

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 13

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 13

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Monday
1 November 2021

2^e session
42^e législature

Lundi
1^{er} novembre 2021

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

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



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 1 November 2021 / Lundi 1^{er} novembre 2021

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Injured workers	
Ms. Jill Andrew	569
Land use planning	
Mr. Toby Barrett	569
Treaties recognition	
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	569
Mackay family	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	570
Sikh genocide	
Mr. Gurratan Singh	570
COVID-19 treatment	
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	570
Remembrance Day	
Mr. Mike Harris	570
Climate change	
Mr. Jamie West	571
COVID-19 immunization	
Mr. Vincent Ke	571
Visitors	
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	571
Sikh genocide	
Mr. Gurratan Singh	571

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Minimum wage	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	571
Hon. Doug Ford	572
Employment standards	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	572
Mr. Michael Parsa.....	573
Hon. Monte McNaughton	573
Land use planning	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	573
Hon. Doug Ford	574
Long-term care	
Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	574
Hon. Rod Phillips.....	574
Long-term care	
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	575
Hon. Rod Phillips.....	575
Employment standards	
Mr. John Fraser	575
Hon. Monte McNaughton	576

COVID-19 response

Ms. Christine Hogarth	576
Hon. Stephen Lecce.....	576

Workplace safety

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	577
Hon. Monte McNaughton	577

COVID-19 immunization

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	578
Hon. Christine Elliott	578

Pork industry

Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	578
Mr. Toby Barrett	578
Mr. Mike Harris	579

Optometry services

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	579
Hon. Christine Elliott	579

Student leaders

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	579
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	580

Treaties recognition

Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	580
Hon. Doug Downey.....	580

COVID-19 response

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	581
Hon. Christine Elliott	581

Travel industry

Ms. Jill Andrew.....	581
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	581

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Carbon Budget Accountability Act, 2021, Bill 32, Mr. Schreiner / Loi de 2021 sur la responsabilité en matière de budget carbone, projet de loi 32, M. Schreiner	
Second reading negated.....	582

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Support for Adults in Need of Assistance Act, 2021, Bill 40, Mme Gélinas / Loi de 2021 sur le soutien aux adultes ayant besoin d'assistance, projet de loi 40, Mme Gélinas	
First reading agreed to.....	583
Mme France Gélinas	583

MOTIONS

Committee sittings

Mr. Michael Parsa	583
Motion agreed to	583

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Optometry services

Mr. Gilles Bisson	583
-------------------------	-----

Highway safety

Mme France G��linas	583
---------------------------	-----

Optometry services

Mr. Mike Schreiner	584
--------------------------	-----

Tenant protection

Mr. Terence Kernaghan	584
-----------------------------	-----

Places of religious worship

Mr. Rick Nicholls	584
-------------------------	-----

Optometry services

Mr. Faisal Hassan	584
-------------------------	-----

Optometry services

Mr. Ian Arthur	585
----------------------	-----

Optometry services

Ms. Catherine Fife	585
--------------------------	-----

Optometry services

Mr. Jim McDonell	585
------------------------	-----

Optometry services

Ms. Andrea Horwath	585
--------------------------	-----

Mental health services

Mr. Mike Schreiner	586
--------------------------	-----

Treaties recognition

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	586
---------------------------	-----

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Affordable housing

Ms. Andrea Horwath	586
Ms. Doly Begum	588
Mr. Ian Arthur	589
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	589
Mr. Faisal Hassan	589
Mr. Stephen Blais	590

Ms. Jill Andrew	590
Mme Lucille Collard	591
Mr. Jamie West	591
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	592
Mr. Mike Schreiner	592
Mr. Kevin Yarde	593
Ms. Catherine Fife	594
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	594
Miss Monique Taylor	595
Ms. Andrea Horwath	595
Motion negatived	596

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Working for Workers Act, 2021, Bill 27, Mr. McNaughton / Loi de 2021 visant    oeuvrer pour les travailleurs, projet de loi 27, M. McNaughton

Hon. Monte McNaughton	596
Mr. Deepak Anand	600
Mr. Faisal Hassan	603
Mr. Robert Bailey	604
Mr. Ian Arthur	604
Ms. Christine Hogarth	604
Mr. Gurratan Singh	604
Mr. Jeremy Roberts	605
Ms. Peggy Sattler	605
Mr. Robert Bailey	611
Mme France G��linas	611
Mr. Sheref Sabawy	611
Miss Monique Taylor	611
Mr. Toby Barrett	612
Ms. Andrea Khanjin	612
Miss Monique Taylor	615
Ms. Christine Hogarth	615
Mme France G��linas	616
Mr. Aris Babikian	616
Mr. Gurratan Singh	616
Mr. Vincent Ke	616
Mr. John Vanthof	617
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	617

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 November 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 2021

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to acknowledge this land as the traditional gathering place for many Indigenous nations, most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, I ask everyone to join in the singing of the Canadian national anthem, followed by the royal anthem.

Playing of the national anthem/Écoute de l'hymne national.

Playing of the royal anthem/Écoute de l'hymne royal.

1020

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jill Andrew: Today I rise for every Jana in St. Paul's who has been unprotected by WSIB; for every injured worker who, like Jana, has spent countless years fighting for benefits—the mental and physical anguish of having to prove one's injuries and subsequent disabilities over and over again with mountains of proof from doctors, specialists, five neurologists Jana has dealt with at some point, and still being denied benefits.

Jana was injured in March 2014 and by October 2019 still hadn't received a penny from WSIB. Jana reached the six-year mark in 2020, and even then, WSIB claimed she could work, even though CPP disability thought otherwise. In January 2021, WSIB threatened to cut what little benefits finally trickled if she didn't attend an in-person assessment, during the heights of the pandemic, when WSIB workers were working from home and most doctor's appointments had long shifted online. Seven and a half years after being injured at work, Jana is still fighting for scraps and has no answer on the permanency of her benefits.

This government has designed WSIB to protect the employer and not injured workers. This doesn't only hurt the workers, it hurts the entire family. This Conservative government puts its buddies ahead of working people.

I'm calling on this government to change its ways and redirect unused funds held by WSIB to supporting injured workers like Jana, instead of giving the money back to their buddies and billionaire employers. Speaker, the

government needs to say yes to Jana and the near 50% of injured workers living in poverty.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Toby Barrett: Building on the work of Ontario's greenbelt approach, I propose we consider a further broadening under what is referred to as the bluebelt. My hometown paper, the Port Dover Maple Leaf, published an article titled, "Has the Time Now Come to Protect our Bluebelt?" The author, Hannah Harrison, proposes a new concept to protect our Great Lakes fishing heritage and economy. The bluebelt proposal suggests many of the same protections and multi-pronged policy approaches to Great Lakes economies, culture and food systems that we find in Ontario's greenbelt that deal with agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands subject to urban sprawl and development.

Harrison proposes broadening Ontario's right-to-farm legislation, the Farming and Food Production Protection Act, to also conserve, protect and encourage development and improvement of Ontario's fisheries. She also makes the case for zoning modernization to safeguard waterfront access and infrastructure for the marine trades and water-dependent businesses. This approach to zoning helps prevent some types of development, such as residential or commercial that don't require water access, from encroaching on our waterfronts.

Further to this, I have introduced and debated a piece of proposed legislation titled the Great Lakes Protection and Promotion Act. Coupled with the bluebelt concept, there is potential to open the door for some concrete action on this.

TREATIES RECOGNITION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Last week I had the chance to visit and spend time in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, which is in Treaty 9 territory. On July 5, 1929, the treaty commissioners came to KI to sign the adhesion to Treaty 9. The elders talked about this time using the phrase "Kikuh kunuhwehminim," which means, "I will look after you." This is what the elders remember from the treaty discussions in 1929. These elders understood the rights that came from the treaty promises, and they knew that they were sacred and to be respected.

"Kikuh kunuhwehminim": How do we reconcile the idea with all the boil-water advisories, the poor housing, the poverty, the underfunding of children's services, the continual high removal of our children by the child welfare

system, the high suicide rates and the lack of land base as all of our lands are now part of the crown? This has never been and never will be acceptable. This is not what our ancestors signed a treaty for, to be paupers on our own land. It is not what they agreed to for “as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow.” The time is overdue for the governments of Ontario and Canada to wake up and start living up to their treaty promises. Meegwetch.

MACKAY FAMILY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: In late August I was notified of the death of Margaret Mackay at her home in Toronto. She was 102 years old. Margaret was the last surviving grandchild of Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay, one of the famous sons of Oxford. George Leslie Mackay is celebrated both here in Ontario and in Taiwan, where he was the first Canadian missionary to that country. He established some of the first churches and schools, including Oxford College, which was supported by funds raised by the people in Oxford county.

George Leslie Mackay brought many skills with him to support the residents where he ministered. He knew basic frontier medicine. He established a rudimentary dentistry practice and some of its first medical clinics. His legacy is still seen in Taiwan today in many ways, from the Mackay Memorial Hospital in Taipei to children’s storybooks.

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan prepared a tribute to granddaughter Margaret which included the following: “The faith and mission heritage of the Mackay family and others who served alongside them continues in this land for which we will be forever thankful to God. We are also grateful for the bonds of friendship between our nations which they helped to forge and enrich as ambassadors of Christ.”

It’s been almost 150 years since George Leslie Mackay arrived in Taiwan as a missionary. To this day, we continue to promote and foster the international relations that he and his legacy have set in motion.

SIKH GENOCIDE

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Before, whenever November would begin, I would always feel angry. I’d feel upset. Why wouldn’t I? Imagine if your government burned your fathers, your brothers and your sons alive in the streets—kerosene poured on heads, tires placed around necks. Imagine if your government raped your daughters, your mothers and your sisters. That is precisely what the Indian government did to Sikhs across India in November 1984.

I was born in 1984, so every year that passes is a reminder to me of how we haven’t done enough. We haven’t done enough for the survivors, who still languish in poverty. We haven’t done enough to fight for justice. We haven’t done enough to remember the countless Sikhs who were killed. That’s why I’m no longer angry; I’m just sad. That’s why I will continue to say “Never forget 1984,” until the world knows about the Sikh genocide and until the Sikh people have the justice that we deserve.

Farmers across India have been protesting the mass privatization of farming at the hands of the Indian government. For over a year now they have been protesting and they have faced everything from freezing nights to blazing days and state violence. That’s why today I stand and I continue to call each and every one of us to stand and support our farmers, because when there are no farmers, there is no food.

COVID-19 TREATMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: There continues to be mounting evidence regarding the use of inexpensive, repurposed medicines to treat COVID-19 in the early phases. This is based on numerous clinical trials and population data, which includes the experience of many front-line physicians globally. Recently, doctors from around the world gathered in Rome for an international COVID summit to discuss early outpatient treatment and share that information with the international community. It was determined that the effects of therapeutic nihilism—that is, to not treat the patient early—allows the virus to replicate unimpeded, which will result in a portion of them being hospitalized or even dying.

Sadly, the Ontario science table supports therapeutic nihilism. Hospitals put patients on expensive remdesivir, with no evidence of efficacy. There are, however, reports of liver and kidney damage. In November 2020 the WHO stated that use of this drug was not effective.

There’s an old saying, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” More natural and preventative ways of strengthening your immune system include the use of vitamins C, D, zinc, ivermectin, quercetin and even hydroxychloroquine. So let’s not shame the vaccine-hesitant and therefore create a two-tier society.

“Why,” as one nurse recently asked, “do the protected need to be protected from the unprotected by forcing the unprotected to use a protection that did not protect the protected in the first place?”

1030

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Mike Harris: This year marks the 100th anniversary of Canadians wearing poppies to remember the sacrifice of veterans who stood up for our country. Every year on November 11 when I’m in front of the cenotaph, it hits me that my job to represent Kitchener–Conestoga is only possible because of those who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. It is these brave men and women who stood up to tyranny and hatred, who have made it possible for us to take our seats in this chamber. This is something that should not be lost on any of us, Mr. Speaker.

I recently joined some volunteers in Wellesley township who, when they learned about this year’s centennial anniversary, started a project to honour the township’s veterans. Beth Schlueter, Karen Pilecki, Wendy Richardson and Barb Nowak have spent the past six months collecting and knitting poppies for display at the Wellesley

township offices. With over 2,000 poppies made by people from all over the township and supplies donated by Home Hardware and Jantzi Electric, the poppy project was officially unveiled last Friday. I want to thank all of those who donated time, supplies and money for this display of remembrance in honour of our local veterans.

I'd also like to recognize our Premier and new Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism for introducing legislation to protect the rights of workers to wear a poppy on the job. It is so difficult for me to understand why we need a law like this, Mr. Speaker, but I will be putting my full support behind it to make sure that all Ontarians have the protected right to remember our veterans.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Jamie West: The COP26 UN Climate Change Conference unites the world to accelerate action towards our collective goals of addressing climate change. CNN recently described this as the world's "last best chance" at tackling climate change, and it's a good thing that Sudbury has sent one of our best to represent us.

The climate crisis is the greatest threat our world faces, and Sophia Mathur from Sudbury has been inspiring our community since she was seven years old about how to tackle this. Spoiler alert, Speaker: She thinks we should listen to the experts.

Sophia is a friend and she is the epitome of youth leadership. Sophia was the first student outside of Europe to participate in the Fridays For Future student strike movement. She has met with Al Gore and marched with Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. Sophia has lobbied at Tom Davies Square in Sudbury, Parliament Hill in Ottawa, and right here at Queen's Park in Toronto. In fact, Sophia is the lead youth plaintiff in the Ecojustice lawsuit against the current Ontario government for weakening Ontario's 2030 climate targets.

Sophia is one of 25 young environmental activists across the globe to be honoured by Action For Nature as a 2021 International Young Eco-Hero. She is featured in the documentary *CitizenKid: Earth Comes First*, and she will be one of six youths to be featured in the documentary *In Your Hands*, with Prince Charles and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Sophia Mathur is inspiring youth and adults across the world with her tenacity. We cannot fail her or any of our children on this issue. Sudbury is extremely proud of 14-year-old Sophia and all of her accomplishments. I join our community in wishing her the best at the climate change conference. And as her representative, I will continue to echo her calls to listen to the experts.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Vincent Ke: As Premier Ford has always said, thanks to the people of Ontario, we are seeing fewer coronavirus cases compared to other major urban areas in North America. Speaker, the most important contributor to this great achievement is our higher vaccination rate.

However, in Don Valley North, the vaccination rate remains low at about 73% only, compared to the city of Toronto and the province.

As such, I have initiated the Every Shot Matters vaccination awareness campaign in my riding. Door-hangers were distributed to each household and lawn signs were placed at people's property and local businesses. Speaker, I'm [*inaudible*] that after the combined efforts of our last mile strategy, the GO-VAXX mobile vaccination clinic and the Every Shot Matters vaccination campaign, we will catch up with the provincial average and fully protect the people of Ontario and Don Valley North.

Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my team and volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I am very pleased to inform the House that page Tanvi Soni from the riding of Brampton West is today's page captain. We have with us today at Queen's Park her mother, Falguni Soni. Also, we're joined today by the parents of page Theo Guida from the riding of Toronto–St. Paul's: his mother, Michelle Sloan, and his father, Danny Guida.

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

SIKH GENOCIDE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have been informed that the member for Brampton East has a point of order.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you, Speaker. I rise today to call for the unanimous consent of this House for a moment of silence to remember the countless Sikhs killed in the November 1984 Sikh genocide.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton East is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for a moment's silence to remember the victims of the Sikh genocide. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Members will please take their seats.

QUESTION PERIOD

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. Perhaps he knows this, but the cost of everything is going up and yet wages here in Ontario remain flat. Of course, the leading culprit for keeping

wages low in this province is, in fact, the Premier and his government: a low minimum wage and a 1% freeze.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: That's unparliamentary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Perhaps the member should.

A low minimum wage and 1% wage freeze hurts those workers and, in fact, hurts all workers. It sends a message to the business community to keep wages low. It sends a message that that's okay. When will this Premier actually show some leadership and help all workers by ripping up Bill 124 and significantly increasing the minimum wage in this province?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I stood in this chamber many times talking about the carbon tax, how it would increase the cost of going from point A to point B, increase the cost of groceries, increase the cost of trucking. We made sure we did everything we could that we didn't see the 10-cents-a-litre gas increase. As a matter of fact, we lowered gas rates by 4.3%. We're committing to lower it up to 10 cents.

We're the only party that actually created an environment for people to have a job. Under the NDP and Liberals, they lost 300,000 jobs, so they didn't have to worry about an increase because they didn't have a job. They constantly vote no. We vote yes to stirring up the economy, getting things going, getting jobs created. We are a party of yes. They're a party of no, no, no. We are going to continue on, making sure that this province thrives, prospers and grows.

1040

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, may I remind this Premier that he said no to a \$15 minimum wage three years ago? It was one of the first big noes that he said to the workers of this province. As a result, workers have lost out on \$5,300 since he said no to them back then.

In fact, here's what the Premier said about the wage increase in 2019: "the worst bill for the front-line hard-working people this province has ever seen." He called it a job killer, and he called it that again today.

The Premier, billionaires, the Premier's buddies never need to worry about putting food on the table or putting a roof over the head of their kids.

How can the Premier justify taking \$5,300 away from hard-working folks while bending over backwards for the buddies who seem to do very well by this Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I'll go back to my previous comments: Under the NDP and the Liberals, there were over 300,000 people who didn't even have a paycheque. There were 307,000 people in 18 months who we created a job for. We created the environment for companies to thrive, prosper and grow, and when they thrive, prosper and grow, so do their employees.

We're the only government that is pro-affordable housing—making sure that we can have areas that can

build homes at an affordable cost. We believe in affordable ownership.

Again, the NDP and Liberals destroyed this province for 15 years. We've turned the corner, and we're going to continue leading North American job creation, economic development. That's what we believe in. They're job killers. We're job creators.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, no matter how you slice it, the Premier's 10-cent-an-hour wage increase was an insult to working people in this province. Even a \$15 minimum wage today will never replace the \$5,300 that this Premier took out of the pockets of everyday working families. And of course, things are even worse now because the cost of everything is going up; absolutely everything is increasing in cost.

The Premier has a choice. The fall economic statement is coming this week. People need and deserve a raise. He has a choice: to give back what he stole, not 10 cents an hour, not even \$15—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

He has a chance to give people back what they deserve, what he took away. He has a chance to make sure that a meaningful minimum wage is brought into place in this province. Will he do that on Thursday?

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, the NDP and Liberals, for 15 years, drove businesses out of this province. They jacked up the hydro rates, to have the most expensive hydro rates anywhere in the country. People were losing their jobs right, left and centre. Over 300,000 people lost their jobs.

Speaking to owners and presidents of companies small, medium and large—they said that before we took office, this was the worst jurisdiction in North America to do business in. We saw it with GM leaving based on the policies of the NDP and Liberals.

Now GM is doing the fastest build they've ever done in the history of General Motors, because we've created that environment. They're going to be employing people—no matter if it's electric vehicles and manufacturing batteries here.

Again, we're going to be creating thousands and thousands of jobs, and we need great people to come to this province and be the workforce to build this province—unlike the NDP and the Liberals. They're job killers.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier.

The Premier's Bill 124 also keeps wages down and sends the wrong signal to the business community in this province.

Across Ontario, workers' wages are frozen at 1%. With inflation, those stagnant wages mean life is getting harder and people are actually losing ground. The little guy is losing ground in this Premier's Ontario.

Nurses across our province are literally abandoning their profession because they feel disrespected and devalued by this Premier and his government.

Will the government do the right thing and scrap Bill 124?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Speaker, the first point that the honourable member pointed out was the jobs in this province. It's under the leadership of this Premier that we have jobs created in this province. While the previous government said goodbye to those jobs, supported by the NDP, this Premier said, "We're not going to give up on those jobs." We're going to fight for every single good-paying job for this province of Ontario. We will be there every single day, because as Ontarians, we have the best and the brightest in this province. We're not going to give up on them. They deserve the best. Under this government and this Premier and our minister, they will always have it.

When it comes to Bill 124, on the second part of the question from the leader across, Bill 124 is designed to protect the very same jobs that the leader is alluding to, those jobs that people are depending on every single day. It's inaccurate to suggest that Bill 124 caps at 1% because public sector employees will still be able to receive salary increases for seniority, for performance, for increased qualifications, as they do—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the low-wage policy of this government is actually hurting everyday families, day in and day out. The cost of living is increasing very significantly this year, by at least 4%, and the last two years up by 2.5%. That is hurting people's ability to make the bills.

Everything is up. The cost of food is up. The cost of clothing is up. The cost of housing is up. The cost of transportation is up. The cost of gasoline is up. The only thing not increasing in the province of Ontario are people's wages.

My question is, why does this Premier think that hard-working Ontarians don't deserve better wages so they can afford the rising cost of living in this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that everything Premier Ford and our government is doing is driving paycheques up in this province. We're bringing in historic workplace protections for workers in this province and we're spreading opportunity to every worker in this province.

I have to remind the member opposite, she voted no. She said no to creating opportunities in the skilled trades. I have to remind the member opposite that these are jobs that are in demand, that in many cases pay six figures. They have defined pensions and benefits, something I thought the NDP would say yes to.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue every single day having the backs of workers, continuing to spread opportunity right across this province and build back a better province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think everybody knows very well what this government is spreading.

Look, this low-wage policy that this government continues to keep in place in this province is hurting people everywhere: a snowplow operator in Thunder Bay; a food safety inspector in Guelph; registered nurses in Milton, Sarnia and Ottawa; youth counsellors in London; a water systems mechanic in Cambridge; an aircraft maintenance engineer in Sault Ste. Marie; corrections rehabilitation officers in the city of Niagara Falls. Really, everywhere in this province, this government's low-wage policy is hurting people. It's making life harder for everyday folks.

Will the Premier tear up Bill 124, give those workers the raise they deserve and signal the right way for the business community to treat workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank the member for the question again. What all employees and job creators in this province know is that our government will have their back every step of the way. We've done it throughout the pandemic.

Remember when it came to pre-pandemic, Ontario's economy was booming. We had issues filling those jobs, unfilled because of the policies of this Premier and this government. We will fight for those jobs. We will make sure that every single employee in this province knows that their government has their back. We have already created supports for our small businesses, making sure that funds are available for them and their employees: the Ontario Small Business Support Grant, for example, which provided \$3 billion to over 110,000 small businesses; the grant that provided them with PPE support; funding that supported them to have an online presence for their customers. That's our government fighting for Ontarians every single day, and we won't stop. Long after recovery, we'll make sure Ontario is the best—

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

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Over the weekend, the Toronto Star and the National Observer revealed that the main beneficiaries of this government's proposed Bradford Bypass highway are well-connected landowners with political and donor ties to the PC Party of Ontario.

One of these beneficiaries is the father of the Associate Minister of Transportation, whose golf course had been in the path of the highway. But in the spring, this government quietly rerouted the highway so that it will now destroy homes and the dense forests in the greenbelt instead of the golf course. Mr. Speaker, this reeks.

1050

Why should anyone trust the integrity of this government's transportation planning decisions when they seem to be driven by the private interests of landowners with ties to the PC Party? The people of this province deserve some honesty and answers from this government.

Hon. Doug Ford: The Bradford Bypass is exactly the type of project this province needs. We want to save people's travel time, 35 minutes one way. That's well over an hour two ways. That's an hour extra they can spend with their families, Mr. Speaker. But they voted no against it, both the NDP and the Liberals. We are spending over \$21 billion building roads and bridges and highways across this province, because it's critical to make sure that people spend more time at home, it is critical to make sure that we get the transportation of goods back and forth as quickly as possible. That will also reduce costs.

But again, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and NDP are against building roads. They're against building highways. They vote against it every single time. If it was up to them, they'd vote against a cow pasture. We believe in building infrastructure. We're a party of building infrastructure, and we'll get this province moving again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: No one is buying what this Premier is trying to sell the people of this province. There's a saying: It's not what you know; it's who you know. That certainly is true with this Premier.

This Premier knows that there are less costly and less destructive ways to ease local traffic issues than building a \$1.5-billion four- to six-lane highway through the greenbelt, prime farmland—and the Lake Simcoe watershed, no less. He is actually sitting on planning studies that prove this. You know this is the truth. But the Premier doesn't seem to care, Mr. Speaker, what those studies say. He is against research and evidence. He cares only about his developer buddies, including the well-connected landowners who own nearly 3,000 acres of land along this highway corridor, and they are poised to profit. They will make a huge amount of money, including the father of the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Does the Premier not understand or does he just not care how bad this looks and how it undermines the trust of everything that happens in this place?

Interjections.

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

The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals are anti-infrastructure, anti-highways, anti-roads, anti-everything. They sit back on the sidelines and say no to absolutely everything. We believe in getting the province moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, the people who do support it: The people who live up there who travel those roads, they support it; York region, Simcoe county, Bradford, West Gwillimbury and East Gwillimbury. The mayor of Bradford West Gwillimbury, Rob Keffer, said that this is an absolutely essential piece of infrastructure, something

that some of these members do not understand because they've never gone past north of Bloor, a lot of their members, so they don't know how everyone else travels—but we're helping them by building a \$29-billion subway system.

The executive director of Holland Marsh Growers' Association—this is a farm association that uses this road all the time—is representing over 125—

Interjections.

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

We need a few reminders. First of all, when the Speaker stands, your microphone is cut off and you need to sit down. When someone else has the floor, though, I need to be able to hear that person, and when there's constant heckling from members on the other side, it makes it very difficult for me to follow what's being said, as you know. If this continues, I'll start identifying the members by name and calling them to order by name. Thank you.

Please restart the clock. The next question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Long-term care is an area that has long been neglected by previous governments. Between 2011 and 2018, the previous government only built 611 net new beds. That is an increase of only 0.8%, while the population of Ontarians aged 75 and older grew by 20%. That is only 611 new beds for 176,211 people.

While I know our government has made a commitment to build 30,000 new long-term-care beds by 2028, can the minister tell this House how much this government has invested into building long-term-care beds since 2018?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Carleton for that question and for her work for her constituents. The member is right: The government is committed to fixing long-term care. One of the pillars of that commitment is our commitment to build 30,000 new beds. The member is also right that the previous government, in the last seven years, built 611 net new beds in the last seven years of their government. In Ottawa alone, this government has committed to 625 new beds and 881 redeveloped beds—and that's just in Ottawa.

The question was how much we have invested: \$2.68 billion for those safe, modern beds—those 20,161 new beds, 15,918 existing beds. That means we're two thirds of our way and we're not done yet. We're two thirds of the way done to our commitment to build 30,000 net new beds to protect seniors and give them the kind of homes they deserve.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: In the seven years prior to our government entering office, the previous government did not build a single bed in my riding of Carleton. This is shameful, and my constituents demanded better.

Last Friday, I was pleased to have the Minister of Long-Term Care in my riding to announce the groundbreaking

of a brand new building for Extencicare Stittsville. This new home will provide 256 upgraded, modern long-term-care beds for seniors in my riding, and will welcome residents in the fall of 2023. We're grateful for these investments, and that doesn't include the investments made in the Osgoode Care Centre in Osgoode, again in my riding of Carleton.

Can the minister tell this House how he will deliver desperately needed long-term-care beds to the rest of the province?

Hon. Rod Phillips: This is the value of the kind of advocacy that the member from Carleton delivers: 256 new beds from nothing. We were there with the member and I thank her for hosting me, along with the member from Ottawa West–Nepean; along with Jim Watson, the mayor of Ottawa, who commended this government for building beds in his community.

We're not done yet. We're well on our way to our 30,000-bed goal. That's why, a few weeks ago, I opened calls again for applications for those who want to develop long-term-care beds: not-for-profits, municipalities, private sector partners. We invited anyone interested in building or redeveloping long-term-care beds to apply through www.ontario.ca/developingltc. We're committed to working with all our partners, municipalities like Ottawa and others, to build long-term-care beds to help our seniors.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. This government's new long-term care bill does nothing to assist our seniors in long-term care who need our help today. Seniors are cramped in for-profit long-term care homes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Government side will come to order.

Please restart the clock.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you, Speaker. It's rather disrespectful that the members would heckle another member when we're speaking about our respected elders.

Seniors are cramped in private, for-profit long-term care homes that cut corners, neglected our loved ones, and this government does nothing to guarantee seniors will get the care that they deserve. Instead of implementing a standard four hours of care per day, this government told families that they're going to have to wait three long years before this basic standard is met.

Our precious parents and grandparents desperately need these changes, and yet this government keeps telling them to wait. How can this government tell seniors and families that they have to wait three long years before they will receive four hours of care per day, instead of helping them right now?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I appreciate the member's question. And I appreciate it particularly because the NDP, five

times in this Legislature—once by the leader and most recently by the member from London–Fanshawe—introduced something called the Time to Care Act, and the Time to Care Act called for four hours of care for nurses and PSWs. This is something that was talked about in 2008, and we are the first government who not only has funded it, but also has put it into legislation.

1100

Mr. Speaker, given that many members—including the Leader of the Opposition and, most recently, the member from London–Fanshawe—introduced acts to add four hours of care legislatively, I would ask the member: What is wrong with saying yes to the four hours of care that you have been calling for for the last seven years?

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I am pleased to hear the minister admit that the NDP has been standing up for seniors since 2008. The Time to Care Act has still been something that this government has kicked down the road, with no intention of implementing it until 2025. Instead of standing up for seniors, the Premier would rather dole out taxpayer money to pad the pockets of big corporate buddies who run these for-profit homes. He's handing out more licences for for-profit long-term care homes, instead of prioritizing getting our seniors the help they deserve today. Standards of care and air conditioning in the hot summer months aren't even on his radar.

Time and time again, we see this Premier choose what's best for his buddies, firing up the gravy train instead of doing what's best for our parents and grandparents. Our Legislature should unequivocally state that people are more important than profit and seniors deserve an excellent quality of life. Why is the Premier prioritizing helping his buddies in the private long-term care sector over improving the lives of our loved ones in care?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for his question. Just to correct the record, 2008 was when the previous Liberal government, which was later supported by your party, first heard about long-term care. When this was brought forward in 2020 in this Legislature, this side of the House supported it, but now we're turning it into a reality.

The member from London North Centre mentioned, "What is the impediment to doing it right now?" Well, Mr. Speaker, it's staffing. We need to hire 27,000 new staff. That's why in London North Centre alone—the member's riding—we're adding \$3.6 million this year and \$22 million by the end of year four. We're upgrading 160 homes at the Mount Hope Centre and 160 homes at Southbridge in London. So we're answering the member's question. We're answering with legislation, we're answering with dollars and we're answering with a commitment to our seniors.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. In the summer of 2018, the Premier launched an attack on

Ontario's workers. He took away paid sick days, eliminated equal pay for equal work and other workplace protections, and he cut the increase to the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. It was hard to watch, on this side, the government benches' daily standing ovations, cheering on the Premier as he stuck it to minimum-wage families, families that live paycheque to paycheque. It has cost each worker about \$6,200 so far—more if you're working two jobs. And this Premier says, "I'm for the little guy."

Speaker, through you: Does the Premier have a shred of remorse, and will he apologize for robbing these families of a fair wage?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John Fraser: I withdraw.

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

To reply, the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Everything we're doing as a government is to ensure that workers across the province have more opportunities that lead to bigger paycheques. We've recently just introduced the Working for Workers Act to address issues in workplaces across the province that the former Liberal government neglected.

In fact, we're bringing in the toughest legislation and protections for workers hired by temp help agencies and recruiters, to crack down on those lawbreakers. We're ensuring that there are washroom facilities for those essential workers like truck drivers and food delivery workers and couriers. We are going to recognize, for the first time, foreign credentials—these newcomers coming to Ontario—so they can earn bigger paycheques, so they can fill in-demand jobs across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'll respond more in the supplemental.

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

Mr. John Fraser: With all due respect, the Premier was like a one-man wrecking ball when he came here, so don't expect to have credit for building something you knocked down to the ground.

The pandemic has hit minimum wage workers harder than anyone else—the same people the Premier likes to call heroes: grocery store clerks, cashiers, gas station attendants, cooks and cleaners. The people who make our everyday lives easier, the Premier made their lives harder. And it has cost them at least \$6,200 so far, more if families have two incomes. That extra money was important to those families. Too many of them live paycheque to paycheque.

What did it mean? Less money for rent, or to put food on the table, or pay for a prescription; less money for a child's clothes or maybe a school trip. Speaker, through you: Will the Premier apologize today for taking that family's opportunity away from them by not allowing their wages to increase?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, again. Everything we're doing is about having policies that lead to bigger paycheques and more workplace protections to spread opportunities to workers across the province.

Let's talk about the former Liberal government record. When it comes to the skilled trades, they brought in a system full of red tape that led to a 40% decrease in apprenticeship registrations. These are well-paying jobs that are in demand. In fact, I think of construction over the next number of years. We are going to be short 100,000 workers. In fact, Mr. Speaker, these jobs pay six figures, in many cases, with defined pensions and benefits. These are the opportunities that we want every worker in the province to take part in. I would ask the opposition to start saying yes to these good jobs. Let's be on the side of workers and support our legislation.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Across Ontario, more and more young people are rolling up their sleeves to get vaccinated against COVID-19. It's what led Ontario to have one of the highest youth-under-20 immunization rates in the country, and we thank those young people for doing their part. We know that measures we have put in place, coupled with the high vaccination rates, are working.

This government recently announced an update to the PCR testing in our schools. Through you, Speaker, can the Minister of Education share with our parents and guardians how PCR testing will be expanded in all our Ontario schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for this important question. In the member's own community of Toronto and likewise in Ottawa, working with some of the best hospitals in this province, we have been able to provide access to roughly 900 schools, to date, with a take-home PCR test. But we know there's more to do, especially as we prepare for the winter, which is why we took the decision last week, with the full support of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, to expand access to take-home PCR tests for all students in the province of Ontario. In fact, all symptomatic students this November will be able to access a take-home test and a kit to bring home, making it more convenient and more accessible, reducing the barriers and increasing access to testing for all families in Ontario.

We are also ensuring that close contacts of asymptomatic students and staff also now have access to this important expansion. We are the only province in the nation to offer this to families, because we are committed, under the Premier's leadership, to make life a bit easier for parents who have faced such hardship through the pandemic. We will do whatever it takes to keep kids safe, keep our staff safe and get us through the worst of this pandemic.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Take-home PCR tests will make life much easier for moms and dads and grandparents out there.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has been clear: Our commitment is to continue to keep schools open and safe.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It works both ways. I need to be able to hear the government member when they're asking a question, without heckling.

I apologize for interrupting. Member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, you have the floor.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: When you see the smiles on the young people's faces knowing they're going to school to see their friends, it brings joy to all our hearts.

The minister outlined a cautious reopening plan that, according to medical experts, is working. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education: What additional steps is the government taking to ensure our little ones remain safe and schools remain open as we look ahead to prepare for the year?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Indeed, the government has, through the last year, invested over \$600 million in air ventilation improvements—the deployment of 70,000 HEPA units, to make sure our classrooms are safer than they've been in the past.

1110

But we're taking nothing for granted. It's why we've expanded access to take-home PCR tests to all children and access to all staff. We also have made a decision to adopt a test-to-stay model, supported by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, that is designed to reduce absenteeism, to help encourage kids to stay in school, to avoid the closures that can happen as a result of the Delta-driven fourth wave. Now, we know that 99.9% of our schools remain open, but to ensure we remain cautious and guard against this virus, we've adopted this model that tests students frequently over a two-week period, using rapid antigen tests, to keep them in school.

We've also elevated the testing requirements on unvaccinated staff, adopting two negative tests—now it will be three, effective November 10. We're doing everything possible, under our Premier's leadership, to keep our schools open and keep them safe.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last week my colleague from Niagara Falls held a press conference with the newly formed Occupational Disease Reform Alliance. This alliance is composed of advocates from every corner of this province who have lost loved ones to workplace cancers and illness. They came together to this government. They will be ignored no longer. They came together to demand justice and proper compensation for their loved ones whose lives were cut short for no other reason than that they went to work.

Premier, this group is sick of hearing you say you have no power to give justice to their loved ones. On Friday, they listed four demands of this government, demands which require legislation. The ball is clearly and firmly in your court.

We are asking you here today to answer them clearly: Will you acknowledge and legislate their demands? It's easy: yes or no?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I truly do thank the member opposite for this very important question. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying to all workers across the province who have faced illnesses on the job that our hearts and thoughts are with you.

We continue to strengthen health and safety in this province. In fact, I think we all could agree in this House that every single worker deserves to come home safely after a hard day's work.

I had the opportunity this morning to actually call Dr. Demers, who is leading some excellent work around occupational disease. I'm proud to say to Dr. Demers that he has our full commitment to continue doing his great work. In fact, I called him this morning to let him know that we're going to fund his program with over \$6 million over the next five years, to better improve health and safety in workplaces.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm not sure if that was a yes.

The group that came together last week demanding justice contained advocates from Sarnia, Dryden, Peterborough, Kitchener-Waterloo and many, many more. They have come together to say they will be ignored no longer.

What's more, we know there are further areas of Ontario where workers were exposed to chemicals, causing cancers, and we will tell their stories as well. This now includes the former GM site in St. Catharines. Loved ones dying because of the chemicals they were exposed to at work has happened across Ontario, and these workers demand the compensation that was promised to them.

That includes their families: people like Jean from Sarnia, who has been fighting for justice for her husband, Bud, for 20 long years, who continues dealing with the WSIB in her quest to get justice for Bud.

Premier, will you stand in this House today and say clearly that Jean and all the other families affected by workplace cancer will get the compensation and justice they deserve, by listening to the ODRA and presenting legislation right now?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member opposite. The health and safety of every single worker in this province is our government's number one priority. Occupational diseases are just as serious as physical illnesses, and as I said in my first answer, every worker deserves to come home safely after a hard day's work. It's one of the reasons why we want to continue to strengthen the WSIB system. The member opposite will know that it was just only a decade ago that that agency was on the brink of bankruptcy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that we built back a stronger system that's going to be there for generations of workers to come. We've reformed the system to ensure that only safe employers receive reductions in premiums. This allows those employers to bring in new health and

safety protocols and programs to give workers wages and to hire more workers across the province.

We're going to continue to have the backs of workers every single day.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Health.

What is the ministry's position on PPE and masking of care workers in order to control transmission of COVID-19 in a hospital setting? Are these reasonable and effective measures to keep patients safe?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

There are numerous ways that one can keep oneself safe. One is vaccination. Vaccination is the single best way to protect yourself, protect your loved ones, protect your community, protect everyone around you. That's why we are urging everyone to be vaccinated, and the vast majority of people are, including workers in health care.

There are other steps that need to be taken. Use of PPE is obviously very important. Masking is very important. Social distancing is important. Ventilation is important. There are many steps that need to be taken to protect people from COVID-19, not just one single thing. A number of different issues taken together are protecting Ontario patients and residents.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you for that response, Minister. I appreciate it.

If PPE and masking of staff are both reasonable and effective measures to keep patients safe, then the government's vaccination policies against unvaccinated health care workers are clearly unconstitutional under the current circumstances, because the government obviously has alternative effective measures available to keep everyone safe—both the vaccinated and unvaccinated alike.

If unvaccinated health care workers have the option to stay on the job, keeping patients safe by masking and wearing PPE, how can you possibly justify not going with this reasonable accommodation that will cause minimal impairment of charter rights and avert the foreseeably catastrophic hospital staff shortages that will follow from the government's current policy?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As I indicated in my first response, the single most important thing anyone can do is be vaccinated twice. That is what all of the organizations around the world have said. The World Health Organization, the FDA, NACI, Health Canada—all of those organizations have indicated that is the most important thing.

There are, of course, other steps that need to be taken, with masking and PPE. Even for those hospital workers who are yet unvaccinated—and again, we're urging everyone to be vaccinated, and the vast majority of health care workers are—they still need to be tested on a regular basis before they can come in to work.

But that is important—you raised the issue about people leaving the profession if they're not vaccinated. That is why the Premier has written a letter to the hospitals and other health care organizations across the province, to understand what their concerns are about losing staff. In British Columbia, as the member may know, they've had to cancel some of their surgeries because they have 4,000 people who are going to be leaving, who are not vaccinated. This is a very important consideration, one that we're—

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

PORK INDUSTRY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, the detection of African swine fever in the Dominican Republic and Haiti is emphasizing the importance of tightening the pork industry's biosecurity and preparedness efforts.

As the members of this chamber are aware, Ontario's pork sector employs 58,000 Ontarians, exports over \$700 million annually, and is responsible for \$2.8 billion of Canada's GDP. A disruption to Ontario's pork value chain is likely to have a large impact on the industry.

Can the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs explain the steps that this government is taking in response to African swine fever?

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I thank the member from Carleton for that question.

The recent detection of African swine fever in the Caribbean and the devastating impact it has had in both Europe and Asia is a good reminder to tighten protections all along the pork industry value chain. African swine fever is not a threat to food safety or human health, but it is a severe viral disease that affects pigs.

1120

Our government has announced the investment of nearly \$3 million in new initiatives to support the provincial pork sector's prevention, planning and disease preparedness. This initiative will provide cost-share funding that will support biosecurity improvements and emergency preparedness.

Speaker, our government is taking an active leadership role in working to prevent the spread of African swine fever within our borders and supporting, as was mentioned, the 58,000 hard-working people in the sector.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I understand that part of last week's announcement also included changes to the invasive species list which falls under the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry regarding wild pigs and designating them as an invasive species. I understand that if established here in Ontario, it could adversely affect the broader agriculture industry and our environment as well.

While other jurisdictions have struggled with the effects of feral hogs, Ontario thankfully has not experienced the devastating effects of these animals. Can the Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry explain why Ontario is taking action now if wild pigs are not currently a threat to Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Kitchener–Conestoga and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member for Carleton for a very important question. While wild pigs are not native to Ontario, they are known to cause wide-scale devastation to wildlife and ecosystems, and can cause negative impacts to Ontario's agriculture sector. To avoid this here in Ontario, the government took action and added these pigs along with 12 other species to the list of invasive species to make sure they do not have a chance to become a widespread issue across our province. I was pleased to see stakeholders, such as the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the Invasive Species Centre, come out in strong support of this policy change.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying yes to protecting Ontario's biodiversity and delicate ecosystems by adding wild pigs to the invasive species list.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. We are now entering the third month without access to eye care for seniors and children. Many of my constituents in Parkdale–High Park cannot access desperately needed eye care, like Steffen's 13-year-old child who can't read the blackboard at school and Dan's nine-year-old stepchild who can't read anything either and is falling behind. Parents like Steffen and Dan want to know how many pennies does the Premier need to pinch before he will prioritize their children's vision and academic success?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. I understand the concern of many parents. They're concerned about their child's eye care, as well as many seniors who are worried about any vision problems they have that are not being dealt with. However, the decision to step away from the table was done by the Ontario Association of Optometrists, not by the government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition, come to order.

Hon. Christine Elliott: The government of Ontario will continue to fund OHIP services, eye care services, for both children and seniors, and we are ready to go back to the table to discuss this with the optometrists.

We've already made a payment of \$39 million into their accounts to cover past losses because, as the member will know, their agreement expired in 2011 and nothing was done by the previous Liberal government to remedy that. We are prepared to do that. We understand that optometrists have issues to discuss, but we need them to come back to the table. We are prepared to go back into

mediation, and we really hope that the optometrists will do the same so we can—

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

Interjection.

Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Supplementary question.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Back to the minister: Another constituent of mine, Gene, was recently diagnosed with glaucoma. Without access to regular appointments with his optometrist, Gene's vision will be permanently damaged and he may lose his vision altogether.

Speaker, Gene's vision is worth funding. Eye care is health care, and yet this government is sitting idle while children and seniors go without care. Will the minister do her job and negotiate a fair deal with the optometrists?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I certainly agree with the member that eye care is an essential service. It is something that needs to be funded, and the optometrists have a duty to continue to provide care. If they choose to not provide care to certain people, they still have a responsibility that the College of Optometrists has indicated they must deal with, and we are ready to sit down at the table with them. In addition to the \$39-million payment we've already made, we've also offered to increase their services by 8.48%, retroactive to April 1, and immediately establish a working committee to deal with the overhead issues that optometrists have also mentioned.

We want to reach a deal with them that is fair to them and is fair to the taxpayers of Ontario, but we can't do it alone. The government can't do it alone. We need the optometrists to come back to the table. That's the only way we can reach a deal. We are ready, willing and able to come back to the table, and we ask the optometrists to please do the same.

STUDENT LEADERS

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. In 1948, the government of Ontario, a Progressive Conservative government, established the Ontario Educational Leadership Centre. For more than 70 years, OELC—under a couple of different names, including Ontario Athletic Leadership Camp—has nurtured Ontario's young leaders, ordinary kids from across the province. More than 100,000 young boys and girls were chosen by their schools to develop skills in athletics, music, outdoor education and problem-solving.

Indeed, in 1969, a 16-year-old from Richmond Hill High School was chosen by her school to attend OALC. She had never been to an overnight camp, she had never interacted with people from across the province, she had no idea that she had potential as a leader, and she certainly had no idea that she could ever be Premier.

Speaker, at a time when we need young people to be at their best as we enter this post-COVID world, at a time when we know that students need opportunities for experiential learning and team building, why would the government choose this moment to remove supports from OELC?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I wanted to say thanks for the question. Obviously, right now, as we talk about the support for sport, recreation and leadership skills in the province of Ontario, the Minister of Education and myself have been working hand in glove, particularly over the past 19 months, in order to ensure that we do have the supports.

I also want to acknowledge the member opposite for becoming Ontario's first female Premier, and for that leadership experience that she had through the province impacting her. Of course, as we speak right now, on this side of the House we would like to welcome, as I'm sure all Ontarians do, Manitoba's first female Premier, Heather Stefanson, for her election to the House.

But I want to be perfectly clear: This government has invested in sports, recreation and after-school programming right across this province. In fact, just a week ago, I was in Ottawa, in our nation's capital and my community, investing \$13.5 million in after-school programming for vulnerable youth.

We've also invested—and I'll speak to this in the supplemental—in increased, enhanced supports for athletes across Ontario, including our high-performance—

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

The supplementary question?

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not actually denigrating some of the things that the minister has talked about, Mr. Speaker; I'm talking about a unique property and unique set of programs. OELC has had to adjust and adapt over their more than 70 years, but they have survived and they have thrived because of their own strong belief in the importance of nurturing student leaders.

In their own words: "Our sustained success ... has been as a result of our foundational belief that students can, and do, make a difference, and that the cultivation of leadership requires a very special environment, one that fosters curiosity, reflection and growth and provides students with opportunities to learn about themselves, others and their communities."

Speaker, OELC is not a place reserved for the elite or for the wealthy or for the privileged. It is a place that provides opportunity to children from every background, kids who would otherwise have no access to leadership programs because their parents wouldn't necessarily be able to pay for them. It's a place that helps prepare young people to lead in an unknowable future.

Will the government commit to sustaining OELC, in order to provide this generation and the next with the opportunities that have enriched the lives of so many young Ontarians for 70 years?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd be happy to have a conversation with the member opposite post-question period to talk about that specific entity.

I will say that we will continue to work with our after-school programming. The \$13.5 million my ministry invested is in addition to the \$13.5 million that the Minister of Education has invested. Our priority in this government

is to ensure the health and well-being of all young students and athletes in this province.

We have invested extraordinary amounts of money in our sport and recreation division, including \$105 million into the sports and recreation sectors this past year. In addition to the \$105 million, we increased the investment into the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which just recently had a call for applications in terms of their capital and operating supports.

So we're happy to continue to work with organizations across the province. In fact, as minister, I have often said—regardless of whether I was here or in Children and Community Services—that government cannot and should not do it alone. We need community organizations across this great province, which are supported by our ministry through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to grow our economy, but also to support our—

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

1130

TREATIES RECOGNITION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

My question is to the Premier. First Nations across Ontario have called on this province to drop its appeals of the Robinson-Huron Treaty annuities case. Under the agreement signed in 1850, the share of revenue First Nations receive from mining and forestry on their treaty territory would increase as revenues increased over time. Speaker, there has been no change in the annuity since it was set at \$4 per person in 1874.

Is Ontario prepared to honour the Robinson Treaties and share the resources fairly?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply on behalf of the government, the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you for the question and the active interest in the Robinson Treaties. As you know, it's a matter of discussion between officials, and so it's something that I can't comment on in the House, but it's something that I'm keenly aware of and interested in pursuing. Again, I can't get into the content of it, but it is something very important to this government—that we continue to engage in a respectful manner to reach a resolution for everybody.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Doing an appeal in court is not honouring the treaties. This week is Treaties Recognition Week in Ontario. I remind Ontario that treaty relationships should not be fought in court.

The Robinson-Huron Anishinabek want to move forward with treaty renewal, and Ontario is blocking this process.

Chief Dean Sayers of Batchewana said of this matter, "As a people, this colonial court process is not our preferred resolution to a disagreement about treaty

implementation.... The treaty is a sacred agreement that has to be interpreted in a way that” serves both parties.

Again, will Ontario stop wasting time and resources and finally honour the promises of the Robinson Treaties?

Hon. Doug Downey: As the member opposite would be aware, most court matters get resolved without actually having the courts decide them. So I would encourage the ongoing dialogue, in the spirit of the dialogue that we’ve been having with several treaties.

Again, I can’t comment on the content of it, but this is a very important matter for this government.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Health.

Minister, wouldn’t you agree that it would be advantageous for members of the science table to welcome doctors who work day in and day out caring for COVID-19 patients and who may have a very different viewpoint on the treatment and issuance of public guidelines? I believe that move would further add credibility. Many are front-line doctors working side by side with other health care professionals. They can add valuable insights from their experiences in assisting the government in providing the best solutions for patients. In my opinion, a more balanced approach would assist the science table in making, again, more informed decisions. I’m sure you would agree with that.

Here in the Legislature, we have a saying: “Audi alteram partem,” or “Always hear the other side.”

So my question is, will you invite these front-line doctors to assist the science table, and will you agree to an open, healthy debate with doctors on both sides of the issue? I believe the voting—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: We listen, of course, to a variety of doctors. We have our Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Moore. We have the science advisory table. We have the people at Public Health Ontario. There are already many front-line professionals who are advising on a volunteer basis to help out with this.

If the member is suggesting that we should have a discussion at the science advisory table of those who are in favour of vaccination and those who are not—absolutely not; I would not agree to that, because the experts have already indicated that the best way to protect yourself, your loved ones, your family and your community is to be vaccinated.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: Shockingly, it’s been observed that the rising number of unexplained medical problems in otherwise healthy people as potential adverse reactions to the vaccines is not being reported. But to suggest that the vaccines cause medical problems invites professional ridicule.

Doctors are at a loss to explain the increase in non-COVID-related ailments, including a reported increase in heart attacks in young people—mainly males who receive the vaccines. Recently, four university students died within a two-week period.

The number of childhood adverse effects have been on the rise. The most notable side effect is myocarditis in males, which can cause permanent damage. Medical experts I have spoken with state that many of the damaged young people could require a heart transplant in later years.

So, Minister, will you commit to investigating these known health issues with doctors whose narrative may differ from the science table and work to mitigate this situation?

Hon. Christine Elliott: What I can say is that, in a situation where there has been a negative impact that may be related to a vaccine, that has been thoroughly investigated by all of the doctors involved in the situation. We’ve had several situations where we’ve recommended certain medications, have certain vaccines for people of different ages.

But to suggest that they’re not being indicated and they’re not being reported is absolutely not true, not in Ontario. We take this very seriously. We are looking at the situation for each and every adverse event. That is something that Dr. Moore takes very seriously, that our government takes very seriously. And this is absolutely important, because we are following the science. We are following the clinical evidence, and we will continue to do so to protect the health and safety and well-being of all Ontarians.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Jill Andrew: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. Last month, the federal government ended CRB for good, the only relief available for independent travel agents after their businesses were slowed down due to COVID. This government listed independent travel agents as eligible under the Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Support Grant.

For my constituent Carol, an independent travel agent for 20 years, CRB was her lifeline. She and 7,000 agents across Ontario—75% of them being women—have not received a cent promised by this government from the Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Support Grant due to an oversight, frankly, in the application that requires a TICO registration number. What the agents have, of course, is a TICO certificate number.

My question is to the Speaker—my question is to the minister, Speaker: Will the minister fix this error, allowing independent agents access to this grant and backdate their support?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’d like to offer an answer, but I think I’d better refer to the minister of heritage.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Do you want to take a crack at that, Speaker?

I want to thank the member opposite for her advocacy. I also want to thank her for standing up for her constituents over the period of this pandemic.

Of course, as I've said many times in this Legislature, the sectors that I represent have been first hit, hardest hit and by all means will take the longest to recover. We're anticipating travel and tourism won't get back to pre-pandemic levels until at least 2025, particularly as these continued waves continue to hit different parts of the economy and our society.

I will say that our government is absolutely committed to the restoration of the tourism sector, which is why we've invested \$100 million into the tourism recovery fund; another additional \$150 million-plus into a travel incentive, which will occur next year; \$100 million into small business grants; and \$50 million into festivals and events programming in addition to \$105 million for the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

How has that supported our Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Support Grant in terms of travel agent support? They received over \$8.6 million to eligible travel agents and wholesalers throughout the province of Ontario. We're proud to have stood up for them at that time. We're proud to stand up for the sector now.

And last week, at the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, in the city of Ottawa, our nation's capital, I was able to be there with 500 people at a hybrid event, in person as well as online, to say we are going to be back—

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: The minister of culture and tourism has missed the point. It's that the travel agents are listed as eligible for this program; however, the application says you require a TICO registration number. The agents have a TICO certificate number, so they are being left out.

Carol, who is a member of the Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors, has written to this government, to this ministry—as have I as well—along with the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, as well as to the Premier, and none of us have heard back from this Conservative government on our advocacy for independent travel agents.

1140

My question, this time to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, is, how are we going to help independent travel agents if this government is not providing them any funding whatsoever and they have no other funding stream?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I just want it to be very clear that the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program is aimed at accommodations and attractions businesses that are key generators of paid tourism visits to a region and a significant contributor to the area's economy and job creation.

My priority is for the tourism economy in Ontario to be restored, not the tourism economy in the Dominican Republic or in Florida or in Mexico. My priority is to make sure people want to visit back in Ontario at the appropriate time, which is why that particular fund is dedicated toward those key anchor attractions, which is why we invested not

only \$100 million into that area but also over \$100 million into Ontario's iconic cultural institutions, and an additional \$35 million into our Ontario arts sector. And that's why we invested \$8.6 million to eligible travel agents through the Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Support Grant, which was nearly 10% of the entire allocation of the budget's program. Travel agents and wholesalers—

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

Question period has concluded.

DEFERRED VOTES

CARBON BUDGET ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE BUDGET CARBONE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act with respect to a carbon budget for Ontario / Projet de loi 32, Loi préconisant un budget carbone pour l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We now have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 32, An Act with respect to a carbon budget for Ontario. The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes.

I'll ask the Clerks to please prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1213.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 32, An Act with respect to a carbon budget for Ontario, has been held.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 20; the nays are 37.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1214 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPORT FOR ADULTS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX ADULTES AYANT BESOIN D'ASSISTANCE

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act respecting reporting of adults in need of assistance and the provision of assistance to those adults / Projet de loi 40, Loi concernant le signalement d'adultes ayant besoin d'assistance et la fourniture d'une assistance à ces adultes.

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'm pleased to invite the member for Nickel Belt to briefly explain her bill.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The act requires regulated health professionals to report to a board of health if they have reasonable suspicion that an individual who is 16 years of age or older is being abused or neglected, and the failure to do so becomes an offence.

The act requires a board of health to ensure that each report it receives is assessed and verified within a certain amount of time. The act also permits board of health employees certain rights of entry into premises to carry out these requirements.

The act provides that every board of health shall establish a team that will review cases and recommend a support and assistance plan for individuals in need. The review team must include at least one legally qualified medical practitioner. For each case, employees and the chair of the review team have reporting obligations to the medical officer of health of a board of health. The medical officer of health shall ensure that the number of reports received by a board of health, the number of cases for which the reported information was verified, the reasons for which reports were made and the outcomes of the reports are published on the board of health's website every six months.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Mr. Michael Parsa: I move that, in addition to their regularly scheduled meeting times, the following committees be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair for the remainder of the fall meeting period and any extension thereof: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Standing Committee on General Government, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, and the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Miss Monique Taylor: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On division.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Like many members in this assembly, I have a huge amount of petitions in regard to eye care service in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"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 sign this petition and give it to Theo.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Monique Mussar from my riding, who, while attending the ceremony of life for William and Sandi Tibbo, who died on Highway 144 at Marina Road, collected all of these petitions.

"Make Highway 144 at Marina Road Safe.

"Whereas residents of Levack, Onaping and Cartier, as well as individuals who travel Highway 144, are concerned about the safety of a stretch of Highway 144 in the vicinity of Marina Road and would like to prevent further accidents and fatalities; and

"Whereas three more accidents occurred"—now four—"in summer 2021 resulting in severe injuries, diesel fuel spilling into the waterways," the death of two people and their dog, Max, and "the closure of Highway 144 for several hours delaying traffic and stranding residents; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has completed a review of this stretch of Highway 144, has made some improvements and has committed to re-evaluate and ensure the highway is safe;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: "that the Ministry of Transportation review Highway 144 at Marina Road immediately and commit to making it safe, as soon as possible, and no later than December 2021."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sujay to bring it to the Clerk.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I continue to collect thousands of petitions from my constituents 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 wholeheartedly support this petition, will sign it and ask Emily to take it to the table.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My petition is entitled, “Call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to Implement Real Rent Control.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the average rent has increased by over 50% in the past 10 years;

“Whereas nearly half of Ontarians pay unaffordable rental housing costs because they spend more than a third of their income on rent;

“Whereas all Ontarians have a right to a safe and affordable place to call home;

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

“Petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass our Rent Stabilization Act to establish real rent control that operates during and between tenancies; a public rent registry so tenants can find out what a former tenant paid in rent; access to legal aid for tenants that want to contest an illegal rent hike; and stronger enforcement and tougher penalties for landlords who do not properly maintain a renter’s home.”

1310

I fully support affordability, accountability and transparency for renters and will affix my signature and deliver it to the Clerks.

PLACES OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I received this particular petition from the great people of the great riding of Wellington–Halton Hills.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas worship is critical to the lives of many Ontarians, and the gathering for worship is an essential aspect of religious faith; and

“Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognizes freedom of religion as fundamental, and the Supreme Court of Canada has interpreted this as including the freedom ‘to manifest religious belief by worship and practice;’ and

“Whereas both the federal and the Ontario provincial legislatures have recognized religion as a human right; and

“Whereas the social, emotional and spiritual elements of worship are significant; and

“Whereas places of worship provide many valuable social services through their members to the communities they are in, and the good work of places of worship in their communities is hindered by the inability to physically gather; and

“Whereas places of worship have been diligent in observing health and safety protocols and have not been a significant source of spread of COVID-19; and

“Whereas the safety and the well-being of religious communities are best preserved through the cooperation of religious leaders and the Ontario government;

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

“That the Legislature recognize the importance and value of worship, and to include places of worship as an essential service under the reopening Ontario act, allowing religious communities to gather for worship.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to the page Zada.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have tons of petitions on saving 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 covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists must absorb the other 45% for the over four million services delivered annually 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'll be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Graden to take it to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Ian Arthur: If I ever need an issue brought before the Legislature, I'm going to contract the optometrists.

“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 support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Tanvi to deliver to the Clerks.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to thank Pierce Family Vision for providing this petition.

“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.”

It's my pleasure to support this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Sujay.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government has been hard at work ensuring that patients have access to the care they need when they need it, which includes eye and vision care for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the government recognizes the valuable services that optometrists provide to people living in Ontario; and

“Whereas the government recognizes that compensation increases for optometrists have long been neglected by previous governments; and

“Whereas the government has made every possible effort to lay a foundation for a long-term relationship with the Ontario Association of Optometrists, including engaging a third-party mediator chosen by the OAO to assist them in reaching an agreement and offering a one-time lump sum payment as well as immediate OHIP fee increases; and

“Whereas any decision to withdraw services is the decision of individual optometrists under the direction of the OAO, despite the government continuing to fund these optometry services through OHIP;

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

“To petition the Ontario Association of Optometrists to immediately return to the bargaining table to work with the OAO's chosen mediator to work out a long-term deal.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Theo.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition to save eye care in Ontario, signed by many folks—Hamilton, Brantford, Huntsville, Binbrook, Ancaster and Dundas.

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

“Whereas the government only covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists must absorb the other 45% for the over four million services delivered annually 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 agree with this petition, Speaker. I affix my signature and send it by Fraser to the table.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition to improve mental health services.

“Whereas issues of mental health and addiction are not being properly and successfully addressed in Ontario; and

“Whereas currently, most mental health services are only available through extended health care that’s offered by private insurance companies, and not everyone has the privilege of purchasing a private insurance plan or securing a permanent position that offers these benefits; and

“Whereas mental health services have become even harder to access for a lot of people due to job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic...; and

“Whereas ... many people who need long-term psychotherapy but” are finding it financially difficult “has become” an “ultimate barrier to ... the service they need; and

“Whereas social workers in Ontario firmly believe that access to mental health care is a fundamental human right that everyone should have access to;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately embark on including mental health care in OHIP to ensure everyone has the rights they deserve.”

I will sign this petition and ask Zada to the table.

TREATIES RECOGNITION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It’s Treaties Recognition Week, and I have a petition here titled “Honour the Robinson-Huron Treaty.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 21 First Nations of the Robinson-Huron Treaty have called on Ontario to engage in negotiations to fulfill their treaty obligations;

1320

“Whereas, in return for the Anishinaabe sharing their lands and resources with the crown, the crown agreed to pay annuities that were to be augmented as the revenue generated from the resources in the territory grew;

“Whereas the annuity amount for treaty beneficiaries was raised to \$4 in 1874 and has not changed since;

“Whereas, in 2018, the Ontario Superior Court found the crown has a mandatory and reviewable obligation to increase the treaty’s annuities when the economic circumstances warrant;

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

“Fully implement the augmentation clause contained in the Robinson-Huron Treaty signed in 1850. The government should engage in negotiations to fulfill Ontario’s treaty obligations by reaching a settlement agreement with the Robinson-Huron signatory nations.”

I fully support this petition and I urge the government to move beyond words to action.

OPPOSITION DAY

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move opposition day motion number 3 as follows:

Whereas Ontario needs to build one million homes over the next 10 years to keep up with the need for housing, according to the Smart Prosperity Institute; and

Whereas consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have developed policies geared more to politically connected developers and speculators than regular people; and

Whereas the ability to purchase a home should not depend on how wealthy your parents are, and rising home prices have made it increasingly difficult for working people to afford homes in the province, driving record numbers to leave Ontario in search of places they can afford; and

Whereas housing speculators have only made the crisis worse, creating bubbles that make it harder for low- and middle-income Ontarians to enter the market; and

Whereas speculation and vacancy taxes have proven effective in prioritizing homes as places for people to live, instead of financial commodities for deep-pocketed speculators; and

Whereas the Ontario Real Estate Association has called on the Ford government to end unfair and exclusionary zoning practices to allow more affordable “missing middle” housing options like duplexes and townhouses to be built in urban neighbourhoods close to jobs, services and amenities, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has called on the Ford government to protect farmland from needless urban boundary expansions;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the Ford government to develop an affordable home ownership plan that: implements speculation and vacancy taxes to help cool the market and fund affordable housing; updates land use planning rules to accelerate the construction of “missing middle” housing and other affordable home ownership options, while protecting farmland and natural heritage from wasteful sprawl; and introduces new, environmentally progressive building standards to make homes greener and more energy-efficient.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Ms. Horwath has introduced opposition day number 3. I return the floor to the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you so much, Speaker. I appreciate that. I’m pleased to be on my feet debating this motion, because it really does speak to a serious, serious problem that we have here in Ontario. In fact, it’s definitely a problem that exists in other provinces as well. But here in Ontario, prices of homes are literally out of control.

We believe that everybody, no matter how much money they make, should be able to afford a safe roof over their head. That is absolutely a basic fundamental human right, the right to housing. We take it seriously, and we know that good policy coming out of governments can actually achieve that goal. We can actually achieve the goal of

ensuring everybody is appropriately housed and that folks who want to and should be able to buy a home are able to do so.

It is absolutely clear that the skyrocketing price of housing is having an impact on people. It's having an impact on young people. It's having an impact on the decisions that young people are making or not making. I don't know how many times I've heard young people talk about the fact that they simply cannot afford to buy a home in the neighbourhood that they were raised in, in the community that they love, where they have most of their familial connections and most of their memories. They simply have been priced out of the market, and it's devastating.

It's devastating for families that, for example, want to start putting down some roots and raising a family. What we know for sure is that young people are delaying those kinds of decisions. They're delaying those kinds of decisions because they simply can't afford a place that's big enough to meet the needs of a potential family situation. So those kinds of decisions of partnering and of raising children are being put off by folks because they are despairing that they'll never, ever actually be able to get into the housing market.

We know that people put off growing their family. They may have one child already, they're looking to have a second or third child, and they simply can't do it, not because of any reason other than the fact that they can't afford a place that's big enough to accommodate a growing family. That's really unfortunate, Speaker, and it doesn't need to be that way.

We can actually put in place policies that create options for young people and for anybody who wants to actually get into the housing market.

As I said this morning in question period, it is absolutely the case that life is getting harder and harder for people. I mentioned that this morning in the context of our Premier's low-wage policies that are keeping peoples' wages down while everything else is going up. One of the biggest expenses that people have, just in general, is their housing cost, the cost of their rent or the cost of the mortgage.

Of course, things had gotten really bad after 15 years of the Liberals not addressing the housing crisis that we were faced with before the pandemic. This government came into office and things have just gotten more and more expensive as they've driven peoples' wages down, putting people who are living on the minimum wage in a situation where they've lost between \$5,000 and \$6,000 since this government didn't proceed with an increase in the minimum wage, and of course, we've watched as this government has told workers on the front lines of COVID and the front lines of all kinds of different workplaces that helped us through the pandemic that they don't deserve a raise. Health care workers are kept to a 1% wage freeze, which of course means that those who are looking to perhaps save some money and get into the housing market have been prevented from doing that because of the low-wage policies of this government.

People are having to fight very hard—very hard—to try to build a life in our province. They deserve to have some rewards from the hard work that they put in day in and day out. Unfortunately, where we are now, after 15 years of Liberal inaction and dragging us backwards by this government, the dream of home ownership has not only become more distant but young people are abandoning the thought of even being able to own their own home.

In fact, I was talking to a young person, I guess it was in September or so, and he was telling me that he and his partner had decided that they were going to buy a place in Costa Rica because they simply cannot afford to buy a home. They know they will never be able to buy a home in the community in which they live, which is here in Toronto. Instead, they're setting their sights on a vacation place in a country that they can afford, which is really troubling. It should never have come to this, Speaker.

But the good news is, of course, we can do something about it, and that's what this motion is all about. It's not new that this crisis has existed. As I said, the driving up of housing prices has been ongoing for some time now. We know that the Wynne-Del Duca government was not on the ball when it came to taking control of this crisis. They let prices skyrocket here in the province. They had a chance to put the brakes on those rapidly increasing prices when they were in office; they chose not to do so. And, of course, we have this government that's much, much more focused on helping their buddies, helping developers and helping the folks who are already very well-off, who never have to worry about whether or not they can afford a home. They're home builders and they make a heck of a lot of money, giving some of it, of course, to the government in the form of political donations. The helping out of buddies and insiders is not going to help one young person to afford a home in this province.

1330

We know that for Liberals and Conservatives the fundraising has increased, and, really, the people who build those homes, they're really a cash cow for the government. Now, of course, as these billionaires are not only building the homes and getting all the consideration from the government while everyday people can't put a roof over their heads, we also see that there are these billionaires—these buddies of the current government and the previous government are buying up properties not even to live in them. They're buying up properties as assets, as part of their portfolios. In many cases, they leave those homes absolutely empty because they're not buying them to be a home; they're buying them to be a part of their financial portfolio, which is really, really problematic.

We believe here in the NDP that homes should be for people to live in, not to be an asset that some wealthy billionaire can plow their money into. We can absolutely do better than what's happening now, and that's why this motion speaks to some of the things that we want to see happen. We want to help people to own their own home so that they can thrive, so that they can live in the neighbourhoods that they were raised in, so that they have that dream of homeownership once again and so that that

dream is attainable here in the province. That can be done. We can cool off those speculators, those investors, those folks who make money off of our housing stock and really do nothing but make the affordability crisis worse and worse and worse.

When we form government, we will be introducing an annual speculation tax—we will be doing that—on residential property, and we will also be implementing a vacancy tax on residential property so people are dissuaded from buying up these homes and leaving them vacant, and so people are dissuaded from speculating in the market and creating a situation where the homes keep being sold over and over again as the price continues to go up. We're going to go after the speculators, the ones particularly who don't pay taxes in Ontario. Speculators from other parts of the world, other parts of the country, they are not paying taxes in Ontario, and we are going to make sure that they have to pay for this kind of behaviour that creates such a crisis when it comes to affordability of housing in our province.

We are going to also make it very clear that huge swathes of agricultural land, farmland, environmentally sensitive areas and greenbelt land are not where houses should be being built. There's a lot of opportunity to build what is called the missing middle, which are things like townhouses, as the motion identified, multi-residential units that are more compact, that aren't the big huge towers, but are things like duplexes and townhouses and those kinds of units which people can afford. We have a huge problem with a lack of those kinds of missing middle homes, and folks know that if we had more of those in place, if we had more of those available, it would make a big difference to help people get into the housing market and then eventually move on.

We think that what we need to do here is act and not just simply sit idly by as we watch people's dreams become dashed and their ability to own a home becomes further and further unattainable for them. So as this crisis continues to unfold, what we're hoping is that this government will understand that they actually do have a role to play, and it's not just to make their buddies wealthier; it is to make sure everyday working folks, the little guy, are able to live in this province and are able to put a roof over their heads, their family's heads, and able to purchase a home.

That's the responsibility of a government—not to just help the wealthy, which we know that they do constantly, but to help everyday folks build a great life in this great province. That's we're all about. We're looking forward to being able to help people own a home next year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate? I look to the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Doly Begum: Scarborough Southwest.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Scarborough Southwest. My apologies.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you, Speaker. You're doing well.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to represent a riding, the riding of Scarborough Southwest, where we have

community members who are concerned about their neighbours, concerned about their neighbours' ability to afford a life in this province, who are concerned about our province and the environment, making sure that we're able to protect our communities, our neighbourhoods and our green space.

So I'm proud to join the NDP's call to develop an affordable home ownership plan that implements speculation and vacancy taxes to help cool the market and fund affordable housing; updates land use planning rules to accelerate the construction of missing middle housing and the other affordable home ownership options while protecting farmland and natural heritage from wasteful sprawl; and introduces new, environmentally progressive building standards to make homes greener and more energy-efficient.

Speaker, Scarborough Southwest is home to families who want to be able to build their life where they grew up, to be able to stay in their communities, but unfortunately, with the price of housing, it has just been impossible. We have a whole generation of people across this province who cannot even envision living in the same communities that they grew up in, let alone affording to buy their own homes. The lack of affordable housing is a crisis, and therefore, we need an ambitious plan that addresses this crisis.

Over the past year, in the name of pandemic management, the government has passed omnibus bills which made it easier for developers to now encroach into our protected lands, yet none of this made it easier for the average family to own a home—not to mention that this crisis we're facing is the result of consecutive Liberal governments, and now this Conservative government, who have failed to address the housing crisis.

Speaker, in my limited time, I just want to point out that in order to address this crisis, we have to look at the way we can make sure that we're protecting our land but providing homes that people can afford to buy.

On residential streets like Windy Ridge in my riding of Scarborough Southwest—we have been informed that corporate speculators and private equity companies will be taking over the land and beautiful green spaces to build condos that may not be affordable for a lot of the community members who actually live in the neighbourhood. That is not the way to address this crisis. Families who have lived in Scarborough for all their lives are still struggling to make ends meet and raising their families—across the area with single homes, because the market rent is just unaffordable, let alone buying a home.

Speaker, I want to end—and I have a limited amount of time, because it's just a big issue and there is so much happening—by pointing out that there are a few things we can do right now to end this, and this motion addresses that. That includes bringing back real rent control and ending vacancy decontrol and making sure that the Landlord and Tenant Board is actually being fair and there are in-person hearings, which have been stopped throughout this pandemic—and a lot of landlords and a lot of tenants have been struggling with that, and we need to

bring back in-person hearings right now. We need to make sure that we establish a cooling strategy for seniors and other vulnerable tenants across our province.

Speaker, I thank you for this time and call on the government to join us in passing this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

1340

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's an honour to rise and speak to this debate, and thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for bringing it forward. I want to begin at what should be the starting point of any policy discussion on housing, that housing is a human right. Everyone deserves a place to live and to have the feeling of safety that so many of us get to take for granted, but an increasing number of people actually do not.

We have strayed very far from that being a reality for so many in Ontario. We are in the midst of a crisis, and that word barely does it justice, Speaker. Homelessness is skyrocketing and continuing to do so. House prices seem to know no bounds in terms of their increases. Families are being priced out of rent, let alone ownership. And it's remarkable: This has been going on for over 30 years. We knew the path we were going down, we had the data to show that the policies that were in place for the last 30 years did not work, and we still pursued it anyway.

We know what works. We know what best practices are, and we can look to so many other places in the world for how to deal with the housing crisis. We can look at Zurich and what they have done to improve their affordable housing supply. Their solution was twofold. They invested significantly—significantly—in building public housing themselves, and they enshrined it in the city constitution in 2011. What a thing to do, enshrine it in a constitution that housing is a human right. They made sure that for any private developments that were made, no less than 33% of them, a full third, were affordable housing. That is the level of numbers that we need to ensure that there is affordable housing in Ontario.

It's been hard to be part of this Legislature and see what we know to be best practices, backed up by data, out there in the world, and the divide between that and what is actually done in this room. Because the contrast is stark. We know what works. We know inclusive zoning works. We know rent controls work. We know that increases to the minimum wage don't slow down the economy, and they provide people with access to housing. I don't have a lot of time, but that's what we can do here.

I want to just touch momentarily on what the reality of this is on the ground. Last week, I toured one of Kingston's homeless encampments, Speaker, and it was a tragedy. I don't even really have words for what it was like to tour through that, I guess, community. I don't know what else to call it. There were so many people, and they had so little access to what they needed to live healthy, happy and fulfilled lives. And it's growing. It's growing every single day.

So would this government please adopt this motion by the Leader of the Opposition and allow us to address the housing crisis in Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Since I was elected in 2018, I have stood in this House countless times raising the issue of the housing crisis and calling for a response from this government. My community of Parkdale–High Park has been an epicentre of the housing crisis. Because of astronomically high rents caused by above-guideline rent increases and vacancy decontrol, people from my community have been forced out, displaced from the neighbourhoods they grew up in or raised their kids in and called home for years.

Our response to the housing crisis must be at the scale of the crisis itself. Speaker, we are faced with a government that has constantly sided with developers and corporate interests—a government for whom it is in their best interests not to acknowledge the scale of the crisis we're facing.

But today I want to focus on something I've been hearing from my constituents when I speak to them at their door: the dream of home ownership, which has become increasingly out of reach for people in my community and for people across Ontario. Speaker, I think most people in Ontario grew up dreaming of owning their own place one day. And for many Ontarians, that was what they were led to believe was possible, that if you have a job that pays decent wages and you have the good fortune of being able to build up your savings, you could eventually have enough to buy a home you can call your own.

We know that home ownership can provide much-needed stability, both personal and financial. Homeowners don't have to worry about being renovicted or about bad faith and bogus evictions. Homeowners can pay into their own equity instead of into the pockets of some big corporate landlord or developer.

But home ownership just isn't possible anymore for most people in this province. Skyrocketing housing prices have made owning a home all but a fever dream for the everyday Ontarian. Even the average two-income household in Ontario—much less single-income families—finds it next to impossible to scrape up enough for today's ballooned payments.

It shouldn't have to be this way. Buying a home should not be an option that is only available to a select few, and not just for speculators to make more money on. Owning a home should be something that is achievable for young professionals, for young couples, for families who want it.

I absolutely support this motion. There are very specific actions that can be taken to address the housing crisis, and this motion outlines them. So I urge the government to support it and get working. It's time to put an end to the affordability crisis in housing and put home ownership back within the reach of everyday Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: It is a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the decent and hard-working community of York South–Weston and speak in support of our opposition motion calling for an affordable home ownership plan.

I'll begin by stating a fundamental principle that all decisions in this Legislature should be premised on, and that is that housing is a human right. Everyone deserves a decent, stable place that they can call home.

The sad reality is that, because of decades of neglect by Liberal and Conservative governments, people are finding home ownership to be just a dream. In York South–Weston, people are being forced to leave the neighbourhoods they grew up in, thus leaving parents, family, friends and community behind.

The Conservatives and Liberals downloaded the cost of social housing onto municipalities with no way to pay for it. Now thousands of affordable and social homes are crumbling and unsafe, and next to no new affordable homes are being built. The provincial governments' years of neglect and inaction on the housing file have led us to the housing crisis we now find ourselves in.

This motion today looks to make housing a priority and calls on the government to reverse their neglect, inaction and apparent lack of interest in developing a real affordable home ownership plan that places families first and not the interests of developers and land speculators. These housing speculators have made this crisis even worse, and it is near impossible for families to even enter the housing market. We need to look to other provinces that have tried to cool the market with speculation and vacancy taxes. Real rent control needs to be brought back, and renovations need to end.

One year ago in York South–Weston, a staggering 170 eviction hearings were scheduled just in the month of November.

Because of Liberal and now Conservative disregard for affordable housing, there are now more families on the waiting list for affordable housing than those actually living in affordable housing units. Seniors now account for over a third of that wait-list for decent housing, and it is an embarrassment to this government that elders are waiting almost five years to obtain affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, this motion calling for an affordable home ownership plan is needed urgently, right now. Communities struggled during the pandemic, and the inequities and disparities in housing for all were really highlighted. We need to move to a post-pandemic economic recovery that places affordable housing as a top priority by creating an affordable home ownership plan that discourages speculators, updates planning rules, creates affordable housing and has an eye to environmental and agricultural protection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Speaker, we know that young people are worried that they won't be able to afford their own apartment or to purchase their new home—and it's not just young people. I hear it from their parents all the time. I hear it from seniors who are looking to downsize. I hear it from parents, families who, unfortunately, are going through a separation or a divorce that's creating financial challenges and not allowing either—but often the female—partner in the relationship to then buy a home or

an apartment. So it's clear that the rising costs of housing are making more and more people insecure about their future.

It's beyond time that this government takes action to address housing affordability. From the elimination of rent control for new builds to pursuing COVID-19 evictions, the government's actions on housing have only led to an exacerbation of the housing affordability and access issue.

1350

Now, there are many elements of housing affordability. We have a crisis in homelessness. We have the need to support millennials and first-time homebuyers. We have people who are looking to downsize, but they want to stay in their communities where they raised their families, and often where their children and their grandchildren have now returned home. Communities like Orléans need to see more purpose-built rentals to support all income stratas, to help aging Ontarians downsize. This will free up their family home for repurchase by others—younger families, perhaps—also allowing them to remain in the community where they raised their family and where the kids and grandkids now also call home.

That may require us to make some adjustments to how we view our communities. Orléans is already home to many townhomes, back-to-backs and even some apartments. But if we're going to provide these housing opportunities, we're going to have to be open to accepting small changes to what our communities look like. We're going to have to provide more affordable options for people starting out. We're going to need to avoid using up all the precious farmland that surrounds Orléans for more and more tract housing, and we're going to need government action. We're going to need government action in concert with the home building industry in the private sector to support different housing options in communities like Orléans and across Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Ms. Jill Andrew: It's an honour to rise today on behalf of my community in St. Paul's and also in full support of our leader and the Ontario NDP official opposition's motion, an affordable home ownership plan. I absolutely stand behind the need for the Conservative government "to develop an affordable home ownership plan that implements speculation and vacancy taxes to help cool the market and fund affordable housing; updates land use planning rules to accelerate the construction of 'missing middle' housing and other affordable home ownership options, while protecting farmland"—of course—"and natural heritage from wasteful sprawl; and introduces new environmentally progressive building standards to make homes greener and more energy-efficient."

Speaker, there are roughly 65,000 empty units in our city of Toronto, and frankly, there are approximately 9,000 folks who are experiencing homelessness also. Many of them—about 2,000 of them—are youth. The reality is, a home is not an option for everyone, renting or owning, and that is a disgrace, especially during a pandemic when, for so many people, the need to stay indoors and stay safe was simply not an option.

We need more duplexes. We need more townhomes. We need more options like co-op housing. We need to be investigating community land trusts, ways in which communities can actually begin to build their dreams into fruition.

Instead, what we had during this pandemic—and actually before the pandemic, quite frankly—was a government that slashed rent control, a government that has literally given gifts to developers. When we talk about the government's abuse of ministerial zoning orders, these ministerial zoning orders are absolutely not creating affordable housing. They're not allowing for Trevor, for instance, one of our community members in St. Paul's. He's got a 97-year-old mom. This mom has no home right now. She's looking for a place to live that's affordable, somewhere where they may be able to continue to have food and access to medications while also paying to live. Right now, she is not able to find a place to live.

I want to also mention someone who asked that she go by the initial B. B is an ODSP recipient. Here is what B said about the experience of renting: "I lost approximately \$130 worth of food because my landlord did not respond to my broken fridge in a timely manner. I am a person with disabilities, relying on a very small allowance on which to live, so \$130 of spoiled food is a catastrophic loss for me. I tried to negotiate with the landlord, but they refused to reimburse me."

I have case after case after case after case, example after example. I was talking to some of my friends over in co-ops and they were saying that we really need a shift to the provincial funding formula to ensure that our co-op housing remains an option and doesn't get obliterated by this government. We could even say the obliteration of housing by this government and previous governments over the last 30 years.

Speaker, I want to also say thank you to Black Urbanism TO for the hard work that they've been doing to ensure that Little Jamaica is a place where people can live and stay and not have to be gentrified out of their neighbourhoods. They as well have been fighting hard for community land trusts. In their project Pathways to Community Ownership, they certainly speak about the need for us to have inclusionary zoning, something I myself have raised here in this House in my motion, which sadly did not get the government's support.

I know I have little time. I'm taking a look at all the eyes and I'm seeing that I have to end, so I will certainly get other people that I have on my list up at a later time.

Thank you very much. Housing is a human right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, the global pandemic has amplified shortfalls in our supply of affordable housing, especially for vulnerable populations. In Ottawa, there are 350 families that are homeless that are living in motel rooms that cost the municipality \$3,000 a month.

A federal government-commissioned report says the effect of the pandemic on homelessness in Canada could lead to a rise of 10% to 15% in some cities. This is one of

the most significant crises facing Ontario. It is very clear that we need to increase supply, and we need to do it in a sensible way.

Restrictive zoning laws have prevented multi-family buildings from being built in many neighbourhoods. This has created an artificially low supply of housing, which contributes to out-of-control housing prices. Now is the time to look at involving the support of new and non-traditional partners to provide much-needed social services and to integrate affordability in housing developments.

To encourage a new approach and ensure a suitable and diverse housing supply, the government needs to step in and take the lead with an aggressive strategy, nothing less. The private sector should be invited to contribute to the solution, as they can make a difference in driving affordable supply.

There is also the problem of abandoned buildings. In my riding of Ottawa–Vanier, the number is staggering and has given rise to many complaints from residents. Everyone understands that these dwellings constitute both a source of hazard and nonsense upon considering the number of people needing a place to live. Therefore, the call for taxes on vacancy and speculation appears as an important incentive to encourage owners to ensure their buildings are purposed for occupation.

I appreciate also the intent of this motion and, in particular, the inclusion of environmental considerations. Building homes to be more energy efficient and green is an essential step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Developing over farmland and nature is not the solution to the housing crisis. We should be building up our cities, not creating endless suburban sprawl.

This motion proposes many of the measures that are needed to make housing more affordable. I hope that the Premier accepts these recommendations and takes steps to promote inclusionary zoning, progressive taxation and green building standards, because in a province as prosperous as Ontario, everyone should have a place to call home. It's crucial that we start working together to implement innovative and sustainable solutions to homelessness and the affordable housing supply.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. Jamie West: Our NDP motion is calling for the Conservative government to develop an affordable home ownership plan. Unfortunately, in my riding of Sudbury, home ownership is, frankly, out of reach for too many people. Not only that, but we're seeing an increase in visible homelessness and, for the first time in my life, we're seeing tent cities.

Speaker, I grew up in geared-to-income housing. I know about the importance of affordable housing. I want to talk about affordability with ODSP.

Karl Ament is an ODSP recipient in Sudbury. He receives \$1,169, and \$497 of that is for rent—\$497. I checked: The average market rent in greater Sudbury is \$921 a month for a one-bedroom, and that's a steal. That's almost double what the government will allocate to people like Karl.

1400

It's even less affordable if you're on Ontario Works, because Ontario Works provides a maximum of \$733 for a single person. The maximum monthly shelter allowance is \$390. Imagine you have \$733 a month to make ends meet, and now imagine the slap in the face you feel when consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments pretend that you can find a place to live for \$390 a month.

Recently, I met with Dr. Carol Kauppi and Laurie McGauley to discuss the lack of affordable housing. Among other things we discussed was the lack of sufficient funding for OW and ODSP. People's entire OW and ODSP cheques aren't even covering their rent. If you only have \$733 and an average market rent is \$921, then not only can you not afford your rent, but you're starting about \$200 in the hole every month—and that's just rent. You've got to find that \$200 to pay for your rent, and then you have to find money for food and hydro, and that adds up to homelessness, losing your home.

Imagine starting every month knowing that the Conservative and Liberal governments are happily pushing you further and further down the rabbit hole of poverty.

I mentioned growing up in Sudbury housing. I lived at 42 Cabot for the first 13 years of my life.

This summer, I met a constituent from my riding of Sudbury who lives in an attached Sudbury housing unit. She has lived there since she was 16. She started with her mother. Her mother moved into a home, and then she lived there with her children and her husband. She and her husband and are getting on their feet. Her husband is working towards becoming a heavy diesel mechanic. The city of Greater Sudbury has started selling off these semi-detached houses. So my constituent looked into it, to see if she could own the house she lived in. She got approval for a mortgage. Unfortunately, her maximum available loan is tens of thousands of dollars less than what her house would sell for. Imagine that: You live in geared-to-income housing, you spend your whole life getting back on your feet, and you find out that you can't afford the house that you lived in for your entire life.

Those are some of the examples why the Ontario NDP is calling for an affordable home ownership plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: The problem of housing affordability has broadened, and that is why I implore all members of this House to pass this motion today. Affordable housing is no longer an issue that speaks exclusively to low-income families. It speaks to all middle-class families. It speaks to every family I represent, in some way, in St. Catharines.

Housing affordability is a big part of Niagara's story right now. You can pick almost any street and you will get the same story. In fact, last week the local newspaper's front page had the headline "Buyers Beware." Yes, you heard it right. A new building, adding more homes to Niagara—and the headline is "Buyers Beware." Front page, top of the fold—imagine that—the headline said, "Buyers Beware." Why? Because the new tenants, mostly

older adults looking to downsize by selling their homes—only now to find out their rent can be raised to any amount every year. That's because this government got rid of rent controls on new builds. These new tenants feel uneasy about this because, like me and unlike this government, they don't trust wealthy corporations to do the right thing with housing.

The Kathleen Wynne-Steven Del Duca government did not do nearly enough and let prices for homes skyrocket. But what is worse than not doing nearly enough? Doing what this government has done to actually make it worse. Housing affordability is worse now than when the Ford government was elected almost four years ago.

That's the story of Niagara houses being bought up by speculators, looking for massive increases in the cost of rent, and an Ontario government refusing to put the people first. Well, they can start today by passing this motion. Otherwise, how can our young families keep up? How can the parents of students afford to help their children with housing for university—or their dreams of having their children grow up in the same community they did?

When you get pushed out of Niagara, you don't end up in another domicile on the other side of the city; you get pushed out to another region of the province of Ontario.

We all love Ontario. I especially love my area of it in St. Catharines, and I know we can do better to help people thrive and build their best life here.

Ontario deserves a plan that creates houses and homes for people. We need vacancy and speculation taxes on residential properties. We need to accelerate construction of houses and homes that families can afford—homes where we know the rent might not double overnight. Everyone deserves a good, stable place to call home, and if this government is unwilling to fix this problem, then I hope that in six months they are prepared to move aside so we can.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today to debate such an important issue. If those of you watching at home want a detailed, comprehensive road map to achieving the objectives outlined in this resolution, I urge all members of this House to read the Ontario Greens' housing affordability plan—a housing affordability plan that Canada's largest-circulation newspaper called a "master class" plan.

I will be enthusiastically voting in support of this resolution, and I want to thank the leader of the official opposition for bringing it forward. I also want to thank the leader of the Liberal Party for giving the Ontario Greens' housing affordability plan a thumbs-up at their most recent convention.

Speaker, let's hope that after today, the Ford government will also see the light and support our plan to increase housing supply without paving over the places we love: the farmland that grows our food and our economy; the wetlands that protect people, property and infrastructure from flooding; and the green spaces that provide us a little bit of relief from those extreme heat waves that are becoming more and more common. We are facing a climate

crisis and a housing crisis, and we could address both with good land use planning policies, inclusionary zoning policies and policies that build housing supply without paving over the places we love.

It's unacceptable that it takes a minimum wage worker a 55-hour workweek just to be able to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Kingston, 63 hours to afford one in Barrie or 79 hours to afford one in Toronto. It's unacceptable that it takes the average Ontarian 15 years of hard work to even be able to afford a down payment on the average home—21 years in Toronto. That's exactly why Greens are committed to building 100,000 affordable housing spaces over the next decade, supporting non-profit, co-op and social housing providers. That's exactly why we're committed to building 60,000 permanent supportive housing spaces with wraparound mental health and addictions support, so we can put an end to chronic homelessness.

Speaker, if we are going to increase housing supply, we have to reduce speculation and increase supply in the housing market, to make life more affordable for people, and we have to do it in a way that doesn't supercharge sprawl. Transportation is the largest source of climate pollution in this province, and it's a huge expense for many families, so the government's plans to unleash sprawl by building more highways will force people to commute longer hours and increase their transportation costs, which will only make life less affordable—all of this just to be able to find an affordable place to call home.

And so, Speaker, that's why it is so important to build livable, connected, affordable communities within our existing urban boundaries: to ensure that people have an affordable place to call home that is close to where they work, shop, learn, play, worship and support their favourite small businesses; 15-minute communities where most Ontarians can have easy access to the places they need by walking, cycling and taking electrified public transit.

We have to, as a province, say no to the false choice between tall and sprawl, that the only way that we can address housing is through giant skyscrapers or sprawling subdivisions. We can build cities, communities and neighbourhoods that embrace the missing middle with changes to zoning laws and land-use planning laws, getting rid of exclusionary zoning and bringing in inclusionary zoning, making it a right of way for people to build triplexes, quadplexes, duplexes, tiny homes, laneway houses and secondary suites, and making it more affordable for homeowners to bring in additional revenue and for people to access more affordable rental supply within our existing urban boundaries.

1410

We can make our homes more energy efficient with a green building program that will create hundreds of thousands of jobs and that will help people save money by saving energy, reducing their utility bills and reducing climate pollution at the same time. We can build communities that actually work for people, not speculators. We can make housing a human right. We can charge people for leaving houses vacant and speculating on the

market, making life less affordable for people. We can build more housing without supercharging sprawl with projects like Highway 413 that will do nothing to improve people's lives, that will do nothing to improve the planet, but will do everything to benefit land speculators. We can't double down on 1950s sprawl. We simply can't afford it. The infrastructure costs alone for municipalities are unaffordable.

So let's build. Let's build housing supply and communities that are connected, livable and affordable. Let's make a commitment to making sure everyone in this province has an affordable place to call home, while protecting, preserving and celebrating the places we love in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It's really a great privilege to rise and speak to this motion: affordable homeownership plan. This motion means a lot to me, as well as my constituents of Brampton North.

Just to let you know prices in Brampton, the average home price in Brampton has substantially increased over the past decade, nearly doubling in the past five years—nearly \$1.5 million for a detached house in Brampton. If you want to rent in Brampton, it's \$1,900 to rent a one-bedroom condo. According to the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board, even the average price of a townhouse in Brampton is approaching \$1 million. Many of our young couples in Brampton have had to resort to living in basement apartments because they can't afford a house in the city. From the previous Liberal government to the Ford government, we've seen nothing but neglect on affordable housing.

When I was getting my second shot at the Save Max centre, my second vaccine, I had a conversation with the doctor, and he mentioned that he's having a hard time finding a home in Brampton. His wife is also a physician and they have a combined income of over \$400,000. Let that sink in.

The motion calls on the Ford government to update land use planning rules to accelerate the construction of missing middle housing and other affordable home ownership options. These missing middle housing options are crucial in Brampton.

I hear from many young constituents who can't afford to stay in Brampton if they want to be homeowners. I had a young woman, a grade 10 student, email me her concerns. She said that she worries about how to afford a house or even an apartment in the future with rising property prices. She fears for her future and her dream of home ownership in Brampton, but she's only in grade 10. Our children shouldn't be neglected. They deserve affordable housing. They should not have to rely on wealthy parents to be able to afford a home in Brampton or other areas of Ontario; they should not have to consider leaving their city or even their province.

The Ford government is sitting idly by while the housing crisis gets worse and worse. This government must implement speculation and vacancy taxes and update

land use planning rules to accelerate the construction of missing middle housing and other affordable home ownership options.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, housing is a human right, not a luxury or an investment commodity, so I wholeheartedly support this motion and I call on the government to do so as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I want to tell the people of this House and those who are watching why this is so important for the people of Waterloo region. The K-W downtown community foundation recently published a Vital Signs report, and they found that in Waterloo region, our housing prices and lack of affordable housing counters San Diego or the greater London area. We have bypassed the crisis state in Waterloo region, which is why I'm surprised that there isn't a more robust debate on this motion, because we've actually brought forward some solutions for the government to consider.

One in particular that is very prevalent in the Kitchener and Waterloo area is the issue of renovictions, Mr. Speaker. This motion calls to stop the unfair renovictions and end landlords' bad-faith own-use evictions.

Last week, I toured Sunnydale. It's a community in Waterloo. Poverty hides very well in Waterloo, because there are very rich people and then there are very poor people, and there aren't a lot in between. This one particular housing complex has been purchased by a Toronto corporate landlord. That corporate landlord has decided that he wants these people out. These are marginalized people. These are people who are new to our country, new to our area.

I toured one of those units, and I want to tell you that what I saw made me ashamed to be an Ontarian. The conditions of these current rental units—I have no words. I'm still processing what I saw. I did not think that people in this country, in this province had to live like this, where there's visible mould on the walls, with children in the home; where there is ongoing water damage which will never be repaired, despite their pleas for help; where there was no fire alarm. The landlord refused to put a fire alarm in the home. There was no hot water. There were leaky windows.

And this is a family that has already been through hell. They escaped conflict in Ethiopia. They survived refugee camps. They survived coming to a country and trying to settle here, and then they are being currently victimized and trying to be renovicted from their home, where they had so much hope.

And the government members know this. They know that this is happening in all of our ridings. To do nothing is an unethical, amoral position to take, which is why we have brought forward this motion to this Legislature pleading with the government to regard housing not as commodification, but as a human right.

We can do better. We should be doing better. Vote for this motion, or at the very least partake in the debate on housing in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'm proud to support this motion, the affordable home ownership plan, which would help every Ontarian find a good, stable place to call home.

Speaker, New Democrats believe that housing is a human right, and right now, far too many Ontarians are being denied that right because of this province's housing crisis. Every year, rent gets higher and housing prices go up. The dream of owning a good home seems further and further out of reach.

I know that this is true across the province, but it is especially true in my riding of London North Centre. Last month I held a round table with the Leader of the Opposition and a group of young renters in London who are feeling increasingly hopeless because of Ontario's housing market.

Hadleigh, a young professional in his thirties, has been a renter his whole life, despite having steady work at a well-paying job. Hadleigh shared with me his frustrations about being trapped in a cycle of renting, instead of being able to find a home where he would be able to settle down for good and start a family.

But this story is all too common, Speaker. I spoke with another young Londoner recently, Davis, who along with his partner, Ali, are pursuing graduate degrees at Western University. They're expectant parents with a little one due to arrive this April. It should be an exciting time for them, Speaker, but instead, they're both feeling the stress of being unable to find a home for their growing family. While their current apartment works for the two of them, it simply doesn't have enough space for them and their baby. Now they're on a deadline to find a bigger apartment or a home in time for their baby's arrival. Young families across this province are feeling this way, and the government's inaction is leaving them stuck in housing that no longer suits their needs.

1420

It's no wonder that these young Londoners are feeling frustrated. Housing costs continued to skyrocket while the Liberal government let costs get out of control, and the current government will do whatever their developer buddies want, no matter how much that hurts families. People can't keep waiting for good homes while governments delay. London's social housing wait-list, for example, has steadily gone up over the last few years, and now numbers almost 6,000 people. That's 6,000 people who need access to safe and affordable shelter who are currently going without. If that weren't enough, the London Vital Signs report discovered that 13% of Londoners are living in unsafe, unsuitable, inadequate or unaffordable housing. It's impossible to hear these statistics and not realize how urgent it is that we tackle this housing crisis.

An NDP government would also stand up for consumers during the most important purchase of their lives. We will review the building inspection systems and strengthen coordination between municipal building inspectors, the regulator and the new home warranty

system. Building codes are utterly meaningless if they're not enforced. Too many homes have been built with defects that should have been spotted and fixed during construction. Consumers should not be left on the hook because of long-standing gaps within the system.

New Democrats also understand that giving Ontarians a safe place to call home can go hand in hand with fighting the climate crisis. I urge this government to stand up for hard-working Ontarians, stand up for young people, not developers, insiders, backroom buddies and political donors. Stand up for Ontario families and pass this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate? I look to the member from Hamilton East—

Miss Monique Taylor: Hamilton Mountain.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Hamilton Mountain. My apologies.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to be able to stand to this motion today, which talks about one of the largest crises in all of our communities right across this province, and that is the housing crisis.

I know when I talk to my constituents and when I'm knocking on doors, I hear it on a regular basis: Their young children—not so young anymore—are still living at home with them, without the hope of being able to purchase that home for themselves and to start that family. I hear from the senior who is worried about the apartment building that they've lived in for years that is being sold, and the renovation that will come with it. Where are they going to go, without any type of affordable housing? I hear about the increased rent that we're seeing across our community. Rental bidding is happening on a regular basis; we were seeing homebuyers into bidding wars, and now we're seeing that in our rental system.

We're seeing townhomes and duplexes that are illegally duplexed, because the municipalities don't have the tools to be able to ensure that we have this missing middle piece, which is leaving so many families without the ability to find that space. We're seeing people, as we heard from the member from Waterloo, in unsafe conditions, without proper fire exits, with mould, with just so many things that are leaving our rentals in a precarious position.

It's not acceptable, Speaker, and these are the types of measures that can help fix that moving forward in the future. It's incumbent on the government to ensure that people have the ability for safe, affordable housing, whether that's being able to get into the buying market and to purchase or whether it's to be able to rent something. More and more people are looking at the rental market because they know that they're never going to be able to afford to buy a house. That's not the dream that any of us have aspired to, that our parents aspired to for us or that we aspire to for our children, and this is the reality that they're facing. So I hope that the government decides to join us today in supporting this motion, ensuring that we do have the ability to have safe, affordable housing and save our farmland at the same time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate? Further debate?

I look to the Leader of the Opposition for her right of reply.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I do appreciate the opportunity to take a couple of minutes in my right of reply to observe which voices were absent from this debate today. It was really troubling to see one of the biggest issues facing people today, which is the cost of housing, not have any participation by the governing party. That says something about who they're in it for and who we're in it for.

We're in it for everyday people, Speaker, and we will always be in it for everyday people. Folks in this province should be able to have their dreams realized. They should be able to have a home that they call their own if they wish to. They should be able to purchase a dwelling, build their life, grow their families and ensure that they have a place that isn't precarious, that they own, that they take care of, that they love and that they build their future in and on.

The governing party seems to be more interested in providing swaths of greenbelt land, swaths of farmland, swaths of environmentally sensitive areas to their developer friends, who make a heck of a lot of money. They would rather build highways that help their donors to make even more money, as opposed to making sure that we provide the missing middle of housing in our province: the missing middle that will help people get into the housing market, not pad the pockets of developers while destroying important farmland that we really need to protect in order to feed our families, in order to keep our agricultural industries and the importance of those industries to our economy vibrant.

Unfortunately, this government seems to really just be barking up one tree, and that's the tree of their development friends. And let's not forget as they build these highways through the greenbelt that they also are using tax dollars to help their developer friends to make that money, to build those new subdivisions on sensitive land—land that should be protected.

Having said that, there's just so much more that should be done and could be done, and will be done next year to help people—everyday people, regular folks; not just the well-heeled, not just the people with vacation properties in St. Barts, for example, but people who actually work hard every day to make this province work. That's whose side we're on. It's the people in communities who deserve to be able to buy a home in the neighbourhood that they grew up in. It's the folks who work hard every day and save to be able to put a down payment on a home, to be able to perhaps get a bigger place so that they can start a family. Some folks are making decisions that they shouldn't have to be making about not getting married, for example, or not becoming formal with a partner or not having children because they simply can't afford a place that would house a family or a growing family. These are decisions that people should not have to make, not in a province like Ontario.

Our housing plan is quite robust. In fact, we tabled it—we made it public, I guess is a better way to say it—about a year ago, in November of last year, because people need to know that there are solutions to these problems. This

government isn't prepared to solve these problems. The former government, for 15 years, made things pretty bad. The prices were rising under the Kathleen Wynne government, and now we have a government that is simply sitting on the sidelines as they are helping their friends get richer, while everyday people are finding it really difficult to get through life, because the cost of everything is going up, including housing—as my good friend from Hamilton Mountain was just saying, including rental costs, with bidding wars on renting an apartment.

It's pretty scary out there, and what's even scarier is in here, when a governing party doesn't even have anything to say about one of the biggest challenges we're facing here in our province.

1430

Our plan—as I said, it's on our website. This is one part of it: trying to calm down the market; get those speculators out; put in vacancy taxes; get speculation, particularly foreign speculators, out so that our people, our folks, can own their own home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Thank you. That concludes debate.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, the bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes.

Please prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1432 to 1502.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): The vote was held on opposition day number 3.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 23; the nays are 40.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. McNaughton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: It's great to see you in the chair this afternoon, Speaker.

I'm excited and happy to rise today for the second reading of Bill 27, the Working for Workers Act, 2021. Today, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Mississauga–Malton.

Before I begin, I want to pay tribute to our Premier. Our Premier has been the driving force behind this legislation to ensure that workers are in the driver's seat as we build back a stronger province coming out of the pandemic.

My parliamentary assistant will discuss some details of our proposed legislation as well, specifically how we're supporting delivery drivers and newcomers, in the last half of the time that we have this afternoon.

I also want to say that my parliamentary assistant truly has been instrumental in developing and communicating our government's plan to support and protect workers and their families, so I want to congratulate him for all of his efforts to bring these policy ideas forward to really improve the lives of workers across Ontario.

As I said, under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is rebalancing the scales and putting workers in the driver's seat. We're keeping vulnerable workers safe by cracking down on recruiters and temporary help agencies who don't follow the rules. We're ensuring delivery drivers are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve by giving them access to bathrooms along their route. We're breaking down the barriers immigrants face to continuing their careers here in Ontario by removing unfair requirements for Canadian work experience, and we're adapting our labour laws to ensure they protect workers in our new world of work, by giving workers the freedom to advance their careers without fear of reprisal and giving workers the right to disconnect at the end of the work day.

Speaker, our mission is to give workers a hand up to better jobs and bigger paycheques. This is why we're making truly unprecedented moves. We're not responding to the future; we're charting our path forward.

Ontario is a province of leaders. We're not afraid to be the first in Canada, in North America and even around the world to act. Looking to the future, we're not going back to where we were before. We're levelling the playing field and lifting everyone up. I'm proud to say that this is a bill that leaves nobody behind. This bill supports the people of Ontario who work hard, put in a good shift and take pride in a job well done. Workers across our province are all different, and the type of work they do is different, but their work ethic and dedication to building this province unites all of us. Ontario is a province of opportunity, where big dreams come to life.

The world of work has been changing for decades, but the pandemic has dramatically accelerated the rate of change here in Ontario and everywhere around the world. Changes that were happening slowly, or that many predicted but that hadn't yet become a reality, happened all at once. Millions of office workers adapted quickly to working from home as our front-line workers worked tirelessly to keep all of us safe. Subways and roads went quiet as many commuters shifted to remote work. Homes became workplaces, daycares and classrooms as parents and kids

spent entire days together. It was a challenging time for many of us, my family included. Almost two years later, some of us have returned to the office, but many continue to work remotely or have adopted a hybrid model.

The pandemic has also accelerated trends such as automation in workplaces. Employers around the world have adopted new technologies to allow for social distancing in sectors including manufacturing, distribution, retail and transportation. We've also seen an increase in gig workers, especially digital platform workers, who drive us to our destinations and deliver food to our doors. Some of these changes are temporary and will soon be gone as we return to normal, but many of these many changes will continue to transform how we work long after the pandemic ends.

In the midst of all of these shifts, one thing is clear: The future of work is already here and our government needs to look ahead to ensure that Ontario workers continue to be protected and Ontario's economy remains strong. That means we need to stand up for workers by treating them with respect and fairness and help them adapt to new work environments. We need to ensure that our laws continue to protect their basic rights and their health and safety, both now and in the years to come.

We also need to make sure Ontario remains the destination of choice for workers outside our borders. That is why we are putting forward changes designed to protect, support and attract workers, while giving businesses a competitive environment that sparks innovation and growth. Simply, we are ensuring Ontario remains the best place to live, work and raise a family.

1510

In June of this year, our government established the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee. We asked the committee to examine the changing landscape of work and to provide recommendations that position Ontario as the best place in North America to recruit, retain and reward workers. Committee chair Rohinton Medhora, president of the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo, has been a steady hand at the helm throughout this entire process. Under his leadership, the committee has produced a thoughtful report that carefully brings together what they heard from workers and businesses in all corners of our province, including leading labour academics, organized labour groups, worker advocacy organizations and technology platform companies.

Our province has a limited window to get this right. This is why our committee moved quickly. From coming together in June to submitting their final report in October, they were nimble and worked completely remotely from start to finish. The committee met with over 100 individuals and groups and reviewed over 550 submissions, more than half of which were from workers. Moving through this volume of materials on issues this complex and important and on timelines this tight is obviously no small feat.

I'd like to recognize each of the committee members for their contributions: Mark Quail, a lawyer representing

artists and other content creators; Kathryn Marshall, an employee-side labour lawyer; Vass Bednar, executive director of McMaster University's master of public policy in digital society and a Public Policy Forum fellow; Sean Speer, assistant professor in public policy at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy; Mark Beckles, vice-president of social impact and innovation with RBC corporate citizenship; and Susan McArthur, who served on the committee in its early stages. We all owe these individuals a debt of gratitude for their contributions to Ontario, and I am grateful to each of them for coming forward and agreeing to serve.

Through their research and discussions with stakeholders, they looked at how we could adapt to these changes and the positive impacts of them, as well as lead economic recovery by helping workers develop their skills and by changing our employment policies. I'm proud to say that today we're moving forward on several of their key recommendations. This includes legislation that would require larger employers to have disconnect policies and to ban non-compete agreements for employees.

Speaker, I'd like to address the first part of this, which is the idea of ensuring that people can unplug at the end of their work day. As I mentioned, the pandemic has drastically changed the landscape of work. It has pushed many workers online who once commuted to office jobs. Many of us now attend meetings from our kitchen tables while juggling parenting and other responsibilities. And even when we're off the clock, it's not uncommon to keep an eye out for emails after hours. There's no question that the pandemic has blurred the lines between work and home life even more than was already the case.

Ontario cannot be a province where people burn out from endless work and family time comes last. We need to give our workers a break. It seems the people of Ontario agree. A recent public opinion poll revealed that 95% of people in Ontario support the right to disconnect from workplace devices. This seems only fair. No one should be on call 24 hours a day. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it has been to put our health and safety first, and that includes our mental health. That's why we're proposing to require larger employers to establish policies to let workers unplug from their devices. The policy could include, for example, expectations about response time for emails and encouraging employees to put out-of-office notifications on when they aren't working. We've seen it done successfully in other jurisdictions, including Germany, Ireland and France.

We're more than our jobs. We're people with families, hobbies and interests outside of work. We're moms and dads, volunteers for local charities, members of faith communities and so much more. Our government believes that good and meaningful work should make it possible for us to spend time with our families. To stay competitive and attract top talent to Ontario and to support the workers keeping our communities and economy running now, we can't compromise on that.

Our next proposed legislative amendment would ban employers from using non-competition agreements. While

these agreements are almost never legally enforceable, employers often use them to intimidate their workers. These agreements generally say that a worker can't seek opportunities at other companies in the same field for a period of time after they leave their current job, and this might stop many of them pursuing exciting opportunities that would help them grow professionally. This isn't fair to workers who are eager to advance their careers and this isn't fair to the thousands of small start-ups we have in Ontario who are starved for talent. This change would help them find workers with the skills they need to scale up, grow and prosper.

There are narrower ways for employers to protect their intellectual properties. For example, there are confidentiality or non-disclosure clauses that bar employees from sharing sensitive information with competitors or the public, or non-solicitation agreements that restrict them from pursuing company clients, vendors or employees for a specific period of time.

I should mention that California, where there are many innovative start-ups, banned non-compete agreements many years ago, yet Silicon Valley has flourished. A free market means competition, and that includes competition for workers too. We need to keep up or we risk being left behind.

Banning these agreements would increase the movement of workers and improve Ontario's ability to attract top talent, and that's what we need right now: top talent from new industries to help us strengthen our economy and our resilience. This will also be particularly beneficial to Ontario's small tech firms. Again, Speaker, we're not competing against Montreal or Edmonton; we're competing against Austin, Boston and Silicon Valley.

With these changes, we can make Ontario known worldwide as the best place to live and work; a place that respects you, your work and your workplace, wherever it may be; a place where the future works for you.

As I mentioned, COVID-19 has pushed many workers online, creating a work-from-anywhere market. Many companies are rethinking physical office spaces, and people want this type of flexibility. I'd like to take a moment to mention the ongoing work our government is doing to make Ontario the work-from-anywhere province.

First, we're investing \$84 billion in transportation over the next decade, led by my colleague the Minister of Transportation. We're investing in fast, reliable transit networks to link smaller communities to larger cities in the province to give people more choice in where they choose to live and work. This includes \$28.5 billion to transform the GTA's outdated subway system to offer more options and reduce travel times; \$5 billion to develop a passenger rail service plan in northern Ontario, with a view to connecting Toronto to Timmins or Cochrane; and a multi-billion-dollar GO rail expansion program, led by Metrolinx, to provide frequent, two-way rail service to communities across the greater Golden Horseshoe.

We are also moving forward with two-way, all-day service every 15 minutes on core segments of the GO Transit rail network, improving access and convenience

for all of the people of Ontario. We are committed to improving the transit experience and making life easier for the people, and look forward to sharing further updates in the future. This means that for many people, it will be easier to live near family.

Speaker, the pandemic has also shown us how important a strong high-speed Internet connection is. I can't tell you how many Zoom and Teams calls I participate in daily, and I know everyone in this chamber is the same. But for many households, particularly in rural and remote areas, poor service means video chats just aren't an option. Lack of access to high-speed Internet is more than just a minor inconvenience; it's also a health and safety issue. People shouldn't have to drive into town to find a reliable connection to access health services, do their work, attend school or catch up with loved ones. They deserve to have access to these basic services regardless of where they live in Ontario.

1520

Speaker, you will recall that our government has increased funding for high-speed Internet to nearly \$4 billion as part of our 2021 budget. Led by the Minister of Infrastructure, this is part of our plan to bring high-speed Internet access to all communities by the end of 2025. Recent investments include:

- \$14.7 million for 13 new projects to improve Internet connectivity in Ontario and provide up to 17,000 homes and businesses with access to reliable high-speed Internet;

- over \$1.2 billion for 58 projects, in partnership with the federal government, which will bring high-speed Internet access to nearly 280,000 households and help to close nearly 40% of the existing gap; and

- committing over \$109 million to Telesat's satellite project, a company made in Ontario, to help connect remote and northern regions to high-speed Internet; I know the Minister of Economic Development has been a champion of that project.

We're also investing in initiatives to improve connectivity across eastern and southwestern Ontario and in high-speed Internet projects in rural and northern Ontario.

Speaker, the pandemic has also reshaped health care, accelerating the use of services like Telehealth and virtual care. Ontario Health supports over 30,000 video conferencing endpoints across Ontario, which enabled patients who are at a location of their choice like their homes, access to over 22,000 physicians, nurses and allied health professionals.

In March, we acted quickly to implement new temporary billing codes for physician virtual care under OHIP. This allowed physicians to continue providing care to their patients with physical distancing and other public health measures in place. Since this was put in place, health care professionals have delivered over 60 million virtual visits, and almost 10 million patients have had at least one virtual visit. I want to thank my colleague the honourable Deputy Premier and Minister of Health for her continued leadership on these and many, many other initiatives, especially during COVID-19. And to our front-line workers: Thank you for stepping up to keep these critical services running at a time we needed them the most.

Speaker, in addition to shining the spotlight on those who are heroes, this pandemic has also exposed a great injustice in our province. While most temporary help agencies and recruiters are upstanding operators, this pandemic has shown us there are some who are breaking the law. This is unacceptable and needs to stop. Underground employers should not be making millions of dollars off the backs of workers while not paying minimum wage, not paying holiday pay, and not paying overtime pay. It's time we return these stolen paycheques back to the workers who earned them and level the playing field for agencies and recruiters who follow the rules.

Speaker, the plan our government is proposing is the most comprehensive in all of Canada. Our plan, if passed, would require agencies and recruiters to get a licence, pay a security bond, and be listed on a public online database. Those who fail to get a licence or choose to use an unlicensed agency could face the highest fines in the country and possible jail time. We're putting vulnerable workers and honest employers first while shining a light on rule-breakers. Breaking the law is not a cost of doing business. If you're not following the rules, we can and we will shut you down. These steps will protect young people, women and newcomers, who are often the most exploited by these bad agencies.

Speaker, complementing this legislation, my ministry is also hiring boots on the ground to crack down on labour trafficking. In Ontario, no worker should have their movements tracked, their passports locked away or be living on a straw bed. Nobody should be going to work in fear. Our government will spare no expense to protect the health and safety of every single worker in Ontario, regardless of their passport. These actions are strong, but they will weed out the lawbreakers who are flourishing in Ontario today.

Speaking of protecting and supporting those who find themselves in vulnerable situations, we're also proposing changes that, if passed, would make it easier for people who come to Ontario with credentials they got in another country to get certified and find work in a regulated profession or trade. And we are proposing an important change that would make life easier for the hard-working people who have been moving goods across our province throughout the pandemic. You'll hear more details about these proposals soon from my parliamentary assistant.

Speaker, when we support workers, we're supporting businesses too, because a healthy, strong workforce is the lifeblood of a strong economy. All of these legislative changes we're introducing today would, if passed, have a positive effect on our merchants on Main Street and on our competitiveness as a province.

But I want to emphasize that we are also always thinking about how we can directly support businesses in this very challenging time.

As you may recall, the pandemic and the closing of many businesses resulted in many people being laid off, especially those who earn lower wages. This resulted in a spike in the average industrial wage, which is used in calculating WSIB premiums. You will recall that our

government acted, through Bill 238, to limit the unexpected spike in premiums for 2021 and 2022. This provided essential relief to businesses facing significant premium increases at the worst possible time, without impacting benefits for those injured.

We are now proposing two additional changes, because the WSIB shouldn't serve government; it should serve workers and employers.

The WSIB is North America's third-largest insurance company. They have revenues of approximately \$4 billion from premiums paid by employers and returns from investments. Right now, the board has a surplus and is in the best financial position in its history. At the same time, main street merchants and shopkeepers are struggling to make ends meet and recover from the effects of the pandemic. This isn't fair. This money belongs to small businesses in our communities. We are proposing to make it the law for funds to be returned to those whose premiums fund the board when the WSIB has 125% of the funds they need, and we're giving the WSIB the option to return monies early when the fund is at 115%.

The legislation, if passed, would allow for a significant portion of the WSIB's current reserve, currently valued at \$6.1 billion, to be distributed to safe employers. This will give employers a hand up to reinvest these funds as they work to recover and grow their businesses. That's hundreds of millions of dollars that can be reinvested in new jobs, technology, and health and safety protections. At the same time, these changes would not affect the benefits and services that workers and their families rely on.

When I announced these measures earlier this month in Hamilton, I was pleased to share some more good news. Over the past year, shopkeepers and merchants have made tough decisions to stay safe and to help us stop the spread of COVID-19. They stepped up when their communities needed them the most. That's why I was pleased to announce that in 2022, the WSIB is reducing workplace premiums by \$168 million. This is another tax cut for safe employers across Ontario. With this rate reduction, premium rates have now dropped more than 50% since we formed government, leaving more than \$2.4 billion in local economies across Ontario.

Complementing this, we're also proposing to make paying WSIB premiums easier for employers. Currently, employers must pay premiums directly to the WSIB and separately send payroll deductions to the Canada Revenue Agency. We are now proposing to allow the WSIB to reduce the red tape and improve customer service by partnering with the CRA to create a one-stop shop. This change would streamline operations and reduce administrative burden for businesses by enabling them to make payments to both organizations in the same place. Our government is all about making processes easier for business so they can focus on serving their customers and creating jobs. If passed, this would create a simple process, similar to what Nova Scotia and Quebec have in place.

1530

Speaker, before passing the floor over to my parliamentary assistant, I want to emphasize that all of the

proposals I've just spoken about are really a continuation of the hard work our ministry has been doing to help protect and support workers and employers, especially over the last two years.

We've taken a number of important actions to help protect workers' health and safety, including ramping up our health and safety inspections of workplaces across Ontario—to date, we've visited more than 70,000 job sites and workplaces, issuing COVID-related tickets and stopping unsafe work related to COVID where necessary; hiring 100 additional health and safety inspectors, creating the largest force in history; and creating over 200 sector-specific workplace resources, including guidelines endorsed by both management and labour to keep workplaces and job sites safe.

We've heard from front-line workers that these measures are providing additional security. It helps them go to work each day knowing that we are doing everything possible to ensure their safety.

We also introduced paid sick days for workers so people who needed to self-isolate, get tested or get vaccinated can call in sick and help stop the spread while still getting paid. We partnered with the WSIB to deliver a program and reimburse employers up to \$200 per day for each worker. This means that if a warehouse worker is told to self-isolate, she can do so without fear of receiving a smaller paycheck next week. If a grocery store clerk tests positive for COVID, he can stay home, recuperate and not worry about how he's going to pay his rent. And if a factory worker needs to take time off to get vaccinated, they get paid while doing so. We recently extended this program until the end of this year.

Ontario is also facing a generational labour shortage, with 300,000 jobs today going unfilled. Each of these jobs is a paycheck going uncollected and a family going another day without. Our government is strengthening our efforts to help workers learn the skills they need to fill new, in-demand roles in their own communities. We are doing this by investing more in training programs and employment services.

We know that ordinary people across Ontario will be the ones to lay the foundation for a better tomorrow. At a time when many have been left without jobs, our efforts will help them connect with the new careers they need to thrive.

Over the next decade, we expect the construction sector will need about 100,000 workers due to retiring workers. That's almost 22,000 more jobs than are expected to enter the industry. Those are opportunities for men and women to find meaningful, well-paid jobs that will help them support their families and our communities.

To close the gap, we're investing in skilled trades and apprenticeship programs. Our government's skilled trades strategy aims to break the stigma some people attach to the trades, simplify the system to make it easier for apprentices to navigate and encourage more employer participation in apprenticeships.

We keep hearing, Speaker, that young people, even if they're aware of the trades as an option, don't know how

to get started. We need to fix that. As I've said many times, it should be as obvious to become a carpenter or pipe fitter as a banker or lawyer. So we recently invested over \$40 million in expanded youth awareness and training programs. This includes \$20 million for Ontario's Pre-apprenticeship Training Program.

Speaker, I want to also give a shout-out and pay tribute to the Minister of Education, who is leading a lot of this for the government to get more young people into the skilled trades and make them aware of the opportunities that exist out there.

Some funding is specifically geared towards spreading opportunity widely by giving people from all walks of life exposure to the variety of good jobs in the trades. This free program includes a hand up with a work placement. In total, we're investing more than \$271 million to remove obstacles for apprentices. This includes support for upgrading facilities with state-of-the-art equipment, incentives to support apprentices as they move through their programs to become fully skilled tradespeople and help for small to medium-sized employers to take on apprentices with funding that encourages them to come together to provide a full scope of training and on-the-job mentorship for apprentices.

Speaker, I will conclude by calling for all in this House to support Bill 27, the Working for Workers Act, 2021. The world of work is obviously shifting quickly, and to protect workers our laws need to keep up. Workplaces are drastically different than they were just two years ago, but some things have not changed. We know people need to feel confident they can support their families and provide for their future. We also know they want well-paying jobs, where they have their employment rights protected and have an opportunity for growth and advancement. If passed, this bill would ensure these basic rights are protected and our economy remains strong in the years to come. The way we work has changed, but I'm confident that the measures outlined today would ensure Ontario continues to be the best and safest place to live, work and raise a family.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to turn it over to my parliamentary assistant.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): The minister acknowledged that he would be handing it over to his parliamentary assistant. As such, I recognize the member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Minister, for those wonderful remarks.

It is my pleasure to rise today for second reading of an act to empower workers and put them in the driver's seat. Bill 27, the Working for Workers Act, 2021, is doing exactly that.

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge and thank my colleague, a champion for workers and our Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, for highlighting the important action of the government that is proposing to support workers and businesses both now and after the pandemic. Minister, you're doing an incredible job, but I want to acknowledge one more thing. I'm

enjoying every second of being in the ministry. So thank you for giving me that opportunity.

Speaker, our government knows that we need to be visionary to support people in a rapidly changing world—a changing world which is full of uncertainty. You'll agree with me that, in anything we have seen in the last 20 months, the only certain thing we have is the uncertainty. That means looking at trends in the job market over the next decade and asking important questions: How can we make sure our kids are pursuing in-demand careers that will set them up for lifelong success in meaningful and well-paying roles that provide them a big opportunity and for their families?

As we all know, the last 20 months have been tough—tough on the whole world, and it has shaken the whole world, COVID-19. I want to acknowledge and thank our front-line heroes for working tirelessly around the clock in fighting COVID-19. The results we see today are due to the efforts of our amazing front-line heroes and our amazing people of Ontario and the historic investments made by the government to combat this deadly virus. As I said, I can't thank Ontarians enough for their sacrifice and patience. Thank you for rolling up your sleeves.

Our Ministry of Economic Development has worked by reducing red tape and providing benefit to businesses located in Ontario. By lowering taxes, reducing electricity costs and cutting red tape, we have reduced the burden on Ontario businesses by \$7 billion. It's no coincidence: lower burden means more support to Ontarians and Ontario businesses. The job data from the last four months, for example, supports our facts. Ontario added 117,000 jobs in June 2021; 72,000 jobs in July; 53,000 jobs in August; 73,000 jobs in September. If you put them together, that is 316,000 jobs. It's no coincidence. It has come because the historic investments, proposed changes, reduction in red tape, supporting businesses and investing in the well-being of residents have resulted in an economic rebound and higher investments in manufacturing and the service sector. That is why, Mr. Speaker, today we have over 290,000 jobs that are unfilled.

1540

As the Premier says, the economy is on fire. We are unleashing Ontario, and we're going to see more investments coming to Ontario from every part of the world right here. This is a good problem to have. What needs to be done so that our province has skilled workers is that we need to complete the historic investments. We want to make sure that we put this money into the projects we need so that communities can depend on things like roads, bridges, hospitals and schools, and that we can quickly and decisively act to ensure our province is a top choice for businesses to set up shop in and create new jobs, and for smart, talented people who want to bring their skills here, who want to build their families and thrive.

If you look at the situation today, Mr. Speaker, on one side we need people. We have unfilled jobs. On the other side, we have many, many foreign-trained workers who are not working in their field. This bill is going to make sure we fill that gap.

This bill is a part of our government's broader actions throughout the pandemic to support workers, businesses and job seekers. Since the start of this pandemic, workers' health and safety has been our government's top priority. To ensure that all COVID protocols have been followed, we hired over 100 new inspectors who visited thousands of job sites. Our government introduced support for workers and businesses, including paid sick days through our worker income protection benefit, and invested over \$200 million in projects that give people the training they need to fill the shortage of skilled workers in Ontario.

Today, we have continued to stand up for workers and have committed to their well-being. As the minister mentioned, our proposal, if passed, will help us to attract the best and the brightest workers to our province. It will protect vulnerable workers, including temporary and foreign workers, to ensure their safety and basic rights are protected, and give employers a hand-up as they work to recover and grow their businesses.

Speaker, I would like to take a moment to walk through some additional proposals. This bill will focus on protecting delivery workers and people who come to Ontario with foreign credentials. As you know, the last 20 months have been tough and many workers have been laid off or their work hours reduced. In contrast, many others whose job is to provide essential services have stayed on the front line through these challenging times. I want to mention those 240,000-plus drivers in our province of Ontario for keeping goods moving and the economy going, ensuring that our health system stays strong and upright with a supply of PPEs. These heroes make sure that the people of Ontario have food on their tables, clothes on their backs, and other supplies as needed. So thank you, our drivers. Whether it is courier drivers, truck drivers, food delivery workers, all of you have played a crucial role in the supply chain.

The demand for delivery has increased since the pandemic started. More of us were shopping online when we could not go into stores. Many of us could not go to restaurants. That's why we were ordering online. Thank you to each one of you for making sure that we were able to celebrate our milestones through you, with your support. You were the ones who got all this to us, so these hard-working people are unsung heroes and we want to thank you for all of what you did.

Speaker, this is why we are proposing to require business owners to allow workers who are delivering or picking up items to use a washroom at that business. It's a surprise when you think about it. I had a chance to talk to some of the truck drivers. Sometimes they have to drive six, seven, eight hours to drop their stuff, and that's in places where there are not many cafes, there are not many retail stores. If they need to go to the washroom, they have no choice. Either they can go to the washroom where they're delivering or picking up or go to a cafe and the restaurants—those restaurants were closed during COVID-19.

What that means—I was surprised when one of my driver friends told me he was in such need to go to the

washroom and he had no choice but to go in the woods. As he was in the woods and trying to use it as a washroom, the only thing that was coming to his mind was, “Where have I been? Am I in a first-world country?” I’ll be honest, Mr. Speaker, I’ve seen certain things like this in the countries where I came from. There at least we had one plea. We will say, “Okay, we’re not in a first-world country.” But if we have to do the same thing here, think about what is going through his mind. Should he pick between being sensible or should he pick being healthy? That is going to stop today.

What we’re going to do is make sure that whenever any of the drivers are picking or delivering their items, they will be allowed to use the washroom at that business.

As my colleagues mentioned, we appointed experts through our Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee in June who have spoken with workers, employers and unions about how we can better support our workers in this changing landscape of work, and they came back by saying the workers who deliver goods are often denied use of washroom at the businesses they serve.

Since the start of the pandemic, I have been hearing these hard-to-believe facts. It was multiplied when I saw a lot of people on social media talking about it. These are the proud men and women who do an honest day’s work who rarely call to raise a concern. But when they call, they know there is someone who is really here to listen and there is something really wrong and needs immediate attention. Their stories of hours and hours of not being able to find a washroom broke my heart. It made me angry. It made me restless.

Mr. Speaker, these drivers deserve all the respect. They’re part of our Ontario family. They need access to clean washrooms, and we need to make sure we give our truckers and other drivers a break.

At the start of the pandemic, our government opened rest stops to couriers and truck drivers even when they were closed to the general public, but we need to do a better job of making their lives easier. Giving people access to a basic facility like a washroom is a matter of common decency. And thanks to the minister and to our ministry, it is happening now. It is the right thing to do.

Our bill would require businesses to allow delivery drivers to use their washroom if they’re dropping off goods or picking them up. This is an important step forward to show our front-line workers that we care and we support them.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, talking about the proposed amendments to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006: As you know, our people are aging. More and more people will be retiring. Already, we rely heavily on immigration to meet the skills employers need.

In 2020, immigrants made up to 33% of Ontario workers. With an aging population, we will be more and more dependent on talent joining us from across the world to support Ontario and support our economy. So it is crucial that we make Ontario an attractive destination for people.

1550

Speaker, I want to acknowledge that, as a first-generation immigrant, I’m thankful to the Indigenous community for caring for this land for thousands of years and allowing us to meet here. I’m also thankful to the multi-generational Canadian immigrants who came many, many generations back and built the country that we’re enjoying today.

Right now, as we know, there are issues facing individuals and families making their way to our province. Each year, our province opens its doors to thousands of internationally educated professionals and their families. These people are accountants, engineers and architects, but many of them never get to practise in their chosen field.

I do remember that when I came, I had my undergraduate degree in chemical engineering, and the first thing I was told was that I couldn’t work as an engineer and I couldn’t use the title “engineer.” When I came, I had a choice: to pursue education and work towards the professional engineer title or designation, or feed the family. I came on January 15, 2000, and the first thing I wanted to do was to make sure that my son and my wife—back then, my son was about five months old—that I could reunite with my son. In order to reunite with my son, I wanted to make sure that I had enough stuff available at my home so that when he walked into the house, he did not feel the pinch and the pain. That meant I had a choice: to pick between going to work or educating myself. Like many other Canadians, like many other first-generation immigrants, I chose to go to work.

Fast-forward, and I’m thankful to Canada, I’m thankful to Ontario for giving me all the opportunities. But what I lost during the journey was what I learned as an engineer and my passion for engineering. This is the story of many of us as we walk through the tough decision between putting food on the table in an immediate need or going back to school and getting educated and working in the field we are passionate about.

I do remember talking to my colleague the MPP for Mississauga—Erin Mills—when you’re looking to upgrade yourself, when you’re looking at getting your designation, one of the things that you need is Canadian experience. To get Canadian experience, you need to get a job. And to get a job—whenever you go to an employer, they always look for what experience you have. It’s like the chicken or the egg: to get a job, you need experience, and to get experience, you need a job. That is what we’re going to address through this bill.

When we look at the national statistics, immigrants earn less than those who were born in Canada. This earning gap has worsened even though immigrants are increasingly highly educated.

In 2016, 75% of internationally educated immigrants in Ontario were not working in the regulated profession they trained and studied for.

Look at this: On one side, you’re saying we have 290,000-plus jobs unfilled, costing billions in lost revenue, and then we have about 75% of our internationally educated immigrants who are not working in the field in

which they're trained. I think we can all agree that these are underutilized skills that could be put to a greater use to contribute to our economy.

The reality is, there are barriers that people, no matter how skilled or experienced, face when they come to Ontario with foreign credentials. This is especially true when it comes to regulated professions like engineering, architects and accountants. Many of those workers can't afford to go through the administrative hurdles to transfer their professional credentials, and even if they do, these processes can be confusing and time-consuming. Many newcomers need help to manoeuvre through complex assessment and registration processes. The language assessments they have to go through can be expensive and duplicative. And all these steps can take a very long time.

Speaker, if we're going to make our province the best place for newcomers, if we want to look to thrive in this province, we can't have regulatory bodies putting unnecessary barriers in their way. We need to make it easier for people to settle here and find jobs in their field. If we do, it is a win-win situation. Newcomer families will have more financial stability and our economy will benefit a great deal. It is predicted that connecting newcomers to jobs that match their qualifications would increase Ontario's GDP by \$12 billion to \$20 billion yearly for the next five years.

That's why we are proposing changes that would, if passed, make a real difference. First, we are proposing to eliminate the Canadian work experience requirement for professional registration and licensing, unless it is necessary for public health and safety. We are also proposing changes that would, if passed, enable the streamlining of language proficiency test requirements. This means newcomers would not be tested again and again: when they immigrate, and again when they're going through the process to become registered with a regulated profession. We're also proposing changes that would, if passed, enable the creation of regulation to speed up the time in which regulated professions are required to make a decision and ensure expedited registration processes are implemented in emergencies like we are going through—like a pandemic.

Speaker, not only would these changes help get these people working in their chosen field, they would also help speed up the process. To be more specific, reducing the number of hoops they would need to jump through would mean that they could start working in their field as much as five years sooner. And if you really look at it in an example, this five years is not the beginning of the five years; it is the exact last five years they will get in extra if they continue this journey now.

In one example, I heard about an individual with seven years of experience in his home country. He has spent \$47,000 over the last five years trying to meet the certification requirements. As of today, he's still not registered and he still cannot practise.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that we provide newcomers with a clearer path to starting their careers. These proposed amendments, if passed, will give newcomers the pride of

continuing their careers and contributing their knowledge and experience to their new homes, all the while knowing our government has their backs. Our ministry has consulted widely, and these proposed changes are supported not only by immigration organizations but also by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

1600

I just quickly want to talk about Ontario today—some of the few important numbers that paint the picture of our Ontario today, why we want to call Ontario home.

We're the second-largest automotive manufacturer in North America. We're the second-largest IT cluster in North America. We're the second-largest financial hub in North America. We're the second-largest centre for food processing. Some 70% of adults in Ontario have post-secondary education. We graduate 55,000 STEM graduates every year.

What does this mean? This means that we are unleashing Ontario. But to do so, we need people who can contribute to Ontario's success. That is why, as the minister said, this bill builds on the work our government has done to protect workers, stand up for good jobs and ensure our economy remains strong.

Our workers need help. They need support. Our Working for Workers Act stands up for those who worked tirelessly through the pandemic to keep our families safe and maintain our roads and highways, and those who did their part by staying home. Since the start of this pandemic, we have supported these workers and businesses—from introducing paid sick days to hiring the largest team of inspectors in our province's history—and we will continue to have their backs long after the pandemic ends.

By taking these steps now, we can ensure Ontario remains the best place to live, have a meaningful career, raise a family and thrive.

I know that all members have a common goal: to serve our residents and look after their well-being. That is why I'll repeat my request to all members in this House to support Bill 27, the Working for Workers Act, 2021.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): It is now time for questions and comments.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the minister and the parliamentary secretary.

This government does not have a good record on enforcement. We need a strong commitment and resources put in place, but this legislation doesn't have that. Also, it excludes health professionals—and these are also the people the government calls front-line workers, heroes and champions. Such is the Canadian experience, if they're not provided as soon as they arrive, those internships, co-ops and placements, and provided directly into that—this legislation also doesn't do that. Then why exclude our health care professionals and put in barriers that the internationally—decisions which will put in more barriers? This will also affect women, BIPOC and newcomers who are in fact internationally trained medical doctors.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. It seems like the member

opposite does agree that this is the right thing to do, and that's what we're doing.

Talking about excluding the health care workers, I want to say that our government is working to assess if these proposed changes can also be made for health care professionals in the future. The Ministry of Health has invested \$52 million to recruit, retain and support over 3,700 more front-line workers. To be clear, this initiative is one of the largest health care recruiting and training initiatives in history.

Absolutely, you are right: This is the beginning. We will be looking after and looking into the future of going into health care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I look to the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair.

I enjoyed the Minister of Labour's remarks and, of course, those of the parliamentary assistant.

Just to get a little more information on the record, I'd like to ask the parliamentary assistant how these proposed changes that both the minister and he outlined—maybe give us a little more detail on how they will lift up workers, whether they're new immigrants or workers for a long time in Ontario, how they will help them to advance.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member from Lambton—no.

Interjections: Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Sarnia–Lambton—not one “Lambton” alone.

Yes, you're absolutely right. What is this going to do? It would impact 43 trades and 14 professions, such as lawyer, engineer, architect, plumber, electrician, accountant, hairstylist, teacher and early childhood educator so that they don't have to go through the multiple testing requirements and they can become licensed faster.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I look to the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Ontario produces some pretty smart people. We've actually been blessed in the last couple of years, having two Nobel winners come from Ontario, the most recent of whom was David Card. What he won for was his work on the minimum wage, because he demonstrated that when you increase minimum wages, you don't actually decrease the workforce at all. There's no decrease in employment associated with it, and it creates a lot of economic activity.

So my question to the parliamentary assistant is: Why the absence of minimum wage changes in this labour bill? It's the single greatest thing that we could do to help workers in this province.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member opposite. As you rightly said, this bill is talking about how we can make sure that the workers are in the driver's seat. What we're trying to do through this is—as I talked about, foreign credentials: Once they have the licensing in place—and they can actually expedite their licensing as soon as five years. They don't even have to work on the minimum wage. That's what we're trying to do through

this legislation. Those who came as an engineer or architect don't have to drive taxis; they can actually work in their profession, what they love, and can make money for their family.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Speaker, it's very nice to see you in the chair today.

First, congratulations to MPP Anand in his appointment as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour.

First of all, I want to thank the Minister of Labour for coming to my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore to do an announcement on washroom facilities for our truck drivers. If anybody knows Etobicoke–Lakeshore, we have the food terminal there that employs almost 5,000 people.

My question is—I was talking to some of these workers about disconnecting from work and spending more time with their family. I'm wondering if the member could please elaborate on the proposal for the right to disconnect and why now is such an important time for our government to act.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member from Lakeshore. You're absolutely right: It is important. What COVID has taught—it has given us the flexibility to work from home. But at the same time, there is no work-life balance left, because you're at work and you're at home. Both things are happening at the same time. That is why Ontario is prioritizing workers' mental health and family time. We've seen that 29% of people, the highest percentage of any province, work half their week from home. We're making sure any businesses with 25 employees or more post a written disconnect-from-work policy so that we can give those residents work-life balance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the minister. We know that right now, workers are struggling across our province, that workers are struggling to make ends meet, to pay bills, to pay rent. They're struggling with affordability. This Conservative government has an opportunity to actually stand up for workers by ensuring that they can live with the dignity to pay these bills, but there's no mention of the minimum wage in this piece of legislation. There's no mention of ensuring that front-line health care workers can get an increase of their wages, because the Conservative government has frozen their wages at 1%.

Will this Conservative government commit today to standing up for workers and increasing the minimum wage, stopping the freeze to front-line health care workers, so workers can live with the dignity that they deserve?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I will absolutely say this to the member opposite: You're right that we need to stand up for workers, and that is exactly what our bill is doing. I call the Minister of Labour a champion for workers. That's exactly what we are doing through this bill. We're trying to make sure that no one is left behind through putting these things in place, so that the workers can disconnect, so that they can have a family and life balance, to make sure that foreign credentials can be implemented faster, to

make sure that the workers who are delivering supplies for us have the respect that they need. That is what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We are making sure that we respect our workers in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you to my colleague for his remarks on this important piece of legislation. A lot of people think about Ottawa as being a government town, but of course, Ottawa is also home to the largest tech park in all of Ontario. We have a huge tech presence in the west end of the city, and I've had the chance to talk to a lot of these tech workers, who have spoken to me a bit about non-compete agreements. I'm wondering if the parliamentary assistant can explain a little bit more about non-compete agreements and why banning these will be a good thing for our tech workers and attracting more of them to our province.

Mr. Deepak Anand: The member is absolutely right. When we talk about the tech industry, as I said earlier, we are the second-largest IT cluster in North America, and there is a reason behind it: Ontario's average tech salary is 65% of the average US tech salary. What does that mean? That our workers are vastly underpaid compared to our US counterparts.

Banning non-compete will help break down barriers for Ontario's tech talent. For example, after Hawaii banned non-compete in the tech sector in 2015, there was an 11% increase in labour mobility in the sector and a 4% increase in wages. That's what we're doing through this bill.

When meeting with entrepreneurs in the tech industry trying to scale up, the most important thing they need is access to the top talent. Restrictions on labour mobility are placing a ceiling on Ontario's economic potential and innovation economy. That's why that's exactly what we're trying to do. We're making sure that through the non-compete clause ban, our tech sector employees can get a head start and can make more money. We need to keep up with the wages and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Thank you.

I now turn to the member from London West for the official opposition's lead.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I rise today to lead off debate on Bill 27 on behalf of the official opposition and as the labour critic for the Ontario NDP caucus. This is a bill which is euphemistically called the Working for Workers Act, and I have to say, Speaker, that this government has certainly set a low bar in terms of its support for working people in Ontario. Maybe this is about as good as it gets in terms of PC-style protections for workers.

But before anybody gets too excited about what's in this bill, I just want to recap for a minute as to what has happened since this government was elected in 2018 that has brought us to today's debate. Everyone will recall that one of the very first moves of the Ford government, shortly after it was elected in 2018, was to cancel the planned increase to the minimum wage, to cancel the \$15 minimum wage. One just has to reflect for a moment on what that

would mean to working people in this province, minimum wage earners in Ontario, if that \$15 minimum wage had been put in place when it was planned to be implemented, and the additional dollars that would be in workers' pockets as a result, especially at a time when we are seeing, frankly, unprecedented increases in the consumer price index and rate of inflation. That \$15 minimum wage at that time would have made a significant difference to many, many families and workers across the province.

At the same time that they decided to cancel the minimum wage increase, they also told employers that they don't have to pay the same rates of pay for workers who are doing the exact same work as the people they are working beside. They removed the equal pay for equal work provisions from the Employment Standards Act and gave the green light to employers who wanted to pay temporary employees less than the full-time workers they were working beside.

At the same time, this government also scrapped the two paid sick days that workers and allies and health care professionals and small businesses who recognized the importance of paid sick days to their workforce and the health and well-being of their employees—this government decided to scrap those two paid sick days that were already inadequate, but it was something. It was something that working people in this province had fought so hard to achieve, and this government said, "No, no, no, we're not going to provide those two permanent paid sick days."

Speaker, if there is some skepticism about this bill and whether it really will work for workers in this province, it is well founded based on past experience.

Now, for the next just under an hour, I would like to walk members through this legislation, look at the different schedules, talk about some of the shortcomings of this bill and, in particular, highlight what a bill that really is working for workers should look like in Ontario.

This is what is called an omnibus bill. We're very familiar with omnibus bills in this place, bills that bring together a number of different statutes and make amendments on sometimes very diverse areas of policy. In this case, the amendments are mostly focused on labour-related issues.

I'm going to begin with schedule 2, and I will briefly refer to schedule 1 as I walk people through schedule 2. Schedule 2 does a number of things. It creates a licensing regime for temporary help agencies and recruiters. It requires certain workplaces to have right-to-disconnect policies, and it prohibits employers from requiring non-compete agreements. Schedule 1 connects to schedule 2 because it creates joint and several liability for offshore recruiting agencies that work with local temp agencies to place foreign nationals, and it requires those offshore recruiters to be jointly liable for the repayment of any fees that may have been charged to those foreign workers.

I want to bring members' minds back to 2017, when many of you may have read a shocking exposé in the Toronto Star that was based on the experiences of Toronto Star reporter Sara Mojtahedzadeh, who went undercover

as a temporary worker at Fiera Foods. Fiera Foods is an industrial bakery in the GTA. It's one of the largest industrial bakeries in the Toronto area, and at that particular workplace 70% of the workers who worked there are temporary. That really reflects some of the trends that we have seen over the last decade in the province of Ontario and, to some extent, across the country. But there has been a 20% increase in the number of temp agencies in the last decade because of the demand for temp workers from companies like Fiera Foods.

1620

Since 2008, so over the last decade and a half, we have seen temporary jobs growing at four times the rate of permanent jobs. When companies are creating new jobs, they are much more likely—four times as likely—to be creating temporary positions rather than permanent positions. In some sectors—food manufacturing like Fiera Foods—we have seen a 110% increase in temporary jobs in those businesses in the Toronto area in the last decade. In fact, I mentioned the 20% increase in the number of temp agencies that are feeding the industrial demand for temp workers, but as a result, there are more temp agencies in the GTA than in seven other Canadian provinces combined.

What's important to understand is that the majority of temp workers—we may have in our minds that we think of The Office, we think of the temp in The Office, Ryan, but, in fact, the majority of temp workers do not work in office or clerical roles. They work in construction. They work in manufacturing. They work in transportation. They work in warehousing and in other sectors. As a result of the kinds of workplaces that temp workers work in, they are twice as likely to get hurt on the job. This is based on statistics from WSIB.

When the reporter, Sara Mojtehdzadeh, went undercover at Fiera Foods, she identified some of the reasons for the high risk of injury that temp workers face. She went through a temp agency to get a position at Fiera Foods. She got five minutes of training in advance of taking her job on the line. She describes the training: She wasn't told where fire extinguishers are, where the exits are. She was working alongside another temp who said that she didn't buy safety shoes because it cost the equivalent of a day's wages. No hands-on instruction; she was shown a diagram of a machine and told not to put her hand in any moving parts.

During the time that Sara worked undercover at Fiera Foods, she was paid in cash. There was no record of employment, no pay stubs, no deductions. That reflects the shadow world that many of these temp agencies exist in, without permanent addresses, sometimes a virtual presence only. There really is a need to understand where these agencies are and to hold them accountable for the workers that they employ.

The other fact about Fiera Foods that everyone in this place will know is that three workers had died working at Fiera Foods prior to 2017, when Sara did her undercover investigation. Two more temp workers died in 2018 and 2019. I'm just going to read their names into the record

because it is important that we recognize and remember the vulnerability that these temp workers faced going into a company like Fiera Foods. Ivan Golyashov died in 1999, Aydin Kazimov died in 2011, Amina Diaby died in 2016, a worker whose name as been withheld by the family died in 2018, and then Enrico Miranda died in 2019, all while working on the job at Fiera Foods.

The bill that is before us today addresses some of the problems that I mentioned. The fact that there has been this proliferation of temp agencies—many of them are not actual places; they just pop up and exist in this kind of grey area. This bill proposes licensing for those temp agencies and also for, in some cases, the offshore recruiters who work with those agencies.

The problem is that enforcement is everything. One of our concerns about this bill is that there are no significant penalties anywhere in this legislation for temp agencies that don't register. As a result, without any kind of significant financial penalty, there is a real concern that temp agencies and recruiters will simply not bother to renew their registration.

Now, there are some penalties in this act. Firms that don't register face a compliance order, so an order to comply. If they ignore the order, they face a \$250 contravention fine. Speaker, that is hardly significant enough that it is going to bring those shadowy temp agencies out of the dark and get them to register with this new licensing regime, and there are no penalties at all in this bill for employers who decide to continue to use a temporary help agency that hasn't bothered to register. Employers have no accountability to use a registered temp agency.

The other problem with this bill: I talked about the fact that 70% of the workers at Fiera Foods are temporary, but this bill does nothing to remove the incentives for employers like Fiera Foods to create a business model that relies on hiring temp workers. Those incentives are, as I mentioned at the outset, that they don't have to pay the temp workers the same as they have to pay their full-time employees. The other big incentive for employers to use temp agencies is that if there is a workplace injury—if someone is injured or dies on the job, as those temp workers did at Fiera Foods—there is no record on that particular employer's WSIB ratings. There is no impact whatsoever. The temp worker is an employee of the agency and not of the firm.

Shockingly, Sara, the Toronto Star reporter, has said, "Despite the orders issued by the Ministry of Labour against Fiera Foods, it remains a model employer in the eyes of the WSIB. At a facility where there are hundreds of people working around the clock, there was just one lost-time injury claim registered in 2016.

"The company has received multiple rebates from the WSIB for their low-injury claims rate over the past decade"—because, as I said, the claims are recorded against the temp agency employer, not the actual client that is using temp workers. At the WSIB, the temp agency is considered the worker's employer. If the temp worker is hurt on the job, the agency takes the financial hit, not the place where they were actually injured. So you can

imagine that for companies like Fiera Foods, for certain food manufacturing and other workplaces that may have a higher rate of injury, there is an incentive for employers to use temp workers instead of hiring full-time employees.

1630

Another concern with this bill, Speaker, is that it allows the director to require a security from a temp agency when they are registering, but this is phrased as a “may” not a “shall.” That security would have been quite helpful, depending on the amount of that security, you can imagine, to try to track down temp agencies that are trying to evade their obligations to their workers, but it’s all up to the director to decide whether that security is going to be required. Quite frankly, we have little confidence that that requirement will be put into place.

Another concern is that the legislation talks about the vetting process that the director will go through when considering registrations, and will take into account previous violations of the Employment Standards Act. But Speaker, we know that any issues that are taken about contraventions of the Employment Standards Act require the employee to lodge a complaint. It’s a complaints-driven process. Temp workers are some of the most vulnerable and most precarious workers in our province and therefore are not the ones who are likely to be following up with the Ministry of Labour to file a complaint.

Speaker, one of the things that we would have like to have seen in this legislation, if this government was really serious about working for workers, would be a commitment to enact a new section of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act that was actually put in place by the previous government in 2018 and has been sitting on the books unproclaimed. It’s just sitting there. That would have been a significant step forward for temp workers and a significant protection for temporary workers in their workplaces. It would have made employers responsible for the costs of an injury that is suffered by a temp worker on the job, and therefore help to remove some of that financial incentive to employers from using temp workers. Sadly, despite the ongoing efforts of advocates like the Workers’ Action Centre, who have been pushing over and over again for that WSIA section 83(4) to be enacted, this government has refused to go in that direction.

There are a number of other very significant recommendations that the government could have implemented if they were serious about helping and protecting temp workers. Many of them were set out in a submission from the Ontario Federation of Labour when the government held its consultation on temporary help agencies. They talked about an end to perma-temping, that there should be a time limit for an employer to continue to hire a temp worker before that worker becomes a permanent employee. We’ve seen too many cases of perma-temping, temp workers who are paid a lower wage, have no job security whatsoever, and have been working for years at the same company without any of the benefits and protections of being a full-time employee.

They also talked about putting a cap on the number of temporary workers within a workforce. They’ve made a

number of very important recommendations that would have protected temp workers that we do not see reflected in the bill that is before us today.

I want to now turn to schedule 2, the right-to-disconnect bill, the new initiative that this government is bringing forward. I just want everybody to understand that these provisions are limited to workplaces of 25 or more employees. We know that there are more than a million workers in this province who work in workplaces with less than 20 employees, so I would estimate, roughly, we’re looking at a million and a half workers at least who are working in workplaces with less than 25 employees. Those workers are excluded from the new provisions on right to disconnect.

One of the concerns that we have about this legislation is that it doesn’t say anything about a worker’s right to refuse work outside standard work hours and it says nothing about compensation for work that is performed outside of standard work hours. Those would have been very helpful to include in this bill.

Instead, what this bill does is require workplaces with more than 25 employees, as I have mentioned, to have a policy. Curiously, the bill doesn’t include any guidance about what is to be in that policy, and we have heard from some of the other countries that have implemented right-to-disconnect provisions that there are challenges around operationalization and enforcement. My advice to the government would be to do the work that’s necessary to understand how to overcome some of those challenges that have been encountered in other jurisdictions and then spell that out in terms of what the right-to-disconnect policy should include.

The other concern, always, about provisions that require policies to be in place is that often those policies aren’t enforced. New rules about right to disconnect that don’t include enforcement are really not going to do any workers much good.

I just wanted to highlight a comment that was made in the Canadian Labour Congress’s submission on right to disconnect when the federal government was conducting its review about whether this should be changed at the federal level. They noted that the problem of the extended work day—which, in right to disconnect, we’re thinking in terms of technology, having to always be on call to respond to emails or text messages or what have you—is really a gendered problem, when you think of people who have been working at home throughout this pandemic and have been stressed by having to respond to messages from their employers because of the issues around technology and not having a right to disconnect in place. When you think about who is sitting at home, you think about the women who have been working at home, whose jobs were the first to be closed down at the beginning of the pandemic and who really had to shoulder the burden of caregiving for children when child care was closed, when schools were closed. These are the people in Ontario who have been particularly stressed by the challenges of the pandemic and who have yet to re-enter the labour force in the way that we need them to. We need women to re-enter

the labour force if we are to make it through this pandemic and move our recovery forward in Ontario.

Unfortunately, what we have seen because of this government's lack of attention to the she-cession and the need for specific measures to support a she-covery, Ontario's labour market numbers, the rates of women's employment in the workforce in this province has moved; we're back at about 1999. As the pandemic hit and so many women lost their job, we were down to 1994 levels. Now, as of about a month and a half ago, we're up to 1999 levels. Meanwhile, Quebec and British Columbia are back to 2016 levels.

1640

And what is one of the things that has been proven, hands down, to be the most effective way to get women back in the labour market?

Miss Monique Taylor: Child care.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is child care—thank you to the member for Hamilton Mountain; that's right. And yet, we see this government continue to refuse to move forward, to sign the deal with the federal government to get a national child care plan going in Ontario. There are seven provinces and one territory that have already signed. There are a couple of hold-out provinces, Ontario being one of them.

It's not just parents who are advocating for \$10-a-day child care. It is economists; it is chambers of commerce; it is banks; it is organizations that represent working people, because everybody understands this importance of moving forward with national child care. We've seen a number of cities actually support motions at their council meetings—Ottawa, Toronto, St. Catharines—urging this government to go ahead with a national child care program, and that would be a huge deal for women in terms of their ability to disconnect if they were able to have affordable, reliable, quality, non-profit child care that they could count on and would help them get back into the workforce.

I don't want to pretend, Speaker, that child care is only an issue for women because we know that it is important for families that are headed by men as well and for everybody in this province, but when we're looking at women's labour market participation, the lack of access to affordable child care is a huge barrier.

I want to briefly touch on the other part of schedule 2 that deals with the prohibition on non-compete agreements. We know that these agreements have already been judged by the courts in years of court decisions as being largely unenforceable. So it's helpful that there is a prohibition now written into legislation, but the courts had already litigated on the legality of these agreements. But, again, one of the things that we see in this bill is that there are no penalties for employers who continue to put these into their employment contracts; there are no provisions to ensure that workers are aware that they will have this new right not to sign a non-compete agreement.

The other thing that I would like to suggest to the government is that it would have been helpful, in addition to looking at non-competes, to also look at non-disclosure agreements. We have seen a growing movement in the US

that started with Me Too and Harvey Weinstein about the use of non-disclosure agreements in workplaces to silence women who have experienced sexual violence and harassment in the workplace. In response, many legislatures in the United States and in the UK and elsewhere are looking at prohibiting non-disclosure agreements in sexual misconduct cases, as well as the prohibition on non-competes. I offer that as some helpful feedback to the government. That would have been a positive thing to include in this bill, because of the high rates of sexual violence and harassment that many workers in many different sectors in our economy continue to experience.

I'm now going to turn to schedule 3, Speaker, which deals with the elimination of the Canadian work experience requirements for foreign-trained professionals in certain regulated professions. The first thing I want to say about this schedule is that in 2013 there was a ruling by the Ontario Human Rights Commission that employers should not require applicants to have prior work experience in Canada. That ruling came down in 2013. Here we are, in 2021, and legislation is being brought in to remove those Canadian work experience requirements. That's a positive thing, that the government has responded to that 2013 human rights commission ruling. It's unfortunate that it has taken this long.

I want to echo some of the concerns that were raised by my colleague in responding to the government's speech, when they talked about this new schedule regarding the exclusion of the regulated health professions from this legislation. This new provision around eliminating the Canadian work experience requirements applies only to certain skilled professions, like electricians, as well as some other non-health regulated professions, like accountants, architects, engineers, teachers and lawyers.

Speaker, one of the concerns we have about this schedule, in addition to the exclusion of regulated health professionals, is the fact that there is absolutely no timeline set out in this bill to when these new provisions will be implemented. That is a concern because, as I said, we have been waiting since at least 2013, and much longer than that, for this discriminatory Canadian work experience requirement to be removed.

I just want to make a pitch, one more time, to the government to move as quickly as possible on the inclusion of regulated health care professionals in this bill. We know that there are 13,000 internationally trained physicians, 6,000 internationally trained nurses, medical lab technicians, respiratory therapists, and other health professionals who are currently registered with HealthForceOntario—so there may be more who are not registered with HealthForceOntario—but who are unable to practise in the professions in which they were trained.

Last week, Speaker, the official opposition brought forward a motion about addressing the nursing shortage, about the need for the government to move urgently with a coordinated recruitment and retention strategy for nurses in this province. Internationally trained nurses would be one significant source of dealing with those workforce pressures we are seeing right now in health care in this province.

I want to quote Magdalene Cooman, who works at World Skills Employment Centre in Ottawa. She says, “By not allowing” internationally educated health professionals “to be part of this group for licensure, I think that is a disaster for the economy”—and not just for the economy, but for the health and well-being of the people in this province, because of the workplace shortages that we are experiencing.

1650

I’m sure we’ve all had the experience of being in a taxi and talking to the taxi driver and learning that he was a cardiac surgeon in Iran or wherever his home country was. There are far too many highly, highly educated medical professionals who could be bringing such value to our health care system, who are left working as taxi drivers or in retail.

In one case, I had a physician—I think he was a cardiac surgeon—in my riding who retrained to be a PSW. It is such a crying shame that his medical knowledge and expertise wasn’t able to be utilized and he had to retrain as a PSW.

I want to talk about a submission that was made by OCASI, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. In their submission, they talk about many of the challenges that face internationally educated or foreign-trained professionals who are attempting to access the labour market in the professions in which they were educated, and they have a number of very helpful suggestions that I hope the minister has looked at and will act on.

I want to highlight, in particular, their first recommendation, which is to commit to inclusive labour market integration. At the same time that we see all of these foreign-trained professionals in health care and elsewhere who are looking to contribute to the Ontario economy, we know that we have a deep-seated and systemic problem with racism and discrimination. That also has to be addressed if we are to effectively integrate these internationally educated professionals into our economy.

OCASI makes the recommendation to adequately support the Anti-Racism Directorate to enable the full implementation of the Anti-Racism Act.

Going back to an earlier comment that I made, they also recommend that the province invest in a high-quality, affordable and accessible licensed child care system.

So there are many wraparound factors that also have to be addressed if we are to be successful in leveraging the talents and skills that these foreign-trained professionals bring to our province and enabling them to practise in the professions in which they were trained.

I also want to take this opportunity to talk a little about what’s going on in my community of London. There was a recent report that hate crimes have increased 46% in just the last year in London. That report was released by London police just one week after the Afzaal-Salman family was murdered in a hate-motivated Islamophobic attack on some incredible members of our community who were involved, one of whom was a physiotherapist, one of whom was an engineer. They were highly respected and well loved by our community—a Pakistani family. In the wake of that murder, Hikma, which is an advocacy group

of Muslim organizations in the London area, did a very comprehensive list of recommendations that they believe all levels of government have to work toward if we are to effectively combat Islamophobia in my city, in all cities, in our province and in our country.

We saw the federal government’s summit on Islamophobia that was convened in July, but we haven’t heard anything further about next steps. We need to see some concrete actions that are going to be taken by this government to address the problems of Islamophobia.

When I think of the health care workforce in my community, there are so many outstanding Muslim physicians and health care professionals working in many different important roles, and there are many, many others who are excluded from practising their skills because of the barriers that they experience.

I’m now going to turn to schedule 4, which is the schedule that deals with temporary foreign agriculture workers. This schedule is pretty simple. It authorizes the minister to collect, use and disclose personal information related to temporary foreign agricultural workers. It also allows the minister to review matters related to agriculture, food and rural affairs. These temporary foreign agriculture workers are the workers we know as “migrant workers.” We saw the significant rates of COVID infections that migrant workers experienced, particularly in the third wave of the pandemic, and we saw three immigrant workers die in Ontario because of the conditions in which they lived and worked on farms in our province.

The schedule to allow the minister to collect and use personal information is useful, I guess, and it does to some extent reflect some of the recommendations that were made by the deputy chief coroner in April 2021 when he reviewed those three COVID-related deaths of temporary foreign agricultural workers, but it falls so far short of what this government could have done to really deal with the conditions that migrant workers experienced both during the pandemic and on an ongoing basis. For example, they have recommended that there be a comprehensive strategy created to improve conditions for temporary foreign agricultural workers. They have recommended educational workshops on Ontario’s labour laws, their rights and responsibilities, how to access provincial health care services, what resources are available in their communities. They recommended an anonymous phone line for migrant workers to contact the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

There are many, many recommendations that were included in the deputy chief coroner’s report, and it’s disappointing to not see those recommendations incorporated into this bill. Once again, it really demonstrates that this government had an opportunity to put protections in place, to put meaningful protections in place for migrant workers in Ontario, but chose not to. They chose to do the absolute minimum, which is to authorize the minister to be able to collect and use information.

1700

I’m going to quickly deal with schedule 5, the access to washrooms provisions that have been added to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I want everybody to

understand that the focus of these new provisions is on delivery workers who are delivering or picking up things, not people. So if you are a taxi driver driving around the city picking up and dropping off people, if you are an Uber driver, these provisions do not apply to you.

In particular, these provisions do not apply to transit workers in this province. We have heard some very strong reaction from the amalgamated transit workers union that represents the TTC workers. They say, "There is no reason why transit workers should have been left out of this legislation. Access to bathrooms is a health and safety problem for all those in the transport sector..." Whether you are delivering people or whether you are delivering goods, you have the same needs for access to bathrooms. So that is one significant concern that we have with this schedule.

Once again, there are no enforcement powers included in this new provision. There is no date for when it is going to be implemented. It says, merely, that the ministry will develop guidelines about access to washrooms, and I'm not sure if people take a lot of comfort in thinking that those guidelines will actually be effective in guaranteeing their right to access washroom facilities.

The other concern, of course, is that there are lots of exemptions, so access is not required if it would not be reasonable or practical because of health and safety, because of the nature of the business or if the washroom can only be accessed through a dwelling. So there are lots of ways that businesses can say they can't provide the access that is set out in this bill because of some of those exemptions. It is not a high bar for businesses to decide not to participate.

I just wanted to quickly mention gig workers. Food courier workers, like those who work for SkipTheDishes and Uber Eats, will be covered by these new provisions, and that is helpful. When I met with gig workers, they did tell me that this was one of the concerns that they had, that when they were picking up meal delivery, they weren't allowed—many restaurants were not allowing them to use the facilities. So this will address one of the concerns that they had identified, but this was nowhere near the top of the list of issues that they spoke to me about.

What was near the top, at the top, was to amend the Employment Standards Act so that they could be recognized as the employees that they are and eligible for minimum wage, for overtime, for vacation pay, for severance pay, for all of the rights and protections that employees in this province have access to and deserve. For years, gig workers like those who work for Uber and other platform technology companies have been excluded from the Employment Standards Act because they are misclassified as independent contractors when they are actually employees. If this government wanted to protect workers, they could have made that change to the Employment Standards Act in this bill. That would have gone a long way to protecting not only those gig workers but also the many, many workers in this province who are denied their rights under the Employment Standards Act because they're told that they are independent contractors and not

employees. That includes cleaners, truck drivers and many, many other categories of workers.

Speaker, in the few minutes that I have left, I want to turn to schedule 6, which really is the schedule that has raised the most serious concerns on our side of the House and from the stakeholders that we have spoken to about this bill. What schedule 6 does, basically, is it says that when the fund under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act reaches a certain point, when the sufficiency of the fund is between 115% and 125%, the board has the option of redistributing amounts from the fund to employers, and when the sufficiency of the fund is greater than 125%, the board must redistribute funds back to employers.

Let's just review what has been happening with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board over the last decade or so. In 2010 to 2016, WSIB benefits for injured workers were cut by more than half as the board moved to reduce the unfunded liability on the backs of injured workers. That reduction of unfunded liability was achieved entirely by reducing the benefits that injured workers, who were injured on the job, were receiving.

In the fall of 2018, again, one of the first acts of this government was to reduce employer premiums by 30%. The following year: another 17% reduction in employer premiums. In March 2020, there was a premium deferral for six months. So at the beginning of COVID, at the beginning of this dire public health crisis, this government took care of employers who were clamouring for a deferral of their WSIB premiums but offered nothing to injured workers, offered nothing to people who are living on disability in this province. In April this year, we saw legislation come through this House to cap premiums in 2021 and to lower ceiling amounts.

We have seen this government refuse, over and over again, to provide presumptive coverage for COVID having been contracted in the workplace, which is legislation that was brought in in BC, but this government has said no. In fact, we have seen the WSIB repeatedly deny workers their claims for WSIB and refusing to accept it as an injury that was experienced in the workplace. And these are claims from hospital workers, from nurses, from residential care workers and from others in the health care sector.

We also know that in Ontario, we have the lowest rate of mandatory coverage for workers across the province. About one quarter of all workers in Ontario are not covered by WSIB. That's 1.7 million workers who don't get any support from WSIB. On that point, WSIB's reviews have repeatedly recommended that coverage be expanded. Instead of listening to injured workers who are sharing their stories with the government, instead of looking at how many injured workers end up on ODSP because they can't support themselves on WSIB or because they've been denied WSIB, instead of looking at the number of injured workers who are living in poverty in this province and committing to do something about it, this government has decided to bring in schedule 6, which once again reduces premiums for employers.

1710

Speaker, as we look to the end of the pandemic, and there is still much uncertainty about the impact of long COVID on people who may have contracted COVID in the workplace, there is a need to ensure that there is support there for those workers. We should not be reducing the amount of funding that's available to injured workers. We should be expanding it. We should be looking at universal coverage. We should be making sure that COVID long-haulers are able to continue to be supported by the WSIB that they deserve.

Speaker, I can't believe that I'm out of time already; I had so much more to say. As I started out, this may be the Conservative government's version of working for workers, but over here on this side of the House, it's not working very well at all. It is leaving a lot of workers—particularly injured workers, migrant workers and temp workers—without the supports that really would have made a difference in those workers' lives.

With that, Speaker, I look forward to questions and answers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): It truly is time for questions and responses. I look to the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you very much to the member from London West. I listened quite intently to her remarks and found them very interesting as well.

I wanted to ask her about foreign credentials, and if she and her party actually support—I know the Liberals did nothing on foreign credentials. I've heard about foreign credentials being improved long before I ever got elected. I remember riding in cabs, in municipal politics and down home as well, in Sarnia–Lambton, so would the member speak to—at least there is some support for foreign workers. We're going to look at credentials. I think there is other work going on at the same time for some of the professions you mentioned that aren't in the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I return to the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the question from the member for Sarnia–Lambton. Certainly, as I pointed out in my remarks, it was in 2013 that the Ontario Human Rights Commission ruled that employers should not be asking for Canadian experience. So almost a decade later, it is heartening that a government is moving in that direction. But the concern is there are so many other barriers that internationally trained professionals face in order to get into their profession in Ontario. I would really encourage the government to look at those comprehensive barriers and, in particular, to ensure that internationally educated health professionals are covered by this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: On Friday, I had the opportunity, like many others, to attend a workers' action against section 6 of the bill, which will see money going back to employers rather than supporting injured workers. It is clear: Close to half of injured workers live in poverty. An

injury at work should not be a sentence to poverty. It shouldn't work that way.

The member gave some really strong examples with Fiera Foods, which, on the record from the WSIB, looks like a perfect employer, when, in reality, they hire temporary workers and five of them died at work. Do you figure that section 6 is fair to the workers at Fiera Foods?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague for asking that question. Neither schedule 6 nor schedule 1 do anything to deal with the reality of temp workers, like those at Fiera Foods, who are working in high-risk workplaces and who get no support whatsoever from the WSIB or from their employer.

Unless we hold employers responsible for injuries that happen in their workplace—which this government could do at the stroke of a pen. The amendments to the WSIA were already brought in in 2018. They're just waiting to be prepared. Unless we do that, unless we hold employers responsible, they are going to continue to bring in temp workers who are going to continue to face injury or potentially death at their workplace.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: I would like to thank the member from London West for the debate and the points you raised.

I would like to say something. When we are discussing about a subject or an element or a bill that will move something that has been waited for for maybe over 25 years—that's how I came 26 years ago. We know the issue. We know that Canadian experience is an obstacle to get any immigrant a good job—or to start a job, even—in the right career of his profession in Canada. That has been a known issue. The first job is the hardest job. They have been telling that.

My question is, why do we keep insisting on trying to—when we talk about trades and engineering, you raise the issue about medical staff. If we spoke about the credentials, you talk about the WSIB. Why don't we agree that this is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I return to the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Look, I acknowledged that I support the human rights ruling that was made in 2013, and the removal of the Canadian experience requirement is a positive step forward for immigrants, for foreign-trained professionals in the province. There is no dispute about that.

However, there is much more that needs to be done to fully integrate foreign-trained professionals into our labour market. Many of those things have to do with funding an Anti-Racism Directorate to deal with increased hate crimes, Islamophobia and violence against immigrants and newcomers in our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Thank you. I recognize the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from London West, who was so articulate in spelling out the

good things in this bill as well as the troubled pieces and the things that New Democrats find missing in the bill.

I am also particularly interested in schedule 6. I was also visited by injured workers on Friday. My door is always open to those workers, who, quite frankly, are always left without the resources and the tools and the money to be able to exist. When you are an injured worker in this province, you are automatically put into poverty, and that is the wrong thing.

1720

So I'm curious—and I know that the member can't speak for the government—about her opinion on why she feels the government would give money back to the businesses instead of giving that money back to the injured workers who were promised it many years ago.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for that question. Certainly, this is part of a pattern that we have seen, both from this government and from the Liberals before them: They're more interested in rewarding employers with premium reductions versus providing the supports that injured workers need. For too long, successive governments have refused to tackle the very serious issues at WSIB that have resulted in so many injured workers being denied the support that they legitimately deserve from a workplace injury and living in poverty or on ODSP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for London West, I appreciate your raising the issue of temporary foreign workers, and I would like to hear some more suggestions of what more could be done. First of all, it's a federal program. The Ontario government has done tremendous work on this, under what I consider a very comprehensive and well-thought-out strategy. Part of that funding came to the tune of \$36 million for PPE and testing, enhanced cleaning and disinfection and things like that. It provided vaccine services at airports and a tremendous amount of information in languages other than English as well.

Do you have a feeling that more needs to be done? We're continuing with the strategy and obviously planning for next year, for the coming year.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I absolutely do have some thoughts about that. As I mentioned, with temporary workers, who work for temp agencies—migrant workers also are often in a similar situation. They don't understand what rights they have under the Employment Standards Act. So proactive outreach to migrant workers to ensure that they understand their rights and how to report violations without reprisal would go some way to helping support migrant workers. There is clearly a need for more audits and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm pleased to rise in support of the Working for Workers Act that was introduced by our Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. This bill represents many issues within my community and things that people have been advocating for for many

years. They're really thrilled that this government is taking action and is constantly proving and showing—through action, not just words—that we are on the side of workers.

We're also on the side of newcomers as well. And frankly, being an immigrant to Canada, I know very well the challenges my grandparents went through. I was four, so no one was going to hire me at four—although they hired me at 12 for a paper route, so that was great. But my grandfather came to this country as an engineer and certainly couldn't practise as an engineer right away. He struggled to learn English, and he always used to say to me, "I don't understand. I speak the language of numbers. It's an international language, the language of numbers."

In this legislation, I was happy to see that we do have some changes coming for language requirements, because for those individuals who come to Canada when English is not their first language and they do everything that they can to try to learn the language—and I think of many in my community who go to the YMCA and they do that newcomers' program where they try to learn English. They can still do really well at their job, but their proficiency may be different from their kids, who are going to school, who are engaged in it every day and, of course, get to learn from the basics all the way on. And maybe they speak the international language of numbers as well.

I'm very grateful. I want to take this time, of course, to thank my grandparents for taking on that challenge of bringing me to Canada with them. I am always grateful for them today and thinking of my grandmother today, as it marks four years since she has passed. I will always remember all her lessons in the back of my head.

She always used to say, "Things come and go, but knowledge is forever." Many of the newcomers who come to our country come with all of that knowledge base. It's not so much for them possessions; they may have only come with a few nickels or dimes in their pockets, but they manage to stretch it to be so much more. We see that time and time again, through many examples and colleagues of mine who have spoken in this House.

But bringing it back to my community, Speaker, I always enjoy going to different events where I get to celebrate different cultures but also talk to different individuals who care about these topics.

I remember when I first decided to put my name forward to represent the area of Barrie–Innisfil, I sat down with Beethoven Crasco, who came to Barrie via the Philippines. He was a humanitarian compassionate case. His dad was actually killed by that government. He was in journalism, and Beethoven followed his father's footsteps to be in journalism. He often said, "We have to tackle, in Canada, this issue of foreign credentials and being able to allow immigrants to have a running start in Canada to be able to work in jobs that are more meaningful and that reflect their knowledge base."

Far too often, that wasn't happening. We talk about many communities in Ontario, but Barrie–Innisfil was no stranger to that as well. We had many people driving for Barrie Taxi services or now still people driving for Uber as the most common example. But a lot of it is these

minimum wage jobs that new Canadians end up working in. They're definitely way overqualified for those minimum wage jobs.

When we talk in this government that we are creating an economy on high-wage jobs and we're not creating an economy on minimum wage jobs, the people who really are thrilled with this are examples of people like my family, which is new Canadians, because they come to Canada not to work in minimum wage jobs for the rest of their life, but they want a government who is constantly creating jobs that have quality of life, benefits and, of course, that are meaningful to their education—so that they can come back at the end of the day and know they made a difference in someone's life that day.

So I talked to Beethoven about that. He's really thrilled that that's coming.

But also, I often go to events put on by the South Asian Association of Simcoe County. This association is just tremendous. They've really grown in the last year. Their last event was an incredible event they held at Mapleview Community Church, so thank you Pastor Jay Davis for allowing that to happen. It was the first drive-through Bollywood screening of a film in our area—so really, really exciting to have people come in through that event.

The director of the South Asian Association of Simcoe County, also known as SAASC—when I told him about this bill that we're going to be debating today, their director, Arjun Batra, who is always striving to improve education and he's always an outside-of-the-box thinker, supported this bill and what it does. When I asked him for his response to this bill, he said, "SAASC supports Bill 27, which will boost the confidence of new immigrants and help them settle faster in their new home, Canada. Hopefully, skilled internationally trained immigrants find work in their field of expertise through the Ontario bridge training program, and services that connect internationally trained immigrants with in-demand jobs in their communities." And so, Arjun understands it very well, both from people he talks to but his own personal stories. Just the fact that anything the government can do to connect people to high-paying, quality jobs that really build on their experiences is really important.

It wasn't just Arjun who believed in it, but many others in the community who have come to Canada or who work with different immigrants. Of course, we have the Barrie Latin Cultural Association, and that is run by Nohemi Hernández-Buitrago. That group has also great networking events. What they've really strived to do with the Barrie Latin Cultural Association is not only do they put on a cultural event, they put on working events where you sit around a round table and you talk about who does what for a living. One lady always comes from Sun Life insurance, talks about the insurance industry and tries to attract other people to join that particular industry. Everyone kind of goes around the table, and they really network and they help lift each other up to these great, higher-paying jobs and meaningful work, and really help people network within the community. So they do excellent work.

Of course, I talk about this group quite a bit, but the Migrante sa Barrie organization is another Filipino group in my area. I actually hired someone from their group when I went to one of their events. His name is Rolando. Rolando, if you're watching from my office, hello. I know your parents are very proud of where you are. But talk about hard work and someone who really wants to get ahead.

They used to put on all these events where it's their extracurriculars—you know, they have a job, but they also want to do these community events. For them it's very much about, yes, foreign credential recognition and helping newcomers get ahead. That organization really strives to really support one another: again, lifting each other up, exposing each other to different sectors and different work opportunities that are available, but also protecting workers' rights. This group is really focused on that too, just not being taken advantage of as immigrants.

We heard about the temp worker issue as a government, and we wanted to take on the challenge and do something about it, so we did. We put on consultations. We heard a lot of feedback from different stakeholders, and it was very much like the Migrante sa Barrie organization I've been talking about: How do you make sure you protect migrant workers so they're not taken advantage of?

I know Wilma Delo, who is a member of that group, came to talk to me about it as well. Her profession is in health care—she's a PSW—and she had a lot of suggestions about how we change that realm of work. Certainly that's a whole separate bill from this bill, but all the work that we're doing to recognize our PSWs and what we were doing well before we got hit with a global pandemic—thankfully, we did some of that work, because it contributed to what could have been worse outcomes if we didn't have that done before, which is investing in more training of PSWs, more nurses, really taking the care economy to heart for everyone who works in that care economy. Of course, that's something Wilma talked about when it comes to foreign credentials and, of course, protecting workers.

Elmer Flores, who's also a pastor, and his wife, Shirley Norella, run a Filipino congregation out of Heritage church, but they also are very involved with the Migrante sa Barrie organization. It's the same thing: They always try to connect individuals who go to their services and update them on what's happening, but obviously connect them to job opportunities as well.

They only want the best for their kids. This particular family, Elmer and his wife—their daughters have gorgeous voices. They're beautiful singers, and they're doing so much for the community. But again, with them being very good caretakers of their community in what they do every day, they don't want others to be taken advantage of. And so I think that's very important to recognize in this bill, that we're very much protecting that workforce.

You may ask why. Well, we heard previously in this debate that at the present moment, about 30% of our workforce in Ontario is made up of the immigrant

population, but we know that many years from now, we are going to have to increase that number because we just don't have our own population to keep up with the force of demand. There's no better example of that than the construction industry.

We know, for example, that when BuildForce did their survey back when they were looking at their growth targets for 2021, they said that their 10-year forecast outlook for Ontario alone, just in that construction sector—they know that 92,500 people are retiring. They know there are only 84,800 new entrants coming in, and the average unemployment rate is 6.4%. Those are the things they knew, and they knew that infrastructure investments are going to be remaining a focal point. This is back when they did their outlook for 2021-30, so they knew that significant investments in transportation, for example, the health sector and the refurbishment, of course, of the nuclear reactors are going to need an increase of people to work in those fields by 2026.

We talk about my community of Barrie; how does that relate to nuclear reactors? Well, we have Brotech in Barrie, and they build the small precision parts that are going to be part of that refurbishment project. When I speak to Jerome Horowitz, who is the president of Brotech in Barrie, he is very excited to be part of this project, but he also knows the fact that we need to get more people in the skilled trades and newcomers are part of it. When we talked about investing more in skilled trades in our last budget, he was really happy to see those types of investments. He knows, and when I spoke to him, he told me the following: that we really “need to simplify the program”—and the program he was referring to was our skilled trades program—and that “has been known for a little while.” He appreciates the government actually paying attention to the skilled trade sector over the past few years. “Brotech, and ... other manufacturers supporting high-tech industries, have difficulty recruiting skilled machinists. We therefore rely heavily on hiring and training apprentices. If the program would be easier to navigate, higher profile and more attractive to young people, we might have more candidates to join our growing company.

“We see a coming boom in Ontario manufacturing as global supply chains are weakened by the pandemic. Now is exactly the time to support Ontario manufacturing and help the economy thrive again.”

So Jerome Horowitz of Brotech Precision understands that very much. He knows that we've got to invest in our skilled trades, we have to utilize the whole skill-force, whether it's apprenticeships and getting young people or new Canadians involved. It's very important. That's something that our government, of course, understands. We stepped up quite quickly to understand that we need to recruit and change the way we manage workforces in this province so that we can have a sustainable industry for years to come.

But going back to newcomers: I know I talked about the Filipino migrant Barrie organization and Elmer Flores, who is the president of the group. When we talked about

what this bill is actually going to do for his community—I was speaking with him on that this bill was going to be coming up today—he said this:

“In Barrie alone, we've known Filipinos that were bank managers, customs officers, nurses, and even pediatricians with years of experience. However, when they got here, they needed to start from scratch due to the struggle to transfer their prior work experience and licences over to Canada. As well, unfortunately, some of them were also victims of foreign worker exploitation and human trafficking.

“We can proudly say that we Filipinos have a lot to offer to Ontario and this bill will be greatly appreciated as it will help us to not only build a better future for our families but also give us protection against deceitful employers and recruiters.”

Speaker, I think this bill speaks volumes for the fact that there should be no tolerance for human trafficking and we should respect all workers in this country, no matter if they're foreign-trained or not. Those protections under our employment laws should apply to everyone. Certainly, we're strengthening it here so that these egregious acts of trafficking and mistreating our foreign workers do not happen again, because while we welcome them and we say we need them, we cannot have employers—the bad apples, if you will—who treat them with such disrespect.

So I want to assure Elmer that this bill is going after that. I thank you for your feedback on this particular bill.

The other individual I messaged when I knew this bill was going to be coming up was Rosa Diaz. She was born in Peru, and this lady is incredible. She won a Simcoe county newcomer's award a few years ago—and thank you for bringing me as your guest. I was mentioning that organization we have, the Latino networking group. I met her at one of those events and we became friends from there. She runs the Road Map to Canada. It's an immigration consultancy firm. She's very passionate about the field that she's in because she's also an immigrant. She likes helping others find their niche in the Barrie-Innisfil area and across Ontario. She had this to say about this bill:

“As an immigration consultant located in Barrie, Ontario, I meet many employers struggling to fill certain positions in order to grow their companies. At the same time, I speak with professionals outside of Canada with strong backgrounds and experience, but one of the issues is that they do not have the registration or licensing to be able to perform their job in Canada. If we had less barriers for these professionals, it would be a win-win situation for companies” that “would be able to source the skilled workers not available in our marketplace and would translate to more economic growth. I believe regulations and standards are important, however for certain positions” they “should be able to recognize foreign skills and give priority in processing”—from Rosa Diaz.

I thank her for that, because she really brings it into perspective. We know that there are people in Ontario who need workers, and there are lots of these jobs. I talk to many manufacturers, especially in Barrie, whether it's Matsu or Canplas—I've talked about Brotech, but also

Innovative Automation—that are looking for employees, and they can't fill these gaps; and yet we have newcomers who would love to come here for those jobs, and there's a mismatch there. She's really targeted the fact that there's going to be more of that connection, because we'll be able to recognize credential recognition.

1740

I spoke a little earlier about the construction sector, which is going to need many, many jobs filled, especially with the ambitious goals our government has building new hospitals, building new schools, building GO train stations and, in Innisfil, building the Orbit, which is a transit-oriented community built on the tech sector as well. We're going to need people to fill all these roles. She mentioned it quite well, that connecting the two is so important.

You have so many people—people from Poland or other parts of Eastern Europe, like Russia or Estonia—who come here and have these great skills, where they can work with their hands. They can do flooring, they can do stucco, they can do roofing. Yet when they come here and we say, “Okay. Well, do you have a red seal certification?” how do they translate their equivalent of red seals in their country to be able to work here?

Certainly, these are individuals who want to work day in and day out: 9 to 5 is not necessarily for them, but that's their choice, even though, in this same bill, we recommend that people take a bit of that break to separate work and life, and they have a bit of work-life balance. But for some workers, they choose that that is not what they want. They want to maximize their earning potential in their young years to be able to help their family and, of course, save for retirement. For them, it's nice to know that their credentials will be recognized and they can keep working, buy a house and raise their family.

In Barrie, it's interesting, because we have a lot of great international students who come to Georgian College. It's no wonder why: We have a lot of different programs to offer, but a lot of them, again, are in the skilled trades. What's really fabulous about Georgian College—and a big shout-out to MaryLynn West-Moynes, president and CEO of Georgian College—is that, thanks to a lot of the work that she has been doing, they now have 89.7% of their graduates find jobs within six months of graduation, which is incredible. They work throughout the community in Barrie. I talked about Great Bear Products. Great Bear Products already had three different interns from Georgian College all at once, learning a lot of those skills that they learned in class. They can apply them practically to the workforce.

Speaker, you see that this bill, even though it's a fully made-in-Ontario solution, helps the residents of Barrie–Innisfil, helps make us a better economy, helps bridge some of those skills gaps that are very much needed and really addresses many of the concerns that many of the groups that I spoke about today have raised for many years, which haven't been addressed.

Finally, this government is doing something about it. We recognize that they work so hard. We want to make sure they're protected, their credentials are recognized and

we grow this economy for not only today, but future generations, so we can attract more Canadians and make this home something they can be proud of.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Thank you very much. It's now time for questions and responses.

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened intently to the member from Barrie and I did not hear the word “WSIB.” I did not hear the member speak about how great schedule 6 is going to be for Barrie.

We know that injured workers in this province are put into a life of poverty. We have seen government after government, year after year, including under the Liberals, lower the input of premiums from businesses. We know that between 2010 and 2016, I believe it was, that was cut in half by them. Injured workers were promised by the WSIB leadership that the unfunded liability, once it was resolved, would make injured workers whole.

The question is from a member from Hamilton injured workers: Where has the money come from? How did the government pay that off 10 years quicker than they were supposed to?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Well, I'll tell you what this government didn't do, which I know the opposition had a plan to: increase payroll taxes off the backs of our small businesses that are hurting so much. They're paying so many premiums to the WSIB. Instead, what we've done is treated small businesses with respect, knowing that they work day in and day out for every dollar and that the less time they spend on paperwork, the more they can spend towards their businesses. They pay hard-earned WSIB premiums.

We also know that now there are more WSIB premiums for those workers. Whether they be injured or whether they need to access those funds, they now can. Frankly, we should be proud that WSIB is in good hands. Fiscally, they're in a surplus situation to help more of these workers across this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and responses?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: To the member for Barrie–Innisfil: That was an excellent speech. It was really interesting. Thank you for sharing some of the experiences of the members of your community. Over the last 15 years, the Liberals did absolutely nothing, the Del Duca-Wynne group. They didn't support newcomers. We've known for a very long time that we need more workers in this community. We need more workers in this province. We welcome them.

To the member, my question is, how can these initiatives help, and why is it so important that we are introducing this legislation now? Maybe you can give us an example of how it could help someone in your riding.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I think this bill encompasses a lot of much-needed changes. I focused on, of course, new Canadians, who are going to be pivotal to rebuilding our economy post this pandemic, whether it's creating more housing to create affordable housing; whether it's creating more transit options so we can get more cars off the road; but it's also the digital sector. We know that, post-COVID,

a lot of the digital stuff is very key. Barrie is home to the DMZ of Innisfil and Innisfil Accelerates, and we've been able to help many people start up their business; people like John Ulman, who started Autopulse, which is a software that went from selling 40 cars a year to about 200 cars a year, entering the auto sector and disrupting it a little bit, but also giving people options. It's people like Marcia Woods, who started FreshSpoke, and that sort of digital economy. Of course, this bill is going to address getting more people recruited into the digital economy with the right protections that they need in recruitment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to ask the member questions about schedule 6 of the bill. In Nickel Belt, many people work in mining. It continues to be a very dangerous type of work. Every year, workers get injured at work through no fault of their own. But now, they go from having a good job, a home, a truck, a family, to making \$15,000 a year that they get from WSIB. Most of them lose their house, lose their truck, lose their family because of the stress of the lack of money coming in from WSIB. How can this government think about giving money back to the employers when we have close to half of the people on WSIB living in poverty?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: With all due respect, a lot of those employers are going to need those WSIB premiums to help those employees, and attract more employees as well. What we're doing on our side of the Legislature is helping those injured workers return to work and giving them the tools that they need, including increasing the WSIB premiums that employees can pull out of the bank, because we've got a surplus, because that's their hard-earned money. It's there for them, and this is all about rebuilding jobs and putting people back on track to that fulfilling career.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I look to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Mr. Aris Babikian: It is a pleasure to stand up here and participate in this debate. I appreciate the member from Barrie—Innisfil for her heart-wrenching story of her grandfather, retelling the story. I'm sure that her grandfather's story is the story of so many immigrants, newcomers, to Canada. I personally have been involved with so many diverse communities and newcomers to bring this issue of accreditation to a fruitful result, but we were not successful in the past. But I'm glad that this bill will address this issue. Can the member tell us how this proposed change will lift up workers and their families in Ontario?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to that member and for all his service as a citizenship judge in his past career, welcoming many new Canadians.

We know that, in Ontario, 70% of immigrants are not in the field which they actually have experience in, which is a shame. It's something the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour had mentioned in his speech as well. This is what part of this bill is about. It's unacceptable in this province that we have way too many

jobs without people filling them, and we need to do better as government. That's what people expect from their government. That's what they deserve from their government. That's what we put in this legislation to actually build on that momentum we have—putting more people to work so that we can come out as a better province, but also have so many more people in this province who can come home happy and healthy, knowing that they have a job in the field they've been trained in.

1750

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: We know how much workers have struggled throughout the pandemic. And we know that those who are on the front lines in our factories and in health care and in trucking bore, in many ways, the brunt of the impacts of COVID-19 because of the fact that they couldn't work from home. And because they went to work, many of us were able to work from home.

In this piece of legislation that is described as working for workers, there's no mention of support to increase the minimum wage, to ensure that workers have the ability to have a living wage, to live in a dignified manner.

Will the Conservative government commit to increasing the minimum wage so workers do not have to live without the dignity and respect that they deserve?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I know the member is a new member, just as I am. That's certainly not something we would put in legislation. That's something for a budget.

Regardless, I think it's important to know that this government is not creating an economy of minimum wage jobs, full stop. We want to build people up in this province and give them high-paying jobs that they deserve and have the skills for—and if they don't, we have many programs in place. We're investing in people's skills so they can skill up and be part of rebuilding this province better and greater than it was before this pandemic and better and greater than the Liberals left it in the last 15 years.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the member from Barrie—Innisfil.

I emigrated, in 1998, from Germany. I got my bachelor's degree in China, and I worked as an engineer in China. I got my master's degree in Germany. I worked as an engineer in Germany. When I came to Canada, before I became an MPP, I worked about 18 years in the design field. My products are selling in the market. My products are used for the [inaudible]. But I cannot be called an engineer in Ontario. So I'm so happy that our government brought up this bill.

My question to the member is, how important is it for the new immigrants who are welcomed into Ontario?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Like my grandfather, the member speaks a language of numbers—before coming here, of course. We need more people to go into STEM, and we have all these international immigrants who are coming from really strong STEM professions. Here, in this bill, we talk about minimizing some of the language requirements to account for that and giving them the tools they need.

This will also help increase the GDP of Ontario—by recognizing those credentials.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the Legislature on behalf of the good people of Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Today, I'll start to give some remarks on Bill 27, the Working for Workers Act. It should perhaps be renamed the “hopefully working for workers act.” But we will go from there.

There are six schedules. When I continue on, I will talk to some of the other ones, but being agriculture critic, I thought I would start on schedule 4, which amends the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act. What twiggged my attention to this is, this act is the Working for Workers Act, so you would expect that it's all about workers, but that's not clear in the subsection about the Ministry of Agriculture and it's not clear in the explanatory notes, which I will read because I think you usually have a direction in the explanatory notes where something is going.

In the explanatory notes: “Section 4 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act is amended to provide that the ministry may review matters related to agriculture, food and rural affairs and establish policies and provide recommendations, advice, coordination and assistance to the government in matters related to agriculture, food and rural affairs.”

I hope they were doing that already, honestly. So let's hope that it's in the second paragraph in the explanatory note where we understand what the bill is trying to do, because this subsection should stand by itself so you know what it's supposed to do.

“New section 4.1 of the act authorizes the minister to collect information, including personal information, for the purposes set out in the section. The section sets out limits with respect to the collection, use and disclosure of personal information. Regulation-making powers are provided for.”

That doesn't tell you a whole lot. It says that the minister now is given the right to access some or more personal information from the farm community, from agricultural enterprises or from farmers themselves, hopefully for good things, but it doesn't really specify for

what. I can see agriculture getting really nervous about private information being given and not really knowing what it's going for. It says that it's set out in the act itself, so let's go in the act and find what this private information is going to be used for.

“Collection, use”—so that's two, and there are four things that we can collect. We'll read the four.

“1. To exercise the powers and carry out the functions set out in section 4.” So, basically, the minister can look at things pertaining to agriculture. Okay, we've got that.

“2. To support Canadian, provincial or municipal responses to urgent public health or public safety concerns related to agriculture, food or rural affairs.” Okay, it makes sense.

“3. To plan for or respond to emergencies related to agriculture, food or rural affairs.” Again, it makes sense.

“4. To further such purposes related to agriculture, food or rural affairs as may be prescribed for the purpose of this subsection.”

But at the end of the day, it doesn't say for what. Some of the members said, “It's okay. It's for the temporary foreign workers and migrant workers.” Well, everywhere else in this bill it talks about workers, whether we agree about the parts, all of it, or not. Workers going to washrooms—it talks about workers. Workers not having to get emails after so many hours—it talks about workers. Here, in the agriculture part? It says nothing about workers. And do you know what? It should.

I'm not saying there aren't problems that—if this is about migratory farm workers on some farms, it should say it. But the way this is written, any minister—these ones, this one; not the previous one. He wouldn't do that; he's my uncle. But any minister or any ministry can collect an awful lot of personal information, and for many farms, that's also their home addresses, that's a lot of things. I'm shocked that this government is being that lackadaisical with—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): The clock being close to 6 o'clock, I regret to disrupt the speaker from Timiskaming–Cochrane, but he will have more time to debate this.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): It is now time to adjourn this House until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, Peter Sibenik,
Meghan Stenson, William Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (IND)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (Transit-Oriented Communities) / Ministre associé des Transports (Aménagement axé sur les transports en commun)
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteuse générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutilla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

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 (IND)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
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	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	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	

**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 / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**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, Faisal Hassan
Jim McDonell, Sam Oosterhoff
Laurie Scott, Vijay Thanigasalam
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**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, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**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
Donna Skelly, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell