We have to ask why that is. If we're seeing numbers going up in terms of injuries and fatalities, how is it possible that that number is remaining stagnant?

Furthermore, if this government would like to support the title of its bill, it would do things such as getting rid of deeming. Deeming is the practice used by the WSIB to pretend an injured worker has a job that they do not actually have; it's a phantom job. It's used as an excuse to withdraw and to cut and to make sure that they are holding back money from that person who is injured and unable to work.

If this government really wanted to support workers, they would actually listen to physicians that attend to these injured workers. It's been long exposed in Prescription Over-Ruled—which was created by a number of different doctors as well as the Ontario Federation of Labour. That has shown the stories of workers who were injured and were then supposedly treated by doctors who never actually saw them, never actually spoke to them, who looked at a piece of paper and made decisions based on a piece of paper.

I want to share, from that Prescription Over-Ruled, Keith's story. Keith's name has been changed to protect their identity:

"Keith suffered a brain injury and serious spinal injury when he fell eight feet and landed on his head. Despite immediate and ongoing physical and psychological distress, receiving treatment remains a constant struggle for this injured worker.

"Keith was working underground at the time of the accident. Unfortunately, his helmet came off during the fall and offered him no protection. When his head struck rock, witnesses say that they thought he was dead.

"In contrast to what Keith's medical team has advised, the board has decided that he does not have a permanent injury. Even though Keith has a solid and consistent work history, and even though he sustained three spinal compression fractures from the fall, they are calling his ongoing pain 'pre-existing.'

"While the board originally funded some physiotherapy, they ultimately turned down the physiotherapist's strongly worded request for ongoing treatments to manage Keith's continuing chronic pain. His condition has continued to degrade, and requests for more therapy—at the recommendation of a health care professional—continue to be denied. Now, he is on so many medications related to his pain that his doctors ordered him not to drive and functioning day to day is a struggle.

1510

"But Keith is suffering from more than physical pain. Shortly after the injury, Keith's doctor became concerned about his depression and poor sleep due to a possible brain injury. As his treating physician, he suggested Keith see a psychologist. The WSIB denied this request. When his depression reached what his doctor called 'profound levels,' he again requested psychological support for his patient. He was again denied. Some two years later and many requests later, Keith was finally granted limited sessions, though any activities related to brain injury rehabilitation or occupational therapy (both of which the psychologist has strongly recommended) have been flatly turned down.

"While Keith's mental health has been improving, his psychologist remains concerned that he struggles with severe depression, a lack of purpose and is at risk of suicide. Their funded sessions together are now complete. His psychologist doesn't anticipate receiving approval for more, but even if they do, it will take months.

"Every medical professional in Keith's life agrees that he needs continued physical and psychological support in order to regain and retain some quality of life. The WSIB—who are not doctors and who have never met Keith—have ignored the recommendations and requests of all of them."

Speaker, as well, I'd like to turn to some of the words from our excellent labour critic, the MPP from Sudbury, who in the line of his following the money has pointed out quite rightly that this government has made a lot of promises and changes within this legislation, yet much of it will never really be realized.

In Working for Workers, we call this a "headline bill" or pretending to be tough on bosses. As our critic pointed out, the fine maximums have been changed for violations of the act from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for an individual. Also, it should be noted that currently, under the ESA, corporations can already be fined up to \$100,000 and repeat corporate offenders as much as \$500,000. But it should be pointed out—and this was very well pointed out by our critic—that the highest fine levied in 2022 was \$31,250. If we're following the money, we can increase the thresholds all you like, but if that's not actually going to be enforced, if that's not going to be levied, then it is relatively meaningless.

In addition, our critic pointed out that in 2018-19, there were 2,345 proactive workplace inspections, but a few short years later, in 2022-23, there had been only 788. It's like they don't want to know what's going on.

And if we follow the money further, stolen money, wage theft—money that belongs to workers, that this government is aware of but is not getting for those workers—is ridiculous. In 2018, that number was \$10 million. The Workers' Action Centre stated—and this is Ella Bedard—that workers need proactive inspections to ensure employers obey the law, and we need effective collection of stolen wages when the Ministry of Labour has ordered an employer to pay back workers' wages. How can it be possible, Speaker, that the Ministry of Labour can order an employer to pay back workers' wages and the workers don't actually see that money? But that is what happens in Ontario.

Between 2020 and 2022, there were 8,400 successful claims, and that amounted to \$36 million. But the province was a failure—an abject failure—in making sure workers got that money. They recovered less than 40% of the money that should be in the pockets of the hard-working people here in this province: \$36 million was owed to workers and only \$13 million was collected.

So, Speaker, in Ontario, we see legislation that talks about bad actors, and yet we see a government that is not actually holding them to account. How is that possible? Why do we have titles of legislation that are strangely

ironic? Why do we have words that are not enforced? Why do we have actions by the ministry of labour itself that are not being completed, that are not being effectively taken care of? Think of that \$23 million that should be owed to people, that they have worked for. They should not have to go and settle for a province that does not have their back, that will not look after them.

So, Speaker, I will say that, with Bill 190, it's not all bad. It is not the worst piece of legislation, but it is the kind of legislation that I do think time will show that this title is yet again strangely ironic, that there are so many opportunities for the government to do the right thing to look after things such as wage parity across health care sectors and across community support services. They could look after workers by ensuring that the money that was owed to them by their employer was returned to them. They could make sure that people who are injured on the job have the protections that they require, that they're being treated properly, that they're being treated fairly, that they're not being deemed, that they're not having phantom jobs.

Further, Speaker, a very last thing, if this government really wanted to stand up for the working people in this province, they would pass NDP legislation to make sure that scab labour is something that is not allowed in this province. I'm very thankful that the government has listened to the advocacy of the great team with the official opposition and has expanded presumptive coverage for firefighters. There's so much that is missing within this bill.

I hope that this government will take the time, pay people what they're worth, make sure that the money that they have earned actually gets into their pocket, that bad actors are taken to task and are forced to pay what they owe people.

It's unreasonable to think that the province is not doing its part to make sure that people are being paid what they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from London North Centre for his comments. I wanted to just get a sense from the member as to—actually, schedule 3 of the bill, which speaks to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act. This has been cited as a barrier that exists for people to get registrations in their particular trades and that certainly affects those that are new to Canada, new to Ontario as well as our young people. I'm looking at this section, and I'm feeling that this is actually a good section to include in the bill, given that it does provide for a number of different processes and simplification of demonstrating your qualifications.

So I would like to know if the member opposite is in agreement with that particular schedule and any thoughts that he may have on how we can better qualify our workers in Ontario today.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for the question. When we look

at schedule 3, it does amend different legislation to require regulated professions to set out requirements for reasonable alternatives to documented proof of qualifications. But the minister unfortunately has yet to explain, in all of the press events, what this is really truly meant to address. Is it possible that this is in consideration of foreign professionals who may not have documentation to be able to establish credentials by other means? It's really not clear.

But I want to thank the member for the question, and I do hope that the member did receive all of the petitions that were delivered to them by their CUPE local calling for wage parity for community health care workers. I hope that you will advocate for them, for your people and make sure that they're paid properly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you also for talking about WSIB. There's some irony, because I've been fighting very hard to get WSIB coverage for wildland forest fighters. But there are many, many problems with WSIB: 46% of permanently injured workers live close to or under the poverty line; 9% live in deep poverty. We also know that this government boasts frequently about a 30% cut to WSIB premiums to employers and then a return of \$1.5 billion to employers.

1520

And what really worries me, and perhaps you can comment on this, is that the government talks about having cut costs to employers, so they're talking about bringing in all these new industries. Sounds great, but they've thrown workers under the bus. That's what it sounds like. So, what protection is going to be there for workers when we already know that they are not being supported for injuries that they have now? There will surely be injuries in these new workplaces, and there's not going to be anything there for them. Can you please comment?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from Thunder Bay–Superior North for an excellent question. You're absolutely right; we have seen that 46% of injured workers live in poverty. That is a cost borne by them. It is detrimental to their life, to their health, to their future, to their entire family, but it is also financially unsustainable for the province as well, because they end up on ODSP. Really, when we have a system that is meant to protect workers, it's absolutely disgraceful that workers are receiving less. The WSIB is turning more people down even though injuries and fatalities are going up and then returning that money to employers. They are taking that money that should belong to someone who was injured for their support, to make sure they are able to be healthy, to be in their homes with their families, and yet they're turning it over as though it's some sort of gift. How can this government have a piece of legislation that has the word “worker” in it when they are overseeing a system that denies workers, that deems them to be able to do phantom jobs, that will pretend that their injury or their illness is pre-existing? It is absolutely unconscionable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I thank my colleague from the opposition for the wonderful speech. Again, we talked about that multiple times. No one solution will be good for every aspect to fix everything, but at least that's a step towards some of the anomalies in the system; for example, that the percentage of women in the construction industry is very low, and studying some of the reasons for that—sanitization of the washrooms and the harassment in the environment and how tough it is and every other aspect of being in the construction industry.

Given the fact our government has a very ambitious plan to build 1.5 million units, do you agree with me that this is a step to encourage women to get into this industry, as 40% of the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Response? The member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills for the question. I believe that the sections that are being re-announced or re-packaged in Bill 190 fall under the category that, as our labour critic has said, is already a law. So the access to washrooms is already within OSHA. The records of cleaning washrooms is already a law as well. But things that I am concerned about that this government is implementing with this: When they're placing the names, addresses of joint health and safety committee members and making them available only electronically, that is actually prohibiting access to them. In addition, joint health and safety committees will not be required to meet at the workplace. Should they not be actually there to see the location, to analyze what is happening there and to make recommendations? Meeting on Zoom is not sufficient. These are actual concerns. Also, expecting that workers are always going to have an electronic means to access this is unreasonable, it's unfair and it actually does put health and safety back quite a step.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from London North Centre for his comments.

I'm glad he brought up the issue of anti-scab legislation, which we've pushed for for a long time. By coincidence, I received a call from my friend Paul McKee from Unifor Local 4268 in Niagara. Unfortunately, they've been on strike and now the company has brought in scabs, and it's led to some very serious safety issues. I'm going to be calling this employer over the weekend and telling them what I think of the use of scabs. But we all know that belonging to a union is the best way to be safe on the job, the best way to make sure that you get paid, the best way to make sure you get benefits and decent pay.

This government could've used this legislation to bring in anti-scab measures. Why does he think they haven't done that, and how important is that to workers in his area?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from Niagara Centre for an excellent question, because for anyone to stand up for workers, they would stand up for

anti-scab legislation. It would be as simple as that. It should be a knee-jerk reaction, because the use of scab labour is something that really just benefits employers. It weakens bargaining. It makes any agreement unfair.

The province itself—and I will say as well, I want to commend the member for reaching out to their Local 4268 and bringing their cause here to the chamber. But this province, this government actually uses scab labour when it comes to the creation of advertisements. During the ACTRA strike, they were not content to actually pay workers the respect that they deserve, the trained professionals. But this is all about, again, following that money. Scab labour is something that benefits employers. It benefits this government, clearly, directly.

If this government were to actually, legitimately, authentically and practically stand up for workers, it would make sure that scab labour was something that was illegal across the province. It's as simple as that. The government could do it today; we would support them. We can pass anti-scab legislation today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I rise to support the Working for Workers Act.

As we gather here today, I am filled with a deep sense of pride for our province, Ontario. Ours is a land of opportunity, a place where dreams can take root and flourish. We stand at the crossroads of progress, poised to build a future that is brighter and more prosperous than ever before.

We want our province to continue to be the best place to live, to work and raise a family. That's why our government is steadfastly committed to working with employers, unions and workers alike. Together, we are forging a path forward, one that ensures workers can find better jobs and bring home bigger paycheques.

Speaker, Ontario is grappling with the largest labour shortage in a generation. Over 237,000 jobs remain unfilled, costing us billions in lost productivity. This is a call to action, a rallying cry for all hands on deck.

Through our Working for Workers Acts, we are taking decisive action. We are providing crucial support and protection for Ontario workers, addressing the historic labour shortage and attracting global talent to our shores because we understand that good, meaningful jobs are the cornerstone of strong families and communities. Every paycheque not earned is a missed opportunity, a chance for a brighter future squandered.

As the world of work continues to evolve, so too must our approach. Our government remains steadfast in its commitment to positioning Ontario as the premier destination for workers, businesses and newcomers alike. Together, we will chart a course toward prosperity and success.

But our vision extends beyond the horizon of today. By investing in our skilled trades workforce now, we're laying the groundwork for a stronger, more prosperous Ontario. Together, with a unified effort, we will build the future our province deserves.

1530

Let us not forget the vital role that women play in our workforce. They are the backbone of our economy, yet too often their contributions go unrecognized. That ends now. Under the government's leadership, young women aspiring to excel in skilled trades can count on our unwavering support. We are not merely paying lip service; we are taking action.

Our Working for Workers Act is a testament to this commitment. If passed, it will usher in a new era of protections for workers, ensuring their health and dignity are safeguarded at every turn. We will hold exploitative bad actors accountable, making it easier for Ontarians to pursue a career in trades.

But our work is far from done. We must ensure that every worker, regardless of gender, feels safe and supported in the workforce. That means addressing online harassment, providing clean and sanitary facilities, and conducting a comprehensive review of fatalities in the construction sector.

Speaker, our achievements stand as a testament to our unwavering commitment to the people of Ontario. Over the past years, we have made significant strides in building a stronger, more prosperous province for all. First and foremost, we have invested \$1.5 billion in the Skilled Trades Strategy, ushering in a new era of modernization and promotion of the trades. This investment has not only bolstered our economy, but it also opened doors for opportunity for countless individuals seeking to pursue rewarding careers in skilled trades.

But our investment in trades development doesn't stop here. With over \$1 billion injected into the Skills Development Fund, we have supported over 600 projects, training over 500,000 workers across Ontario. This investment is not just about numbers; it is empowering individuals to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our society.

In the past year alone, Ontario witnessed the highest number of apprentice registrants in over a decade. This surge in registration is a clear indication that our efforts to promote apprenticeship and remove barriers to entry are yielding tangible results. Furthermore, we have taken bold steps to support workers by eliminating apprenticeship fees and cutting journey person's fees by half. These measures not only make it easier for individuals to pursue careers in the trades, but also demonstrate the commitment to supporting those who keep our economy moving.

Ontario's manufacturing sector has seen remarkable growth under our leadership. In fact, we welcomed more manufacturing jobs than all the 50 US states combined. This is a testament to the confidence that businesses have in Ontario. It is a premier destination for investment and growth.

Since 2018, Ontario has created 700,000 jobs, providing opportunities for individuals and families to thrive. Our historic investments in training and skills development have played a critical role in this success, with close to 600,000 Ontarians now working in construction, more than at any point in our province's history.

Moreover, our commitment to workplace safety is unwavering. We have slashed WSIB premiums in half since 2018, reaching the lowest point in over two decades. Additionally, we have increased health and safety fines to the highest in the country, sending a clear message that the safety and well-being of workers are non-negotiable.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed. Eight unions endorsed us in the last election, recognizing our commitment to pro-worker policies. This benefits all Ontarians. By streamlining processes and welcoming skilled workers from out of province, we are positioning Ontario as a prime destination for trades professionals. In 2023, over 60% of candidates accepted via the OINP program had expertise in technology and skilled trades, and this underscores our simple yet effective model welcoming those who have the skills Ontario needs to grow and prosper right here in Ontario.

Speaker, our achievement is a testament to what can be accomplished when we work together toward a common goal. As we look to the future, let us continue to build on our successes and strive for an Ontario that is even stronger and more prosperous for generations to come.

As we reflect on our achievements and the progress we have made, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of diversity and inclusivity in the skilled trades. Our government's message is clear: Skilled trades are open to everyone, and we are proud of the steps we have taken thus far, as evidenced by the historic increase of 28% in new entrants to the skilled trades who are women in the past year alone.

However, we're not resting on our laurels. We recognize that there is still work to be done. We remain committed to pursuing measures that will further encourage women to join the skilled trades and ensure that the doors to these in-demand careers remain open to everyone, as well as for females.

To reinforce our commitment to supporting women in skilled trades, we are taking concrete steps. For instance, we are requiring menstrual products to be accessible on certain construction sites. This initiative ensures that all workers, regardless of any gender, have access to essential resources, enabling them to be comfortable and focused at work. But our dedication to improving workplace conditions extends beyond this initiative. We are mandating clean and sanitary washrooms, along with a regular cleaning schedule, setting new standards for workplace hygiene and comfort. By prioritizing the well-being of our workers, we are creating a better workplace environment for all employees.

Moreover, we recognize the evolving nature of our workplaces and the challenges that come with it. That's why we're proposing to expand the definition of workplace harassment under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act. This expansion would include virtual workplace harassment and sexual harassment, adapting to modern communication methods and providing comprehensive protections for all workers. In addition to expanding the definition, if passed, we plan to consult on workplace duties concerning workplace harassment. This

includes establishing potential thresholds and standards to create a safer and more respectful workplace. By clearly defining responsibilities and expectations, we aim to foster a culture of respect and accountability in every workplace across Ontario.

1540

Speaker, at this point I would like to thank our Minister of Labour, the PA and the entire ministry for their commitment to supporting workers, promoting diversity and ensuring worker safety knows no bounds.

Let us summarize the accomplishments that we have made over the past few years. Well, we have invested \$1.5 billion in the skilled trades strategy to modernize and promote the trades. As I said, we have invested over \$1 billion in the Skills Development Fund and over 600 projects to train over 500,000 workers.

Ontario has the highest representation of women and visible minorities in the skilled trades in Canada.

Last year, Ontario had the highest number of apprenticeship registrations in over a decade. Our government eliminated apprenticeship fees and also cut journey-persons' fees by half.

Ontario welcomed more manufacturing jobs than all 50 US states combined. Ontario has created 700,000 new jobs since 2018. Thanks to our historic investment in both training and skills development, close to 600,000 Ontarians are working in construction, more than at any point in Ontario's history. Employment grew by 183,200 positions in 2023 alone, with 93% being full-time jobs.

Since 2018, WSIB premiums have been cut in half, and are at the lowest point in over two decades.

We are going after bad actors by increasing health and safety fines to the highest in the country.

Eight unions left the anti-worker policies of the NDP and the Liberals and endorsed us instead in the last election.

By allowing many out-of-province skilled workers to register within 30 days, we are streamlining processes and positioning Ontario as the prime destination for trade professionals.

In 2023, over 60% of the candidates accepted via the OINP program had expertise in technology or skilled trades. Our model is simple: welcoming those who have the skills to Ontario to grow and to prosper.

At this point, I'd like to share something that I'm seeing in my own community. I've been sharing a lot of experiences with parents who, in my time when I raised my children, were only focused on sending them to computer science, doctors, dentists and those kinds of professions.

And for almost 20 years now, I've been hearing how manufacturers have not been able to succeed in Ontario because of the taxes, because of the WSIB and a lot of other things. And I also see that they have been screaming out so loud that they have no workers, and they have been asking us about getting apprenticeships.

And I have to say, seeing it with my own eyes, this has been changed for the past five years. Slowly but surely—I should not say "slowly" because they have worked so

fast and the changes came along so fast that, right now, we have over 700,000 jobs created.

All those accomplishments that I just shared are the work that we have done since 2018, and a lot faster in the last two years, which is why I have to say thank you very much to our minister and whole ministry that has been working so hard to help us and lead us to this point. I know there is still a lot yet to be done, and we will continue to work on this. That's why we are putting this bill forward to continue to guide us towards better goals.

In closing, let us remember the strength of Ontario lies in its people, in their resilience, their determination and their unwavering spirit. Together, we will overcome any obstacle, scale any height and build a future that is brighter and more prosperous than we have ever dared to imagine. We are only starting to do it, but we'll continue to make this a good thing for Ontario and a better future for our next generation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay, time for questions. We have the member from Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you for that wonderful presentation. I'm curious about the intention of the bill and how to ensure that workers in Ontario are adequately protected. Of course, we all recognize that wage theft is a significant issue, and oftentimes it's hard to track, hard to prosecute.

I'm just very, very curious to understanding how we can address that particular crisis with respect to wage theft if there isn't actual enforcement. So can the speaker kindly speak to that particular operational piece? How are you going to get this enforced?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Member from Richmond Hill.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, member from Toronto Centre. Yes, I believe I've covered how we have protected our workers, especially on the construction sites. We make sure that we give them the dignity and respect that they deserve, and even a simple thing—we think it's simple, but it's really not simple in making sure sanitary—the washrooms that they are using on a daily basis.

I still remember when we go to different events that have construction sites, when we go into the washroom, it's not an easy thing. But not only have we kept it sanitary; we are also caring about the women that will be using it if the site is going—if that construction is going on for more than three months and we have over 20 workers, we will have the products that are needed for this. So we are doing everything we can to protect our workers and give them the comfort, dignity and respect.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions? I recognize the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon. I want to thank my colleague the member for Richmond Hill for an excellent presentation. I know that before politics she was a successful and long-term employer. Based on that experience and now your experience in politics, I'd like to know how the hiring and em-

ployment experience is being made fairer under the Working for Workers Five Act in your opinion.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much to the member. Yes, I've been running my own business, and I care about my employees. It is really important for us to care for them. For me, I always care for my workers.

But in this bill, we are also making sure that we control the bad actors and make sure, if they are not doing their part as good employers, they will be fined. The fines are getting more and more—like, double what they used to be. We also care about the employees' safety in everything that they do. Perhaps in my business, it's not as much of a concern—safety—but in other areas there are safety concerns, and we have been working on those through this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My previous question to the honourable member from Richmond Hill was about wage theft and what the bill does to stop wage theft. I got a response about washrooms instead. So I'm just going to try to stay on the topic.

I think it's important for us to recognize that workers will oftentimes fear reprisals from calling out and asking for wages that are owed to them if their employer holds all the power. And what I'm looking for in this bill is, how is this bill protecting workers against actions such as wage theft, where they are not going to be facing termination if they are demanding what is duly owed to them?

1550

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member from Toronto Centre. As I say, we made sure that we covered things on bad actors—sorry, just now, I thought that was the question you were asking me. But this bill here does not apply to something specifically, like what you just asked about the wages. And we are protecting the workers. If the bad actors are not doing their part, we will be fining them in all sorts of ways. So we are on top of this.

As I say, even little things like sanitary washrooms are being taken care of in the construction sites, all these other things we have been working on—but it's not specifically listed in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. John Jordan: I want to thank the member from Richmond Hill for her comments. I also want to congratulate the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity for her work in increasing the number of women moving into good-paying careers in the trades.

To do that, we need to create an environment that's both healthy and welcoming for women to work in the trades. I'm wondering if you could comment a little more on how this bill helps create that welcoming and healthy environment.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, member, for your question. I am so happy that women are being welcomed into the skilled trades. A lot of women in the past may have wanted to join the skilled trades, but the environment was

not as welcoming as what it is now. We specifically highlight that we will support and train women, and we encourage them to join some of the skilled training sessions we go through.

By the numbers that we have received and the increase in the number of female skilled workers, we can see the difference. And little things—I don't mean to highlight just the sanitary part of this bill, but just that information itself, by providing the menstrual products for women, already tells them the kind of support that we are going to give them. They are welcome and we want to encourage them to be part of the skilled trades.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Back to the member from Richmond Hill. I'm going to stay on the topic of wage theft. I'm discouraged to hear that, in the member's own words, there isn't enough or anything in the bill that deals with the matter proactively, trying to stop wage theft in Ontario.

So I want to be able to highlight the fact that, if we are raising the fines for bad employers, that is a good thing. But I also want to point out that the Workers' Action Centre has noted that higher fines will not actually protect workers in the face of wrongful dismissal because what's really needed are proactive inspections and meaningful collection on orders, and that's not in the bill. My question to the member from Richmond Hill is, why is it not in the bill?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you again to the member from Toronto Centre for asking that question again. As I say, this bill is still in action. We have already covered a lot—if you can imagine how much we have covered these past five years until now.

I really want to say join us to be happy and let us, together, work on this. Yes, there is still a lot of work to be done. This part, as you mentioned, is being done, but may not have specifically been mentioned in this bill.

There are a lot of things still yet to be done, and if the direction is correct, I would ask and invite the member to join me to support this bill. Together, let's make this bill something that will work the best for everybody, and everything that we see that has not been covered, mention it so that we can focus on it and improve on it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question, quick response? Further questions?

Seeing none, further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the people I represent in London West to participate in this debate on the fifth iteration of the Conservative's working for some workers agenda.

I want to focus my remarks today mainly on schedule 2, and also on schedule 4. Schedule 2 is the section of the act that deals with changes to the Employment Standards Act. In particular, I want to talk about the change that is introduced to allow employees to be sick, to stay home from work without requiring a sick note from a doctor.

Certainly, in my time as MPP, I have done quite a bit of work on what kinds of changes are needed in the

Employment Standards Act to support workers who are sick in this province, and certainly removing the requirement for a doctor to provide a sick note is something that is long overdue. It was in place in this province, in fact, prior to this government getting elected. In the dying days of the Liberal government, when they were desperately looking for measures that would maintain some kind of popularity, with their backs to the walls they brought in some much-needed changes to the Employment Standards Act and labour laws in Ontario. One of the changes they brought in, as I said, was to remove the requirement for sick notes for employees who had to be absent from work because of illness.

The other change that they made, thanks to the incredible advocacy of the labour movement in this province, worker advocates and NDP members on this side of the House, was to ensure that workers who are sick get to stay home without losing their pay. Because we know that paid sick days are a critical public health measure to enable, in particular, the lowest-wage workers to actually stay home when they are sick, because too many workers who are sick in this province worry that if they stay home on an unpaid sick day, they won't have enough money at the end of the month to pay the rent, to buy the groceries, to pay the utility bills. So one of the most important things that we can do to protect public health in the province and also to support workers in the province is to provide paid sick days. While this legislation very sensibly removes the requirement for sick notes, it doesn't say anything about ensuring that sick days are paid.

I also want to give a shout-out to the Ontario Medical Association, to all of the family physicians in this province, who have been calling repeatedly for the elimination of sick notes because of the time that it consumes for family doctors. We know that there is a dire shortage of family physicians in this province. There are 2.3 million Ontarians right now—that number is projected to increase to over four million Ontarians—who do not have access to a primary care provider: a family physician or a nurse practitioner. We need to do everything possible to make sure that the family doctors who are practising in this province are able to accommodate more patients. Just in the London area, Speaker, we have 84,000 people in the city of London or around the city the London who don't have access to a family doctor.

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Dr. Andrew Park, who is the president of the Ontario Medical Association and also a constituent of mine in London West and an emergency room physician at London Health Sciences Centre, has told me stories of people who have actually come into emergency because they don't have a family doctor and their employer is requiring them to get a sick note. They've come into emergency just so that they can get that sick note that their employer requires because without it, they could lose their employment.

So it is a very sensible measure that this government has introduced in this legislation, something that we definitely support. But it is unfortunate that one of the first

things that this government did in 2018 when they were elected was to bring back sick notes. It has taken this crisis in our health care system—the demands, the calls from family physicians to remove the administrative burden of sick notes—that finally got this government to take action.

But in 2018, when this government brought back sick notes—which they're now removing—they also made some other changes to the leave provisions of the Employment Standards Act. As I said, prior to the election of this government, there were two paid days that sick workers were entitled to under the Employment Standards Act, and there were an additional eight unpaid days, personal emergency leave days, that were available for every employee in this province.

When this government got elected, they eliminated the two paid sick days. The eight days that were remaining, all unpaid, they categorized them to make it very specific that workers could take three unpaid days if they were sick, they could take three unpaid days if they had family responsibility obligations and they could take two unpaid days if they needed a bereavement leave.

So not only do we need paid sick days in this province, we certainly need more than three. Yet, what this government thought was reasonable for workers in Ontario was to restrict every worker to only three unpaid sick days.

Then, of course, COVID hit. Many of us recall those dark days at the beginning of the pandemic, when there was not a lot known about how contagious COVID was. We certainly heard loud and clear from public health professionals that it had the potential to just ravage workplaces with spreading contagion from workers who were forced to go to work sick because they didn't have access to paid sick days, and they only had access to three unpaid sick days.

So, in March 2020, we saw this government introduce a new kind of leave, infectious disease emergency leave, to allow unpaid leave for workers who were diagnosed with COVID so that they could stay home and prevent spreading infection to their co-workers and their customers. But of course, we know from studies that public health units did in Peel and other places that workers were still going to work sick because unpaid infectious disease emergency leave was not enough to enable a worker to stay home if they were sick.

Finally, after many iterations of my legislation, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act, the government finally, and very sensibly, brought in three paid infectious disease emergency leave days. That was very successful. That worked for over a period of almost two years, until March 2023, giving workers who were dealing with COVID or who had family members dealing with COVID access to paid days so they could stay home.

This bill was an opportunity for the government to not only remove the requirement for sick notes but also to take action to make sure that workers don't have to make that choice—that impossible choice—between staying home sick and losing a day's pay or going in sick and infecting their co-workers and their customers. And we know that for workers, especially low-wage workers in this province,

with the skyrocketing costs of rent, the cost of living out of control, it's hard. It's hard to have to make that decision. Or if they have a sick child, do they keep their child at home and have to take that loss of a day's pay or do they keep their fingers crossed and send their child to school? What we really need to see, Speaker, is paid sick days. I really hope that the next version of Working for Workers will include that.

I know that the government is very proud of this bill because of what it will do to support women at Ontario workplaces, especially in the skilled trades. I do want to give a shout-out to Carpenters Local 1946 in London. They hosted the Ontario apprenticeship showcase at the end of April. It was a wonderful opportunity to go, and there were a number of women carpenters who were participating in the competition, and I got to talk to some of them. I learned about the program that the Carpenters Union has called Sisters in the Brotherhood and the advocacy that they are doing, which is great.

What this bill does to support women workers is it requires menstrual products to be provided on larger construction sites. At least, the regulations to this bill will do that, because there's nothing in the bill that addresses menstrual products, but we will take the government at their word and look forward to those regulations. The bill requires that washrooms be clean and sanitary. That is certainly something that every worker should be able to access, but it's already in legislation, so it's good that this legislation requires it again. It also adds virtual harassment to the definitions of "workplace harassment" and "workplace sexual harassment" in the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Now, those provisions on harassment are outlined in schedule 4 of this bill.

I want to now draw the government's attention to another bill that I introduced, along with the member for Toronto Centre as my co-sponsor, called Bill 114, the Safe Night Out Act. I'm not sure if members are aware that, currently, in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, there are three definitions: There's a definition of "workplace harassment," a definition of "workplace sexual harassment" and a definition of "workplace violence," but no definition of workplace sexual violence.

The Safe Night Out Act amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to explicitly recognize workplace sexual violence, which, as we know too well, often occurs in the context of intimate partner violence. We have seen intimate partner violence follow workers to their places of employment far too often, putting those workers at risk, putting their coworkers at risk and resulting in huge productivity losses for those companies where workers are working. That was a big part of the reason that I introduced the domestic violence and sexual violence leave act, which ensured that workers who are experiencing domestic violence or sexual violence were able to access leave to deal with the violence.

I would encourage the government to look at Bill 114, that private member's bill that is on the order paper right now, the Safe Night Out Act, that talks about workplace sexual violence and acknowledges that it often occurs in

the context of domestic or intimate partner relationships, because we have an epidemic of intimate partner violence in this province. We were pleased to see the government pass through second reading of Bill 173, the bill to formally declare an epidemic of intimate partner violence in the province of Ontario, but that declaration has not yet been made. Although the bill has been passed, we are still waiting for that declaration. That would go a long way, Speaker, to supporting women in this province and to supporting women in Ontario workplaces.

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The other piece of Bill 114, the Safe Night Out Act, that I would encourage the government to look at is the requirements for training on workplace sexual harassment. My bill had required employers to complete training on workplace sexual harassment and ensure that every person in the workplace also completes training, because we know that one of the sectors that has the largest number of women workers in this province is the hospitality industry. Hospitality workers are overwhelmingly female and they are very vulnerable to workplace sexual harassment, and they get far too little support from their employers—sometimes their employer is the perpetrator of workplace sexual harassment. So it's very, very important. You can have the definition of workplace sexual harassment in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but the training to understand workplace sexual harassment and to take actions to prevent it is very important.

The other point that I wanted to make in the very short time I have left is around the need for the government to look more closely at the kinds of occupations that women are working in. If the government wanted to support women workers in Ontario, they would know that women predominantly work in caring jobs. They work in health care and education, as child care workers, as PSWs, as educators, and yet, we have seen a government that has failed to recognize the economic importance of the care economy. They have failed to recognize that care jobs represent one in five jobs in this province.

The care economy, in fact, is twice as big as either the construction sector or the finance sector. It is three times as big as the manufacturing sector. It is 38% bigger than the manufacturing sector. The care economy is a significant driver of the provincial economy in this province, and so we have to value the jobs that are performed by care workers. We have to value the economic significance of the care economy, and we have to put in place provisions that are going to support that care economy and support those workers, the majority of whom are female, in those care economy jobs.

Finally, I just want to talk about the other jobs that tend to be more occupied by women: They are cleaning, catering, cashiering and clerical, and those are often jobs that women perform in contract positions where they are denied the full benefits and protections of the Employment Standards Act, because they are often misclassified as not being employees under the act and simply being contract workers. Again, this is another important improvement that the government could have included in this Working

for Workers Act to end the misclassification of workers in this province, mainly low-wage workers, racialized workers, women workers, and it's definitely a missed opportunity that they chose not to do that.

Speaker, there are some good things in this bill. Removing sick notes, the requirement for sick notes—glad that the doctors finally got the government to do that—but we need to see a lot more from this government if they want to show us that they're serious about supporting workers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions? Questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I would like to ask the member, through the Speaker, if she could share a little bit more about her thoughts on gig workers and how we should include consideration for them in labour motions and bills coming forward in the coming time.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre for that question. I actually have introduced in the past legislation that would add new provisions in the Employment Standards Act to clarify whether a worker is legitimately a contract worker or is actually an employee, and so too often, especially with gig workers, Uber drivers, food delivery workers, they have been misclassified as contract workers and then denied the benefits of the Employment Standards Act.

This government has actually legislated them as second-class workers, giving them these digital rights that are lesser than the benefits and protections of the Employment Standards Act, and said, "Oh, we care about gig workers," but there is a lot of work that can be done to ensure that workers are not misclassified as contractors when they are actually employees of a company.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. I know that paramedics and first responders, such as firefighters and wildfire firefighters, have unique challenges in their occupations which we are appreciative of, what they do, but the challenges they have in their jobs are oftentimes very troubling and very concerning. The government has taken initiatives to support firefighters.

In this particular legislation, we are helping to support the aspects of wildland firefighters with PTSD and some of the mental health issues surrounding what goes with the territory in those jobs. Is that something you're supportive of with respect to this bill?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to the member for Oakville for that question. Absolutely; I mean, even before I was elected in 2013, the NDP caucus had been championing presumptive coverage, especially for first responders. The former member for Parkdale-High Park had moved that legislation forward and that was a significant accomplishment.

It's unfortunate that the government in its Working for Workers Four excluded wildland firefighters, and I want to acknowledge the advocacy of many of my colleagues from the north in particular who really pushed for wildland firefighters to have the same access to presumptive cov-

erage as other firefighters. So it's too bad that it took that advocacy, but we are going to push to make sure that workers get the coverage they deserve for occupational illnesses.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from London West. Certainly she has a strong history of advocating for worker rights in Ontario—with the sick notes, with the paid sick days, the Stay Home If You are Sick bill.

As both former trustees, I wanted to ask you about the proposed changes in the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, which simplify the ability for individuals interested in skilled trades to find apprenticeship opportunities through high school streams and online job portals.

Now, we do have a very successful program in Ontario called the OYAP program, and it's a very competitive program, I actually want to say. The proposed changes also allow for alternative qualifying criteria for individuals who lack certain academic requirements, keeping health and safety at the forefront of apprenticeships and those opportunities to learn on the job, but having the qualifications to ensure that students stay safe.

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I wanted to get your comments on what precautions or measures need to be in place to ensure that students are safe as apprentices.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague the member for Waterloo for that question.

Certainly, as a former school board trustee—also as somebody who did a lot of research on work-integrated learning in the post-secondary sector, looking at co-op opportunities, internships, etc.—we know how vulnerable young people are, whether they're in high school or college or university, when they go into workplaces in these kinds of co-op or internships or other kinds of work-integrated learning opportunities, and how important it is for young people to understand their rights in the workplace and their right to refuse unsafe work. Because too often young people are nervous about asserting their right to enforce unsafe work, because they fear reprisals from their employers. So there's a lot that we could do in school curriculum to raise awareness of those rights and to educate young people on how to exert those rights.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions? Further questions? Further questions? Seeing none—the member from Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You've got to look to the left.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I mean, I sometimes look to the right, I just want to say.

The member from London West actually had some really good commentary on workplace sexual violence, and also the caring economy, where a vast majority of those employees are women. One of the other areas, Madam Speaker, that is predominantly held with female employees is the retail sector, and I know this for a fact.

My daughter is a business leader at Aerie and, boy, if you're selling bras and underwear as a female retail worker in Ontario, there's some areas that get a little dicey.

I'm going to circle back to the enforcement of those workplace health and safety and anti-harassment strategies. Does the member from London West have any concerns around employers enforcing their own anti-harassment policies that are now guided by this legislation?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I think there's one thing that we have learned, and it is around the importance of training. You can have the best policy in the world, but if you don't have training in how to implement, then it won't be effective.

The other thing we have learned is about the importance of proactive inspections. Too much of the labour protections that are available to workers rely on workers going forward to file complaints. It's so important that there be proactive inspections to make sure that workplaces are safe, to make sure that employees understand their rights. But under this government, we have seen a dramatic decrease in the number of proactive inspections that have taken place, we have seen a dramatic decrease in the number of fines that have been levied. So proactive inspections are very important to make sure that workers' rights are protected in the workplace.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question, quick response?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just wanted to ask the member from London West if she could comment on the improvements on the fines. There have been increases to the fines for those who have not paid wages and the wage theft issue. Could you speak to that?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes. The fines have increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals, but we have to remember, when the fine was \$50,000, it was never levied. The highest fine that was imposed in 2022 was \$31,000. So, yes, we can increase the ceiling to \$100,000, but if we're not actually going to impose maximum fines, then it's not going to be an effective deterrent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to share a few positive thoughts about the bill and then a few things I'd like to see in the next iteration.

We were talking a lot this winter with the group from the wildland firefighters and I know I've heard, in some of the quotes, that people who have lost loved ones to the health consequences of fighting fires were happy to see the changes in recognizing cancer, retroactively looking into the compensation and considering PTSD in health conditions for that. And the lifting of Bill 124—there was a lot of harm from Bill 124 and I'm glad to see it finally, hopefully, getting out of the way so that we can move on and ensure that people have good compensation for the work that they do.

Something that I want to recognize is a few quotes from the sector about what they would like to see: The Canadian Wildfire Network is worried about turnover still. We

didn't see increases in pay, and because of that, OPSEU says workers are getting paid \$22 to \$26 an hour. If you think of what it's like to be in a bush and fighting a fire, it's pretty intense, front-line work, and they come with a lot of expertise. So \$22 to \$26 an hour, OPSEU says isn't quite cutting it, and that's kind of why we see understaffing.

As we look ahead to this summer and the concerns we have about it being an unprecedented wildfire season, we know that we're short firefighters by the tune of about 25%. We were hoping to have 190 fire crews and we've only hired 143. So, when we see labour shortages, we have to be sure that we're doing a good job in compensating people for the work they're doing and so on.

I was also happy to see the reduction of sick notes, because we know 2.3 million people in Ontario don't have a family doctor. So we can reduce this administrative barrier and the impact it has on our health care sector.

I do also want to echo my concern that we still don't have paid sick days. As a social worker, I worked with too many low-income families, single parents who had to put food on the table, and so they went to work sick, and really, it caused a lot of spread of COVID—and that's just COVID. We know that our emergency rooms are overwhelmed with RSV and cold and flu season. If we had paid sick days, we know that this would reduce the burden on our health care system dramatically.

And we know that this negatively impacts low-income families: 70% of families who make less than \$25,000 have no access to sick days. So this is a policy that disproportionately negatively impacts low-income folks, who are the most vulnerable, trying to feed their families. If you have a choice between eating and going to work sick, you will go to work sick to feed your family, so I urge the government that, going forward, it considers the benefits of paid sick days in their legislation. We've seen that, in US cities that had paid sick days, they saw 40% reduction in influenza rates during flu waves, so it would do a lot to ease the burden on our already stretched health care system.

I do want to commend the government for improving working conditions. I have been in workplaces; I think a lot of women I know—I spoke to a lot of women from the Carpenters Union, just like my colleague from London West. They've been trailblazers in trying to create safe spaces for women in the trades. I think period products—making that equitable to women across our province is valuable.

I have a constituent, Victoria, who started a period equity program—just like a little library. I have a friend, Karen Farley, who started the Period Pin product, so people could find access to menstruation products wherever they work.

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But we know that equity is a big topic and so I was hoping to see more for gig workers. We really have to use our time to address the issues facing gig workers. They spend 40% of their time to 52% of their time working but unpaid. They're paid far below minimum wage, which is really unacceptable. Where does that money go? It goes to

Lyft; it goes to Uber; it leaves the province of Ontario as soon as it comes through the cash.

We need to show respect to these immigrant workers, people who are marginalized, people who speak English as a second language, who aren't being paid equitably for the service that they do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I thank the member for Kitchener Centre for her comments and, really, some great information. I wanted to touch base a little bit on the opportunities for young people to get into trades. I know down our way, we have not just industry but also housing development just crying for potential workers. I know one item that I've heard has had a little bit of debate over this legislation is the educational component and the crediting of practical experience in the workplace rather than in a formal school. I was hoping you could shed some light on your perspective on that part of the legislation.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Thank you to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. I worked in alt-ed for the last two years with kids who had dropped out. I think we do have valuable students who get disenfranchised from the academic side of things, who want to feel valued for their hands-on experience. I know a lot of students, I referred them to workplace co-op, and they were able to access this. I do see the value of that.

My concern is that we need to be sure that they're safe for that, and we need to be sure that the literacy components are adequately addressed. I think we're facing a major issue with literacy. Because we moved away from phonics and we used a different model, we're finding high rates of illiteracy in our high schools. So we do need the funding from our Minister of Education to be sure that we can address the literacy gaps that we're seeing in high-school levels.

I have friends that work there trying to build in the phonics in grade 9 and grade 10. We can't send them off to the workplace without the tools in their tool box to ensure that they know their rights because they can read a contract properly. I was glad to see that that English requirement was in there.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for her comments. Some of the concerns that we have with Bill 190 are, in particular, the way it amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act, especially where they're taking information that is being posted electronically rather than being posted in the work-

place. It will include the names of joint health and safety committee members. Also, the way in which it will allow the meetings for joint health and safety committees—that they'll no longer be required to meet within the workplace.

Do you think this is a wise move forward, or will this actually make the information more difficult to retrieve and those meetings be less meaningful if they're not happening within the workplace?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I always like to make sure that we're getting—yes, virtual is important, and it's good to have resources available virtually. I think in the work I've done with low-income families, not everybody has access to these things. We have to remember that people need access to the Internet. We know that that's not widely available across Ontario if you live in rural communities. We know that not everybody is very computer-literate. I worked with a lot of newcomers from Eritrea, for example, who are just being introduced to this kind of technology here in Canada now.

I believe more in a hybrid model, that we don't sacrifice the face-to-face, the human point of contact, so that we know how to get that help when we need it, where we need it, because virtual really does leave people out of the conversation. I think if we don't include everybody, it's really the most vulnerable who will be negatively affected by this lack of access.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question, quick response?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I'm just wondering if the member from Kitchener Centre is supportive of our legislation that's going to extend virtual harassment protections to teleworkers—you mentioned the virtual—ensuring all workers are safeguarded. Knowing that the workplace is evolving, and it's not necessarily that you're going to work in an office, do you support our legislation to include that?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I do. I know that online spaces are actually awful and ripe for harassment. I know we experience it online as politicians all the time, so we know that with the invention of cellphones, it means that we don't just get to go home, turn off the phone and relieve ourselves. But I hope that we can move forward from a worker complaint-driven system. I hope that we can have—I know I talked to an immigrant recently. She's from India. She got her first job, and he's not paying her wages. She's frightened that—she's indebted weeks, if not months, of wages. But she's afraid to go to—she doesn't know our labour laws to begin with. She's afraid to rat her employer out, because she's afraid that she will lose those months of income. And she's hanging on by a thread.

Report continues in volume B.

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Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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