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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 March 2022

Mardi 22 mars 2022

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. We'll begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2022, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to enact the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 88, Loi édictant la Loi de 2022 sur les droits des travailleurs de plateformes numériques et modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Good morning, Speaker, and good morning to all my colleagues here in the chamber this brisk spring morning. What a beautiful day it is, and what a beautiful day it is to also be able to speak about the legislation that has been brought before this House. I know all of us are very thankful to have the opportunity to serve here representing our constituents on the issues that matter, and, of course, a very good morning to all those watching on live stream. I'm sure there are many across the province eagerly anticipating a robust debate, a robust discussion, on the subjects of the day, the matters of importance, and today we're resuming debate on Bill 88, Working for Workers Act, 2022, which builds on the strong foundation of the Working for Workers Act, 2021.

I had the opportunity to walk through a few of the various schedules of this legislation, and I know I don't have a great deal of time left so I won't go back through all of those parts, but I just wanted to reiterate the commitment of this government to ensuring that we have strong protections in place that support employers, that support employees, that ensure that workers are being protected, that ensure that they're taking home the tips that they deserve, that the fines that are being levied upon bad actors when it comes to employers are strong enough to be a big prevention when it comes to workplace accidents and, of course, workplace injury, and we've also been making steady progress on building up and introducing policies which are supporting gig workers across this economy, and we've seen that really come forward as well in the legislation.

I want to just acknowledge again, as I did yesterday, the excellent work of Minister Monte McNaughton and his parliamentary assistant, the member for Mississauga–Malton when they came down to Niagara and spoke with Youth Skills Studio, a partnership that has been launched with the town of Lincoln, and local job creators to ensure that the skills being provided to our youth are the ones that are needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow, building on the work of the transformation that's happening in our education system to ensure that we're providing the training that's necessary for learning the skills for all the job opportunities that exist—not 15 years ago, not perhaps 10 years ago, but recognizing that the economy shifts so rapidly, the jobs that are in place today are very different than many of the jobs that were around even a few years ago.

So I want to acknowledge all the work that has gone into today's legislation, I look forward to the continued debate on it and I want to thank all members in this House for their indulgence and for taking the opportunity to hear me present on behalf of the good people of Niagara West. I look forward to a robust question and answer as well, as we discuss this further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions and comments.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Happy World Water Day, everyone. We know that when I come here, I always talk about water. Access to clean drinking water is such a basic human right. I know that sometimes when we talk about some of the legislation that comes down, water is not even an issue. As a First Nations person, one of the things I know is that, disproportionately, we are impacted—and not only that, the front-line people, the essential and migrant workers, women, BIPOC folks, but the workers living with a disability. What does this bill do, is my question, to help the people that are impacted?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Very respectfully, Speaker—and I appreciate the member raising this—I'm not completely sure exactly, so I'm going to ask, perhaps, for him to follow up a bit. Was this in reference to concerns about water, or was it just an acknowledgement of water? I wasn't sure if the question was about water or if it was about the impact of trades on populations in particularly marginalized communities that were mentioned. I apologize to the member; I'm just trying to better understand what the question is.

But, obviously, I want to ensure everyone has the opportunity to succeed and to thrive. Regardless of anyone's background, regardless of the circumstances, we want to provide the tools for all communities in this province—

every individual in this province—to reach their full potential to be able to live a life that reflects the dignity, the worth and the respect that they should be deserving.

So perhaps he can reiterate in the follow-up question, I guess, with some precision, what the area—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much.

The next question.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I know that one thing this legislation does is look after the new gig workers. Something that is new and really, I guess, spurred by COVID, as we've changed the way we do work—a lot of changes in technology that have come about in the last few years. I'm just wondering if the member might elaborate on some of the protections that this bill puts in place. Something that is timely, with the time that we're looking at here, with the requirement for changes going forward. As we look at life evolving after this pandemic, we're not quite sure how, but, of course—because will people go back to work? Will they change? There's a lot going on and we'll have to evaluate. It's an evolution coming up.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes, absolutely. That's a fantastic question.

The very first schedule of this bill is the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022, which is a very important aspect of the legislation. That schedule enacts the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022, which establishes a number of rights for workers who perform digital platform work, commonly known as gig work: the right to information; the right to a recurring pay period and pay-day, which is a huge improvement; the right to a minimum wage—we believe everyone in this province should be earning a minimum wage, at least.

When it comes to including our digital platforms: the right to amounts earned by the worker and to tips and other gratuities—a big improvement as opposed to having those tips, which obviously people give in good faith to the person who provided the service and then sometimes they can actually be redirected to the business. We also have implemented the right to notice of removal from an operator's digital platform; the right to resolve digital platform work-related disputes; as well as the right to be free from reprisal—so important changes that will protect more workers in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Today is World Water Day, so it's a bit disappointing that the member from Niagara West didn't understand the question from the member from Kiiwetinoong when he asked about the importance of ensuring, in every bill, equal access to the basic fundamental rights of humans in this country, in this province, including the access to clean drinking water. It's a fundamental human right.

But I'm sorry to say it's not very surprising, because we have a government that has this bill that in fact doesn't do all the things that they're saying. It doesn't provide a minimum wage for gig workers for all the hours that they work. That is not a fact. The second thing is that this is a

government that has capped the wages of our public sector workers with Bill 124. They refuse to repeal that. You also have not done anything to ensure that workers in all kinds of communities—racialized workers, BIPOC workers, low-income workers, women—in fact have the protections that they deserve.

0910

I will give the member another chance to answer the question: What have you done in this bill to ensure equal access to the fundamental rights of the people of the province of Ontario?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Again, I think there are two parts to that question, and perhaps that does explain the earlier question. One is a commentary and, I assume, a recommendation for changes to the regulation of water supply and protections here in the province of Ontario. Of course, it seems that the member opposite isn't content with what's contained in this piece of legislation, so I anticipate we'll be seeing a proposed amendment from the member opposite or from the party opposite with regard to water regulation and supply in the province of Ontario to the Working for Workers Act, which has to do with labour changes to ensure that gig workers are protected and employees are protected. I'm assuming we're going to see something like that added, which is a bit of a surprise because typically we see the NDP complain, frankly, when there are matters brought up in a bill that don't seem to pertain exactly to what the title of the legislation is. I look forward to seeing what the proposal from the member opposite to the legislation looks like.

Secondly, I would completely reject the premise that this legislation doesn't support everybody. It does, in fact, ensure that each and every person in the province of Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much.

The member from Perth–Wellington has a question.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This is probably a question that means so much this morning after hearing on the radio of some opioid-related problems. Apparently there's a super drug out there that will kill you faster than what they had before, and it's been quite alarming. The police said this morning it's quite alarming how fast this works. I wonder if I could ask the member, why are we proposing to require naloxone kits, and what types of workplaces will be required?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The member and I must have been listening to a similar broadcast, because I know I was listening to the news at the top of the hour at I think 7 o'clock this morning and I heard about the situation I believe the member is referencing, where there were multiple overdoses due to the lack of stability within the way the drug composition is. In fact, if I remember the report correctly, there was an individual who needed six naloxone treatments in order to be brought back to consciousness—six naloxone treatments. This just goes to show the dangerous street drugs that there are right now and the instability in those drugs and the need to ensure that we have in place protections, but also that we have in

place treatment. I think naloxone is that first response. Of course we recognize that we need to ensure that there's broader access to supports for those who are struggling with addictions. That's something the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has been working on. But we also want to ensure that employees know that when they're at a work site, the employer is going to have naloxone available to react to an overdose. That's a requirement we put in this law to support—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

The next question.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's interesting and, quite frankly, welcome to hear the government talk about the concerns that are happening in our community with the overdoses. We were looking at an over 80% increase in overdose deaths. And yet this bill does not go far enough. Would the member agree that it doesn't go far enough when it comes to ensuring that people in various workplaces across the province have access to those kits to ensure that they can save lives? And will the training be there for the workplace to ensure that they know how to implement them and truly do the work that they need to do?

This bill doesn't go far enough with just construction sites, bars and nightclubs. It needs to be vast and broad and in all workplaces. Would the member opposite agree to that, and maybe amend their own bill in doing so when it comes to the naloxone kits in this bill?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member opposite for the question. It's always important to see, on issues like this, the broad consensus and bipartisan support that there is for taking action to address the opioid crisis that is in so many communities. I know in Hamilton, as well as in Niagara, it is a major issue.

Look, the Working for Workers Act, 2022, builds on a foundation that was first laid out in the Working for Workers Act, 2021. I hope there's going to be another Working for Workers Act after June, where we build on the work that has been done in this one.

I think there's always more work that we can do. I know that the minister has been in consultation with community leaders, with industry stakeholders, with union leaders and with labour advocates to ensure that we're building on this work. We recognize that the work is never done, but we do believe that this provides, again, very strong leadership, the first in Canada, in fact, to require certain employers to have these in place—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's an honour to rise and speak to this bill today. Speaker, it was tough for workers before COVID-19 hit our communities, and things have only gotten tougher. I don't think anyone in this chamber could deny that gig workers played an incredibly important role throughout the pandemic. Many delivered food right to our doors, allowing us to stay in and stay safe during the worst

of the lockdowns. We know that gig workers are disproportionately migrant workers; they're women, Black, Indigenous, racialized, and many live with disabilities.

Speaking on the precarity of gig workers in Toronto, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council noted that, "New immigrants are overrepresented in precarious gig-work jobs and struggle for decent working conditions. The gig economy is here to stay. Moving forward, TRIEC hopes the government will further labour reform to be inclusive of workers in this sector."

Speaker, despite the barriers that workers face getting by, gig workers have shown extraordinary courage, compassion and grit throughout this pandemic. These essential workers are fighting for equal rights and fair treatment—something they don't currently have under Ontario law. I recently spoke to Jennifer, the president of Gig Workers United, who shared with me that her co-workers feel like heroes. They feel pride at what they have been doing during the pandemic.

Jennifer shared with me that she regularly delivers to a family with four children who have come to love waiting outside for her deliveries and get excited to greet her when she comes around. The parents told Jennifer how difficult it was to rally four children to make a trip out to the grocery store and make it back home safely. Workers like Jennifer kept parents and children in our community safe, and have all throughout this pandemic.

Gig workers have waited far too long for fair treatment from this government. It's no secret that a deeply rooted agenda of the gig economy is to roll back workers' rights, and that is exactly what we've been seeing happen. App-based workers are not treated as workers by their employers, because, quite frankly, it's not in the interest of the apps, of these businesses, that rely on their labour to do so. There is more profit to be made when you can incorrectly classify a worker as a contractor and subsequently offload all of your responsibilities for their overhead expenses, for workplace health and safety and for minimum wages.

Recently, though, a Ministry of Labour investigation ruled that gig workers at Uber Eats are, in fact, employees, just as the courts have been ruling in cases all around the world. The ministry's ruling ordered Uber to stop contravening the Employment Standards Act by misclassifying Uber delivery drivers and to start recognizing them as the employees that they actually are. Rather than enforcing its own employment law, however, what did we see this government do? Well, they immediately tabled legislation to deny gig workers the basic employment protections that they deserve and had just fought for and won. This law will entrench their misclassification.

Workers like Jennifer are told by the multinational companies like Uber, who lobby their buddies in this government, that they don't deserve the same rights as other workers. Jennifer reached out to my office and said, "Misclassification is violence. It's dehumanizing. You are constantly reminded that you don't have rights. If my health and safety rights are violated, I cannot hold my employer accountable. I feel like being an essential worker is coded language for being an expendable worker. We

never even had” a plan for “paid sick days under” the Premier’s “plan.”

Speaker, I’d like to speak next to the section of this bill that the government is trumpeting as a supposed \$15 minimum wage for gig workers. When we look at the bill, we actually see that it only applies to app-based drivers when they have a passenger in the car. This would be like telling a retail worker that they’re not going to be paid unless they are actively cashing out a customer, not when they are in the store waiting for the next customer or doing any other kind of work in their down time. They’re stuck in that store, but if they’re not actively cashing someone out they’re not being paid.

This is not even close to what gig workers have been calling for. Not only will most gig workers be unlikely to see a \$15 minimum wage for the hours that they are actively working, but they will continue to be denied overtime pay, vacation pay, public holiday pay, termination pay, WSIB coverage and other employment protections that every other worker in this province has access to.

0920

Josh Mandryk is a labour lawyer with expertise in the ABC test. The ABC test is used by some jurisdictions to determine whether a worker is misclassified as a contractor rather than as an employee. It’s the basis for my colleague the member for London West’s Bill 28, a bill that would address worker misclassification specifically. Josh Mandryk actually assessed the minimum wage provisions in this bill and determined that it has the potential to in fact reduce the earnings of delivery drivers to as low as \$9 an hour. They’re talking about, “Oh, it’s a \$15 minimum wage,” but, in reality, the way that the math ends up, these workers will be lucky to see \$9, which is far below the actual minimum wage of this province. Why is this government more interested in protecting the profit margins of app-based companies, rather than making sure that the gig workers, who held up our communities for the last two years throughout this pandemic, can actually earn a minimum wage so that they can do their job?

In Canada, Uber has been actively shopping around a proposal to carve gig workers out of the Employment Standards Act entirely and create a new subclass of workers with fewer rights, in order to avoid having to recognize gig workers as legitimate employees. This Conservative government is caving to Uber’s demands through this bill. These companies—Uber and others—have found a willing partner in the Premier, whose government hastily convened a rushed process last June with absolutely no worker representation at their supporting technology platform workers as one of their three pillars. They had no workers at the table on this supposed consultation that led to this.

So to keep drivers’ wages down and their company profits up, Uber wants to legislate a third category of workers so that they can legally deny gig workers their rights as employees. This bill effectively does that, and I have to say I join my colleagues in flat out rejecting this approach.

This House recently had a chance to stand up for gig workers when my colleague the MPP for London West put forward the Preventing Worker Misclassification Act. That bill would have filled the holes that are in this legislation, such as how Uber drivers are still working employees during the time on the job when they’re in between passengers. Without that recognition, they cannot access any of the employment protections of the ESA. As independent contractors, they’re not covered for things, like I said earlier, like minimum wage, paid overtime, vacation pay, statutory holiday pay, parental leave, termination notice, severance pay and the paid sick days that every worker deserves. They are not covered by other workplace protections like WSIB coverage, the right to refuse unsafe work or access to unionization. And although it’s illegal under the Employment Standards Act for employers to misclassify their employees as independent contractors, employers do it anyway because it saves them money. It’s cheaper for them to call their workers independent contractors because it means they don’t have to pay overtime, they don’t have to pay minimum wage, they don’t have to pay vacation, they don’t have to pay severance. This bill does nothing to fix any of those problems.

But when misclassification cases have gone before the courts, legal rulings have made it clear that it doesn’t matter if their employer calls them an independent contractor. What matters is what the workers do. Uber Eats courier Saurabh Sharma, who was found to be an employee by an Ontario Labour Relations Board arbitrator, was speaking about this and said, “We’ve been saying from day one, Uber is not a tech company. Uber is deciding what labour rights we get, how we do our work.

“It is very important for us to be recognized as employees.... This is what gives the job some dignity.”

Ontario employers who have misclassified their employees can face huge financial penalties in owed back payments. Even if the misclassification is accidental, employers are still liable financially, which means that preventing misclassification is as important to businesses as it is to workers. We are leaving employers in a position where if they’re accidentally misclassifying their workers because we don’t have adequate legislation in place, that puts them at financial liability risk as well.

The Workers’ Action Centre has commented on this and has said, “Since Bill 88 does not make gig workers employees, the door begins to open for employers in all industries to also turn their employees into gig workers without full protection. The burden of fighting for employee status against large, international app-based companies would fall onto individual workers willing and able to challenge their precarious working conditions.”

I want to remind my colleagues that, for a very brief time, the onus was on the employer to prove that their worker was not an employee. Reversing this requirement was one of the very first attacks on labour that was launched by this Conservative government right after they were elected in 2018. Along with that move, what else did they do for workers? Well, they cancelled the minimum

wage increase, eliminated the meagre two paid sick days that workers fought so hard to achieve and ended equal pay for equal work and other provisions, undermining workers' rights.

Importantly, Bill 88 does not establish that digital app-based workers are employees of the companies that employ them, with access to full rights under the labour code and Employment Standards Act. Canadian Union of Postal Workers president, Jan Simpson, commented on this, saying, "The Conservatives misrepresent this legislation as a step forward, but it's really designed as a barrier to unionization and a distraction from the fight for equal rights and employee status."

So, again, we have the government trying to parade this bill around as some gift to workers while taking away their rights to unionize, their rights to employee status, their rights to things like overtime pay, severance pay and vacation days, and trying to tell workers, "Hey, this is in your best interest." I don't know what kind of spin that is, but it is not in the best interest of the workers of this province.

Despite the efforts of this Conservative government to reinvent themselves as a friend of labour, workers will not be fooled. This Conservative government's low-wage policies and the Premier's consistent attacks on workers' rights have shown time and again that they are not here for workers. The Premier is more interested in doing what his buddies want than what gig workers need.

Speaker, every single gig worker deserves so much better. They deserve respect. They deserve to be able to afford the life that they are working for. And they deserve to be protected by the Employment Standards Act, the same way that every other worker in this province is. I would add to this point that, according to the government's own workforce recovery advisory committee, 69% of Ontario residents surveyed agree the province should treat gig or technology platform workers the same as traditional workers when it comes to employment benefits. These are workers' rights that are, yet again, under attack by this Conservative government. And it should be surprising to absolutely no one, considering this government's low-wage, high-cost, anti-worker policies that we have seen put in place for the last four years.

To remind the members of this House: What have we seen for the last four years? They cut the planned minimum wage increase in 2018, taking more than \$5,300 out of workers' pockets so far. Every minimum wage worker in this province would have more than \$5,000 extra to their name since this Conservative government was elected if they had not rolled back that minimum wage increase.

They then moved on to cap the wages of workers like nurses and teachers behind the rate of inflation—effectively a cut to their wage in terms of their purchasing power in the world—by implementing Bill 124, which capped public sector wage increases at 1%. Meanwhile, we've seen the cost of rent, the cost of our groceries and the cost of our bills skyrocketing with the cost of inflation. So, how are our nurses, who are the backbone of our health system right now, supposed to be keeping up with their

rent increases when their wages are going up 1% this year? It's absolutely outrageous.

Then they denied workers PPE supplies and other protections during a pandemic, even fighting in court to avoid having to give workers access to KN95 masks. They took away workers' paid sick days and refused to reinstate them during the worst days of the pandemic. The absolutely inadequate sick day plan that we got from this government expired before the Omicron wave hit our communities. And did they bring those paid sick days back when we were in the absolute worst of this pandemic? Absolutely, they did not. This is not a government that is for workers; this is absolutely not a government that is for workers.

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Then they took women in health care to court to try to deny them equal pay for equal work, and they're taking WSIB funds that should have supported injured workers and they're handing that money over to corporations instead. It's no surprise that this Conservative government is bringing in legislation to permanently misclassify gig workers, because they have never been on the side of the working people of this province.

We also saw this government decide that there was no need for legislation to ensure equal pay for equal work, to ensure that when a temp worker is brought into a company that that temporary worker is paid the same wage as the worker doing the exact same job as them but that's hired by the company directly. The government said to employers, "Go ahead. Keep paying temporary workers less than the workers that you hire yourselves." What it does is it incentivizes those employers to continue to keep a consistent stream of temporary workers hired through their company, but that puts those workers at really significant risk.

When you've got a temporary worker coming in they may not have the same training or the same experience, particularly in a situation where those workers may be working on factory lines. We've seen devastating incidents of death and injury. I think Fiera Foods is a perfect example of that, where temporary workers are not being given the training or safety procedures they need to be put in place and are being put onto these factory lines and putting their lives at risk and dying because the company doesn't want to properly directly hire and train their own people. They can undercut the wages by using temporary workers.

The other thing that we saw this government do right after it was elected was decide that workers had to prove they were employees and not independent contractors. Again, I've spoken extensively to that misclassification piece, but it's really truly astounding that we're seeing this coming forward for further attack by this government. We need to ensure that gig workers are properly classified, we need to ensure they have the same rights and protections as every other worker, we need to ensure they have access to paid sick days and to all of the benefits that any other employee would expect.

Speaker, I see I've got just a few minutes left on the clock, but there were a few other provisions in this bill that I did want to speak to. I did want to start with schedule 4, which amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require some businesses or workplaces to provide naloxone kits in their businesses. I have to say that while I certainly am thankful for an opportunity to improve access to naloxone kits, especially for workers across our province, considering the opioid overdose crisis that we are facing, I have to challenge this government. You can't sit back and pat yourself on the back and think that you are going to solve one of the greatest crises of our lifetimes, the opioid crisis, by putting a few naloxone kits in a few workplaces. It's not going to solve the crisis.

I had the opportunity yesterday to spend the day with an NDP MP who was visiting my riding, Gord Johns from BC, who has put forward a bill federally to decriminalize personal possession and to improve access to a safe supply of drugs, because we know that what's killing people who are using drugs right now is a tainted and poisoned drug supply. That's why we need naloxone kits in our communities: to reverse overdoses that are not caused by people not taking the right doses of their drugs, but that are caused by tainted drug supply. If this Conservative government is not willing to have a conversation about addressing the poisoned drugs in our community that are killing tens of thousands of people across this country, you cannot pat yourself on the back and say, "We're going to hand out a few naloxone kits to a few businesses," and think that that's going to solve that crisis. It absolutely is not.

I'm not saying it's not a good first step. Fine, let's put naloxone kits in businesses, let's put them in schools, let's put them in this chamber, let's put them everywhere, because people who use drugs are in every corner of our community and we need to break down the stigma of who we see in our community who we identify as people who use drugs. We need to start treating this as a health issue and not a criminalization issue. People cannot seek access to safe supply if it doesn't exist, and they cannot come forward to overdose prevention sites if they think they are at risk of criminalization for being in possession of the drugs that they're going to be using there. If we are still criminalizing a health issue, we will never get in front of it. So my ask to this government is: If you actually want to address the opioid crisis in our communities, stop treating it like a justice issue, like a policing issue, and start treating it like what it is, as a health crisis, as a pandemic, a second pandemic that has been raging through our communities longer than COVID has.

Speaker, I see that I'm out of time, but it's been a privilege to rise in the House today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The first question goes to the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning.

To the member opposite, I have been listening about your concerns with the opioid crisis in Ontario. Of course, we're all very concerned about it. My hometown of

Hamilton has had ongoing issues with drugs and, in particular, with opioids. And, of course, we've heard the news this morning about the incidents here in Toronto.

But we have introduced in this piece of legislation a requirement to have the naloxone kits at workplaces. You did mention that it is a good first step. Without getting too political—I understand that you are a member of the opposition—can you share with us the importance of why it's so necessary to include this in legislation and the benefits of having this particular kit in the workplace?

Ms. Suze Morrison: To the member opposite, as I said in my remarks, you cannot sit there and pat yourself on the back for putting a sprinkling, a few naloxone kits throughout our community and thinking that's going to end the pandemic of the poisoned drug supply raging through our communities. If you are not willing to come to the table and have very real, big, serious, complicated, hard conversations about how to address the opioid crisis, people in our communities are going to continue to die by the tens of thousands.

The problem is the poisoned drug supply. Putting in an antidote to an overdose isn't going to stop the overdose from happening in the first place. The only way to stop the overdose from happening in the first place is to address the poisoned drug supply. You are, quite frankly, trying to treat a bullet wound with a Band-Aid. It's shameful.

I'm not saying don't put naloxone kits in workplaces; do it. But you don't get to pat yourself on the back and say that this is going to end this crisis while people in our communities die.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Around Bill 88, Working for Workers Act, we know there wasn't much consultation that happened. I really enjoyed the member bringing the voices of her gig workers from her riding—to bring that consultation to the Legislature.

We know that the \$15 minimum wage that the government is saying gig workers will be eligible for only when they're engaged in work doesn't really help. Can the member elaborate on the gig workers' bill of rights from the member for London West, who brought it forward, and how it will affect gig workers and the actual benefits it will have if we actually implemented Bill 28 from the member for London West? How is that going to change lives in your riding?

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you so much to the member from London—Fanshawe for the question. Certainly, I would love to speak to the member from London West's bill to improve gig workers' rights. I certainly love my friends from London.

The member's bill would absolutely improve the rights of workers, by clarifying their classification as employees, not independent contractors. When employers are allowed to treat their employees as independent contractors, they get to just absolve themselves magically of the responsibilities to do things like pay vacation pay, pay overtime, pay a fair minimum wage, severance pay. When an Uber driver's rating falls too low, they just get cut off from the

app. Where are they supposed to go? They don't get any termination notice. They don't get any termination pay, just, "Too bad, so sad. You didn't meet our magical app criteria to continue working for us. Your job is done."

We need the member's bill to clarify the classification for these workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the member from Toronto Centre: Clearly, you are very passionate about this issue—through the Speaker—but that passion doesn't give one the right to misrepresent information or the facts. You have stated that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but I would ask her to withdraw her unparliamentary language.

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Ms. Donna Skelly: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: But it's important for us, regardless of how we feel about issues, to bring forward accurate information. I would like to ask the member from Toronto Centre, where and when did this government suggest that requiring naloxone kits at workplaces would end the opioid crisis? You've stated that several times in your response to me and in your remarks earlier. If that is the case, please show me where.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you for the question. I think the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook's question is quite interesting because what it suggests to me is that she would like to clarify on the record, as I've just heard her try to do, that the provisions in this bill to address the opioid crisis are not actually intended to end the opioid crisis. To me that sounds like an admission from the government benches that they actually have no plan or no legislation on the table and no funding for any programs or services that actually will end the overdose crisis in this province. Do the job: Come back with a bill that actually will end the overdose crisis, because you've just admitted yourself that this bill will not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I want to commend my colleague the member for Toronto Centre for an absolutely stunningly powerful speech on the problems with this bill and how to fix them for workers who really need it. I really do wish that the member for Niagara West, who was having so much trouble understanding the questions after his presentation, had actually listened to this disquisition, because he might have learned something useful.

I would like to ask if there's anything else you would like to say on what this bill should have if we're going to meet the needs of Black, Indigenous and other people of colour; workers who are disabled; immigrants; marginalized workers; and people who really need the help.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you to the member for Beaches—East York for the question. Certainly, like I said earlier in my remarks, when we look at who makes up the

gig worker population, we know that population is predominantly racialized. They are Black; they are Indigenous. They are more likely to be women. They are more likely to be lower income, to live with a disability, primarily because, when we look at gig work and the structure of it, it is a style of work that you can accommodate around a disability if you can only work a few hours a day. We do recognize that. We do need opportunities for more workers to be able to access fluid schedules that are going to meet their needs, especially for folks with disabilities. But that doesn't mean that we can then all of a sudden treat this most vulnerable class of workers as substandard to every other worker in this province. If anything, they need the strongest level of protections, because they are most vulnerable to being taken advantage of by their employers. We need stronger minimum wage protections, we need to ensure they are classified adequately as workers in this province, and they need stronger rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Sarnia—Lambton has a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: To the member from Toronto Centre: I had a question about skilled trades and the retirement in the next two or three years. I think a third or more of employees in Ontario are over 55, heading towards that retirement goal that some of them worked so long for. There are a number of pieces in the bill, Working for Workers Act, where we talk about working with employers and with employees to replace those workers. I wonder if the member from Toronto Centre could speak to that and if she supports that part of the bill.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Respectfully, to the member, I think this would be a good opportunity to talk about how we should be better supporting young people to actually access employment and training opportunities. You know what a really great way to do that would be? To address the unbearable student loans that are crippling the students of this province. Young people are being absolutely weighed down by the massive debts on our shoulders that we incur for post-secondary education—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I apologize, you did nothing wrong.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six-and-a-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the parliamentary assistant to the government House leader, the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Please continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The debate will continue. I believe you have, I don't know, 15 seconds to conclude your response.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thanks, Speaker—15 seconds isn't a lot.

Ease the student debt on young people so we can actually go to school, get trained, get our education and not

enter the world with \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 of student debt on our backs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to rise and join today's debate speaking in support of Bill 88, Working for Workers Act, 2022. And it was brought forward by the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. I first want to thank and commend the minister and his parliamentary assistant and their staff for the work that has gone into this landmark legislation and the work they are doing each and every day to create a stronger economy that works for everyone.

Speaker, it is important we leave no workers behind. If you take a look around Canada and across the world, we have seen that other governments are experiencing real challenges keeping up with new technologies and the economic implications of these changes, but not in Ontario. Thanks to the leadership of Premier Ford and the Minister of Labour, you will see that our government is working swiftly to close these gaps and to ensure that workers in the 21st century have the protections that they need.

In the first Working for Workers Act, debated and passed in this House last year, we made it clear that we would protect, support and attract workers due to the changing nature of work. Mr. Speaker, the changes brought forward in Working for Workers, the first act, put workers in the driver's seat, and we became the first province in Canada to say yes to introducing the right to disconnect after work and a ban on non-compete clauses. We also said yes to removing barriers for internationally trained workers by making it easier for these individuals to get licensed in a regulated profession and get access to jobs that match their qualifications and skills.

In addition, Working for Workers 1 put delivery and courier workers first by guaranteeing them washroom access at the businesses that they serve. I can't thank the minister enough for this particular measure, because in my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I heard first-hand from drivers that they're being denied the right to use the washroom—even when they were stepping up over the past two years to help fight the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, Working for Workers 1 was a first step to show what we are about: a government that will deliver smart, common-sense policies to protect the working class, help middle-class families earn more money and create a better future for everyone. But we didn't stop there, because we know there is always more that we can do for our workers.

Recently, it was announced by the Minister of Labour that Ontario will be the first place to examine how to bring extended health care benefits to workers with limited-to-no coverage—another step, the first of its kind in all of Canada, that stands to benefit millions of workers right here in Ontario. Make no mistake, we are actively working for workers because the future of work is here, and that is exactly why we are proposing the measures found in Bill 88, to help those workers and ensure no one is left behind.

During my time in office, and especially the past two years, I've had the privilege to meet with digital platform and gig workers from my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park. And these individuals—mothers, fathers, students, young people—all share one thing in common: the collective desire to build a better life, and support themselves and their families.

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In our conversations discussing their jobs and the many digital platforms that they use, I noticed that three common core themes emerged: These workers appreciate the flexibility, they appreciate the options that they have and the opportunity that comes with the jobs found on digital platforms. They spoke about how these jobs filled temporary gaps as they changed their careers or navigated a layoff, or allowed them to better balance the work and life obligations that they have.

Presently, one in five workers works in the gig economy, and that number is only expected to grow in the coming years. Online platforms like Uber, DoorDash and Instacart are here and they are growing in size and popularity. As a government, we must look out for the workers on these platforms, protect their rights and ensure they can get ahead. And Bill 88 builds on the success of the Working for Workers Act by proposing foundational rights and protections for workers in this gig economy.

Bill 88 proposes a bill of rights for gig workers in Ontario which would grant a guarantee of at least minimum wage when logged onto the platform, and the right to keep their tips and know when they're getting paid. These are some foundational rights, Mr. Speaker. Clarity on advance notice or an explanation if they are being removed from the platform—that is also a foundational right—the right to resolve their work-related disputes right here in Ontario and the right to protection from reprisal for asserting their rights to the platform. These protections extend to all digital platform workers regardless of the worker's classification as an employee or as a contractor. These rights are the first of their kind in Canada. It just makes sense to do it, because for these gig workers these protections are essential so that they can put more money in their pockets and get ahead.

But most importantly, implementing these essential rights are also a matter of fairness, respect and gratitude for gig economy workers and the work that they do in our province, because no one working in this province should ever make less than minimum wage for an hour's work. No one working in Ontario should be dismissed without notice, without explanation. And certainly no one working in Ontario should have to leave this province to settle an employment dispute or go elsewhere to sign a contract that they do not understand. It is unacceptable that these injustices are happening in Ontario, and by implementing the proposed changes found in Bill 88, we give back to workers by protecting their rights and laying a foundation for their success in our province.

Over the past two years, gig workers—and all workers—stepped up for their communities during the pandemic. They were there for the families and for the

seniors who had to isolate and needed groceries to be delivered. They were there for businesses that had to pivot to delivery to keep their products moving. Despite these heroic efforts, the scales in the gig economy continue to not be in the workers' favour. Therefore, we must act as a government to recognize the value of their work, increase their protections and give back to digital platform and gig workers. I cannot state this enough: This bill is a landmark measure for gig workers. By moving forward with Bill 88, we have a real opportunity to level the playing field and raise the floor for these workers.

Speaker, now I'll shift to schedule 2 of the bill, which proposes legislative amendments to the Employment Standards Act to create another protection for workers. We live in the 21st century, and as such, workers and people expect their privacy to be protected and, more importantly, that their government is actively working to ensure that, despite changes, their privacy is protected. With the changing nature of work, workers are working in different places, like their home. When you're in your home, it doesn't matter if you're working in your living room, bedroom or in your kitchen with your children; you deserve to know if, how and why your employer is monitoring you. That is why Bill 88 proposes a requirement for employers to disclose to their workers if, how and why they are being monitored, and implement this policy within six months. This new protection would extend to company devices like computers, cellphones, tablets, GPS systems and the many other electronic devices that a worker may come across on the job. By proposing increased privacy protections for workers, we are putting workers first and ensuring that they can work with confidence and certainty while they work in new places as the nature of work changes.

Speaker, we are committed to safe and healthy workplaces across the province. No worker should ever have to work in fear over becoming seriously injured, or not making it home at the end of their shift. If you're doing business here in Ontario, you must put the safety of your workers first. We must act against the bad actors who do not put safety first and see current fines as another cost of doing business. The changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act found in Bill 88 would propose the highest fines in Canada for companies that break workplace health and safety laws. If this bill is passed, the maximum allowable fine for a violation resulting in serious injury or death would increase to \$1.5 million for companies that do not follow these important workplace health and safety laws.

Speaker, another way we are working for workers is making it easier to bring a worker's skilled trade credentials to Ontario. It should be no surprise to any member of this House that Ontario is in a skilled trades shortage—the largest shortage in a generation. Take in that, just last summer, over 300,000 jobs were vacant. With even more skilled trades vacancies expected in the coming years, we must stay on top on making it easier for workers to get into this sector. Bill 88 does that by making a call-out to skilled workers across Canada to move to and

settle here in Ontario. Currently, Ontario recognizes 52 of the 55 Canadian Red Seal trades, a credential that recognizes that a tradesperson has met the national standards for their given trade. To close this gap, Bill 88 proposes to recognize the final three credentials—gas fitter class A, gas fitter class B and oil and heat systems technician—that make up the full slate of 55 Red Seal trades.

Making it easier to live and do business in Ontario is at the core of what we do as a government. That is why Bill 88 proposes a new service standard to have the credentials of out-of-province skilled tradespeople recognized in a timely manner. By introducing a service standard of 30 days, skilled professionals like engineers, mechanics and plumbers will be able to move to our province, fill long-standing job vacancies and contribute to our economic growth.

To get ahead of the skills gap, we must raise our game to attract the workers we need. The new 30-day service standard builds on what was found in the first Working for Workers Act, which introduced a streamlined process to have the credentials of immigrants and new Canadians recognized. Again, this is another measure that I cannot thank the minister enough for, making it easier for newcomers to apply their skills in Ontario. We have a real opportunity to fill these positions, contribute to our province's economy and give newcomers a secure economic footing as they settle in our province, because for far too long, skilled job seekers have been met with bureaucratic red tape and delays, and ultimately this deters them from seeking these jobs.

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By moving forward with this bill, Bill 88, we are charting a different course than the Del Duca-Wynne Liberals. We will make it easier for workers to fill these crucial gaps in our economy. When taken together, the proposed actions illustrate that our government will do whatever it takes to increase labour mobility and drive skilled and in-demand workers to our province. I cannot stress this enough: These are well-paid jobs with defined benefits and pensions that represent real opportunities. Making it easier for all workers to reach these opportunities just makes sense.

Speaker, the proposed measures found in Bill 88 are common sense and needed as we build Ontario. With our growing population, we must take every necessary step to create the conditions for the economic success for our province and its workers. Our government has allocated over \$148 billion in infrastructure spending, and we are going to need skilled workers to build highways, to build bridges and subways that will be needed in the coming years.

By making it easier to come to Ontario and have your skills recognized, we are leading the way in Canada and across North America in promoting labour mobility. By proposing foundational rights and protection for digital platform workers, we are the province in Canada that is being bold and leading the way for workers.

As Ontario continues to grow, we must leave no worker behind. In our government, led by Premier Ford, it doesn't

matter if you work for a big company or a small company or a digital platform, we have your back and we won't leave you behind. We listen to workers, and we heard you loud and clear. We are moving forward with Bill 88, our second Working for Workers Act. Our government is ensuring that Ontario remains the best place to live, work and raise a family.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions. I see the member from Niagara Centre has a question.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member for his speech. I appreciate it. My question is regarding Bill 124. If we're proposing to come up with a bill that's going to help workers, especially at this time, at the end of a pandemic, when we're looking at what's going to be good for an economic recovery and what's good for workers, you would think that the very first thing any government would do is to repeal Bill 124, which restricts the pay of people who got us through this pandemic.

How could a government possibly come up with a bill that's supposed to help workers and still retain a bill they've already passed that limits workers' pay to less than inflation? And we all know what's happening with inflation, so the people who got us through the pandemic are actually losing pay.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: As I mentioned in my speech, this is the first of its kind. In Bill 88, the Working for Workers Act, our government is introducing foundational rights for digital platform workers in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I have engaged with many residents from Scarborough and all across. One core theme: They're all saying that they need digital platform gigs because they're flexible, because they can balance their family responsibilities while they're on the job, and sometimes this is their second or third job. We're the first government in Canada to actually introduce foundational rights for these gig workers, so I am thankful to the Minister of Labour, the parliamentary assistant and their staff for their great work in actually bringing foundational rights for gig economy workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Sarnia—Lambton has risen to ask a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I wanted to congratulate the member from Scarborough—Rouge Park for his remarks. I wanted to ask him—I've got two questions here, but I'll just ask one; maybe I'll get a chance for the second one later.

I wanted to ask him to comment on—well, I guess I'll ask about the fines for workplaces to protect workers. If the member could expand upon the importance of fines and implementing them by the government.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: As we know, when a worker goes to a job, we want that worker to be safe. That's priority number one for this government. If there are bad actors in Ontario and if there is an accident and there is a severe injury or death, the government will increase the penalty to over \$1 million, because we have to make sure we, as a government, should be there to protect our workers first. Regardless if they're working for a small company or a big company, they should know that

our government is there to back them up when it comes to safety and safety laws in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The Working for Workers Act, Bill 88, is, as the member has said, protecting workers, making sure workers are safe at work. I have to say, because we didn't have any consultations, we haven't heard from all workers. One of the areas I want to ask the member a question about is temporary workers, temporary workers like Enrico Miranda who worked at Fiera Foods and was a temporary worker who was cleaning machinery and was crushed by that machinery to his death. Where is that in this bill to protect workers? Temporary workers who are owned by a temporary agency, literally owned by them, and then contracted out to employers that pay them less for the same work. Where is that protection in Bill 88 for temporary workers, their health and their safety?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: As I mentioned in my remarks, we are the first government in the country to actually bring these foundational rights and protections when it comes to safety. Protecting workers is going to be the forefront of our government's focus in Bill 88. When it comes to safety, we're not going to leave any stone behind and we're not going to leave any workers behind.

Again, we have heard loud and clear from all corners of our province, whether it's from Sudbury or Scarborough, that workers welcome these protections for their safety. Moreover, the families are welcoming this, because they really want their family members to come home after their shifts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question is from the member from Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my colleague for the presentation—always a strong advocate for the people of Scarborough—Rouge Park. Thank you very much.

My question to my colleague is about the historic labour shortage we have in the province and the many unfilled jobs that are costing billions in productivity. I was wondering if the member can perhaps share with the House how this proposed legislation will not only cut red tape but make it easier for the skilled trade professionals across Canada to come and work right here in our province.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: As the member from Aurora—Oak Ridges mentioned, our province is actually facing the largest labour shortage in a generation. Just last summer, about 300,000—labour shortage. That's why it is important to address this problem by making it easier to bring skilled workers from other provinces to come with their families and work right here. By working towards eliminating this bureaucratic red tape, it is easy for the workers to get their credentials in a short amount of time. Also, we are welcoming workers across Canada as well as internationally. That's why I feel like this is landmark legislation that the Ministry of Labour team introduced.

I will continue to advocate to make sure that we fill the gaps, because our government is building bridges, to highways, to all the subways that we are building.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: The member opposite did a great job of walking through some of the government's talking points on this bill, but did not answer any of the crucial questions that were raised by my colleagues about where the bill is leaving behind gig workers who are marginalized in particular, and I want to know if the member can please tell us and assure us that at the committee stage, the government will amend the bill with many of the suggestions that are going to be brought forward, which would actually make it a bill that would help workers?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member opposite for that question. We heard loud and clear from gig workers and digital platform workers about the changes that they want to bring forward in their ecosystem. It's the new nature of work and it's evolving day by day. We've seen the increase of the widespread usage of digital platforms, and in the last two years they stepped up.

Our Ontario government would be in the first in the province to offer these rights and protections, including minimum wage to digital platform workers to deliver food, or have a rideshare or deliver courier services. These changes would apply to all digital workers who provide all sorts of services to Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, this is not just about having minimum wage protection, but it's also about disputes. All the disputes will be handled right here in Ontario and they don't have to leave the province to take care of any work-related issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): If the government member has a quick question, you may get a quick answer.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm interested in some of the comments made this morning, certainly on workers' rights and all this type of thing. I think it's the right of every worker in this province to have a good job, and we are in a crisis right now where we are probably a hundred and some thousand workers short—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): If you want an answer, now is a good time to pose your question.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'll ask a quick question. Can you explain what we're doing for Canadians on digital work platforms?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government has the responsibility to keep up with technology. That's why we are leading the way in Canada and across North America with Bill 88.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. We will not have time for further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(g), the

Clerk received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and therefore, the afternoon routine on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, shall commence at 1 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I also beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 101(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Babikian assumes ballot item number 43 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 59.

At this stage, we're a little bit early, but we are going to move into members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BENGALI CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: One of the great delights of being the member for Beaches–East York has been the privilege of getting to know many members of the Bengali Canadian community. In east Toronto, the community's core is nestled on and around the Danforth and in Crescent Town.

March is of course Bangladeshi Heritage Month, and March 26 is Bangladesh Independence Day, which marks the day that Bangladesh separated from Pakistan at an enormous cost in lives to preserve its Bangla language and culture. The dedication of Bengali community groups to the well-being of community members and ensuring kids are growing up proud of their language and culture is unmatched.

I want especially to shout out the South Asian Women's Rights Organization for consistently shining a light on the harsh conditions of working immigrant women and for providing the policy answers that need to be enacted.

Last summer, we unveiled the first International Mother Language Day monument in Dentonia Park, and this year the community gathered there in February for the first time to honour those who lost their lives fighting for their language. Every year, this powerful ceremony, and indeed the existence of Bangladesh as an independent nation, serves to remind all of Canada of the importance of mother languages to root and ground us all.

Ontario and Canada need to follow the Bengali example, and to ensure that First Nations people can reclaim the languages stolen from them in residential schools. We have so much to learn from this beautiful community.

SUNDERLAND MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize an annual and very sweet community event taking place next

weekend, April 2 and 3, in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the Sunderland Maple Syrup Festival. After two long years, the annual festival is back, and this year we are celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Maple syrup festivals will be taking place all across the province over the next few weeks where community members can gather together to enjoy this season’s maple syrup harvest and learn about the time-honoured tradition of making maple syrup.

Maple syrup has a long history in Ontario and it continues to be an important staple in our rural and global economy. Canada remains the world’s largest producer of maple syrup, and I want to give a shout-out to and thank some of our local producers in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, like Harlaine Maple Products and Pinedale Maples in Sunderland, for allowing community members to visit their farms every year to learn about such an important Canadian tradition.

So come learn about traditional maple syrup production, beginning with early knowledge sharing from Indigenous communities to today’s production methods, support local vendors and take part in lots of family-friendly activities next weekend in Sunderland.

Congratulations on 25 years of this tradition in Sunderland and thank you to the fantastic local volunteers who make it possible.

PORT COLBORNE TOP HAT CEREMONY

Mr. Jeff Burch: It’s my pleasure to speak today about the Port Colborne Top Hat Ceremony. My riding of Niagara Centre runs the length of the Welland Canal from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie through St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland and Port Colborne. An important tradition takes place in Port Colborne every year in March celebrating the annual opening of the Welland Canal, and this year the kickoff of the 64th navigation season of the St. Lawrence Seaway takes place on March 24.

Every year a top hat is presented to the captain of the first downbound vessel, and Port Colborne’s fair-trade committee made up of dedicated volunteers are on hand at Lock 8 Gateway Park with coffee and hot chocolate for the many residents and dignitaries in attendance.

Port Colborne has a rich history in the marine industry and does a great job promoting that fact through Canal Days festivities and the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum. We are also very proud of the Port Colborne Marine Auxiliary Rescue and its dedicated volunteers, formed in 1988 to preserve life and property in the waters surrounding Port Colborne.

Niagara drivers are well acquainted with bridge delays and know that we will spend time waiting for ships to pass in the coming weeks and months, but we are also aware of the economic benefits and jobs that the Welland Canal generates for the entire Niagara region. It is estimated that 3,300 ships pass through the canal annually. Today, over 40 million tonnes of cargo is carried through the canal by vessels each year. As a matter of fact, general cargo shipments surged by 71% last year. The top hat ceremony

gives us an opportunity to recognize the importance of the Welland Canal and how much it enriches the economy, history and culture of our great region and province.

AL LEEDER

Mr. Bill Walker: Today I rise in the Legislature to pay honour and tribute to the life of Alma James Vernon “Red” Leeder, formerly of Wiarton, who passed away on March 6 at the age of 92 years. Alma is survived by his wife Shirley, his companion of 69 years, sons Steve (Donna) and Bert (Susan), and was predeceased by daughter Maureen.

Mr. Speaker, Red Leeder was a pillar of our community. He served for 70 years in the Wiarton Rotary Club and was an absolute fixture at the corn booth at the Rotary Village Fair. He was twice awarded the Rotary Club’s Paul Harris fellowship and recognized as Rotarian of the Year in 2017. He was committed to the club’s mandate to help spread hope, particularly the Easter Seals concerts, which were hosted at the local arena. He was part of the community choir. He was on the recreation committee, and did much for the youth of our community.

He was a teacher, Mr. Speaker. At the age of 18 he began teaching in Amabel township, and went on to work as a teacher and principal in Shallow Lake, Wiarton, Ajax and Amabel-Hepworth over a distinguished 39 years.

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Red, or Al, as we knew him reverently in Wiarton, was a person who, along with his wife, Shirley, gave significantly to our community in many, many capacities. He and his wife, Shirley, helped to save the Wiarton train station, and he was always around to be able to help out youth in need. He was very firm and committed to what he did, but he was a compassionate, friendly giant, and he truly will be missed as part of our leadership in the Wiarton-Bruce Peninsula area.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Today is World Water Day. As Anishinaabe people, we know that the Creator has given our people a special relationship and responsibility to the water.

Water is one of the most basic elements we need to survive and live a good life. And it’s a basic human right.

Ontario is the province with the highest amount of drinking water advisories. In Kiiwetinoong today, there are 13 long-term drinking water advisories and five short-term advisories. This is 60% of the 31 First Nations in the Kiiwetinoong riding.

We had elders who told us decades ago that there would come a time where we would pay as much for water as we do for other resources. We are living in that time today.

The water that sustains all of us is under threat due to climate change, water diversion systems and man-made pollution. The health of our water system has an effect on our relationship to water. We must be able to trust our community water sources and those out on the land.

Speaker, today on this day, and every day, I hope you take the time to honour our collective responsibility to protect the water and the environment for our children and our future generations.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is an honour for me to rise in this House to acknowledge the progress that has been made on an area in this province that is of great concern to my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

In June 2021, I stood and brought forward motion 10, condemning Islamophobia, because the terror attack that took place in London demanded an immediate and unequivocal response. In the aftermath of this tragic loss, I joined my Liberal colleagues in working with all parties to address the issue of hate-motivated incidents in this province. From those collective efforts came Our London Family Act, Bill 86, put forward by the NDP.

Bill 86 is now at justice committee. Getting this bill passed quickly must be a genuine commitment from members of this House, following consultations with stakeholders and the development of a framework for combatting hate. It is critical that we work together to get Bill 86 passed as soon as possible.

I want to recognize the leadership of the CEO Mustafa Farooq of the National Council of Canadian Muslims, as well as Abdul Hai Patel, Nadeem Sheikh and Maaz Abowath from the Scarborough Muslim Association and, of course, MPP Mike Schreiner of the Green Party, who joined me in recent discussions about the bill. There was agreement from everyone who attended, including the relatives of the Afzaal family: If this government is committed to passing this bill, they must take action quickly.

Speaker, this weekend, sadly, we all know that hate-based attacks are happening in this province. Worshippers at Dar Al-Tawheed Islamic Centre in Mississauga were attacked in a hate-motivated incident, a clear reminder that the work that we need to do is ongoing. All parties agree: Bill 86 must be passed, and it must be passed now.

HORSE INDUSTRY WORKERS

Ms. Donna Skelly: Since our government first took office, we have been committed to tackling the skilled worker shortage. In the horse industry alone, there are over 1,000 unfilled jobs tending to horses on farms, racetracks and training facilities. Grooms and caretakers are fundamental to the health and welfare of the animals, and they are critical to the success of the industry.

The horse racing and breeding sector contributes \$2.3 billion each year to Ontario's economy. For more than a decade now, I've been working with Jim Whelan, president of the Ontario Harness Horse Association, to find a solution to the worker shortage program. I am so pleased that weeks ago, our Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development came to my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook to announce that our government is investing \$2.1 million

to train workers for rewarding careers in the horse industry; 250 participants are being offered free training and up to \$3,000 to cover expenses and paid work placements.

Hannah Knowles from Mount Hope is a young person who was looking for a new career path. She had been enrolled in a special effects program in a career college, but she really loves horses, and when this opportunity came up, she jumped at it. I am so proud that our government is supporting the project. It is giving people a head start in a career that they want to pursue, and it is assuring employers in the horse industry that they will have the trained workers they need.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today I ask that the government reject the plans Metrolinx has put forward to build a train maintenance facility and layover in the Don Valley park.

I support and my community supports the expansion of GO train service in the Lakeshore East corridor and in the rest of the system. We need this. My community understands—I understand—the need for increased GO services to get people out of their cars and onto mass transit. People support and want electrification of these GO lines to cut pollution and greenhouse gas emission. However, they don't want a rail maintenance and layover facility in the park area of the Don Valley. No one would propose such a facility in High Park and no one should propose such a facility in this location.

The Don Valley park is a major recreational area for a community that is becoming increasingly denser on both sides of the Don. These are areas already facing park deficits. We can't get new parkland in the centre of Toronto, and we can't afford to lose what we have. The minister should sit down with Metrolinx, review what is needed and find a new location that works from an environmental and engineering standpoint.

GEORGE LESLIE MACKAY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This is a very special year in Taiwan. It's a year filled with celebrations of George Leslie Mackay. He was the first Canadian missionary to Taiwan, who arrived there 150 years ago on March 9, 1872, and is still a beloved hero.

George Leslie Mackay was born in my riding of Oxford—incidentally, that was 178 years ago yesterday. The people of Taiwan are showing their regard for Mackay throughout this year with various celebrations and a message to the Canadian Mackay Committee from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen. I'd like to read part of the president's message to you today:

“As we commemorate the 150th anniversary of Reverend Mackay's 1872 arrival in Tamsui, we look back on his remarkable life as a missionary, educator, and medical practitioner in Taiwan. Among the most notable of his achievements was the founding of Oxford College, where Reverend Mackay himself lectured extensively on subjects including Bible studies and medicine.

“It was his devotion to public health that left possibly the deepest mark on Taiwan, as his name is now synonymous with the medical profession here. Several of Taiwan’s hospitals bear his name, ensuring that his legacy will continue for many years to come.

“Reverend Mackay represented Canada admirably through his time in Taiwan, sparking a close friendship between our two countries that endures to this day. Today, Taiwan and Canada are like-minded democracies working together toward a common global vision of peace, stability, and prosperity.” So says the president; so say we all.

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INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Today we are honoured to remember and pay tribute to a former member of our provincial Legislature, the late Claude Frederick Bennett, who was the MPP for Ottawa South during the 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd Parliaments. Mr. Bennett’s family are here with us in the Speaker’s gallery: His son Winston Bennett and spouse Erin, and daughter Natalie Bennett.

Also in the Speaker’s gallery is Mike Harris, Premier during the 36th and 37th Parliaments; John Parker, MPP for the riding of York East during the 36th Parliament; and David Warner, Speaker during the 35th Parliament.

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We’re delighted to have you here.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As I mentioned in my statement, we have a delegation here from the Taiwanese community. Ms. Jin-Ling Chen is the director-general of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office. Mr. Kuan-Chung Chen, Mr. Cheng-Hao Liao, Mr. Kuo-Hsiang Sun, Ms. Pei-Chen Hsu, Mr. Peter Huang, Ms. Maggie Lin, Mr. Edward Chung, Mr. Columbus Leo and Ms. Pi-Lin Lin. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: This is fantastic to be able to welcome people back to the House and I’m really excited to welcome my executive assistant, Jessica Beaupre, and my OLIP intern, Melody Greaves. Welcome into the chamber.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to welcome Charlie the chaplain who’s here with us all the time not only in spirit but in words and thought. Thank you for all you do for everyone in our province, our country and the world. Thank you, Charlie.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: On World Water Day, it is my pleasure to welcome to Queen’s Park people who have travelled from Tiny township. Tiny township has the purest water in the world. They’re here to make sure we protect it and we’re aware of it.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, I’ll ask our pages to assemble. It is my pleasure to introduce this group of legislative pages:

From the riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook, Kamal Alaichi; from Niagara Centre, Jackson Burch; from Sarnia–Lambton, Emily Coyle; from Toronto–Danforth, Mila Dechaine; from Don Valley North, Brianna Lovshin; from Ottawa South, Vivian Lozada; from Whitby, Rhythm Panchal; from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, Pallas Shen; from the riding of Simcoe–Grey, Callum Smith-Milne; and from Mississauga–Erin Mills, Ria Somaia.

We have two other pages who unfortunately aren’t here this morning, but will be helping us in the coming days: from the riding of Markham–Unionville, Stanley Zhou; and from the riding of Spadina–Fort York, Molly Marshall. We’re delighted to have you here as well. Thank you very much.

CLAUDE BENNETT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Claude Frederick Bennett, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty’s loyal opposition, five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group and five minutes allotted to Her Majesty’s government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Claude Frederick Bennett, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty’s loyal opposition, five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group and five minutes allotted to Her Majesty’s government. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: It’s an honour to rise today as the member of provincial Parliament for Ottawa Centre in the presence of two Premiers and the Bennett family to offer some remarks on the life of Claude Bennett, a truly huge figure in Ottawa politics.

As I think about what to say this morning about Claude Bennett, I think back to a question that took me myself into this place in the first instance, and that is the question of: Who do we serve in this work? What’s this work really about?

A lot of people out there are cynical about politics. They think politicians are in it to serve themselves. What I’ve found to be honest in all parts of this House is a number of people who are trying to make their communities better. We will disagree on how to get there, but we’re trying to make our communities better.

What I was heartened to know in the example of Claude Bennett is that we both hail from the same part of old Ottawa South, at the moment, on Bellwood Avenue; that Claude went to Hopewell Avenue Public School, where my kids go to school; that Claude was proud to be an Ottawa boy, as the vernacular often goes from his generation; and that he actually wanted to use everything he could to help make Ottawa better. But as I’ve learned, Speaker, in this work in three and a half years, a really

important question one has to ask themselves in this work that we do as a team with our community is: What are we prepared to sacrifice to serve our community?

What Claude Bennett was prepared to sacrifice was a number of things. He married very late, worked very hard, spent a lot of time on the road, as I understand, in a mobile van, going all over Ontario; and in doing that, he also entertained a certain amount of risk. So I want to entertain, just for our benefit collectively here, one in particular that benefited Ottawa in 1983.

When Claude was serving as a cabinet minister in the then-government led by Premier Davis, the Ottawa Heart Institute was about to open its doors, and it was short \$6.5 million in funding. Mr. Keon, who led that heart institute, told Claude that we could be facing a situation where the heart institute would open and there would be no equipment inside to help the people who would come in its doors. So Mr. Bennett decided to take a risk. On the spot, without any authority to authorize the spending, he guaranteed a \$6.5-million loan to the Ottawa Heart Institute and said that he would be meeting with Premier Davis shortly to figure out if the government could make right on the dispensation. He said in 2012 to someone who gave a retrospect of his life, "I'm going to Bill Davis and telling him what I've obligated the province to do. He either agrees or I'm gone." I ask, how many of us take risks like that in public life?

What I can tell you is that the Ottawa Heart Institute today is one of the leading institutes for helping Canadians who have thrombosis concerns, who have heart issues. It took a lot of sacrifices to get there, and I wanted to take a moment to name Claude Bennett's sacrifice.

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I'm also inspired, in the time I have left, Speaker, to talk about how much Mr. Bennett, despite his activity in politics, cared about his family. His wife, Deborah, apparently told him in 1986, "Do you think some day you would like to grow up and know your children?" It was one of those alarming conversations you have with your partner when you realize, "Oh, my gosh, I'm such a political nerd. I'm so immersed in this life that I may be forgetting what's most important."

He tells the reporter in this 2012 memoir that he saw many of his colleagues, with the stress of this job, succumb to alcohol addictions, succumb to habits that hurt themselves as they tried to cope with the stress of the occupation. What he decided to do instead was invest that stress through his faith and through his family. I think that's something we all can benefit from, given the pressure all of us are under in this place. I think the fact that we see his family here today is evidence to the fact that that was an investment worth making.

Speaker, I want to end with a quotation from the great American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson on success, that I think Claude Bennett meets:

To laugh often and much;

To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;

To earn the approbation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;

To appreciate beauty;

To find the best in others;...

To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition;...

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived—

This is to have succeeded.

Thank you, Bennett family, and thank you, Claude, for your service to Ontario.

Mr. John Fraser: It's an honour today to pay tribute to Claude Frederick Bennett, MPP for Ottawa South from 1971 to 1987. He sat in this seat. Claude held the responsibility for many different portfolios in the Davis government—a lot of responsibility.

Before coming to Queen's Park, he was an alderman, a deputy mayor and a controller, which is a position he actually held while he was here at Queen's Park for a year, which is a testament to his energy. He was born and raised in Ottawa, and was a lifelong resident.

I had the pleasure of knowing Claude, although our politics were definitely different. We came from two different political families; like the Hatfields and the McCoys in Ottawa South, we disagreed on many things. I never doubted for one second his commitment to the people of Ottawa and to the people of Ottawa South. His energy and enthusiasm and efforts left Ottawa a better place.

Aside from his work at Queen's Park, Claude was deeply involved in our community. He gave up so much of his time to build up and support places that are so important to our community, like the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the Glebe Centre. He oversaw a new Ottawa airport and St. Patrick's Home.

He loved sports. He was the president of the Ottawa Sooners Football Club, chair of the Ottawa Sport Hall of Fame and supported Lynx AAA baseball coming to the nation's capital.

Claude was energetically and enthusiastically involved in so many aspects of his hometown of Ottawa, but I would be remiss if I didn't say a few words about politics. His politics were definitely on the right-hand side of things. He was a true believer. He held fast to his values and he wasn't shy about it.

I only ever ended up in one debate with Claude, and that was at an Alta Vista Community Association meeting where he was coming in as the Ottawa Transition Board chair and I was coming in as Dalton McGuinty's local assistant. Claude finished his presentation and I got up to make my presentation. I talked a bit about health care and education and then, of course, opened the floor for questions, which each speaker did. Claude's hand was the first hand up. That's just about all I remember, apart from the ferocity of the question. I still have that feeling—that's almost 20 years ago—but we still treated each respectfully

after that. It was an early lesson for me to always be prepared.

I think it's important to mention his wife, Deborah, Winston and Natalie's mom. Like so many partners of politicians, she had to endure the long absences that we all know and the hectic schedules. As I understand it, she handled that with grace and gave back in her own right to her community—not the least of which was her dedication to the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in Ottawa South and the gift shop that's there. It's named after her now. It's Deborah's Gift Boutique.

Claude's life was full of boundless energy. I'd like to share a comment that Speaker David Warner helped me get from Chris Carruthers, his neighbour, who is also the former chief of staff of the Ottawa Hospital. This one is entitled the Ottawa Hunt Club Claude Bennett rule. When Claude took up golf at age 65, like everything else in his life, he went full speed ahead on the sport. He would book two games a day—18 holes in the morning, 18 holes in the afternoon, and occasionally, another 18 holes. He was monopolizing the tee sheet. Because he was playing twice a day or more each week and tee times were limited, others could not get on the course. As such, the club brought in the Claude Bennett rule, in that you could only book one round of 18 holes a day. The issue had never arisen in the over 100 years of the club.

He also took up walking with a vengeance. You could see him walking in the neighbourhood up to 20 kilometres a day. He would wear large earphones and walked at a very brisk pace—and anybody who knew Claude knows how quickly he moved through things. You could always spot him a mile away. He walked rain or shine. Like everything else in his life, once he started, he went at it passionately and full-time.

He was a good guy and always opinionated on anything political—just get him going.

To Winston and Natalie and to the gathered guests—mostly to Winston and Natalie and your families, thank you for sharing your dad with us. He left a mark on the city of Ottawa that won't be forgotten.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: It is truly an honour to have the opportunity to pay tribute to the life and the legacy of the Honourable Claude Bennett. He is dearly missed.

Claude shone brightly in life, and his legacy continues to shine after his passing in March 2020. The city of Ottawa, the province of Ontario and Canada have all been well served by his accomplishments and dedication to political life and public service.

With a career that spanned an amazing five decades, in both the municipal and provincial political arenas, Claude made an immeasurable contribution to his community.

And overarching all his vast achievements was his love of family and love of community. He would do anything to help a neighbour, and he had genuine interest in people. He would meet you once, remember your name and even your children's names and ask about them the next time he saw you, sincerely.

Claude Bennett was a remarkable man and a remarkable elected representative. He embodied what it means to

be a Progressive Conservative. He was fiscally responsible, adhering to guiding principles. At the same time, he was compassionate and caring and always focused on how to best support individuals, families and those who required a helping hand. With Claude, those combined character traits were hallmarks. It's who he was. And they are why today so many of us look back on his time in office with great fondness for the man and great regard for his accomplishments.

He led life with remarkable ability and seemingly boundless positivity, courage and hope for the future, and he led others with the same zest for life he had embraced. He knew how to work hard from a young age, and he came from a family that instilled the value of hard work and helping others.

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After serving 12 years as a municipal alderman at Ottawa city hall—the last years of which he served as acting mayor and a controller on the city's board of control—Claude took the step the run for a provincial seat. He would soon become the youngest member of the Ontario cabinet when Premier Davis appointed him Minister without Portfolio. He went on to serve as Minister of Industry and Tourism from 1973 to 1978, and he brought his positivity and enthusiasm to his role. He met with leaders and Ontarians across the province with the message that they had a voice at Queen's Park and he travelled the world promoting Ontario.

Claude would carry on to have an illustrious political career at Queen's Park, holding many important cabinet positions. At a tribute dinner held for Claude in 2015, Premier Davis reflected on his days working with him: "You are one of the most intelligent, one of the most delightful individuals in cabinet. It was a pleasure to be associated with you."

Throughout his political career, Claude represented his hometown with distinction. In fact, he was Ottawa's ultimate ambassador. He was also our ultimate champion. There is a lengthy list of significant landmarks around the city of Ottawa, and Claude Bennett had a central role in realizing those. We must thank him for his vision of a vibrant and livable city and his ability to deliver for the people of Ottawa.

Consider what he championed and accomplished—some of these things have already been mentioned, but there's always more: the Rideau Centre, the Ottawa Congress Centre, the provincial courthouse, Ottawa's regional Transitway, the Algonquin College expansion, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the Ottawa Heart Institute—without Claude and his collaboration with Dr. Keon, it may never have happened. He was a champion.

In so many ways, Claude shaped our Ottawa as we know it today, and we owe his life as an elected representative a great debt of gratitude.

Claude's beloved wife, Deborah, shared the dedication to community in providing her support to the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre for decades. The gift shop she championed was ultimately named in her honour. They were quite a pair.

Claude Bennett really cared. It showed in everything he did—in the way he treated people, in how he touched the lives of others, in his loving family with his wife, Deborah; daughter, Natalie; son, Winston; and their families. I have tremendous respect for Claude and I feel honoured to have been his friend. He was always generous with his time and he provided me with wise counsel as well as colourful anecdotes, as he was prone to do from time to time. I will always cherish Claude's friendship, as so many do.

We are grateful to the Honourable Claude Bennett for all that he has achieved, to his family for sharing his life with us and for his legacy of duty, kindness and hope for the future. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the members for their eloquent tributes as, together, we give thanks for the life and public service of Claude Bennett.

Applause.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can I just say to the minister across the way, that was very moving. I know you're feeling a lot of emotions right now, and that was lovely—as well as the other speakers, also.

My first question this morning is in fact to our Premier. We all know that our health care heroes gave their all during the pandemic. They gave their all, and now they are absolutely burned out. The nurses in our province, in our hospitals, in all health care settings really did deliver for us, but their government simply didn't have their backs.

Now, we know that they continue to face really difficult situations at work. There are staffing shortages that are massive. Their workloads on their wards are extremely heavy. They feel disrespected because of this government's low-wage policy, Bill 124, and they continue to face significant mental distress. Yesterday, the federation of nurses told Parliament, "Over 80% of nurses report insufficient staffing in their workplace, with two thirds saying the quality of care has declined over the past year."

My question is simple: Where is this Premier's plan to retain, recruit and return health care workers to our health care system?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. We certainly recognize the tremendous work that's been done by nurses across the province for the last two years. We know that they have, in many cases, had to sacrifice being with their own families, especially before vaccinations started, and we recognize that a strong nursing workforce is critical as we move forward into our recovery phase, past COVID.

That's why our government is investing in a number of different ways in order to retain nurses, first of all. We're investing \$763 million to provide Ontario's nurses with a

lump sum retention incentive of up to \$5,000 per person. That's equivalent to about a 6.9% increase.

But there's more than that. We are retaining and we're recruiting more and more nurses in order to be able to allow for some of the nurses who have been on the front lines for the last two years to be able to have the time off that they need, because many of them have been at work virtually the entire last two years. So we need to do more work both to retain what we have but also to recruit more people, and I'll speak to that in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If this minister doesn't know, she ought to, that their one-time payment with strings attached was largely panned by nurses. They still feel very disrespected.

But it's not just nurses, Speaker. It's not just nurses. Medical lab professionals processed millions of COVID tests and other samples over the last two years. Their new report says that they are experiencing burnout as well. Michelle Hoad, the CEO of the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario, said this: "We have a mass exodus of people leaving the profession because they just are tired of feeling unappreciated." They, too, are disrespected by this Premier's low-wage policy, Bill 124.

My question is, why does this Premier insist on continuing to disrespect and drive out health care professionals in this province with this low-wage policy, including our medical lab techs?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, what we're doing is supporting all of our health care professionals with the investments that we've made. We've made investments to support our nurses. We made investments previously with the pandemic pay to help people get through this time period and to recognize their efforts, knowing that they were, in many cases, having to leave their families behind; they were working extra shifts. We recognize that all front-line health care professionals have been through a great deal, and that is why we are spending additional monies in order to recruit and retain more health care professionals.

We've also recognized that we need more physicians in Ontario. That's why we're expanding, for the first time in the last 10 years, the number of undergraduate and post-graduate spaces for physicians and to train more doctors for northern and rural areas.

But we recognize that there are also other front-line professionals that need help. That's why we've expanded the number of beds available. We're expanding the number of professionals that are going to be able to be trained at some of these locations, including the new medical school in Brampton that is going to be started by Ryerson, which will also be able to train other health care professionals, including lab techs, including nurses and other front-line health care professionals.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the reality is the staffing crisis continues to be a problem in our health care

services, and this government should not be surprised by that.

1100

Back in October the Premier's own science table flagged them with this concern: "Sustained burnout will likely contribute to staff retention challenges due to health care providers leaving their workplaces and professions. A vicious circle may be under way where understaffing leads to increased burnout and an even weaker health care workforce." That spiral is under way, but it doesn't have to be this way. This can be fixed, and we can start fixing it up by ripping up the government's Bill 124 low-wage policy.

My question is, when nurses, when PSWs, when lab technicians, when the government's own science table are ringing the alarm bells that something needs to happen and it needs to happen fast, why is he stubbornly refusing to fix it and get rid of Bill 124, his low-wage policy?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we are dealing with it, by retaining the front-line health care professionals that we have, by recruiting more people and providing them also with the supports they need if they are facing exhaustion or burnout. In some cases, many of them need mental health supports. We are providing that in terms of online assistance, but for people that need front-line interpersonal care, they can receive that as well.

We're also getting ready for the future by building the support at the Runnymede centre that is going to be for front-line professionals. That includes front-line police officers, front-line firefighters, but also front-line health care workers, because we know it can often be more difficult for them to obtain supports in a traditional setting. We are creating a centre that is going to be for them when they are facing burnout, when they have mental health or addiction needs. This is going to be a centre specifically for front-line health care providers and front-line providers for other services.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. We all know it's been a difficult couple of years in our schools in this province. There's been a new report issued by People for Education, an organization that does a lot of work in terms of our education system. In that report it says that 90% of principals found that the pandemic was extremely difficult to navigate for the staff that they were responsible for. The report says the stress on teachers and education workers is resulting in an absolute crisis in our education system, a staffing crisis that's significant and that they're very worried about. Worse, the group is calling for action, and they have been doing so for some time, but they're being ignored by this Premier and his minister.

My question is, why are the Premier and the minister ignoring our kids and our schools and the workers who work in those places, the folks who support our children and our families? Why are they being ignored by this government?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara West and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. Speaker, I think it's important that we take a step back and we look at the historic investments that have been made by this government, by Premier Ford and Minister Lecce and the entire government of Ontario, in our education system—truly historic investments that have enforced and built upon the health and safety measures that we put in place based on the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and, of course, his team.

I want to speak a little bit about some of the specifics. We've seen that this year alone, under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is increasing investment in public education by \$683 million, the single largest investment in Ontario's history. That's a substantial investment. What this means is that on an average provincial per-pupil basis, funding is going to be over \$13,000 per student for the first time in our province's history. There's a \$92-million increase in the Special Education Grant funding through the GSN being projected to increase to over \$3.25 billion, substantial funding that's ensuring our students receive the best education possible.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the report that I was referring to in my first question, principals shared stories of the hardships they've been facing during the pandemic, and I'm going to share some of those with the government, because apparently they're unaware. One principal said, "Families are undergoing significant stress.... I have a staff member breaking down in my office over stress at least once a week. It's a lot to take in...."

Another one said, "Without an increase in supports to keep schools open safely ... impact of educational funding cuts"—which is what's happening—"especially during a pandemic, on our community will only worsen."

The government cut \$500 million from education just in the last review. That's not going to fix what's broken. Cuts by this government are not going to fix what's broken in our education system. When is the Premier going to start investing in education, stop cutting and fix what's broken to make sure our educators and our students get the kinds of schools that they deserve?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The leader of the official opposition must have been a victim of discovery math because the reality is that, on this side of this House, we have invested the single largest amount in public education in Ontario's history. Our government's investments in public education have increased each and every single year since taking office, rising 9% in the 2022-23 school year when compared to before our government took office. This is a substantial amount of investment, and it is ensuring that each and every student in the province of Ontario is receiving the safe and supportive environment that they need to learn. It's ensuring that each and every student is receiving the staffing supports through our education workers.

I want to speak about a few of the specifics. We recently announced a detailed plan, Ontario's Learning Recovery Action Plan, to strengthen the learning recovery in reading and math, anchored by the largest provincial investments in supports, summer learning, mental health and special education in our province's history. These are real dollars that are going into our education system, including \$176 million being expended to access free, publicly funded tutoring in small groups; our largest summer learning investment in Ontario's history of \$15 million; expanded teacher-led online tutoring in English and French, with more days and grades offered to more students; and, of course, very important as we deal with the consequences of the pandemic, the largest mental health investment in Ontario's history, more than \$90 million, a quadrupling of what we saw under the former Wynne-Del Duca government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it is certainly not surprising that this government is denying the cuts they're making to education, but the evidence is very clear. In fact, that report's conclusions should be an alarm bell for this government, and the fact that it's not is truly frightening. Here's another quote from that study: "The Ontario government and education system have allowed students, staff, and families to go without the support, resources, and action plan needed to navigate this crisis."

But, Speaker, it didn't have to be this way; in fact, it still doesn't have to be this way. We can invest in our schools and our classrooms. We can build a system that has the supports that our children need. We can take care of our excellent staff and give them the respect that they deserve. Together, we can actually fix what's broken in our education system, but we have to stop the cuts and make the necessary investments.

My question is, why won't this Premier do exactly that?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have to correct the record because, under the leadership of this Premier, the government has increased funding to the publicly funded public education system each and every year by historic amounts to ever-increasing levels to ensure that every student of this province receives an education that they can be proud of, that can ensure they're prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

But I want to speak a little bit about some of the specific issues that were mentioned by the member opposite, although, of course, clearly she hasn't had the opportunity to go through some of the budget items that express how much we're increasing supports for public education. We've invested over \$300 million to hire 2,350 new staff. We also announced an agreement with the Ontario Teachers' Federation to deliver access to thousands of retired educators. We've increased the 50-day re-employment rule to 95 days for retired teachers, principals and vice-principals in the public school system. We've expanded the use of temporary certificates to a new cohort of Ontario teacher candidates. This will allow approximately 3,400 additional certificates to teacher candidates this year alone.

These are the sorts of measures that we are taking as a government to ensure that each and every classroom in this province has good staff in front of it, and each and every classroom is safe, supported with ventilation, with proper and adequate access to infection control measures—

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

The next question?

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: In October 2020, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued a minister's zoning order to enable a medical innovation park on unserviced farmland in Oro-Medonte. The MZO was sought by developers with political and donor ties to the PC Party. By granting the MZO, the government claimed it would accelerate the production of PPE, vaccines and other medical supplies, but none of that happened. The medical innovation centre was never built. Instead the property owner put the land up for sale for \$26 million, citing the MZO as a key selling point.

1110

Through you, Speaker: Why is the Premier handing out MZOs just to boost the property values of friends and donors to the PC Party?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll caution members: You can't impute motive.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing wishes to reply.

Hon. Steve Clark: Absolutely, Speaker, I want to reply. Those are unfounded allegations that the member should really seriously reconsider when he's posing a question.

Again, I've said this many times: Minister's zoning orders come at the request of the local council. They're for priority projects that that council determines are needed and are necessary in their community.

I understand that that property is not for sale. That information, while it might have been correct several months ago, is not the case today. We're going to continue to work with that council to ensure that the project and the zoning meet the intent of the minister's zoning order. I thank the member for the question.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: According to a Teranet search, the Oro-Medonte property was bought in April 2020 for \$2.6 million, six months before the MZO was issued. Then the property owner put the land up for sale for \$26 million, 10 times what they had paid for it less than two years before for the same land. All that had changed was the MZO.

This government has issued 80 MZOs in the last three years, more than five times what the previous government issued in 15 years. More than half of those MZOs, Speaker, have benefited friends or donors to the Premier and the PC Party. When will the Premier stop corrupting the planning system with special favours to his friends and donors?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I say to the member for Niagara Centre: You can't impute motive with a question or any statement in the House.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Withdraw, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order on the government side.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks for withdrawing that. That's the important thing that the NDP should be doing, Speaker.

But the fact of the matter is—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We know what the fact of the matter is.

Hon. Steve Clark: And the Leader of the Opposition can chirp all she wants, but here's the compare-and-contrast: We want to build Ontario up. We want to work with municipalities. We want to ensure that municipalities can build the housing, can have the job creation, can have a basis to move Ontario—which we all believe on this side of the House is the economic engine of our country.

Again, Speaker, Liberals and New Democrats will always gravitate to a coalition against development, against prosperity, against local councils. We are going to continue to work with councils to ensure that our province leads the nation.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to stand up in the House to represent the communities in my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure: \$17 million to Grey county for 3,982 house connections, and \$16 million to Bruce county for 5,225 homes as part of the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology program, or SWIFT.

Mr. Speaker, just last week, Grey county announced that they would be using some of their provincial funding to minimize the increase of property taxes from a 3.75% hike to a 2.88% increase. This is great news for the use of funding that will go a long way in putting money back in the pockets of the hard-working people of Grey county, and I look forward to seeing the other projects that will be funded.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the Minister of Infrastructure please share with us how our government is supporting critical infrastructure projects in my riding?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much for the question. There's no question that our small, rural and northern municipalities have been the victim of chronic underfunding to support their infrastructure backlog by the previous government. That is why our government committed an additional \$1 billion annually in our fall economic statement, bringing our total investment to \$2 billion per year over the next five years for the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. These investments also help 424 small, rural and northern municipalities, including those in southwestern Ontario, build and repair their

infrastructure such as roads, bridges and water and waste water systems.

As part of our investment, 13 communities throughout the area, including Bruce and Grey counties, will see over \$12 million to support local projects for more than 266,000 residents, to provide safe and reliable infrastructure. These people are getting the infrastructure that they so desperately deserve.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the minister for her great response. I know this funding will go a long way to support municipalities in my riding and across our great province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I know that our government is working tirelessly to connect Ontarians to high-speed Internet, an issue that is very important in my riding and, again, across the province. In areas of southwestern Ontario, including Grey and Bruce counties, we're retaining and attracting young farmers and seeing increases in their earnings. Despite the increasing population and drive for more farmers, many of these farmlands don't have the connections they need to connect to reliable high-speed Internet, an essential service they rely on heavily to access information to make business decisions, market their products, operate on-farm technology and much more.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure please explain how our government is helping these farmers in my riding and across our great province connect to compete in today's economy?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I want to thank the member for his hard work.

Our government is investing a historic \$4 billion in high-speed Internet infrastructure and has committed to full connectivity province-wide by the end of 2025. Through Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology, or SWIFT, more than 63,000 homes and businesses are being connected to high-speed Internet services in the region. And we didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. We invested a total of \$255 million to connect 58,000 more homes and businesses across southwestern Ontario. Construction is under way for 53 projects, and SWIFT is on track to complete construction by June 2023. Our government is saying yes to building Ontario and yes to connecting all Ontarians.

LAND REGISTRATION

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Experts have been warning us for years that home prices are being driven up by investors who anonymously buy and sell homes in Ontario and Canada to store wealth, launder money about cheat on their taxes. The BC government found that money laundering in the real estate sector caused house prices to skyrocket by 5% in just one year. Experts and the NDP agree: To stabilize housing prices and stop tax evasion and money laundering in the real estate sector, we must bring in a land registry and require secret investors to reveal their true identity, but this government doesn't want to do it.

Why is this government allowing anonymous investors to drive up the cost of housing beyond what Ontarians can afford?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for the question. She had a very similar question a couple of weeks ago, and I know the Minister of Finance gave a really good answer. I'll let him deal with the supplemental.

Our government has been crystal clear throughout our mandate that all housing options are on the table. We spent a lot of time early on in our term looking at housing supply—

Interjection.

Hon. Steve Clark:—something that the laughing Leader of the Opposition has voted against every time. Again, we had a bill that protected tenants and strengthened community housing, something you would think New Democrats would be in favour of. Again, they vote against it—even some of our measures, including the Housing Affordability Task Force.

It's interesting that some members support some of the issues but don't support some of the others. There's a bit of a challenge in that caucus in terms of getting their housing policy. But do you know what's not in their housing policy, Speaker, not one word? That's supporting our call to federal government for the \$490 million that they owe us.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is back to the Premier. A new report from Transparency International Canada reveals that Ontario and Canada are being marketed in Russia and elsewhere as great places for money laundering and fraud. Countries like the UK are rushing to pass legislation to create a public land registry to expose and stop money laundering and fraud. A similar bill has been sitting in our Legislature for months, yet this government does nothing.

1120

Why are Russian oligarchs and other transnational criminals still allowed to take advantage of Ontario's weak transparency laws and hide financial crimes in our real estate sector?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Finance to reply.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for that very important question. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure she has read the fall economic statement that I tabled in this House November 4, 2021. She's nodding her head, so she has.

Of course, as you know, anyone would note that the government introduced the Ontario Business Corporations Act as a measure to prevent and better detect the use of corporations for tax evasion, money laundering or other illicit financial activities, Mr. Speaker. That's right there in the fall economic statement. We're taking action.

Let me tell you something else, Mr. Speaker. What the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was talking

about is the imbalance of supply and demand of housing. We're welcoming people right across the world to this province. Our Minister of Labour and our Premier are welcoming Ukrainians to this great province. They have to have a place to live. We have to build houses. We have to build supply. We won't rest until we start to build more houses and more places to live in this great province.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, just before the March break, I tabled a private member's bill in relation to a very important issue: human trafficking.

Bill 99 seeks to help survivors with their financial burden as they try to recover a normal way of living. Survivors of human trafficking often find themselves with huge debts that were forced upon them, like credit cards and student loans, and it's really nothing else than financial fraud. I'm proposing that these coerced debts be forgiven and that information on the debts not be made available when the finances of the survivors are evaluated.

Discrimination on the basis of someone having been trafficked is sadly common in the financial sector. My question is, will the government support my bill to put a stop to this heartless practice?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that very important question. This is something, on this side of the House, we take very seriously. In my former role as Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, I was one of the co-leads on developing the anti-human-trafficking strategy, so our government has taken continuous action on this issue.

In the past, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities has exercised discretion to forgive Ontario student loans and debt for human trafficking survivors based on financial hardships, economic considerations or other circumstances that do not warrant the collection of these debts. These requests are conducted on a case-by-case basis, and as part of the review, the ministry looked at individual circumstances, including documentation that was provided, such as police reports.

I know I have addressed a letter that you sent to my office. This is a very important issue, and I know I'll have more information in the follow-up about the strategy that we have developed and the importance that this government takes towards human trafficking victims.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I very much appreciate the intent of the response and trying to help with the debt, but I think we need legislation that addresses that in a systemic way to make sure that these survivors are protected. The United States did recently pass a law barring the collection and consideration of coerced debts incurred during human trafficking. I think Ontario should do the same.

Human trafficking is a horrible crime that targets women, racialized people and vulnerable people. I find it alarming that kids in our schools are among the victims. I think that we should do everything possible to at least help the survivors.

Will the government be taking concrete steps to ensure that survivors of human trafficking aren't prevented from taking their life back because of financial fraud?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jane McKenna: I just want to first of all say, when I first got this portfolio, I went with Minister Lecce and the Sol Gen, and we went to a school just for that alone, to make sure that the school boards would be able to recognize when kids were being human trafficked. It was an honour to be there, and I was very blessed to be part of that right after Minister Dunlop.

Everyone deserves freedom from exploitation. Unfortunately, Ontario is a hub for human trafficking and has the most police-reported incidents of human trafficking in Canada. That is why our government created Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy, and we have committed to investing \$307 million over the next five years. Our Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy is focused on four key areas: raising awareness, which I just spoke about; protecting victims and intervening early; supporting survivors; and holding offenders accountable. Thank you very much.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. Speaker, the economic impact of the pandemic has many young Ontarians worried about entering the workforce, getting jobs and developing meaningful and stable careers. Students both across the province and right at home in my riding want to be secure in their future endeavours. We all know a skilled workforce will be an important driver for Ontario's economy and competitiveness. Students who choose to enroll in post-secondary education should be rewarded for their hard work and dedication by getting a job that will support them throughout their lives.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the minister tell us what is being done to ensure students in post-secondary education get the education and skills needed to lead meaningful careers?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park for all of your hard work. I know we're meeting this afternoon for an exciting announcement in your area.

Our government puts students first through supporting the economy, jobs and benefiting hard-working Ontarians. And this month, we've announced exciting initiatives for students.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen PSWs be the true heroes, and we are incredibly appreciative of the private career colleges that have trained countless students

for their heroic roles in health and long-term care. That is why earlier this month our government relaunched the Personal Support Worker Challenge Fund for private career colleges to support up to 4,000 PSW students in Ontario. This \$54.7-million investment will not only address the shortages of PSWs in the province but also support students for meaningful careers in health care.

Our government says yes to making investments that will ensure Ontarians have access to the health care they need, and private career colleges have an excellent track record preparing students for in-demand roles in health and long-term care. We are committed to preparing students for critical jobs caring for some of the most vulnerable people as we build a more resilient and stronger health care system in Ontario.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her answer and for her ongoing commitment to supporting students in Ontario. I admire this government's all-hands-on-deck approach to bolster our health care system and this minister's evident dedication to students and post-secondary education. Supporting students for in-demand roles in health care through high-quality education will support Ontario's economic recovery and help hard-working Ontarians in their careers.

I'm curious to know what other sectors the minister is supporting students in. So my question to the member is, what other initiatives has the minister taken on to support students so they can get meaningful careers and make Ontario stronger?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for that question. As minister, I want to make sure students get every opportunity to get the skills and education needed for jobs in all sectors, including new, innovative and cutting-edge industries. That is why I was delighted to announce the new Ontario Esports Scholarship program.

Gaming is the largest segment of Canada's entertainment industry, with Ontario home to 300 video game companies. These in-demand jobs are growing here in Ontario, and this new scholarship program will assist colleges and universities with \$1 million over two years to support students enrolled in programs such as video gaming, game development and game design.

Last year, the gaming industry contributed more than \$5.5 billion to the Canadian economy, supporting more than 55,000 full-time jobs, including computer scientists, software engineers, data scientists and marketing professionals. This rapidly growing industry in the province is not only supporting our provincial economy, but it is also a critical piece to support training in sectors like health care, manufacturing and the skilled trades.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Keeping cabinet mandate letters a secret has been a top priority for this Premier for three years. He's so determined to keep them hidden that he's refused to listen to the Information

and Privacy Commissioner, the Divisional Court and now the Court of Appeal.

1130

This is public information, Speaker; it's literally just what the Premier asked his first cabinet to do in their jobs. That's why the Court of Appeal dismissed the Premier's last-ditch attempt to stall. Fifty-five days ago, the court ruled he had to release these 150 pages of mandate letters so Ontarians could see.

Will the Premier do as the court said he needs to do and release these mandate letters, or will he continue to waste time and money on this needless and expensive charade?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll help the member opposite. We were elected in 2018 with a mandate to fire the six-million-dollar man: check.

We were elected on a promise that we would stabilize energy prices in the province of Ontario: check.

We were elected to stop the 19% increase that the previous Liberal government had planned: check.

We were elected on a mandate to deliver a three-stop subway for the people of Scarborough: check.

We were elected to bring back the 300,000 jobs that were lost by the Liberals: check.

We were elected on a mandate to end red tape in the province of Ontario: check.

Mr. Speaker, on every single mandate, we are delivering for the people of the province of Ontario, and we will continue to do so for a long time to come.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Man, oh, man. Speaker, back to the Premier: What an answer. I can't believe it. Anyway, now I know.

Why the Premier is so desperate to withhold these letters from the public is still unknown, although the answer we got may explain some of it. What's also unknown is how much this ridiculous process has cost the people of Ontario. The government has refused multiple requests to reveal how many public dollars and government resources they have poured into this three-year-long battle at keeping secret what everyone involved says the public has a right to know.

If the Premier won't be open with the people of Ontario about what is in the letters, he should at least be open about how much the secret is costing the people of Ontario. When will this Premier reveal to Ontarians just how much he spent trying to hide these mandate letters from the public?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's no wonder the member opposite is so worried about that answer, because he participated in all of the things that I mentioned. He was very happy to vote for a carbon tax for the people of the province of Ontario that would cost every single Ontarian hundreds of thousands of dollars. One of the first thing we did was eliminate that, Mr. Speaker. He was one of the architects in the program that saw us pay billions of dollars for energy that we did not need and could not afford. He

stood up happily and made sure that it happened by working closely with his coalition partners in the Liberal government, Mr. Speaker, because they worked together.

I understand why he's stressed out, Mr. Speaker, but this is what I can tell the member: The mandate that we have, we are delivering on. Health care reform: We're doing it. Building long-term care: We're doing it. Transit and transportation: We're doing it. Better colleges and universities: We're doing it. Delivering for our students so they can get past the discovery math of the past: We're doing it, Mr. Speaker.

And what we're seeing in Ottawa today—the people know if you want a strong, stable Ontario, the only route to it is a strong, stable provincial—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Let's restart the clock. The next question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. By the end of the 2014-15 school year, when the full-day kindergarten program was fully implemented, almost half a million of our earliest learners were already benefiting. This marked a major shift when this program was first announced in 2010 by the Ontario Liberals, and it amounted to the most significant investment in Ontario education in a generation. Students in FDK are better prepared to enter grade 1—actually, even grade 3—and are more successful in school.

Thanks to the leadership of the federal Liberals, we once again have an opportunity to invest in our children's future. As of today, every single province and territory in this country, with the exception of Ontario, has signed and started to implement a child care agreement with the federal Liberal government. Conservatives are ideologically opposed to this child care agreement, just as they were opposed to FDK. They know that Ontarians will not want them to cancel a program they're benefiting from when they see the learning benefits for children.

Speaker, will the Premier stop dragging his feet and sign the child care agreement with the federal government—

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

To reply on behalf of the government, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look at the question. In the question, she said, "thanks to the leadership of the federal government," which means that for 15 years the government that she was a part of failed the people of the province of Ontario.

This, of course, is a member who brought forward a motion of support and confidence in the government—the first in the history of parliamentary democracy, where an opposition party brings forward a vote of confidence in the government and votes en masse with the NDP, begs us to

ensure that we stay in government right until the end of our mandate.

When it comes to child care, we're not going to follow the lessons of the previous Liberal government, which brought us the highest child care fees in the country. We're going to work on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario to sign a deal that is in the best interests of the people of the province of Ontario, that supports families for generations to come—and not what the opposition would have us do: disadvantage future generations of Ontarians to cut a deal today. That's not what we'll do. We'll do what's right for the people of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the Premier and his government: This Premier and this government cite the costs of a child care program as the reason for their delay. Kicking and screaming, they are being dragged to the negotiating table.

However, Ontarians know that an investment of \$1 in child care will get a return of \$1.50 or maybe even \$2 back. They know that this investment will increase labour force participation, especially for women—and it is Women's History Month, so that is very important. It will boost Ontario's GDP as well as generate more revenue for this province. But more importantly, it will help Ontarians with the deepening crisis of affordability in this province.

Speaker, \$10-a-day child care for Ontario families who are struggling to cope with the costs of housing and food will make an enormous difference. It is already costing over \$1,000 this year to Ontario families by this government's delay in signing.

Are you going to give this money back to those families who are losing \$1,000 because of your delay?

Speaker—

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

Again, the government House leader to reply.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, these are remarkable questions from the member opposite. Her question highlights every single failure of the previous Liberal government. The reason it is costing families so much money is because of the programs and policies of that member and the government that she was a part of.

The reason we have the highest child care fees in the country are because of the decisions that you made, working with your coalition partners in the NDP. That's why we have the highest child care fees. You voted against every single measure that we put in place to reduce those fees for parents. And now, all of a sudden, colleagues, the Liberals care about affordability. You didn't care about affordability when you worked with the NDP to put a carbon tax on the people of the province of Ontario. You didn't care about affordability when you were raising taxes. You didn't care about affordability when 300,000 jobs were going somewhere else.

People understand that to protect progress, prosperity and growth, a strong, stable provincial Progressive

Conservative government is the only way to do it, and on June—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

I'll remind the members to make their comments through the chair and not directly across the floor at each other.

Please start the clock. The next question.

1140

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Donna Skelly: Speaker, we are going to continue on the theme of the consistent failures of the previous Liberal government. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

As we all know, unfortunately, under the previous Liberal government, Ontario's auto sector was absolutely decimated. It was on life support. Hundreds of thousands of jobs fled the province. The sector had zero confidence in the previous Liberal government, and they simply saw no future here in Ontario, but things have changed under the leadership of this Premier and this minister. Today, the auto sector is making significant investments in this province.

My question to the minister: Please tell this House what recent investments have been made to support good-paying jobs right here in Ontario.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Last week, with the Premier, we were proud to lead yet another game-changing investment in Ontario's auto sector. Honda Canada announced a \$1.4 billion investment in their plant in Alliston to upgrade and retool their plant for hybrid vehicle production, and we made a strategic investment of \$132 million to support those jobs here in Ontario.

Through our Driving Prosperity plan we're focusing on transforming our auto sector and positioning Ontario as North America's leader in developing and building the cars of the future. This investment will secure thousands of new jobs at their plant in Alliston but will also create thousands more indirect jobs all through the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, to the minister, for all of your hard work. Clearly, the auto sector has confidence in the province of Ontario and in this government. Investments like these have transformed local economies and they are securing their prosperity for years to come. Ontarians truly deserve a government that is willing to make these anchor investments in local communities as they have multiple spinoff benefits and create great-paying jobs for local workers. I see it every single day in my hometown of Hamilton.

There is so much more we can do and we are doing. Back to the minister: Can you please tell us what this investment means for Ontarians and what the government's broader plan is to transform and secure Ontario's automotive sector?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: This investment from Honda continues the momentum of significant auto investments we've seen in the province. In just over a year, our auto and related manufacturers have invested \$9 billion here in the province of Ontario. Because we reduced the cost of doing business in Ontario by nearly \$7 billion annually, we have created the right economic conditions to attract yet another historic investment. This program from Honda only further solidifies Ontario's position as the global auto manufacturing hub. We are positioning Ontario's economy to unleash our potential and show the world our manufacturing might.

We continue implementing Driving Prosperity—that is our plan for the auto sector—and it will transform the province's auto supply chain to build the cars of the future.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sara Singh: Yesterday, the province's Patient Ombudsman released a two-year report that shows that this government has neglected long-term care for far too long. As we all know, nearly 4,400 residents and staff lost their lives in the pandemic in long-term care. But these problems weren't just because of the pandemic, these are systematic issues that were bad under the Liberals and made even worse by this government. As the Patient Ombudsman said, "No one in Ontario's health care system wants a repeat of the scenarios we faced in the spring of 2020. This will take strong leadership."

What is the government doing to assist the Patient Ombudsman to ensure that these complaints are handled properly and that Ontarians receive care with dignity and respect in our long-term-care system?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think it should be quite obvious what we've been doing right from the beginning, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we welcome the report, because it really solidifies what we already knew. We knew that we had to make important investments in long-term care in the province of Ontario. It was the Liberals and the NDP who worked together in a coalition who ignored long-term care between 2011 and 2014, especially at a time when the NDP held the balance of power, to ignore long-term care at a time when it was so important.

But what are we doing, Mr. Speaker? We're making important investments in staffing and care, because we know we have to increase staffing. We're going towards a groundbreaking North American-leading four hours of care, again something this government is doing. We're putting the resources behind it. That's a \$5-billion commitment. And we are building thousands of long-term-care beds across the province of Ontario and upgrading those old beds, eliminating ward beds.

There is more work to be done, but this government will continue to make the appropriate investments and get the job done.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: The report titled Honouring the Voices and Experiences of Long-Term-Care-Home Residents, Caregivers and Staff During the First Wave of COVID-19 in Ontario makes it clear that systemic issues are not being addressed in long-term care and in home care and community care. It's evident that patients and staff are not getting the supports they need to provide the quality care that residents deserve. We only need to read stories like story number 9 in the report that indicate there was no assistance provided for meals for residents, and that family members flagged concerns like dehydration and malnutrition, and yet nothing was done.

Speaker, the Patient Ombudsman says that families are concerned that their loved ones are not getting the service levels they deserve and staff shortages are leading to patients being abandoned. The office raised in 2021 that more than double the number of mandatory reports were made by the ministry, and these reports outline abuse, neglect or risk of harm over the previous year, under this government's leadership.

What is this government going to do to implement the policy recommendations in the Patient Ombudsman's report and provide the care that residents in long-term care deserve?

Hon. Paul Calandra: What the report does is highlight the system that we inherited, frankly. We all knew this. That's why it was so disappointing that when they had the balance of power, when they could force the previous government, the coalition partners, into making some decisions in long-term care, they settled for a stretch goal in insurance.

Well, it doesn't matter, because what are we doing, Mr. Speaker? We're building new long-term-care homes across the province. While the previous Liberal-NDP coalition were only able to develop 611 net new beds, we're delivering 30,000 new beds. But when it comes to the beds, there's no point in having beds if you don't have care. That's why we're increasing staffing by 27,000 physicians across the province.

Now, what does that mean for the people of Brampton, delivered by the President of the Treasury Board? What it means is \$35 million more for staffing for the homes in Brampton, on top of the homes that we are building in Brampton, on top of the new hospital that the President of the Treasury Board has delivered, on top of the medical school, the university—

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

The next question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. We all know that Bill 88 is erroneously named the Working for Workers Act, because what it does is it actually makes gig workers second-class workers in Ontario. They're actually not able to get the same kinds of benefits and protections that all other workers can get in Ontario: no health and safety protections, not even minimum wage,

because you're only paying people for engaged time. That's like saying to a cashier in a supermarket, "I'm only going to pay you when someone is standing at your cash."

Why did they call it the Working for Workers Act if it doesn't work for workers? Because they like to say it. They like to write bills so they can put on their flyers, "I'm working for workers." But they're not. It's not going to raise up gig workers, not at all.

Interjection: Yes, it is.

Mr. John Fraser: No, it isn't.

Speaker, when will the Premier actually do the things that he likes to say he's going to do?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Mississauga–Malton.

1150

Mr. Deepak Anand: Through you, Mr. Speaker—and thank you to the member opposite for asking this question—as we know, in 2016, only 4.5% of workers were in the gig economy. Today, one in five Canadians works in the gig economy, and the number is expected to rise. That is why our Working for Workers Act 2, if passed, will make Ontario the first province in Ontario to protect the foundational rights of these digital platform workers.

To the workers: I want to assure you this legislation will make sure that digital platform workers will have the right to information on how they are being penalized on that platform. It will require written notice if they are removed. It will give them the right to resolve work-related disputes in Ontario, in the province where they work and live. Most importantly, it will protect them from reprisal if they seek to assert their rights.

Our ministry has made protecting workers our first priority. Whether you work in the gig economy, whether you work in a big company, a small business or any rideshare app, you will not be left behind in this province.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The Working for Workers Act doesn't actually give health and safety protections to gig workers. It doesn't actually give them minimum wage. It doesn't give them things like vacation pay or statutory holidays in some sort of prorated form; not at all.

But let's go back to the Premier saying things and not actually doing them. Did he lower gas prices? No.

"I'm going to reduce your hydro prices." Did it happen?

Interjections: No.

Mr. John Fraser: What was that? No.

Do you know what? Twenty per cent income taxes, the election the last time out: "I'm going to cut your income taxes by 20%." Did anybody see that? No.

Look, to be fair, we did get buck-a-beer. You would be hard-pressed to actually not spend more money than save in trying to find a buck-a-beer.

When is the Premier going to do the things that he likes to say he's going to do?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I take my glasses off today, because I notice that the Liberal leader has now stopped wearing glasses. And do you know, the last time a Liberal leader stopped wearing glasses, it led to seven members in the opposition caucus?

Imagine the House leader for the Liberal Party talking about affordability and reducing prices. We eliminated immediately the Ontario carbon tax. The member for Markham–Unionville stood in front of that gas line, and we saw the prices come down one, two, three, four cents. But do you know what happened? The coalition team over there begged the federal government to put a carbon tax back on the people of the province of Ontario. We fought it every step of the way, and we'll continue to fight it, Mr. Speaker.

The legacy of the opposition and of this member is a decaying health care system; a long-term-care system with 600 beds; students who couldn't pass basic reading, writing and math. What we've done is change the province. We've saved the auto sector and transitioned it into the autos of tomorrow. We're building subways, we're building roads and we got back the—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Stop the clock.

Start the clock. The next question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is for the Premier. Residents in northwest Toronto, Vaughan, Mississauga, Scarborough and Brampton pay the highest auto insurance rates in all of Ontario. On average, drivers there pay over \$1,000 more a year on their auto insurance premiums than drivers in other communities.

Speaker, safe drivers with clean driving records in my community are getting gouged because of our postal code. I fought against this for years. I've done the research, and it shows that the streets of my community don't even have the most accidents, yet we're still getting gouged.

Will this government finally end postal code discrimination once and for all?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for that very important question. As you know, our government is keeping a close watch to make sure insurance companies are treating the people of Ontario fairly. I'm sure the member opposite knows that we sent a clear message to those insurance companies to provide relief, and in fact—

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Yes, it did, Leader of the Opposition, by \$1.3 billion in consumer savings—\$1.3 billion. Of course, that's a reduction in premiums across the province.

Mr. Speaker, the best way to lower rates for the members opposite and for people in Ontario, in Toronto and all across—in Brampton and Durham and York and Peel—is to implement broad, systemic reforms, which our government is continuing to work on. It's important that these reforms do not result in an increase of costs for all customers.

We've done a lot through this pandemic for insurance premiums, and I'll have a little bit more to say in the supplemental.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: You know, if government ministers had the same kind of energy they have at deflecting questions during question period on the golf course with these auto insurance execs, standing up to them there, maybe we wouldn't be gouged. But, instead, time after time, the issue of auto insurance gets raised here, and all we get is PR from this government for auto insurance execs.

The proof is in the premiums—I've said it before: All of your constituents, all of our constituents know this. Last year, insurance company profits went up by 65% in Canada, to over \$10 billion for the first time ever. One third of those profits were in auto insurance alone.

The MTO has reported before that Ontario has ranked in the top five for road safety in all of North America for decades, yet at the same time, Ontario drivers pay some of the highest auto insurance rates in all of North America.

Ontario drivers are getting gouged and we deserve relief. Will this government take real action to stop auto insurers from profiteering on the backs of Ontario drivers?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, only the member opposite and that party opposite would consider "gouging" a \$1.3-billion savings for all Ontario drivers in insurance premiums. That's 93% of Ontario drivers who saw a reduction in their premiums. You know that. You know that in Toronto, in Brampton. The data is out there.

But we have more work to do. That's why we've been focused on things to put more money in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, like driving on the 412 and the 418. Those tolls, which were put on by the previous Liberal government—in fact, the only place in Ontario where they were put on, in Durham: We've taken them off.

The val tags, which went up under the leader of the Liberal Party's watch every year for five or six years in a row, went up to \$120—we are a party that is going to make life more affordable for the citizens of Ontario. We've done a lot already. We're going to continue to do more.

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

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Ottawa–Vanier has a point of order.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to note that I had submitted an order paper question on November 18, 2021, and it has been more than 24

sessional days and I have still not received an answer. My question was number 19 and it was addressed to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd just like to correct my record. Earlier this morning, I introduced Charlie the chaplain. I should have said—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I've got to deal with this one first. I apologize. I thought it was maybe the same one.

I need to remind the minister that there is a requirement under standing order 101(d) to file a response to an order paper question within 24 sessional days. The response is now overdue. I would ask that a minister give some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Government House leader?

Hon. Paul Calandra: We will endeavour to ensure that the response is tabled immediately.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next person requesting a point of order is the member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: This may not be a valid point of order, but I think that we have Peggy Nash, a former member, in the gallery; it was hard to tell with the mask on. I think she's here with members from my alma mater, X University, for the Women in the House program. Thank you all for being here today.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: I just want to correct my record. Earlier, I introduced Charlie the chaplain, which is very appropriate and correct, but I omitted his surname, Charlie Lyons. Again, thank you for your ministry.

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

There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1500.

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 March 22, 2022, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing

order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (MICROFIBER FILTERS FOR WASHING MACHINES), 2022

LOI DE 2022 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT (FILTRÉS À MICROFIBRES POUR MACHINES À LAVER)

Ms. Bell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to microfiber filters for washing machines / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne les filtres à microfibrilles pour machines à laver.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member to briefly explain her bill, if she chooses to do so.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Today is World Water Day.

This bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to require that all new washing machines sold in Ontario are equipped with a specified microfibre filter to ensure that the microplastics that are in our clothing are not released into our waterways to pollute our Great Lakes.

ENDING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE DISCRIMINATION IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 METTANT FIN À LA DISCRIMINATION EN MATIÈRE D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE DANS LE GRAND TORONTO

Mr. Gurratan Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to prevent discrimination with respect to automobile insurance rates in the Greater Toronto Area / Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances pour empêcher la discrimination en ce qui concerne les taux d'assurance-automobile dans le Grand Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Brampton East care to explain his bill briefly?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you, Speaker. Across our province, people are struggling with a life that is becoming increasingly unaffordable. One of the greatest expenses that people are facing is car insurance. There are some households in Ontario where people are paying more for their car insurance than for the mortgage on their own homes. There are some folks who have never been in an accident, never had a ticket and drive very affordable vehicles, but they're being charged incredibly high car insurance rates simply because of where they live. This is postal code discrimination, plain and simple, and it's wrong.

This bill, if passed, will end the unjust practice of postal code discrimination and ensure that people are paying rates based on their record, not based on where they live.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the members that it is best to explain your bill by reading the explanatory note that's with the bill, and not to begin a debate on the bill.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 POUR DES COLLECTIVITÉS SOLIDAIRES

Ms. Park moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to enact the Connected Communities Act, 2022 / Projet de loi 104, Loi édictant la Loi de 2022 pour des collectivités solidaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member for Durham to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Lindsey Park: The bill enacts the Connected Communities Act, 2022, which requires the government of Ontario to maintain a strategy that aims to reduce instances of loneliness and social isolation in Ontario and to support persons who may be struggling with loneliness and social isolation. The act provides one year for the development of an initial strategy and requires the government of Ontario to subsequently review the strategy at least once every five years. Consultations are required when developing or reviewing the strategy. Regulation-making authority is also provided for.

PETITIONS

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tenants are finding it difficult to pay constantly rising rents; and

"Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and families had to put their hopes on hold;

"Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing, whether a family wants to rent or own,

live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through real rent controls and updated legislation.”

I agree with this petition. I have signed it, and I have page Ria who will be presenting it to the Clerk.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Jessica Bell: My petition is entitled “Protecting Vulnerable Road Users.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas vulnerable road users are not specifically protected by law; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, facing only minimal fines; and

“Whereas the friends and families of victims are unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government’s responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to a vulnerable road user;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ... commit to reducing the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users; create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users; allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person, in court, by the driver responsible; and pass ... the Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act.”

I support this petition, I’ll be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Pallas.

1510

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I fully support this petition. I will sign it and send it to the Clerks’ table with Jackson.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to raise social assistance rates, and I would like to thank Dr. Sally Palmer for sending this to me.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s social assistance rates are well below Canada’s official Market Basket Measure poverty line and woefully inadequate to cover the basic costs of food and rent;

“Whereas individuals on the Ontario Works program receive just \$733 per month and individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program receive just \$1,169 per month, only 41% and 65% of the poverty line;

“Whereas the Ontario government has not increased social assistance rates since 2018, and Canada’s inflation rate in January 2022 was 5.1%, the highest rate in 30 years;

“Whereas the government of Canada recognized through the CERB program that a ‘basic income’ of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

“We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to increase social assistance rates to a base of \$2,000 per month for those on Ontario Works and to increase other programs accordingly.”

The rates are definitely too low. I’ll affix my name to this and give it to page Mila to bring to the Clerk.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Chris Glover: “Petition for Ontario to Sign and Commit to the Federal Child Care Plan and Follow the Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the child care fees in Ontario are unaffordable for many families;

“Whereas Ontario faces a shortage of early childhood educators and child care workers because of low wages and difficult working conditions;

“Whereas Ontario has a shortage of child care spaces;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Sign and commit to the federal child care plan and follow the Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario developed by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

in collaboration with the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario.”

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

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m really pleased to present one of many petitions I’ve received on eye care in Ontario. This one was presented to me by my constituent Maria Ferreira. It reads as follows:

“Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I’m very pleased to affix my signature to this petition, which I support, and I’m going to pass it on to page Mila to table with the Clerks.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to present a petition entitled “A Just Recovery Means Decent Work for All.

“Whereas COVID-19 has exposed the way in which low wages, temporary jobs, unstable work and unsafe working conditions are a health threat not only to workers themselves but also to our communities;

“Whereas systemic racism in the labour market means Black workers, Indigenous workers, workers of colour and newcomer workers are overrepresented in low-wage, precarious and dangerous employment and more likely to be without paid sick days, supplemental benefits or working part-time involuntarily;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to:

“—provide at least 10 permanent, employer-paid emergency leave days each year and an additional 14 during public health outbreaks;

“—ensure all workers are paid at least \$20 per hour, no exemptions;

“—promote full-time work by offering additional hours to existing part-time workers before hiring new employees;

“—provide set minimum hours of work each week, and provide schedules at least two weeks in advance;

“—legislate equal pay and benefits for equal work regardless of race, gender, employment status or immigration status;

“—protect all workers from unjust firing ... and ensure migrant and undocumented workers can assert labour rights;

“—ensure all workers are protected by ending misclassification of gig workers, and end all exemptions to employment laws;

“—make companies responsible for working conditions and collective bargaining, when they use temp agencies, franchises and subcontractors; make companies financially responsible under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act for deaths and injuries of temp agency workers;

“—end the practice of using temporary agency workers indefinitely by ensuring temp workers are hired directly by the client company after three months on assignment;

“—make it easier for all workers to join unions by signing cards, allowing workers to form unions across franchises, subcontractors, regions or sectors of work...; and

“—enforce all laws proactively through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws.”

I am proud to affix my signature to it, and I will send it to the table with page Ria.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: This petition is entitled “Housing Crisis: Safe and Affordable Housing Now.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Toronto’s residential rental vacancy rate is 1.1%; and

“Whereas the average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in Toronto is over \$2,000/month...; and

“Whereas the wait-list for social housing in Ontario is nearing 200,000 households; and

“Whereas the Ford government eliminated rent control protections on new rental housing; and

“Whereas every person deserves access to safe, affordable, and liveable housing;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—Reverse the recent elimination of rent control protections for new rental units;

“—End vacancy decontrol...;

“—End above-the-guideline increases...;

“—Strengthen the Residential Tenancies Act to protect tenants from renovations and illegal evictions.”

I support this petition. I’ll be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Callum.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 22, 2022, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to enact the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 88, Loi édictant la Loi de 2022 sur les droits des travailleurs de plateformes numériques et modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate this opportunity to address the House today on Bill 88. As you're well aware, Speaker, it has been a very, very tough few years for working people in this province. There's just no getting around it. It was very tough before COVID-19. COVID-19 has made it even more difficult. As I go door to door in my riding, getting the opportunity to speak to people, they're making it very clear to me that life is much harder than it was in the past and that they need help, that they need support. This bill that is before us is not actually going to provide them with the support and help that they need to make their lives easier. Frankly, they aren't asking for a life of luxury; they just want decent pay, decent working conditions and respect. I don't think that's too much to ask. The government had an opportunity with this bill to address many of their concerns, but they haven't.

1520

When we were debating this the other day, I had an opportunity to ask the member from Oakville about this government's commitment to working people, and he assured me that it was profound and that working people were flocking to the standard of the Conservative Party in this province. I'm not seeing it, Speaker. I am just not seeing it.

I want to touch on some of those elements—and I want to thank my colleague from London West, who spoke to this bill initially, because I think she actually went through many substantial issues that are on the table, that should be addressed, that should have been addressed in this legislation and were not.

I'm going to touch first of all on the cutting of the minimum wage increase, the cutting that was implemented as one of the first items of business for this government when it was elected in 2018. To now say, "We're increasing the minimum wage," a number of years later, after people have literally lost thousands of dollars per year in income, is not to say that you're pro-worker; it's to say that you're alive and understand there's an election coming. There's a very big difference between being a supporter of working people in this province and simply recognizing that you need to be able to say something on the doorstep when you're out hustling for votes. I want to say that it is not at all possible to say that you're pro-worker when one of your first steps is to cheat working people out of thousands of dollars per year in income.

The second thing I want to note here is the impact of Bill 124—the wage cap that has been imposed on many public sector workers, I think, most notably, we're aware of it when it comes to nurses and front-line health care workers. As I go door to door, again, talking to many nurses and health care professionals in my riding—PSWs, people who work in radiology, people who have actually been taking huge risks with their lives and their well-being since the beginning of the pandemic—they see Bill 124 as an assault on their standard of living and their rights, but they also see it as massive disrespect for the quality of the work that they do and the risks that they have taken. So often, this government uses the rhetoric of health care workers, front-line workers, being heroes. Traditionally, when people do heroic things, they are recognized. At the end of the Second World War, returning veterans had tremendous support, in terms of the ability to get housing, to get jobs, to get education. There were rewards put forward for those who had risked their lives and, frankly, in recognition of those who had lost their lives to protect our society. Nurses and health care workers have lost their lives in this pandemic, and to continue with Bill 124 for those who have sacrificed so much and gone through so much is simply shameful, indefensible. To say that you're pro-worker when you allow that bill to continue just says that those words have no meaning.

Speaker, as you may well be aware, one of the things that happened when this government came into power was cancellation of equal-pay-for-equal-work protections for temporary, contract and part-time workers. Why would you do that? We all know that in this society there's a big gap between the incomes of women and men. We all know that that leads to huge difficulties for women, for their ability to lead independent and decent lives, and again, it's great disrespect for the skill, the commitment, the ability they bring to their working lives. If you respect women who work, you make sure that equal pay legislation is in place and enforced.

Midwives had to fight in court denial of equal pay for equal work. This is extraordinarily important skilled work in this society. These women work difficult hours. A friend of mine is a midwife in London, Ontario. As you are, I'm sure, well aware, Speaker, she is on call at all hours, because babies come when babies want to come. That's all there is to it. You can't just say to a woman who's calling and saying that she's in labour, "Wait till 9 a.m. I'll get up, I'll have breakfast, I'll have a coffee, and I'll come look after you. No problem. Just tell that baby to slow down." No, at 3 in the morning, you get a call, you get out of bed, you get there, and you deliver that baby. Why on earth would you fight against equal pay for equal work in that situation? How do you defend that? And yet we have legislation before us, the Working for Workers Act, that claims to show this government as being pro-worker. It does not wash.

Paid sick days: We are in this chamber. We are a lucky bunch of people, because when we get sick, frankly, we go to bed and try to get better. We are in a situation—and I think the proper term would be "privileged"—where we

can determine our hours, to a great extent. If you determine them really badly, you don't come back here, and voters are right not to send you back. But you have a lot more latitude, whereas people who stock groceries in stores, people who are out delivering goods, driving trucks around the city, people who are doing the work in the kitchens of restaurants and cafeterias, who are in food processing plants, trying to make sure that our lives continue—they are told no, or they are told, "If you get sick, too bad. Show up for work or lose money or lose your job." Not only is that unjust at the heart of it, but it also undermines all the work that we have done to try to stop this pandemic.

The government's profound resistance to paid sick time for working people at the beginning of this pandemic is indicative, fundamentally, of its attitude towards working people. This is a government that is tied in the first place to the wealthy, to the development industry and those who do very well with things continuing as they are, not with working people, who for, let us say, centuries, have fought for better lives, from the end of child labour—which was fought for, not given—to the fight for a 40-hour work week, which was fought for, not given. The fight continues. The vast majority of people in this society, who have to work for a living, who make society happen, have always had to fight, and they shouldn't have to. They should be given the respect, the pay and the benefits that they deserve for the work they do to make society function.

I haven't covered it all yet, Speaker.

Gig workers: Again, my colleague from London West was really eloquent, and I can't reproduce all that she did—no offence, colleague; you really hit it well. In the end, are people who work for a living, for a wage, workers who deserve to be covered by the Employment Standards Act or not? A Mini-Me Employment Standards Act is not a good thing—full recognition so that when you are on standby for an assignment, you're paid, because you're not able to live the rest of your life; you're not able to do the rest of what you have to do. You are committed to that employer, and you have to be available for that employer. Gig workers are not happy with what has been brought forward and have made it clear that they want things changed. And I have to say that this government could have done that. We're talking about corporations that are extraordinarily wealthy.

1530

If you get the chance, there's a book called *Super Pumped* about Uber, not a bad read for a weekend—an extraordinary push to change the way that transportation is delivered in cities by very sharp and sharp-elbowed people. I thought one of the observations from one of those leaders was quite interesting: The law is what gets enforced, not what's on the books. So they would push to the limit in order to get what they wanted and count on a lack of enforcement. Well, this government could have changed that, could have given Uber workers a framework under the Employment Standards Act where they were paid fairly. If you read that book, you'll see that a lot of

what happened with Uber workers and that corporation was a quest by that company to wipe out competitors by cost-cutting and pricing below the cost of delivery of service, which had a huge impact on the lives of those who were actually trying to deliver that service—very, very tough stuff.

This government could have taken a stand for the workers of Ontario and made their lives a lot better, and brought them under the jurisdiction of the Employment Standards Act. It should have. It didn't. It failed.

I won't spend a lot of time criticizing the Liberals in this chamber, because they're a bit thin, but I will say that they had many years to actually do what they needed to do to protect workers, and they didn't. We had many fights with them over this. In many ways, you're continuing what they did—you in the government. Their negligence was wrong. What you're doing by failing to correct the problems that they left is wrong as well.

Gig workers are employees. They should be treated like employees. They should be under the Employment Standards Act; there's no getting around it. They should have access to basic protections like employment insurance and parental leave. They should have an hourly wage that reflects the law in this province. That hourly minimum wage should be higher so that people can buy groceries and pay rent, but nonetheless they should have, at least, that structure.

I wanted to mention traditional Chinese medicine while I'm here—a schedule that had to be withdrawn. I have to say to you, Speaker, I have a large Chinese population in my riding—good folks who made a huge difference. They revived parts of my riding that had fallen into very deep economic trouble over the years. The traditional Chinese medical practitioners went through a huge fight a number of years ago in order to get regulation so that people would not be taken advantage of, so you wouldn't have unscrupulous or untrained practitioners offering services that didn't help or could harm people. No matter what your critique is of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, a system of regulation to deal with bad actors is a good thing, and simply to scrap it without talking to anyone—it was breathtaking.

There are a variety of critiques of this bill.

Speaker, I want to ask for your indulgence and the indulgence of the House. I have to say, one never knows when one will have a chance to speak here, and one never knows when the House will rise—sometimes unexpectedly. So if you would indulge me, I wanted to say just a few things about some of my colleagues who won't be running again. I'm not going to speak about all of my colleagues who won't be running again.

I want to say to all of you, having been through a few elections now, that none of us ever knows when we won't be here again. It's just the way it is. I didn't expect the Liberals to be completely cleaned out in the last election, but hey, that's the way life is.

First of all, the member for Hastings-Lennox and Addington, Mr. Kramp—I want to tell you all, don't tangle with this guy if you haven't done your homework, because

he does his homework. He's very plain-spoken, very direct. I think I'm being fair.

I'll just say, I have a lot of respect for you, sir. It has been an honour.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Although he's not here, thus I can speak freely—Mr. Bill Walker, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound?

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Excellent. I went on a blind date with that minister—full disclosure. As I said to him, I had never been on a date with a minister before. We spent two days together. Let's face it, folks: We disagreed. We had a tough time agreeing on what time it was. But he is quite a charming guy. I know that's a shock to some of you. We had a chance to drive around his riding. I took him around my riding on Political Blind Date, and my mom was right—"He's not as bad as you said, son."

Bill, you're not here, but you may see the Hansard sometime, so best of luck to you in whatever you do next. You did a really good job.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: She's not here right now, but I had terrible arguments with Kathleen Wynne, the member for Don Valley West. Notwithstanding allegations of a coalition, I would just say to all of you right now that we had some down-and-out fights. She even called me a liar once on CP24. I thought, "Kathleen, come on. I'm just telling the truth about you." Anyway, whatever the criticisms—and there are a lot of valid ones—she is a woman of intellect, and I think, as the first out, gay Premier and the first woman Premier in this province, she broke ground that all of us were happy to see broken. She won't be running again. I wish her the best.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There are two more folks—I'm not going to say goodbye to all members who aren't running again. I'm trying to limit it, because I only have so much time.

Taras Natyshak is not running again. To those who have had the great opportunity to visit Taras at his home—he is totally correct when he says, "I live in paradise." It's on the St. Clair River? Lake St. Clair? When you go to his place, you wonder how he actually pulls himself away to come to the Legislature, because it is so gorgeous. I know the attack dog stuff may wear on some, but he's a really fun guy, a tremendous man to work with, and he has a hell of a sense of humour. I'll miss him, and I wish him well.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You, Speaker, Mr. Percy Hatfield from Windsor–Tecumseh—okay, there are caucus secrets that need to be spilled. This man, unassuming behind that mask, runs poetry and song contests in our caucus. He will never reveal them because they're too good, but I'll tell you right now, they're pretty damn good. He got a poet laureate for the province.

You, sir, really helped this province move forward culturally. Within our caucus, you're a man to be loved and feared for the content of those poems—always good. We'll all miss you a lot, Percy.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm coming to the end of the love-fest.

I know we're going to go back to the normal daggers and hammers and tongs in a few seconds, but for all those who I sent best wishes and are not coming back: Don't give me a hard time in the next while. Don't undermine my words—although, Daryl, I know you'll do your homework, and if you have to take me on, you will, and you won't hesitate.

I have to say to all of you folks—again, you never know when you won't be coming back here—it has been quite an amazing number of years. People I've disagreed with behind doors, I've been able to talk to and, frankly, I've enjoyed it a lot—some of my colleagues I've been with for a long time.

Actually, Laurie, you're coming back, but—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That's right; notwithstanding the rumours. When I was new here, you were really gracious in your help for me, and I really appreciate that.

That's it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you for those kind words.

I must admonish the member from Toronto–Danforth. As you know, parliamentary procedure precludes us from mentioning those who aren't here, that they aren't here. I guess we can overlook it this one time, but this is your one warning for the rest of the day.

1540

And just to follow up, you don't have any more time, but Norm Miller from Parry Sound–Muskoka and Jim McDonnell from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—

Interjection: And Randy Pettapiece.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, I can't mention people who are here or not here. I'm just saying that there are two members in the chamber who will not be seeking re-election as well.

We have time for questions. I see that the member from Brantford–Brant has risen to ask the first question of the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Speaker. Through you, thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth. I don't know how to top that, and I don't know how to take a knife out on that one either, so I won't.

I understand that there are parts of the bill you have difficulty with. But as a volunteer firefighter, having seen the devastation that opioids can bring and the part of the bill that's bringing naloxone kits into more workplaces—I was wondering if you could offer us any commentary or advice on that part of the bill.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question, and I appreciate the step. I have to say that my colleague Suze Morrison, the member from Toronto Centre, under your questioning, pointed out that there is an awful lot more that has to be done. I'm not denying that it's a useful step. I wish it was a much bigger step, because I don't think it will save enough lives, but it's better to save some lives than save no lives. I think you could have gone further; I

don't think it would have been a problem for you, and I wish you had.

I think that requiring the installation of naloxone kits, in good working order—yes, that should be there. I don't think there's an argument. I just want the larger question of dealing with the conditions that create addiction in the first place—as you know, because you talk to people who have addictions, there are a lot of factors that contribute. If we would take steps to make sure that they didn't have those addictions in the first place, the need for naloxone would hopefully not be there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Joel Harden: My friend from Toronto–Danforth reflected on the gig worker conundrum that we have: that we have an Employment Standards Act that doesn't cover people on their way to work. What I talked about the last time I was here, Speaker, were these billion-dollar companies, many of which don't pay proper amounts of taxation—and I just wanted to repeat, for the member's benefit: We have, at the moment, 59 billionaires in this country, with accumulated wealth of \$100 billion, who made, from March 2020 to now, \$111 billion in profit.

I struggle to understand—and I wonder what the member's thoughts are—why we can't have a government ask those 59 billionaires, every one of whom I believe to be a policy failure, how do you need that much money? This House should be compelling them, shouldn't they, member? We should be compelling them to share that wealth with those workers, give them full-time benefits, give them sick pay, pensions. Member, what do you think? What's Toronto's perspective?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Man, it was worth giving you those notes, member.

First of all, obviously, I think the imbalance of wealth causes huge problems. I think what we've seen in North America and western Europe—the rise of a great anger amongst working people, often directed into channels that are socially destructive, that come out as Islamophobia, as anti-Semitism, as other kinds of racism, that come out in anti-science expression—reflects people's profound frustrations that they're not able to live decent lives, that they are pushed down, and they know there are people who are doing really well. For us as a society to not adequately tax those who are billionaires is a failure. One of the things, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Conclude, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: —that came up in a debate I had once on right-wing talk radio was this whole question of what we had as a society at the end of World War II and in the 1950s and 1960s—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you for running out of time.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It would have been really good, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I gave you a 10-second warning.

The next question goes to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I wanted to acknowledge the member from Toronto–Danforth and thank him for those kind words. We often have heated tempers in the House, and sometimes it's nice to just have a moment when we acknowledge that we're all here to do what we can for our constituents.

It's nice that you appreciated the work of the people who are going to be leaving us, from both sides of the House, so I thank you for that.

I do want to ask you about the fact that this is a changing workplace and we rely on our technology far too often. As a mom, when my children were young, I tried to give them a break all the time: “Go out and climb a tree. Even if you break your leg, go out and climb a tree and get away from the technology and the games.” I think we have to think about that as adults as well. We are introducing legislation that gives people an opportunity to say to their bosses, “You can't have me 24/7.” I know that the Liberals have supported that particular legislation.

Do you agree that it's time to give workers that break from being monitored 24/7 by employers?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I appreciate the question—thank you—because I think it's an important one. I don't think, as written, that this will actually provide the regulation that's promised, just to be honest with you. I think, again, you could have had more substantial regulations, more substantial changes. I think it is a problem to have people monitored. My guess is, we've all talked to constituents who have resented the fact they felt under this electronic surveillance when, frankly, they work hard.

All of us in this House must have had this experience: I've been knocking on doors at 7 and 7:30 at night, and people come to the door with headsets on, saying, “I'm in a work meeting,” and I think, “Yeah. Yeah, you are”—no, because they are.

Hon. Todd Smith: They're just telling you that.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You should be supportive and friendly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much—if you're still campaigning.

The member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you also to the member for Toronto–Danforth for your excellent summary of some of the members who are leaving the Legislature after this session.

I want to go back to your answer that you half-started when the member for Ottawa Centre asked you about the consequences of failing to look after workers and the rise of anger and what happens when it's misdirected. I think you were talking about what the 1950s and 1960s were like. Would you care to finish your answer?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you. That's very generous.

I'll just point out that there was a period in this society, in the post-war period, when people saw that government was looking out for them. We developed medicare in the 1960s. We had much higher taxation of the wealthy in the

1940s, 1950s, 1960s and into the early 1970s, and people saw their standard of living rising. They haven't seen that now for decades, and that undermines the glue that holds together our society. It's a generator of anger and frustration that comes out in very unpredictable and sometimes very dangerous ways. Whether you are on the left or the right, everyone should look at the history and agree that having the majority of working people, the majority of people in society, living decent lives—man, it's much safer for everybody.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member opposite for his speech.

I just wanted to dig into the avenue of the last quarter of his address. I know we, of course, understand that we have some different approaches when it comes to dealing with many different issues in this House, and I respect the fact that over the course of the pandemic the opposition has fulfilled their role to oppose on some issues and has had a different perspective as to some of the measures or interventions that were necessary.

I do want to acknowledge the Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, who is also not running next time. I'm wondering if the member has any particular stories or memories, having served with her far longer than I ever have, I know, prior to her short vacation away from this place for some years and then returning. I'm just wondering if the member opposite has any words about the Minister of Health.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I see the danger of straying from the bill at hand. But I'll just say, one morning in the midst of the 2018 election, the two of us showed up at 6:30 a.m. to do Metro Morning. We both groused about, "God, what kind of questions are they going to ask us at 6:30 in the morning?" And I thought, yes, there's a camaraderie in these kinds of battles that continues.

I'll just say to the member that I go door to door and I sometimes come across Conservative campaigners, and we disagree. We don't spend a lot of time, but we both talk for a bit about what it's like knocking on doors. As one Conservative said to me in Toronto–Danforth, "I know what it's like to be rejected." And having campaigned in Conservative ridings, I know what it's like to be rejected, my friend.

So that was a charming incident that morning, although it was too early, Sam.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for further debate. I turn to the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise here and think about campaigning, which I guess a number of us will be doing in a few weeks.

I remember the time I was door-knocking in a community called Brights Grove. It was a cul-de-sac. I went up one side and I saw this fellow hanging around at the end of the cul-de-sac, and I thought he must have been waiting there to talk to me, because he was talking to

another; but he didn't live there, I figured out. So I went around and I talked to all the people on the way. I got a few signs—I got a few yeses, a few noes. Anyway, when I got all the way back to the end of the cul-de-sac—I see the Speaker; he'll appreciate this—I went to give my brochure to the one fellow, and he took it. I went to give it to the other fellow, and he said, "No, no. I couldn't possibly take that. I'm a teacher, you know." He didn't even live there. He said, "I can't possibly support you." I said, "Well, that's fine. I did this street, and I know I've got three or four signs. I don't need all the votes; I only need four out of 10, and I got more than that on this street." I didn't argue with him; I just moved on.

Anyway, those are some of my experiences of door-knocking. I'm not counting the dogs I ran into.

It's an honour to stand in the Legislature today and speak to this very important piece of legislation that was tabled by the Minister of Labour. I want to commend the minister and his team, again, for the outstanding work that they are doing on behalf of the province. I know that ever since the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex became the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, he has been seized with improving working conditions for workers and also training and attracting new workers to Ontario. So far, this has been really great news for workers in Ontario and it has been great for our province, because under the leadership of the minister and the Premier, we are transforming Ontario's pro-worker legislation and helping to increase economic competitiveness and support for Ontario businesses.

You might ask yourself, why are we doing this? We are doing this because the way many of us have been working has been changing, and the pandemic has accelerated those trends. Whether it's remote work, automation or working through online platforms, we have seen workers in Ontario and around the globe face new challenges as well as coming opportunities. They need support to overcome these challenges, and we have to make sure we're always there to make the most of these opportunities.

Thanks to the efforts of the government and the private sector, there are nearly 300,000 jobs that are available in Ontario. This is a challenge for employers, our economy, our province and, of course, those workers themselves. But at the same time, it represents an opportunity for workers and job seekers across Ontario. The demand for workers is everywhere.

In my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, we're experiencing a renaissance in the chemistry sector. New businesses in the bio-refining and chemistry sectors are locating to my region, and the major players in the petrochemical hub are all making major long-term investments in their facilities to modernize and adapt their processes with new environmentally minded technologies. These are big projects and they need thousands of skilled workers to be completed.

In fact, there was just an announcement this week, a distillery, Diageo, that makes royal crown—Crown Royal liquor. I'm not experienced on that subject, so I might stumble on the name, as you know, Mr. Speaker.

That's why I'm so pleased with this government and the Minister of Labour for the work they've been doing to

meet the current and future labour needs of Sarnia–Lambton and this province.

As a government, we've been laying the foundation for opportunity and prosperity across our province, and it's an important reason why we are debating the Working for Workers Act, 2022. This act builds on the measures this House passed last year. Last summer, the minister appointed an expert committee to examine the changing landscape of our work and provide recommendations that would position Ontario as the best place in North America to retrain, recruit and reward workers, and they've delivered. From June to September, the committee met with over 150 workers, union leaders, advocacy groups and employers. They also reviewed and analyzed an additional 550 written submissions and surveyed over 2,000 people across Ontario. They completed their mission and provided valuable recommendations. Their advice led to the bill the House passed last year, as well as this bill. Thanks to all of that hard work, Ontario is a leader in protecting and supporting workers today.

Building a stronger Ontario means levelling the playing field and helping average people get ahead, especially those who have not been getting their fair share of the economic pie. The legislation we're discussing today will make Ontario the first province in Canada to establish a minimum wage and other important rights and protections for certain gig workers—for the people who help us to get around, deliver food to our doors, and people who have been on the front line during this pandemic. Those rights include more clarity around work assignments, pay calculations, protection against removal from the digital platform without notice or explanation, and a guarantee that any tips or gratuities a worker earned will remain where they belong: in that worker's pocket.

If passed, the Working for Workers Act will also increase a worker's right to privacy and address electronic monitoring. Technology has changed the way we work. Our labour laws must adapt to protect our workers and their families. Work has been increasingly creeping into our family time. That is why we will be one of the first jurisdictions in North America to give workers the right to disconnect by requiring employers to make and have a written policy on disconnecting from work. As part of the Working for Workers Act, our government would make it a requirement for large employers to have a written policy disclosing electronic monitoring of their workers and how they use the data they collect. If passed, this legislation would be the first of its kind in Canada. Ontario would again be breaking new ground and taking historic steps to protect privacy.

Workers from across Canada and around the world are watching and paying attention to the changes that this government is making. I think they're going to like what they see.

We're making Ontario a destination of choice for Canada's tradespeople and skilled professionals. We're sending a clear signal to the skilled workers across Canada and North America. The Working for Workers Act will guarantee regulated professionals a 30-business-day service standard for getting their credentials approved,

something I've heard about since I came to this House. Workers won't have to wait for weeks to know whether their application has been received, months while it's being assessed by the regulators, and then weeks or months for the decision to be sent.

Think about a situation where you come here, knowing this is a place you want to strive, you want to grow, you want to build your life and family, and then you take years to get to the profession you were already skilled in and want to take part in. This will stop with the Working for Workers Act.

We will make sure that we guarantee all regulated professionals a 30-business-day service standard for getting their credentials approved. This will be an important change because we need that skilled labour in this province. There are so many opportunities in the skilled trades right now. There are fantastic jobs, meaningful jobs, with pensions, good benefits and that are well paid. You can see the results of your hard work take shape in front of you. They pay well and often include pensions and benefits. These are jobs that allow workers to support their families and give back to the community, yet many go unfilled—I think somewhere in the neighbourhood of some 300,000 just in Ontario alone. I know in Sarnia–Lambton we will need between 3,000 and 5,000 extra workers in the skilled trades to meet the projected demand over the next few years because of the success of bio-refining or the chemistry sector etc.

It has never been more important for Ontario to keep, train and attract more skilled workers, because our government is building Ontario with over \$148 billion in infrastructure projects, including roads, bridges and highways. We need over 100,000 skilled workers over the next decade just in construction alone.

The average age of a journeyman is 55. These are opportunities for well-paying careers with pensions and benefits, and doing meaningful work—that's very important. These opportunities should not go to waste. Our businesses, our province and our economy should not be held back by the lack of skilled workers. That's why I'm pleased that we've passed the program.

Another thing I want to touch on before I run out of time here is the Red Seal program. This sets common standards for the skills of tradespersons across Canada. This is used very much in my riding. Tradespeople who have successfully passed the Red Seal examination receive a Red Seal endorsement on their provincial or territorial certificate of qualification. The Red Seal endorsement makes it easier for out-of-province skilled workers to come to Ontario. That's why Ontario is already participating in 52 of the 55 Red Seal trades. Now we're taking steps to recognize the remaining three and other occupations under the Ontario skilled trades legislation. This recognition will not only boost the prestige of Ontario workers in those occupations, but it will make it easy for workers from other provinces in these trades to start working in Ontario.

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I also want to highlight the improvements to the critical leave sections that are contained in this bill. Canada's

proud military tradition and our reserves are an integral part of that. These brave men and women are the first line of defence during times of crisis, and we need to support them every which way that we can.

I see that I'm running out of time, so in conclusion, Speaker, I'll just say thank you for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Speaker's prerogative before I go to the first question: What a thrill to see people in the visitors' gallery again—especially the people who were here in the morning, who sat through question period, to see the difference in legislative debate from question period to, perhaps, the rest of the day and the evening. Welcome.

First question: the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I wish this bill went further. I've worked, in my past life, representing workers, and when I saw that there was going to be some addressing of the concerns of gig workers, I was somewhat excited. Then I read the bill and I realized these workers are going to be put into another category and they're not going to enjoy the same benefits that other workers in Ontario enjoy. So my question is, why would you do this to these workers, who have won a court case, who have been recognized under the present labour legislation? Why would we do this to them and not give them the full benefit of the protections that workers in Ontario should receive?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the honourable member for the question.

To be honest, the section in there about the gig workers—I think it's a first step. I think, in the ministry's own points that I've read up on, it's a foundational agreement as we start to improve the laws on the gig workers. It guarantees them a number of guarantees they don't have today.

One that I thought was very interesting—I didn't know before that if they had a labour dispute, lots of times they would have to go out of the country to resolve it. Now they will have to be resolved within Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Flamborough—Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To my esteemed colleague: That was a wonderful presentation.

I want to talk to you about the naloxone kits. We've heard a lot of discussion about this throughout this morning and this afternoon, about how perhaps it hasn't gone far enough to address the opioid crisis in Ontario, but it clearly is something that was lacking up until this legislation addressed it. Can the member please talk about what this is and what it will do to help address the crisis in Ontario?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the member for that great question.

Yes, the naloxone kits are very important. I see the need for them every day. Every day I turn the news on and there's a story, on Twitter or in the news, about some police officer or ambulance attendant who has brought someone back from the edge or from almost being dead. I

think I read the other day that there was some worker and it took six different naloxone kits to bring him back; he must have been pretty far gone. Anyway, I think that's a requirement that we need to see in every workplace. I look forward to, as we make them present here, just like the—the heart starters; I can't think of the word for those right now.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Defibrillators.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Defibrillators. Just like we have defibrillators in this chamber and in this building, I look forward to the days when the naloxone kits are also available and carried by our security officers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Now the member from Ottawa Centre has a question.

Mr. Joel Harden: Over the weekend, I had the occasion to march with a group of advocates who care about migrant workers in this country. The march was 1.6 kilometres because there are 1.6 million migrant workers in our country doing some of the most important work during this pandemic: keeping us fed, keeping us alive, delivering our food. But their rights are wanting. And something missing from this bill—and my friend from Sarnia, I'd love your comment on this, because I know in your community, like mine, migrant workers play an important role.

I want to tell you the story about Juan Miguel, who paid \$1,500 to a recruiter based in Ontario to come here and gradually, over Juan Miguel's work life, had to pay that off, in addition to earning a salary for his family back home. I wonder if the member from Sarnia would welcome an amendment to this legislation taking action against these unscrupulous recruiters that put migrant workers in such a deep hole. For Juan Miguel, what he said—I've lost the page, but what he said was that he was put in a kind of debt servitude to his employer, and he didn't feel he had the ability to appeal to the Ministry of Labour to intervene. I'm wondering what my friend from Sarnia thinks about that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the member from Ottawa for that question.

We certainly use the migrant workers in my riding, especially in the vegetable and pepper industry and other agricultural sectors and, I know, south of me down in Windsor-Essex—your area, Mr. Speaker. It has always been a concern of mine how they've been treated. I think that this legislation is a good start. It gives them protection. The Ministry of Labour will have rules they can go in and they can enforce. Now it is kind of awkward: I understand the feds look after the bunkhouses, yet we enforce the labour standards. We're not responsible for the bunkhouses. I think that's something that needs to be looked at. We need to really work together with our federal partners to make sure that the people who are doing this work that is so important are looked after.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka has a question.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the member for Sarnia—Lambton for his comments.

We're in a historic labour shortage, and unfilled jobs—I know, when you talk to businesses, pretty much any

business is looking for skilled people to work at this time, and it means billions in lost productivity as well.

Can the member please share with the House how this proposed legislation will cut red tape and make it easier for skilled professionals across Canada to work in our province?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I think I touched on it during my remarks. They will speed up the people with foreign credentials who are coming to Canada and give them a faster track to get those credentials recognized, because we need those skills, we need those people, whether it's in health care, engineering, the medical field, the construction sector, pretty well every sector you can think of—in the restaurant industry as well. I think that this bill will go a long way towards looking after that.

I did want to, before I sit down, recognize the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka—21 years in the House today, I think. He was elected 21 years ago today. I think we should give him a big round of applause.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Congratulations.

The next question.

Mr. Guy Bourguin: I want to thank the member for Sarnia–Lambton on your presentation.

A former job I used to do: I used to represent workers on WSIB.

I know on your side of the House you've also heard advocates for injured workers talking about deeming and how deeming affects injured workers. Injured workers are living with very little money. In fact, they have a hard time surviving.

With the title of the bill saying Working for Workers Act—my question to you—don't you think your government should have addressed the deeming part of WSIB? Just imagine: In northern Ontario, you have to travel two hours to go to Timmins. If they deem you and that work is in Timmins, how do you get to work? You're deemed and you don't get the wages that you deserve that you were trained for. I'd like to hear from you why—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Back to the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to that member for the question.

Yes, I have many injured workers, as you can imagine with a riding like mine, with a refinery background, the heavy construction that has taken place over the years, so I've represented those, either their widows or the families themselves, for a number of years.

Our government wants to make sure that every worker who is able to work is on a path to the dignity of a job. We've sent a clear signal that we'll spare no expense in protecting the health and safety of every worker in Ontario. This includes a skilled training [*inaudible*] who cannot return to a pre-injury job and that supports a key health and safety initiative.

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In 2019, 88% of all injured workers were able to return to work and earn 100% of their pre-injury pay with no

change to their compensation or insurance. This is because of the support we were able to provide them.

Our government will continue to work with them to provide that support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: One of the biggest issues facing Ontarians today—and it's something that I discovered shortly after we were elected—is the lack of skilled labour in Ontario.

Our government is laser-focused on not only educating people in the skilled trades but allowing them to work here.

Can you expand on what we are doing to attack and tackle the skilled labour shortage?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I keep getting these notes—I think I can answer that one, though. Twenty per cent or more of the skilled labour force in Ontario are going to retire in the next three to five years. There's a great need. I said earlier, the age group who are over age 55, all the ones I knew, who I worked with—their grandsons now are joining the trades. So that's something in Sarnia–Lambton that we take in great [*inaudible*].

I know the minister is going to expose young people as early as public school to the skilled trades so they will have an idea that they don't all have to go to university, they don't all have to go to college. If they want to work with their hands, if they want to work with their head, they can join the skilled trades and have a great career and a great life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for further debate.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm proud to rise today to speak to Bill 88, the Working for Workers Act, 2022. I want to just talk a little bit about the process that was used to have this bill go through the Legislature. This bill affects up to 10% of the workforce in Ontario. That's how many gig-based workers there are in Ontario. Yet this government decided to move this bill through committee—they did not allow any member of the public to submit spoken testimony in committee; they just went straight to clause-by-clause. I think that is a real shame. This is the kind of bill that should be properly consulted, and we should be allowed to speak to it because it affects so many people in Ontario. So now we're at second reading.

I want to identify three pieces of the bill that I'm going to speak to. One is around the government's decision to establish minimum standards for app-based delivery drivers. There are two other pieces to the bill which I'm going to spend a lot less time speaking about. The other one is the decision to require naloxone kits to be available at certain businesses. It's certainly something that I support. And then, finally, I'll just mention the government's decision to deregulate the traditional Chinese medicine sector within Ontario—and then realize that they didn't do any consultation at all on that process and then back down within a period of 72 hours.

The first thing I want to talk about is the decision by this government to essentially lower the standards that gig

workers have in Ontario. It's important to point out how many gig workers there are. As I mentioned, up to 800,000 people in Ontario could be classified as gig workers; 7% to 10% of the workforce. These are the kind of folks who deliver our food in all kinds of weather—snow, rain. They're on our busy roads. They're delivering food to us. They're taking us from A to B. They are not eligible for the kind of rights that a typical employee or an employee like us has. If they get injured, there's no compensation. If they are sick—maybe they have COVID-19—there's very little they can do about it. They don't have access to paying into CPP, they don't have access to employment insurance if they lose their job through no fault of their own, and they don't have access to WSIB. So if they're injured on the job—maybe they're a delivery driver who uses an e-bike or a bicycle and they're hit by a car, which is not uncommon in my riding—they're not eligible for WSIB. That's a real travesty. And what is very disturbing is that they're paid a pittance for their job.

This is what Josh Mandryk, a labour lawyer, had to say when he made some calculations into what this bill would mean for a delivery driver's average wage. He estimates that they would be paid approximately \$9 an hour. There are a few reasons for this. One is that app-based workers have to pay for their own costs. So when you get into an Uber vehicle, it is the Uber driver that is paying for the gas to take you from A to B. And we know that gas prices are going through the roof right now.

Also, this bill means that an app-based worker or a gig worker is only paid for the time they're on the job. So if they are waiting 20 minutes for their food to arrive so that they can deliver it to a customer's home, they don't get paid for that entire section of the period. They only get paid for that section when they're on the job. As the member for Ottawa South mentioned earlier today, that's like only paying a cashier at a supermarket when they're actually checking out groceries for a customer, and not paying them for the time when they're waiting for the customer to appear in the aisle in the first place. It doesn't make sense at all, because the worker is there doing the job and ready to do the job. It's very concerning.

The reason why it is so concerning is because there is a better standard that we should be implementing in Ontario so that all workers—doesn't matter if you get your job through a cellphone or if you turn up to work in an office—should be covered and have full rights under the labour code and the Employment Standards Act.

Interjection: Amen.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you.

That was a court decision. It was a court decision that was made in Ontario to allow workers in Ontario to have these rights. What this Working for Workers Act actually does is it says, "We're sorry, but that court decision that was made in Ontario to give these workers the status of an employee so that they are fully protected by the Employment Standards Act"—this bill says, "Nope, we're going to treat you like second-class citizens. We are going to take the side of companies like Uber." I mean, they're not even Ontario companies. "We're going to take the side of Uber,

and we're not going to take the side of Ontario workers. And we're going to make sure that you get paid less than minimum wage at a time when inflation is at 5.7%."

Interjection: Shame.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It is a shame.

What I am calling on this government to do and what we, as a party, are calling on this government to do is to pass the protect gig workers bill which was introduced by my colleague from London West. What this bill would do is it would re-implement the ABC test, which the Ontario courts ruled is an appropriate way for an employer to determine if an employee is an independent contractor—which is what these Uber drivers, these gig workers, are now classified as—to determine whether someone is an employer or employee. It's called the ABC test. It's in the member for London West's bill. It is enshrined in the Ontario courts. I urge this government to return to that standard so that these 800,000 workers can have the rights that they deserve—and that includes a decent minimum wage.

The other piece that I want to speak to in the final three minutes that I have left is schedule 4, which is the changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. This government has done a good thing: They are going to require that naloxone kits are available and that they are in good, working condition, and they are available in businesses and workplaces that are considered high risk. These are businesses such as construction sites, bars and nightclubs. The reason is this: If someone is experiencing an opioid overdose, we know that naloxone kits are a very effective way to help people survive an overdose. They are a very effective way.

What I also urge this government to do is to take steps within the upcoming budget that's coming out—who knows when it's going to come? Certainly after the deadline, but hopefully before April 30. This government needs to also take steps to introduce funding and bring in measures to address the reason why people get addicted in the first place, and to provide holistic supports to people who are experiencing opioid addiction so that they can get back on their feet again and recover.

The reason why this issue is so important to University-Rosedale is because we are home to Kensington Market, and Kensington Market has one of the highest rates of opioid addiction, opioid use and opioid overdoses in Ontario. I regularly communicate with businesses, residents and social service agencies that are on the front line of this issue, and this is what they're calling for: They are calling for St. Stephen's, which is an excellent social services agency in the region, to have a safe consumption site that is properly funded so, if people are going to use, they're not going to use in a washroom where they might overdose in a Tim Hortons and die; they get to use in a space where there is a health expert who is going to make sure that they are okay.

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Businesses are also calling for additional support so that there is increased security, and the city of Toronto in particular is calling for additional support so that we can

provide homes to people who are experiencing the consequences of addiction so that they have a place to live and so that there are supports available to them. We're talking social workers, we're talking people who can provide them with meals, we're talking—when they're ready—employment counsellors who can get them their first job so that they can get back on their feet. Those additional supports so that these people can become fully functioning members of society. I know there are many people who have addictions and they live okay lives, but in Kensington there are people who are not. They are struggling.

The Ontario government chose to give just a paltry \$3 million a year to the city of Toronto for affordable housing programs. That is a shame. What I am calling on the Ontario government to do is to step up and provide at least \$50 million in funding, which is what the city of Toronto is calling for, to provide the affordable housing with the wraparound supports that folks need so we cannot just help people when they're experiencing an overdose, but we get them back on their feet again, keep them housed and support them. I urge you to put that in the budget as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Time for questions.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Over to the member from University–Rosedale. For the past four years since we were elected, clearly our government has recognized that there's a skilled labour shortage, and under the leadership of Premier Ford we have done just about anything we possibly can to attract more young people to the trades, and worked with the trades, worked with unions to create an environment that would entice more and more people to enter what is a very good job, a high-paying job. We've done so much. We've cut red tape to allow people from other parts of Canada to come to Ontario and to be able to practise their trade.

Historically, the New Democrats were the party of labour, but they seem to be now going against all of the valuable and good things that this government is doing to help people in the trades. With your history supporting people in the trades and labour, will you support all of the measures that help those people in this legislation?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for your response. The NDP fully supports increasing access to the trades, including establishing equitable hiring practices so that we do get more people into the trades. I believe you're referring to schedule 3, which would make it easier for more people to be recognized in the trades. That is something that we don't have any issues with.

One question or concern we have is whether regulating professions, schedule 3, is going to be including the health sector and health professionals so that we can increase the number of internationally trained health care workers so that we can have them working in our sector.

What is also important to note is that this government has a responsibility not just to bring people in to recruit, but also to retain. When we're talking about retaining health care workers, there is a critical need to make sure they are treated with respect and they're paid the wages that they deserve. That includes repealing Bill 124.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Chris Glover: I share a border with the member opposite and with the member beside me. We, I think, are at the epicenter of the homelessness crisis and the opioid crisis in the city of Toronto and probably in this province. There are people on the streets who have fentanyl addictions, and it's the worst epidemic that we have experienced, second to COVID only. It's taking lives every day. There were 30 people who died who were homeless on the streets of Toronto in January alone. I've been delivering meals to people experiencing homelessness, many of whom have addictions, and I've seen that there are no supports, there are no treatment supports. This government has introduced legislation that will provide naloxone kits, but there's much more that needs to be done.

I'll ask the member: What should be done to provide supports to people experiencing addiction?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member from Spadina–Fort York for that question. Before I spoke to this bill, I did some research to look at how the opioid crisis has worsened during the COVID pandemic, and it certainly has. There has been an increase of 40% in overdose deaths in Toronto. Many of those deaths are happening in Toronto Centre, Spadina–Fort York and University–Rosedale. The number of people who continue to die from overdoses just keeps going up. It just keeps going up.

There are a lot of things that we can do city-wide and province-wide to address this crisis. I can begin by saying that if you have an overdose addiction and you go to a hospital right now, there's very little support available within the hospital to stabilize people and help them recover, at least in the short term. That's something that we can address.

And then there's the issue of affordable housing and supportive housing, as well. That's something that this government has to address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I always enjoy listening to the member from University–Rosedale. I come to work every day in your riding, so it's good to hear from you.

Mr. Speaker, talking about Working for Workers Act 1, when I was in the committee meeting, I heard every time that severe injuries or deaths should never be a cost of doing business. I heard it a lot of times on the other side, in fact. Some businesses treat fines as an expense line and continue to put their workers at risk.

What this legislation is doing—that's what we're stopping right now. We are going to increase the maximum fines; that will increase to \$1.5 million. The opposition said that we need to increase the fine, which we are doing now.

The question to the member is very simple. We're doing what you asked for. We're doing the right thing. Are you going to support this bill?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for the question from the member for Mississauga–Malton. I had a challenge; I didn't hear the beginning of your question, but I did hear

the end of it, which is that you asked if we are going to support this bill. We're not going to support this bill, and the reason why we're not going to support this bill is because it makes the working conditions for up to 800,000 Ontarians a little tougher. These are people who already have really tough jobs, and this bill essentially keeps them as independent contractors when they should have the same rights as everyone else to be protected by the Employment Standards Act. When a bill has something like that in it, it's not something that we can support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Ottawa Centre has a question.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to ask my friend from University–Rosedale, back to the issue I was raising earlier, on migrant workers: One of the toughest days of the pandemic for me, Speaker, was in June 2020, when then-chief medical officer Dr. David Williams said that migrant workers, if they were asymptomatic but COVID-positive, could continue to work. What happened from that, Speaker—and I know you know this, because it's in your community as well; you had a number of heinous incidents in your community—is that nine migrant workers died. Nine migrant workers died between 2020 and 2021, and three more deaths have happened in January.

My friend from University–Rosedale, I don't see anything in this bill working for workers, to help the migrant farm workers we have put at risk during COVID-19, who have died, let's be clear, giving us our daily vegetables. What advice do you have for this government to make sure that migrant workers are not continuing to be forgotten; that they are not disposable; that we see them, we value them and we give them a path to citizenship?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much to the member for Ottawa Centre. It's important that you raised that issue of who else in Ontario is treated like second-class citizens. Migrant workers are treated like second-class citizens. They do not have access to employment insurance and CPP, even though they pay into these programs. They do not have the right to organize and improve their working conditions, even though they're workers too and they're doing some of the hardest and most back-breaking work that needs to be done in Canada. Not only that, they're doing the kind of work that keeps our economy functioning, and that was made real to us when we realized how the COVID pandemic was impacting immigration and how it was impacting our food supply.

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Migrant workers deserve to have the same rights as other employees, and that includes a fair and reasonable path to permanent residency and citizenship.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from University–Rosedale: As we know, many of us rely heavily on this. We carry it with us. And, of course, these gig workers have it with them all the time, whether they're being tracked by GPS or they're on their phone or whatever. That information is being retained and can be used by their employer.

This legislation that we're discussing today will protect gig workers. It will offer them protection to know how their employer is going to monitor them, if they're monitoring them, and what they're using that information for. The Liberals on the other side of the House have said that they agree with the information that we have included in this, the legislation we have included in this to protect gig workers against electronic monitoring. Will you?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that question. Overall, gig workers and the organizations that work with them have been very clear to us about what they think of Bill 88, the Working for Workers Act: They oppose it. What they are calling for is for the right to be protected by the Employment Standards Act and for the right to be treated like employees, and they have made that very clear. If this bill went to committee and we allowed Ontarians to speak to this bill, I think that they also would have made that clear to you as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Our government's proposed legislation, the Working for Workers Act, is intended to deliver better protections, bigger paycheques and greater economic opportunities for workers and their families. This legislation offers workers additional protections and it helps to provide an even stronger economy in the province—an economy that works for everyone.

Since we took office back in 2018, our government has been committed to tackling Ontario's critical labour shortage, which has been made even worse by this pandemic. And one of the ways that we are dealing with this problem is by making it easier for tradespeople and in-demand professionals from outside the province to work and live right here in Ontario.

We are introducing changes that would help workers in dozens of professions register in their regulated trade or profession within 30 days. Speaker, this means that they no longer have to wait months for their application to be assessed and then wait again for a decision to be rendered and delivered to them. We are cutting the red tape to make it easier for skilled professions from other provinces right across Canada to get the papers and certification that they need to work in Ontario faster. It should be easier for professionals and tradespeople to continue their careers in Ontario.

We are facing a looming crisis in the skilled trades alone. There are more jobs in the trades than there are skilled workers available to fill them. Estimates are that we are looking at a shortage of about 100,000 skilled employees in the coming years. When we were first elected, I was fortunate enough to sit on the committee of finance and economic affairs. We travelled across the province, and I recall being in northern Ontario and meeting a number of stakeholders who said, "We simply cannot find people to fill the jobs that are available." We travelled to eastern Ontario and we met with stakeholders who said the same thing.

Regardless of the jurisdiction or the trade, stakeholders were struggling to find people to work for them. It is a

crisis now in Ontario and it's something I'm proud that our government recognized early on, and is putting the steps in place to address that shortage. My colleague from Sarnia–Lambton talked about how our Minister of Education is introducing curriculum to introduce the trades to children as young as kids in grade 1. They need to know what is available for them when they graduate from secondary and post-secondary institutions.

The trades offer people good-paying jobs. Regardless of whether you are a man or a woman, there are opportunities in the trades. We as a government recognize that and recognize the importance of educating Ontarians, parents and students as to the opportunities available in this particular field. Our government wants to open the doors to the skilled workers we need here in Ontario. We are building Ontario, and it's important now more than ever to attract the workers required to fill the tens of thousands of vacant positions.

Unfilled jobs cost this province billions in lost productivity. Between July and September of 2021, nearly 339,000 jobs went unfilled, and many of those jobs are in the skilled trades. Allowing out-of-province workers to get their credentials processed within 30 business days means that they will be able to work in Ontario sooner. This change will help drive economic growth and rebalance the skills to make it easier for employers to find the skilled workers they need. With billions of dollars' worth of highway, public transit and other infrastructure projects on the books, Ontario needs architects, engineers and construction workers to complete the work.

Our government wants to make Ontario the first province in the country to establish a minimum wage and other foundational rights for digital platform workers. Employees who offer rides or deliver food and other items for companies such as Uber, DoorDash and Instacart. We want to build a stronger economy that works for everyone. We want every worker in this province to have every opportunity to earn a good living and to provide for their families.

Data shows that as many as one in five Canadians works in the gig economy, and that number, of course, is expected to increase. These workers often face uncertain working conditions and lack the necessary protections that other Ontarians enjoy. It's often difficult for them to predict paycheques or to resolve complaints. But our government wants to enshrine rights and protections for digital platform workers. They include earning the general minimum wage for time worked, the right to keep their tips and to have a regular pay period, the right to know how their pay is calculated so it will be easier to predict their earnings. Workers should know why other employees may be picking up more work than they are. They should receive written notice if they are removed from the platform. And if they decide to assert their rights, they should be protected from reprisal. No one working in Ontario should be making less than the minimum wage. They should not be dismissed without notice, explanation or recourse. They should not sign a contract that they do not understand, and they should have the right to resolve work-related disputes.

We are all aware that technology is advancing at lightning speed. Staying ahead of that technology and the economic implications of those changes is a huge challenge for government. As technology changes the way we work, our labour laws must adapt to protect workers. I'm referring specifically, Speaker, to electronic monitoring. Electronic monitoring is becoming commonplace: Delivery persons are being tracked by GPS, construction workers' phone and tablet use are being tracked on the job site, office workers are logging on from home. Our government has introduced legislation that requires large employers to share how their workers are being monitored and how the data is collected and what it will be used for. This legislation would be the first of its kind in Canada.

Our government is taking steps to address workplace privacy issues. Employers should be transparent with how electronic devices being used by workers are being monitored. Employees deserve to know how their activities are being tracked. This legislation would require businesses with 25 or more employees to have a written electronic monitoring policy in place for the entire staff. This kind of transparency is necessary because so many people are now working remotely.

COVID-19 triggered the most significant shift to remote work in our history. At the peak of the pandemic, 32% of Canadians were working from home. Five years earlier, only 4% were working remotely. During that same period, advancements in technology have made electronic monitoring that much easier. We believe the majority of employers are acting responsibly, but this legislation will hold employers to account.

Speaker, I want to move on to a very difficult issue, and that is the opioid crisis. During the first 10 months of the pandemic, approximately 2,500 Ontarians died from causes related to opioid use. Some 30% of the overdose victims who were employed were construction workers—30%. The construction sector is seeing more opioid deaths than any other business sector in the province. Bars and nightclubs are also seeing an increase in opioid use involving recreational drugs laced with fentanyl and carfentanil, which can be deadly.

1640

Our government is here to protect these workers, and that is why we introduced legislation that will require workplaces that are at risk of a worker opioid overdose to have naloxone kits available. We want to help people struggling with addiction, and that's why we are taking decisive action to address the challenges of the opioid crisis at the job site.

Dealing with an opioid addiction is nothing to be ashamed of. Many of us know someone who has been impacted by the opioid epidemic. It could be a family member, a co-worker or a friend. Requiring businesses in high-risk settings to have these kits available will help reduce the stigma around opioid abuse. It will raise awareness about the risks of accidental overdose. These deaths are preventable, and having these kits available could potentially save hundreds of lives each year.

Speaker, we are taking action to protect workers' privacy by requiring employers to be transparent on how

their employees are being monitored electronically. We are introducing a minimum level of income and guaranteeing that. And, of course, we are requiring naloxone kits in high-risk workplaces. These initiatives, Mr. Speaker, will help—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): You have run out of time. Now you will answer questions. The first one comes from the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I was listening to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook in her comments on Bill 88, and one thing she said really caught my attention: It was that no worker in Ontario should earn less than the minimum wage. I agree with that. I would like to ask the member why her government is bringing forward legislation that will guarantee that gig workers will earn less than the minimum wage by requiring them to be paid only for engaged time and not recognizing the time that they are logged into the apps and waiting for work.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from London West, thank you for the question. We know that workers in the gig economy often face uncertain working conditions and they lack the protections, including difficulty predicting paycheques. One week they may earn \$1,000, and the other \$500. That is why the Working for Workers Act 2 will include the right for these workers to keep their full tips, in addition to their regular pay period. That is why it will include the right for information and clarity around the processes used by digital platforms: how pay is calculated, how and why a worker might be penalized in the allocation of work. They will have access to this information. We are providing these workers with the much-needed transparency that they asked for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Sarnia–Lambton seems to have a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the member from Flamborough for that great dissertation there a few minutes ago. I have a question around foreign credentials. I don't know whether we've touched on it very much today during the debate, but I found it interesting. I was reading the bill and reading some criticism from the opposite side that we didn't consult enough about the change we made to Canadian experience as far as foreign credentials. That was something we heard—I know the minister and his parliamentary assistant heard a lot about how that was a big impediment to people trying to seek employment, having Canadian experience. Maybe the member could speak to that, please.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you again for the question. Again, we recognize the need for more people in the trades, and to do that, we're inviting people from other provinces to work here in Ontario to fill the 300,000-plus jobs that are currently available in the trades in Ontario.

We're rolling out the red carpet. We are guaranteeing qualified workers can get registered and start working within 30 days of coming to Ontario. This would make it easier for the engineers, auto mechanics, plumbers and other regulated professionals to move to Ontario to fill these in-demand jobs and drive growth. Our customer service standard is part of how we are making Ontario a

top destination of choice for Canada's tradespeople and skilled professionals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member from Spadina–Fort York has a question.

Mr. Chris Glover: This bill is not as advertised. It's called the Working for Workers Act. It does not; it works against workers.

There are four schedules in this bill. One of the schedules actually guarantees that gig workers do not get paid for any time they are waiting for the next job, and so many of them will be making less than minimum wage, rather than minimum wage—what this government is advertising this bill as.

It says it will protect workers' privacy, but this bill doesn't say what kind of data employers can keep on workers. It only says they have to be transparent and actually let the workers know what they are keeping.

You say naloxone kits are going to save hundreds of lives. There were 4,000 opioid deaths in Ontario last year, and this government has been completely negligent in providing the kinds of services for people to overcome the opioid addictions that are so prevalent, that are at epidemic levels in this province.

Will the member opposite recognize that this bill is not as advertised and that you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Back to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook to respond.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would have to challenge the member opposite. I think it is as advertised. I think that some of the questions or some of the issues and concerns that were raised by the opposition all afternoon—speaking to a segment, a part, just one isolated part of this act; for example, the naloxone kits.

This is not a bill to address the opioid crisis. For example, as I mentioned, 30% of the opioid cases in the last year were in the construction industry. It's to help workers address certain issues within their workplace. So if there is an opioid issue in the workplace, we are saying one way of tackling that, one way of helping these workers is to provide these naloxone kits. In no way are we advertising that it is going to address the opioid crisis in Ontario. It's one step to make it safer for workers who are on the job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has a question.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm happy to ask a question to the member. I know that I've been passionate about skilled trades for—oh, my gosh—the better part of 18 years in the Legislature and asking for reforms.

We know there's a huge shortage coming, and I just wanted to ask the member about the historic shortage we have coming in skilled trades and what we are doing to cut red tape, to get more people into the skilled trades, more of our young people, more international people. There's a lot to be done, and I'm very happy to see that this bill addresses some of that, so I ask the member if she could address that, please.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Of course, thank you to the member for all of her work in addressing, again, this historic labour shortage in Ontario. As I've said, we recognized when we first were elected that there are not enough people to fill the jobs currently available, especially in the skilled trades, here in Ontario. So we've put many measures in place, such as this particular act, to tackle that.

It is the largest in a generation. We're making it easier for people in the skilled trades to continue their careers in our province. We are planning to introduce legislation that would ensure those working in these professions in the skilled trades can get their credentials processed and continue working within 30 days. That's huge—30 days. This service standard would make it easy for engineers, for mechanics, plumbers and several other professions in Ontario to get certified. We will fill those jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Davenport has a question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I wanted to go back—I was listening carefully to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook's comments, and then I heard my colleague the MPP for London West raise a concern with the member opposite about kind of a misrepresentation, perhaps, in this legislation, of this enabling these gig workers to actually make minimum wage.

I want to get the member opposite another opportunity here to address that excellent point that the member from London West made. Just for anybody watching who doesn't completely understand, what this bill means is that app-based workers or gig workers only qualify to be paid when they're in the middle of a delivery, not for all the work hours they're working and waiting. It's kind of the equivalent, I would say, of paying a retail worker only when they're ringing up a sale, not for all the other work they're doing there.

1650

So I want to throw it back to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook again, to try to get a real answer to this question. Why is the member unwilling to pay gig workers a real minimum wage? Why is this government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We'll get an answer to that question that you just posed.

Back to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from Davenport, thank you for the question. Speaker, this is a step, and it's the first time in the country that these digital platform workers have been given this type of foundational right. No one in Ontario should make less than the general minimum wage for the time that they work. No one should be fired without notice, explanation or recourse, or have to travel out of country to resolve workplace disputes.

We are improving conditions for Ontario's digital platform workers. These workers are mothers. They're fathers. They're students and young people. We believe it's an injustice that they don't have these rights. Again, that's why this act, working for workers, is introducing these foundational rights. We will give them the general minimum wage for the time that they work. We will—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

We really don't have time for another question and response with 20 seconds on the clock, but we will have further debate with the member from Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good afternoon. I am very pleased to see Bill 88 back here for second reading after its early and, I would argue, very inadequate visit to committee. I am proud, as always, to speak here on behalf of the people of Davenport, which is home, by the way, to a significant number of people who work in what we've come to call the gig economy.

I am also very pleased to see this return without schedule 5 with its surprise deregulation of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture. I want to tell you, I heard from hundreds of constituents who were absolutely incensed by this out-of-nowhere attack on their profession and medical care, and I want to thank them along with traditional Chinese medicine practitioners and supporters across the province who so successfully pushed back on this move. I want to especially thank the member from Toronto–Danforth and the members from University–Rosedale and Spadina–Fort York and others in my caucus who really did extraordinary work in pushing the government back to change this terrible decision. As always, I'm joined here by some really exemplary representatives of their ridings.

The thing is, nearly four years in and this government is still bringing forward legislation without consulting the very people it impacts, still making deals behind closed doors and hoping that nobody notices. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, people are tired of it. I'm tired of it. And we see it all too often here in this place.

New Democrats were proud to stand with Ontarians to oppose that schedule. I wish the government would listen to everybody else who has concerns with this legislation.

But let's talk, Mr. Speaker, first of all about that gig economy, because the term tends to make it sound like it's a separate economy, one that's somehow different than the rest of the economy. But actually, when we talk about the gig economy, we're talking about new technologies that have changed the way services are coordinated, but the work involved hasn't really changed that much. Whether you order food using a delivery app or you're driving to your destination in an app-based taxi service, the basics of the job remain the same. Someone is still physically going to get your food and bring it to you. They're driving a real car with you in it, and they are making a living with their labour.

Notably, Mr. Speaker, the workers who are doing these jobs, like many in the service sector, are disproportionately women and racialized people. And like everyone else, they are trying, just like every other working person, to build a good life for themselves. They're working long hours. They're piecing together enough money to get by in a province where the cost of everything is just skyrocketing every day, from housing to groceries to gas; it just keeps going up under this government.

What many of these tech companies have succeeded in doing is to convince us that the new ways we access

services mean that the nature of the work and the rights of the workers who do it are somehow different. They have made billions, in fact, by convincing governments that their workers don't actually work for them—it's a really interesting rap—that they're simply providing some kind of an interface for thousands of independent contractors, and that those independent contractors don't really need the same protections at work or benefits or good wages.

Unfortunately, this bill actually works against those workers, because it helps codify some of those false arguments into your law, and that's why we here in the official opposition, the NDP, are opposed to this. This will have the effect of further holding down the incomes of some of the most precariously employed people and, sadly, eroding the rights of workers everywhere.

Speaker, gig workers have been making this case for a long time; this isn't just us. In fact, it was my first full summer as MPP back in 2018, and I remember I worked with what was then called Gig Workers United to help them collect signatures on petitions at the Dundas West Fest—wow, those were the days when we had festivals. It's an incredible local festival. Those workers, those folks from Gig Workers United, had been working very closely with me and also with our amazing former federal member of Parliament, Andrew Cash, who was and remains a steadfast advocate for contract, gig, part-time workers, musicians, artists. Andrew was successful in putting the issues facing workers on the national agenda, and he continued that work through a new organization that he built called the Urban Worker Project. In all of that time since he started raising those issues in 2014—2011, actually—going back to before that, the asks haven't changed. The workers want the right to organize themselves as a union. They want to be treated with respect. They want to end the misclassification that has allowed employers to exploit them for too long, and they want access to benefits and workplace protections that other workers are entitled to. Why are they not entitled to those same protections?

Through a lot of hard work and historic victories in the courts, these workers have made a lot of progress, and they finally succeeded in getting the attention of this government and even a labour minister whose advocacy for workers famously included praise for the anti-union laws of so-called “right-to-work states.” We don't forget that. We will never forget that.

So has this government really done a complete 180 on their respect for workers' rights? As my colleague from Spadina-Fort York said, really, this bill is not as advertised. They certainly have not abandoned the low-wage policies that have defined them for the last three years. Does Bill 88 really work for workers? Well, if you look beyond the press releases and the spin, it shows us that Bill 88 certainly does not. The bill continues, in fact, this government's low-wage agenda. It's the same one that took \$5,300 out of the workers' pockets of this province by delaying a planned increase in the minimum wage. Don't let them tell you they have increased the minimum wage and made everything better. They took over \$5,000

out of the pockets of minimum wage workers. The low-wage agenda of this government capped the wages of nurses and teachers beyond inflation with Bill 124. We won't forget that. I can tell you, it comes up on the doorsteps in my riding every single night when I am knocking on doors.

This bill does set out a new \$15 minimum wage for what they called, as I mentioned earlier, these “app-based workers,” but it's actually less than what companies like Uber have recommended as a base wage. It also—and I pointed this out in my questions earlier—constrains the definition of work to when the worker is on assignment, and this is a really important point. That means that when you're waiting for your next pickup or between pickups, surprise, you're not entitled to that minimum wage anymore—nada, nothing. In fact, we think this change could end up costing workers big time. And all of the details are left to regulation. It's a mystery.

1700

So what is left? Does this bill help gig workers in any way to access the basic safety net of EI, of parental leave, of vacation pay, of CPP? These are the other things these workers have been asking for. No, again. In fact, what they've done is misclassify again. Instead of addressing that misclassification that the member from London West has attempted to address in her bill, this bill basically creates a subclass of workers with fewer rights.

As this bill was being rushed through at committee, our caucus pushed to have some of those provisions in Bill 28, the bill that prevents worker misclassification, which the member from London West introduced—tried to move some of that through as amendments. This government wouldn't budge because that is not in their interests. At the end of the day, that is not what they're trying to do. We could recognize employees as employees. We could listen to workers. They're telling you what they want you to do. They are telling you what they need.

This bill is not going to get the job done. It includes too many loopholes. It's going to continue and possibly worsen the exploitation of some of Ontario's most vulnerable workers.

I urge the government, on behalf of the gig workers in Davenport and across this province, to work with us to actually fix this issue so all workers can build a good life here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The first question comes from the member from Mississauga-Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, talking about the opioid crisis—we talked many times earlier as well. Over 12,500 people died from the opioid crisis. As the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook said, it is the right step in the right direction to protect the workers on the job and save lives. I know my colleague and the member for Mississauga Centre has worked on it. Another friend of mine, Antonio, has worked very hard on this. Many other stakeholders' groups advocated for more workplace safety, and they praised the government for introducing the legislation

that would require naloxone kits at workplaces. My question to the member for Davenport—thank you for the remarks—what is your opinion? Are you going to support this move? Are you against this move?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate the question.

I do want to point out to anybody watching that this bill, like so many others that this government brings forward, throws a whole lot of stuff in one bill—it's always these omnibus bill type of things. It means that we are kind of forced to take—we can't cherry-pick and say, "Oh, we're going to support the naloxone kits, but we won't support this." That's not how this works.

Unfortunately, I will say, although I think the intention isn't bad around the naloxone kits—and I want to say also to all of the members opposite that we have them in our office, my community office, and I hope you do too, because it is a crisis. But the problem with this schedule 4 that this government introduced in the legislation is that it just doesn't go far enough. We fully support getting naloxone into workplaces, but this doesn't specify which workplaces.

I will add, we would have gone a lot further in this legislation if they had gone ahead and supported, for example, the motion that my colleague from Parkdale–High Park—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan may conclude that question and give you a chance to finish it; I don't know.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you to my colleague the MPP from Davenport with her remarks. I couldn't agree more. I've heard from the other side in this debate that this is a step in the right direction, that it's just a step towards justice for these workers. I think, what a lost opportunity. These gig workers have been asking for justice for a long time, and our colleague from London West's bill would have been a much better way of addressing this issue.

My question to my colleague is, why do you think that they have left out the full rights that people should have in this bill?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. It's a really great question, and I would love to hear what the government members have to say about that, too.

First of all, why doesn't it do the job? Because they didn't ask the workers; they didn't ask the people who are actually impacted. I think that's part of it, but I think the other unfortunate part of this is, at the end of the day, they're not really looking to protect those workers. They're actually working for the guys who want to continue to exploit those workers. That is the problem here.

These workers, people who work in the gig economy, are very clear about what the protections are that they need. The member for London West's bill would go a long way to fulfilling those needs, but this government chose a different tack. Why? Because they want to create this

fiction, this theatre of protecting workers, but the reality is that none of this actually does that at all. In fact, it may harm things more than help them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. Billy Pang: The opposition have repeatedly called on the government to do more to deter bad actors from taking advantage of vulnerable workers. Our government is now introducing high fines for businesses to accomplish exactly that.

So my question is, will the member opposite stop saying no and agree that this is a good move for workers in Ontario?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you very much to the member from Markham–Unionville for those comments.

I don't know if the member had a chance to hear some of what I was saying, but I fundamentally disagree with the premise of your question: that this is somehow going to help workers; it actually doesn't. In fact, as I said earlier, it actually creates, again, this crisis of creating a second class of workers. It does nothing to remedy that fundamental issue, which—so many people in this province increasingly are relying on that kind of work.

You are dividing people into different classes of workers. You aren't listening to the very people who have been impacted, who are impacted, who have come to you and demanded and asked, please, for these protections. Why should one worker be able to qualify for EI and parental leave and get a real minimum wage and another worker not?

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I wonder, who really are the bad actors here? Is it the government themselves, for ignoring the voice of those workers?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from University–Rosedale has a question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I was really struck by the title of this bill, the Working for Workers Act, because it made me think about all the measures this government has passed over the last three and three quarter years that have clearly done nothing to help workers. In fact, it has made it worse for them.

Can the member for Davenport outline some of the issues she has seen with what this government has done to make life a little harder for workers over the last three and three quarter years?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you to the member from University–Rosedale for that excellent question. I do appreciate so much the work she does in her community as an amazing representative for workers there.

It is a good point, because over the last few years—let's take everybody through this. We saw this government cut the planned minimum wage increase, which, as I mentioned in my comments, has taken \$5,300 out of workers' pockets so far. We saw them cap the wages of workers like nurses and teachers, the people they call our front-line heroes during this pandemic. They capped them behind inflation, forcing them to fall behind the rising cost of living. My goodness, the cost of living is increasing every moment. They took women in health care to court to try to

deny them equal pay for equal work. And this bill means that gig workers are continuing to be denied a basic safety net, like EI, parental leave, vacation pay and CPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, through you, I appreciate the member's speech and discussion points.

I'm a volunteer firefighter myself, and I've always valued that, for a lot of our volunteers, they have to have a close working relationship with their employer so that they can respond when their pager goes off, to see to the emergency needs of their community.

I noticed that in this bill, and especially with our proud military tradition, that we're actually strengthening the ability for reservists to take leave from their works so that they can serve their country.

1710

I was wondering if the member could comment on what her thoughts are on our actions in this bill to protect our reservists' jobs for when they get back from serving our country.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate the question from the member for Brantford—Brant.

It is interesting in this place—I was thinking of the people in the gallery today, when they watch this. They must be thinking, "Isn't it interesting what people decide to raise?" I just spent all this time talking about a lot of really important issues that I have raised, and I'm always amazed that there isn't actually an attempt to engage in that conversation.

I represent a lot of people. I appreciate that you're a volunteer firefighter and the issues there, but I'm coming to you on behalf of my community, where there is really a disproportionate number of people who work in this economy that this government treats like it's some sort of separate economy. It's my job to bring their issues forward. I wish this government saw it as their job to listen to those workers. They should have brought them in and actually asked them how this so-called Working for Workers Act is going to help them. I'll tell you what they're telling me. They're saying, "This is going to make life more difficult. This is fiction. This is theatre. It's not going to help me feed my kids." I'm disappointed, but I appreciate that we all come here with our own concerns and issues.

I hope that the government learns something today from some of the issues that people in my community have been raising.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the member for Spadina—Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I actually want to start my remarks by talking about the situation in Ukraine, and I beg your indulgence for this.

On Sunday night, I attended a prayer vigil for the 109 children who have been killed in Putin's invasion of Ukraine. People of Ukrainian descent from all across southern Ontario were there. I spoke with one woman named Larissa. She said, "We come here because it feels like there's some solidarity. It feels like we are together

and that we are mourning the loss of these 109 children who have been murdered in this invasion together."

In the media, some people have been surprised at the strength of the Ukrainian defence.

For the last seven years, I've had the honour of attending the Holodomor commemoration at the St. Demetrius church on Lake Shore Boulevard in Toronto. The Holodomor, for people who don't know, was 1932 to 1933. It was an attempted genocide of the Ukrainian people by Stalin, by the Soviet Union. They deliberately stole their food and let people en masse starve to death. Millions and millions died. There are still a few survivors who actually can recall and recount their stories. If you've ever listened to a survivor of the Holodomor, then you will understand why the people of Ukraine are fighting so fiercely to defend their country. For any people who have ever suffered through a genocide, the words that come first and foremost are "never again." Those words, "never again," are being echoed across Ukrainian communities around the world, and they should be echoed around all of our communities. In this Legislature, we should be doing everything we can to support the people of Ukraine and to end this invasion.

Applause.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you. Ten million people inside Ukraine, a quarter of the population, have had to leave their homes. Three million have crossed borders into other countries. These Ukrainian refugees will be coming to Canada shortly, and we as individuals can do what we can to support them—empty nesters like myself and my friends. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress site has a space where you can sign up to host refugees who will be arriving shortly. So I encourage people from across Ontario to support these refugees when they arrive. Thank you.

We're talking about the Working for Workers Act, Bill 88. I think the title of the bill is a complete misnomer. I want to talk about it in the context of labour relations and labour rights in Ontario.

My mother's side of the family comes from Uxbridge, and everybody on that side of the family were independent workers. My grandfather owned a small lumber business, his son owned a lumber business, his father owned a lumber business, and my cousin is in there now too. There are actually four generations of people in the lumber industry from that family. My grandfather was a really good employer. He paid his workers a living wage, and he also was one of the pioneers of profit-sharing, so the workers were actually benefiting from the work that they did. The more productive the company was, the more they earned at the end of the year.

The other side of my family is from Oshawa. I come from five generations of General Motors workers. My brother works at General Motors today. My father, grandfather and great-grandfather worked at General Motors. My great-grandfather was building horse buggies when they converted over to building cars.

My great-grandfather and my grandfather lived in deep poverty. My father grew up in deep poverty, particularly through the Depression. General Motors did not pay well

until 1937. In 1937, there was a strike at General Motors, and my grandfather was the fourth person to sign a union card to join the United Auto Workers, Local 222. At that time, there was a Liberal government here in the Legislature. Mitch Hepburn was the Premier, and they were determined to break that union. Hepburn formed a special police force—a bunch of goons who were going to go and break the heads of the people who had dared to strike in Oshawa. They were nicknamed the “Hepburn Hussars” or the “Sons of Mitches.” It would have been my grandfather that they would have attacked. But two of his cabinet ministers resigned in protest over this plan, and his wife told him, “If you send those hussars, if you send those goons to beat up the strikers in Oshawa, people are going to get killed.” That was what was happening all over the United States when people were trying to strike and form unions. So Hepburn backed down, and the United Auto Workers was formed.

It was the first major victory for the unionization of the manufacturing sector in Ontario. That unionization—people talk about the economy. That unionization drive of the manufacturing sector meant that those jobs that my great-grandfather and my grandfather and the other 4,000 workers in General Motors at the time had went from being poverty jobs to being middle-class jobs. Particularly after the Second World War, people started those manufacturing jobs, as unionization of the manufacturing sector—and the bulk of the jobs in Ontario at the time, in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, were manufacturing jobs. Those became middle-class jobs, and the middle class grew. It grew to about 70% of the population. Many of us in here, particularly of my generation, benefited from that unionization drive.

The other thing I will say about this: Unionization and all of the social benefits that came with it—the push for employment insurance and WSIB and CPP and workers’ safety standards across the board—led to an increase in the economic growth of this province. The growth in Ontario, the economic growth, the GDP growth per year in the 1950s and 1960s and into the 1970s was 5% per year.

Since then, starting in the mid-1980s and then into the 1990s, and particularly in Ontario in 1995 and following, unionization has been broken down. We have converted from a manufacturing sector to a service sector. Some 80% of the jobs in this province are now service sector jobs. And the most poorly employed workers, the most vulnerable workers, are those gig workers.

When I look at this bill, the Working for Workers Act, it’s being sold—the marketing is that this is actually going to improve the lot of gig workers, but it’s not.

There was a labour relations board ruling in late February that said that gig workers are, in fact, employees; they’re not independent contractors. As employees, they are entitled to protections under the labour code and under the Labour Relations Act. This means that they are entitled to paid breaks, vacation pay, employment insurance, CPP, and a safe workplace, including WSIB if they’re injured on the job. That ruling was years in the making, and it was a huge victory for all of the gig workers in the province

because it meant they were going to be given the same rights and protections as other employees in this province.
1720

This bill creates a separate category for gig workers. It says that they’re going to get paid minimum wage, but only when they’re engaged in work, not while they’re waiting for work. If you’re an Uber driver and you spend half your shift waiting for the next delivery, you don’t get paid for half your work, which means that if you’re getting paid \$15 an hour, you’re actually only going to make \$7.50 an hour. It means that you don’t have protections that other employees have.

I would strongly encourage this government, don’t do what Mitch Hepburn was trying to do in 1937. We came so far in the post-war period, in protecting workers. For the last 25 years, workers’ rights have been steadily eroded, and this bill is another step in that erosion of workers’ rights in this province. I strongly encourage this government, don’t do what Mitch Hepburn was trying to do in 1937. Actually respect the workers of this province and respect the gig workers, because they are entitled to the protections that employees and workers in this province fought for a century to achieve. This kind of legislation undermines the work that they have done and the protections that so many people sacrificed so much to fight for.

I will take questions from the floor. But I am strongly encouraging the government to repeal that schedule of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Your first question comes from the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I appreciate the member’s comments, and thank you for sharing the history of your family. I always find it very interesting—where different people in the Legislature have come from and over the generations.

I think all Ontarians are going to be very welcoming of the Ukrainian people, as they are forced from a terrible situation in their country—and some will have to come to Ontario—with open arms. I know that we’re talking about a piece of legislation, and so I’ll tie this in with the fact that we’ve been talking in the legislation about skilled labour and the fact that there is such a need now and it’s only growing—and how hopefully some of the Ukrainian migration that is coming over can dovetail into the expediency of getting them into the job markets in the skilled trades.

Mr. Chris Glover: My father is a tool-and-die maker, my uncle is an electrician, and one of my best friends is an electrician. On the Uxbridge side of the family, everybody was in construction trades. There were masons and carpenters. I actually paid part of my way through university building log houses with my uncle. So, actually, I’ve got some carpentry skills, although I don’t have a licence. I’m a strong believer in skilled trades. Those are great professions. They pay really well, and we need to encourage those.

I agree that there’s this one piece in this legislation that actually makes a lot of sense—that we would recognize

the credentials of skilled workers coming into the province quicker so that they can join the workforce and address some of the shortages of skilled workers as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you for the comments about Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. I agree that that strength really makes us all feel humble. I know it makes me feel humble.

There are bits in this bill—things like the Red Seal skilled trades, recognizing things that are good. But the gig worker piece is something, as someone who has worked in the trade union movement, I see as creating another class of employee. I'm thinking about a gig worker—let's say an Uber driver. They have to gas up their car. They have to do maintenance. They have to wash their vehicle. There are all sorts of things that they're not going to be paid for. I don't think that's right, and I think we need to fix that.

What are the changes you would like to see in this bill that would improve it?

Mr. Chris Glover: You know, it's very simple. The Ontario Labour Relations Board has ruled that gig workers are employees and entitled to protections under the labour code and Employment Standards Act. We just have to honour that ruling by the Ontario Labour Relations Board instead of overruling that ruling with this bill. That's the danger of this bill. It reduces what the gig workers have finally achieved through that appeal to the labour relations board and it reduces them to a second class of worker without the protections that every other worker in Ontario is entitled to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I think we do have time for one further question. The member from Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I understand the member's speech addressed a few different areas that he had concerns with and areas that he felt could be, perhaps, enhanced. But I have a question about schedule 2, which enshrines the right of an employee to leave to train as a Canadian Armed Forces reservist and reduces the amount of time an employee needs to be employed to qualify for this leave from six to three months. I know we have seen, with the situation in eastern Europe and in Ukraine, the need for a robust military and our commitment to NATO and ensuring that we're helping our neighbours and our partners in eastern Europe. I'm wondering if the member opposite supports the schedule and supports ensuring that workers, employees, are able to leave and train as Canadian Armed Forces reservists after three months.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the member for his final answer.

Mr. Chris Glover: I've only got a few seconds left. I will say, yes, I absolutely support that. We need to support our armed forces as much as we possibly can, including when they come back with PTSD and need support. We've got to provide those supports to people.

I've only got a few seconds left. I'm wondering, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker—there's a saying in

Ukraine, "Glory to Ukraine." It goes "Slava Ukraini," and the response is "Ukraini slava." So I'm wondering if we as the Legislature could say—if I could get you to respond, "Ukraini slava."

Slava Ukraini.

Interjections: Ukraini slava.

Mr. Chris Glover: Slava Ukraini.

Interjections: Ukraini slava.

Mr. Chris Glover: Slava Ukraini.

Interjections: Ukraini slava.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much.

Are we going to call for further debate, or do you have anything to say? I recognize the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill—no? Okay.

Further debate? The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I expected that the government members were getting up at that point, but I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. As you have heard from various members on this side of the aisle from the official opposition, we have a lot of issues with this bill. There are some good things within the bill, but there are several things that we just feel do not go far enough when it comes to really working for workers in the province of Ontario. With our consultations with workers and several organizations we know that the people, and gig workers in particular, also feel this bill does not go far enough.

I'm only going to have a few moments, so I will check on a few schedules. Schedule 1 is the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act. This provides gig workers—for people who are at home watching and just tuning in, gig workers could be Uber drivers, people who are delivering our food, like SkipTheDishes, DoorDash, those sorts of organizations. Those workers currently do not get an hourly wage whatsoever. That's how they end up under the term "gig worker." They have no employee status currently. This bill will provide them \$15 an hour when they're actually working. As we know, delivery drivers, a lot of times, sit in their car waiting for that next order to come in. They will not get paid for that time. They will only get paid for the time where they are moving in their vehicle to pick up their order and deliver their order. So this does not qualify them, still, under the Employment Standards Act. There are a lot of important things under the Employment Standards Act that many people in this province enjoy, such as a real minimum wage for the full 15 hours while they're punched in to work; overtime pay; vacation pay; just labour entitlements and labour rights, which they will still not be entitled to under this schedule.

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It's interesting that the government already—sorry; I believe it went to the labour board. The arbitrator found an Uber driver was actually an employee of Uber, and this schedule in this legislation doesn't even reflect what that ruling was. So the government is putting forward legislation that doesn't even meet the needs of the labour arbitrator that had already ruled on this—so a big concern.

Another huge concern for a gig worker, particularly in delivery service: Look at the price of gas. We're all

struggling with the price of gas. People across the province are struggling with the price of gas, and gig workers, particularly in delivery service, have to cover the cost of their own gas. So not only are they not making a full minimum wage and have no protections under labour standards, but it's also costing them money to be able to go to work, which is a big problem.

I have to say, Speaker: Since Uber became Uber, I have refused to take them. Taxi drivers in my city of Hamilton had to pay enormous amounts of insurance, plate fees, the cost of the plate, the cost of being a taxi driver. When Uber came onto the scene, they didn't have to follow the same rules, and that has never been fixed, so we have seen our taxi industry be depleted. The huge investments that went into the taxi industry have really been depleted, so we see many of those taxi drivers have left the taxi service and just become a part of Uber, who swallowed them. I know there are still taxi services, but I think I heard that Burlington no longer even has a taxi industry anymore, which was mind-blowing to me. But I get it, when we have these big companies like Uber being able to suck up that space.

So that's schedule 1. Schedule 3 is the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006. This speeds up the recognition of credentials within trades across the country. It makes perfect sense. We definitely have a shortage of tradespeople here in Ontario. We've seen that there have been, time and time again, changes to how the colleges work and all of that stuff, and people just not being encouraged to get into trades.

We've seen trade schools in our high schools that were taken away. They actually led to an opportunity for young people to be able to access those classes, and they've been taken out of schools. That really took away from the trades, the building of the trades and the trade industry, when young people didn't have that immediate access throughout their high school opportunity, which was a wonderful opportunity. I remember taking woodworking in school. I remember taking auto class in school. We had these tech schools, so that when young people just weren't able to get through school in the same format—they may have had some learning disabilities or different learning ways—they went to these tech schools, like hairdressing and cosmetology and all of the trades, and those schools were taken away by previous governments, which really hurt those industries. We're definitely seeing the cause of that now.

So this schedule really should have come into effect a long time ago. I remember, when I was first elected over 10 years ago, I had heard from a Red Seal carpenter. He was a Red Seal carpenter from Alberta, and his qualifications were not the same here in Ontario. That's how long I've been hearing about this, so I'm happy to see this coming.

What's really interesting is that people are actually leaving Ontario in droves. We used to have people coming to Ontario. Ontario was the goal destination. And now we see record numbers of people leaving Ontario. Between July 2020 and July 2021, 85,000 people left Ontario—85,000 people. We have not seen those numbers migrate

out of our province since the early 1980s, and that's because of the high cost of living. We see gas prices going through the roof. The cost of housing is completely unaffordable.

I talked to somebody today. Their son, I think it is—\$85,000 a year. They have a great job. They think they can do well. They will never have an opportunity to buy a house in this province—never an opportunity. Speaking of which, my daughter is actually driving to New Brunswick at this moment, looking at housing, because they have an opportunity to buy a house there. And here, it's not even a thought. For so many young people, the dream of having that stability of owning that home has just gone out the window.

Other things: child care. We have the highest child care in the country and a government that refuses—we have a time clock tick tick ticking. We're going to lose billions of dollars that could be given to families to help them achieve here in the province. But we have a government that doesn't pay attention.

And we have a bill in front of us that's called “working for workers”. It does so little to work for workers. It's really such a missed opportunity of what the people in our province are looking for. There are some good things here. They could have gone better. If they actually were the new working party of the province, then we would see bold initiatives. This government doesn't even know what a bold initiative is when it comes to actually working for workers. It's little bits and pieces. It's smoke and mirrors. It's like, “Look at us. We're champions for you.” The people of Ontario, they know the difference. The people that we talked to, just talking about this bill, they know the difference and they know this bill doesn't go far enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have an opportunity for questions. I recognize—I'll flip a coin. I'll go with Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the opportunity to engage with the member opposite on her speech this afternoon. I want to thank the member for her passionate speech in speaking to the issues that are so important to the people in her community. One of the issues I know she raised—and I know it's not directly linked to the bill, but I think it's an issue that all of us hear about in our constituencies—is gas prices, which is obviously a major issue and one that we've heard about more and more in the last few weeks. I know in my community I have.

I just want to ask the member opposite. I know that they worked with the Liberal Party to ensure that there was a cap-and-trade carbon tax here in the province of Ontario. I know that their federal counterparts are now supporting a Liberal government bringing in place 37 cents per litre of gas, a carbon tax there. I'm just wondering, if they form government, would they put in place an additional 37 cents of carbon tax on every litre of gas in the province of Ontario like their federal counterparts?

Miss Monique Taylor: As you see, Speaker, the ability to make things up as they go along happens on a regular basis.

I would like to know why the government would vote against one of our colleague's bills to regulate gas prices

in this province, to actually have some strategies and reliable prices that people could count on. They're the kind of initiatives that would help the people of this province. But yet, your government chose to vote against that, not believing that people deserve regulation and that they deserve reliable gas prices. It's unfortunate, but the gas prices are too expensive and your government has done nothing whatsoever except put some stickers that didn't even stick on a gas pump.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for her comments on this bill. I listened with interest. I was really interested in the trades aspect of this bill. We are looking at a system where certain people will be recognized; their qualifications will be recognized.

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I appreciate your comments about the failures of our school system throughout the years when previous provincial governments stripped all the trades programs out of the high schools. I spoke recently to principals who were talking about this and how they want to see that reignited and that investment made, because employers are telling them that's what they need. I'm wondering if you're hearing the same thing in your riding.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you so much to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. She's absolutely correct. We hear it on a regular basis that the trades are scrambling for people. I know when I visited—I haven't been able to visit a school in some time, Speaker, but one of my favourite things to do was visit grade 5, grade 10 students, talking about civics classes. But in there I would always encourage young people to not just look at going to college and university, but really truly looking at the trades and the wonderful opportunities they could have in life from working in the trades, with great benefits, wages and pensions—just really fantastic jobs that come from the trades. But really, I don't see enough happening to encourage young people to look at the trades very often.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. Billy Pang: I feel sorry that, on one hand, the member opposite is saying that gas prices are very expensive and refuses to remove the carbon tax initiative from them and voted no for our more house, more homes strategy to control house prices.

Because of the previous question—I asked previously to the member that the opposition has repeatedly called on this government to do more to deter bad actors from taking advantage of volunteer workers, and she didn't answer my question. So I ask again: Will the member opposite stop saying no and agree this is good for workers in Ontario because our government is now introducing higher fines for businesses to accomplish exactly that?

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, I'm not really quite sure. I heard a few different things in there. I heard something about homes for homes and work—like, I apologize to the member. I honestly was quite confused in all of the

different aspects he brought, but I will talk about the homes.

If the government feels that it has done enough to actually help our housing market, then they really need to look at it again. Our housing market has increased exponentially. Young people do not have the opportunity or even the ability to dream of owning a home. That is so sad; it is so sad. MZO's are not going to help. That is just overpowering municipalities. Municipalities know we need help. The MZO's are not going to help the prices and the cost of housing. It's absolutely not working. They've been using MZO's for three years and houses have gone up unaffordably.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I listened very carefully to the member from Hamilton Mountain's comments. I know that she has raised previously in this place, on a number of occasions, concerns about naloxone access and the growing poisonous drug and opioid crisis in our province. She called, I know, for naloxone access for correctional officers. This bill, as the government members have mentioned several times, includes schedule 4 which amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to list high-risk workplaces where naloxone kits could be provided.

Anyways, I just wondered if the member from Hamilton Mountain would care to share her perspective on whether this is adequate—I know some of us have issues—and where she thinks this could be strengthened?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you for asking me this question because I didn't have the time to be able to touch on it. It is one of the most depressing issues in our province right now, and that is the opioid overdose crisis that we're seeing in every community. There is not a riding in this chamber that is not affected by this.

When I look at this legislation and I see that it's only construction and bars and nightclubs, it just leaves me to wonder who the government spoke to. I know they spoke to the construction council and I'm sure that's where it came from, but what about all of the other industries? What about all of the other businesses that should be included in this? It should be broad scope. It shouldn't be if you feel there's a need and kind of here and there. We don't see supports and resources of training to go with this. It's just not far enough. We have a major human crisis on our hands, and this little piece is a good step, but it's a very small step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciated the debate this afternoon. I was wondering if the member could perhaps, and I know it wasn't directly—because there are certain issues that the opposition have with the legislation, obviously; they've mentioned that many times this afternoon. But on the other parts of the legislation, and specifically I would just like to go to the naloxone piece and what the member's thoughts were on that. I know as a volunteer firefighter I have witnessed the use of naloxone. I've been on ride-alongs—I'm sure we all have—where this is

necessary, and those high-risk workplaces where we're putting the naloxone kits into.

I was wondering if the member could just speak to that. And if we didn't get that right, where else should we be putting those naloxone kits that are not mentioned in this legislation? If she could go into that just a little bit more for us.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, every speaker that I've listened to on this side of the House has told or pleaded with the government to please put them in other businesses, ensure that there is proper training, ensure that very broad scope.

But if they want to talk about working for workers and they want to help fix the opioid crisis, repeal Bill 124. Public sector workers, those mental health and addiction workers, they're trapped under Bill 124. Wage equity: Fix that. Retention program: Help fix that. Implement innovative, urgent recruitment programs for workers in the province for community and mental health. Implement pay supplements for PSWs in mental health and addiction.

If the government actually did some real consultation with workers of this province, they would know that AMHO—that's the addictions and mental health workers across the province—are begging for these things. An 8% increase, \$130 million a year—that's how you save money. Provide people programs. Let's not just help them not die on the spot, but let's actually put real programs in place that could maybe even fix this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon. I don't know, perhaps you could agree with me, but I think it was a very good afternoon in the House today. I really appreciated the debate, the going back and forth. I think the member from Toronto–Danforth led it off and set the tone, and I appreciated the comments from the member from Spadina–Fort York too.

I have to say, I love it and I really, really appreciate it when we are all generally on the same page, and when the worst that we can hear from the opposition as we debate is that our legislation doesn't go far enough. I would say that that's actually a very good step forward, that we are doing good things for employees in the province of Ontario.

When I think of the expansion of places where naloxone kits will be, they are a lifesaver. I think they're as important in workplaces as AEDs, which we now see all over the province, in every rink and every arena, and the numbers of lives that have been saved by those—it really thrills me.

When I contemplate being born in the Netherlands and being a Dutch immigrant to this great nation and the reason that my parents chose this country is because my father and mother could remember being liberated by

Canadian soldiers at the end of the Second World War and that we are now putting in place workplace protections for our reservists, it speaks to me. These are good things.

What I heard here this afternoon is that we all agree on these things. And yes, there could be changes made, and perhaps we could go farther, and I look forward to this bill moving on and some of those things happening, but what I heard resoundingly this afternoon was that this is a very good first step in working for workers, or a good next step in working for workers, and we can re-evaluate.

And so, I would like to thank everyone for their participation this afternoon. It was really good to be here. If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, I think I may have even seen a little tear in your eye at some point this afternoon, and I really appreciated that also, because it shows that when the facade comes down, even if just for a few minutes, that we're all here for the same reasons: to do right, to do right by our communities, to do right by the people of Ontario. That really means a lot to me. It's gratifying and I appreciate all of the debate this afternoon.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Bouma has moved that the question be now put. We've had more than nine hours of debate and more than 20 members have had an opportunity to speak to the matter. Therefore, I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Orders of the day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I think that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The government House leader is suggesting that if I seek it, I will now see the clock at 6. Are we all agreed? Agreed.

The clock being at 6, normally we would have private members' public business. However, there being no business designated for debate during private members' public business today, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1752.

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (OP)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (IND)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Vacant	Ajax / Ajax	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Vacant	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jim McDonell
Sam Oosterhoff, Laurie Scott
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Hogarth
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa
Amarjot Sandhu
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Aris Babikian
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe
John Fraser, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Jim McDonell
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Vanessa Kattar

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell