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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

F-69

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Building Opportunities
in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Friday 21 May 2021

**Comité permanent
des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Loi de 2021 ouvrant
des perspectives
dans les métiers spécialisés

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42^e législature
Vendredi 21 mai 2021

Chair: Amarjot Sandhu
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Amarjot Sandhu
Greffière : Julia Douglas

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

Friday 21 May 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES**

Vendredi 21 mai 2021

The committee met at 0900 in room 151 and by video conference.

**BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE SKILLED TRADES ACT, 2021
LOI DE 2021 OUVRANT DES PERSPECTIVES
DANS LES MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 288, An Act to enact the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021 / Projet de loi 288, Loi édictant la Loi de 2021 ouvrant des perspectives dans les métiers spécialisés.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good morning, everyone. We're meeting today for public hearings on Bill 288, An Act to enact the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021.

We have no members present in the committee room and the following members participating remotely: MPP Cho, MPP Fife, MPP Hunter, MPP Kanapathi, MPP Mamakwa, MPP Roberts, MPP McKenna, MPP Gates.

As a reminder, I ask that everyone speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Are there any questions or business before we begin?

**MINISTRY OF LABOUR,
TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Seeing none, I will now call on the Honourable Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Minister, you will have 20 minutes for your presentation, followed by 40 minutes of questions from the members of the committee. The questions will be divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition, and two rounds of five minutes for the independent members.

Before we start, MPP Thanigasalam, can you please confirm your attendance?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: This is MPP Vijay Thanigasalam here in Scarborough, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Minister, you can start your presentation.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Good morning, everyone, from Mount Brydges in southwestern Ontario. It's great to see everyone this beautiful morning.

Before I forget, I want to wish all members and staff on the call a wonderful long weekend. Everyone deserves some downtime with their families.

I want to begin, first, by thanking my parliamentary assistant, Jane McKenna, who has worked really, really hard on this legislation. We're really excited about this, really proud about how much change this is going to bring and just how many opportunities are going to be created because of the lucrative careers awaiting people in the skilled trades.

I also want to thank my team; I haven't publicly given them a shout-out yet. I can tell you, we've worked a long, long time on this file. My view on this when we got started was to ensure that we got this right, so we were relentless in meeting with industry leaders, literally hundreds of workers, labour leaders, employers right across all different trades. So we're really excited about this. Our team did a great job. So to all of them, thank you very, very much.

Lastly, to our ministry officials at the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, who have been working on this not just over the last couple of years—but this has gone back many, many years. Some of the people at the ministry have been working on this, really, since the beginning, under previous governments. So thank you so much for that.

I have to say that it's a coincidence that we're meeting today ahead of a long weekend. I can tell you that my family and I are looking forward to doing some work around the yard. Many of you know that last year my then six-year-old daughter and I built a treehouse with our neighbour, who has been a journeyman, a member of the insulators' union, for about 40 years. So I was the apprentice on that job and I guess my daughter was, as well. We're going to be doing our next project this weekend: building a raised vegetable garden. We're looking forward to learning the tools, working with the tools and encouraging my daughter to consider a pathway into the trades when she gets to that age.

My mission, our government's mission, is to help more people find meaningful careers in the trades. Not every single person needs to go to university to become successful and make an honest living. Jobs in the trades are well-paying, you often get to travel, and you can be your own boss in many cases.

Tradespeople build our hospitals. They're building our broadband network, our bridges, our roads, our natural gas infrastructure, our chemical plants, our homes and, of course,

our factories. They manufacture our cars and keep them running. They cut down trees and they treat the ones that are sick. They are critical now, and they will be critical to Ontario's future.

Many of our skilled tradespeople will soon be retiring. Right now, nearly one in three journeypersons are over the age of 55, and the average age of an apprentice, unfortunately, is 30. Our economy cannot grow if we don't have the skilled workforce to support it.

Prior to COVID-19, more than 200,000 jobs went unfilled every single day. Many of these jobs were in the trades, costing our economy more than \$24 billion. In construction alone, Ontario is going to need 104,000 workers over the next decade. Prior to the pandemic, nearly half of all Canadian employers said they could not find workers with the skills needed for the jobs out there and that the skilled trade were the hardest positions to fill. We are on the verge of a looming crisis. Our economy cannot grow if we don't have the skilled workforce to support it.

Further to that, our government has embarked on an ambitious infrastructure plan, including a record investment of more than \$144 billion—plans like a GO Transit expansion to bring all-day, two-way service to every corner of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and beyond, or broadband and natural gas expansion projects like the ones taking place in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex that will bring affordable heating and Internet connectivity to rural and northern Ontario. And I'm proud to say, as a former Minister of Infrastructure, I worked with the Premier and the former Minister of Transportation in presenting the single-largest subway expansion in Canada's history, which will reach transit-starved communities in Toronto, Mississauga and Richmond Hill. Just last week, because of the leadership of our Premier, our government secured an agreement with the federal government to deliver on their fair share of funding. Without enough skilled workers, we can't complete these ambitious projects on time and on budget.

Just to point out about the looming crisis that we're going to face: The subway expansion alone needs 60,000 workers, so we have to move forward as quickly as possible. The same actually goes for factory jobs in Ontario, which are in demand even in the midst of this pandemic. As recently as the fourth quarter of 2020, one in 10 job vacancies in our province were in manufacturing. I'm proud that, thanks to the leadership of our Premier, Ford Motor Company of Canada, along with our government and the federal government, invested a total of \$1.8 billion to make Ford the first auto giant in Canada to build battery electric vehicles. Ford will retool its assembly complex in Oakville beginning in 2024, in addition to a new engine program at its Windsor plant. This means we are securing thousands of good-paying jobs in Oakville and across the province, like the auto parts sector and service providers.

Last October, Unifor and Fiat also reached a tentative \$1.5-billion deal to bring about 2,000 jobs to the Windsor plant along with electrical vehicle capability. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles has indicated their commitment to adding three products to its plants, including a recall of over 100

workers at an Etobicoke casting plant. The work is scheduled to start in 2023, and the expectation is that more than 2,000 jobs will be sustained in Windsor, including more than 1,500 new ones.

Just over a week ago, it was reported that General Motors will restart production in Oshawa. Truck production is expected to begin in the fourth quarter of this year, ahead of the initial January 2022 schedule. GM will hire nearly 1,700 people to staff the two production shifts, including 1,500 production line workers who will see an hourly wage of \$23 an hour, 110 electricians who will start at \$43 an hour and 60 millwrights starting at \$43 per hour. The jobs will also see pensions and benefits.

I want to pause here to truly and sincerely thank Unifor, and Jerry Dias for his leadership and helping repatriate automotive jobs back here to the province of Ontario. This is why I believe so strongly that government, industry and labour need to work together. When we all work together, we achieve better things for our workers and for their families, and Unifor has played such a leadership role in ensuring that new products are being manufactured here and that these jobs have pensions and benefits, and there's more of that coming here to Ontario. Thank you very much, Mr. Dias, and to Unifor.

But in saying that, all this means is that we need to attract more people to the trades. We have to modernize our system and engage businesses, and we need to act quickly and effectively to make this happen. For far too long, the skilled trades have been neglected. The previous Liberal government set up an apprenticeship system that was doomed to fail from day one. I want that neglect to change. I want all members in this Legislature to come together to begin addressing the neglect that has been in the system.

0910

After the Liberals introduced the Ontario College of Trades, or OCOT for short, the number of new people signing up as apprentices dropped by over 17,000, or 40%. Since OCOT was established, fewer than half of those who started an apprenticeship program completed it. Since 2014 and until we formed government, the number of certificates of apprenticeship and certificates of qualification also decreased every year. But the year after the 2018 election, new apprentice registrations increased by 5.5%. We have a long, long way to go.

Over and over again, I've heard from young people, "I know how to become a doctor or a lawyer or a banker, but I have no idea how to become an electrician, a welder or a millwright." Apprentices have told us time and time again that the system is confusing and difficult to navigate.

One reason for this is the overlap between OCOT and my ministry. My staff actually showed me an apprentice's journey, and I thought I was looking at the Tokyo subway map. For example, apprentices register with the ministry and OCOT; get a logbook from OCOT, but schedule classroom training with the ministry; then advise the ministry of their progression and completion; pay exam fees to OCOT, but book and write exams through the ministry; and then get exam results from OCOT. It is truly

no wonder why apprentices and tradespeople find this confusing. This needs to end, and I can guarantee you it will.

The growth of our economy demands a skilled trades and apprenticeship system that is nimble, agile and responsive to the needs of industries. To guide us through this very important work, our government established a new skilled trades strategy built upon three principles: breaking the stigma and attracting more youth to the trades, simplifying the system, and encouraging employer participation in apprenticeships. Together, this includes a historic investment of \$1.1 billion between 2020 and 2024. Although members of the opposition did not vote for those investments, we are now seeing hundreds of million dollars more into the skilled trades than the province has seen in decades.

Over the course of the second reading, several members of the opposition said there is a shortage of training opportunities. They claimed that we are not investing in our youth or ways to get more women or people from Indigenous or under-represented communities into the trades, but nothing could be further from the truth.

To break the stigma and bring more youth into the skilled trades, we are taking a number of important actions. For example, we are investing more than \$17 million in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, or OYAP, to help grade 10 summer students and those in grades 11 and 12 gain experience in the trades while earning credits toward their high school diploma. OYAP is delivered by all 72 school boards at over 800 secondary schools. Between 2018 and 2019, 18,017 students participated in OYAP. A notable example is a partnership between the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board and LIUNA Local 837 that has given students opportunities to get started in construction. We're also looking at ways to better serve Indigenous communities. We appointed three apprenticeship youth advisers who were tasked to consult and provide recommendations on how we can enhance exposure to the trades as early as grade 1, and ways that we can target those in grades 7 and 8 when students begin to think about the careers that they will eventually pursue.

We also know that those entering the trades often face financial barriers, like the cost of tools. Our new, non-repayable tools grant provides between \$400 and \$1,000 to apprentices to help with these costs. We also have two grant programs to cover basic living costs for apprentices.

A fundamental part of our training system is our partners, such as the colleges, union training centres and private career colleges that provide in-class training. To increase support for them, we increased their per diems for an ongoing budget of over \$111 million every year. Training centres not only face operating pressures, but they also need funding to purchase new equipment for students so the next generation of tradespeople get trained on the same machinery that they're actually going to see on the job site. By providing these training providers with \$24 million in annual, predictable funding, they can buy state-of-the-art equipment that truly helps our next generation of apprentices be the best that all of them can be. To keep our instructors and apprentices safe, we invested more than \$5

million, in 2020-21, in relief funding for purchasing PPE, cleaning products and digital supports.

As mentioned, the third key pillar of our skilled trades strategy is encouraging more employer participation, because the more employers who participate, the more jobs there are for apprentices. Everyone wins: The youth get the opportunity to prep for a meaningful career, and the employers get a chance to train someone who will contribute to their business. This is why we launched a new \$23-million annual Achievement Incentive Program. Unlike earlier programs, this one is totally focused on outcomes. Employers are rewarded financially when apprentices reach milestones and when they complete their training.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Five minutes.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Another common barrier for small and medium-sized employers is that they cannot teach an apprentice all the skills they need to master their trade. We launched the Group Sponsorship Grant to encourage employers to come together to provide a full range of training and on-the-job mentorship for apprentices. Right across the training system, from apprentices to training providers to employers, our government is there to support them and give them the tools they need to succeed.

I'd like now to come back to the second pillar of our skilled trades strategy, simplifying the system. A key component was the establishment of a skilled trades panel to advise on the successor framework to OCOT and co-delivery of services, and the second upcoming phase on matters of training and classification. The panel held dozens of meetings and reviewed nearly 70 written submissions to hear the concerns of tradespeople, apprentices, unions, businesses large and small, and training providers. The panel—Michael Sherrard, Jason Ottey, Shaun Scott, Melanie Winter and Melissa Young—did truly incredible work. I really just want to take a few seconds to point out Melanie and Melissa, who are true female leaders in the skilled trades in Canada and did a remarkable job. So, to all five of our expert panel members, thank you for your service to Ontario.

What they told us in their first report is that we need a simpler, more customer-focused system. The decade-long co-delivery of training and certification of the trades has not been successful. While the overwhelming majority of stakeholders acknowledge challenges with OCOT, there was no desire to return to the system that existed prior to OCOT, where government was responsible for the design, delivery and implementation of skilled trades and apprenticeship programs, policies and services. The layers of bureaucracy resulted in a system that was not agile or responsive to 21st-century demands.

Instead, the panel recommended that we replace OCOT with a new crown agency called Skilled Trades Ontario. This received broad support from organizations like the Ontario Skilled Trade Alliance, an umbrella association that represents organizations like RESCON, the home builders, OGCA and Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association; the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, including IBEW;

LIUNA; Unifor; the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association; the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; Merit Ontario; and CLAC.

The new agency that's proposed, Skilled Trades Ontario, would be a one-stop shop for skilled trades and apprenticeship training and certification. It would handle all the daily client services, no more going back and forth between OCOT and my ministry. Apprentices would be able to register, take exams, pay fees and get certifications all in one place.

Next, we'd have a digital system instead of paper log books and wet signatures. With this portal, clients would be able to register, log their hours, schedule their in-class learning and schedule exams from a home computer, laptop or smartphone. They could also access information about financial supports and verify their status, all online. This is truly—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: —an approach centred around workers.

0920

Another thing we heard about was the importance of learning whole trades, so that will remain the basis of the apprenticeship system. This will also make participation in the Red Seal Program much easier.

Instead of a huge, 21-member board of governors, Skilled Trades Ontario will have 11 members and a CEO selected based on their expertise and appointed by the government. We are also separating compliance and enforcement from training and certification. This will help depoliticize this agency. OCOT was fixated on jurisdictional disputes instead of updating curriculum and training standards, some that haven't been updated in more than a decade.

If this legislation is passed, my ministry would take on responsibility for enforcement of the trades and apprenticeships because our ministry has the experience that is needed to do this—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I apologize to cut you off, Minister. The time has come up.

We'll start with the questions now—sorry, before we do that, MPP Piccini, can you please confirm your attendance?

Mr. David Piccini: I'm MPP Piccini, and I'm in my office in Port Hope.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

We'll start the first round of questions with the opposition. MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Minister, for your comments.

I'll start off with something positive. I think that the non-repayable tool grant will be very positive and received well. You know that my son is apprenticing as an electrician. You don't know how expensive the tools are until you go shopping with your apprentice. So on that, I think those measures will be helpful.

We do have some concerns about Bill 288 that I want to bring to your attention. Bill 288 does not name the construction trades in the compulsory trades or non-compulsory trades—this is perhaps by design—and leaves

the door open, potentially, to go back to skill sets. Bill 288 still leaves the possibility of future skill-setting, breaking up the trades into skill sets and not recognizing trade qualifications and perhaps even the apprenticeship system. The reason I raise this with you is that the last time the PC government meddled in the trades, it was under Premier Mike Harris. He removed the majority of the trades from what was then the TQAA and moved them under the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, where they were fragmented into pieces and skill sets.

So I wanted to give you an opportunity to address why the legislation is crafted as it is and does not name the construction trades in the compulsory trades or the non-compulsory trades.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: It's a great, great question.

Congratulations to your son in the trades. I've met a lot of apprentices in the electrical trade over the last couple of years. What a great profession. He has a great future in front of him.

I can tell you that skill sets are gone; I repealed that. They will not be coming back.

What the legislation does, clearly, is to create a new agency that's going to deliver a nimble, agile system to really make it easier for apprentices, employers—to make it an easier system to increase completion rates, for example. Our whole plan is built around the three pillars: ending the stigma around the trades, getting young people like your son and others—my parliamentary assistant's son is a tradesperson who started his own business and hires other tradespeople—great stories all over—

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm sorry, Minister; you know that I only have seven minutes. So I just want to say, what mechanism are you going to be able to put in? You can say unequivocally that the skill sets are gone, but the legislation, as it's crafted right now, still leaves the door open for skill-setting. What mechanism will be in place to prevent us to go back to skill sets and then further water down the skilled trades programs?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Skill sets are gone. I restored compulsory trades, if you read the legislation—

Ms. Catherine Fife: I did. It does not—

Hon. Monte McNaughton: —it restores all three trades.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Can I request the members not speak over each other, please?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Our second pillar is to simplify the apprenticeship system. That's what this legislation does. The Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act clearly creates a one-stop shop for apprentices.

Thirdly, one of the biggest challenges we have in the apprenticeship system here in Ontario is that we don't have enough employer engagement, so this will certainly help engage employers. It will eliminate wet signatures and create a digital portal, so it's going to be a much better system and one, I believe, that we can all rally behind—and of course lots of support, MPP Fife, from a lot of different stakeholders who worked with us, I can tell you, for hours and hours to get this right.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Chair, I'm going to throw it over to my colleague from Niagara Falls. Please go ahead, Wayne.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Gates?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. Can you hear me okay?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, we can. Three minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: The first thing I'm going to say to the minister is thanks for being here. I know I don't have a lot of time, but you did mention about infrastructure projects, so I want to get to the minister quickly and say that we need our Niagara Falls hospital built. I can tell you that would put our tradespeople to work. It would hire probably 100 apprentices. Right now, IBEW has 75—you talked about the need for skilled tradespeople in Ontario. IBEW, which is the electrical union, has 75 workers in Niagara who are on layoff.

And then you talked about the auto industry. I'd like to thank the auto industry for what they did to keep the auto sector running here in the province. But when you look at their ratio, it's 8 to 1 in the plant. We found that out because we were going to jeopardize that investment if we went to 1 to 1 in the auto plants. So that's just a couple of things.

I'll start with my questions. Could you discuss with the committee why your government initially wanted to pursue the skill set model in the first place?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Well, the legislation—

Mr. Wayne Gates: I might cut you off, because I want to get a few questions in. Go ahead.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: The legislation is clear that that's gone. We're moving forward with restoring compulsory trade status. I'm a believer in that, as well as this new agency.

I just want to talk about infrastructure. You're right, MPP Gates, just how important these projects are to put people to work. That's why I'm proud that Premier Ford and our government announced in the budget a new hospital in the Windsor-Essex region that's going to be a game-changer, and I know there are projects about to happen down in Niagara region and in MPP Oosterhoff's riding. I agree that this is how you put people to work.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. So you're going to commit today to our new hospital—I appreciate that—and getting some trades to work.

One of the major issues we have heard regarding the present legislation is the lack of clarity around enforcement and compliance. Prior to the creation of the College of Trades—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —there were some concerns with the quality of inspections from the minister. This legislation brings the enforcement arm into your ministry now. How confident do you feel that the ministry will have the capacity to provide proactive enforcement for the trades? This is a big issue with all the trades that I talk to.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: No, absolutely. You're right, this legislation brings enforcement back to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Look, the inspectors have done heroic work during this pandemic—about 55,000 workplace inspections and investigations. We have

hired more than 100 new inspectors, which actually brings the level to the highest inspectorate in Ontario's history, under this Conservative government, and we'll continue to ensure that the health and safety of every worker, including tradespeople, remains our top priority and that we do this right.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Monte, are you going to hire new inspectors or not for this?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: We just hired more than 100 new inspectors, but we'll ensure that we have the level needed to do the job right, for sure.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll go now to the independent members for their first round. MPP Hunter?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you to the minister for his presentation. I certainly support the skilled trades sector in Ontario. My father trained as a licensed mechanic in Jamaica. He worked for the Jamaica bus service before immigrating to Canada, where he then became a transport driver and owned his own trucks. Of course, his skill as a licensed mechanic helped him along the way. He and his brothers established the first mobile truck wash in Ontario, the Hunter mobile truck wash. They were ahead of their time back in those days in terms of environmental requirements, in terms of the trucks.

0930

I wanted to pick up on some of the comments you made with regard to the auto sector. When your government took office, you didn't necessarily see the future for auto. I remember clearly, when GM announced that it was closing Oshawa, the Premier literally threw up his hands and said the ship had sailed. I remember going to an organized event with Unifor, starting at the GM plant and ending in Windsor, and talking to so many retirees in particular about their journey with auto in Ontario and the importance of that sector.

It's good to see that your government has come to see the future for auto and electric vehicles, but I believe that we lost ground and we lost time in the global fight for leadership and dominance in electric vehicles because of that setback and the lack of vision from your government, including pulling up charging stations and the network that's required in Ontario to give confidence to those manufacturers of electric vehicles and innovations in that sector—that Ontario wasn't a real player because it was busy ripping up charging stations from GO stations and the network that was being put in by the former government.

I also want to say that the commitment to apprenticeship is also important. I wasn't the minister responsible for university, colleges and trades for very long—it was just a short six months—but one of the first things that I remember being able to announce was the apprenticeship strategy, and just the importance of that—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: —particularly in providing incentives for employers. That was part of it, and also attracting women, other groups, racialized groups—Black, Indigenous and other people of colour—into the skilled trades, because those are really, really good jobs.

Can you speak to what your government is doing to diversify the skilled trades area? Do you support community benefits? And do you support diversifying the trades? Because that's something that's very needed.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Look, there's a lot in your eight or nine minutes there. I come from southwestern Ontario; I know very much the importance of auto jobs for working women and men and their families. I believe that good, meaningful jobs change lives. They strengthen our families. They keep families together. They build better and stronger communities. That's my whole vision for this ministry and everything we're doing, whether it's on an immigration front, workforce development, apprenticeships and getting more people into the trades, the redesign of the Second Career program.

To be completely frank, under your government, apprenticeship registrations fell 40%. We were down 17,000 under OCOT. We're changing that. We're going to get this right, and I think this one-window approach is going to make a big difference.

Just to touch on your last point, pre-apprenticeship programs, which you'll be familiar with: We're investing more money than your government, and then secondly, we've created a Skills Development Fund, at least \$115 million to create innovative training projects from across the province. Many of those are based on recruiting—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off, Minister. The time has come up for independent members.

We'll go to the government side now for their first round. MPP Kanapathi, go ahead, please.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Minister, for that wonderful presentation and thank you for your leadership regarding building opportunity in the skilled trades, especially the younger generation and the diverse community in Ontario. You're always helpful and you always listen and you're always trying to put things into policy. You always hear them out. Thank you for that, Minister.

You made very interesting comments about how we are on the verge of collapse in the system. For far too long, skilled trades were neglected, and we have a long way to go. These were very important and thoughtful words you said. We are changing the dynamic of the system. Minister, thank you for that.

I wanted to hear more from you. You also mentioned that when your staff showed you an apprenticeship journey map, you thought you were looking at the Tokyo subway map. Please elaborate on that before I get to the detailed questions. Thank you.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Well, you're right, and thank you for all your leadership. I know you talk to me often about helping employers and tradespeople and young people in your riding to get started in the trades. It's true. I remember on day one asking ministry officials to show me basically the map of pathways to get into the trades. I remember when we announced Skilled Trades Ontario, we had that map up, and it really looked like the Tokyo subway map. I mean, apprentices were ping-ponging back and forth between the ministry and OCOT.

It's no wonder 17,000 fewer people joined—the time to get started in the trades, the apprenticeship journey.

It's amazing, and I said it in my remarks, but I can't tell you how many times people have come up to me and said, "I know how to become a lawyer or a teacher, but I have no idea how to become a pipefitter or an automotive technician or an arborist." There are well over 100 different trades to choose from in Ontario. As I said, we want people to have good, meaningful jobs. They change lives. They strengthen families and build stronger communities.

I just want to tell you a quick story about a lady. It really is what keeps me going every single day as the minister responsible for this. Her name is Nattisha, and a number of years ago, she had an opportunity to participate in a pre-apprenticeship program. Nattisha told me she was a young mom, a single mom on welfare. She had two young daughters, beautiful daughters. She grew up in an at-risk community. Anyways, she got to participate in a 12-week program to try all the different trades. It was provided in partnership between the government and the unionized trades. At the end of the 12 weeks, she decided she wanted to become an ironworker. Fast-forward to a few years later, she had completed her pathway. She became a journey person, a licensed ironworker.

I got her phone number and called her a couple of months ago on a Sunday night. She was in tears. She's making \$44.08 an hour with pension and benefits: life-changing. I said, "What's the most exciting thing?" She said, "Well, I can provide better for my daughters, a better way of life, a better roof over my head," and she said, "For first time in my entire life, I can buy a car."

I thought, like, that's what we need to do. We talk about changing lives and recruiting women and others from under-represented groups. We are going to spread opportunity more widely and fairly. That is our goal, and that's what the belief is of our government. Everything we're doing is built around creating life-changing opportunities for people in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: As I've said, I'm a broken record, but the skilled trades really do change lives: an opportunity to make six figures; to work anywhere in Canada, sometimes around the world; to have a pension and benefits and start your own business in many cases. This is exciting.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: That's a powerful story, that woman's story: a single mother, and the first time trying to buy a car. It's the Ontarian dream, the Canadian dream, through your ministry and through [inaudible].

How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two and a half.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Minister, during second reading of Bill 288, we heard from some of the members of the opposition that they were supportive of the creation of the new agency. The member from Niagara Falls is a good friend of mine. He always speaks from the heart. Some of the positives in this bill include the streamlining and an organizational approach to give information to apprentices. Can you comment on why the creation of Skilled Trades

Ontario is so important to the future of the prosperity of this province?

0940

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Absolutely. It's to simplify the system. Everything we're doing is built around ending the stigma, breaking down the stigmas around the trades, simplifying the apprenticeship system and encouraging employers to bring on more apprentices.

This is going to create, I think, first and foremost, a digital portal, bringing the skilled trades into the 21st century, getting rid of wet signatures, having a digital log-book. There are so many benefits to having a one-stop shop for the skilled trades, and this legislation is creating Skilled Trades Ontario. It really does have broad support across the industry.

My commitment to everyone in the industry, whether it's labour leaders, employers or contractors and others—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Hon. Monte McNaughton:—we're going to continue working together every single day. My office door is always open, and they know that. We'll continue working with all of industry to get this right.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start the second round now, and we'll start this round with independent members. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I do want to focus on the diversity and inclusion side of things. Minister, you may have seen the reports of nooses found on certain job sites, and anti-Black racism has surfaced as a real, disturbing aspect of construction trades in particular. The industry is working on that, but there is a lot of leadership that is required, and I'm wondering your thoughts and your comments on that.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Well, it's disgusting. I have no tolerance for any injustices on job sites or in workplaces. We're not going to tolerate any racism or discrimination in any form, and the law is clear under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It is against the law. We continue to send inspectors out and deal with this seriously, and this isn't going to be tolerated in our province.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Do you support the community benefits agreements where the investments that are being made in major infrastructure—such as transit, which you've talked about—also have an aspect of hiring, training and supporting people who live in the neighbourhoods that are being affected?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm totally committed—as you know, I'm not the Minister of Infrastructure or Transportation, but everything we're doing is to recruit more people into the trades: women, Indigenous people, people from other under-represented groups. We're working every single day, for example, with the Hammer Heads Program that's put on through the Central Ontario Building Trades, where they're recruiting people into their program.

I referenced Nattisha, who got to try the pre-apprenticeship program. We're investing more today than at any point in the history of our province to have these pre-apprenticeship programs, to bring people from all different backgrounds into the trades. We have a huge shortage. I

think these are life-changing opportunities, and we support every day to work to get people from under-represented groups into the trades. And I do agree with you: With these public projects, there is a huge opportunity to use these for the good of society.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Okay. I appreciate you saying that, Minister. It will go a long way, and it can influence your other cabinet colleagues to write policies that include community benefits, because that is the way we're going to change society, when we bring more people into the trades and at the table of leadership.

You are establishing the oversight body affirming the College of Trades under the new name, Skilled Trades Ontario, with its powers of the board and the governance set out. Will you include a diverse board, including women and racialized people in that structure?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Yes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That's great. Thank you, Chair. I have no further questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the government side now for the second round. MPP Roberts?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Minister, thank you so much for appearing this morning and talking about this really exciting initiative. I know that you're incredibly passionate about this. This has been exciting work that started even before the pandemic, but of course now it's becoming all the more important as we start to think about how we are going to lay the foundation for that economic recovery. I think this is such a huge piece of that, making sure that we can fill so many of those jobs that we need filled and get people those high-paying, reliable, good, steady jobs.

You know, I'm in my twenties, and my group of friends right now are all at different stages. Some of them are still studying. Some of them are still working retail jobs. I myself am very fortunate to have a great job here, but when I look at my friend group, I would say that the one who is doing the best out of all of us is the one who chose to go into the trades. He is working as a carpenter now. He's doing fantastic. He's got a home, he's got a truck, he's got 17 chainsaws; he's doing fantastic, and it's because he chose that route into the trades right out of high school and got into that and has been doing fantastic. I think we need to hear more of those stories.

Of course, the trades are very important in my riding. We have Algonquin College in the centre of my riding. They have their wonderful ACCE unit, their construction unit there, which is training a ton of folks in the trades. I met with Algonquin a number of times right after I got elected to talk about the skilled trades, and they talked all the time about breaking the stigma, that the stigma is out there. We need figure out how to break that amongst young people, amongst parents, amongst educators.

They also talked about how complex the apprenticeship system is. I noticed that those are two of the pillars of your strategy that you're laying out here, so I wondered if you could start by talking a little bit more about those two pillars of your strategy and how they're going to come together to help us tackle this important issue.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thanks, MPP Roberts. You are doing a great job representing your riding.

I love every time I get an opportunity to go to Algonquin College. I was there—I would like to say recently, but it was the last time we were able to safely travel. We did a partnership with Algonquin, and I remember being in the shop where there were a number of different trucks, big transport trucks. Just to see their training—it's really incredible. They had very modern 21st-century technology, which goes a long way to training people properly for the job. So thank you for everything that you're doing.

Look, I've been clear: Not every single student in Ontario has to go to university to have a great career and a great job. There are other opportunities out there. When I think, for example, that the average salary for an elevator mechanic is \$107,000 per year, it's incredible—pensions and benefits—and the great career opportunities for electricians and all the other different trades. It really is incredible. As the Premier always says, if you have a trade, you have a job for life.

Specifically around ending the stigma, it is something that we're working to overcome. A year ago, we ran a really modern advertising campaign called Find a Career You Wouldn't Trade, which was really aimed at parents, educators like guidance counsellors and young people, about the exciting, meaningful work in the trades. We highlighted some of the different ones, including an arborist who is a lady in the trades. We also appointed three youth advisers who are going to be reporting back to me very, very soon on how we can introduce the trades as early as grade 1 and talk about how young people can do their level 1 apprenticeship at a much younger age.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: When you think that the average age of an apprentice in Ontario today is 30, that means that there's a lot of people going to university. I talk to them all the time, and I'm sure you do, too. They go to university, they rack up debt, then they decide they want to get into the trades afterwards. We need to ensure that they know about these opportunities at a younger age. They'll decide what they want to do themselves, but we need to lay out a simpler pathway to get into the trades and talk about the more than 100 different ones that are out there.

Lastly, I want to highlight our government's partnership with Skills Ontario. They promote the trades from a young age all the way through high school. They do a really large skills competition in the GTA out by the airport where literally tens of thousands of young people come from all different school boards across the province to do a skills competition, and it's really great to see. So we've increased funding there. They pivoted quickly online during COVID to do everything virtually, but hopefully, if all goes well, in September we will be back to doing things in person. Skills Ontario plays a key role in promoting the trades and ending the stigma as well.

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Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure. That's fantastic. All great work, and it's so important as we try and encourage more young people to choose that route, again, for steady, long-

term, stable employment in fields that are in demand—so important.

One of the other pieces I want to ask you about, Minister, is, we're trying to modernize this system, we're trying to simplify the system and we're trying to drag it into the 21st century. I know a key priority for you is making sure that we have adequate access to digital service delivery across the range of services that are going to be offered, whether it's registration, booking exams, digital logbooks, all of those pieces.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I think as we're encouraging young people to get involved, that's so important. I wondered if, in this last minute, you could just speak a little bit to those initiatives.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Well, that's exactly what this legislation would do. It would create Skilled Trades Ontario to modernize the apprenticeship system we have. Look, we're in 2021 and we don't have a digital portal for apprentices. We're lagging behind not only other provinces but around the world. I had an opportunity to spend time in Germany. I've also met with people from the UK around the trades and other provinces, and we are lacking. It's been a system that has been neglected by previous governments, quite frankly, of all stripes. What we're proposing really is leading, it's game-changing, it's digitizing the logbooks and the signatures. Thank you, Jeremy.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll now go to the opposition for their second round. MPP Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Kitchi meegwetch, Minister. Next week I'm speaking to Indigenous youth in trades. What message do you want me to provide to them?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Meegwetch. Thank you so much for that question. The message is what I tell all young people: There's hope and opportunity out there. There are great, meaningful careers awaiting everyone in the skilled trades. We're here to help everyone transition into these careers. We're here for them, and if there's anything I personally can do, I commit to working with you to make sure we do this right.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. I'm going to move it to MPP Gates.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. Monte, you can hear me okay? I want to be clear before I start, before I get into a question: We need in this bill, Minister, to change a lot of the "mays"—I call them weasel words—that are in collective agreements and in this bill to "will." Hopefully, you'll be open to doing that during clause-by-clause. I think it would send a really good message to all the stakeholders on how important this is.

So a question I have for you: We know that we need to ensure that we not only get more apprentices who are women, First Nations, racialized, those with disabilities, but also we need to ensure that journeypeople are getting work. Would you support a mandatory percentage of Ontario workers for government infrastructure projects? You're spending billions of dollars on infrastructure right across

the province of Ontario. I believe that we need a percentage of those jobs to include Ontario workers.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: It's a great question. MPP Hunter asked something like this. I can speak, as Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, I agree. These projects give us a huge opportunity as a society to recruit people into the trades, and we should leverage them for the good of the province of Ontario and people out there. That's why, for example, we built our changes to the apprenticeship system around those three pillars: ending the stigma, simplifying the system and encouraging employers to bring on apprentices.

One of the things I'm really excited about, that I really think is going to be game-changing—I'm told that only about 6% to 8% of employers in Ontario that are eligible bring on apprentices. The national average is actually much higher, so we need employers to bring on apprentices.

That's why we've offered an incentive for employers. This will really help small and medium-sized in particular, but they can get up to \$4,000 per apprentice that completes their journey, and they're rewarded. It's all based on outcomes, MPP Gates. So you get \$1,000 after level 1, \$1,000 after level 2, \$1,000 after level 3, and then a completion bonus, but it ensures that that apprentice is going through the system and that the employer is making sure that it happens. That's one change that we're making.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that, because I know a lot of employers aren't hiring apprentices. You're absolutely right on that. I really think that there is another opportunity, in clause-by-clause, to put it right into the bill. I think that's the key to making this bill as strong as possible, with the commitments to Ontario workers and to our young people that your government is talking about, whether it be young women, First Nations—all the ones that I've said—those with disabilities.

My next question is, the \$19 million that the college currently has in fees—that's the College of Trades—does the minister know what is happening with those funds and how they will be utilized?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: MPP Gates, you'll be familiar—although your party, I guess, supported the creation of the College of Trades and that fee structure—one of the first things we did as a government was to cut journeypersons' fees in half and eliminate all apprenticeship fees. So apprentices aren't paying fees right now—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Hon. Monte McNaughton:—and journeypersons are paying half of what they were under OCOT. Again, this is going, I believe, a long way to helping those tradespeople.

Furthermore, we introduced, as MPP Fife mentioned how helpful it's been, the grants for tools program. Under the previous government, they had a loans for tools. We've moved to grants—between \$400 and \$1,000—to help apprentices. Lastly, we've continued to work with employers to bring on apprentices, but we're going to continue working through, improving and modernizing the apprenticeship system.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Currently, we have concerns with the lack of clarity in the legislation around the makeup of the board of Skilled Trades Ontario and the committees.

Can the minister tell us today what the structure of those boards would look like? What representation will labour have on the board versus owners, management and members? And, again, with no disrespect to yourself, Minister, we know that ministers change, so you saying yes is one thing, but we also know governments change, so would you be open to putting the makeup of the board right into the bill?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: We're winding down the College of Trades, which had an unwieldy, 21-member board. This is going to be more nimble, a smaller 11 members. The goal is to take the politicization out of the trades. Again, I'm really proud of this legislation. We brought a lot of stakeholders together. I slowed this down and I wanted to take my time to get this right, and I believe we have come, overall—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Hon. Monte McNaughton:—to a really good consensus. We have the skilled trades alliance of Ontario in support. We have groups like the building trades that have been really helpful. We have unions and non-union workers. We have employers, industry associations. So I'm proud of where we've landed—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Monte—

Hon. Monte McNaughton:—I commit, to all of them, to continue working together to make sure that we—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Can I just get my last question in? I've only got a minute left.

Hon. Monte McNaughton:—we work together—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Gates, can you let the minister finish, please?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Again, the former government, that the NDP supported, under OCOT, never had this kind of consensus. Everyone knows my door is always open and we'll always work together for the betterment of tradespeople in Ontario, and creating these meaningful, exciting opportunities for people out there.

Mr. Wayne Gates: We know that there—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize. The time has come up. This is all the time we have.

I want to thank Minister McNaughton for your presentation and for answering all the questions. Thank you so much.

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ONTARIO SEWER AND WATERMAIN
CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS
AND EXPORTERS

ONTARIO ELECTRICAL LEAGUE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Now, moving along to our next group of presenters, first I would like to call upon Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. If you can please state your name for the record, you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Steven Crombie: Thank you, Chair. My name is Steven Crombie. I am the director of government relations

and public affairs for the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

Mr. Steven Crombie: Our association represents over 750 companies across Ontario, which includes contractors, manufacturers, distributors and consulting engineers. Collectively, we perform over \$1 billion a year in capital projects. Our members ensure delivery of safe drinking water and responsible waste water management for the people of Ontario. Collectively, OSWCA members employ tens of thousands of skilled tradespeople across Ontario.

OSWCA and Ontario skilled tradespeople play a vital role in Ontario's economy. Careers in the skilled trades are lucrative, rewarding and fulfilling, but we need to encourage an even greater number of new people to participate in these careers. According to a BuildForce report, it's estimated that more than 100,000 additional workers will be needed in just the next six years to keep pace with construction demand and to offset the 87,000 current construction workers set to retire over the next decade.

We believe Bill 288 will simplify the process to get more people into the skilled trades, and hopefully encourage more younger workers into this vital industry and help people obtain meaningful employment in Ontario. We support the intention of the legislation that would designate Skilled Trades Ontario a new agency that will put the trades first. We support an industry-informed training authority to lead the promotion, research and development for the latest apprenticeship training and curriculum standards.

We also strongly support a one-window experience for client-facing services, including apprenticeship registration, issuance of certificates and renewals, and conduct equivalency assessments all in one place, with many services offered digitally.

We support Bill 288's intention to move enforcement functions to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. We support the notion that compliance and enforcement be separated from the crown agency's training and certification focus. Compliance and enforcement should be the responsibility of the ministry's occupational health and safety inspectorate. This bill recognizes that compliance and enforcement expertise exists within the ministry through the OHS inspectorate. We do recommend that the OHS inspectorate be sufficiently resourced and trained to deliver on the compliance and enforcement objectives of the act.

How tradespeople perform tasks is constantly evolving in its landscape. Rigid regulations may not take into consideration future modes of work. Therefore, individuals who receive notices of contravention should have the ability to challenge enforcement actions of the OHS inspectorate. We support provisions in the legislation which allow an individual to apply to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for review of the notice of contravention. The Ontario Labour Relations Board's expertise is recognized by the majority of Ontario's workplaces and employment statutes. Risk of harm must remain a guiding principle for

the compliance and enforcement policy, in alignment with previous reports and recommendations.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes left.

Mr. Steven Crombie: In terms of next steps, there remains limited awareness and knowledge about apprenticeship and skilled trades careers among youth, and it remains a barrier. This should be a strategic priority of the new crown agency. Studies show youth indicate a preference for university as a first choice post-secondary option and say their guidance counsellors, parents and friends do not encourage them to pursue careers in the skilled trades. Despite many career awareness initiatives to promote the skilled trades, challenges remain.

Looking ahead, we recommend that Skilled Trades Ontario's mandate be to address the promotion and misconceptions about careers in the skilled trades. We recognize the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act as a vital step towards Ontario developing a strong skilled trades workforce for tomorrow. We are pleased that this bill, if passed, will reduce burdens for people wanting to pursue careers in the skilled trades, which leads to employers struggling to find qualified skilled trades workers.

Through the Ontario Construction Careers Alliance, the Building Opportunities for Life Today, BOLT, foundation and the Toronto community benefits advisory committee, the OSWCA is committed to advancing the knowledge of careers in construction. We welcome the creation of a crown agency whose mandate is to advance knowledge of trades and promote these worthwhile and fulfilling careers. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input on this piece of legislation.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll move to our next presenter, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation as well.

Mr. Matt Poirier: Good morning, everyone. I'm Matt Poirier. I'm the director of policy for Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's discussion. It's my pleasure to be here on behalf of Canada's 90,000 manufacturers and our association's 2,500 direct members to support Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act.

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters members cover all sizes of companies from all regions of the province and all industrial sectors. Manufacturers employ 770,000 Ontarians in a wide range of occupations, helping to make everything from cars to medicines, robots and airplanes. Our sector is vital to the economic success and to the prosperity of the province. The skilled trades are a core component of our entire industry, and it's why it's important for us to be here today.

Manufacturers' number one challenge is skills and labour shortages. Even during the past year and in the middle of the pandemic, skills and labour shortages remained their primary concern in addition to staying open, staying in business and staying safe. We lump skills and labour shortages together because they are different sides

of the same problem for our industry's workforce. Basically, the lack of skilled workers available in Ontario is the main driver of our industry's labour shortages. Because of these labour shortages, our industry does not have the workforce it needs to meet current demand, let alone having the workers they would need to grow and prosper. In short, this problem acts as a massive drag on growth of one of Ontario's key economic sectors.

When we ask our members what types of jobs are hardest to fill, the answer is all of them. From low-skilled labourers to engineers and project managers, our sector struggles to fill key roles—this despite the fact that we offer stable, fulfilling jobs that are some of the highest-paying professions around. But of particular concern is the shortage of skilled trades workers today, a shortage that demographics say will only get worse if we don't take action now. This is why CME worked closely with the Skilled Trades Panel and now fully supports Bill 288.

This bill proposes to undertake critical reforms to how Ontario manages and promotes apprentices and skilled trades in the province. We believe that eliminating the Ontario College of Trades and replacing it with Skilled Trades Ontario, an independent crown corporation, will address many of the governance issues that plagued previous models. Moreover, adopting a simpler customer-focused interface and offering expanded digital services will simplify life for employers and skilled tradespeople. This will include easier registration and renewals as well as smoother equivalency assessments. These are changes that CME and industry asked for and changes that will be implemented through the creation of Skilled Trades Ontario.

We understand, as well, that Skilled Trades Ontario will be responsible for promoting careers in the trades. Like my previous panellist just discussed, we cannot stress enough how important to pass this is and something that governments are uniquely positioned to help us with. The promotion of careers in the skilled trades should not start in grade 12 but as early as primary school. To that end, CME currently runs Open Doors events with this specific goal in mind. We host students in our facilities to open their eyes to the possibilities in our sector. We believe this work needs to be enhanced and supported by government.

Now, while all these measures will do great things on the skilled trades side, I would be remiss if I did not raise the issue—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Matt Poirier: Sorry?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes left.
1010

Mr. Matt Poirier: Thank you. I would be remiss if I didn't raise the issue we face with general coordination of skills development in Ontario. To a large extent, the skills needed for the jobs in our industry vary across the province. Furthermore, the skills our industry needs may be vastly different from those of other industries.

For all these reasons, we do not believe that skills training can be centrally planned and applied uniformly across the province. Rather, we need to enable local regions

to coordinate the skills development between employers and training institutions for that region.

To get there, CME has long called for the creation of regional industry councils. These councils would act as a forum for large industrial employers, colleges and universities, unions and local stakeholders to get together and plan out the training to build the skill sets needed for the employment opportunities in that region. This simple concept once existed in Ontario and solved a lot of coordination problems that exist today. We urge the government to fund regional industry councils so that it can help the development of skilled trades in all skills for our sector.

To conclude, I will say that, right now, there are major shifts happening in manufacturing. The success of these companies and the prosperity of Ontario are only possible with a strong, innovative workforce that supports advanced manufacturing. One of the greatest challenges our sector faces today is accessing talent with the right skill sets, particularly in the skilled trades, to drive that growth and innovation.

We believe the creation of Skilled Trades Ontario is the first step on the right path. Industry has been plugged into its development all throughout, and we urge that this reliance on industry and stakeholder input remains in the months ahead.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Matt Poirier: We, therefore, fully support Bill 288 and hope to see its swift passage. Thank you again for inviting me. I look forward to the discussion.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

We'll go to our next presenter, Ontario Electrical League. Can you please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Louie Violo: Hi. My name is Louie Violo.

Dear members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs: In my capacity as chair of the board of directors of the Ontario Electrical League, I want to thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak to you today about Bill 288, Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021.

The Ontario Electrical League is a non-profit, member-based organization that represents the electrical industry in Ontario. We have over 12,000 members province-wide, including electrical contractors, inspectors, utilities, distributors, manufacturers, agents, engineers, educators and more.

In addition to being chair of the Ontario Electrical League, I've worked in the electrical sector for over 35 years. Throughout my career, I have served in a variety of roles, including as an electrician, an estimator and a project manager. I was also the owner of Power Quest Electric, a company based out of Halton Hills, for a period of 18 years. I am also an avid volunteer both in the community and the industry.

I am the past chair of the Electrical Contractor Registration Agency, which oversees licensing of electrical contractors and master electricians in the province. Also, as a member of the local Lions Club, I have been an organizer

involved in several charity events, including the Georgetown Craft Beer Festival.

As you can see, I come with a great deal of experience in this sector, and over this time I've seen many changes, both good and bad, that have impacted the trades. As an organization that is heavily involved in the trades sector, the Ontario Electrical League welcomes Bill 288 for many reasons.

Today, I want to touch on three reasons why we believe Bill 288 offers strong improvements compared to what existed in the past few years here in Ontario under the College of Trades.

Firstly, Bill 288 establishes a new governance model for the skilled trades in Ontario. Like many other organizations in this province, the Ontario Electrical League has serious concerns with the governance model that existed under the Ontario College of Trades. More specifically, we felt that representation on the Ontario College of Trades board was problematic at best. However, Bill 288 addresses those issues related to the problematic governance model that prevailed with the Ontario College of Trades. In fact, Bill 288 establishes a governance model that is, first and foremost, skills-based. A skills-based governance model will promote greater fairness by ensuring that the interests of both workers and employers are adequately heard and represented. In addition to ensuring a more balanced approach to governance, the Ontario Electrical League believes that the proposed changes in Bill 288 will result in more effective oversight of the modern skilled trades environments that we all want to see in the coming years.

Secondly, Bill 288 creates a separation between enforcement on one hand and training on the other. What we witnessed over the last few years was the muddying of the originally mandated role of the Ontario College of Trades. Leaving training in the newly created crown agency is more appropriate. In fact, the agency's main role should be to oversee certification, standards and training. The new objectives include establishing programming standards, curriculum and certifying exams; doing research; issuing certificates; leading experience and qualifications assessments; maintaining a public registry; working interprovincially with respect to the Red Seal; and promoting trades and apprenticeships. Meanwhile, returning enforcement back to the Ministry of Labour is a more appropriate place for these important functions, which are critical to the safety of all Ontarians.

Third, Bill 288 reinforces the changes in ratios initiated by this government two years ago.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Louie Violo: Thank you. The Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018, introduced 1-to-1 journey-person-to-apprenticeship ratios. This reform has already translated into positive results for Ontario's electrical industry. In fact, a survey conducted by the Ontario Electrical League in October 2019 found that 75% of surveyed contractor members have hired at least one apprentice since the passing of the previous bill. Additionally, over 100 ap-

prentices have been hired, with an average of 2.9 apprentices per respondent. By removing unnecessary ratio setbacks, this new provincial legislation is going to make it easier for employers across Ontario to properly hire and train the next generation of tradespeople. Needless to say, the Ontario Electrical League is very pleased about these positive developments, and so should this government and all Ontarians be.

To recap, the Ontario Electrical League wholeheartedly supports Bill 288, Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021. The Ontario Electrical League welcomes, among other things: (1) the establishment of a new governance model for skilled trades; (2) the separation of enforcement and training; and (3) the reform of journey-person-and-apprenticeship ratios. For these reasons and many more, the Ontario Electrical League hopes that Bill 288 is passed and implemented as quickly as possible.

Before I wrap up my remarks, I want to acknowledge the leadership shown by the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development and his team. We thank them for their ongoing support of skilled trades in Ontario. Finally, I want to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to share the Ontario Electrical League's thoughts on this proposed legislation. I will be pleased to answer any and all questions that you may have. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Before we go to the questions, I would like to do an attendance check. MPP Cuzzetto, can you please confirm your attendance?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Yes, this is MPP Rudy Cuzzetto and I'm here in Port Credit.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll start this round of questions with the government side. MPP Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: To all of our presenters, thank you so much for appearing today before the committee; really great remarks from each of you, and I appreciate the support that all of you are offering for this really important piece of legislation. All of you touched on a variety of things that I think are captured in the three main priorities that the minister has outlined in the strategy, those being breaking the stigma around the trades, simplifying the system and encouraging employer participation. So it's really fantastic that those remarks are being reflected in the overall strategy. We heard from the minister earlier today, who talked a lot about that overall strategy.

One of the pieces that I want to dive into, and I think all three of you can speak on this a little bit, is that underneath that bucket of simplifying the system, we're seeing a big move towards digital service delivery and making sure that there is an easier path forward through digital means to access some of the pieces that apprentices need to go through in order to register, keep logbooks, all of those different things. I'm wondering if each of you can comment on that.

Maybe we'll start, Matt, with you, because I know at CME—I think I've seen the number that, in the last quarter of 2020, one in 10 job vacancies were in manufacturing,

so we need to figure how to get folks into those job vacancies. I think making the system a bit more modern with this digital service delivery will help, but I'm wondering if you could comment a little bit on that piece.

1020

Mr. Matt Poirier: Certainly; absolutely. I think what we're doing right now, having this meeting digitally, is proof that we've always had this technology at our fingertips; we just needed to be nudged into using it. Like I said, this is the proof.

Anything that could simplify the life of apprentices and employers by moving stuff digitally, where they don't have to show up at an office or in person—which takes time out of a workday, right? It's time that the apprentices or the journeypeople aren't working, and it's time that the employers lose to that process. So yes, absolutely, we support that. It's long overdue, frankly.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure, absolutely.

Maybe, Steven, I'll hop over to you. It fits in, also—our government is making some significant infrastructure investments right now, which I'm sure will include projects that touch on water and sewer mains etc. We've got to get people into those jobs to be able to work on those projects. Talk, perhaps, a little bit more about how this modernization can help make sure that we're providing a clear pathway for some of those workers.

Mr. Steven Crombie: Yes, absolutely. Thank you, MPP Roberts. It's no secret that the government has made historic levels of investment, many of which will include components of sewer and water infrastructure, road building and other kinds of construction, which are all sort of in the same bucket of careers in the skilled trades.

In addition to promoting these worthwhile jobs, we believe we really do have to simplify the process. There have been some diagrams in the past that compare and contrast what's proposed in the new model versus the old model, and how convoluted it may have been at times for individuals to access and make sure that they were on the right path and they're fulfilling all of their requirements to become certified journeypersons. Folks were left confused, and it was taking much longer than it needed to.

We really do recognize and appreciate how this new system, in a digitized way, will simplify how folks are ensuring that they're achieving their landmarks throughout the process of becoming journeypersons.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure.

Louie, maybe if you want to comment on this piece as well?

Mr. Louie Violo: I can offer a little bit. Thank you for allowing me to speak, MPP Roberts. I remember in my old days as a business owner, with the administrative training and apprenticeship act, that at the time, the representative would have to come into the office with the proposed apprentice. We'd have to fill out a bunch of documents. It would take probably—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Louie Violo: —anywhere from 35 to 40 minutes. So I do propose that a more digital system is going to save a lot of time, firstly on the apprenticeship side with any new

hires, as well as saving that precious time on the employer. I believe the digital world is long here and it's long overdue, and I do think this is a step in the right direction, for sure.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure. Louie, maybe I'll keep going with you while I've got you. I was reading a couple of the comments that your organization had provided, and one of the quotes that really struck me was that the organization had said, "Up until the introduction of this legislation, we had seen a muddying of these operations under the Ontario College of Trades." I'm wondering: Can you talk a little bit about how there was a loss of public confidence and trust in OCOT, and why it's so important that we're replacing it with this legislation?

Mr. Louie Violo: If you can, I'd like to direct this question to my colleague Stephen Sell, who is also on here.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Of course.

Mr. Louie Violo: Thank you.

Mr. Stephen Sell: Can you hear me?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Yes, we can hear you.

Mr. Stephen Sell: Okay, so I'm going to turn my camera on.

One of the things that happened with the muddying of the waters was that it was becoming clear that it wasn't about promoting the trades; it was more about protecting turf. I think everybody in the trades agrees that we need more tradespeople and we want to promote it, but it was being used in a way that was unintended. It wasn't intended to be a turf-protecting organization; it was supposed to be promoting. And that's where problems started arising.

The Ministry of Labour has a track record of not getting into that, so just from an enforcement standpoint—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Stephen Sell: —it became more enforcement than it did promotion and training.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Fantastic.

Mr. Stephen Sell: Hopefully that answers—

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Yes, absolutely. Thank you, Stephen, for jumping in.

Sorry, Chair, you said there's just a minute remaining?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, 50 seconds.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Okay. Well, I don't think I have quite enough time to get into another question. Again to all of you, I really appreciate the comments that you brought forward today. This is so important that we get this right. When you see numbers like the job vacancies in some of these areas, we need to get folks into those jobs, and breaking down that stigma is so important.

I know my colleague MPP McKenna is going to have some questions on our next round. I'm sure she's a familiar face to many of you. I look forward to hearing more of your remarks today as we dive into more questions. Thanks again.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you, MPP Roberts. We will move to the opposition now for their first round. Who would like to go first in the opposition?

MPP Gates?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good morning. Can you hear me okay?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, sir.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. Thanks for presenting today. My first question is to Matt, Steve and Lou—is “Lou” okay, rather than Louie? Whatever you prefer. I’ll say Lou.

I’d like to begin by asking all panel members if they could discuss their primary concerns they had with the previous system by the Liberals with the Ontario College of Trades. All three can please answer.

Mr. Matt Poirier: I’m happy to dive in first, MPP Gates. I think the main criticism, at least from the manufacturer-employer perspective, was just the convolutedness of the system. Those were the main criticisms that we kept hearing, so anything that sort of scratches all that out and just starts fresh with a crown agency and a bit of a better governance structure—how they’ve divided up the powers between the ministry and the new crown corporation. We hope that model works. We’ve had a few iterations up until this point, so hopefully this one does the trick.

I know that this redesign and this restructure sort of address a lot of those issues that employers in our industry felt.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Steve and Lou—I’d like them to answer the question as well.

Mr. Louie Violo: I guess I’ll speak here. I’d like to echo Matt’s comments as well. I’d also like to speak from a personal experience regarding the ratios. At the time it was 3 to 1. In particular, I had one gentleman—Darren was his name; he’s a local boy, a very good kid. I knew the family. He wanted to get hired on to my company at the time when I had it and I had to explain to him the ratios, that the current structure modelling at the time was 3 to 1. I told him my company could not afford that at the time and I said, “This is the governance model as we have it today.” I said, “I wish I could hire you on.”

It broke my heart to tell him that I couldn’t hire him because I had to follow the certain governance model that the College of Trades had set out back then, which were the apprenticeship ratios.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Go ahead, Steve.

Mr. Steven Crombie: Thanks, MPP Gates. When the college came in with its own scope of practice regulations and its enforcement body—who could do what on a construction site—it became muddled. There were jurisdictional disputes and there were a lot of tickets and enforcement around who was allowed to do what on a construction site. That created a lot of problems between the college and employer associations.

The reality is, the Ontario College of Trades presided over a decade of decline in apprenticeship. I think that’s where Ontario’s focus needs to be over the next decade: encouraging more people into careers in the trades. That’s what we’re hoping for.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. I’m just going to do a follow-up question to Lou, because Lou mentioned this.

Do you have any concerns, Lou, with the quality of training when we go to a 1-to-1 ratio in trades?

1030

Mr. Louie Violo: I do not. I think actually that the quality of training is better. In our experience, the apprentices experience a more wide variety of scope of work, if you will,

with certain journeypersons, and that gives them a better range of experience rather than working with separate people. They get a little bit more attention with the 1-to-1 platform rather than 3-to-1. I feel like, with the 3-to-1, they didn’t get the attention they needed to learn the trade properly.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Louie Violo: So with a 1-to-1 governance model, it certainly has worked, and it allowed the employers to hire the people that wanted to get in the trade and more of the apprentices that have the passion for the trade.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate your response, Lou. I’m not sure I completely agree with it, but I certainly do appreciate your reasoning for it.

This is to all three of you: This government initially began their approach to modernizing the skilled trades by moving to a skill set-based system. They later changed their approach and moved their reforms to this current legislation. Would you have preferred the skill set model? That’s to all three of you, so, I think Matt went first last time. Maybe Steve could start this time so it’s fair to everybody.

Mr. Steven Crombie: Yes, sure. MPP Gates, our members are supportive of this legislation. I think fundamentally what we want is government to play a greater role in promoting the trades. I think how we get there—any of our members would be frankly agnostic to that, just as long as we are moving the ball forward and encouraging more young people into these careers.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Lou, you want to go next, buddy?

Mr. Louie Violo: Sure. Yes, I totally agree with the skills-based model. Our trades are all based on your skill set, so at the Ontario Electrical League we are offering many opportunities for young apprentices to develop those skills, which maybe they have not seen in the past education models, whether it be at the university level or apprenticeship level. And it gives them that practical level and more confidence to do what they’re doing when it comes to electricity.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute left.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Matt, you want to give it a try, please?

Mr. Matt Poirier: Sure. I think I approach it more practically in the sense that we wanted to start with redoing the Ontario College of Trades and bringing in this new crown corp—fine, that needed fixing too, right?

As I alluded to in my remarks, we really need to do something about the coordination of skills training and development at a regional level. And that’s not just for the skilled trades, but for all skills, and industry-specific ones, like for ours in manufacturing. So we would be supportive of that as well, in addition to these good reforms that are happening.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay, Matt. I appreciate it. I just want to say quickly to Matt: You know that a lot of places that you represent are unionized and they have a ratio that’s higher than 1 to 1. In the auto sector, where we got close to \$60 million in investment—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sorry to cut you off, MPP Gates. The time has come up.

We will now go to the independent members for their first round. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to say thank you to all of the presenters today. I noticed that each of you touched on the fact that we need to change the culture around trades, as it relates to young people being interested in a career in the trades. That's something that I absolutely believe, and I fully support that. Can you talk about how you see the industry moving forward, attracting more young people into the trades? Matt, because you are nodding vigorously, we will start with you.

Mr. Matt Poirier: It's something that, I just look at my experience going through the Ontario education system and how I think another one of my panellists mentioned that we're sort of scaring kids away from the skilled trades right in high school, if not earlier, and channelling them towards the university stream—which is fine, it's what I did, but I could have had just an equally as pleasing and satisfying and financially rewarding life pursuing the skilled trades route. I think that's where it has to start. It has to start in the school system. Like I mentioned in our remarks, we do Open Doors, which is a program that just basically brings high school kids to a manufacturing facility in their area and opens the doors and shows them around. The feedback we get from not just men but women as well, which it's targeted towards, is, "Wow, I hadn't thought that this could be an option for me." That's the most consistent feedback we get. So it's exposure; that's the low-hanging fruit.

We could talk about curriculum and all those types of more systematic fixes to try to promote skilled trades, but again, all three of us think that with this new organization, Skilled Trades Ontario—we hope that that promotion aspect becomes the dominant function of the organization.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Fantastic. Louie, you were nodding the next most vigorously. Go ahead.

Mr. Louie Violo: This needs to come back to the school system, back to the high schools. There's always been a stigma around white collar workers and that blue collar is not really the way to go, people getting themselves around computers and lawyers and trying to get into other types of industries. But there's absolutely nothing wrong with the trades. There is just not enough education surrounding it for these young kids to make informed decisions growing up, especially through the high school system, that there's nothing wrong with it.

Of course, yes, there needs to be a curriculum surrounding it, but I feel that with the apprenticeship system, there's not enough—there is practical experience, of course, but I think it needs to start earlier than that so that by the time they get to the apprenticeship stage, they can all become better informed and better educated, and they have more of that confidence going into the industry.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That's great. Steven, with the time remaining?

Mr. Steven Crombie: Thank you very much, MPP Hunter. I think it's important to note that the average Ontario secondary student spends about eight minutes a year, on average, with a guidance counsellor, so it speaks to how

much tailored and independent consultation they're actually able to get. It's important to note that that consultation is with an individual who themselves chose a university pathway, and not to say one is better than the other, but I think we need to be aware of the inherent limitations and barriers just built into the system itself.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I completely agree with you that the age range needs to start—especially grades 7 and 8, sort of the middle school years, being able to really identify—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter:—what those career pathways are for young people so that by the time they get to grade 9, they have full exposure to opportunities in the trades.

If I do have a few seconds, I want to say that I remember being in southwest Ontario and hearing the statistic that someone who gets a university education earns the most over a lifetime, and the second is those who choose the trades, and then college, and then those who graduated from high school.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry, the time has come up. I apologize. There was only four minutes and 30 seconds, so I was confused with five minutes. We'll come back to you in the second round.

Now we'll go to the opposition side for their second round. MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to all the presenters—much appreciated. I did want to just share some of the feedback we've received from some building trades folks. This was a business manager from Hamilton, and he mentioned the importance of trade boards. He said that trade boards need to be in the legislation with stronger language. The trade boards should be filled with qualified people familiar with industry, trades, training curriculum and training standards. These trade boards have been standard practice in the past, boots on the ground, reporting and keeping government informed and accountable.

Matt, you had talked about a regional council sort of model. Can you give us some sense of what that would look like and why it would be important?

Mr. Matt Poirier: Sure. For us, it would be separate from this whole skilled trades apparatus. The basic idea is that skills needs are very regional-based, or at least they are for manufacturing. So the Hamilton industrial skills needed to fill the steel sector would be very different than automotive, or mining in northern parts of the province.

The idea is that you get everyone in the room together, between labour, the employers and the educational institutions, and you create the curriculum and tailor it to the jobs that are in demand right now and will be on, let's say, a 10-year horizon. So it's that central coordination that is needed.

1040

We know that because we know when we have our conference, our annual conference, and we invite all these players to the conference, it's the first time they all get in the same building and the same room together, and they can hash these things out and talk. So there's a great hunger out there for that coordination, and then, frankly,

that will help alleviate a lot of this mismatch that we have, where we have all this training happening but they're not the skills that employers need. That perpetuates that struggle that they have to try and build the jobs, right—to get that mismatch fixed.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's excellent. Can you still hear me?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, we can hear you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. My WiFi is in and out.

My son is apprenticing as an electrician, and it was one teacher who taught him how to apply math in an electrical problem and that was what hooked him into the trades. You've all mentioned the importance of the education system and hooking and sort of addressing the stigma, which I totally agree with. We do have a shortage of trained teachers now in the education system. Is this something that your sectors have identified, and is there a way to fast-track the skill set that we will need in the education system to actually have a successful recruitment program in our education system? Louie, maybe you could start.

Mr. Louie Violo: I could take this on, and if you don't mind, I'm going to defer this to my colleague Stephen.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Sure. Stephen, go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Sell: Okay, thanks. In the education system, one of the things we find specifically in the trades is, because they're looking for teaching certificates and university degrees, we don't have a lot of tradespeople who already have a university degree and then go get their C of Q. We need to find a way to get more tradespeople actually into the classrooms, looking at a different model where a C of Q would be equivalent to a BA so that you could put somebody straight into teacher's college to have them be able to teach. That's one of the issues we're seeing in the high schools, is we don't have enough tradespeople actually teaching those shop classes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's excellent. Thank you for getting that on the record, because when this legislation passes, because it's going to pass—now we are going to make amendments to it, I hope, that make it stronger.

I'm going to pass it over to my colleague MPP Gates to take on the next set of questions. Thanks for your input today.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Gates, and about three minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. It might be more of a statement than anything. Seeing we were talking about education before I get into my last question here, I think it's important that we actually start in grades 7 and 8 and into our high schools when it comes to our shops.

I can tell you, just a little history for myself, I wasn't the smartest kid in school, but I wasn't bad with my hands. In grades 7 and 8, I did all the shops. I did welding. I did woodworking. Then I did a four-year tech course in high school. After the four years, I graduated. I didn't go to university or college. I'm one of those guys that went into a plant. I went and worked in General Motors. I had an opportunity to become an apprentice there, but I chose to become a union rep instead. But I wasn't scared to work in the plant around machinery. I knew how to lock out. I knew how to do all that stuff.

So I think getting back into the schools is really, really important. I really think, instead of closing schools, we should keep our schools open and make them trade schools. If we're really going to be serious about taking the issue on that we need apprentices, we need more skilled trades, that's one way to do it. That was more of a statement than a question to you guys, but that's kind of how I feel about schools.

My question is: The current legislation doesn't fully outline the structure of the new enforcement and compliance system from the minister. What does an ideal enforcement and compliance structure look like for your organizations? All three of you can answer that question with the couple of minutes we've got left.

Mr. Louie Violo: Again, I'll defer this question over to Stephen, my colleague.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Go ahead, please.

Mr. Stephen Sell: We're talking the compliance and enforcement, correct?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes.

Mr. Stephen Sell: One of the things that we find with enforcement is there is a lot of regulation, especially in the electrical trade. By having the ministry health and safety inspectors doing the enforcement rather than adding another enforcement regime—they're already there on the health and safety side. Electrical can be a dangerous occupation if you're not properly trained and paying attention to what you're doing. But having the regular health and safety ministry inspectors doing the workplace safety works for us.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Would anybody else like to—do you, Matt or Steve, want to jump in on that? Go ahead, Steve.

Mr. Steven Crombie: Thank you, MPP Gates. We support enforcement being rolled back into the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. We believe that the notion of compliance and enforcement be separated from the crown agency and the training and certification focus. We believe that Skilled Trades Ontario should focus on certification and promotion, and enforcement and compliance be their responsibility.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. That concludes our time for the opposition.

We will now go to the independent members for their second round. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I wanted to ask you about safety, and the reason is, safety is important. The industry has always said, with all three of you, that you're supportive of Bill 288. I know that you have the expertise and the experience. I have trust and confidence in that and in our industry across the board to make sure that we continue to build great places in Ontario and that they are safe places in Ontario, without compromise. That's a given.

Years ago, before I was in politics and running for office, I was asked to serve on a Ministry of Labour committee on young worker safety. It was through that very deep dive that we took into young worker safety that I recognized just on day one the mindset of, people deserve to go home the way they came to work, in terms of not compromising on safety. I wonder if you can talk about your view as the

industry rolls out and improves from where we are today with this legislation—any impacts on safety. I want to see that as an improvement and an enhancement. If you could just talk about safety in the context of this new legislation, even in the context of the 1-to-1 ratio, for instance, that is being included. Maybe, Louie, we can start with you, because obviously, electrical has an uncompromised record.

Mr. Louie Violo: I just want to start out by saying, from the electrical safety report from 2014-19 for fatalities, there has been one from the apprentices and two from the electricians in that five-year span. Yes, some people take the electricity industry for granted, and it's amazing what a pair of copper wires can do in your hands.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Louie Violo: But it's very, very important, especially in our industry, the mindset that these young apprentices must take when dealing with electricity. They have to respect it, and that's the only way I can say it. Yes, it's there. They need to know what the dangers are surrounding it, and the more knowledge for them that they can have in hand surrounding the safety and the guidelines of what to do when working with electricity is of utmost importance to our organization and to our staff, too, at our places of business.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Steven Crombie, I'll go to you next, quickly, on this.

Mr. Steven Crombie: Thank you, MPP Hunter. Our members put health and safety above anything else. Many of our members are COR certified. That's a national certificate of recognition that verifies a construction company's health and safety program. We believe that safety in our association is non-proprietary. We have committees that share health and safety best practices. Irrespective of any legislation, our members are 100% focused on achieving health and safety excellence.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That's great. And then Matt, to close.

Mr. Matt Poirer: Yes, MPP Hunter. I think our members, like you, take that simple principle to heart: When people go to work, they want to go home at the end of the day safely.

1050

I think our industry does take this very seriously. We have internal resources at CME itself dedicated to health and safety for training and help—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thirty seconds.

Mr. Matt Poirer: —and our industry has some of the lowest WSIB rates of any other sector. The proof is in the pudding there too of how seriously we take this and how successful we've been at doing it. Certainly, going forward, and coming out of the pandemic where we've had to operate during this past year, it's still going to remain front and centre for us.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I just want to say thank you to all of you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize. The time has come up. We will now go to the government side for their final round. MPP McKenna.

Ms. Jane McKenna: First of all, I'd like to say to Louie, Matt, Steven and Stephen, thank you so much. I'm going

to reiterate to say that your expertise and experience obviously get us where we need to go because you're looking out for the skilled trades and where we need to go and where we've gone to this point.

I just want to point out a couple of things first. The 1-to-1 ratio—I just want to bring this up because it has been mentioned—aligns us closer with other provinces, as we all know. There is no evidence that lowering the ratio declines health and safety outcomes. I just want to put this out. In fact, from 2019 to 2020, there were nearly 400 fewer critical injuries in workplaces. On fatalities, some of the highest numbers were seen under the Liberals, where many years saw more than 60. In 2020, there were 53. The year prior to that was 45.

So I guess my question to all of you—and I'll start with you, Louie—is, can you speak on the need for an agency to regularly update the training standards?

Mr. Louie Violo: Yes, I'm going to say my piece and maybe Stephen can step in. As a master electrician, I think there are a lot of them out there right now that are writing the exams but they have no practical experience, with no knowledge of safety and ratios and governance models.

I think there should be training, and it should be validated every maybe five years, maybe three years. I'm thinking maybe a refresher course, an upgrader course for electricians and for master electricians. Most companies have to have a designated master electrician in their company who oversees all of their employees. That's an operational perspective as well as a safety perspective. Taking additional courses is only going to further their involvement with safety requirements and up their status.

I don't know if Stephen has any other comments.

Mr. Stephen Sell: On the training standards, this is one of the issues with the current structure, with both the College of Trades and the previous PACs, in that the training standards haven't been updated in years. The college did do an update to the electrical standard, and we're still waiting three years later because it's still mired in the college's bureaucratic approvals process.

We do need to update our training on a more regular basis, and that's one of the things that we're looking for Skilled Trades Ontario to be able to do as the new crown agency.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thanks, Stephen. The other Steven, please?

Mr. Steven Crombie: We absolutely believe that the training models need to be constantly updated and fluid with the realities of the changing modes of work on the ground.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you. And Matt?

Mr. Matt Poirer: It's hard not to support that. I mean, it has been a chronic problem just to update all those curriculums and those processes, so anything that can improve that is welcome, certainly by our members. But again, that's to stress that need for that regional coordination just to make sure it's not just that it's updated for the whole province but that it's updated for the regions as well, at that regional level where the needs might be very different.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you. I've jotted notes everywhere around here, so the next thing is, Steven, you did bring up that the government needed to play a bigger role and you were very grateful that they have. I just want to reiterate a couple of things: I think parents have a role too. I've got five kids. My youngest son opened his own business. He didn't want to go to university, like the four girls; he wanted to go to college, so he had his mom's personality.

But I think it was you, Matt, who brought up how much they actually engage with the guidance counsellor—or maybe it was you, Steven—and that's the reality, right? There were lots of my sons' great friends who didn't engage and didn't get to that because they didn't have the support from their parents recognizing that this was a good career for them. I just want to say that, so thank you very much for all of those comments there.

The new system will see the return of whole trades, as opposed to skill sets. Could you please speak on the importance of restoring full trades? Matt, you're up, so you go ahead.

Mr. Matt Poirier: Absolutely. Like I said in my remarks, for manufacturers, the labour needs are in all job categories across the spectrum, so anything that helps alleviate that pressure on them is welcome. If that's taking the broader approach, then that's going to be something that we support.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Great. Louie?

Mr. Louie Violo: Yes, absolutely, we can support the full trades. I'm going to divert this question to Stephen, as well.

Mr. Stephen Sell: Because electrical is a system, as opposed to individual components, it's more important that an apprentice does the full scope of the trade, as opposed to just skill sets.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Okay. The other Steven?

Mr. Steven Crombie: Yes, we support—again, to echo Matt's point—the broader need for just folks in these trades. Whether it be skill sets or whole trades, we just want to see more folks engaged in that process.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much. I do want to reiterate that, because all of you have a passion for what's best for the skilled trades. I know I do, because of my son, and so I was very grateful to be the parliamentary assistant to this ministry and to all the wonderful people who work with Monte McNaughton, just because it was so overdue. We so needed to engage the skilled trades. They haven't been here in years—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jane McKenna: —and we needed to just make sure that they were at the table.

So I want to thank all of you, for my last few minutes—just to thank you, because it's all of us working together, right? Government, labour unions, all of us at the same table—I think, Louie, you said that as well. It's so important for all of us to engage together, because we can only get to where we're going to go if we all work together. We're all doing a great job with that, and this ministry has done a phenomenal job—long overdue. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. I would like to thank all the three presenters for coming and for your presentations. You are now released.

CHRISTIAN LABOUR ASSOCIATION
OF CANADA

WATERLOO, WELLINGTON, DUFFERIN
AND GREY BUILDING AND
CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL
DURHAM COMMUNITY LEGAL CLINIC

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move along to our next group of presenters. First, I would like to call upon the Christian Labour Association of Canada. If you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Ian DeWaard: Hi. Good morning. Can you hear me okay?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, we can.

Mr. Ian DeWaard: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to provide CLAC's response to Bill 288. My name is Ian DeWaard, and I am the Ontario director for CLAC.

CLAC is an independent, multi-sector, all-Canadian union, and is one of the fastest-growing in the country. It was founded in 1952 but now represents over 60,000 members. Provincially, our members serve in construction, the health care sector, transportation and emergency services. Over 6,000 CLAC members in Ontario are directly employed in the construction industry, and for them, this bill is very important.

As I was preparing these remarks, it struck me that I've never come before a government committee to commend a bill and to deliver the appreciation of our members for government action. Today, I'm simply here to do just that. Since 2009, our organization has observed successive governments wrestle with how to modernize the trades for today's economy, and to contend with emerging technological and labour force realities.

When this story began, there were two different pieces of legislation that governed the trades and apprentices. Back then, the role and scope of responsibility between differing ministries and agencies was convoluted and the cause of perpetual conflict. The introduction of OCOT and the substantive review of the agency in 2016 held significant possibility for reform; however, for a variety of reasons, it failed to fully deliver on its promise.

With this bill, the province has developed a winning model. As a framework, it achieves the right balance of interests with regard to enforcement as well as oversight for the regulation and credentialing of the various types of trades and apprentice certificates.

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We're also pleased to see that this bill establishes a new agency that is focused in purpose and that is equipped to support apprentice training and to expand and improve in novel ways the apprenticeship experience. This agency

will also be able to collect and process data so that the entire stakeholder community can properly understand evidence-based trends and challenges in the learning, onboarding and attrition of learners and journeypersons in our respective industries.

From CLAC's perspective, this bill resolves the worst elements of the former College of Trades, while sifting out and preserving the components that are necessary to address the growing and unresolved challenges in our industry. In 2019 and again in 2020, CLAC made robust submissions on what should be done to replace the college, and on all key points—registration, data collection, enforcement and arm's-length organization—we believe there is alignment in this bill with what our members said was most important.

We know that this bill is simply the architecture for a system and that the real impact will be achieved through the writing and refinement of the regulations. While those are not before the committee, it bears noting that this bill has achieved widespread stakeholder support for what has historically been an unresolved contentious area of employment legislation. It was remarkable, then, that from all corners—employer, building trades and wall-to-wall unions like CLAC—nearly the entire industry responded supportively to Bill 288. While that was in part, no doubt, a result of learning from the failures of old systems, much credit is due to the consultative approach and listening posture of the current government and to the advisory panel that was struck to advise the minister on this bill.

We would encourage the government to draw on the experience of this success as it readies for the crafting of the regulations that are yet to come, by taking the time to be as inclusive and considerate during that process for the many different stakeholders. For its part, CLAC is committed to working as diligently, to wrestle with the tough questions to come, for the sake of the trades and our future workers so that a trades job continues to be a respectable job in which workers have opportunity to flourish.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Ian DeWaard: Okay, thank you.

Some of the regulatory work ahead that needs special priority: a few comments about where we see the need for focus. In particular, we must work to increase apprentice completions and guard against efforts to disassemble the scope of a journeyperson's work or of diluting the value of a trade certification. We were especially pleased to see that enforcement activities will remain with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. This effectively addresses one of the major failings of the prior system.

With this new regulatory framework and through this new agency, we also see opportunities to expand who will provide the in-class training which will be an important means to serve the training needs of apprentices in all parts of the province. We must continue to create learning capacity and opportunity evenly throughout Ontario.

In closing, we note that with this new system, the province is establishing a model that is poised to continue to support the efforts of all stakeholders as we separately

and collectively continue to tackle our two greatest challenges: the need to attract more than 100,000 new and future workers in the next decade and the need to ensure that those who register to embark on an apprenticeship are supported in that journey so that they achieve completion.

With that, thank you for allowing me to bring you CLAC's perspective and please accept our encouragement to move this bill on for quick passage. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

I would now like to call upon the Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin and Grey Building and Construction Trades Council. Please state your name for the record and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Greg Bobier: Thank you to the Chair and members for the opportunity to appear before this committee and comment on Bill 288. My name is Greg Bobier. I am the business manager for the Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin and Grey Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, your local trades. Our council represents over 12,000 proud unionized construction trades professionals in the Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin and Grey areas.

I would point out that in 2008 when the government passed Bill 100, schedule 40, introducing skill sets, no consultations were held with trades trainers nor with tradespersons, so today we welcome the opportunity to provide our feedback and we commend the government for moving away from skill sets through Bill 288. Pending certain construction-specific amendments that we believe are absolutely necessary to strengthen Bill 288, we are generally supportive of the legislation because it moves away from skill sets and reasserts the fulsome nature of construction trades.

We understand that the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario will be presenting to you later today, and we would point out that our policy positions on this proposed legislation are identical to those which are going to be articulated by our provincial counterparts.

I'd like to go through those amendments one by one, if you don't mind. First, transition: Bill 288 creates uncertainty as to whether trades currently prescribed in the construction sector will continue to be prescribed when the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021, is proclaimed into force.

Furthermore, section 65(2)(d) of the bill specifically anticipates that trades will no longer be prescribed as a trade or classified as a compulsory trade for the purposes of the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021. Accordingly, it would be appropriate to deal with this issue in a way analogous with the way that OCOTAA dealt with it and replaced in the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act and the Apprenticeship and Certification Act. Basically, it needs an amendment with a new section to read as follows:

"Every trade that was prescribed as a trade that belongs to the construction sector in the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, shall be deemed to be as prescribed by a minister's regulation as a trade under this act and every construction sector trades classified as

compulsory under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, shall be deemed to be classified by minister's regulation as compulsory under this act until such a time as a new regulation is made."

Second, section 6(b) Practice, compulsory trades: Section 6 prohibits engaging in the practice of compulsory trades unless the individual holds a certificate of qualification—C of Q—a provisional C of Q or is a registered apprentice.

Two fixes are necessary. First, section 6(c) says that the regulation can exempt anyone from this prohibition, which severely weakens the compulsory trade licensing. Basically, we need to delete section 6(c). Second, the phrase "engage in the practice" can create interpretive problems. A new section 6(2) should be added to read, "6(2) In this section, engage in the practice of compulsory trade includes the performance of practice and scope of practice of the compulsory trade."

Section 28, Review, notice of contravention: Section 28(10) sets the criteria for what the Ontario Labour Relations Board, or OLRB, will consider when adjudicating in the appeal from a notice of contravention issued by an inspector. Those criteria are: 28(10)(a) the scope of practice, and 28(10)(b) the compliance and enforcement framework, and 28(10)(c) any other factors the OLRB considers relevant—that's a *carte blanche* statement. Section 28(10)(c) gives unfettered power to the OLRB to consider anything, including anything not properly considered by the inspector. No appeal body should be entitled to consider its own criteria beyond the statutory criteria that guide the first-level decision-maker.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Greg Bobier: This extraordinary OLRB power will inevitably erode the compulsory trades and their scope of practice. We would like to request that we delete section 28(10)(c).

Section 17(3), provisional C of Qs: Section 17(3) allows provisional C of Qs to be extended beyond one year. Such situations have caused significant safety problems in the past because the practice discourages apprentices from completing their C of Q examination and encourages unsafe work environments.

In addition, contractors will be forced to pay journey-persons' wages to individuals who have completed their apprenticeship but have not obtained their licence after passing the Red Seal exam. This inevitably devalues the Red Seal Program within Ontario and across the country. We would suggest that section 17(3) be deleted.

Lastly, section 42(2), Committees: Section 42(2) states that the board of Skilled Trades Ontario, STO, may establish committees. This is a significant downgrade from the previous legislation that included the clear establishment of industry-specific boards to review curricula and other industry-specific issues. The needed amendment is to add a new section 42(2)(a) to read, "Trade committees composed of an equal number of persons qualified in the trade and employers of persons in that trade will be established for each trade. The trade committee will review curricula and provide advice on trade-specific areas."

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their time, and we really appreciate you considering our position on this point. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We will now go to our next presenter, Durham Community Legal Clinic. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation as well.

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: My name is Omar Ha-Redeye, and I'm the executive director of the Durham Community Legal Clinic. I'd like to pass it to Reid Jackson, who will be starting with our submission.

Mr. Reid Jackson: Good morning. My name is Reid Jackson, and I'm a community legal worker with the Durham Community Legal Clinic. I'm also joined today by Pam DeWilde of the Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre. We'll be sharing our time. Her agency is a partner in Durham Access to Justice Hub. We are also joined by the executive director of the Durham Community Legal Clinic, Mr. Ha-Redeye, who has already introduced himself and who will be fielding questions with us today.

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It should come as no surprise to anyone here that Ontario is facing a skilled trades shortage in the coming years. This pressure will be felt most keenly in the construction industry, with shortages of 100,000 workers predicted by 2029. This government has taken action to combat these looming shortages, including the creation of grants, media pieces extolling the virtues of the trades and developing plans to send recruiters into high schools to promote the trades to new graduates. However, these changes alone may not be enough to cover the shortage, which can be traced to deeper systemic issues, in part.

It is also no secret that the Ontario College of Trades itself has long been in need of reform. The college has faced criticism since opening its doors in 2013, with many believing that its mandate was too sharply focused on enforcement and that it did not focus enough of its efforts on attracting new workers and promoting the rights of apprentices. The system has also been criticized for being needlessly complex and difficult to navigate, discouraging new workers from entering or staying in the trades and creating additional barriers for low-income individuals and others who could benefit most from a more accessible apprenticeship program.

In 2015, the Dean report made a number of recommendations to improve the Ontario College of Trades. In brief, the report highlighted the need for changes to the apprentice ratio and changes to scopes of practice and trade classifications. The report's primary concern was that these changes be focused on risk presented to workers and the public. Now, many of these recommendations have already been addressed through regulations, and it is our hope that the government will continue to address these issues through robust regulation under this new bill and continue to apply principles which can be traced back to the Dean report.

This government had previously proposed abolishing the Ontario College of Trades in 2018 as part of omnibus

Making Ontario Open for Business Act. While this was supported by many stakeholders, it also generated some alarm, notably from several unions who were concerned that the proposed changes to the ratios of apprentices and journeymen could lead to more workplace accidents and could create unsafe working environments. We share these concerns in part and would hope that they can be mitigated through robust regulations and by ensuring that adequate funding is provided for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and tribunal systems in the hopes that a fully funded worker safety regime would address any such concerns.

To be clear, in large part, the clinic is supportive of this proposed legislation. Located in Oshawa, we can see first-hand the importance of accessible and empowering employment and the terrible void that can be created when these opportunities disappear. The trades have long represented a pathway out of poverty for Ontarians, and making these opportunities more accessible has the potential to benefit the most vulnerable in our society.

Now, to speak to the broader implications of unemployment in this region is Pam DeWilde of the Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre.

Ms. Pam DeWilde: Thank you. I'm the acting executive director of the Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre, an Employment Ontario service provider and lead agency of Welcome Centre Immigrant Services in Pickering. We support job seekers within the employment and settlement sectors. Our clients are the full spectrum of recent graduates to seasoned workers who seek assistance with finding meaningful, sustainable employment.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Pam DeWilde: At the Pickering welcome centre and Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre, we support newcomers who are looking to reconnect with their field of work, which may be a trade or regulated field of work.

We are encouraged by the intent of this bill to make it easier for people to find rewarding careers in the skilled trades. A client-focused process that is easy to access, that clearly lays out the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the process, sends the message: "You are welcome here. We need the experience and talent that you bring, and we want to eliminate the barriers and delays that keep you from working, from contributing to the economy, contributing to your community and supporting your families."

Being unemployed when you want to be working fuels low self esteem, a lack of confidence, anxiety and stress, particularly for those who live paycheque to paycheque, which is the situation for many of our clients. For youth, it creates doubt about their future. For newcomers, it creates confusion and uncertainty: "We came to this country because we heard you need people with experience in skilled trades, but no one will hire us because our experience is not recognized."

For our newcomer clients at the welcome centre, they drawing on savings that are often depleted much quicker than anticipated because finding work takes longer than expected. If they are accessing our services, it is primarily because they need a job as soon as possible to pay the bills.

While there are income supports available, for many people, to access those supports deprives them of the hope that they will ever be employed.

Our main office is located in Oshawa, a growing city in a growing region. Oshawa and Durham region needs more skilled workers in response to population growth from immigration, second migration from other regions of the province and those simply leaving the GTA. When people are unemployed, coming to us looking for a job in skilled trades, our message is, we are here to help. Similarly, when an employer reaches out looking for an apprentice, we are here to help.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Pam DeWilde: As Reid pointed out, the process of getting the person looking for work trained and ready to go with the employer who needs someone as soon as possible should not be complex and not, least of all, discouraging. A clearly articulated process that individuals can navigate on their own or that service providers can seamlessly support someone to navigate is critical to getting job seekers entering or with experience in skilled trades to the employers and jobs that exist in our communities. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start with the questions now. We'll start the first round with the independent members. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thanks so much to everyone who has joined us today for your presentations. Perhaps I could start where we're just ending there, with the Durham Community Legal Clinic. Pam, I believe you are the first woman to present today and I really value that voice. It's really important when we're talking about skilled trades in Ontario that it is a diverse and inclusive voice that we see and hear at all levels.

This morning, I had a chance to ask the minister about that and about the inclusion of women and racialized people in the governance structure that is moving forward. He did confirm that that was his intention. So we really want to watch for that, as we move forward. Can you talk a little bit about—and, of course, to Omar and Reid as well—the importance of diversity in the skilled trades? You talked about the journey for people who are ready and motivated to work, but we need to create a clear pathway for them in the skilled trades sector.

Ms. Pam DeWilde: Most certainly. We are seeing that diversity come into our community. We work closely with the Durham Local Immigration Partnership. One of their pillars is community, employer engagement and talking about what are the barriers for employers to hire newcomers, and also to find those pathways to find the people that we know are there with the skills, who come with the skills that can meet those demands.

If there's more to add, I'll let Omar add to that.

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: Certainly. I would love to add to that. And MPP Hunter, it's great to have your questions. My current constituents of yours, as you know, obviously are very ecstatic about the work that you do here at Queen's Park.

For this particular question, I probably have to draw more on my father-in-law's experiences as an immigrant to Canada. He moved to Canada from China as an engineer. After being approximately my age, coming to Canada, and not having his credentials recognized in Canada, he ultimately was able to get a journey person class qualification as an electrician way back in 2002, when he had his Red Seal effective date. So this was, in a very, very real way, his journey to a middle-class income and having his life changed.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: I think the challenge that we have is, in 2010 the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum highlighted that immigrants make up about 3% to 5% of all apprentices, even though immigrants represent about 20% of the Canadian population. Similarly, visible minorities represent between 5% to 7% of apprenticeships, compared to 16% of the Canadian population. And so we know that there is actually a very significant challenge in bringing in diverse people into the trades.

We need to have that reflected in the consultations but also the advisory bodies that regulate this area—but also to recognize that many of the partners and bodies that may be operating in this industry may have their own systemic barriers that keep diverse populations from entering these industries. That's the reason why, quite frankly, we need the role of government. This cannot be something that's left entirely to the private industry to sort out themselves. Despite all the well-intentioned, there are obviously many, many unintentional barriers.

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I'll point to a study that just came out today. This can be found in the Toronto Star, where a new survey demonstrates that Canadians agree that racism is a problem, and nearly all Black Canadians—96%—think that racism is an issue in the workplace. This is in stark contrast to white Canadians, of whom 56% of them see it as a small problem or not a problem at all. Unfortunately, these problems are also reflected in the trades workplaces and need to be addressed.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you so much for everything that you have said. One of the tools that we have is the community benefits agreement, where we build into the procurement process that there is a requirement for more inclusive projects as we roll them out.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much, MPP Hunter.

Before we move to the government for their first round, MPP Tangri, can you please confirm your attendance?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good morning, Chair. Nice to see everybody today. Yes, this is Nina Tangri, MPP for Mississauga–Streetsville, and I am in Mississauga, Ontario. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start the first round with MPP McKenna.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much. I appreciate Greg, Omar, Pam, Reid and Ian being here today. Thank you so much for giving us your input.

I just want to say a couple of things. I had the privilege a few years ago of going to the building foundation for equity and support for women. I'm sure everybody here remembers Blue Coble. She was an ironworker from Phoenix, Arizona, and spoke there. Patrick Dillon was there as well. When I was there, they talked about how cumbersome it was to navigate, how we needed to end the stigma and we needed a one-stop shop, because it was very confusing to navigate the system. I can say from trying to navigate for my son that it was absolutely exhausting. So you do recognize that getting people to be able to be at a one-stop shop—to work together—is the best avenue, because you don't want people who might want to be in the skilled trades not to have the opportunity because they just are exhausted trying to figure out how to navigate it. I know the minister said this morning that when the previous Liberal government was in, the skilled trades dropped 40% and there were 17,000 fewer OCOT members.

I guess my first question is to Ian. First of all, thank you for your quote on October 20, 2020, in the article in the Daily Commercial News titled "Future of Skilled Trades in Ontario." Your quote said, "OCOT failed for a number of reasons that should be considered in developing its replacement." Do you want to just elaborate a bit more on that, Ian, please?

Mr. Ian DeWaard: First of all, I have to remember the article, but I'll give it my best. As I said in my remarks, OCOT held out a lot of promise in terms of what it could achieve, but was bogged down in areas that were just too big and too diverse for it to remain focused.

I think what the province has done here with the agency that arises next is deliver focus in terms of a purpose that removes some of the areas that were burdensome, namely enforcement and, really, the complicated governance structure, which was good in its intent, in terms of trying to draw all the stakeholders into a self-governing model, but which became too cumbersome for it to be effective.

Some of the problems that we heard talked about here in terms of creating better pathways for folks who come to this country and want a life in the skilled trades, or better pathways for those who have challenges navigating them, are things that the agency can attend to and that we've talked a lot about in the industry, and that I'm hopeful they'll be able to prioritize on with some of the distractions that OCOT brought being now removed from its mandate.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you very much. The minister did say this morning that good, meaningful jobs keep families together, and that is very, very true. We all know that skilled trades haven't been at the table for many, many years, and it's so important to bring them back in. We've all heard the ratios, the average age, and we don't want to—well, we're already in a situation now where we need to engage those people to be able to get into these great jobs. I'm passionate about it, obviously, because of my son, so it's very near and dear to my heart.

OCOT presented many challenges to the skilled trades, making it quite cumbersome to navigate. Obviously Blue Coble was one of the people. We've heard that throughout the morning so far.

The new proposed system addresses many of the issues that OCOT had, such as establishing a new crown agency, while the ministry will be responsible for compliance and enforcement. Can you speak about the importance of the separation?

Go ahead, Ian.

Mr. Ian DeWaard: Oh, sorry. I didn't realize the question was directed at me.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Well, anybody can answer.

Mr. Ian DeWaard: Like I said, I think that the enforcement is a really important element of ensuring that trades work is done safely, both for the sake of the worker and for the sake of the public. That was left within the ambit of the college's responsibility. It was complicated, because it was also trying to be a self-regulating organization.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Ian DeWaard: We have long suggested that, for efficiency, for clarity and for trust in the system, that task was best left to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. That reassignment to the ministry is a good one and we were pleased to see it.

Ms. Jane McKenna: That's great. How much time do I have left? Sorry, Omar, do you want to go ahead? Omar, I see your hand up.

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: Thank you. If I can address the comments in the previous panel, MPP McKenna, where you indicated there was no evidence that ratios affect injuries. I'm not sure we can entirely agree with that. There are some studies—a 2017 study from the BC Federation of Labour—that did suggest that the reduction of ratios to 1 to 1 has resulted in an increase of injuries. I know that other provinces, like Manitoba and BC, have moved in that direction, but we're not convinced that there will not necessarily be any resulting increase in injuries.

There was also a 2010 study—and this will be in our written submission, and I'm going to quote from it—that says, "For every 10% increase in the percentage of apprentices at the worksite, there was a 27% increase in ladder falls." And so, I think we do have to be concerned about this, and we'll have to keep an eye on this from a health and safety perspective as well.

Ms. Jane McKenna: How much time is left, Chair? Sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): A minute and 30 seconds.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Okay, so I'll go back to either Omar, Reid or Pam. Do you support measures introduced by Minister McNaughton and our government to ensure workers are protected, including hiring 98 new health and safety inspectors, a robust and consistent workplace inspection blitz and implementing workplace rapid tests?

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: Sure, yes, of course we support that, but it's worth highlighting that that is not a small-government approach. It's also a reactive approach and not a preventive approach to health and safety, and obviously the focus and emphasis should always be on prevention.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Does anybody else want to add to that? Okay, so then I want to thank all of you for being

here today, and we look forward to moving forward with the rest of the day. It has been great conversations up to this point. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll move to the opposition side now for their first round. Who would like to start from the opposition? No questions from the opposition? MPP Gates?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. I'll start by saying thank you very much to all the presenters.

I'm going to go to Greg first. First of all, I enjoyed your presentation. Thank you very much. Currently, we have concerns with the lack of clarity in the legislation around the makeup of the board at Skilled Trades Ontario and committees. Can you tell me what structure of these boards you would like to see, and what representation would labour have on the board? What would you like to see on the board as far as labour goes?

Mr. Greg Bobier: Ultimately, realistically, what we're looking for is that boots-on-the-ground representation. From a standpoint of if we're talking about the electrical trade or the plumbing trade or any of the certified trades, it should be individuals with knowledge within that trade scope that can speak to this, from both an employer as well as the labour side. If we're seeing that representation and those individuals are following through with that, then that's certainly going to give us the best result, which ultimately is going to be people going to the job site, working safe and coming home safe at the end of the day.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just quickly on that, Greg: Would you like to see the makeup of the board put right in the bill? I know the minister had said that he agrees with a lot of the stuff that we've been saying, but as you know, the minister could change tomorrow and the government could change in a year. Would it not make more sense to put it right in the bill for more protection for the makeup of the board?

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Mr. Greg Bobier: Well, that's actually what we're asking for, for those elements to be refined. When you leave these things up for doubt—like the MOL inspections. Having these things open for subjective discourse is not really at that point what we should be doing. It should be nailed down; it should be literally put into the legislation itself and controlled. That way, the government knows what's going on and all the players and stakeholders have an understanding of where we're at. And at the end of the day, we've got people working safe. I think if you leave it open, you're just asking for more of those issues and troubles.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I agree 100% with you. Again to Greg: Why do you think the government moved off skill sets in the current legislation?

Mr. Greg Bobier: I think it's a smart decision, and one that we applaud collectively. From a standpoint—we've seen it tried in other areas where we, without saying the word, deskill the trades. It doesn't work, and you put people's lives at risk.

I think, if nothing else, we all have the best of intentions. We're trying to get people to go to work; we're

trying to build our economy in this province. I think it's just a good learning process going forward from it. It's been tried other places and it doesn't work, and from the standpoint of listening, I applaud the government. This opportunity to actually have input into this is fantastic, and we really applaud the government for that. If we keep this up and we listen to the people who actually know what they're saying as relates to the specific elements of the trades, you're going to have the best results.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I actually think it's because of the hard work of labour. Their concern with protecting their workers in compulsory trades is the reason why they moved. Also, I know that in the auto sector, which was talked about earlier, they would have lost the entire investment in the province of Ontario if they didn't get off of skill sets.

I'll go to another question, and it's going to go to Pam from the unemployment centre. We talk a lot about the need for more people to be in the skilled trades, to get more apprentices. Can you discuss right now your level of coordination of your organization with the province, colleges or unions to help those looking for work in the skilled trades do apprenticeships, and could the coordination be improved and do you have any suggestions? A little bit of a longer question but hopefully you can get it answered.

Ms. Pam DeWilde: I can speak to some parts of that in terms of, yes, we have people who come to our centre who are looking to get into skilled trades, so we're talking about looking at it as a career and what is the pathway to being an apprentice and eventually becoming a journey-person.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Pam DeWilde: We also work with employers who come to our centre who are trying to find people to fill vacancies. There are various programs and supports for both apprentices and employers available, and so anything that creates clarity for our staff in communicating that to people who come to us, clients or employers, will be helpful.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much.

This can go to all three of you. We know there's a significant backlog of apprentices that have completed their hours but need to write their C of Q exam before graduating to journeyman status. Is this a concern for all of your organizations that we actually have people ready to write the exams and they can't write the exams? As we say, there's a shortage of trades.

Mr. Greg Bobier: Absolutely. From a standpoint of the unionized construction trades, we have the highest rate of completion for apprenticeships, but it's something that we're literally working on, on a regular basis. Definitely it's a concern, and we're taking steps to try and move that forward as best we can.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Ian, do you want to answer that?

Mr. Ian DeWaard: Thanks, MPP Gates. It's good to see you. Thanks for the question. It's not as significant a problem that I can speak to in our organization, but I can say that one of the key concerns is access to training. What we hope for from this shift and that the agency will be able

to do is focus on ensuring that the seats are available in the communities where our workers are learning. That's sometimes not the case. You're doing your apprenticeship in Sarnia and the best next location for apprenticeship is—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Ian DeWaard: So again, we hope that with a focused effort, Skilled Trades Ontario is going to be able to identify effectively where demand is for training and credentialing and be able to respond accordingly in terms of ensuring that the seats are available in the communities where workers are doing the learning and testing.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks.

This is probably to Greg. The minister, in May, set out scope of practice of individual trades—I believe 2(a) is where it's at—but particular practice may include a more-than-one-trade scope of practice. Is that a concern to you, Greg, that the minister could actually say that a trade could actually expand their scope of work to the trades?

Mr. Greg Bobier: Yes. I think that goes without saying. From a standpoint of an overall statement, we still believe that the scope of the trades should be left with the trades, with, of course, a broader—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up for the opposition. We'll have to move to the government side now. MPP Tangri.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good morning, everyone. I appreciate all of you coming here to present today. In my role as parliamentary assistant to economic development, job creation and trade, I meet with many businesses from all sectors across this province. The one thing I hear, time and time again, is the lack of the ability to hire skilled workers. It's a dire need, even now throughout COVID, if not more so. It's really something that we need to do much more work on, and I think this bill is really a step in the right direction.

And much to your point, Pam, it is really critical that we support our newcomers to try and help them pave the way to getting meaningful employment in their field. The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development right now has the oversight of the immigrant nominee program. It prioritizes certain jobs like the trades that we're seeing right now. The new agency is mandated to make the equivalency process more efficient so we recognize those foreign credentials much faster, especially in the trades.

I know you talked a lot about diversity and inclusion, and there is no doubt that that's a huge problem, especially in the pre-apprenticeship. Much more than the Liberals, we actually spent \$21 million annually. This seems to attract more women, Indigenous and under-represented people into the trades. So we look at all of these issues.

I wanted just to speak a little bit about this new thing. We often talk about Minister McNaughton and some of the things he's doing in this bill. But one area where I've spoken to people and that I think is one of the concerns is potential accidents in the workplace. Another thing, there was a funding boost that was announced to the Office of the Worker Adviser as a first step in a series of WSIB reforms.

So I'll start—maybe Omar, if you want to comment on this: Do you support more supports and services catered to assisting workers so that they can navigate the WSIB much better? I know you've done some work with people in this field and we have the Office of the Worker Adviser that does similar work. So if you can comment on that, Omar.

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: Without question, we support those types of initiatives. I'll point to a 2004—so a little bit dated—study that was published through the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which says that thousands of highly qualified immigrants who come to Ontario are totally frustrated that their talents and their training is wasted. I'm going to quote from that report. It says, "If immigrants are really the lifeblood of the economy and society, it is vital to assure that the lifeblood remains healthy. All agencies involved in the accreditation process have a role to play."

In light of this particular bill, I think there are some elements that I think we can point to specifically. There are some changes. One of the three main differences in the proposed framework is changing the 21-member board of governors to the Skilled Trades Ontario 11-member competency-based board of directors and CEO. This in and of itself might actually be a good thing.

The only thing that I will emphasize once again, though, is that issues of equity, diversity and inclusion are also issues of competency. There are skills in those areas. And so if we're looking at the skilled trades and we're looking at issues of equity, we also need to have those 11 members who are going to be on Skilled Trades Ontario also reflect that diversity and have those skill sets.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you.

I'm just going to veer off, if I can ask Greg a question. Greg, this new system will see the return of whole trades rather than just skill sets. We have listened to many, many skilled tradespeople and stakeholders alike, and maintain full trades in this act for the health and safety of tradespeople right across the province. Could you please speak to the importance of full trades, as opposed to the breakdown into skill sets and restricted activities?

1140

Mr. Greg Bobier: Absolutely. Thank you, MPP Tangri. It's sort of an obvious thing from a standpoint—or at least to me—the unionized construction sector is always focused on taking an individual and working towards actually having them complete their apprenticeship, their C of Qs, Red Seal and graduate a journeyman that is actually competent—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Greg Bobier: —within the whole skill set of that trade. If they're not, the reality you're going to see is going to be seeing further accidents. If you are not capable in doing the entire job within that, the full certification, you're going to see an increase in those accidents, and that's the thing that we work constantly to avoid. Our training levels are such that we want our members to go to work and come home safe. We want everyone to go to work and come

home safe. A lot of our push has been trying to do that. It's something that, to us, is an obvious approach to it.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: This question is for each of you, just a quick yes or no answer. As you've heard today and previously, there are many labour unions, including Unifor, LIUNA and building trades affiliates, and they're all on the record of supporting this proposed legislation. Could you just, each of you, add your voice and whether you support this bill today? We'll start with you, Ian.

Mr. Ian DeWaard: As I suggested in the remarks, we think that this is the right framework, the right architecture for engaging in the long list of issues that need to be confronted, and so we very much support the bill and urge its passing.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Greg?

Mr. Greg Bobier: We support it as well, with, of course, the stipulations, like some of the changes that we've listed that you're going to hear echoed by our provincial counterparts and some of our other trades. We do support it.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Omar?

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: I would point out that probably all of the collective agreements that are going to be affected by this bill have a higher ratio than the 1 to 1, so the changes in the bill are actually not going to affect their workers in particular. Labour relations are effectively immunized, as well, from the Human Rights Tribunal because of the collective agreement regime—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: —and so, yes, we're in support, but the concerns that we have expressed earlier are still very live concerns.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you for coming today.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll now go to the opposition for their second round. MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm having some technical issues. Thanks for your patience.

I appreciated hearing from all presenters. I especially want to really thank Omar for raising the Dean report around safety. It took a long time to get those recommendations into place, especially the working-at-heights component. So I wanted to thank you and Pam for raising the issue around affordability. My own son is apprenticing right now as an electrician, and his friends and his counterparts, including those older workers who are in their second and third careers, are having some serious issues with affordability and access, so I appreciate your raising that.

Ian, I haven't got to the new CLAC training facility, but I can see it from the 401. I hope one day to get there in the future, hopefully sooner than later.

Greg, I want to thank you for bringing specific amendments to Bill 288.

Our concerns are ongoing. I'm just going to quote from a business manager, who says to me, "Bill 288 does not name the construction trades in the compulsory trades or the non-compulsory trades"—and this is probably by design, he says—so if the government wants to later on go

back and address skill sets, Bill 288 still leaves the possibility of future skill-setting—I want to make that very clear—breaking up the trades into skill sets and not recognizing trade qualifications and the apprenticeship system.

The reason that this is concerning for us and why this forum is so important is that there is history here. When Mike Harris was Premier of this province, we had the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, and the majority of trades were removed from the TQAA, under the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, where they were fragmented into pieces or skill sets. Then the Liberals tried to address that issue with the College of Trades. So getting this piece of legislation right now is so very important, not only for our economy but for diversifying and making a more inclusive economy on a go-forward basis.

Greg, can you address specifically your first amendment? You want to address the uncertainty which still exists in this legislation. Can you speak to the importance of the government accepting that amendment?

Mr. Greg Bobier: Absolutely, MPP Fife. I appreciate it. It's the same thing I'm going to continue to repeat here, and you're going to hear it again and again from many of the certified trades: Unless you're actually addressing those compulsory trades as compulsory trades—unless you're naming them—you run into that situation where someone, either from enforcement or for curricula or just broad scope of practice, who is not a member of that trade, has input on it. To be frank, no, you shouldn't be doing that, just from a common-sense standpoint. Having someone who isn't an electrician, to be very obvious, defining what are electrical safety procedures or correct procedures is absolutely silly.

From a standpoint of that, that's why a lot of these base pieces here are, to us, essential for this framework to work properly. We see great potential within it. It's just that we need to make some changes, which is fair enough.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Absolutely. I think that we all collectively want to get this right, but it's been a long time since the skilled trades and the apprenticeship programs have been fully reviewed. Now we have a better understanding of their importance to the economy.

Certainly we, as the official opposition, also want to see a more inclusive direction so that those who want to enter the trades have no barriers. When you think about the financial assistance that some receive for university and college, we should be applying that same equity lens to the skilled trades.

With that, I'm just going to throw it back over to my colleague MPP Gates. Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes. MPP Gates?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to go to Omar and Greg on this question. Could you discuss any safety concerns regarding the 1-to-1 ratios, particularly in the non-unionized sector, and maybe share with us some of the data that you have on this? I think this is a very, very important issue when we're talking about ratios.

Go first, yes. Omar, go ahead.

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: Sure. The ratio, it's worth pointing out, is identified in section 8. That's where we find this. There is a provision under here which says that the minister may collect information for risk management—that's section 62, sub 4—that is used for quality improvement purposes.

It's worth noting, though, that the minister is not mandated to collect this information. This is where we start to depart, perhaps, from some of the recommendations we found in the Dean report that really did say we need to emphasize the quality of on-the-job training and looking at ratios—because it's not just about ratios in and of themselves; it's also about the quality of supervision—and ensure that if we are going to be reducing the ratios, if you will, we're doing it in a safe manner and we're not just doing it for economic reasons.

We understand, of course, that ratios as well as increasing the number of apprentices have significant economic repercussions. Large construction is more efficient or effective in being able to bring apprentices in that way. But as you pointed out, MPP Gates, when we start looking at smaller employers and smaller operations, non-unionized operations, the same protections are not there and we typically do see higher risk and higher injuries in that context.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Go ahead, Greg.

Mr. Greg Bobier: Thank you, MPP Gates. Absolutely there's a concern with it. As was pointed out, our collective agreements will stipulate ahead of those ratios. There's a reason why the unionized construction sector works safer. The Ontario Construction Secretariat just re-released an updated version of their study. The numbers of 25% to 31% of safety margins that are better within the unionized construction sector are not something to be taken lightly. There's a reason why we have a higher rate of completion: because we're following protocols and systems that have been set down by the tradespeople themselves.

1150

Absolutely, from a common-sense standpoint, it still follows back to putting people in front of the dollar and allowing the people who are actually utilizing this—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off; the time has come up.

We'll now go to the independent members for their second round. MPP Hunter?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thanks so much to everyone today. The level of discussion is really important and it's important that we get this right in Ontario, both from just the role that the trades play in our economy, in our communities, in our society and in our way of life, and how we can continue to make this an attractive option for people—and utilizing everyone's capacity as well. I really appreciated the discussion around those who immigrate to Canada and how we can best utilize their skills. In some ways, the trades almost give an opportunity to convert skills as well and give people viable career choices.

Greg, I want to just reinforce the language and the recommendations that you've made to improve the bill. I

recognize that there is broad consensus that this bill is something that the industry supports. But there are still aspects of it that could be tightened. That's what the purpose of committee is, to hear all sides and to see how we can make improvements.

I also appreciate many of the individuals referring to the Dean report of 2015. One of the first things that was talked about in that report was the importance of self-regulation. Really, that leads to a safer industry as well for people who do perform the work, are responsible for the work, and who are ensuring that the standards are met and maintained.

You talked about making sure that we tighten the language and actually prescribe the establishment of those committees that give voice to this sector. Can you talk about that a little bit more in terms of the importance of hearing that tradesperson's voice?

Mr. Greg Bobier: Thank you, MPP Hunter. Absolutely—again, I'm sounding like a broken record—but it is just straightforward common sense. The people who are actually on the ground doing the work, having a direct input, in conjunction with employers—it leads us to a better place.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Greg Bobier: It leads us to a more refined and structured system.

We recognize that this whole process—this legislation and its previous incarnations and where we come from—is a work in progress. We do want to get it right. As long as we continue to focus on that, I think we're going to see success from it.

We applaud the government for the work they're doing with this piece of legislation. It's just that, like all things, we want to have that little bit of input. We appreciate that input in trying to make it a little bit better. I think, with the changes we're suggesting, you're going to see that both from a standpoint of economics and how people are working safer, as well as employers being able to realize more value and put more people—more diverse people—and more systems at play where we're putting people to work. That's really, at the end of the day, what we're looking for.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That's great. In terms of more diverse people, I really believe that that's important at all levels, including the oversight at the governance level as well. Removing barriers for low-income individuals, I believe Pam spoke to that—things like removing the fees for apprenticeship, and the grants to purchase tools, I think, will help.

Omar, if I could give you the last word—where you talk about the need for representation at the governance level.

Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye: In the limited time that I have, I will point out that I think we already have some concerns in terms of how this is panning out. The Skilled Trades Panel, for example, has 40% women, which is great, but there are 0% racialized minorities on that particular structure. We're flagging this for a very important reason. We know that these voices have historically been excluded from discussions around the trades and we want to ensure that going forward, especially when we're looking at on-

boarding immigrants—but not just immigrants. Many racialized Ontarians are not immigrants at all but are looking for these opportunities. We want to ensure that those—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. That concludes our time. I would like to thank all three presenters for coming. We appreciate your presentations. You are now released.

This is all of our business for this morning. This committee now stands in recess until 1 p.m. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1155 to 1300.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good afternoon, and welcome back. We're resuming public hearings on Bill 288, An Act to enact the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021.

SKILLS ONTARIO

PROMOTION

ONTARIO COUNCIL FOR TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I would now like to call upon our first presenter this afternoon, Skills Ontario. If you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Ian Howcroft: Thank you very much, Chair. Good afternoon. My name is Ian Howcroft, and I'm the CEO of Skills Ontario. With me is Paul Clipsham, Skills Ontario's director of stakeholder relations. We're very pleased to be here today to provide comments on Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act. We have had the privilege of appearing before this committee in the past, and we appreciate all opportunities where we can highlight and promote the benefits of pursuing skilled trades and technology careers.

Our focus is always on young people, but we have significantly expanded our audiences to include parents, small businesses and other organizations that can help us realize our goals and objectives. I would like to recognize the government and Minister McNaughton for the leadership and actions that have been taken to build Ontario's skilled workforce of the future.

I'll make a few general comments and will address some of the points, and I'll turn it over to my colleague Paul Clipsham to talk about Skills Ontario's work and the bill.

Skills Ontario has been promoting skilled trades and technology careers for over 30 years and is expanding and enhancing our reach and impact in partnership with the government and other organizations. As I often say, Skills Ontario is the conduit to connect the work and initiatives that pertain to skills. We are a repository of information and resources, and we want to put our experience, expertise and extensive network to full advantage. We highlight the three Cs: co-operation, coordination and collaboration. We want to do all we can to ensure we're leveraging all investments and skills to realize as much success as possible.

We support the direction and goals of Bill 288, as we see this as a way forward that will help bring certainty,

clarity and better define the rules and responsibility for what and where that responsibility rests. We've been pleased to have the opportunity to provide input to the minister's advisory committees, and we're also pleased to see the work come to fruition.

There has been a shortage in skilled trades careers for many years—in fact, decades—and we no longer have the luxury of time. More people will be leaving the workforce than entering it, so the competition for talent will become even more intense. It is crucial that young people become more aware of all career opportunities available to them at as early an age as possible. I'm pleased to note that we have been helping to change the negative stigma around skilled trades, and our hope is that Bill 288 will allow us to have even more success.

This shortage in skilled trades has been exacerbated by the pandemic, so the need to build on this success and that of others is more important than ever. Students will need more assistance in transitioning from their pandemic learning into their future career paths. This is an aspect that we're taking into account. The province's economic recovery depends on having the skilled trades and technology workers available to build things, construct things and ensure things work and are serviced. We also have a strategic focus on better engaging Indigenous youth, girls and young women, as these are groups that are very under-represented.

As an aside, I'll like to mention that we have a Guinness world record challenge we would like to invite all committee members to participate in: having the longest virtual exchange of people using screwdrivers. While the focus is on girls and young women, our commitment to diversity has it open to all.

One last point I'll make is that the pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance and need for certain jobs to get things done, to keep the economy running and to ensure that all are safe and healthy. Skilled trades and technology workers are more highly valued and recognized than they were 18 months ago. We need to leverage this and build on this as we move forward in the recovery.

I'll now turn it over to my colleague Paul Clipsham to say a few words.

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Thank you, Ian. As Ian alluded to, our primary mission is to promote and enable the next generation of skilled trades and tech leaders, and so I want to spend the remainder of the time just providing a bit more information about how Skills Ontario is really well-positioned to support this new entity and the government of Ontario in continuing to build momentum in terms of promoting careers in skilled trades and technologies.

Heading into the pandemic, we launched a new initiative called our #SkillsAtHome Challenge Series, which were just fun, simple activities that young people and families could do at home. We've held over 20 contests since that time. We've had over 350 submissions, and it was great to see parents getting involved and working with the young people to come up with really innovative solutions for that.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Not only that, but we generated a lot of interest on social media, with over 1.4 million hits. We also recently held our virtual Skills Ontario Competition and Career Exploration Showcase. We had over 12,000 participants log into the VFairs platform for that event to learn about skilled trades, to engage with employers and educators to get a better understanding of the education and career pathways involved in rewarding careers in skilled trades and tech. Within that event, we also broke a new record for Canada's largest young women's conference, with over 7,000 participants in that event. It's just amazing to see how that event has grown over the years and, even during the pandemic, has really accelerated.

The same goes for our First Nations, Métis and Inuit conference. As Ian mentioned, that's an important community for us that we have been engaging for a number of years, and the interest continues to grow. We doubled our numbers from previous years, with over 1,200 participants in that conference as well. And of course we had a closing ceremony where we had over 4,500 viewers. We awarded medals where students can go on and represent their province at Skills Canada—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Paul Clipsham:—and if they win there, they have an opportunity to go and compete for their country at WorldSkills as well. It's just an incredible event, and we were pleased to be able to continue to deliver that, even under fairly challenging circumstances, of course. Most importantly, the feedback from students and educators alike and other stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive, many reporting that this experience has literally changed their lives and their direction in terms of their career, so that's something we're really proud of.

Again, we're hoping to work with this new entity, Skilled Trades Ontario, and continue to work with the Ontario government to deliver more success and continue to build momentum. We really believe strongly that this has underscored the success, that we want to scale up our activities and continue to grow and expand our reach.

With that, I'll say thank you to the committee and look forward to the discussion.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you for finishing it on time.

We'll move to our next presenter, Promotion. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Darryl Spector: Good afternoon, and thank you. My name is Darryl Spector. I'm the president of Promotion. Joining me today is Jamie McMillan, the founder of KickAss Careers.

Just to jump into it, thank you today for the opportunity. That's a good segue, from the previous speaker, because I'm actually an alumnus of Skills Ontario and the whole experience was transformative to my own. From my own perspective, I'm a white-collar engineer. I graduated from mechanical engineering at U of T with honours. I've got 30-plus years' experience in the automation industry and running a business now, and I'm now the president of a \$30-million-plus company that works in the skilled trades

technology side of things. But I, very importantly, have a blue-collar background experience that I would not have had otherwise had I not stumbled into it to a certain degree. That's led me into a journey that I think is very relevant to this discussion and the act.

I now currently sit as the chair of Skills Ontario. I'm also on the board of the Ontario Council for Technology Education, or OCTE, that's joining us today as well, and I'm a board member of the Ontario advisory board for the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters.

So just for context, the point I'm speaking from as president of Promotion but also my own experience is that the skilled trades very much touch white collars as well, and we don't really consider that aspect. Speaking to that, the absence of skilled trades competencies plays an intrinsic aspect in the white-collar education pathways and it directly undermines the effectiveness of those careers for several reasons. First is that it propagates the systematic perception in the divide between desk jobs and skilled trades competencies. We need to close that.

It also propagates the paradigm of a two-class system; you know, white collar is respected and blue collar is kind of a second-class career. That's still a paradigm that we need to break. It's been around for way too long. It also undermines an understanding that designs need to be constructible and manufacturable. You can't decouple those two. They are intrinsically related. Instilling a strong appreciation of the skilled trades worker, competencies and the role skilled trades have played in our societal infrastructure and well-being will increase the likelihood of uptake and respect of skilled trades as a first-choice career, and also create more champions and advocates of the skilled trades. They are just too intrinsically related.

The other thing, as well, is—again, I could have been this, I could have been a stat—many white-collar technical graduates have little to no practical trades knowledge or experience, and quite often they're the ones creating the designs. They're sitting at their desks and they're throwing designs that need to be made. It could take years of post-graduation work and experience to develop the necessary understanding and skills to calibrate that effectiveness: manufacturability and so on, cost-effective designs, operability maintenance. Disconnected designs—and again, I'm speaking as a business manager and business leader and an engineer here—can be more costly to manufacture, can take longer to manufacture and construct, and can be more expensive and more difficult to operate and maintain.

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So from a fiscal point of view, in the consideration of decoupling white-collar careers and so on, it will lead to a longer curve to industry-relevant effectiveness of early white-collar technical graduates, which potentially undermines the competitiveness of Ontario, the productivity and the gross domestic product.

With regard specifically to Bill 288—I'm just going to speak to these points and pass it to my colleague Jamie here—the promotion of skilled trades pathways is critical. It must not be limited or strictly focused directly on skilled trades career incumbents, but, I think, more broadly as a

cohort in general, like in the social sciences: a respectful appreciation of the role that skilled trades have played in our collective societal infrastructure.

The streamlining of understanding of access to the skilled trades pathways and apprenticeships and so on is essential, as is the consideration to define the requirements of mandatory curriculum content within the Ministry of Education to ensure robust, effective and pervasive respect for the skilled trades broadly amongst youth, and eventually society at large.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Darryl Spector: Kids are going to grow up. They're going to be those adults. If we don't have that respect instilled—I think now, Jamie, it would be a great time to jump in and kind of speak to—that's the work that she does.

Ms. Jamie McMillan: Absolutely. Thank you, and thanks for having me today. It's an honour to be here. I'm Jamie McMillan. I've been in the skilled trades for almost 20 years. I am a journeyman ironworker. I've been a welder. I am an apprentice boilermaker. And I'm the founder of KickAss Careers—named by high school students, by the way. I speak to approximately 40,000 students across North America, but I primarily work in partnership with Skills Ontario and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. They're really where I got my start, so I'm a big fan of both.

I do work in construction, so I'm very familiar with the barriers and the challenges, especially as a woman going through the trades, and I recognize the barriers are not just women's alone; they're for everyone, including under-represented groups as well. My work in the schools is primarily with the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, and I'm seeing the barriers and challenges of trying to recruit youth into the industry.

I speak to kids from kindergarten all the way through to grade 12. I get to speak at community centres. I do detention centres. My focus is to promote skilled trades pathways as first-choice careers. Through my work, I've been recognized by the Canadian Armed Forces, as well, and made an influencer, and I'm also part of the federal advisory committee for the government with Mandy Rennehan, Matt Wayland and France from the apprenticeship forum.

I'm very lucky to be in the position that I'm in, and I'm looking forward to change. I didn't know much about the Ontario College of Trades because when I came in to skilled trades, it wasn't there yet. I did the C of Q; I didn't have to go through the College of Trades, and when the College of Trades came out, ironworking was not considered a compulsory trade. So I didn't have much experience with the College of Trades. But I do remember that there wasn't a lot of paperwork when I originally started. For people like me who are in construction, we hate paperwork and red tape, and I know that I've heard from a lot of people in the trades that the Ontario College of Trades—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jamie McMillan: —was a lot of paperwork, especially for students and parents trying to get in the

industry. They would get annoyed and frustrated with all the extra paperwork.

So I'm here today. Thanks for having me, and I will pass it over to whoever is next.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): All right. Thank you so much.

We'll now move to our next presenter, the Ontario Council for Technology Education. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation as well.

Mr. Chris Tucker: Okay. Excellent. Thank you very much. Good afternoon. My name is Chris Tucker. I am the chair of the Ontario Council for Technology Education, or OCTE, and also an Ontario-certified construction technology teacher with over 20 years of teaching and consulting experience in both the elementary and secondary school systems. With me today is—

Ms. Christine German: Hi. I'm Christine German. I'm the manager of growth and innovation for OCTE. Previous to that, I worked with the Halton District School Board for close to 15 years, managing programs at the board level. My background is in research and program development rather than teaching.

Mr. Chris Tucker: OCTE is the provincial teaching association that represents both elementary and secondary teachers whose primary role is the delivery of technological education. The courses we teach offer direct alignment with the skilled trades because approximately half of our high school members are licensed trades professionals. This is because in Ontario, technological education is the only subject that you can teach without holding a university degree, and it also requires you to have work experience within the field you're going to be teaching. I am confident that if you were to ask any of the fellow presenters over the next two days where they saw the skilled trades in high school, it would have been in a technological education program. We are proud to be the grassroots of the trades in Ontario.

As an organization, we reach approximately 4,500 members comprised of educators and industry partners. We are affiliated with 68 of the 72 school boards comprising both English- and French-speaking boards in the province. We have a well-established communication network which allows us to have excellent engagement with our membership. This is demonstrated by our engagement rates of between 35% to 60% when conducting surveys, and just as a note, we launched a survey on Monday and we have already recorded over 1,200 responses.

One of the primary supports that OCTE offers is the development of innovative and industry-related curriculum resources with an explicit focus on safety and transferable skills. These tools support students in exploring the skilled trades and developing and showcasing their skills through experiential opportunities, like skills competitions hosted by Skills Ontario.

We continually engage with industry to ensure the relevance of our resources and have partnered with industry representatives, like the Canadian Welding Bureau and the

Canadian Tooling and Machining Association, on multiple occasions to offer professional learning to our educators.

OCTE also has a strong working relationship with the Ministry of Education and has partnered with them on several projects. However, despite our positive working relationship with the ministry in Ontario, there is still no formal requirement for school boards to offer technological education programs, nor is there a compulsory technological education credit in high school.

Ms. Christine German: We've heard over the last several years that skilled trades and technology are key priorities of our Ministry of Education. At the same time, there's a big disconnect between this government's intent and key guiding policies of education, and I'm speaking specifically about the curriculum and the high school graduation requirements.

This is a bit personal to me, but on the left you actually see my grade 1 daughter's elementary student schedule. As a parent, I was personally horrified to see that she's actually enrolled in dance, drama, music and the visual arts and up there you'll see one little subject area that's called science and technology, and that's regularly referred to as simply science. It implies to us that we're not teaching technology in elementary school.

As our students continue on to high school, as Chris mentioned, technological education is one of very few high school credits that is not compulsory. So our students literally go through their whole entire educational career—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Christine German: —without taking a technological education course. You'll see on the list there the art, history, geography and phys ed. Basically we're sending a very clear message to our students, our parents, our community and our education system that technological education is not as important as the other subject areas.

And with no compulsory credit also comes no dedicated Ministry of Education funding for technological education. It's very expensive to keep our shops and facilities up with the updates to technology to provide adequate training for our students. In our last survey, lack of funding for consumables and capital equipment was listed as the top issue in our classrooms at 36%—that represents approximately 360 teachers. Also, the orange part is declining enrolment in high school that has impacted their programs and the 13.5% is the lack of a compulsory credit for a high school technological education.

We need you to know that our teachers are your champions. They are the ones who spend the extra hours to coach our students for the Skills Ontario competitions. They're also the ones who leverage their contacts in industry when they know a student is going to be successful in a skilled trade and apprenticeship to make that connection. But now more than ever, they truly need your support. Bill 288 is a fantastic start. They are really key to encouraging youth to pursue the skilled trades.

Mr. Chris Tucker: In November 2019, I had the opportunity to attend the opening of the new LIUNA 506 Training Centre. Premier Ford was also in attendance at the event. Just prior to meeting the Premier, I overheard a

gentleman say to Premier Ford that we need to bring trades back into our schools.

OCTE is the organization that is fully invested in doing this. As a first step, OCTE advocates for two key priorities, the first one being the development of legislation that will allow for our school boards or schools—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Chris Tucker: —to become training and delivery agents separate of the college oversight process. This would occur where there is a technological education program being delivered by a fully licensed tradesperson who is also a fully licensed teacher.

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The second priority would be that a seat on the board of directors for Skilled Trades Ontario be filled by a representative from the OCTE executive, thereby offering Skilled Trades Ontario direct insight into our elementary and high school classrooms.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address the committee. We look forward to answering your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start with the questions now. We'll start the first round with the opposition. Who would like to go first? MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks to the presenters for being here. A new organization, Skilled Trades Ontario, is tasked with promoting the skilled trades in Ontario. Obviously this is an important goal, with the need for apprentices. What are some of the initiatives you'd like to see done by Skilled Trades Ontario to promote trades more broadly?

All three of you can answer, whatever you'd like to do.

Mr. Ian Howcroft: I can start off, MPP Gates. Thank you very much. I think promotion is still key to having success in realizing more young people considering and moving toward a career in the skilled trades and technologies. I think there's a lot that's being done out there and Skills Ontario has been able to maintain that momentum of promotion. I'm hoping that how this is executed from a practical perspective is that we use the network that's there, we build on the network that's there and we help to promote that network to let young people know.

We go into the schools, as Jamie McMillan does. We've done almost 2,000 in-school presentations virtually this year and we've been directly in front of 80,000 kids through this virtual mechanism. We've also engaged tens of thousands of others in the other activities that we've had to promote skilled trades. It's been more of a challenge for us this year to provide that experiential hands-on, but we've been able to do that.

I think we're looking for new ways to be innovative and continue to engage and grow the network that we have. I know there's a lot of other groups out there dealing with this, and that's why we feel that Skills Ontario can be that hub in the spoke to make that connection, to bring groups together and to realize as much success as possible for the investments that are being made in the promotion of skilled trades and technology.

That's what we do. That's what we've been doing for 30 years, and we look forward to building on that as we move forward with the new agency and with the ministry

that is still going to have some responsibilities in the skilled trades area.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. Does somebody else want to go? Then I'll get on to another question. Would somebody else like to respond?

Mr. Darryl Spector: Sure, I'll jump in. Very simply, I think, it's creating those experiences early on and working for the organizations. I think Skilled Trades Ontario is effectively the conductor of the orchestra and the pieces are going to be the different associations and organizations that do this promotion work.

Being an alumnus of Skills Ontario, my career would not be where it is today were it not for the work that they did early on, and for the tech teachers that OCTE represents, who played a critical role in that. Effectively you can't say Skilled Trades Ontario without Skills Ontario.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anybody else? Christine?

Ms. Christine German: I would just add two parts. First of all, advocacy: We've been advocating with the Ministry of Education for years to make technological education compulsory and more prominent in elementary as well. But we need some pressure from industry. We need big organizations and our public pressure to actually tell the Ministry of Education why this is so important. Without that we will not have more youth following the skilled trades.

The second part is engagement. As Chris said, previously to an organization called School College Work Initiative coming into Ontario, our high schools were allowed to directly be training delivery agents if they had a certified tradesperson delivering the program and the facilities were up to par. They worked directly with MTCU at that time to do so. However, it's been replaced by the School College Work Initiative, where the college provides oversight, where it doesn't involve enough access for our schools and our students to go through this process, and all we're doing is eliminating access for our students to actually start their apprenticeship at level 1 directly in high school.

I'd say look to us, engage us, engage high schools and be able to provide this level 1 apprenticeship training in order to solve the access issue, because all of our students cannot access this directly through the School College Work Initiative.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. I think I'll do this to Jamie, because she didn't get a chance to speak. I've got another question for you, Jamie, so please don't talk too long because I don't get a lot of time here.

Do you think the makeup of the board at Skilled Trades Ontario should be directly included in the legislation?

Ms. Jamie McMillan: I don't think I understand what you mean.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, the board right now in the legislation—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —it's not spelled out who's going to sit on the board. Is it going to be tradespeople? Is it going to be developers? Do you believe that in the language of the bill itself—should we not break it down so we know

exactly who is sitting on that board? Are they tradespeople? Are there people within the community who understand the importance of getting young people into the trades? How do we do the makeup of that board?

If you don't understand it, somebody else can ask, and I'll ask Jamie another question.

Ms. Jamie McMillan: No, I do understand now. I believe that the board should be made up of very diverse people. I think you need to include people in skilled trades. I think you need to include employers and educators, and maybe even some of these younger apprentices or students who are really passionate about it should be part of the board so that you're getting a very diverse effort.

I did find, even with my own company, through KickAss Careers, that I engage with the students when I'm asking the students how to do presentations to the students or do any type of engagement, because the best advice you're going to get is from those in it or those looking to get into it.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. I'm going to get into the schools in my next seven and a half minutes, so don't worry about that. I understand that.

This is going to go back to Jamie again: Being an ironworker, you might understand this. We know this government is sticking with the 1-to-1 ratio. You came through the apprenticeship program. The most important thing for me is to make sure our young people who get involved as apprentices are safe. Do you believe that a 1-to-1 ratio when somebody who is 19 years old is going into an apprenticeship program—we've seen in the last three, four months, we've had a couple of really young, young 19- to 21-year-olds get killed on the job. Some of that was because they were unregulated.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Do you think that the 1 to 1 is a good ratio to make sure of the health and safety of young people?

Ms. Jamie McMillan: It might be in some cases, for some trades, but I'm going to say in my industry, I don't believe so. When you're working in the workplace, it's a dangerous environment. Ironworking is considered one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the world. I think the ratio has to be higher. The job sites are not prepared for the younger people who are coming in. There's a lot of education and health and safety matters that have to be taken into account. I've been in the trades for almost 20 years, and I can still walk into a steel plant, and if my spider senses aren't keen that day, I can accidentally trip on something or fall or get hurt or walk where I'm not supposed to walk. So I don't think the 1-to-1 ratio makes sense for some of the trades at all.

Mr. Wayne Gates: How much time have I got, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Ten seconds.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. I'll ask some questions around schooling in the next seven and a half minutes. Thank you very much for your responses.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to say thank you to all of the presenters. I really appreciate the theme of this panel

being around young people and the future in the trades. I think it's incredible.

I'm just wondering if maybe the folks from the Ontario Council for Technology Education can talk about the Specialist High Skills Major and if you think that that does give high schools the opportunity and students in high schools the opportunity to really gain those hands-on experiences and exposure to trades and technology careers.

Christine, you're nodding. This was going to go to Chris. Okay, go ahead. Go for it, Chris.

Mr. Chris Tucker: I'll start that one. I also am the SHSM board lead for my school board that I work for, so I can absolutely address that. The SHSM program, or the Specialist High Skills Major, is an excellent program for engaging students in exploration of post-secondary pathways. It honours all destinations, whether it's an apprenticeship, college, university, and it has multi-industry foci. Whether you're looking at getting into construction, manufacturing, transportation, there are relevant pathways. And so in premise, absolutely: It definitely provides opportunities for our students looking to explore the trades to get into them.

However, the ratios of students participating in the trades in the SHSM program has been eclipsed by sectors like arts and culture, business and health and wellness. They far outnumber the number of students exploring the skilled trades.

The current government, the current ministry has been making moves to try to address that. There's recently been some dedicated staffing associated with technological education that's been rolled out through that portfolio. So there's intent to address that situation; however, by and large, it becomes a situation where you have a specialty program that certain students are able to access, but unless your school has one of those programs, you're not getting those same resources and access to opportunity.

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Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Okay. So it could be better utilized. I think there's a huge opportunity there. Saying that we're going to build trade schools or build shop classes, sometimes we also have to think about what the desire is of the students and how we grab them to have interest in these career pathways. The Specialist High Skills Major is a way to promote that and we need to do that more in the skilled trades. I would support that for sure. Just as in the elementary I've seen so many wonderful schools where they have makerspaces: just put the tools in the space and the imagination of the young people really incorporates many disciplines in using those tools. So I think we need more focus on those types of things.

Christine, I think you want to really jump in. Go ahead.

Ms. Christine German: You will not find two bigger believers in the Specialist High Skills Major. I was also a board lead in Halton for the program.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Christine German: Absolutely, this program leads students into the skilled trades. But as you just alluded to, I would say starting in grade 11 isn't enough. You can't

expect students to not see this through their whole educational career and then start in grade 11 and say, all of a sudden, “I want to be an apprentice precision machinist”—so, definitely.

The other thing is, not having compulsory technological education means boards get to pick or choose whether they offer that or not. And they are closing shops. They’re turning them into art classrooms because they don’t have that huge onus to keep them open. Even though we’ll continue that messaging of how important it is, and we have leveraged that funding all we possibly can to get into our shops, it’s really inconsistent depending on the board and whether they’re using their funds and they have the capacity to do so.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Do you have any challenges recruiting the technical teachers?

Ms. Christine German: Actually, we’ve been diving into this question and working with our faculties of education on what’s driving a technological education teacher shortage. We believe it’s not only teacher candidates, but it’s also school board hiring practices. So again, it’s sending that clear message to our boards of why we need these teachers. Because it’s a lot easier to hire degreed teachers that can teach in any single discipline—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up.

We’ll now go to the government side for their first round. MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you again to all the presenters for coming here today and presenting. It’s great to see that you all agree to have more promotion and investment into the skilled trades, and especially I see that education aspect is coming into this with these three presenters.

Before I go into my question—again, I will keep my question open so anyone can jump in to answer. But in terms of our government makeup, we’ve been focusing on investing into skilled trades with over a billion dollars. There are some specifics that I just want to highlight. For example, in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program we are funding almost \$17 million per year. That helps grades 10s and those in grade 11 and also grade 12 gain experience in trades while earning high school credits. Again, this is delivered by all 72 school boards in 800 schools; for example, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic board and LIUNA Local 837.

Also, I just want to highlight the pre-apprenticeship investment. Every year the government is investing \$71 million, which is much, much higher than the previous government. For example, the last round was almost 1,800 placements. The reason I’m highlighting this is, my question is—there are two parts of the question. One is, why is it important to invest more into skilled trades at this time? Also, the promotion, as to how we can promote it to more youth: As OCTE mentioned, they’re pre-positioned in the perfect space to take this to a school level. We know that one in three skilled tradespersons are over 55, and just in construction, we need over 100,000. There’s a gap of

100,000 people. So why now, and why is it important to invest more into education at this time period?

Mr. Darryl Spector: Yes, I think I can speak to that. Again, being in business, I think the skilled trades are going to be the catalyst and the backbone of the restoration as we come out of the pandemic. Restoring Ontario to the manufacturing hub that it used to be a couple of decades ago, to be leading in North America—the time is right. The economy, opportunities are going to be there, and it’s going to be the skilled trades and technologies that will lead us there. It’s really the time—if you really want that ROI, that return on investment, now is the time to invest. That’s why I’m just so grateful with what this government has done with the appreciation and their understanding that that is where the money needs to go right now. That resonates with the stakeholders that know this on this event right now.

Mr. Ian Howcroft: Just to add to that, I think promotion continues to be very necessary and key to our success. You look at the average age of someone starting an apprenticeship, it’s still 28, 29 years old, so it shows that there’s a need for us to still get into the schools as early as possible. That’s why we’ve had a more focused approach to getting to kids in the earlier grades, engaging them, letting them know about it.

We’ve also taken a real, diligent effort to get to parents. Parents have a huge influence on their kids. There still is, I think, in many people’s minds, a negative stigma around the trades. I think we’re addressing that and I think it’s improving, but many parents want their kids to go in a certain direction, not even aware of the opportunities presented by a skilled trade or technology career. So that’s why we’re getting out there to keep the kids advised of what’s available, but also to let the parents know what could be an opportunity of great fortune for their kids, to get them involved. For compensation, of course, with balance of life, with entrepreneurship, there’s a whole array of benefits to pursuing that type of career for those who are interested.

Our goal is to make sure kids and parents are aware of all opportunities so they can make the choices and the selections to take them down a career path that best suits them and best suits the economy of Ontario.

Mr. Chris Tucker: I would just like to also add that—I think we’re all beating around the bush too a little bit, in terms of there’s a bias in education in Ontario toward teachers who have degrees.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Chris Tucker: Our elementary teachers all have gone through a university pathway. They’re not skilled tradespeople. So when you look at the earliest years, when we’re putting professionals in front of students, they’re not seeing tradespeople unless that person is sitting around the dining room table, right? We need to look at that and see how we can address that. Through organizations and opportunities like Skills Ontario, where they offer elementary challenges—those are great opportunities, but they’re limited. It’s a once a year, twice a year type of situation. The exposure needs to be ongoing, continuous. Having an add-on to a science document isn’t sufficient to represent

technological education and the breadth of opportunity that it provides our students.

Ms. Christine German: I would just add to what Chris said that we are truly appreciative of this investment into skilled trades and technology. At the same time, the funding can just be a band-aid solution if we don't take this opportunity to actually address our systemic barriers for our students, and that's changing the policies, updating the curriculum to reflect what is needed in today's economy and making sure our students see this from K to 12.

Ms. Jamie McMillan: Do I have time to speak?

Interjection: Go ahead.

Ms. Jamie McMillan: Oh, I do have time? Okay. I'm seeing that we need to get to those elementary students. We need to normalize the trades at a really early age, and these elementary students need to learn something more than firefighter, plumber, carpenter, electrician. That's pretty much what they know. They need to know about all the trades and all the lucrative opportunities, and not just about working in the trades. They don't even understand, when you're speaking to parents, how many career pathways come and stem from the skilled trades that lead into all types of things. I never thought I'd be a motivational speaker, and I'm sure many of you never thought you'd be in the positions you were in, if you came from the trades.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jamie McMillan: There is so much opportunity and we need to let these students and the parents know, and the earlier, the better.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you all for those answers. I really appreciate it. I realize we only have a few seconds left. I just want to make some comments. Next to education and investment, the protection of workers in these workplaces is important. When we got into public office, there were a couple of things we noted down just to increase the workplace safety measures. In 2020, there were 53 critical injuries that took place. Prior, it was 45. When we saw the file, the injuries were getting out of hand, so we brought it down, but we are still working. Hopefully, the next one may be [*inaudible*] on than how we can improve that from 45 or 53 to even reduce the numbers of critical injuries.

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Again, thank you all for your continuous advocacy, and we'll be happy to take your—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start the second round now, and I'll start with independent members. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Chair. What a great conversation. It's so focused on learning and getting more young people into the trades, and I think that's exactly the way to go.

I want to go to my friend Ian Howcroft. You obviously have many, many years and understand the need for the promotion and the hands-on exposure for young people. I'm wondering about the role that we're expecting Skilled Trades Ontario to do in education and promotion, because one of the things I want to see is the diversification of

people being attracted to the trades, so more women, like some of the fierce women on this panel today; and of course, as diverse as Ontario in terms of its population, so more people from the Black community, Indigenous communities. We talked about newcomers this morning. Do you see this being an effective role for the new organization?

Mr. Ian Howcroft: I think it should be, it could be, and hopefully, it will be. I think the most success can be realized by working with groups like Skills Ontario, with my stated bias, to ensure that that does happen. It's an important part of what Skills Ontario does. We want to make sure that we're getting to as many different groups as possible.

As I said, we have a very robust young women's program, an Indigenous program. We created a position this year for diversity, a manager of diversity and inclusivity. We're doing some more on the BIPOC communities out there. We're going to be having another announcement coming out about something else we're doing to extend our reach, to make sure that we're getting our message and these opportunities out in front of as many young people as we can.

There are many under-represented groups that we have to get to. We're not going to fill all these positions unless we do that, unless we are proactively reaching out, engaging and including as many of those groups as possible. We see that as an important part of our future, an important part of what we're doing now, and we're hopeful and expect that that's what Bill 288 will allow, for the new agency to take advantage of what groups are already doing. We see our role also increasing the coordination and collaboration to make sure we're maximizing the investments that are being made to get that success that we all hope to achieve.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: A very comprehensive answer. Thank you.

I often say when I speak to young people that if you can see me, you can be me. We've got here Jamie and Christine. I wish more young people could see you and see the opportunities in the trades and how wonderful it is. I heard a young woman, and she said she thought it was a dirty job; that's why she was not attracted. And then when she realized how much money she could make, she was completely attracted to the job, became a pre-apprenticed journey person and became certified. She says she goes home and then she's totally glamorous.

It's an anecdote, but it is about impressions, right? We need to change the impression of what it is to be an apprentice in this province. I really want to see women at the leadership level in the governance and the oversight, as well as people from diverse backgrounds, because we need to inspire the next generation of apprenticeship and skilled tradespeople in this province.

I want to thank all of you. If anyone has any last comments they want to make, just raise your hand. Christine, go ahead. Jamie, too.

Ms. Christine German: I just wanted to lend my support behind Skills Ontario. When I was in Halton, we ran skill competitions with close to 1,500 competitors, and

1,000 of those were elementary students. They were young women, and they were diverse young women and included a lot of diversity. This was so important—also our elementary teachers and the work they did.

On an unfortunate note, when the cuts came a couple of years ago, our board felt the need to cut our technological education board lead, including elementary science and technology, and that was so damaging—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll go back to the government side for the second round. MPP Kanapathi?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you all for coming today. Thank you for your presentations and your comments and for the work you do to build a skilled trades labour force in Ontario.

I'll start with Skills Ontario, with Ian and Paul. You talked about the negative stigma around the skilled trades. You want clarity and clear provisions in this bill, that we no longer have the luxury of time left. You also passionately talked about the youth and Indigenous—the under-represented youth being factored in, and you want to bring more of those people into these trades. This is very powerful work. I like that.

Could you elaborate on that, on why this is the right time to update our skilled trades and organize a system to attract more individuals to these careers?

Mr. Ian Howcroft: Thank you for the question. I'll start off and then pass it to my colleague, Paul. I think it's unfortunate but the reality is we still have a lot of negative perceptions. That stigma is there because of inaccurate perceptions as to what the skilled trades and technology careers offer. Again, that's why we're trying to get out to the parent community to make sure they understand that. We've actually been trying to put together and host some family skill events and get the whole family involved in exploring what a skilled trade career can be all about and how you start that journey.

I'll turn to Paul because he's been working a little more closely on this and can add some more perspective.

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Sure. Thanks, Ian, and thanks for the question. Yes, I think in terms of the timing—and Darryl talked about this, and others earlier—coming into the pandemic and through the pandemic, we've seen the sectors that are hiring the trades, after an initial hit, have come back really strongly. If you look at construction and manufacturing, just as a couple, those have continued, as essential roles and essential services, to expand through the pandemic and will, as we emerge from the pandemic, continue to grow, and so the demand for those trades is only expected to grow. Then, you couple that with demographics plus some of the challenges with training and onboarding that have gone on through the pandemic—I think there's a confluence of factors that are really exacerbating the whole skills gap challenge, and so it's just all the more important to be investing right now in engaging young people and newcomers and diverse populations about these rewarding careers in skilled trades and tech, because we're seeing a big challenge in terms of

the skills gap. We need to leverage the momentum that we have in promoting the skilled trades and tech.

The point was made about these investments, which are phenomenal, and I think it's also really important that we need to sustain them because we don't want to have this as a one-off opportunity but as something that's going to take time to fill these positions, because an apprenticeship takes four years, right? It's not a quick fix or a quick turnaround when you're talking about skilled tradespeople. I think something else that's really important is to make sure we're thinking long-term here and being strategic and sustained in our funding and our efforts around those. Our hope is that this new entity that's being created will have that long-term view and continue to work with partners like Skills Ontario and OCTE and others to really continue that momentum that we have here.

I think the technology side of it is changing, too, in how we engage young people. We're focusing a lot more on digital and social media and how we connect with the next generation, so that's been really important for us in terms of continuing to build the momentum and push the message out that these are rewarding careers, and enabling that to take place. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Paul. Thank you for that answer. Darryl, you are—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: —a business leader and also a businessman, and you lead so many skilled trade companies in Ontario and Canada and the world.

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Your own experience: You mentioned about white-collar workers versus blue-collar workers. That's a very interesting comment you made. You want to fill that gap. Could you elaborate on that, why this bill is allowing that to do so? As the minister talked passionately this morning about how the skilled trades can move in that direction, could you elaborate how this bill is addressing your concern?

Mr. Darryl Spector: Again, speaking first-hand about this, it really comes down to the promotion of skilled trades. You keep hearing the same thing: the promotion of skilled trades and the education. Again, I would not be in the career that I am today had I not stumbled into the skilled trades, because I had a dedicated tech teacher who brought me in and educated me. The question was, "Hey, listen, why are you doing design?" "Well, because I'm going to be an engineer." "When are you doing machining?" "That's for guys who can't do math." That's what I believed. And then it was, "Tell you what, sign up for my course. Let me ask you a question: If you don't know how to make it, how can you design it?" "That's a manufacturing problem, not a design problem."

I believed that, and so many of my peers in university believed that. I was actually a very angry student in university because I had work experience as a machinist and a designer, and I'm sitting next to these people who all believed, through no fault of their own, that that's how the world worked, that if they design it, manufacturing is its own issue.

This bill is critical to close that gap, secure the investment, and to define that framework that allows that proper mix of education, promotion, apprenticeships and getting more youth involved, but also to elevate the esteem and prestige that it's not just a white-collar thing.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Darryl Spector: It is a blue-collar and a white-collar problem that we need to approach together for, overall, society's betterment.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: How much time do I have? One minute, Mr. Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Forty-five seconds.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Forty-five seconds; okay.

I'll ask one quick question to Jamie. You talk about, Jamie, how paperwork and red tape are killing the spirit of the young people to get into the trades. Please, quickly, tell us, it's very important—that's what we've been trying to address in this bill, is we're trying to get rid of the red tape in the system, trying to make it easier with one-stop shopping. Please go ahead.

Ms. Jamie McMillan: Absolutely. I think that you heard it before: Kids can't be it if they don't see it. I think it's really important that they're seeing actual tradespeople who are so passionate about these careers, and trying to promote them and move forward.

Another thing is that I think that it's really important that we don't make this focused just on—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up. We have to move to the opposition now for their time of questioning. MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I'm going to go back to Jamie just for a second.

First of all, there's a reason for it. I think it's important that you're on this panel talking about it, because you're an ironworker. You know exactly what you had to go through as a woman, quite frankly, and 20 years ago it would have been a lot tougher than it is today.

But also, you're able to educate the people who are around here to talk about why the 1-to-1 ratio may work in some cases but it doesn't work in all cases, and you give that experience. That is why I think it's important that the board, in this bill, has a makeup of trades, women, racialized, those with disabilities and First Nations, so we get to understand all the scope around skilled trades and what should make up our skilled trades going forward.

Skills Ontario does a wonderful job of helping to get our youth exposed to the skilled trades and showing our young people all the rewarding natures of the job. When I was in school—and this is a little story about myself—in grades 7 and 8, I took tech. I did woodworking. I did welding. And then I went into high school for four years and I did autobody. I did welding. I did all those things.

When I went out and got my first job at General Motors, I could have gotten an apprenticeship. I knew how to do a lockout. I wasn't afraid of machines. We have to bring that back into our schools and get to our young people and get them to understand how important a skilled trade job could be, as opposed to being a doctor or a lawyer.

But we also have to be honest with them as we talk about skilled trades, that it's not that you're good with the hands; you still have to be good in education. You still have to make sure you're getting your science and your math. That's something that I think we're missing during this whole discussion: to make sure our young people are still getting an education on the things that are important to being able to do your job on the job.

Maybe you can answer the questions around, how do you feel about incorporating more skilled trades-related classes in secondary and elementary schools? Whoever wants to answer can answer that. Skills Ontario can answer it, or whatever you want to do. I'm good; it doesn't matter who.

Ms. Jamie McMillan: I think from my perspective, what I'm seeing—and I'll try to be really quick—is that I think there should be compulsory credits that are in skilled trades, and the curriculum needs to change. When you think about life now, we have different requirements that we need from when the system was originally created. When I do my speaking engagements, I do speak about math. If you struggle with math, please take some shop classes in school; it's going to change your perspective.

But I think that it should be mandatory that they take an auto tech program and a construction program, because that is essential to life. Even if they're not going to get into skilled trades, when their toilet is leaking and there are no plumbers, and they have this leak that they don't know how to stop, and there's \$1,000 of—\$4,000 of damage by the time the plumber gets there. They could have learned the simple, basic things to do that: to change a light fixture, to fix a hole in the wall. And just maintaining their vehicle: If you're stranded on a highway with no reception, you should know how to do the basics, and that, to me, needs to be in the curriculum system ASAP.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Christine, go ahead.

Ms. Christine German: I'll add that I agree with Jamie, and Bill 288 does give me a lot of hope for the future. The other half of my daughter's story is that my husband is an automotive service technician and a tech teacher, and she's in the shop with him day in, day out. I hate the fact that she goes to school and then she sees it nowhere in her schooling. She doesn't even make that connection. So I think that those changes in the elementary schools are so important, and we really do rely on you sending this clear messaging to our school boards that this is so important. This needs to continue. This needs to grow. This needs to be changed for the future.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Ian, go ahead, and then I'll go on to the next question.

Mr. Ian Howcroft: I just wanted to briefly say, MPP Gates, that I think you're really right on when you say a lot of people have that experience, people who are good with their hands. But it's people who are good with their heads, as well. It's not an either/or. You need both to be successful. I just wanted to highlight that, and I think that was a very important point you made.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Ian, thanks very much, because I think it's being lost in this discussion. The more we talk

about it, I think the better it will be, quite frankly. I'll raise it in my next hour lead as well, as I talk about everything we've talked about today.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anybody can answer this: Do you think that an increase of access to high-level technology would help destigmatize the trades and better increase involvement from our youth? Whoever wants to answer it, go ahead. Don't fight over it; just start talking.

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Yes, I think, absolutely. That's definitely something we're doing more of, in partnership with the Ontario government. We're building a skills bus. We're going to take it out to kids and show them really cool technologies and give them an experience with it—post-pandemic, obviously, but we're just starting to build now, so we're excited to have that.

Looking at other ways, we're creating some 360 VR videos, so kids can put on a headset and see inside a mine or a steel mill and ask some questions. I think, absolutely, kids are in tune with the technology—I know my kids are—and so it's a great way to connect them with the trades and with those technological opportunities.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anybody else, real quick? Because I've got one more question I want to get to.

Mr. Chris Tucker: Yes, the only other thing that I would add around advanced technology is the current policies around large spending by funding organizations. When I've got a \$10,000 limit before it triggers an additional level of work, me going out and buying a \$75,000 CNC mill becomes hugely problematic, and it's a barrier for a lot of school boards to get into that technology. So if we're going to be looking at large capital spending for technological education, I think we should also consider how we can actually make it easier for school boards to engage in that practice.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's a very good comment, quite frankly. The one comment I'd like to say: Instead of closing our schools and selling them off to developers, we should keep our schools open—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —and use them as trade schools going forward.

My last question is: Right now we understand there is a significant backlog of apprentices who have completed their hours of training but cannot take their C of Q exam. How important should it be to this government to address and fix this backlog? And do you believe that delays like this are a deterrent to increasing interest in trades for young people?

Maybe Jamie can answer that—she's out of the trades—and then somebody else.

1400

Ms. Jamie McMillan: I wasn't aware of that. I haven't been so much in the trades as in the schools right now. I don't think I could give a great answer on this, but I do say that there is a big gap in the schools. When the school kids are graduating and trying to get into trades, I think the government needs to work more with creating some sort

of pathway that makes it easier for employers to offer apprenticeships to those students, because there's a big hole there as well. But I'll let somebody else speak to the other question.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anybody? I got one more if you want?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I apologize. That concludes our time for the presentation.

I want to thank all three presenters for coming. We appreciate your presentations. You're now released.

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION COUNCIL
OF ONTARIO

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING
ENGINEERS, LOCAL 793

MERIT ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Moving along to our next group of presenters: First, I would like to call upon the Residential Construction Council of Ontario. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Andrew Pariser: I think I've been unmuted. I think Amina, my colleague, is going to introduce us and start the presentation, if she can be unmuted. Amina Dibe?

Ms. Amina Dibe: Yes, I'm here. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Sandhu, and members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. RESCON appreciates the opportunity to speak in front of you today in favour of Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act. My name is Amina Dibe, and I'm the manager of government and stakeholder relations at the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, also known as RESCON. I am joined today by my colleague Andrew Pariser, who is the vice-president of RESCON.

RESCON represents over 200 residential builders of high-, mid- and low-rise buildings in the province, with a primary focus on the GTA. We are committed to providing leadership and fostering innovation in the industry through the following six core focuses: labour relations; training and apprenticeship, including improving pathways into the skilled trades for youth and women; health and safety, including mental health and anti-racism; building science and innovation; building code reform and technical standards; and government relations.

RESCON is happy with Bill 288 because it creates the Skilled Trades Ontario crown agency to officially replace the Ontario College of Trades. We are appreciative that the government is following through with their long-standing commitment to wind down the college and improve pathways into the skilled trades. For one, the College of Trades was not able to meet its mandate or expectations and it was overly burdensome for employers, journeypeople and apprentices, resulting in low employer engagement and a drop-off in an apprentice's career journey.

I'm now going to pass it over to my colleague Andrew to speak to the role of compliance and the OLRB in this bill.

Mr. Andrew Pariser: Thank you, Amina. I don't think we're going to go the full seven minutes, so I will take an opportunity to say hi to the skilled trades champions from all three parties. Specifically I see MPP Jane McKenna, MPP Wayne Gates and MPP Mitzie Hunter. Obviously I think everybody's a skilled trades champion, but I do have to shout out to those three in particular.

When it comes to compliance and enforcement, I think this is actually one of the main reasons why OCOT wasn't successful, and I don't think it mattered what side of the debate you were on when it came to OCOT. Everybody had an opinion on enforcement, and I don't think anyone's opinion was positive. That's mainly because there is a distinct role that the Ontario Labour Relations Board plays and essentially you need one deciding body. The role of the OLRB is to look at things like jurisdictional disputes. It is to look at disputes between unions, specifically related to jurisdiction, and this legislation certainly respects that and enshrines that.

When it comes to enforcement, the COVID pandemic that we're in has really shown the important prestige and really how qualified and excellent the health and safety inspectors in the province of Ontario are, and so we're certainly very supportive of enforcement going back to the MOL. It's 2020-21; we're in a pandemic. Nothing's more important than safety and so safety should be done through the MOL. I think that makes a lot of sense, hopefully, to most people.

With that, I'll turn it back to my colleague Amina Dibe to finish our opening remarks.

Ms. Amina Dibe: Thanks, Andrew. I'm just going to get into a bit on why this bill is important. It will better improve and create opportunities for young people to get into the trades, and one of them is the tools that are in this bill to ensure that apprentices are maintaining their progress to certification, and again so there's no drop-off in the pathway.

As most of us know, by 2030 the construction industry will need to recruit more than 90,000 workers in Ontario alone, and our industry cannot afford to have an apprenticeship system that deters youth and employers from participation. That's why we're glad this bill and the proposed crown agency, Skilled Trades Ontario, has a significant promotion mandate.

We must ensure that we're promoting real careers in the trades, and within the residential construction sector, with a focus on the GTA. It's made up of dozens, if not hundreds, of jobs that fall within the 40 construction trades, careers like low-rise or high-rise forming, interior finishing, house framing, concrete and drain, and exterior cladding.

Finally, RESCON supports Bill 288 because of the reduced number of the members on the board of directors, which will help remove confusion, streamline decision-making and eliminate red tape and bureaucracy. We're confident that these 11 members will be equally representative of all skilled trades, including construction; represent management and labour; and be representative of our workforce diversity.

To conclude, we believe that Bill 288 lays the infrastructure needed to improve skilled trades regulation in Ontario. And that concludes our commentary. Thank you for allowing us to speak in front of you today. We look forward to your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Our next presenter is International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Steven Sagle: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Steven Sagle. I am the legal council to the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today. Local 793 is a construction trade union that has operated in Ontario for over 100 years. Today we proudly represent over 17,600 crane and heavy equipment operators who work on construction sites and mines and in industrial settings across Ontario. We are thankful for the invitation to comment on Bill 288 and to shape Ontario's new skilled trades and apprenticeship system.

Today I'm going to focus my comments on three key concerns that we've identified in our review of Bill 288. Those three concerns are: (1) the absence of a purpose clause in the act, (2) the disappearance of trade boards, and (3) the absence of a process and criteria for making a prescribed trade compulsory.

First, Bill 288 does not contain a clause setting out the purpose of the act. It is, in our submission, a matter of common sense to include a purpose clause in the statute to guide its interpretation and enforcement. As I'm sure you're all aware, disputes over the interpretation of a statute are inevitable. Purpose clauses are an invaluable resource to guide adjudicative bodies to resolve these disputes.

A purpose clause is of particular importance when considering Bill 288, because it empowers the Ontario Labour Relations Board to adjudicate compliance and enforcement disputes that come from Skilled Trades Ontario. As you may be aware, in its past adjudications under the former Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, the labour board adopted what we argue is a consistent practice of downplaying the importance of occupational qualifications, training and risk of harm in favour of giving priority to labour relations considerations. This issue needs to be squarely addressed in Bill 288.

The OLRB's expertise is in labour relations, not in the regulation of trades. For this reason, it is critically important that if the OLRB is given jurisdiction over compliance in enforcement issues, Bill 288 should contain a purpose clause and the labour board should be directed to give deference to that purpose clause when adjudicating disputes. In order to assist in carrying out this proposal, we have prepared a draft purpose clause which will be attached to our written submissions that will follow.

The second key concern I want to discuss is the disappearance of trade boards in Bill 288. The Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act provided for the establishment of trade boards. The trade boards were composed of an equal number of persons qualified in that

particular trade in question and employers of persons in that trade. The trade boards had a mandate that was actually set out in the OCTAA of providing advice and recommendations to the college with respect to all issues touching on that trade.

Now, the trade boards were really where the boots hit ground at the College of Trades. Because the trade boards included workers in that specific trade, along with their employers, they were able to provide practical advice straight from the field. In this way, the trade boards effectively acted as the voice of the members that the college regulated.

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Now, despite this, Bill 288 contains absolutely no reference to trade boards and does not even continue the trade boards that are currently in place and that have been conducting valuable work for over a decade. If Skilled Trades Ontario is going to be successful where the college has failed, it will need the buy-in and support of industry stakeholders. The disappearance of trade boards, however, is a sharp and dramatic decrease in the role of industry stakeholders. To remedy this, we propose that Bill 288 should be amended to give status to the existing trade boards and to recognize their essential roles in providing informed advice.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Steven Sagle: Third, I want to discuss the lack of a process in Bill 288 for making a prescribed trade compulsory. The term “compulsory” is incredibly meaningful to our organization. For our members, it represents a commitment to worker safety and the delivery of the highest training standards possible for the dangerous work of operating cranes, concrete pumps and other heavy equipment.

Crane operation became a compulsory trade in 1979. In the decade before this, crane and rigging fatalities accounted for just shy of 20% of all construction fatalities in Ontario. Since the trade became compulsory, the rate of injury and fatality associated with crane and rigging has dramatically decreased. Statistics compiled between 1979 and 2004 show that crane and rigging fatalities account now for only 8.8% of all construction fatalities, which represents a 55.5% improvement from years prior, so it’s not an exaggeration to say that compulsory certification is a matter of life and death for our members.

Given the importance of compulsory certification to the health and safety of trade members, construction workers and the general public, we propose that Bill 288 should be amended to include criteria for classifying a trade as compulsory or voluntary, and also set out the process that will be used to apply for compulsory status or to review the existing status of a prescribed trade.

Those are my comments. Thank you once again for the opportunity to address the committee, and I look forward to questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Our next presenter is Merit Ontario. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Hi. I’m Mike Gallardo, Merit Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Okay. Good afternoon and thank you to the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the opportunity to appear today.

I’d like to share the perspectives from our members on the creation of this new crown agency, Skilled Trades Ontario, that is going to be replacing the Ontario College of Trades. My name is Mike Gallardo, president and CEO of Merit Ontario, the voice of open shop contractors in Ontario. We have members who work in every construction trade across the province, employing thousands of Ontarians from Toronto to Ottawa, Windsor and North Bay.

Bill 288, Building Opportunities for the Skilled Trades Act, is of particular interest and importance to our members. As an organization, we have raised serious concerns about the Ontario College of Trades since its inception. We applaud the leadership of Minister McNaughton in listening to the real concerns of skilled trades workers and construction employers across the province about the College of Trades and on taking decisive action to address these concerns through Bill 288. We want to recognize that the government’s overall efforts to promote the skilled trades and make real investments towards training are benefiting all workers, union and non, across the province.

As members of this committee know, we are facing a massive shortage in the pool of skilled tradespeople across many trades. The first step towards recruiting these workers is promotion, to get the message out that a career in skilled trades is rewarding and a ticket to the middle class in Canada. This government is leading the way in communicating this message, and we commend them for their efforts.

Let me turn back to Bill 288 and talk about how this legislation supports skilled tradespeople, employers and our economy in three specific ways. First, Skilled Trades Ontario will be governed by an 11-member board appointed based on competence. This is critical. It ensures Skilled Trades Ontario has a professional and independent board that acts in the interests of the entire industry. We have been asking for this since the creation of the College of Trades, and we appreciate that the government is listening. This key change brings an end to the unrepresentative structure of the College of Trades and its board of governors that for many, many years represented 30% of the entire construction industry.

Second, we applaud the government for properly assigning compliance and enforcement activities to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. This ministry has a long history of effective enforcement of Ontario’s workplace health and safety and other requirements by helping employers achieve compliance. This significant and positive change ends an inherent conflict of interest that we felt existed in the College of Trades system with enforcement, specifically. Furthermore, its bureaucracy was delayed, with a lack of clear direction, leading to what we and many in the sector believed to be ineffectiveness. The change in separating

enforcement to the ministry allows for both the ministry and Skilled Trades Ontario to do what they do best.

Third, Merit Ontario welcomes this new legislation as it will further modernize the skilled trades and reduce the barriers to entry by marginalized groups. This legislation builds on measures taken by the government and Minister McNaughton to ensure that Ontarians know that a career in the skilled trades is respected, well paying and brings the dignity of work to the entire community. Our organization stands ready to do our part to make sure that the skilled trades are more inclusive, while remaining a primary choice for Ontario's youth.

Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start with the questions now. We'll start the first round of questions with the government. Who would you like to start in the government? MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to all the presenters for your presentations and also for your comments. I just want to begin by saying that when it comes to this bill, Bill 288, and the government's legislation, a big representation of tradespeople, like LIUNA and Unifor, have shown their support. It shows the importance of bringing out this legislation at this time.

As we all know, there is a demand for tradespeople. I think it was mentioned by Amina or Andrew from RESCON that in 2030, in 10 years, almost over 100,000 tradespeople will be needed. There's a gap there. Even right now, one in three tradespeople are 55 or older, so there is a huge need.

When it comes to compliance, I just want to highlight a couple of things before I move on to the questions. There will be a compliance enforcement framework to be developed in regulations and additions to scopes of practice, and there will be advisory committees throughout. Again, this is to listen to the experts and listen to the advice from trades and curriculum experts in terms of exams and what are the education materials to be part of.

My question is pretty much open to everyone. Anyone can please feel free to jump in. Again, when we know this gap—for example, Michael just mentioned in his presentation that, again, it is needed right now, more than ever. Also, I want to quote what Michael from Merit mentioned in one of his quotes: “to ensure that Ontarians know that a career in the skilled trades is respected, well paying and brings the dignity of work to the entire community.” I think that's the important piece here, to bring that dignity and also to have that respect for the skilled trades work. What's your take on that?

Also, when it comes to compliance, how can we work with industry partners, stakeholders and all the experts out there to implement more investment as well as to amplify the promotions to bring more folks into our skilled trades?

Ms. Amina Dibe: Thanks for the question. Yes, I think that there are existing programs that are doing a great job, and organizations like Skills Ontario, who you heard from before, are doing the work already in addition to and in partnership with the government to better promote careers in the skilled trades and the construction industry. I think we've come a long way even within the last five years on

the promotion angle. It's one thing to get a young person interested, but it's a whole other thing to get them trained and hired with an employer, and I think Bill 288 complements that and helps improve the pathways into the skilled trades, which isn't always the easiest. It's not the easiest pathway, and I think this bill really does help clear the pathway and remove some of those so-called roadblocks for youth.

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Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Amina. Andrew, please go ahead.

Mr. Andrew Pariser: Just to follow up on the health and safety component of your question: As we all know, health and safety requires a systems approach and so it would make sense that enforcement is moved to MOL, where they really have specialty and experience with that systems approach. There's also a very extensive health and safety network within Ontario. We obviously want it to happen and make sure that health and safety is done across the board in a one-system approach. That really jumped out at me with Bill 288 here too. Thank you.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you. Are there any comments from any other person? Or I can go to the next question.

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Yes, it's Michael. I just wanted to thank you again, committee, for having me. I guess really what you're looking at is that this is a good opportunity, a great opportunity, for us to have a restart. I think the goal for many employers and for youth getting into the trades is that here is an opportunity for us to strengthen and actually promote the skilled trades as a viable career path.

Too many times people talk about the skilled trades as a job. We want to start looking at it as a career. It's well-paying. It provides many, many people an opportunity for advancement. There are so many contractors out there and the industry itself is such a cohesive unit. I think what we're looking to do is fix what didn't work and improve it, and moving along with different perspectives, different voices, making sure that we can actually be a lot more inclusive. I think, on that approach, we can achieve a great system here in Ontario.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Michael. Again, Merit Ontario has said that this legislation “will further modernize the skilled trades” as well as “reduce the barriers to entry” for “marginalized groups.”

The digitized portal will allow for a seamless apprentice experience, or help attract more young people in. Can you please emphasize or try to speak to the importance of this bill in removing these barriers to attract more people to the trades?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Please unmute Michael.

Mr. Mike Gallardo: We need to make a system that is easier for youth to navigate. My fellow colleague from RESCON, Amina, mentioned the pathway to becoming a skilled tradesperson. When you make it easier for people to navigate and get through the system, the net effect is you have more people getting into the skilled trades, looking at it, I mentioned before, as a career option. So I

think when you look at the legislation and making it simpler, making it easier for people—we want to attract as many people as possible. We have a shortage and we have to address it, and I think this legislation is going to do that and it's going to help rebuild our economy. Right now, we're still—we had a great announcement yesterday from our Premier. As we move forward, construction is going to be part of that, and the skilled trades will be part of that. So I think when you look at what this legislation will do, it will help people look at it as a career choice. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll come back to you in the second round.

We'll have to move to the opposition now for their first round. Who would like to go? MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks very much to the presenters. The first question can go to all of you, Steve, Michael, Andrew and Amina. A big concern we have regarding clarity on the legislation is the power for the minister to designate compulsory trades. It does not outline what trades will be deemed compulsory or how decisions will be made. Do you have any concerns with this, and would you like to see the compulsory trades listed right in the bill? Anybody can answer.

Mr. Steven Sagle: I don't mind starting. I would think that at a minimum, we would like to see a continuation of the status of trades as they exist right now, so a continuation of setting out which trades are compulsory and which trades are voluntary. As I already spoke to, I think we'd also like to see set out in the bill, at a minimum, the criteria that the minister will take into account when determining whether a trade will be compulsory or voluntary, and also a process that can be initiated for the review of existing trades.

Local 793 represents many concrete pump operators in the province of Ontario. You've likely seen them as you drive around the GTA. Concrete pumps, in our estimation, are not much different than cranes. They're very, very similar: large pieces of equipment, large booms that move, lots of heavy things. Right now the concrete pump is not a compulsory trade in Ontario, though it requires many of the same skills as are required by crane operators.

As the bill exists right now, there's no indication of how the ministry will undertake a review of the status of any other trades, including concrete pump operators, nor how anyone can initiate that kind of review, and we see that as a real deficiency in the bill.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Michael, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Thank you. I think when you look at outlining, more discussion needs to be given. There are so many groups that are going to be represented, and I guess the fellow presenter there from the operating engineers obviously would like to see—obviously it impacts his members. I think more discussion has to be fleshed out in order for it—and I think giving the minister latitude to do a proper review, and the panel itself. I think further debate and discussion will come about in the phase 2 recommendations as well.

Ms. Amina Dibe: I'm going to yield to Andrew. I think he had his hand up before

Mr. Andrew Pariser: Thank you so much.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Go ahead, Andrew.

Mr. Andrew Pariser: I think it's a great question—and good to see you again. As a bit of a policy wonk, I think there are certain things that make sense in legislation, and I think there are certain things that make sense in other places, whether it's regulations or other areas. When you look at compulsory versus voluntary, I'm led to believe that there's a Skilled Trades Panel appointed, and so I think this is some of the work that they're still doing.

From my point of view, some of the scopes, they quite frankly haven't been updated in over 50 years. Let's figure out what the Ontario economy needs right now and figure out what makes sense when it comes to the trades, because when people talk about promotion, we need to promote careers that exist. We need to meet the needs of employers. I think the number was that about 100,000 jobs and careers exist, and so if we go in with those core values and principles, I think some of this other stuff becomes a little bit easier, just as far as how we do it.

There's some work that needs to be done. I think this bill really lays the foundation and, dare I say, infrastructure that we need to tackle some of these big issues so that we can really move Ontario forward, because I think we all know the recovery that's coming up will be a skilled trades recovery. So we've really got to get it right for everyone in Ontario.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Andrew, I appreciate that.

Just to go back to Michael, just to get a clarification—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's to Michael: Do you think that the compulsory trades now should stay the same?

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Again, I think there are many interest groups. When you look at different unions, different trades, different scopes, to Andrew's point, many of them haven't been updated. I think there needs to be further deliberation in determining what the reality is of the marketplace today. There are decisions being made at the Ontario Labour Relations Board that haven't even made their way into some collective agreements, and so you have to kind of consider from both sides: from the employer community and from those impacted by determining which are compulsory or not.

The implications when you're looking at a pump, from the operating engineers, and a crane operator—they could be different; they could be the same. You have to kind of do a deeper dive and make sure that it is reviewed thoroughly.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. I appreciate the answer. The Ontario Labour Relations Board is a whole other issue, but I'd probably need another half an hour of questions to get through that one, so I'll move on to the next one.

1430

Right now, the legislation does not give any guidance for a process to see voluntary trades make an application to become a compulsory trade. This was something that the College of Trades offered and was successfully used by the sprinkler fitters, which quite frankly my son-in-law is part of. Do you believe there should be an outlined process for this, and what should it look like?

I'll go to Steven, and if anybody else wants the answer, they can do that as well. Thank you.

Mr. Steven Sagle: I absolutely agree that that should be the case. As I discussed in my submissions, compulsory status is extremely important. It means that an individual practising in that trade has to undergo rigorous and extensive training—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Steven Sagle: —and go through an apprenticeship program to get experience in the field. It ensures the health and safety of the person practising in the trade, the people that that person works beside and the general public. There absolutely should be a process set out in the act to allow for either the trade itself or an interested party to at least initiate a process to have the status of the trade reviewed and its compulsory status considered.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. Anybody else want to jump in in the next 30 seconds? Andrew, go ahead.

Mr. Andrew Pariser: I touched on it. I think that's part of the phase 2 of this STP, but we have to get it right. Obviously we're going to need to look at that. There's got to be processes, whether it's in legislation, regulations or somewhere else. We need the mechanisms to make sure the right decisions are made, 100%.

Mr. Wayne Gates: [*Inaudible*], right? Am I done or have I got a few seconds left?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Five seconds.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Five seconds. I prefer to see it in legislation rather than regulations; just saying—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. All right, so we'll move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Steven, I'm going to come back to you. I've been looking for your purpose statement. I don't know if the Clerk has already put that into our written submissions folder, but I'm very interested to see what you're proposing. I agree with you. As I was reading this bill, I reread—because I was looking for the purpose clause and I didn't see it. So I'm glad that you mentioned that.

For the time that I have, I want to hear from the folks at RESCON about your skilled trade recovery lens and the 90,000 to 100,000 positions that we need to fill. Where do you believe that will come from for the 2030 goal, which is less than nine years away? Sorry; it's upon us. Where should we focus our time and our attention in the recruitment and attraction?

We talked a lot about education with some very passionate people from Skills Ontario and other groups like the Ontario Council for Technology Education. Changing the way we talk about trades and demonstrate career paths at the elementary and secondary levels is really important, but it seems to me that there's more that has to happen. What are you talking about in your industry and in your organization to fill that gap? Andrew or Amina can jump in.

Ms. Amina Dibe: Thank you for the question, MPP Hunter. Maybe I'll start and then I'll kick it over to Andrew.

I think what a lot of the previous presenters and the previous groups were saying was that there needs to be more promotion in the schools, but if there's not a program or an experiential learning opportunity that goes hand in hand with that promotion, there's a bit of an issue there. I think there are a lot of programs right now that do exist, for example, the STEP to Construction program out of Northview Heights in the Toronto District School Board.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Amina Dibe: That program has recently been scaled up, and that creates a direct pipeline and relationship between an interested youth and an experiential learning opportunity with a builder. They get to profile or try a different trade throughout their experiential learning opportunity and see what they like. It's a "don't knock it till you try it" kind of thing, but you don't have to put all your eggs in one basket. And then there's the BOLT program, which creates opportunities for people from racialized communities and provides a lot of financial and social supports. There are programs that do pick up from the promotion side of getting youth interested but then actually allowing them to try a trade—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Amina Dibe: —and we are really supportive of those programs and would like to see more of those. I think there is a lot of funding from the government, allowing for more programs to be created and more engagement with employers.

I think I have given Andrew 10 seconds to add something.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Go for it, Andrew. How do you see us promoting and recruiting?

Mr. Andrew Pariser: It's a very complex issue, so I think it requires a simple, high-level plan so that we can focus on implementation, but the idea of using information to break down the stigma, streamlining placement opportunities and making that clear, and then improving engagement with employers. If we do those three things, we'll reassess when they're done, and then we'll address the new issues that are existing after we've solved those, so, one step at a time but—stigma, pathways, placements.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Excellent. Thank you so much. You did it.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Right on time.

We'll go to the opposition now for the second round. MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll start off with all three. All three can answer the first question. I'd like to start with concerns about the compliance and enforcement piece of the legislation. There are minimum details on how that process will roll and concerns about the ability of the minister to proactively enforce regulations in the trades. How big of an issue do you believe the enforcement is, and how best do you think the government can achieve proper enforcement and compliance? I'll start with Steve on this one.

Mr. Steven Sagle: Yes, compliance and enforcement was a big problem under the previous system. I've addressed this somewhat in my opening submissions. I do

think a purpose clause will be a good place to start. Particularly, again, if the Ontario Labour Relations Board is going to consider compliance and enforcement disputes, it needs to know why the act is in place and what interests and purposes the act is attempting to further. Right now, that is completely absent.

I also believe it needs to be made clear that the purpose of enforcement is to ensure that the scopes of practice of trades are respected. Compulsory and voluntary status exists for reasons. There are reasons some trades are compulsory and some trades are not. That largely has to do with health and safety. It needs to be made clear to enforcers that compliance enforcement is a health and safety matter and should be treated as such and enforced strictly.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anybody else? Andrew, go ahead.

Mr. Andrew Pariser: I think health and safety has got to be the top priority. Anyone who has done anything with health and safety or the Ministry of Labour, occupational health and safety—health and safety inspectors have very broad powers, which makes a lot of sense, because it's a very important issue. Moving it back to MLTSD is the right answer, but I really actually see it as the only answer, and I think I touched on this. Health and safety depends on a systems approach. It depends on identifying hazards and first eliminating them. If you can't eliminate them, then you mitigate them. There is no one more important.

When it comes to employers, you have to have a health and safety system, and the idea is, you don't want the health and safety of workers coming down to one thing; you want to build up a health and safety system so that if one part of the system fails, there's another part to catch it which will prevent the accident from occurring. One barrier of defence is not enough.

I don't know if you brought it up or not, but when you look at the role of the OLRB, the OLRB is the eventual home for, I think it's 26 pieces of legislation, regulations, and it's the final destination, because you need a final destination for everything. That includes violations under the health and safety act. Those make it though the appeal process ultimately to the OLRB. This bill takes best practices from across the province and recognizes that the OLRB not only has the jurisdictional and jurisprudence expertise, but most other legislation makes it there too.

1440

I'll stop there, because I think you want me to—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks. Michael, have you got anything to say on this, or should I move on?

Mr. Mike Gallardo: I think you can move on.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. When the OLRB rules against a group on a trades-related issue, should there be a penalty attached to it? Is there enough deterrent right now? So if there's a violation, should there be a deterrent? Should there be a fine? Should there be something to make sure they don't keep doing it?

I'll go to Steve on that. I want to move on quickly, so I'll get Steve to do that one, and then I'll ask Andrew and Michael a different question.

Mr. Steven Sagle: I think the answer is absolutely. Without a deterrent, it's hard to imagine how compliance can be enforced. Again, I go back to the fact that certain trades are made compulsory for a reason. There's a public interest in having those things done. There are health and safety components.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Steven Sagle: We need to make sure that people are compliant, and having a penalty is a very effective way of doing that.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Michael, you heard the question. Do you want to answer that one?

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Obviously, employers want to work with their inspectors. They want to work side by side, so I think there's an element of—for enforcement, obviously, a proper penalty should be considered for deterrence, but you also have to look at the educational component as well. The inspectors on-site will work with the employer, will work with the safety consultant on-site, and so there needs to be an education element also, along with that, to learn from it as well so that it doesn't repeat itself.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. Michael, I've got a question for you. This is to your organization. Currently, how many unionized employees do you have?

Mr. Mike Gallardo: MPP Gates, we don't represent the unionized employees. We're open shop, so we represent the non-union sector, the independent sector.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Oh, okay. Thank you. I appreciate that. Back to you again: This government initially began their approach to modernize the skilled trades by moving to a skill-set-based system. They later changed their approach and moved their reforms to this current legislation. Would you have preferred the skill set model? That's to Michael.

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Would I have preferred the skill set model? As opposed to which other model?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, the current legislation that is in place now.

Mr. Mike Gallardo: I think right now, given that we're in phase 2, we have to consider that there are going to be submissions coming in looking at various models. To be exact, I think right now our organization is considering that we and other organizations that we're part of are looking at modular and we're also looking at transferrable skills. So I think as we go through the phase 2 consultations, the intent, really, on that note is to flesh out that specific on how apprenticeships would look moving forward.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. The last question can go to all three—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —and whoever wants to answer can do it. We have concerns about the makeup of the board and the advisory committee underneath the new Skilled Trades Ontario organization. This legislation does not outline what the structure or makeup of these boards will be. Could the three groups discuss how they believe the boards should best be created? I guess Steve, and then

Andrew, and then Michael. Try to keep them quick, because I've got a minute left.

Mr. Steven Sagle: Will do. We believe that the system under the College of Trades is the preferred system. As it is now, they've changed it so that all appointments are made by the minister, which obviously opens up the possibility of cronyistic appointments and appointments to political friends. In the system before, there was an independent panel that chose who sat on the board and there were specific seats set out for the different industries and different sectors so that no one group was overrepresented. That, in our estimation, is the superior system.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Andrew, quickly—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sorry. We are out of time.

We have to move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you for the excellent discussion on how we can improve Bill 288. Steven, I want to go to you, because you had some very specific ways of doing that in terms of the purpose clause, as well as an opinion on the skill sets, in fact, which is the first I've heard that today, around how shifting the compliance and those functions in terms of enforcement to the Ontario Labour Relations Board is going to actually create a capacity issue for that board if they are needing to acquire expertise. What would you suggest that they consider?

Mr. Steven Sagle: Again, I know you've commented on it already, and I can say that I have not put my written submissions—I have not submitted them yet, but I will, and the purpose clause will be in there. But I will come back to that.

There are many tribunals that already exist. We are not proposing that a new tribunal has to be created to deal with these very specific issues. The labour relations board does seem like a sensible place to go, but if it had zero guidance on how to interpret this act, there's a real concern that they will do what they're familiar with, which is dealing with jurisdictional issues, dealing with trade union disputes, disputes between employers and employees. That is not what this is about. This is about enforcement. It's about a regulatory system for the skilled trades, which is not what the labour board customarily deals with.

Again, at a minimum, a purpose clause, I would think, is required to ensure that the labour board has the guidance it's going to need when these disputes are put to it.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I really appreciate that, and I hope the government is listening.

You also talked about record of safety. Maybe Michael, as well—if there's time to talk about how you believe that this legislation, going forward, has to uphold or improve that record of safety for the industry. Otherwise, why are we doing it? Safety has to come first. People in the trades need to know that—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: —when they go to work, they're going to be able to come home the way they went. Do you

want to talk about that, Steven? You had given some data points on that.

Mr. Steven Sagle: Yes. In our estimation, health and safety is certainly one of the key concerns when determining whether a trade is compulsory or not. The more dangerous that trade is, the more risk of harm involved in the practice of that trade suggests that that trade should have compulsory status.

As I mention in my submissions, after crane operation became a compulsory trade in the late 1970s, there was a 55% decrease in fatalities associated with the operation of cranes. Whereas before, they amounted to about 20% of fatalities in the construction industry, that dropped to about 9%.

So, yes, health and safety is an essential part of compulsory status.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Michael, did you want to speak to the importance of safety as well, obviously, for those you represent?

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Of course. Thank you, MPP Hunter. Obviously, all employers, whether union or non-union, are dedicated to the culture of safety. As you mentioned, if an employee comes in, we want to make sure that they go home safe and sound. I think with the enforcement changing, focusing on looking at it—but there has to be an educational portion as well. The new Skilled Trades Ontario has an opportunity to promote careers in construction, but it also has an opportunity to promote the importance of safety. I think more and more youth who are entering into the skilled trades have an awareness now of the importance of safety on a job site. And employers today are aware and they're sensitive to making sure that their sites are safe and instilling that culture of safety. Whether you're a large—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Apologies to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll move to the government side now for their final round. MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: I certainly appreciate all of your remarks today. Thank you for taking the time to come to the committee, Steven, Andrew, Michael, Amina. And I see some new folks joining on for the next round.

I'll just dive right in. Obviously, the class system, I think, phase 2—Michael and Andrew, you referenced this too. I think it's important. And not in my words, but, for my friend Wayne there, the words of Pat Dillon, protecting the class system: That's really going to be critical in phase 2 and really important. I think also the stigmatization piece that has been addressed, the voluntary piece, even removing that term in and of itself, and the broader stigmas, is so integral as we go forward.

Thinking of how we attract those youth—and my question for all the panellists is the importance of a responsive model, builds on career opportunities, again, something union leaders like Joe Mancinelli said; the digital piece that's critical for youth and the duplicative processes that were existing before, paper-based models. Talk a bit

about the importance of that digital piece to streamlining and modernizing the trades and making it easier for our next generation to find a meaningful and rewarding career in the trades.

1450

Mr. Andrew Pariser: I've been unmuted, so I would love to tackle that first. There's lots of research that shows the more information you give young people, the better their career decisions are. We've seen some research that said if you educate youth on the skilled trades and you give them the information that they need when they need it, they will actually choose the skilled trades on average more than they are now, because the truth is, a skilled trades career is a great career. It's a great career for almost anybody.

Going digital, I think, recognizes just how we all live, right? Today's youth didn't grow up without the Internet. They grew up with the Internet. I have a four-and-a-half-year-old son and he can probably use my smartphone better than I can. It's just hard-wired into them. In fairness, we have to communicate with them how they communicate with each other, and so if it's not digital, in some ways it doesn't matter. People are not going to go—and they can't with the pandemic even go into a guidance office and get a physical binder on skilled trades opportunities. It literally, because of the pandemic, now needs to be digital.

I know my colleague Amina would want to speak and the others will too, so I'll end the comments there.

Mr. David Piccini: Thanks, Andrew.

Ms. Amina Dibe: I would just reinforce that I was not too far separated from the university system and I knew exactly how to apply to university and college, but if you were to ask me what even a skilled trade was, I probably wouldn't have been able to tell you, unfortunately, back then. Creating more digital schools and having information online would be a huge improvement and just keeping up with the times of how people absorb and find information in 2021. Again, you can't be what you don't see. How are you supposed to know what a skilled trade is or a sewer and water main installer or a trim carpenter is if you've never heard about it before?

Mr. David Piccini: That's really well said. Just to add an extra layer for Steven and Michael, what role do you think the formative role of Skills Ontario—one of the things with respect to you can't be what you can't see, what Amina just mentioned. When I got to see some of the fairs that they did, it was truly remarkable the formative role Skills Ontario played. So maybe add that extra layer into how we've positioned them in this legislation and what role you think that they can play.

Mr. Steven Sagle: Sure. I support the comments that have been made by everyone so far.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Steven Sagle: Obviously, the more information that can be given to young people, the better that will be for them to make an informed decision about what they want to do.

I think primarily what needs to be done is that the skilled trades need to be promoted not as a backup option for people but as a first option for people, especially for those who like to work with their hands. It can't be seen as something to fall back on and have a stigma that's associated with that.

Mr. David Piccini: Well said, Steven. Thank you.

Mr. Mike Gallardo: Thank you, MPP Piccini. What you're looking at, really, is: Obviously we're in the information age; we have to modernize. Construction is doing that slowly. You look at other sectors. They're slowly modernizing with technology. It starts with training. It starts with promotion. When you look at the sector as a whole—like yesterday, there was a software company, Procure, who went and did an IPO and had a huge, huge, huge buy-in. Technology and construction—you're seeing it a lot more on job sites.

As Amina said and even Steven, when you try to attract those who use YouTube and different forms of media as ways to be exposed to what the skilled trades are—I think it's going to be incumbent for Skilled Trades Ontario to think about how it promotes itself. It's going to be an important way to attract new people to the sectors and knowing what type of jobs they might or might not like. So I think exposure, knowing what a job or what a career in construction could look like, and having that information given to them so that they can walk through a lot of—right now, children are learning asynchronously, right? I have two young kids. They're going to continue to do that. So I think when you look at digitization, it's going to happen naturally. I think we need to embrace it as an industry, and government should embrace it as well and promote it as much as possible, because it is the next way of introducing the skilled trades.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. David Piccini: Certainly, and even with respect to apprenticeships and the role we can play in digitizing that—

Interruption.

Mr. David Piccini: Sorry for the background noise. It's the train in Port Hope—anyone who has been through would know that—and my dog, Max, as well.

How much time, Chair? Sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Forty-five seconds.

Mr. David Piccini: Okay. Well, I just wanted to again thank you all for the work you're doing. I think certainly we can all agree on ending the stigma and on what a meaningful and rewarding career the trades propose for Ontarians. We can't unlock the future of this province without doing it.

Just in my final seconds, Chair: I see a former MPP, a real champion of the trades, Garfield Dunlop. It's good to see you as well. I don't know if I'll have the chance to ask questions in the next round, so I just wanted to say thanks for all you've done, Mr. Dunlop.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. That concludes our time. I want to thank all three

presenters for coming. We appreciate your presentations. You're now released.

THE CARPENTERS' DISTRICT COUNCIL
OF ONTARIO, UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF
CARPENTERS AND JOINERS OF AMERICA

MR. GARFIELD DUNLOP

GENERAL CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION
OF TORONTO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move along to our next group of presenters. First, I would like to call upon the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Mike Yorke: Great. Well, first of all, my name is Mike Yorke. I'm the president of the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario. Also, my day-to-day job is as director of government relations and innovation. Hopefully we'll have an opportunity to speak about innovation, certainly, today.

I'm going to introduce my colleagues, and then maybe I'll just give a brief overview and ask one specific colleague to respond and further the discussion. With me today are Mark Lewis, who is the general counsel with the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario, and Cristina Selva, who is the executive director of the College of Carpenters and Allied Trades. She is responsible for the training of 2,500 young men and women through the course of their apprenticeship program, but also, her particular organization trains an additional multiple thousands of members of the union in day-to-day training and upgrading and health and safety. Literally 5,000 people a year go through the doors of the college of carpenters for maybe a three-hour program or a two-month program. They are really doing a fantastic job on behalf of the next generation and on behalf also of the whole industry.

I just want to give a brief overview before handing the reins over to Christina. I'm a very proud member of Local 27. That really is without a doubt and maybe should go without saying, but as the president of the district council, I wanted folks on the panel and the committee to understand that our organization is truly committed to training the next generation from one corner of this province to the other. We have 16 training centres and they're all operating all time, whether it's health and safety or skills development. Actually, it was very interesting hearing the former group of folks speaking, because there's so much there that we can certainly agree with: the emphasis on the skilled trades, the commitment to apprenticeship, removing the stigma of the skilled trades. We're all committed to that, and it's great to see that we have multiple partners speaking with you today.

One of the things I might say that I'm very proud of is our commitment to partnership and collaboration. The carpenters have great skilled people, and we're very dynamic, and we're dedicated. But it's not one organization

fixes it all. No, our best results come from collaboration and partnership.

I heard the former group speaking about Skills Ontario. We've been very committed to the success of conferences and outreach that Skills Ontario has done, and likewise with the Ontario Construction Secretariat. I don't know if they're going to speak with you, but their Future Building really—it's one year in Toronto, another year outside of the GTA. They've reached out to literally tens of thousands of young people and high schools. We've been very committed to the success of the Future Building initiative.

Another aspect is certainly our commitment to safety. That can include the full spectrum of health and safety on a job site. That means working in an environment free from sexism and racism and harassment. It also means working in an environment where we respect and regard and value mental health. Cristina and I have been committed to that initiative and addressing the issues of mental health and what we call the silent crisis in construction.

1500

You may be familiar with the Ontario drug policy report released two or three days ago. It noted that opioid abuse in our society has caused the deaths of 2,400 Ontarians in the last year. Fully 30% of that is from the construction industry, so we're looking at 800 deaths in construction. We recognize that our training programs have to address those concerns, and I'm glad to say and I'm proud to say that Cristina and the college of carpenters have really taken up the challenge and will remain committed to taking up the challenge on that and many other challenges facing our next generation.

With that overview, I think it's appropriate to ask Cristina to say a few words as well.

Ms. Cristina Selva: Thanks, Mike, and thank you to the committee for giving us this opportunity to speak with you. I just made some written notes because I realize that time is of an essence, and there are just a couple of points that I want to make so that I don't get sidetracked or go off on tangents, so if you'll bear with me, please.

In general, we're very pleased with the new legislation and in specific the fact that it will preserve the integrity of the trades and not move to a skill set model, which was the direction that things were initially appearing that they were going in. A skill set model would have had disastrous consequences for the industry across Ontario, particularly in areas outside of the greater Toronto area—Sudbury, northern Ontario and whatnot—where skill-set-specific apprentices would not survive. The industry requires people to be trained in the full breadth and depth of the trades and the full scope of the trades. So we greatly appreciate that, that it's preserving the existing model, which has been so successful for such a long time.

As Mike mentioned, the College of Carpenters and Allied Trades is the largest training delivery agency, actually, for general carpentry apprenticeship and for floor covering apprenticeship in the province of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Cristina Selva: We offer health and safety and pre-apprenticeship training programs to about 5,000 members

a year. We're out there promoting career opportunities to young people all the time in the trades. What young people are looking for is career opportunities, not job opportunities, as are their parents. Their parents are interested that their kids are going into something viable that they can do well on, and that they can then proceed into various career paths. The skill set model that could have happened would not have provided our young people with lifelong career opportunities. They would have had very, very limited employment opportunities and career pathways. So we are very happy with the legislation as it stands.

The only thing that we're interested in seeing, presumably through phase 2 of the next consultation process—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off.

Our next presenter is Garfield Dunlop. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Hello, everyone. Can everyone hear me?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, we can.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much. It's a real honour to be part of the hearings on Bill 288. Let me put it this way: As someone who spent basically their whole life in the skilled trades except for my 15 years at Queen's Park when I wasn't active in it, I'm really excited to see the debate carry on around the trades. We had some debate around the College of Trades, and although we picked our sides on that, the reality was there was a tremendous amount of conversation, debate, discussion and meetings on the value of the College of Trades or the non-value. I believe this step here with Bill 288 is just another step in that direction of making life better for people wishing to enter a career or a job opportunity in the skilled trades.

I look at it, and I'm proud of the PC Party for this, and I go back even as far as Bill Davis, when that government created the community college system. We've seen some unbelievable apprenticeship opportunities and training opportunities for both the skilled trades and non-skilled trades in that particular area. That was a giant step at that time. A lot of money was invested. We've got some amazing community colleges across our province that create the apprenticeship opportunities and the apprenticeship training. They also go hand in hand with the—like the previous two speakers had mentioned—carpenters' associations and a lot of the training centres that are with all the different unions.

I think all of these things combined create an atmosphere where, slowly, people are getting the idea that it's not bad to be in skilled trades. Let me give you a couple of examples.

I was at La Cité community college in Orléans not that long ago, and I was talking to one of the main teachers who teaches the electrical apprenticeship. This guy does this in the French language, by the way. It's the Orléans campus. He said to me, "Every time I see this gang of young people"—there were some women in the group as well—"I'm so proud of what they do. All I have to do is

look outside at the parking lot and look at the vehicles they're driving—most of them are driving new, upgraded pickup trucks etc. It shows that they're not only making money as they go through their apprenticeships, but they're contributing to the economy as well."

One thing I don't know how many people have touched on in the debate or in the debate in the Legislature—but I often think of what people are thinking about the opportunities in agriculture. A lot of people think of agriculture as some dairy farmers and people having horses in their fields etc. But up in eastern Ontario, I learned some amazing things about the things that are happening in agriculture that require amazing skilled trades opportunities—things like milking cattle. I don't know how many people realize this today right in your group, but cattle at a lot of farms are milked by a robotic system. The cattle walk into this big device and are automatically milked by a computerized system. The people who set those up are highly skilled technicians. It takes a lot of training and a lot of willpower to be able to be good at that.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Then, I look at things like the big tractors you see in the field. Most of them today, especially the modern ones, are run by GPS. The tractor monitors the fields. It goes right back to companies like John Deere and Case and—again, those people who build those tractors, who repair those tractors etc., all that farm equipment, are highly skilled people who require a lot of training.

I work for a company in Midland. We have about 35 men, and we're in everything from welding, refrigeration, heating, some plumbing. The reality is that we have a great bunch of young guys, but in our group we—for example, we just bought three new pickup trucks for three new employees. These are contributing to the economy. I think we've got a total now of 30 trucks and 35 employees.

All these things together, when you look at the trades, they're not—the day of the mechanic. They used to call them grease monkeys. They hardly exist anymore. It's highly skilled people, and they need to have that training, either at their home base or in the education system.

So as we walk through this, I think Bill 288 is just the next step in something that's really good for the citizens of the province of Ontario and their families.

I was talking to one young fella who is 17 years old. He went through the education system, and he won the Governor General's award for his excellence in education at his secondary school. And the first thing he did? He went out and got his first-year apprenticeship.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: When I talked to him, he basically was saying, "I have the opportunity now to form my own business in the future after I get my apprenticeship and get my trade, and I'll be there as a contributing member of the economy, building a new business."

1510

So just to thank Minister McNaughton and all the members at Queen's Park who would support this or work towards making any bill even better—I congratulate them

for this, because it's good legislation and it's good for the people of Ontario, and for the young people of Ontario in particular.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Our next presenter is the General Contractors' Association of Toronto. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Jim Vlahos: Good afternoon, and thank you, everyone, for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Jim Vlahos, and I'm the executive director of the General Contractors' Association of Toronto, also referred to as GCAT. Joining me today is the chair of our association, Mr. Jeff Robinson. Mr. Robinson is also the president of J.J. McGuire General Contractors Inc., a long-standing member of GCAT and proud member of the construction employer community in Ontario.

GCAT is a construction labour relations organization that deals with six of the 25 unionized construction trades in the GTA and Simcoe county areas. Although we are Toronto- and Simcoe-county-oriented in focus, our members do not limit their scope of work to these boundaries, and indeed work around the province, and in some cases around the world. The general contractors forming part of our organization employ or subcontract work to tens of thousands of skilled tradespersons and generate billions of dollars of construction work on a yearly basis.

I'm therefore very pleased to have the opportunity to speak a little bit about the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, which GCAT considers a monumental shift in the right direction to better organize, modernize and administrate the skilled trades, which we believe will have an enormously positive impact in the ongoing battle to increase the number of qualified tradespersons and make gains against the stigmatization of construction-based skilled trades careers, and the growth of apprenticeships.

That stigmatization has in part contributed to the dearth of skilled tradespersons available to meet the growing demand within the industry. Billions of dollars of infrastructure, institutional and commercial construction work continue to amass within the province, while we have unfortunately seen little growth in the number of qualified skilled tradespeople available to complete it, or even in some cases commence the work.

Our organization, through its participation as foundational partners in the carpenters' and labourers' GTA-based training centres, has done what it can to provide state-of-the-art facilities and technology to entice the younger generation and, perhaps more importantly, their parents to think of construction as something more than a dirty business, and something that more so embraces new technology and techniques for a safer and more rewarding career in construction.

It bears mentioning that we see that same stigmatization on the other side of the equation, as well. GCAT has created and self-funded the Career Edge program to encourage students, their parents, educators and even guidance counsellors to consider and promote careers in construction management, including building information modelling, estimating, materials management, civil engineering and

more. By connecting with school boards and educational partners like the Learning Partnership across the GTA, Career Edge has provided speakers and informational materials to well over 10,000 students each year. We are also the single largest bursary provider to George Brown's school of construction management, and also provide scholarships and bursaries to Centennial College, Mohawk College, Fanshawe and Ryerson University, specifically to promote the pursuit of construction management careers.

This is not done with a focus of purely serving the unionized industry, but rather to encourage the pursuit of such careers regardless of union affiliation. This is because a competent and motivated workforce with a balance of seasoned journeypersons and apprentices is the key to the industry's success.

Bill 288 will greatly assist us in the pursuit of a bigger workforce that better serves the skilled trades through its client-facing and enforcement functions. It streamlines the process and pulls the oversight and enforcement bodies into the digital age by embracing digital options and client interfaces.

To be sure, there's still a lot of heavy lifting that needs to be done, with the need to formulate scopes of practice for the existing skilled trades, provide pathways to classification and set the standards for licensing and trade certification. However, with the continued input and consultation of the construction industry—again, regardless of union affiliation or preference—we believe that Bill 288 will avoid some of the pitfalls we saw with the College of Trades, which became mired in issues with respect to classification and rehashing construction trade jurisdictional disputes via its enforcement mechanisms.

By dividing the responsibilities of training and certification from compliance and enforcement, Bill 288 aims to cut through some of the confusion that existed previously under the College of Trades, with a clearly defined body, Skilled Trades Ontario, dealing with the instruction and accreditation of skilled trades, while leaving the enforcement provisions and appeal process to a body more experienced in those labour matters. This streamlining under the Bill 288 framework and the greater clarity of roles between the crown agency and ministry will make things smoother and provide greater direction to those who are trying to navigate that system. There will hopefully be no more bouncing between agencies, as before between OCOT and MOLTSD. I believe this is particularly helpful in removing some of the barriers previously encountered by those seeking a career in the skilled trades but perhaps put off by the bureaucratic structure or upfront financial commitments.

We look forward to providing some additional comments regarding scopes of practice, apprenticeship ratios and compulsory certification status at the appropriate time with the Skilled Trades Panel, but I would welcome any questions regarding those today. I sincerely wish to commend Minister McNaughton and his entire staff, along with the skilled trades advisory panel, for consulting and giving the entire industry the opportunity to provide input while keeping paramount the mandate of public safety.

Those are my remarks this afternoon, and both Mr. Robinson and I welcome any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start with the questions now, and we'll start the first round of questions with the independent members. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thanks, everyone, for your presentations. It has really been an extraordinary day of diving deep into the trades. There was a comment that I had not heard, and it came from the carpenters with respect to a commitment to safety that includes keeping the job site free of harassment and racism and making sure it's a safe place, including mental health and well-being. It's such a very whole way of looking at a job site, and I just thought that was pretty incredible—and the shocking statistic that 800 of last year's terrible increase in opioid deaths happened in this sector alone. What do you believe is driving that trend? Mike, you can start.

Mr. Mike Yorke: Sure. Yes, myself or Cristina—maybe I can say a couple of points and then Cristina or Mark could contribute. There is a culture in our industry—and we know that construction is a physical industry, so there are a lot of injuries. Sometimes that's a route to opioid use because people are prescribed painkillers and one thing leads to another; it leads to addiction, leads to overdose, leads to misuse.

The other aspect within our industry is, historically, it's a very macho, suck-it-up industry where to discuss individual pain has sometimes been frowned upon in the past, and to discuss that was an indicator in the past of being weak. We need to change that as a culture. That has to come from a commitment not just from our organization but, from working with Jeff and Jim Vlahos, it has to be across the spectrum. I think that's how we addressed the issue of racist outbursts within the industry. We collaborated with a broad spectrum of industry leaders, including, candidly, our mayor, John Tory. His office has been very helpful in addressing that. Now we have to take on the issue of drug use and abuse in our industry, and I think we do that through a collaborative approach as well. That really means across the spectrum.

Cristina, do you have anything further to contribute to that?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Cristina Selva: I think you just about covered it, Mike, but back to the original question of why it's happening to this extent in construction, it is by virtue of the culture in construction and just the nature of construction work, which includes long hours that can be very stressful, very physically stressful. People sustain injuries in construction and take painkillers to manage those injuries, and then before you know it, they're carrying on into a substance abuse situation. The instability of the work or the cyclicity of the work also causes a lot of stress on our members, and so that also encourages people to self-medicate with substances.

1520

As Mike pointed out, the traditional mentality of the macho construction site: You're not allowed to feel weak. You're not allowed to talk about your feelings or what

you're thinking. You need to be tough at all times. So I think those are the major factors that are contributing towards the epidemic, really, that's taking place, not just in Canada, but across the US and elsewhere.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you so much for that.

Former MPP Dunlop, it's really great to see you, and I appreciate you mentioning the establishment of the college system under Bill Davis. Centennial College in my riding was the first to be set up. It's really wonderful to see you, and we'll catch you in the next round. Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go to the government side now. MPP Cho.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you to all presenters for coming today. It's very valuable.

I'm going to start my line of questioning with Mr. Dunlop. Clearly, time out of politics has been good to you. You look younger and more refreshed than when I saw you last many years ago. I also really appreciated your presentation today, because there are some really relevant issues that you brought up, and I think you're uniquely positioned to speak to this, not just because you've had your time as an MPP but because you've been in the skilled trades for decades.

As we know—it has been mentioned in some of the other presentations, too—as we move to economic recovery and growth, there's no question skilled trades are going to be a huge part of that plan writ large. But there are nuances, and that's why, at finance, we've been positioning our economy for success. Part of that is going to be considering the fact that when we move through recovery into growth, it's not just going to be Ontario against Ontario or Quebec; it's going to be Ontario against Pennsylvania, and the world will be competing for an edge, and that includes our skilled trades. That's going to put immense strains on an already strained system not just for the skilled trades but for the supply chain, so we need to pre-position ourselves for success. Part of that was—you spoke of broadband and the importance of that in the skilled trades, and I'm really glad you brought that up. That's why our government presented, in our last budget, \$4 billion towards that investment, because you're absolutely right: Broadband is everywhere, and that includes in our skilled trades. We also need to be wary of the impediments already built into the system.

So I'm wondering, through your experience, if you can speak to some of the challenges that apprentices are facing in your industry out there and what our government can do to address that.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, thanks very much, and thank you for that compliment, because I looked in the mirror earlier and I didn't think I looked all that good. And thank you to Mitzie as well—MPP Hunter, I should say.

When you look at possible opportunities for apprentices, I think you've also got to look at the business owners. I think it's overall a big struggle to find young people, male and female—because, I can tell you, there are a lot of female apprentices and now journeymen who are now in the skilled trades. I know of a couple of electricians—

twins, for example—who are both electricians now, fully qualified—females.

It's an old story: I think getting people, getting parents, getting the boards of education, the guidance teachers to all agree that there's nothing wrong with the skilled trades, particularly when you look at how much money, the actual money, a person can make a year as a qualified tradesperson and even doing quite well as an apprentice—I think, again, it's getting people educated on how it's a great opportunity.

I know so many people try so hard, whether it's the community college system, and some of the guys here from—for example, I appreciated the comments from the carpenters' union. I know they're doing very well. Groups like LIUNA, all of the different small construction associations trying to get the word out: What can we do to attract more people to these trades? I know, right now, in the business I'm working in, we could use a couple of apprentices in refrigeration and also in sheet metal and welding. It's just an ongoing fight to try to find these people. That's why in a lot of trades today, you'll see that a number of the people are older. They're still an older generation of people that make up the bulk of the workforce and, in particular, trades. I just think that if people knew more about the strength of some of these trades and the qualifications you need and how complex the trades actually are—I mentioned a little about agriculture. I don't think a lot of people know that on some big dairy farms, for example, they have things called digesters.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The digesters create power from the cow's manure, and they go right back onto the grid. It's probably the best form of green energy we've ever seen, because it's a winner all around for the farmer and for the community and for the hydro system, and it gets rid of a smell of manure on farm fields.

I mentioned other things as well, but the bottom line is, getting the people interested in just taking that first step towards the job opportunity or the future in that job, as someone earlier mentioned, I think, is the key thing. Getting the word out, whether it's more ads, whether it's more things online, whatever it may be—we have to take that step, and that's what will be the success in building our economy with more young people.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Mr. Dunlop. Agreed; there are lots of great initiatives happening there.

But I do want to talk about the past a little bit, because it's important in not repeating some of the mistakes that were made back then. As a member you fought passionately for the skilled trades, the fight your daughter continues very passionately today in the Legislature. But also you fought quite passionately against the Ontario College of Trades. Can you tell us why you thought OCOT didn't serve the skilled trades development well and what we can do to avoid those mistakes in the future?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: What the key point was in the College of Trades originally is a lot of the construction folks had come forward, and they didn't agree with the apprenticeship ratios. That started it all, because the questions

would come up in the House with Mr. McGuinty and the former ministers etc. In the end, the government thought, "Well, we'll try the Ontario College of Trades." We thought it was a little too lopsided towards the unions.

What I had actually done to try to back it up, because I had that portfolio, I had actually decided to tour the province and go to a lot of different people, have meetings—you name it—town halls, community, whatever it was.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I did about 150 events, and I was convinced that we can do better than the College of Trades. When Monte became the minister and created this bill, I thought, "Well, that's the first giant step away from it."

I'm not saying that the College of Trades was completely bad. It brought the discussion out that I talked about earlier. It brought it out to the public in the Legislature. It brought it out to a number of fundraising events, that sort of thing. In the end, I think the College of Trades was a step towards the bill we have today, and I'm quite sure there will be amendments to this bill in the future. But the more discussion on trades, the better it is, and that's where the college helps. I think this bill will enhance it even further.

Mr. Stan Cho: I think we're out of time, but thank you very much, Mr. Dunlop.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll go to the opposition side now for their first round. MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to all presenters. This has been a very valuable day of conversation and discussion around skilled trades and the future of apprenticeships.

Garfield, your ears must have been burning a couple of weeks ago. We were all talking about you and relaying Garfield Dunlop stories. It's interesting to know that you're back on the tools as a plumber. I was joking that there's some consistency between Queen's Park and plumbing, but we'll leave that to another discussion. It was also interesting to hear you talk about the trucks, because my son is about 400 hours shy of his 9,000 hours as an electrical apprentice. His truck is parked out in our driveway, and it looks like an ice cream truck. He's really hoping there's a pickup truck in his future.

That said, I also appreciate the fact, though, that you have raised that legislation as it moves through a history and as we learn more—we heard from the Carpenters' today about the opioids in that sector. That's incredibly important for us as legislators to hear. But Bill 288, as you know, does not name the construction trades in the compulsory trades or the non-compulsory trades, and there are some folks out there who really do believe that this is by design, Mr. Dunlop, because there's a possibility in the future around future skill setting, breaking up the trades into skill sets and not recognizing trade qualifications and the apprenticeship system. Now, I asked the minister this morning about this and he's like, "It's not going to happen." But if you don't have it in legislation, we both know that future governments, different ministers can change that.

1530

How important do you think it is that we enshrine and make sure that we recognize the trade qualifications by way of compulsory trades? Garfield, please go ahead.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Catherine. I hope your son soon gets that new truck because—

Ms. Catherine Fife: He deserves it.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: There's lots of them out there, and all the young guys like them, the big pickups.

This compulsory, non-compulsory has been a discussion for, heck, the last 10 years, and I think it will continue to be. There's nothing saying that somebody in the future or even the current government or if they're re-elected down the road—that that can't change. I think what really made it bad is that in the beginning, what was considered a trade was—they had some pretty weak reasons for calling them trades, so they didn't really get into that, and I know that's why the Liberal government wouldn't change that. I think there are a few areas where some of the things like technicians on farm equipment, that type of thing—they're not really a trade. However, they're very, very complex and it takes a lot of training to be a good technician in a lot of those fields that I talked about.

I think it's just a battle that will continue. If it's not enshrined now, there's nothing to say that further trades won't be enshrined down the road and considered compulsory trades. I can think of a few that I just witnessed as I have worked. By the way, I'm not really on the tools. I'm kind of coordinating work, but I have been out on a few jobs, and I haven't really lost it, eh? So I'm not that bad.

Anyhow, I just think that it's something you may disagree with now, but there's no reason down the road that things can't change in that direction. I just think it's nice that I'm hearing positive comments from a whole pile of people. There are always going to be little things that people don't agree with, but I think getting the word out that the trades are a good thing is a really smart move on behalf of all of you folks at Queen's Park who are working to get this passed.

Ms. Catherine Fife: And also key to our economic recovery to get this right. I'm going to throw it over to MPP Gates. Go ahead, please, Wayne.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Gates, you have three minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I'll start with Garfield only for a minute, because he's gotten far too much face time already by everybody saying what a wonderful guy he was and all that other stuff. All of it is accurate. I've known Garfield—I got very close to him while I was up there. But I will leave a message with my good colleague there: You can talk about agriculture all you want, but in the province of Ontario today we're losing five farms, 175 acres of prime farmland in the province of Ontario—you've got to get to your government and tell them that if we can't feed ourselves, we're going to be in the same problem we were with vaccines. So I want to take that message back. But I do love you, Garfield. You know that. You look great, and stay healthy.

I've got a few other questions that I'd like to get out here. One of our concerns we noted with the legislation is the lack of clarity around the power granted to the minister to determine compulsory trades and the lack of any formal process from allowing voluntary trades appeals to the compulsory. Could you discuss any concerns you may also share on that issue and what you believe is the best path forward? I'll take this to the Carpenters' seeing as I've met with them at least once.

Mr. Mike Yorke: Yes, Wayne, you know what? This is an excellent question, and Catherine mentioned that as well. It's a real concern of the Carpenters' union, and I think the most appropriate person to handle that question—I'll flip that to Mark Lewis, our general counsel.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I was wondering if Mark spoke here. He's been pretty—

Mr. Mike Yorke: I want to make sure he's in. I want to get him in.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I thought that was Neil Young for a minute, but I wasn't sure.

Mr. Mark Lewis: Well, I'm waiting for a legal haircut.

I will be extremely quick on this. One of the things that the Carpenters' have always been concerned about is we would like a process or a system whereby we can apply and it would be considered for the entirety of our trade or even a quarter of our trade to be compulsory. One of the problems we had prior to OCOT—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Mark Lewis: —was that there wasn't really a system whereby you could move from one status to the other. OCOT—I understand what everybody said about it. There were all sorts of problems with it. We weren't married to it, but what we liked about it was that it was supposed to provide that system.

We generally support this bill. As Mike and Cristina said, we love the fact that it's a whole trade concept; it's not skill sets.

We assume that the minister's advisory panel that's doing that stage 2 reporting process will come back with some recommendations concerning all of those structures, including how you go from one step to the other. On that point, we'd just say that you don't have to be a compulsory trade to be a great trade with a great future, but if we want to attract young people, if we want to get different, diverse groups into the trades—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll go back to the government side now for their second round. MPP McKenna.

Ms. Jane McKenna: First of all, I'd like to thank everybody for being here today. I know it has been mentioned numerous times, but it's very near and dear to my heart, and it obviously is to everybody who's here today. I want to thank all of you for your contributions.

Under the Liberal government, 40% of skilled trades dropped and there were 17,000 members who dropped in OCOT as well. The reason I'm saying that is because now, more than ever, we need to bring the skilled trades to the table. I do know that with the Premier, all of you people

here working together because of the best interests of what we need to do to get skilled trades to move where it needs to go—it was about time we did it, and this is one piece that I'm extremely proud of. I want to make sure that we all continue on that path, because the minister, his team and all you people here have done the same.

There was a comment about stress and mental health. That's no excuse for discrimination or violence, ever.

I had the privilege and honour when I first got in, in 2011, of having the member from Simcoe North sitting in front of me. His passion for skilled trades and all the things that he talked about was a huge eye-opener for me. My son hadn't decided to get into the skilled trades at that point.

I'm very grateful for all that you did, Garfield.

I say to my kids all the time, when you work alone, you make progress; when you work together, you make history. Those are the reasons that we're all at the table together in partnership, working collaboratively to make sure that these things move forward. So this is a great day for me.

I'm sure it has been said numerous times up to this point, but I also want to mention—we talked about inclusivity—more women and minorities getting into this.

I want to point out that on that panel, we have Jason Ottey; we have Melissa Young, the executive director of NETCO; Melanie Winter—and just hearing all of the wonderful things that everybody has talked about today.

Garfield, my question to you, first of all, is, one thing out of Bill 288—I know you're smiling from ear to ear as well, because this is a lot of hard work that you did yourself that obviously has brought this to this duration. What's the one thing that you are so impressed with in Bill 288 that's going to help all the youngsters and whatever person decides to get into the skilled trades?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Jane, for that question.

I can't really point to one thing. The fact that we're having this debate and hearing such positive comments from different stakeholders is what—I think I tried to mention it earlier. To have the ongoing discussion that there are all kinds of opportunities for our young people, male and female, to move forward with a good lifestyle, a good trade—I'm sure almost anyone entering a trade right now knows that they've probably got a job for life if they want it. They don't necessarily have to be on the tools; they can be members of the community in many other areas. We're going to need people to buy companies and create new companies to carry out this work that's needed to build the economy and to build our province.

So it's just the fact, Jane, that we've had so much good discussion and it's carrying on the discussion from past years. Hopefully more and more ideas will come up that will allow young people to say, "Hey, this is a good thing," and their parents to say it's a good thing, and to get out there and establish themselves in some kind of a trade.

1540

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Your first trade you pick may not be the one you want. It may not be the one you're satisfied with. My son went through for a plumber, but you know what? He loves to drive heavy-duty equipment, and

now he drives a large excavator. It gives you a chance to work. I think just the ongoing discussion is fantastic. I'm really pleased to be part of this today and to hear the kind of comments I'm hearing from everybody.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much, Garfield. I think, too, Cristina had said it's career opportunities. Long gone are the days when we got a job and we stayed there for 30, 40 years. This really is a career opportunity for anybody to get into. I've said it a million times about my son. But I do say, Garfield, one thing you said to me is that the government needed to be a part of this process, because it hadn't been for so many years. Thankfully, we are now. But we have ownership as parents, as well, to encourage our kids to go where they need to go, right? I can honestly say I had the stigma myself, where I worried about it. My four girls went to university, and my son was a hard no on that. Thank God he's his mother's child, so he threw me in the car and we went up to get him enrolled to become a welder. He's done extremely well and has his own business now.

But I want to ask Cristina, Mark or Mike—I just wonder, what has your relationship been with the minister through this process?

Mr. Mike Yorke: I'll start it off, but certainly Mark could back me up, and Cristina as well. Look, I think the relationship has been very positive. It's been great dialogue. I don't like to put words in the mouths of the contractors, but I can certainly say, with this minister, with both union and management—I think we both would say a lot of respect, a lot of dialogue and a lot of recognition of a job well done.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Mike Yorke: Mark, if you can speak to that.

Mr. Mark Lewis: I'm going to be really quick. I agree with Mike. We're really, really happy with the outreach that we've had and our ability to speak. I don't want to insult MPP Piccini, because I know what he does as a PA, but one of the things that we like is that skills got moved over to be with labour, where we think it really belongs, because when we were with colleges and universities, we thought apprenticeship was regarded as the ugly stepsister and we didn't get as much attention. But under this minister, it's been really, really good. We're very pleased with the outreach and the dialogue.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you very much. If we've learned anything—we've learned a heck of a lot today, and thank you very much. We all knew that it was cumbersome to navigate and that we needed to end the stigma. We've come leaps and bounds with this minister, this Premier, and people like yourselves working with us to get where we need to go.

I'll just leave off with that I went to the building foundations of equity, supporting women, and Blue Coble was one of the speakers. She was an ironworker, and she said the same thing at that time.

Thank you, all of you. This has been very inspirational and I appreciate all your feedback.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll move back to the opposition side now for their second round. Who would like to go? MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I will say, to Mr. Lewis, it's better to have it in legislation than in regulation, if you're going to be successful going forward. If I were you guys, I'd be concerned about where we're at if it's not going to go into legislation. That's a concern of mine. But you guys obviously will make your mind up on where you want to go there.

One of the major issues we have heard regarding the presented legislation is the lack of clarity around enforcement and compliance. Prior to the creation of the College of Trades, there were some concerns with the quality of inspections from the ministry. This legislation now brings the enforcement arm into the ministry. How confident do you feel that the minister will have the capacity to provide proactive enforcement for trades? I'll go back to the Carpenters' or the Toronto general contractors—or both go. It doesn't matter which. Go ahead.

Mr. Mike Yorke: Jimmy, I'll ask Mark to respond to that, but I do hear your point that it's important to have the contractors in, so Jimmy should be in as well—but Mark, please.

Mr. Mark Lewis: Very, very quickly: Clearly, inspection and enforcement is critical, and it's critical because lives depend on it. You get good inspectors. You get bad inspectors. That was under the previous system, under the college, under whatever system is going to be in the future. What we all have to emphasize is the work has to be done safely, and inspectors, wherever they are from, have to have the confidence and the willingness to shut down unsafe work practices, whether that relates to trade enforcement or any other issues on the site.

I'll turn it over to Jimmy Vlahos now for his views from the contractors.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Go ahead, Jim.

Mr. Jim Vlahos: Thank you. Thanks, Mark. I would echo Mr. Lewis's sentiment here. Public safety is the overarching focus of this. We don't want any work, be it a general contractor, a subtrade or individual, employing somebody who is a skilled trade to perform the work unsafely or in a manner that puts the general public at unease. It's the same concern that we would have. We felt that, in the past, things became a little too mired in jurisdictional claims versus the actual issue at hand or public safety issue that may be at hand, and I'm hoping that the system, as it will be revised, will address that. Again, we're coming at this very specifically from a construction focus and appreciating that there are other skilled trades involved here and appreciating also that that work needs to be performed in a safe manner.

Mr. Wayne Gates: To both of you, probably more to Jim: You've had a tough few months in construction, with a number of people not only getting injured but getting killed on the job. Since December, we've had six. Unfortunately, two of those getting killed were young men. One had a young family with a baby. He was 21. The other one

was 19. So health and safety, obviously, is job one in the province of Ontario, particularly in construction. It's one of the most dangerous jobs, quite frankly, in the province of Ontario. I do appreciate all the training, all the unions—probably more unions than non-unions, but there are some non-unions that have some training facilities that do a wonderful job.

I'll get on to another question. I'd like to get a couple more, so if you can keep your answers quick, I'll do them quickly. The legislation does nothing to change the current 1-to-1 ratio set out by the province. How do you feel this impacts the health and safety of the trades and the quality of learning for apprentices in the trades? The same two guys could answer, or Mike could answer, or Cristina.

Mr. Mark Lewis: I'll go real quick. We're a non-compulsory trade, so the statutory ratios have never actually been enforceable. We've done it through our collective agreement. We have a higher ratio under our collective agreement—I see Jim nodding away—but we also have some flexibility, because nothing will stop—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Mark Lewis: There are jobs where you need to have a big ratio, and there are jobs where you can get away with having more apprentices, to get them out there and have the working opportunities.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Jim, go ahead.

Mr. Jim Vlahos: Mark raises an excellent point. I agree with Mark. Again, he raises an excellent point. I think Mark and I agree on most things except English football clubs, but that's okay. We'll get over that, Mark.

When you have to strike a balance between the training element and the hands-on element, you want the individuals who report to a site to get that appropriate level of training, but you also want them to have the opportunity to earn a living and make some money upfront. I think that's a very important element, particularly within the construction trades, about ratios and employing apprentices early on in the process so they can appreciate the paycheque that comes in, the health and welfare benefits that may accrue if they're working, perhaps, again, in a unionized environment, and their pension contribution. This is all very important. But when we get to a larger ratio, it can become more like supervision or delegation for that very skilled journeyman, so we have some concerns with that.

Mark is right, though: The majority of the trades that our organization deals with are all non-compulsory trades. We have some within the operating engineers that do so, and we very much respect and abide by the ratios that are established there.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I can certainly appreciate the fact that the unionized shops have higher ratios because of the collective agreement. I know in the auto sector it's as high as 8 to 1, with 9,000 hours to get an apprenticeship. So I do understand that.

I have a question here that I'd like to talk about, as well. We know there are significant issues with opioid use among skilled trades workers in the province. Do you

believe the province has a role to play in their approach to reconstruction of skilled trades in addressing the issue among workers? And what do you think the province could do to combat this issue?

1550

I will touch on one thing that I think is hurting the construction trade. The government—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —will not support my Bill 119 on deeming, and they're forcing workers to go to work, even though they're injured, because they're scared they're going to be deemed, which means they will lose at least 50% of their wages or more and they will end up being on ODSP or OW. That's kind of a two-headed part to that question, but I do know there's a real, real crisis with opioid use—not only in the construction trade, by the way; right across the province of Ontario. Maybe you guys can answer that question. I appreciate it. Go ahead, guys.

Mr. Mike Yorke: Just a couple of quick points: I'm not familiar with that bill, Wayne. I think we should know more about it, because some of the feedback that I get from the staff—and Mark will attest to this—is that people are concerned about loss of wages, so they will just put up with the pain and they will go back to work Monday morning. So that's an issue.

With the first part of the question, yes, absolutely, I do believe there's a role for government there. It's a collaboration—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sorry. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll have to move to the independent members now. MPP Hunter?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: First of all, I want to say thank you to the Carpenters', who have in the past participated in my youth career fair to attract young people of very diverse backgrounds into the trades, some in elementary, grades 7 and 8, as well as throughout the high school panel.

First of all, Jim, you have very specific, creative programs, partnering with Career Edge and The Learning Partnership. These are really excellent. One of the things that surfaced today that I hope the work of Skilled Trades Ontario will do as part of its education is to really look at the trades as a first option, not a backup option, for young people. That, to me, would be a really remarkable goal that would rally everyone, really, in the sector to do that. I'm just wondering: Maybe, Jim, you could speak to what that would mean, if the trades were a first option for young people when it is the right fit. The average age would decline from 28 right now, maybe to the early twenties.

Mr. Jim Vlahos: I would almost feel like we'd won the lottery in that respect, if we could sort of flip the switch and change that mindset immediately. It has been our constant call to increase the quality and the quantity of apprentices. We do have an aging workforce and we do have a limited number of applicants as it goes now.

Again, the same applies to our organization, admittedly to a lesser extent. But careers in construction management—or professional construction careers, as we call

them—are often seen as that second choice or often seen as that community college program because your son or daughter didn't perhaps achieve the post-secondary grades they needed to get into some other career. But they are so rewarding. They are fulfilling. They embrace technology. Again, we've come a very long way from the photos we see of workers standing on an iron beam—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Jim Vlahos: —with no protection or tie-off. Construction is embracing technology at a rapid pace.

If anyone has ever had the opportunity to attend any trade shows—no one has recently, mind you—in the past, just what we've seen in terms of formwork, of constructing in tight spaces like the downtown core, for example, and the speed at which these buildings can now be put up, and the safety elements that are built into all of this technology—I just wish people understood, or that it could be better ingrained, perhaps, at a younger age that the careers are not only viable and economically rewarding, but they're a lot safer.

Again, I appreciate that we have had, very unfortunately, some deaths in the industry, and I don't mean to sound cold about it, but we certainly statistically have seen a large decrease in the number of people who have been killed in construction-related work. I'd love to see that number go to zero, of course, but thankfully it is on the decrease. But I think we need to eliminate that idea that—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Jim Vlahos: —it's dirty work, you'll literally break your back doing this work, and it's not as secure or safe as other potential careers. I think quite the opposite is true. Having worked here now for about nine years—and previously, I was actually with the Carpenters' for about nine years as their general counsel, and meeting all of the apprentices who went through those programs, journey-persons who would come in to see us in the legal department. They're all learned people. They're smart. They have the ability to carry their own business, in a lot of cases, and grow their own business. You're not necessarily going to work for somebody else for the rest of your life. Most of our companies, the most successful companies that we have as members—the individuals who run them started as tradespeople, and they've grown them exponentially. I think that's something that needs to be shared.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): That concludes our time. I would like to thank all three presenters for their presentations. You're now released.

Before we go to our next presenter, I would like to ask a question of the members of the committee. Since we have only one presenter for the 4 p.m. time slot, I propose that we ask only one round of questions. Are the members in agreement? MPP Gates?

Mr. Wayne Gates: No. I think it's important that they be treated no different from everybody else. Everybody else had two rounds. They should have two rounds.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): All right—so if there's not an agreement.

PROVINCIAL BUILDING
AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL
OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I would like to call upon the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. I'm Patrick Dillon. I'm with the building trades of Ontario. With me is Jim Hogarth, the president of the building trades and business manager of the pipe trades council for the province of Ontario.

I'd like to make a few opening comments about this bill, how we got to where we're at, and then Jim will talk about some amendments that we think need to be made to the bill. We'll also follow this up with a fuller written presentation. Hopefully, the committee got the short version for this meeting.

Just to kick it off, talking about the building trades: We represent 150,000 tradespeople in the province of Ontario. The lifeblood of the construction industry is apprenticeship training. We are the only industry that the apprenticeship and trades training is the lifeblood that—that's all we do. People on the committee, I think you know and understand that, but it needs to be stressed that we come to this—that if we don't get the trades training system correct, our industry suffers, and so does the economy of the province of Ontario.

In general terms, I want to say this: With certain necessary amendments, the building trades are supportive of this bill. We'd prefer to have the College of Trades, but that's not on the table today; it's Bill 288, which we support, with amendments. It's certainly a step forward from where we were two and a half years ago with Bill 100, schedule 40, which brought in skill sets.

I was watching a little bit earlier, when Garfield Dunlop talked a little bit about the history. The history of compulsory licensing of the trades and the trades qualification—the fulsome of the non-compulsory trades goes back to 1963, with the Simonett report and Premier Robarts. And 10 years after that, there was another report done by Dymond, who recommended getting rid of the compulsory licensed trades. But thankfully enough for all of this, we had a Premier of the province at that time, a pretty progressive, smart-thinking individual, Premier Davis, who rejected the Dymond report and kept the compulsory licensed trades.

1600

Then we went into the 1990s, where the Harris government actually introduced legislation, Bill 55, that would have fragmented the trades. With a serious lobby around the province—I've got to give them credit that they actually gave us consultation time to talk about the bill. At the end of the day, they exempted construction from Bill 55, so we still had the compulsory licensed trades and the fulsome trades and the non-compulsory.

In 2013, then we had the College of Trades set up. I want to say this: Despite what my friend Mr. Dunlop had said, the College of Trades was set up with consultation

throughout this province. There was a gentleman by the name of Mr. Armstrong that was engaged by the government who went to every community in this province, and that was the start of the college. But I don't want to talk about that really because that is a part of the history. I will say this, that the college in some respects wasn't perfect, but some of us in the industry caused more of that imperfection than what the college actually did.

In 2018, then we get the present government that brought in the skill sets, which would have destroyed our industry. Major consultation and lobbying has gone on since then. Thank God that Monte McNaughton took this challenge on and, through lots of discussion, has moved away from the skill set model and brought in Bill 288. Even with its imperfections, it's way better than where we were with skill sets.

Just to make a quick closing comment on the skill set thing, the BC government did the skill set thing 12 years ago. The first thing that was noticeable was the contractors were left with a deskilled workforce.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Workers were left with—in fact, apprentices were injured four times more regularly than prior to the skill set model.

How are we doing with time there?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Forty-five seconds now.

Mr. Hogarth, can you hear me?

Mr. James Hogarth: I can hear you, yes.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, you have about 40 seconds.

Failure of sound system.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Your voice is breaking up. Sorry, we can't hear you properly; your voice is breaking up.

Mr. James Hogarth: Hello?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, do you want to take it over please? I can give you 40 seconds.

Mr. James Hogarth: Well, it's kind of hard to do it in 40 seconds, what's remaining, but there are five sections that we would like to speak to in Bill 288. The transition creates uncertainty as to whether trades currently prescribed in the construction sector will continue to be prescribed. In light of time, needed amendments—a new section needs to read as follows: "Every trade that was prescribed as a trade that belongs to the construction sector under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, shall be deemed to be prescribed by a minister's regulation as a trade under this act, and every construction sector trade be classified"—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The time has come up.

We'll start with the questions now, and I'll start the first round of questions with the opposition. MPP Fife?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Hogarth. Mr. Hogarth, I am going to give you a chance to finish, because we do want to hear the amendments and we want to get them on the record. Our concern is that Bill

288 does not name the construction trades in the compulsory trades or the non-compulsory trades, and we believe that this is by design, based on what we've heard from stakeholders. This still leaves the possibilities of future skill-setting, breaking up the trades into skill sets and not recognizing trade qualifications and the apprenticeship program.

We're going to try to amend this piece of legislation so that there's clarity on this. We think that that is key to the integrity of this program going forward. Mr. Hogarth, can you speak to some of your amendments that you are proposing? And do they align with trying to secure some of this clarity?

Mr. James Hogarth: Yes. Under the transition, we're asking that it be that the trades under this act and every construction-sector trade classified as compulsory under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act shall be deemed to be classified by a minister's regulation as compulsory under this act until such time as a new regulation is made.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Excellent. Thank you very much for getting that on the record.

Mr. Dillon, you mentioned that the College of Trades and the industry sector were problematic. We haven't heard that today. Can you expand on that, that they were part of the problem with regard to the college? Because if there's a way for us to prevent that from happening, then this is our opportunity to make that happen.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: I think some of the amendments actually speak to that, where the Ontario Labour Relations Board was used. The Ontario Labour Relations Board is primarily, for construction, a labour relations place to solve differences.

Ms. Catherine Fife: For sure.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: When training issues were brought in through jurisdictional disputes between trades, the labour boards took the position—and we're definitely afraid of that going forward—that they were there about their labour relations and their past practice and so on around jurisdiction, and that the trades qualification act or the Ontario College of Trades act didn't really influence them. We can't have that. For trades training, it's absolutely imperative that we get this right and that the pieces are put in place that the labour board have to use to judge issues around training. We've covered that off in the amendments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: And to be clear, not to blame everything on the labour board, there are issues within the trades where there's overlap from one trade to another. I think that was some of the problem in the past, where people were trying to deal with the overlaps but were, I would say, maybe using the college somewhat as a battering ram on those things. That was not very successful, but—

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's excellent. So—

Mr. Patrick Dillon: So if the criteria are right, the labour board will be fine.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. So we've got to get it right, right at the legislative piece.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Yes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm going to throw it over to my colleague Wayne Gates. Please go ahead, Wayne.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Hi, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Hogarth—I think that's the first time I've ever called you "Mister," Patrick; it's kind of how I start.

I'd like to begin by looking at the history of how we got here. This government initially began their approach to modernizing skilled trades by moving to a skill-set-based system in 2019.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: They later changed their approach and moved their reforms to this current legislation. Could you discuss why that was the wrong approach and why you think they changed course? I personally believe it's because of your organization and others that stopped it.

1610

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Well, thank you very much, Wayne. I guess, because of the short time frame and the introductory remarks: The fact that the government moved to the skill set model in the first place was—I don't think that the government was wrong-minded, but they were being lobbied by people in our industry who do not do apprenticeship and trades training—that there was a better model. Well, if you don't do apprenticeship and trades training, what do you know about whether the model that exists works or doesn't work? The government was lobbied by people who had their own agenda, and they came out with the skill set thing.

It wasn't just the building trades. The trades-training trainers and our contractors were almost totally opposed to the skill set model. There are contractors, some that you've had on here today, and some residential association people that would support the skill set model, but they don't hire and train tradespeople. The people who do hire and train tradespeople want fulsome apprenticeships and compulsory licensed trades.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Some of the language in this bill, particularly section 6, seems to leave the door open for this government to water down and to weaken compulsory trades in the province. Could you expand on how dangerous this could be for compulsory trades and maybe discuss why you think it was included in the bill in the first place?

Mr. Patrick Dillon: You want to take a shot at that, Jim, or do you want me to?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Go quick, because this time goes quick.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: You're on mute, Jim.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): He's unmuted on our end, so I don't know—Mr. Dillon, do you want to take it over?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, Pat, you better take it over.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Okay—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): The time is up now, sorry, unfortunately.

We'll go to the independent members now for their first round.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you so much to Pat and Jim for rounding out our day. It's been a pretty great day talking about the value and the importance of skilled trades in Ontario and the future of trades. One presenter said that this is about a skilled trade recovery in Ontario. I hope that you both agree with that.

I think it was Pat who said that apprenticeship injury increased four times under the skill set model. I'd like you to expand on that, please.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: In British Columbia, it would have been 12 years ago where they brought in the skill set model. Five years after, looking back at what was happening in the industry with that model, that was one of the key observations, that the apprentices—that's who we're depending on to be our workforce of the future—were being injured by four times what they had been prior to the change. Now, I do want to say this now that we've moved away from the skill set model: Hopefully there are not pieces of it buried in this legislation; we need the politicians to pay particular attention.

I did like a suggestion that you got today from the operating engineers around the purpose clause. That would be a real asset in this bill that would help govern what the labour board can and can't do.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Actually, you anticipated my next question, which was going to be around the need for the purpose clause which would help the OLRB to fulfill its requirements better in terms of compliance and enforcement. So you believe that that is another amendment that should be made to this bill as well?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Yes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Okay. All right; that's great. I know the need for the industry to come together and to collaborate on these matters is very important. I think you've spoken very well to that today, and I certainly believe that the debate and the input that we've heard from all of today's witnesses really speak to that. This is about the future of skilled trades in Ontario and one that we are going to be depending on, with the shortage of almost 100,000 workers in the field. The only way we're going to get to that 100,000 number is through a model that educates, attracts, recruits and properly trains individuals—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: —and allows them to go out on their journey as successful tradespeople in this province. After all, it is your industry, your members who have built and will continue to build this great province that we have. I just want to say thank you for that. I know you represent very broadly and are in touch very broadly with the sector, so please pass on that message.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll move to the government side now. MPP McKenna?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you for being here today. I want to say a couple of things. I look behind you, Pat, with your "Supporting Women in Trades," and I am so grateful for that. You had reached out to me and given me a call a few years ago to go to Niagara Falls and to speak at the building foundation for equity, for supporting women.

I want to say that it was a huge moment for me in the time that I was there. Obviously, Blue Coble, an ironworker from Phoenix, Arizona, was there, and all of those women who spoke there were extremely inspirational. I walked away from that, and I learned so much. So, first of all, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be there. I appreciate that you continually engage me with that.

I also want to just point out a couple of things too. We're very appreciative of your quotes that you've put out: "The Building Trades Council welcomes Minister McNaughton's legislative direction to protect the construction trades classification system."

As we all know, the shortage of 100,000 certainly didn't happen since 2018. So my first question to you is, how do you see Bill 288 resolving that?

Mr. Patrick Dillon: The amendments will help. One of the issues that Minister McNaughton and the government have moved towards is to keep the compulsory licensed trades. And just for the panel's information, there are no shortages in Ontario in the compulsory licensed trades; there are shortages in Ontario in some of the non-compulsory trades. People will not look at, what are the issues? Why would the compulsory be so successful and the non-compulsory, in some trades, not? Part of it has to do with—and we need to have a further, longer discussion about this—how the safety record of the compulsory trades is exemplary compared to a lot of the non-compulsory trades. So if you're a parent or you're someone choosing to come into the trades and you have an opportunity to go to work where you can learn a trade, a wholesome trade, and be reasonably safe—or you can go over here; it may be a little easier to get in but a little more apt to get hurt—you go to the compulsory trades. So we need some work to do on attracting people.

We appreciate that your government, by the way, Jane, has supported this women's group that the sign here behind me is talking about, but we've also received money from the Skills Development Fund just recently to do outreach for the diversity aspects of feeding into the trades. So there's a combination of things, and we could talk about that for quite some time.

1620

I believe that our industry can meet the demand if we collaborate and we actually listen to one another about what the positive steps are in attracting people to the trades. If you're a parent and you have a 17- or 18-year-old offspring that is looking at the trades and there has been some big tragedy take place where four or five construction workers have gotten killed, it will be a few years before you recommend to your offspring that they should go to the trades.

Now, the trades are a very safe place to earn a living if you've been trained properly. You just can't stress that enough. I think that we've got a lot of work to do on the promotion side and I see some opportunity there in this bill. A career as a cement mason, as an example, is actually a great career and they can make great money, but nobody advertises for them. So we've got work to do collectively

to go out and reach out, but we've also got work to do on the safety side.

I heard one of your guests on here earlier today talking about the safety, how safe we are. Our serious injuries are actually going up. Our deaths are actually trending up. The injuries that are going down—or the reported injuries; I'll put it that way—are ones that people may be able to hide. You can't hide the deaths and you can't hide the serious, so there are issues there. And that's not to knock anyone. We need to have some discussion about what we need to do collaboratively and collectively to address these issues. I think that construction is a great place for people to come to earn a living, but we have to make sure that they're going to be fulsome trades and that it's safe. The best way to be safe is to be trained on how to do your trade in the first place.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I thank you very much for that. I want to say, my boyfriend says to me all the time that you can't move forward if you're always looking in the rear-view mirror. What I want to say is our first priority, as you know, is the health and safety of everybody, every worker in Ontario. Also, we want to make sure people go to work and come home safe every single day.

We recognize that we've made—obviously, as you know as well—changes to the heavy hand that the previous government had with inspectors—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jane McKenna: —going in, and now we're working hand in hand with people to make sure that they're successful. As you know, the majority of people want to be successful as employers.

I want to say that we talk about the stigma, and you brought that up as well. It's our responsibility. We've said numerous times that the government needed to check in. As we've said, the 100,000 people that are lacking right now clearly didn't happen since 2018. But the reality is that we're all working together to make sure that we get to the next place.

Jerry Dias said, “Since the provincial government first announced its intention to replace the Ontario College of Trades, Unifor has been deeply engaged in this process. I look forward to continuing to work together as we move to the next phase and implement these changes for the next generation of skilled tradespeople that our province will rely on.”

I'm thrilled that you've all engaged. Obviously, working together as a team, we're going to get where we—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up. We'll go to the second round.

MPP Hunter, do you have any questions in the second round?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I felt like we cut off Mr. Dillon there, so I wanted to give him a chance to provide any thoughts, and the same as well for Mr. Hogarth. I know that you had five points that you wanted to share in your opening. So if either of you want to just finish your thoughts, that's fine. I can yield my time to you.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: I'll go over to you, Jim, if you've got some comments there on the amendments.

Mr. James Hogarth: All right. We'll jump into section 28, review of notices of contravention. Section 28(10) sets out criteria that the Ontario Labour Relations Board will consider when adjudicating an appeal from a notice of contravention issued by an inspector. Section 28(10)(a) the scope of practice; 28(10)(b) the compliance and enforcement framework; and 28(10)(c) any other factors the OLRB considers relevant.

Section 28(10)(c) gives unfettered power to the OLRB to consider anything, including anything not properly considered by the inspector. No appeal body should be entitled to consider its own criteria beyond statutory criteria that guide the first-level decision-maker. This extraordinary OLRB power will inevitably erode the compulsory trades and their scope of practice. That section needs to be deleted.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Is that it? Anything else in terms of amendments?

Mr. James Hogarth: How about provisional C of Qs? Section 17(3) allows provisional C of Qs to be extended beyond one year. Such situations have caused significant safety problems in the past because the practice discourages apprentices from completing their C of Q examination and it encourages unsafe work environments. In addition, contractors will be forced to pay journeyperson wages to individuals who have completed their apprenticeship but have not obtained their licence after passing the Red Seal exam. This inevitably devalues the Red Seal program in Ontario and across the country. It needs to be deleted.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Okay. I want to check something with you, because one of the presenters talked about the committees—that it doesn't actually require the committees; it says it “may” have committees. Do you have any particular feeling about making that a bit stronger so that the committees are actually required that will bring people who are in the experienced trades to the table?

Mr. James Hogarth: Yes, under the previous act there was a trades panel, an equal number of employers and trades. That needs to be carried on. It's required for review of curricula—straight, specific areas on a go-forward basis. It's very much needed for the guidance of the trade.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Pat, do you want to close off? Is there anything that you want to say in 45 seconds?

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Yes, just that I support the comments there. I think the College of Trades—some of the administrative people at the college didn't really like the trade boards, but the reason that the trade boards are needed is, that's where we get the grassroots suggestions of what needs to be changed in the trades.

At one time, with the trade boards, you might be four years before you updated your curricula. Now, you've got to do it maybe every three months. The changes coming into our economy are so fast and so the trade boards are the secret to and they're made up of—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. The time has come up.

I'll move to the government side. Any questions from the government side? MPP McKenna.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Mr. Dillon, this new framework has been almost two years in the making. Can you please walk us through Minister McNaughton's engagement and collaboration with your organization and affiliates through this period?

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Yes, we've had extensive discussions with Minister McNaughton and his staff to get us to where we're at, away from the skill set model to Bill 288. We're hoping that over the next few days—it looks like the schedule is getting pushed pretty quickly to deal with the legislation. By the way, that's a good thing, if we get the amendments done. It's a good thing to get this legislation in place, because there has been a drag going on and we're not focused on bringing the people into the trades like we should be; we're focused on whether we're going to have a training mechanism or we're not.

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But I have to say that Minister McNaughton has been quite open. Obviously, he doesn't agree with everything that I say, but that goes both ways, I guess. But the fact that we've moved from where we were two and a half years ago to where we're at now—we're pretty pleased. We're confident that, at the end of the day, as you hear the rationale behind the changes that we make—and we'll make this a little more fleshed out when we send you the written brief. We think that we can actually get this done, that it will work at least for the construction industry. I can't comment on the industrial service sector, and in some ways, I'd appreciate if they didn't comment on what we do.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you very much. I'm going to leave it at that, from the government side. I appreciate you coming out today and appreciate your feedback. We look forward to what you bring forward. Thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Opposition side, now: MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll go back to Pat or James. I've got a couple of things I want to say quickly. I want to talk about diversity in the trades. I want to make sure that we talk about women, First Nations, racialized and those with disabilities. I think we have an opportunity here.

But there are a few things that I feel have come out of today. I think the government is telling maybe unions and workers one thing and telling employers something different when it comes to the legislation. That's why it's so important to get what we need to get into the legislation, not into regulation, because if we only do it in regulation, this bill and trades are going to be fighting this for a number of years going forward, whether they're in government or there's another government or a different minister.

I've got five questions, Paddy, and I'm going to try and do them quickly. Hopefully, I can get them out, because I think they're important. Some of the language in this bill,

particularly section 6, seems to leave the door open for this government to water down, to weaken, compulsory trades in the province. Could you expand on how dangerous this could be for compulsory trades and maybe discuss why you think it was included in the first place? I'm sorry to rush it, but that's the way they do these things here.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Well, making it quick: We're pretty clear with our amendments, Wayne. The compulsory licensed trades have stood the test of time from a safety side, a training side and a supply side. For that to be undermined at a time when contractors that don't do apprenticeship training are talking about this 100,000 shortage—a fabricated number, by the way—I think you've got to set aside that they've got a different agenda.

But from a worker's perspective, having a wholesome trade doesn't necessarily have to be compulsory. There are some trades, like the millwright and the boilermaker and the ironworker that are non-compulsory, but they're fulsome trades. Some of them want a process in place so that they can become compulsory. What could be better in the system than to have something that's available to the trades to improve themselves? That improves the whole economy, so I'm a big fan of looking at that and having something in place that allows trades to move up to a compulsory—and, do you know what? There may be compulsory trades, certainly not in construction that I know of, that maybe want to be declassified. I don't know of any. But there isn't a tradesman, a tradesperson—let's get that clear—of a compulsory licensed trade in this province who would like their licence reduced.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. I'll give you another question: Another issue is the role of the OLRB underneath this legislation, particularly section 28(10)(c), which notes they may hear “any other factors” the OLRB “considers relevant.” Could you discuss why you believe this should not be in the legislation, and maybe also discuss why you think the government included it? Was this something you saw coming from the consultation that was done prior to the legislation? I will tell you, Paddy, I've got all your amendments.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Just quickly on that: I don't want to sound like I'm here to dump on the OLRB. They do lots of good work there. But when it comes to the labour relations versus training, this can't be left in the open. Their history has been about labour relations, and I'll say this: If anyone on this panel were to come into any one of our training rooms, where it's jointly trusted with the employers and the unions, you would not be able, no matter what the discussion was in there—you wouldn't know who the employers were—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: —versus who the worker reps were, because they're talking about training. Training is not political. Training is about people's ability to earn a living safely.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That was a good comment, the last part, about being safe. We all know that if you belong to a union, your opportunity to get better training is pretty clear. Even when you finish an apprenticeship, it's about 95% in

a unionized shop, with unbelievable training, compared to 30% in a non-union shop.

But one of the major issues we have heard regarding the present legislation is the lack of clarity around enforcement and compliance. Prior to the creation of the College of Trades, there was some concern about the quality of inspections from the ministry. This legislation brings the enforcement arm into the ministry now. How confident do you feel that the minister will have the capacity to provide proactive enforcement for the trades? And do you believe that if there is a violation, there should be some kind of penalty that will make them not do it again?

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Well, on the penalty side, that goes both ways for the employer and for the worker who's actually performing work that they're not licensed to do. If you go out on the highway and you do something you're not supposed to do, it doesn't matter if you're male, female, employer or worker; they deal with you pretty evenly. And so why is it all of a sudden that something changed in the workplace, where our safety is at stake? So yes, I believe that there is some rationale that supports penalties for people who are in contravention of the act.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I've got a minute left, Paddy, and I've got one more question that I'd like you to answer, as

well. I know you discussed your concerns with section 17(3) on the extension of the provision of the C of Qs. Can you expand why this has created unsafe work environments? Also, we know there are apprentices who are finished, who aren't allowed to write their tests right now.

Mr. Patrick Dillon: Well, that's where the safety part of it comes in, Wayne, and panel members. All we're asking—right now it exists that once you've finished your licence, you've got a year. If you've written your exam and you failed, or you're a new immigrant coming into the country and you don't have an Ontario licence, you have a year of a provisional licence to get the proper licence—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Our time has come up. That concludes our time. I want to thank the presenter for coming and for your presentation.

As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 6 p.m. on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, and the deadline to file amendments with the Clerk of the Committee is 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 26, 2021.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Tuesday, May 25, when we will continue public hearings on Bill 288. Thank you so much, and have a good long weekend.

The committee adjourned at 1640.

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