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of Ontario



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de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

N° 44A

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 March 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 mars 2022

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À OEUVRER  
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. Calandra, on behalf of Mr. McNaughton, moved second reading of the following bill:

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

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Will the minister lead off the debate?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I will be splitting my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the member for Mississauga–Malton.

It is a pleasure just to very briefly get up and speak to this bill, which is really a continuation of the work that this government has been doing since it was elected, to modernize the province of Ontario and to continue the hard work in making Ontario the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family. It is part of a bundle of initiatives that have included not only ensuring that workers are protected in the province of Ontario but also ensuring that our small, medium and large job creators have access to the largest talent pool available to them.

We have seen over the last number of months—in the months that were leading up to the pandemic, Ontario was becoming one of the most aggressive jurisdictions when it came to job creation. Month after month we saw the increase in jobs available to the people of the province of Ontario. We saw the jobless rate drop every single month. And, of course, as we moved into the pandemic, as we saw globally, there was a lot of fear and trepidation as to how we would come out of the pandemic. But as we have been saying the entire time, we wanted to ensure that Ontario was in a strong position to ensure that we had stable growth, long-term growth, and that the people who work in our province, the people who generate wealth in our province were well-positioned to exploit that. That's what these series of changes have been brought forward to do.

I note that it was also the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues in her previous role as a parliamentary assistant who helped institute many of the changes in the first Working for Workers Act that was brought forward, which was, again, a good step on the way to bringing us to where we are today.

As you look around the chamber, Speaker, there are many reasons why we have to modernize. There are many reasons why we should all be proud of where Ontario is right now. I note, of course, that the Minister of Infrastructure is handling one of—not one of, Speaker; I shouldn't say that—the largest building of transit and transportation infrastructure in the province's history. It's not just about the \$28 billion worth of subway investments throughout the greater Toronto area and leading into York region, which has been fighting to get access to the subway for decades—and they are finally getting that. And, of course, it's not just about the people who are working to build those subways; it's about the jobs and economic opportunity that will surround the stations and the billions of dollars of investments. It's about the transit-oriented communities, a revolutionary concept of actually building housing around where your transit infrastructure is going. The bills that we have done to eliminate red tape and improve working conditions for our workers help go a long way on that path.

Part of all of this, though, is recognizing, as it is right in the bill, the digital platform workers. I know the parliamentary assistant is going to go much further in detail than I am, but we have seen how important they have become during the pandemic. Speaker, I think there was perhaps a little less of an appreciation for the digital platform workers and the work that they did until the pandemic hit, and I think Ontarians then really started to better understand how important their role was, how important the work they did was and really, truly reflect on the fact that they weren't protected in a way that they should be.

Now, Conservatives have always been the party that protects workers. We've always been the party to ensure that the rights of workers are balanced off by the rights of individuals who earn and generate wealth in the province of Ontario. Again, as we get—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Every time we do that, colleagues, you see what happens, right? The opposition get all frustrated, because they think it's their domain to protect workers. But when they had the opportunity, the one time the official opposition had the opportunity, they didn't do it. It has always been a Progressive Conservative government that has moved forward on labour legislation to protect workers. It has always been a Progressive Conservative

government that has moved forward to ensure that our economy is strengthened, and this bill gets us on that path.

Without further ado, Mr. Speaker, I know how excited we are all to hear the words from the member of Mississauga–Malton because of the hard work that has gone into getting us here today. It is very nice, of course, to see that there are people back in the galleries in the province of Ontario, in our Legislature. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will hand it off. I'll cede my time to the member for Mississauga–Malton and the parliamentary assistant, who will knock your socks off with what's about to be entertained in this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I recognize the member for Mississauga–Malton.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Before I do that, I want to say thank you to the House leader and the minister of many portfolios for doing an incredible job and leading the bill. The minister and I have been working in lockstep to support and protect the hard-working people of our province. I would like to thank the minister for his tremendous leadership to ensure that we have a plan that works for all Ontario workers, because that's the mandate we've taken into this role: building an Ontario that works for all workers. Our plan is unleashing Ontario.

I would like also to thank and acknowledge our Premier for his leadership, and all my caucus members throughout the last four years and particularly for your support for this bill as well as our previous working for workers legislation. These are the historic reforms we are making to stand up for workers and put them back in the driver's seat of Ontario's future.

Before I proceed, as our House leader talked about, a lot of hard work has gone into this bill. So I want to acknowledge and I want to thank everyone from the minister's office who has worked hard on this, including: Joshua, Antonio, Alexandra, Richard, Walid, Ryan, Vlad, Brian, Meaghan, Samantha, Brandon, Zoë, Ava, Ben, Harry and Nabiha. Thank you, each one of you. Without your help, without your hard work, we would not have gotten that far. Thank you so much.

**0910**

Madam Speaker, before I discuss my bill, I want to take a moment and talk about the heartbreaking situation in Ukraine. Our government is standing with the freedom-loving people of Ukraine and the province's Ukrainian community. We want to give a clear message that Ontario is here to help and support. The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program is prioritizing Ukrainian applicants. Our expanded Second Career program is providing up to \$28,000 for Ukrainians who want to train for a new career here in Ontario. This third round of our Skills Development Fund will prioritize programs that will help Ukrainians upgrade their skills for in-demand jobs.

It is not just our government that's responding to this challenge, Madam Speaker. Employers all across the province have stepped forward offering approximately 30,000 jobs.

I want to assure and show that the people of Ontario have a big heart and are always here to help the globe. These programs are not only available for Ukrainians; these programs are absolutely available for our own Ontarians as well.

Over to talking about my bill, Madam Speaker: The way many of us have been working has been changing, and the pandemic has accelerated those trends. Whether it's remote work, automation or working through online platforms, we have seen workers in Ontario and around the globe face new challenges, as well as come new opportunities. They need support to overcome these challenges and we have to make sure we're always there to make the most of these opportunities. And that is why if we provide that support, we will be promoting economic growth and prosperity across the province.

Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, we are facing a historic challenge today, one that also represents opportunity for many. If I want to go back and recall, in January of 2018, there were over 400,000 people looking for work, and in the last decade we have seen over 300,000 manufacturing jobs leaving our province.

Thanks to the efforts of this government, we see another issue now, and the issue is a good issue. We see many more people looking for jobs. There are 300,000 jobs that are available in Ontario. This is a challenge for the employers, our economy and our province. But at the same time, it represents the opportunity for workers and job seekers across Ontario.

The future of work is here. Under the leadership of the Minister of Labour and our Premier, along with all of our caucus members, we're adapting quickly to chart a course that leaves no one behind. We're not going to go back to where we started. Instead, we're making changes that will put Ontario workers and their families first for generations to come.

We are laying the foundation for opportunity and prosperity across our province. This means taking action now to plan for the future and not waiting to see how other provinces or even countries around the world will act. So while many places are just starting to rebuild from the pandemic, we are already thinking ahead to what the next 10 or 20 years will look like. Madam Speaker, we're thinking about the workplaces of the future, and what kind of future we're building for our children, for our grandchildren, and what their job prospects will look like.

It will take time. It will take a lot of hard work. It will take a lot of people working together. Our future is bright, but it has to be a brighter future for everybody. That's why we are working hard, we are working tirelessly, for our workers. To accomplish our mission, we need all hands on deck. Things only work when everybody works together, and we have seen it during COVID-19. Whether it's workers, labour leaders, businesses or the government, we all want to build our roads and bridges, build our health care and long-term-care system, and build projects that our communities need, be it a new school or an ice rink. We all want to build a prosperous Ontario where hard work

pays off and big dreams come to life. To do that, we need everyone to work together.

Madam Speaker, that's why I'm speaking about the bill, the Working for Workers Act, 2022. It builds on the important measures this House passed last year in our previous bill, which protect families by providing family time, requiring most workplaces to have a written policy on disconnecting from work, helping ensure more workers can unplug at the end of the day; by breaking down barriers that prevent immigrants from continuing their profession here in Ontario. We heard from many of my colleagues on how important it is for us to help those who come and make this place as their home. It gives delivery drivers the basic human right and human dignity of access to a restroom at a business they serve along their route.

Last summer, the minister appointed an expert committee to examine the changing landscape of our work and provide recommendations that would position Ontario as the best place in North America to retain, recruit and reward workers—and they delivered. From June to September, the committee met with over 150 workers, union leaders, advocacy groups and employers. They also reviewed and analyzed an additional 550 written submissions and they surveyed over 2,000 people across Ontario. I want to thank the committee chair, Rohinton Medhora, for leading such a thoughtful and thorough process, along with Kathryn Marshall, Vass Bednar, Mark Quail, Sean Speer, Mark Beckles and Susan McArthur. They completed their mission and provided valuable recommendations. Their advice led to the bill the House passed last year as well as this bill I'm speaking for today. Thanks to the hard work of Ontario and Ontarians, Ontario is a leader in protecting and supporting workers today, with first-in-Canada measures I'll talk more about today.

Madam Speaker, in the last two years, when we talk about what has changed the world, it's COVID-19. The way we all worked together: We came together, we put our hands together to beat this COVID-19. It is great to see everyone today with a new normal, much better than we've seen in the last two years.

We talk about, during this time, one of the pains we had when we couldn't go to the places—we could not eat outside. The food came to us, and that came through the workers who worked on the platform and supported our community. We've seen the gig economy growing. We've seen the gig economy helping and supporting the community. We saw that the gig economy is here to stay. They were here for us; it is our time to make sure we're there for these workers.

Building a stronger Ontario means levelling the playing field and helping average people get ahead, especially those who have not been getting their fair share of the economic pie. That is why Ontario is leading the way, not only in Canada but across North America. We are appointing an advisory panel to provide recommendations on expanding health benefits to millions more workers, and we have mandated washroom access at the businesses that delivery workers serve.

No one in Ontario should make less than the minimum wage; be fired without notice, explanation or recourse;

have to travel out of country to resolve a workplace dispute; or sign a contract they don't understand. Can you imagine a place where somebody has to fight for their own rights but they can't because they can't afford to leave the place? It is unacceptable, and these things are happening in our province. We've got to act now. We have to stop this, and we have to be the leader in this.

That is why the legislation we're discussing today would make Ontario the first province in Canada to establish a minimum wage and other important rights and protection for certain gig workers, for the people who help us get around, deliver food to our doors and people who have been on the front line through the pandemic. Those rights include more clarity around work assignments and pay calculation; protection against removal from a digital platform without notice or explanation; and the guarantee that any tips or gratuities a worker earns will remain where they belong, in that worker's pocket.

While talking about the bill, I spoke to many of the workers who work in the industry. They said, "Many times, we feel that we are making \$22, \$20 an hour, which is well above minimum wage. But at times we think we're only making \$5 an hour. And we don't know whether \$22 is the right number or \$5 is the right number."

**0920**

To those workers: That stops now. We're going to make sure you will be able to understand how much you're making. We want to make sure not just that you understand how much you're making; we will be able to make sure together that it is going to be more than minimum wage.

In the last two years, we have seen huge shifts around traditional labour markets, and as we build a resilient economy, our government must keep pace with those changes. We know that the gig economy is one of the fastest-growing employment sectors in Ontario and that as many as one in five Canadians currently take on work via a digital platform—as compared to 4.5% in 2016, it is today about 20% of the population. So we're not just listening to their concerns; we are acting today. We want to make sure that they not only make more than minimum wage, but they have the flexibility to work on multiple platforms to make sure they can earn the most they can.

Moving over from this to the right to privacy and electronic monitoring: Madam Speaker, as you know, technology has changed the way we work. Our labour laws must adapt to protect our workers and their families. Work has been increasingly creeping into our family time. This is why we will be the first one in North America to give workers the right to disconnect by requiring employers to make and have a written policy on disconnecting from work.

As we embark on a new world of work, electronic monitoring is becoming more commonplace. For example, delivery persons are being followed by GPS, construction workers are using phones and tablets on the job site, and office workers are logging on from their homes.

We cannot leave our workers in uncharted territory. We cannot wait for others to find the path forward for us. The people of Ontario are leaders, and as a government that is working for workers, we must act, and we must act now.

That is why I'm pleased to share that, as part of this new proposed legislation, our government would make it law for large employers to have a written policy disclosing electronic monitoring of their workers and how they're using the data they collect. Our new legislation, if passed, would be the first of its kind in Canada—and I want to say thank you to all the members of this caucus for your support; we could not have done it without your help. Ontario would once again be breaking new ground and taking historic steps to protect privacy.

Our government is breaking down barriers by increasing transparency. We are empowering our workers by giving them the tools they need and deserve. Madam Speaker, as you know, data is power, and by pulling back the veil, our workers can make informed choices about how they work and who they work for. This is another way we are rebalancing the scales and putting workers in the driver's seat of our future.

As I said earlier, in the last decade, we have seen over 300,000 manufacturing jobs leaving Ontario. Thanks to this government, we have put the supports in place for our businesses—as much as making sure that \$7 billion is provided as a support year by year.

Thanks to the minister of red tape for supporting businesses by cutting the red tape so that they can do what they do best by employing more people.

Because of these efforts of our government—we have seen over 300,000 jobs going unfilled today. By the way, this is more than the population of Windsor.

In February, employment in Ontario increased again. If you look at the numbers and you compare them with 2018 and then you compare them with the time when we were in COVID-19—we have seen that there has been an increase of 194,000 jobs in the last one month.

And the shopkeepers and merchants on Main Street—it doesn't matter which riding you go to; everywhere you go, when you go from one place to the other in the province of Ontario, all you see outside is, "Help wanted. We want to hire." And then, at the end of the day, what we see is there are many employers who can't find the workers.

We talked about this to many of the business owners. We talked about this to many of the employers. We talked about this to many of my colleagues. We heard it. The minister has heard it. The Premier has heard it. We know that each of these jobs is a paycheque going uncollected, and that's a missed opportunity to strengthen families and communities, spread prosperity, and build a stronger Ontario for all of us.

With the changes being proposed in this bill, we are making Ontario a destination of choice for Canada's tradespeople and skilled professionals. We are sending a clear signal to the skilled workers across Canada. We're telling them, "Come to Ontario. We are here to serve. We're making it easier for you to come here with your families. We are a place where the economy is booming. We are a place which is growing by leaps and bounds, and that's why we want you to come here and be part of this revolution."

Through the legislation we're discussing today, if passed, we will guarantee regulated professionals a 30-business-day service standard for getting their credentials approved. Workers won't have to wait for weeks to know whether their application has been received, months while it is being assessed by the regulators, and then weeks for the decision to be sent. Think about a situation where you come here, knowing that this is a place where you want to thrive, you want to grow, you want to build your life and family, and then you take years to get to the profession you want. That stops now. We will make sure that we guarantee all regulated professionals a 30-business-day service standard for getting their credentials approved, and that's what's happening with this bill.

Madam Speaker, as I talk about supporting workers, I need to take this chance, as I take every opportunity, to highlight the opportunities in the skilled trades. These are fantastic jobs, meaningful jobs. You can see the result of your hard work take shape in front of you, and they pay well, and often include pensions and benefits. These are the jobs that allow workers to support their families and give back to the community, yet many go unfilled. Every unfilled job is a paycheque not collected, a family going without.

It has never been more important for Ontario to keep, train and attract more skilled workers, because our government is building Ontario with over \$148 billion in infrastructure projects, including bridges, roads and highways. We need over 100,000 skilled workers over the next decade just in construction. The average age of a journeyman is 55. These are opportunities for well-paying careers with pensions and benefits, doing meaningful work. Those opportunities should not go to waste.

Our businesses, our province and our economy should not be held back by the lack of skilled workers. Without workers in these jobs, companies can't expand, prosper and create more jobs, in and out of the trades. Without enough workers in these jobs, our government's historic investments in subways, highways and hospitals can't be built on schedule.

That is why our new regulation includes recognizing all Red Seal trades. The Red Seal Program sets common standards for the skills of tradespersons across Canada. Tradespeople who have successfully passed the Red Seal examination receive a Red Seal endorsement on their provincial or territorial certificate of qualification.

The Red Seal endorsement makes it easy for out-of-province skilled workers to come to Ontario. That is why Ontario is already participating in 52 of the 55 Red Seal trades, and now we're taking steps to recognize the remaining three occupations as trades under Ontario's skilled trades legislation and to have the three trades recognized as Red Seal trades in Ontario. This recognition will not only boost the prestige of Ontario workers in those occupations, but it will make it easy for workers from other provinces in these trades to start working in Ontario.

We're also making it easier for workers who are trained to work at heights to do so here. We're investing a record \$1.5 billion between 2020 and 2024 to support our skilled



workers strategy to help break the stigma about the trades, simplify the system and encourage employers to participate in apprenticeships.

**0930**

Our skilled trades strategy includes our brand new agency Skilled Trades Ontario, which celebrated its launch earlier this week. Skilled Trades Ontario replaces the previous Ontario College of Trades. Between 2014 and 2018, we saw only half of the apprentices complete their training each year. This is now changing. At maturity, Skilled Trades Ontario will address our critical labour shortages in the trades by developing marketing and advertising campaigns, building partnerships between industry and training providers, working with the recruiters who have been reaching students in every school board to provide co-op placements in these trades, updating apprenticeship training and curriculum standards to reflect industry needs and new technology, and promoting diversity by tackling barriers. There will be a clear separation of responsibilities between them and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Our new agency will also deliver a customer service one-stop-shop approach that is long overdue. This will simplify the journey to become a tradesperson, making it more straightforward to start, more straightforward to follow and more straightforward to complete. This includes new online services available around the clock, and registration time will be cut from 60 days to 12 days, which means it will be easier to become an apprentice, easier to complete your training, and for employers, it will be easier to hire skilled tradespeople.

Madam Speaker, I talked about jobs being unfilled and that then we have people who are looking for help. These measures will help skilled workers from across Canada more easily work in Ontario and help people in Ontario train for fantastic, well-paid careers in trades. They build on other key pieces of the puzzle, a piece from our previous bill addressing the recognition of foreign credentials. I talked about it last time, and it was echoed by many of my colleagues. We know that we rely on immigrants, but in 2020, immigrants made up about 33% of Ontario's workforce. With more workers set to retire over the next decade, we will need to continue to attract professionals in Ontario to fill in-demand jobs, so it is essential that we make Ontario a welcoming and attractive destination for people.

When we look at the national statistics, immigrants earn less than those who were born in Canada. Over time, that earning gap has increased even though immigrants are increasingly highly educated, and the vast majority are not working in the field that they're trained in. For example, in 2016, 75% of internationally educated immigrants were not working in the regulated profession they trained and studied for. Madam Speaker, I firmly believe that Ontario is the best place in the world for families to live, work and build a new life. But at the same time, we have to help these immigrants get into their profession so that they can work at their best and help our communities across Ontario.

I shared my story last time. When I came to Canada, I had an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering, and

the first thing I was told was that I could not work as an engineer and I could not use the title "engineer." I can say this: It's been over 20 years, but even after 20 years, these are the barriers that immigrants continue to face, no matter how skilled or experienced they are. This is especially true when it comes to regulated professions like engineers, architects and accountants. Many of those workers can't afford to go through the administrative hurdles to transfer their professional credentials. Even if they do, the process can be confusing and time-consuming. Many new immigrants, many newcomers need help to manoeuvre through complex assessments and registration, and the language assessment they have to go through can be expensive and duplicative. That is why we are taking steps now.

Madam Speaker, if we are going to make our province be the best place for newcomers, if we want everyone to thrive in this province, we can't have regulatory bodies putting unnecessary barriers in their way. We need to make sure that we make it easier for the people to settle here and find jobs in their field. And by the way, when we do that, it is a win-win situation. It is predicted that connecting newcomers to jobs that match their qualifications would increase Ontario's GDP by \$12 billion to \$20 billion in the next five years. That is where our first working for workers bill came in. It is helping cut through a number of unnecessary hoops to make sure it is easier for internationally trained professionals to make a living here in their chosen fields.

First, we are eliminating Canadian experience requirements for professional registration and licensing, unless an exemption is granted because it is necessary for public health and safety. We're also streamlining language proficiency testing requirements. Newcomers would not be tested again and again: when they immigrate and again when they're going through the process to become registered with a regulated profession.

I want to send a clear message: If you're a newcomer and if you're a professional, we're making sure that we're speeding up the time in which regulated professions are required to make a decision and ensuring expedited registration processes are implemented in emergencies. Not only will these changes help get these people working in their chosen field, they will make the process faster and easier. And I'm proud that we are providing newcomers with a clear path to starting their careers. This will give Ontario an edge over other countries and help us keep and attract top talent. This will also help give newcomers the pride of continuing careers here and helping build our province, all the while knowing they're welcomed here and supported.

Canada has a proud military tradition, and our reservists are an integral part of that. These brave men and women are the first line of defence during times of crisis, from search-and-rescue operations to ice storms and flood relief. In the previous decades, the bravery Canadians showed at battles such as the Battle of Vimy Ridge and the Battle of Normandy is legendary, not just at home but across the globe. We rely on them in times of need to provide support and protection, without a second thought.

Our military operations have been hit hard by this pandemic. Regions across Ontario have seen the number of new recruits cut in half due to this pandemic. This has put a heavier burden on the forces, and it is hurting our military operations. But for the military reservists who are starting new jobs, it's not always easy to pack up and leave.

Currently, under the Employment Standards Act, reservist leave is available for deployments, but reservists are required to be employed with their employer for at least six consecutive months before they qualify for job-protected leave. This is far longer as compared to other provinces. Under the federal Canada Labour Code, for an example, military skills training is a reason to take the leave, and then the employment requirement to be eligible for the leave is just three months. To make it easier for our reservists to serve their country, we're reducing this unnecessary burden. Again, we're helping and we're supporting our fellow Ontarians.

I'm pleased to share that we have proposed changes that, if passed, broaden the reasons for taking reservist leave and reduce the current length of employment requirement for eligibility for the leave to three months, same as our federal counterparts. This will give our front-line heroes peace of mind that their job will be waiting for them when they return. This job-protected leave would be extended to all military reservists, including those in military skills training and those stationed abroad. With these amendments, we're going one step further to support, protect and attract our best and brightest to Canada's armed forces. We owe them a debt that cannot be repaid, but we can support them in any and every way we can.

Madam Speaker, I talked about the gig economy, and I want to talk about portable benefits. We also know, more and more people are building their career across multiple employers. That is why our government is appointing an advisory panel to provide recommendations on expanding benefits such as health and dental to millions more workers in Ontario. Whether you're busing tables, working the cash or giving rides, necessities like dental and affordable medication should be within reach for more families. The same is true for entrepreneurs branching out on their own and starting new businesses. We all recognize the importance of new and small businesses in our community and to Ontario's economy. They deserve peace of mind, with health and dental coverage when they need it.

**0940**

Right now, less than a quarter of those who work part-time or in these jobs have these benefits. Madam Speaker, our government is examining how best to change this. By bringing the best minds together, we will be designing a portable benefits strategy for Ontario that ties health and dental insurance to workers, not employers. This is another measure to put workers and families first.

We want to make sure there is stronger workplace protection. A few weeks ago, the minister announced new measures to strengthen workplace protection. When I think of safe employers, I think of companies like Eastern Construction. The team at Eastern are the gold standard for putting the safety of their workers first. One of the first

announcements that the minister made as the Minister of Labour was at an Eastern site, when we shared how they're returning the WSIB savings to their workers as a reward for being safe each day.

Putting our workers first means giving them and their employers the tools they need to stay safe. But it is tragic that between March 2020 and January 2021, over 2,500 people died from opioids. I call it another pandemic. Together, businesses, labour, government and Ontarians, we must do better to save lives. We must provide naloxone kits into people's hands. We must do everything possible to turn pain into action.

Our government, in our Working for Workers Act, 2022, is requiring naloxone kits in every workplace where there's a risk of a worker having an opioid overdose. This means many employers across all industries could have naloxone kits on-site. It is about saving lives. We have to be ambitious in fighting this epidemic. We have to propose solutions that match the scale of this crisis. This proposed requirement is the first in Canada. It will help keep workplaces safe, and it will be matched with support from our government to train workers and help employers get the kits they need, because everyone should come home safe at the end of the day.

When we had the Working for Workers Act, we heard it from across the other side how important it is to make sure that we should do everything to ensure that all the workers return to their families at the end of an honest shift. We talk about some of the businesses, how they're treating these fines as the cost of doing business, and this should stop now. Our legislation would make Ontario's fines for companies that would not put safety first the highest in the country. With fines of up to \$1.5 million, we're sending a clear message to the lawbreakers: no more of this. These proposed changes will help protect hard-working people all across our province. We'll make sure that those who consider these fines as a cost of doing business have to stop and make sure our workers are safe.

Madam Speaker, I just quickly want to talk about the minimum wages. Those measures build on the legislation this House passed in the fall session as well as in the fall economic statement. That included raising the general minimum wage across the province to \$15 an hour. It has helped over 700,000 workers across Ontario, and it would mean that a full-time minimum wage worker could see a raise of \$1,350 a year. That's good news for workers, families and communities.

This includes the thousands of front-line workers in grocery stores who braved it all to keep us all safe during the pandemic. It's because of them that shelves were stocked and our families had food on their tables. I want to thank these workers for their dedication. I know it has not been easy. Many of these front-line heroes make minimum wage. And while many of us worked from home, they have been needed at their workplaces throughout the pandemic.

Our paycheque increase also includes liquor servers, as we made the general minimum wage apply to these jobs. We recognize that these workers have bills to pay and kids to feed, and that their costs have been rising rapidly. We

recognized that they could not wait another year for an increase.

That is why, starting in January, these workers have been receiving a higher wage, to recognize their efforts and help them make ends meet.

I'm glad that we are building on that measure by also extending minimum wage protections to digital platform workers providing ride-share, courier and delivery services.

Disconnecting from work: As I talked about, the pandemic has resulted in historic changes in the way we live and work. For many of us, the lines between work life and home life became blurred, as many office workers shifted to remote work overnight. As our front-line workers fought bravely to contain the virus and keep essential goods flowing, many of us did our part simply by staying home. This meant that for many families, including my own, homes became offices, daycares and schools. It was not uncommon for kids or family pets to interrupt a Zoom or a Teams call during the day.

An unintended consequence of working from home was that, without a commute, it became easier to work longer hours. And even when off the clock, many of us kept an eye on emails, making it hard to relax at the end of the workday, on vacation, or when spending the weekend with our families.

Madam Speaker, we are more than our jobs. We are moms, dads, volunteers for charitable organizations, members of faith communities, hobbyists and much more. Ontario cannot be a place where workers face burnout and only have time for one part of life. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is the importance of mental health. It seems that the people of Ontario agree. According to a survey, over 95% of people believe that those who work from home should be able to disconnect from their employer at the end of the workday. That is why we are making this change. That is why we passed legislation that requires larger employers, those with 25 employees or more, to establish policies about disconnecting from work.

I want to share some of the things we've done with the Working for Workers Act in terms of the non-compete clause. As part of the Working for Workers legislation, we banned employers from using non-competition agreements, with exceptions only for very senior executives. These agreements prevent an employee from taking a new job with a direct competitor for a period of time after they leave a current job. While they are almost never legally enforceable, employers often use them to intimidate their employees. They prevent workers from seeking better opportunities. This limits workers from pursuing exciting opportunities that could help them grow professionally.

We want Ontario to be a place where workers can advance their careers and where businesses can easily recruit the talent they need. We have seen that this has been done in several other places. California banned non-compete agreements many years ago, and yet Silicon Valley has flourished. Hawaii banned them in 2015, and following that there was an 11% increase in labour mobility in the tech sector and a 4% increase in new-hire salaries. We banned these agreements to increase the

mobility of workers and to improve Ontario's ability to keep and attract top talent.

Madam Speaker, I'm keeping an eye on the clock as well. I have a few things more to cover, so I'm just going to skip a couple of pages.

**0950**

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Yes, thank you so much.

Another thing that we want to talk about, which we did for the Working for Workers Act one, was about the temporary help agencies, those who definitely need help. We've seen in 2021 that they were focused on the use of temporary help agencies by farms, retirement homes, food processing plants and warehouses. They discovered over \$3.9 million was owing to workers, thanks to the hard work of employment standards officers, and more than half of these funds have been recovered. We're sending a message that breaking the law is not a cost of doing business. If you're not following the rules, we can and we will shut you down. These steps will protect young people, women and newcomers, who are often the most exploited by these bad agencies and recruiters. That is why we are putting the temporary help agencies in place. We are making sure there's a structure available to fix this problem.

While I was mentioning this in the previous bill, Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the House of another key item, something I am proud of that is now in effect: the washroom access. I was talking to some of the trucking transportation operators over the weekend and they were so delighted about what we did in the Working for Workers Act. I want to reassure them and remind all the businesses that we require business owners to allow workers who are delivering or picking up items to use a washroom at their business. I had a chance to talk to some of these drivers, as I said, who told me it is not uncommon to drive for six, seven or eight hours straight to make a delivery or pickup. Many of these locations are in industrial areas and do not have a public restroom or a café nearby. And as you know, during the pandemic, these restaurants were closed. So to take a break, drivers often have no choice; they have to use the washroom at the businesses where they're picking up or delivering food or other goods.

As I mentioned earlier, Madam Speaker, we appointed a panel of experts through our Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee in June. They spoke with workers, employers and unions about how we can better support our workers in this changing landscape of work. One of their findings was that workers who deliver goods are often denied use of these washrooms at businesses.

I have heard the same from drivers first-hand. A friend of mine who drives trucks for a living, Shahid Mughal, told me that he was in such dire need of a washroom that he had no choice but to keep himself driving without going to the washroom. He talked about another friend of his who was in dire need of a washroom and had no choice but to go into the woods. Madam Speaker, I think we can all agree that this is not the way we should be treating our front-line heroes. They deserve our respect. They deserve to have reliable access to washrooms during their workday.

That is why our Working for Workers Act one is helping those drivers.

Madam Speaker, I talked about the workers and I talked about the gig workers. I want to take a turn and talk a little bit about supporting the businesses. Our government is helping main street merchants and entrepreneurs. Just as businesses cannot succeed without skilled workers, workers need the job-creating businesses that can help prosperity and economic growth. Our government recognizes that and that's why we have removed barriers to economic success, while keeping Ontario families, workers and the environment safe and healthy.

We have reduced the regulatory burden, saving businesses, not-for-profits and other organizations \$373 million a year in compliance costs. Whether it is making it easier for restaurants and bars to create patios, allowing online renewals of licence plate stickers for heavy vehicles, including farm vehicles, or making it easier for people and businesses to understand their energy use, we're making life and business easier.

I want to highlight a recent game-changing investment, a testament to the Premier's leadership and our government's hard work to promote economic prosperity. Earlier this month, the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade announced a historic investment by Honda of Canada Manufacturing. Madam Speaker, we've seen that many of the automotive companies are investing in Ontario because they see the economic boom coming ahead. For example, Honda is investing nearly \$1.4 billion to upgrade its plant in Alliston. With support from our government, this investment will ensure next-generation vehicles are built here in Ontario by Ontario workers, which means thousands of good jobs.

I want to talk about another investment the ministry made. With the support of our government, MDA is investing \$100 million here in Ontario, in Brampton, for a new global headquarters for space logistics and the Space Robotics Centre of Excellence. These are just some of the examples of the investments our work to support businesses and cut unnecessary duplicative red tape is bringing to our province.

Through these remarks, I want to send a clear message. I want to show all the companies of the globe that we in Ontario have people of 150 nationalities speaking over 200 languages. If you really want to see a global village, we have it right here. You have a government that is here to support businesses to grow and thrive.

These are just a couple of examples I talked about, but our work to support businesses and cut unnecessary and duplicative red tape is bringing harmony and prosperity to our province. We have seen the reversing of the trend of businesses leaving Ontario. Now they're coming here, investing here and creating jobs. Their investments and success contribute to the government revenue. It's a vicious cycle: When businesses come here and invest here, they create jobs. When they create jobs, more people get paycheques. The more people get paycheques, they go out and spend money. The government gets the revenue as tax dollars, the whole revenue goes up, and at the end of the day we can invest back into programs and we can pay off

our debt. That is why it is important for us as a government to make sure that we work with Ontario, we work with our businesses and we work with our workers to build this momentum of prosperity.

Madam Speaker, when I started talking, I felt it was like a marathon, but when looking at the clock—I think we're close to the marathon. I want to quickly move over to the closing remarks. My sincere thanks to every member in our caucus—and across the aisle, if they did—who supported our previous bill to support workers. I hope you join me today and help progress this bill and vote for this bill to further support, protect and attract workers, to help them earn bigger paycheques, provide better protection and help them find better opportunities.

Speaker, I will conclude by calling for all in this House to support the Working for Workers Act, 2022. The future of work is already here, and to protect workers and jobs in the province, our laws need to keep up. If passed, this bill would ensure that workers' basic rights are protected, that Ontarians can keep and attract top talent, and that our economy remains strong in the years to come.

This legislation stands up for the front-line heroes who worked tirelessly through the pandemic to keep Ontario running, and it builds a better future for the workers of today and tomorrow by ensuring their basic rights are protected and our labour laws are keeping up with the changing world of work. It builds on the requirement for employers to develop policies on disconnecting from work by now and also requiring employers to provide information on electronic monitoring of employees.

Empowering workers on how they can be monitored, how they can be progressed—we need to come together, work together. Empowering workers to know how and when they are being monitored is important for them. It protects the jobs of military reservists so that they don't need to worry about providing for their families when they return from defending our great country. It provides rights and protection for the digital platform workers who deliver groceries, help us get around and do many more things. We're protecting their rights, Madam Speaker. This is a huge step in the right direction to give these workers, who we rely on so much, their due.

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By taking these steps now, we can ensure Ontario remains the best place to live, have a meaningful career, raise a family and thrive. We can promote economic prosperity and opportunity for all. We have seen, over the last decade, 300,000 manufacturing jobs leaving. But now we've seen over 330,000 jobs being unfilled and a lot of investments coming to Ontario. We're seeing the days of prosperity ahead. We're seeing it, and that is why together we're unleashing Ontario.

I'm looking forward to everyone in my caucus and across the aisle to come and support this. Let's build a prosperous, a better, a stronger Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Thank you to my colleague from Mississauga–Malton for his presentation this morning on Bill 88. There's no doubt that gig workers and all workers in Ontario should have full labour rights,

full rights under the Employment Standards Act and equal rights. This bill unfortunately doesn't do that. Even in this bill, it excludes some workers, making another category of workers that don't fall under its protections that it's starting to try to implement.

It comes to mind, for me, that in the world of labour rights, this bill has something in it that you only get money for the time that you're actually delivering. This is very similar to home care workers, where they do not get paid for their travel time. We have a crisis because we can't keep people in there. I'm asking the member, did you consider actually trying to improve the rights of home care workers?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I want to thank the member opposite for that important question. As I said earlier, when I was talking to the workers—and I actually went on a radio program, thanks to the anchor Shameel Jasvir, and we talked about this. One of the challenges that we found was when we were asking the workers questions about the minimum wage, we heard some of the workers talking about how they only make, they believe, \$5 an hour, and yes, there were some workers who were talking about making \$22 an hour as well.

I think the biggest challenge at this point is with the transparency. With this bill, we're making sure that, first, we're bringing that transparency to the forefront to make sure that they understand. We can together see whether they're even making the minimum wage. So, this bill, when passed, will help to bring that transparency to make sure that we can make sure that each and every one of those workers can make a \$15 an hour minimum wage.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you for the presentation to the member from Mississauga–Malton. Ontario has a large number of military reservists, men and women, who serve our country. I think we owe them a debt of gratitude. We know what they do to protect our freedom here in Ontario and Canada, and we've seen what is happening abroad, for example, and the importance of men and women in uniform. Could you expand on the job-protected leave for reservists and how that will benefit them?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you to the member from Oakville for that wonderful question. Absolutely, thanks to our Canadian Armed Forces, because of their tireless work, we are able to sleep calmly at night.

One of the challenges we talked about was when these reservists have to leave, they would need six months. Compared with the federal jurisdiction, it was only three months. That is why our government is working for workers by introducing legislation that protects the day jobs of military reservists while they put their lives on hold to protect our freedoms. What is going to change? Instead of six months, now going forward it will be the same as the federal government, and they will only need three months. Thank you to the member.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you to the member opposite for your comments today. You're calling this bill the Working for Workers Act. It's largely about gig workers,

at least that's what's been discussed most in the media. You're saying that gig workers are going to be guaranteed minimum wage, but they're not guaranteed minimum wage for their full workday. They're only going to be guaranteed minimum wage for the time they're actually delivering, which can be half of their actual workday. So they could end up actually working for \$7.50 an hour rather than \$15 an hour.

The Superior Court ruled recently that gig workers are, in fact, workers and are entitled to protection under the Employment Standards Act, which includes minimum wage for their full workday. It includes WSIB and EI coverage. But this act actually overrides that Superior Court decision and downgrades gig workers. So will you admit that this bill does not, in fact, help the gig workers? And will you accept a friendly amendment to the bill, that instead of calling it the Working for Workers Act you call it the working against workers act?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Through you, Madam Speaker: I want to talk about Minister Monte McNaughton. One thing I can say proudly is that he is the champion of workers, whether it is minimum wage or whether it is giving them protection.

When I spoke to these people who work in the gig economy, one of the challenges they were facing was the uncertainty and difficulty in predicting paycheques. One week it could be \$1,000; another week it could be \$500. That is why the Working for Workers Act—and it is the Working for Workers Act—will include the right for these workers to keep their full tips during the regular pay period. It is giving them the right of information and clarity about the algorithms used by digital platforms. They will know how the payment is calculated. They will be able to calculate and make sure it is more than minimum wage.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question? The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Perth–Wellington.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Sorry, my apologies; Perth–Wellington.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Although Haldimand–Norfolk is a great riding too, but anyway.

I want to talk about the labour shortage we have in this province. I have spoken to a number of industries in my riding that want to expand, but right now they are having a labour shortage even with what they have. Some of these expansion plans will involve 100-plus workers in some of our manufacturing plants in the riding of Perth–Wellington. It's something that we've been trying to address. We have people being bused into our area to work from London, from Brampton, Cambridge and Kitchener, and then they go home at night. That does cost a lot of money, certainly for the plans, but the workers also have to get up an hour or two earlier just to go to work.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you to the member for that important question. I remember going to Listowel with

you and when we were going across the town we saw a lot of places with signs saying that they need help. There is definitely a labour shortage.

By the way, you are one of the reasons for that, because this government has helped and supported businesses to grow and prosper. We have a good problem. The problem which we've seen in the last decade, 300,000 jobs leaving—and now we have 330,000 jobs unfilled.

That is why our government is calling on skilled workers from other provinces across Canada to move here and live a great life, to tackle Ontario's historic labour shortage, the largest in a generation. We are making it easier for them to continue their careers and we're making sure that these people will get their credentials in 30 days, so they can serve the community and we grow Ontario together.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Mississauga–Malton. This government likes to say that they are on the side of workers, but this is also the government that cancelled paid sick days, that kept public sector workers' wages capped at below the rate of inflation, including health care workers' wages, and gave over \$1.5 billion to employers through the WSIB program while there are thousands of workers in Ontario who have been injured on the job and who are living in poverty because they cannot access the benefits they deserve.

1010

My question to the member is this: Why are you siding with international companies like Uber and forcing workers to be classified as independent contractors, when they are often employees and should be entitled to basic rights like a right to minimum wage and benefits?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thanks to the member for that important question. I agree with you that we need to stand with the workers, and that is why this bill, if you read the bill, is actually helping them. It will give them the transparency, so that they know—every worker in the province of Ontario who is working in the gig economy should know that they are actually making more than minimum wage, and they'll be able to add the tips to their revenue.

Along with that, they do not have to go across the world to fight for their rights. With this bill, they're getting the protection. They can stand up for their own rights and they can fight with those employers right here in the province of Ontario.

This is the bill, Madam Speaker, which is working for workers. As I said earlier, we have a champion in Minister Monte McNaughton, a champion for the workers who will continue to work for the workers.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** It is a pleasure to rise this morning to lead off debate on legislation that really is a first for this chamber under this government. We are debating a bill in second reading that actually went to committee after first reading, and it was interesting listening to the comments from the member across the way, because he didn't address the committee process. He didn't address the fact that this bill was introduced on February 28, and then, in a

surprise motion that was introduced by the government House leader, the bill was referred to committee after first reading.

For those who are watching here today, this is not something that you see happen very often. It certainly has not happened under this government. In my experience, I saw it happen once under the Liberal government, but this government chose to use that process to move this bill forward.

We saw an extraordinary spectacle at that committee meeting that was held to receive public input on this bill, because there was no public input on this bill. Instead, we saw the majority of the government members on that committee move immediately to clause-by-clause consideration of this bill, and what went into that committee was the bill that was tabled on February 28, which had five schedules.

The fifth schedule was to eliminate the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario. The government, during the committee, moved to repeal or remove that schedule of Bill 88 from the bill that we see before us today, because the members of the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario first saw this legislation proposing that that college be eliminated the very day that the legislation was brought forward by this government.

It is the height of incompetence, Speaker, for a government to bring in legislation abolishing a very significant college that was established to protect the public interest, to protect the well-being of patients who are receiving care from traditional Chinese medicine practitioners and acupuncturists—to propose that that be abolished without ever consulting with the people who belong to that college, with the five million Ontarians who are patients of traditional Chinese medicine practitioners and acupuncturists.

It was really an extraordinary spectacle, to see this government bring in, with a big fanfare, this bill that they said was working for workers, and then, pretty much immediately, once 40,000 people had signed a petition to remove schedule 5 from the bill, to turn around and establish a committee—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I'm sorry to have to interrupt the member for London West. The time is up for debate this morning.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** It is now time for members' statements. The member will have an opportunity to finish debate next time the bill is called.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### DURHAM REGION STUDENT BUSINESS PROGRAM

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I'm proud to highlight a partnership between the Durham College school of business, IT and management and the boards of trade and chambers of

commerce in Durham region, including the Whitby Chamber of Commerce.

This region-wide partnership provides first-year students with membership in all chambers of commerce and boards of trade for the duration of their studies and for an additional year following their graduation.

This precedent-setting initiative will help foster greater opportunities for students to enhance their professional development and to connect with local professionals and employers in the region of Durham.

Speaker, working professionals and students from across Ontario come to the region of Durham because we have a reputation for growth, innovation and a business climate par excellence. I'm proud to recognize this critical partnership and commend the leadership of Durham College and the Durham region joint chambers and boards of trade for giving our students a hand up and hope for the future.

#### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Speaker, I stand here today with a heavy heart in memory of Kristin Legault-Donkers. She was a 25-year-old long-time champion for improving mental health, and well-known in London for her children's books. She died on March 11.

Her obituary reads, "After years of battling her own demons along with the bureaucracy of our mental health care system, the system that she so passionately fought for failed her." I can only imagine the rage and sorrow her loved ones have been feeling, and I stand here today to help lend a voice to her cause.

According to CMHO, pre-pandemic, 28,000 children and youth were waiting for mental health services. For some families, the wait-list was up to two and a half years, and we know it's gotten worse during the pandemic.

Over the last few weeks, I have spoken to a number of local London mental health and addiction agencies that say that the wait-lists are growing and their resources are not growing. Their resources are getting shorter.

Family Service Thames Valley says that their wait-lists have doubled in five months. Even their priority wait-list is now four to six weeks long. They've told me that at the intake level, they are witnessing an immediate increase in acuity of need.

It is clear that what the province thinks it is doing and what is actually needed on the ground are two different realities. We are too late for Kristin, but if we work hard, fast and together, we can save the life of another young person like Kristin.

Let's work together to make sure that every young person has the medical and mental health services they need in their riding.

#### ANDREAS APOSTOLOPOULOS

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Every year, thousands of people like Andreas Apostolopoulos come to Canada from across the world to fulfill their dream and give back to the community. Born in Greece, 17-year-old Andy, with a

grade 6 education, landed in Canada on a Friday in 1969 and started working at KFC the following Monday.

Through determination and hard work, Andy built his multi-billion-dollar company in commercial real estate. His biggest revitalization was in 2009, with the purchase of the 80,000-seat Pontiac Silverdome, and the construction of an entertainment resort in Pickering, creating thousands of jobs and adding a billion dollars to Ontario's GDP.

As per Andy, "You can't get to the top without starting from the bottom." With little formal education, he could work out a deal in his head in no time. Andy passed away earlier this year, leaving behind a gap that can never be filled. He was a mentor and a fatherly figure to me.

I would like to honour the memory of a smart, sharp, quick-witted—a human calculator—caring and proud Canadian, Andreas Apostolopoulos. Jimmy, Peter and Steve, you are blessed to have had Andy as your father, as an inspiration to many.

Andy's story is one of many entrepreneurial immigrants who have added value to our global village. Our government's current entrepreneur stream will recruit hundreds of international entrepreneurs, who will start their companies, hire local workers and drive economic growth. I want to say thank you to Canada for being the land of opportunity, where these dreams can be realized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Andy, for all you did.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** This month, the UN published its most comprehensive report on the state of climate science in eight years. It is grim.

This is what the present UN Secretary-General had to say: "Nearly half of humanity is living in the danger zone—now. Many ecosystems are at the point of no return—now."

"Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future."

#### 1020

As lawmakers, we have a responsibility to face hard truths and take measures to protect our future. Instead of spending billions of dollars building highways we don't need, it is time to invest in public transit and the electrification of our transportation sector. Instead of building sprawl on farmland, it is time to increase density in existing neighbourhoods and build sustainably. And instead of closing down wind farms and fighting fruitless lawsuits, it is time that Ontario invests in the Green New Democratic Deal to transition to a net-zero economy and create good green jobs as we do so. This is about our future, and this is what we need to do.

#### PERTH COUNTY

#### FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FORUM

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Last Monday, I attended the Perth County Federation of Agriculture's annual federal-

provincial forum. I'm honoured to have participated in this event just about every year since I was first elected in 2011. There are always constructive conversations, and this year was no exception.

Representatives from the PCFA, commodity and farm groups presented their ideas and concerns. One common theme was that Ontario's agricultural sector is facing labour shortages. Finding and retaining agricultural workers in Ontario was difficult even before the pandemic. In the last few years, it has become even harder.

We also discussed other issues, including Ontario's Risk Management Program and its importance in maintaining a stable agricultural sector, the importance of education in attracting young people to the agricultural sector and increasing processing capacity throughout Ontario, which will bring more goods to market, benefiting producers and consumers.

If the past two years have taught us anything, it is the importance of having secure domestic food production. Ontario is fortunate to have that.

I would like to thank PCFA president Julie Danen and Sharon Weitzel for hosting and organizing this event.

For nearly 11 years, it has always been a privilege to work with the PCFA, as well as the Wellington Federation of Agriculture, Christian farmers and all the agriculture associations in Perth-Wellington. They represent farmers well, but they do more than that: They represent the interests and values of rural Ontario and its future. Working together, we know that future will be bright.

#### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr. Roman Baber:** The public lost faith in government. That's because government, particularly this government, are abysmal failures. But why is government incompetent? The answer is politics. Politics is the cancer, the rot, that consumes politicians, staffers, stakeholders and bureaucrats. Everyone is too busy putting their political interests ahead of what needs to be done.

Let me explain: Say you identified a problem, then you need to call it out. But in government, that's a career-limiting move because it means calling out your boss or ruffling feathers, so no one has the courage to speak out. But say someone called out a problem correctly. Now you need to craft a solution. You know what the solution is, but politics get in the way. Voters, lobbyists, stakeholders say, "But you can't do that, Minister," so the minister doesn't do it and doesn't do what needs to be done. They do it in part or something entirely different. That's what I call political friction.

No one has the courage to craft the right solution because of politics. But even if we had the courage to call out the problem and miraculously conceive the solution, now you need to go to bureaucrats for the execution.

I've met many fine public servants. They're eaten alive by politics: seniority not meritocracy, toeing the line without raising an issue, work from home and make it a long weekend, implementation is never on time or on

budget, delays and ineptitude until a new government arrives. And that's why nothing gets done in government: politics. Politicians who don't have the courage to do what people elected them to do is the classic agency conflict. Everyone prioritizes their salary and their personal ambitions while real people, real issues and lives hang in the balance.

Politics is the root of everything that's wrong in government.

#### ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESSES

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Last week, the family-run Mi Taco restaurant on Queen West closed. It's a victim of this government's delayed third round of COVID relief grants. The Premier promised in mid-December when he announced the most recent lockdowns for the Omicron wave that they would roll out a third round of relief grants, but I polled 32 businesses in my riding last week and 22 had not yet received those grants.

Ontario businesses are desperately hanging on. This government's record in supporting small businesses through the pandemic has been abysmal. In 2020, they waited until 25,000 businesses had gone under before they rolled out the first round of relief grants, and we are still losing hundreds of businesses while this government delays the third round.

The CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, reported last week that the average small business pandemic debt is \$160,000 and that one third of small businesses in Canada are on the verge of bankruptcy.

Deryck Roche, who owns Level2 Music Productions in my riding, said, "Why is this third grant taking so long? I have burned through my savings."

John Ulgen, who owns Simit & Chai, said, "The pandemic has been hell. We've been paying staff from our personal savings, but now, all our personal savings are gone."

Elena Arsenov from Papi Chulo's Mexicana said, "The grant has been spotty and no government employee can answer questions."

Kathryn Beet from Yogaspace said, "I've run a successful yoga business for 25 years, but now I've burned through my savings."

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage this government to roll out that third round of small business grants before more businesses are lost.

#### NON-PROFIT SECTOR APPRECIATION WEEK

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** It was rewarding to witness the encouragement so many gave to the non-profit sector during Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week. The third week of February is recognized as Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week and was celebrated last month.



To all the professionals in the not-for-profit sector, I want to say that you are no longer invisible champions. We see you, we appreciate you, and we thank you.

I thank my colleagues who took the opportunity to visit so many non-profit organizations. Some prepared scrolls and also hand-delivered them. I also thank the community for coming out. It has positively stimulated communities to continue supporting them, as volunteers, and also financially, because whether there are fundraiser events—their continued support is so important to this sector.

I want to thank the team that was working so hard behind the scenes: Daniele Zanotti from United Way Greater Toronto, Cathy Taylor from the Ontario Nonprofit Network, and Raksha Bhayana from the Bhayana Family Foundation.

I also want to thank my staff.

We will all work together for 2023, but this should always be celebrated—not only once a year, but every day of the year.

#### CHATHAM ALL-STARS

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Speaker, on this, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I'd say it's never too late to correct an injustice.

Last October, hundreds of people turned out at the Fergie Jenkins Field in Chatham to watch a baseball game to honour the Chatham All-Stars, a team of Black men who won the Ontario championship way back in 1934. That was 13 years before Jackie Robinson broke the colour barrier in the major leagues.

There has been an effort under way for years to have the All-Stars inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. They've already been named to the Chatham hall, and that was more than 20 years ago.

Speaker, it wasn't uncommon for the Chatham All-Stars to have to fight their way out of another town when they won a game or to be ridiculed if they lost.

Nobody would rent them a room when they drove to Penetanguishene for the OBA championship game in 1934. They had to go all the way to Meaford, about 60 miles away, where they were allowed to stay overnight in cabins, but the owner said, "You have to be up and gone before sunrise so my neighbours don't know you were here."

The Chatham All-Stars were the first Black team to play in the Ontario Baseball Association and the first to win an OBA championship title.

Despite the racism, despite the prejudice and the bigotry, those players loved the game, and they were really good at it; in fact, they excelled. Had times been different, several of them could have gone on to a career in the major leagues. That wasn't possible then, but there's no reason now that they couldn't be named to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. I would hope, as I believe, that every one of us here in Ontario's Legislature would be supportive of such a recognition. It's overdue, Speaker. It's never too late to correct an injustice.

1030

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the member for Brampton Centre.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Thank you, Speaker. Are members' statements concluded? Okay. I just wanted to make sure.

Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting the delivery of statements during afternoon routine today in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and that the question be put without debate or amendment.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Ms. Singh is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice respecting the delivery of statements during afternoon routine today in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and that the question be put without debate or amendment. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize again the member for Brampton Centre.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** I move that members be permitted to make statements in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination during afternoon routine today, with five minutes allotted to the government, five minutes allotted to the opposition, and five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Ms. Singh has moved that members be permitted to make statements in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination during afternoon routine today, with five minutes allotted to the government, five minutes allotted to the opposition, and five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, there was already a ministerial statement scheduled for this afternoon. The reason why we were not supportive of the member's UC is because it actually reduces the amount of time that members were going to be speaking, from 20 minutes down to five. Having said that, the House passed it, so we will—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. That's not a point of order, but I appreciate the information nonetheless.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** On behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I want to welcome all of the visitors who are here with us today. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you here.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll ask for the attention of the House. On March 10, 2022, the member for London West and the official opposition House leader, Ms. Sattler, raised a point of order respecting what she suggested was a conflict between the notice provisions for the consideration of private members' public business, as set out in standing order 101(e), and the power of the House to discharge an order for second reading of a public bill and refer it to committee, provided by standing order 77(a). The government House leader, Mr. Calandra, also spoke to the point of order. Certain members had been grappling with this matter for several days prior, with related points of order raised by the official opposition leader on March 3 and March 9, and the government House leader and the member for Scarborough-Guildwood, Ms. Hunter, offering comments on those points as well. I am now prepared to rule on the question raised on March 10.

First, by way of background: The member for York South-Weston, Mr. Hassan, was assigned ballot item number 30 on the order of precedence for private members' public business, with a corresponding date of March 10, 2022. Pursuant to standing order 101(e), the business that the member wished to bring forward for consideration on that day was required to appear on the Orders and Notices paper by February 24, either in the form of a notice of motion or an order for second reading of a private member's public bill. The member for York South-Weston met this deadline with the introduction on February 23 of Bill 86, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various Acts to combat Islamophobia and hatred, which appeared on the February 24 Orders and Notices paper as the item of business designated for debate on March 10.

On March 3, in motions, during the afternoon routine, the government House leader moved that "pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 86 ... be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy." That motion carried in a recorded division. The discharge of the order for second reading of the bill effectively nullified Mr. Hassan's notice of his intention to move second reading of the bill as his item of private members' public business.

It was on this point that the official opposition House leader raised her first point of order on the subject. She argued that the March 3 motion was moved without Mr. Hassan's consent, and that the resulting order of the House served to deny him the opportunity to bring his bill forward for debate as his item of private members' public business. At that time, I ruled that there was no valid point

of order. The motion approved by the government House leader was in order, and it was adopted by the House.

On March 7, with unanimous consent, the government House leader put forward a substantive motion that would have provided for another bill co-sponsored by the member for York South-Weston—Bill 87, An Act to proclaim Black Mental Health Day and to raise awareness of related issues—to be designated for consideration as the member's ballot item on Thursday, March 10, in place of the co-sponsored Bill 86. In the midst of debate on the motion, the government House leader withdrew it, as standing order 56 permitted him to do.

On March 9, the official opposition House leader again raised the matter on a point of order, this time highlighting the fact that the member for York South-Weston had taken all steps required by the standing orders for him to move second reading of Bill 86 during his assigned time for private members' public business. On that point, I again ruled that there was nothing procedurally out of order in the events that had taken place. I had hoped at that time that it would be possible for the matter to be addressed via communication between the members involved, as these kinds of issues so often are, and I looked to the House leaders to seek a resolution.

This brings us to March 10 and the fact that when the order for Mr. Hassan's ballot item was called, he had no business standing on the Orders and Notices paper that complied with the notice requirements. Therefore, no business was called. In raising her third point of order on the matter, the official opposition House leader made the case that the current situation demonstrates an inherent conflict between the notice requirements provided in standing order 101(e) and the power of the House provided for in standing order 77(a). She sought my ruling, pursuant to standing order 1(c), which allows the Speaker to decide on "all contingencies not provided for in the standing orders."

In their remarks, both the official opposition House leader and the government House leader acknowledge that standing order 77(a) does not distinguish between government bills and private members' public bills. The official opposition House leader argued that because standing order 77(a) has less frequently been applied to private members' public bills than to government bills, our procedures implicitly distinguish between them. The government House leader, on the other hand, argued that the absence of a distinction should be interpreted as an intentional choice of the House at the time the standing order was adopted.

What is clear is that the standing order references public bills, which leads to only one possible conclusion: that pursuant to standing order 77(a), on a motion by the government House leader, the House has the authority to discharge the order for second reading of any public bill and refer it to committee. This necessarily includes both government bills and private members' public bills.

The appeal made to the Speaker in this matter is to decide a question that is not provided for in the standing orders. However, as the foregoing sets out, the situation

raised by the point of order does not arise because of gaps in the rules of procedure. Both standing orders 77(a) and 101(e) were duly adopted by the assembly many years ago, and both were correctly applied in the context of this situation with the member for York South–Weston’s ballot item.

It is worth noting here that the member for York South–Weston could possibly have made use of, on March 3, the provision in standing order 101(c) to exchange places with another member in the order of precedence, thereby conserving his ability to bring forward an item of business at a later date. However, the member would have had less than four hours that afternoon to make such an arrangement, which would have required the swift agreement of a willing colleague. Therefore, while this was procedurally possible, it was impractical and virtually impossible.

**1040**

While the outcome has no precedent, it is neither out of order, nor the result of procedural error or misapplication, nor are we left with a “stub” or “remnant” of unfinished or incomplete business that can only be rectified with the Speaker’s intervention under standing order 1(c). My finding is that there is nothing to remedy under this authority.

Although there was nothing out of order, I am disappointed that the House was unable to find a resolution in time to preserve the member for York South–Weston’s ability to bring forward an item of business for debate on his ballot date. I am sure most private members here, on both sides of the House, who value their opportunity to initiate debates in private members’ public business, and who follow the standing orders and provide proper notice on the order paper, would find it very disappointing to have their opportunity for a debate in this House on their priority bill or resolution taken away without their consent by a motion of the House. The proceedings on Bill 86 were ultimately beyond the control of Mr. Hassan as an individual member, and, in my view, it is very regrettable, and on the surface seems most unfair to Mr. Hassan, that one of the effects of those proceedings was that the member lost his private member’s public business slot. These opportunities for individual members are rare, and I would hope that the House would reconsider this matter and seek a resolution satisfactory to both sides of the House. I want to thank the members for their submissions.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### HOME CARE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My first question is to the Premier. Home care in Ontario is so bad that it’s making national headlines. We have seen, in a story that was recently published, provinces like Saskatchewan, BC and the territories provide publicly funded and publicly delivered home care to their residents—but not in Ontario. In Ontario, it’s private companies that profit from care. Things were bad under the Liberal government, there’s

just no doubt about it, but it’s become worse under this government, Speaker. As an investigation by CBC Marketplace found, the result is that families who are expecting care to arrive for their loved ones don’t see that care come at all. They can wait and wait and wait, and nobody shows up because a PSW has been double-booked by her company.

My question is, why has the Premier allowed our broken home care system to get worse under his watch?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence and parliamentary assistant.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Our government has heard first-hand about the difficulties Ontarians face accessing home care and, of course, our Minister of Health was the Patient Ombudsman and heard many stories, which is why one of the top priorities when we entered government was to fix the broken system. Since then, we have been taking action to modernize home and community care with Ontario health teams poised to take on delivery over the coming years. This makes home and community care part of our integrated health care offering and not a stand-alone service.

We know that people want to stay at home as long as possible. That’s why we removed service maximums, to allow them to have whatever hours they need to be able to stay at home. But as the person in the Marketplace video noted—Willie Foreman—some people cannot stay at home. So we also needed to repair long-term care, and we have been doing that with great investments in long-term care to make sure that those resources are available for people like her husband, Robert, who need to move into long-term care.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Natalie Mehra from the Ontario Health Coalition said this about Ontario’s for-profit home care providers: “Home care companies get contracts for ... visits that they do not fulfill, yet they still get their money.”

One London family whose loved one had a very poor experience, very poor treatment, from for-profit provider Extendicare said the care “was so unreliable she was forced to put him in hospital, where he waited months for a bed in a nursing home.”

The Auditor General said in her report in December, “Clients may not receive the level of care they need when they need it.”

Now, this Premier should know that people, families, loved ones want to stay in their homes as long as possible, with the appropriate amount of care to help them stay there.

So my question is, why is the Premier still supporting his profiteering home care buddies instead of starting to support Ontarians, who actually deserve the kind of quality and accessibility of home care that we could be able to give—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. To reply, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you again to the opposition leader for the question.

When we came to power, there were over 30,000 people on a wait-list for long-term care. These were people who were stuck in hospital and had nowhere to go and, like Robert Foreman, Willie’s husband, needed the long-term-care support.

By building long-term care while investing in home care as well, we are ensuring that the entire continuum of care is in place for people who need it.

The opposition resorts to speculation and innuendo about privatization when no such thing is happening.

We will continue to do the hard work of improving our public health care system across the board and finally solving our home care challenges that Ontarians, frankly, have been facing for many, many years—under the former Liberal government for 15 years, supported by the NDP.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The CBC investigation clearly showed that the for-profit providers don’t do the work that they’re paid to do, that they didn’t do the work they were paid to do. In fact, one Ottawa family shared their tragic story: “Much of the care that Bayshore promised was downloaded onto the family—and twice, nurses didn’t come for more than a week, including in the eight days prior to her husband’s death.”

Sue VanderBent, the CEO of Home Care Ontario, said, “We need help. We are in a crisis.” That’s what the home care providers are saying in our province.

Home care is broken. Yes, it was broken under the Liberals, but it is broken under this Conservative government as well.

So my question is, why won’t this Premier commit to fixing home care and community care, just like his counterparts in BC and Saskatchewan have been able to do—with a system that is publicly funded and delivered and actually meets the standard of quality of care that residents in our province deserve?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you again to the Leader of the Opposition.

Our government is fixing home care. We’re fixing the entire continuum of care in health care. We have to fix long-term care so that we can deal with hallway health care. We’ve been addressing our hospital needs. We’ve started the largest recruitment for health human resources ever in Ontario’s history.

Recently, we invested an additional \$548.5 million over three years in the home and community care sector. This will expand home care services, including supporting additional staff and personal support workers. The funding will support up to an estimated 28,000 post-acute surgical patients and up to an estimated 21,000 patients with complex health conditions every year by providing 739,000 nursing visits; 157,000 nursing shift hours; 117,000 therapy visits, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology; 2,118,000

hours of personal support services; and 236,000 hours of other home care visits.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

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

I think we would all agree that long-term care saw the brunt of the pandemic, the worst of the pandemic. The brunt was taken by the people who live in long-term care, the people who work in long-term care, the families of residents and workers in long-term care. It was a bad situation because there was a government that was unprepared and unwilling to invest the money necessary to protect those folks. The government’s own commission found that a lack of infection prevention controls existed, that there was no PPE provided, that there was not enough staff and not enough supports for the residents. Reluctantly, eventually this government squeezed a little bit of money out and gave it to long-term care, but those funds, sadly, came with expiry dates.

So my question to this Premier is, why is the government cutting funds that are supposed to provide more staffing retention and recruitment as well as infection prevention and control in long-term care?

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

1050

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I don’t even know where to begin with that question, frankly, Mr. Speaker, because there is no government in the history of this country that has ever made more investments in long-term care than this government has.

Now, very directly to the Leader of the Opposition’s questions on prevention and containment funding, we’re actually increasing that by \$328 million a year. That is what this government has put in place. We’re increasing staffing by over 27,000 health care workers: That’s PSWs; that’s allied health care workers; that’s nurses. We’re adding 30,000 new long-term-care beds. We’re upgrading 28,000 additional beds. In the member’s own riding—actually, forget the member’s own riding; let’s do all of Hamilton combined. We are increasing funding to the homes in that area by \$70 million so that we can get to four hours of care. I don’t know where she has been, but this government is investing in long-term care for now and into the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, 4,398 residents in long-term care lost their lives to COVID-19, as did 10 staff. That is something that we should never, ever forget.

In a letter dated February 4, this very minister said that he recognizes there are “staffing pressures”—February 4—in the system that still exist. That’s a reality. But his deputy wrote a letter that says, “Funding provided during the 2021-22 fiscal year ... that is not spent by March 31 ... will be recovered” by the government. That means that money has to be sent back, and that, my friends, is a cut.

The funds that are going to be cut are for 24/7 screening of residents and staff, infection prevention and control, and staff recruitment and retention. I can have a page send this letter over to the minister in case he didn't know that the deputy sent it to long-term-care providers.

Why is the Premier cutting in long-term care when we should be providing more resources? Does he think that this staffing crisis is over?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** This may come as a shock to people all over the province of Ontario, but at the end of a fiscal year, the government reconciles its books and works closely with organizations to find out what you spent, how you spent it, was it spent properly, was it spent for the things that we need it to be spent on. We work very closely with the sector. Now, had the Leader of the Opposition turned the page on that letter, she would have read that the government will be allocating an additional \$328.7 million directly to long-term-care homes to support their prevention and containment. That's on top of the \$5 billion that we're spending on increasing staffing. That's on top of the \$5 billion that is coming for new and upgraded homes. That, of course, includes our increasing staffing by 27,000 additional staff and 30,000 additional beds.

The unique thing about all of this is that on every occasion, that member voted against every single investment.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** What this minister needs to reconcile is the fact that long-term care still remains in crisis under this government's watch, with staffing problems, with infection prevention and control concerns, and he is simply not paying attention to their serious concerns. They need to plan. They're being cut right now, when, in a couple of weeks, the new fiscal starts, and they have no idea what's happening. They need certainty to be able to hire more staff. They need those specialists in IPAC.

Without proper staffing, we know what happens in long-term care. It's the residents who suffer. It's the residents who don't get the attention and quality of care that they deserve. Cutting money for staffing and infection prevention and control right now in long-term care is not going to fix our long-term-care system.

My question, again, is, why will this Premier not acknowledge that long-term care is still broken, that we shouldn't be cutting any dollars from long-term care? Stop those cuts and commit to fixing our long-term-care system.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member ought to be ashamed of herself to suggest that we are cutting funding to long-term care when the member knows full well that that is absolutely not happening. It is an increase in funding of \$328 million for prevention and containment alone.

The member doesn't seem to know the difference between IPAC funding, which is infection prevention and control, and prevention and containment. The IPAC funding has also increased by hundreds of millions of

dollars; prevention and containment have increased by hundreds of millions of dollars. We're adding new staffing in her own riding—over \$2.5 million last year; \$6 million in 2022-23; \$15 million by 2024-25 to get us to four hours of care. I just announced last week an additional \$672 million to increase staffing across the province, and we've also committed to \$1.2 billion the year after and \$1.8 billion the year after.

Those are investments to make our long-term-care system the best in this country, no thanks to that member.

## GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Premier. Public dollars spent on public transit should benefit the public interest—Ontario's public interest. So why is a Russian oligarch under sanction following the invasion of Ukraine poised to benefit from a \$750-million contract for the Scarborough subway extension?

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

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx require all companies working with them to abide by sanctions that are imposed by the government of Canada. Since those sanctions have been in place, Infrastructure Ontario is conducting due diligence and reviewing all contractors and all teams that intend on bidding on future projects.

Mr. Speaker, Strabag has communicated publicly that they are severing all relations with that particular individual.

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

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is back to the Premier. Earlier this month, we learned that this government secretly reduced the Canadian content requirements for subway vehicle contracts from 25% to 10%. This comes at a time when Ontario workers in the Alstom plant in Thunder Bay face layoffs lasting up to a year as they wait for more transit vehicle contracts. Meanwhile, 27.8% of the company that won a \$750-million subway contract is owned by a sanctioned Russian oligarch.

Let me get this correct. Why does this government's subway contract have nearly 28% Russian oligarch content, but only 10% Ontario worker content?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Associate Minister of Transportation with responsibility for the GTA.

**Hon. Stan Cho:** I thought we made this issue very clear a month ago, when the Leader of the Opposition asked about the Canadian content policy—which, I will clarify once again for the opposition, has not changed and remains at 25%. But no matter how much the opposition calls for 25% Canadian content, we will not reduce it, in the construction of the Ontario Line, from 75% Canadian content, 90% of which will be made right here in Ontario.

Here's the ironic part of the questions from members opposite: They talk about protecting Canadian jobs, but they stood here for the better part of two decades supporting the Liberals when they didn't build transit, when they

didn't bring those jobs to Canada. And when it came to the most historic transit investment in Canadian history at \$28.5 billion, what did the opposition say? No. They voted against that. They voted against the Ontario Line—\$11 billion back to the local economy—and against 5,000 Canadian jobs.

We will not take lessons from the NDP on creating Canadian jobs in this province.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. Speaker, long-term care is a sector that has long been neglected by successive governments. Between 2011 and 2018, the previous Liberal government only managed to build 611 net new beds. That is an increase of only 0.8% while the population of Ontarians aged 75 and over grew by 20%. That is 611 beds for over 176,000 people.

This is simply unacceptable. Ontarians deserve to know their government is hard at work to deliver the quality long-term-care beds seniors can count on. Through you, Speaker: Can the minister please tell the House what recent investments have been made to fix long-term care in Ontario?

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**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I applaud the member for Don Valley North on that question and his advocacy for his community; also, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health for her advocacy that saw us have the opportunity to announce additional beds for Villa Colombo, a new upgrade there; and, as well, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, who joined me when we announced some additional funding for homes in Toronto.

Over 1,600 new beds is what we announced just last week across Toronto. It's part of our plan to build 30,000 new beds and upgrade 28,000.

The member is absolutely correct. The fact that over the previous 15 years so few investments were made in long-term care and, on many of those occasions, obviously supported by the NDP, who held the balance of power in that time—we knew we couldn't allow that to happen. We knew that we had to do better for our seniors. We knew that we had to do better for the people who helped make this the best province in the world in which to live, work, invest and raise a family. That is why we are doing so much, investing so much.

Again, thank you to all the members on this side of the House, who advocate every single day—

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

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** Thank you to the minister for that response. I am proud to be part of a government that is finally fixing long-term care, but, Speaker, we all know that beds alone are not enough to ensure that our seniors receive the proper hands-on care that they deserve.

Governments of all stripe have heard of the need for four hours of daily direct care for residents in long-term care, but from 2009 to 2018, the previous Liberal

government only increased direct care to residents by 21 minutes. That is a 12% increase over nine years, or slightly more than two minutes per year.

Our government's Fixing Long-Term Care Act enshrined our commitment to providing an average of four hours of direct care per resident per day. Speaker, can the minister tell the House what the government is doing to fulfill this commitment?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, I thank the member for that question. He has been working so very hard, and I certainly have all the scars to prove how hard he has been working for his community, not only in terms of getting new bed allocations for his community, but as the member has said to me on many occasions, there is no point in building new buildings if you don't have the people to work within those buildings. He is one of the key architects, of course—and I thank him for this—of getting us to that commitment where we will make four hours of care and enshrine it in the new Fixing Long-Term Care Act, something that no other government has been able to do.

For his community alone, that means an additional \$4.7 million on the announcement that I made Tuesday. In case the House missed it, on Tuesday, I announced \$673 million for additional staffing. That's an additional 10,000 people within the sector because of this funding. For the member's riding, that means over \$4.7 million. And again, I thank the member for his hard work in getting us to this great announcement and helping us get into a position where we can fix long-term care for generations to come.

#### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** My question is for the Premier. On Thursday, the Premier went to the Alstom plant in my riding during the evening shift. It's too bad the Premier didn't face the over 1,000 families affected by avoidable layoffs or the small businesses and their employees who supplied the plant that also now face an uncertain future. Many of the workers the Premier met will be laid off next week.

During this government's time in office, the number of workers at that plant has gone down from 1,200 workers to 75 workers this summer. The plant needs large, long-term orders from the province to keep workers' jobs.

Premier, why won't this government do more for the workers at the Alstom plant?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Northern Development.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** In fact, I've had the opportunity to visit the Alstom plant with the Premier no less than three times over the past couple of years, and there's no question that they've had their challenges. But what they do know is that this government stands shoulder to shoulder with them on one of the largest transit expansions in the history of this province and likely this country over, Mr. Speaker. It's this government, unlike the federal government that committed \$1 billion worth of train cars to a plant in Los Angeles, that has stood there with brand new trains and refurbishments of existing ones, no less than \$350 million

announced by my colleague the Minister of Transportation, to ensure that the Alstom plant in Thunder Bay has the orders that it needs. And during this difficult time of conversion, that plant will come back stronger than ever later this summer and start to build Ontario's transit out. We're proud of that, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate those workers at Alstom.

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

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** My question is for the Premier. The only new cars being built at the Alstom plant are an American order.

This government has announced an order of 60 street-cars and refurbishing 91 bi-level cars from the Alstom plant, but that plant has the capacity to do so much more. For example, the vehicles for the Ontario Line should be made in Thunder Bay, yet this government has lowered Ontario's mass transit vehicle content requirement rules to just 10% from 25%.

The plant needs large, long-term orders to create more jobs. That's what we hear from the plant; that's what we hear from the workers. Small orders and refurbishments aren't the answer.

Premier, why won't this government reverse itself and increase the Canadian content for the Ontario Line subway trains so they can be made at the Alstom plant in Thunder Bay?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I want to welcome the member, finally, to this discussion, after a couple of years of hard work on the ground in Thunder Bay.

Mr. Speaker, they are working on a couple of American orders right now because they finished a couple of orders from Ontario. As soon as they convert over the course of this spring and summer, they're going to be working on a whole bunch of other train cars to the tune of \$350 million. And they know, from our visit last week, that we're committed to a 75% Canadian plan to ensure that Ontario workers and Canadian workers are involved in this.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the only thing that concerns me about this is that when it comes to earmarking \$354 million for train cars, how did that member vote? We told the workers at Alstom last week, by the way. She voted against it, and so did her party. Shame on them.

## EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Premier. This morning, debate began on Bill 88. We know that the bill got off to a bad start when government tried to sneak through eliminating the traditional college of Chinese medicine simply because somebody whispered in the Premier's ear. And it's clear now they haven't consulted on the rest of this bill. There's way more sizzle than there is any steak in this bill.

The Premier would be hard pressed to convince anyone that the Working for Workers Act actually works for workers. Instead of bringing gig workers under the Employment Standards Act, it actually creates a second class of workers in Ontario who don't get things like vacation

pay or other rights and protection that Ontario workers have earned and deserve.

Speaker, through you, will the government withdraw Bill 88 and take the time to get it right, to make sure we actually protect gig workers in this province?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the member for Mississauga Malton and parliamentary assistant.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to the member opposite for that question and thank you for listening about the important work this government is doing on Bill 88. Thank you for that.

Our government has been and continues to work for the workers. This includes those who work on the digital platform and the gig economy. The gig economy is here to stay and the number of gig workers is expected to rise. That is why our government is advocating for the foundational rights for these workers. Our proposed legislation would make Ontario the first province to give digital workers these rights. Our legislation will ensure that gig workers are paid minimum wage; they are not dismissed without notice, explanation or recourse; and they are able to resolve their workplace dispute right here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our government is going to work every single day to work for our workers, and we want to make sure that they know we have their backs. We are continuously striving to better protect our workers on this side of the aisle.

1110

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's clear they're intent on creating a second class of workers here in Ontario. Maybe it's because someone else whispered in the Premier's ear; I don't know. Workers who don't get health and safety coverage—the Premier's message to gig workers is, "If you get hurt at work, you're on your own." Workers who don't get vacation pay or stat holidays, workers who don't get their right to organize or bargain, workers who only get paid minimum wage for engaged time—that's like saying to the cashier in the supermarket, "I'm only going to pay you when someone is at your cash register." It's crazy. The Working for Workers Act is legislating gig workers as second-class workers in Ontario, saying they don't deserve the same rights as all other Ontario workers.

Speaker, through you: Will the Premier commit to broad public consultations and amend Bill 88 so it actually gives gig workers the rights and protections they deserve?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Through you, Mr. Speaker, I will say it again: This is the government that is working for workers. That is why we were the first ones in North America to bring this kind of bill. Workers in the gig economy often face uncertain conditions and lack protection, including difficulty predicting paycheques. One week it is \$1,000; the next week it is \$500. That is why the Working for Workers Act 2 will include the right for these workers to keep their full tips in addition to these regular pay periods. That is why it will include the right to information and clarity around the algorithms used by

these platforms about how pay is calculated, why a worker might be penalized in the allocation of work. They will know this information.

We are providing these workers with much-needed transparency in their pay. We are providing them the rights they deserve. We want an economy that works for everyone. We want our workers to have the opportunity to earn a good living and provide for their families.

#### SPORTS FUNDING

**Mr. Dave Smith:** My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. The pandemic has severely impacted nearly all of Ontario's sectors. One of the hardest hit was the sports sector. Based on advice from our public health experts, the risk was too high to safely play organized sports. Ontario's athletes and sports clubs are now eagerly returning to do what they love most, and that's play sports.

However, all the time away from the game has impacted the sector immensely. Speaker, can the minister tell us what the government is doing to ensure the economic stability of Ontario's sports sector?

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** May I first say to the member from Peterborough how proud I am of him and his commitment to community sport and recreation in Peterborough. Let me mention just three areas he has brought attention to for me and our government: the plight of the Peterborough Petes, he has been working day in and day out; the Canadian Canoe Museum, which we made a significant investment in this past year; as well as the Challengers, the young fellas and girls who are out there each and every day with their special abilities, making sure they are playing the game.

This is why our government has made an unprecedented commitment of \$110 million of new money, thanks to our finance minister working with me, so we could ensure that organizations are up and running and supporting the sector. That includes:

- \$20 million just a couple of weeks ago for provincial sport organizations and multi-sport organizations;
- \$7 million for the Ontario Sport Network, including female athletes;
- \$3 million to assist the Ontario Hockey League;
- \$250,000 to support the Ontario Summer Indigenous Games;
- \$50 million to the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Community Building Fund; and
- \$9.7 million in emergency relief.

We care about sports and recreation on this side of the House, Speaker—

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I've often said that everything you need to know to survive socially in the world you can learn through team sports. I'm a big fan of everything that you get when you're working together as a team.

I want to thank the minister for her response. It seems our government truly understands the importance of sport.

Every year we see more and more women and girls taking part in sports. However, they are still under-represented in a majority of the major sports that are played in this province.

Can the minister please explain what is being done to ensure women in the sports sector receive the support they deserve from this government?

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** That's a very important question. As a former elite athlete myself when I was much younger, as a hockey mother and a former hockey coach, I think it's really important that we continue to invest in female sports, which is why our government has made unprecedented commitments to support our female athletes. More than \$3.5 million this past year went to support our female athletes in the 2021 Quest for Gold program, with over 52% of that money going toward our female athletes who represented us at both Olympics. We've supported over 980,000 women through \$62.3 million to our provincial sport organizations.

And for the first time in the history of this province, this government under this ministry is investing in female sports, including cheerleading, dance and skipping rope, which was never done before. We made a commitment to that because we recognized that throughout the pandemic those sports were not able to be supported. In addition, we were able to support with an additional \$80,000 to the Ontario University Athletics association, which we hope will make sure that there's parity for women in sport with the funding we have provided them.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE IN INDIGENOUS AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** *Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

My question is to the Premier. Southern Ontario is putting the pandemic behind them, but for those of us who live in the Far North, the pandemic is not over.

Janet Gordon of the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority said last week that fly-in First Nations and local public health officials should have been consulted before lifting public health measures. I know one of the things she said was, "Ontario gets treated the same, but our situation is different."

Why were northern public health officials not consulted before the decision was made to lift the majority of public health protections this week?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Our government recognizes that culturally appropriate care is essential in supporting improved health outcomes for Indigenous people in Ontario. We remain committed to working collaboratively with our Indigenous partners and communities, working on programs that will improve access to safe and effective health care services.

Our government has been working with the federal government and with local health care partners to support the coordination efforts of the Sioux Lookout First Nations



Health Authority, which has been facilitating response efforts. In addition to surge capacity supports, the province has assisted in providing a request for assistance to the Canadian Armed Forces for the provision of Canadian Ranger supports on the ground and in the community.

We will continue to work successfully with our First Nations partners, as we have through Operation Remote Immunity one, two and three, to ensure that they have the resources they need.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Speaker, the only thing I heard is “our First Nations.” You don’t own us. You don’t own First Nations.

Deer Lake First Nation is in a major COVID outbreak. The number of cases is now 275. Their population is 1,200 people; 275 is 23% of their population. I know, speaking to them this morning, their workforce is right now very low. Community members who have stepped up to support the households that are in isolation—that’s the support that they have.

Speaker, again, northern public health officials wrote this government last week and asked for resourcing for medical assistance teams to support northern First Nations like Deer Lake that are in crisis. How will you support this request?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our government has taken action to support First Nations and other remote communities in Ontario. To be clear, we know that First Nations communities are facing challenges. That’s why we have taken swift action to ensure these communities have been identified as a priority group.

Additionally, we’ve invested \$37 million in supporting Indigenous services during COVID-19, and that includes \$16.4 million to help with the distribution of goods, transportation support for urban Indigenous people, self-isolation, prevention awareness and pandemic planning; \$10 million to ensure continuity of services offered by Indigenous social services agencies to vulnerable children, youth, adults, families during the outbreak; \$4 million to ensure continuity of services at remote and northern airports serving Indigenous communities; and \$7.4 million to help social service providers, charities and not-for-profits delivering critical housing services to Indigenous people living off-reserve. With the leadership of our Premier and our Minister of Indigenous Affairs, we will continue to support the First Nations communities in Ontario.

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## ELECTRIC VEHICLES

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** My question is for the Premier. By 2018, Ontario was well on its way to being a strong leader in electric vehicle manufacturing and research. In 2015, our government was investing in electric charging stations. By 2017, our Jobs and Prosperity Fund

had invested in Johnson Electric to the tune of \$24 million to support a \$350-million investment to drive electric auto manufacturing. In March 2017, I made a joint announcement with Prime Minister Trudeau of a federal and provincial investment to create 300 new clean-tech jobs in partnership with Ford Canada. And in February 2016, a full six years ago, Mr. Speaker, I announced and we implemented a new Electric Vehicle Incentive Program to help Ontarians purchase low or zero-emissions vehicles.

In 2018, this government, led by this Premier, attempted to bring all of that to a halt. He did his best to kill the electric vehicle market. Happily, leaders in the automotive sector knew that we were on the right track and they kept continuing to develop their industry.

Now that the current government has had an epiphany on electric vehicles, will they reverse their wrong-headed decision and restore electric vehicle incentives?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, I think that question in itself highlights why it is that the people of the province of Ontario lost faith in the previous Liberal government.

Let’s get it straight: What the Liberals are asking us to do is to give a certain small sector of people money so that they can afford to buy electric vehicles. We said no. Instead, what we’re going to do is put the policies in place that will allow us to build millions of electric vehicles with thousands of people working in the sector so that—get this, Mr. Speaker—it’s not only a small subset of people who can afford to buy the most expensive electric vehicles, it’s all Ontarians who can afford to buy those vehicles.

That there is the difference between a Conservative government and a Liberal government. They want to help a small group of people. What we said is no. We can do more. We can be the centre of innovation. We can be the centre of electric vehicle manufacturing in the province through the hard work of the Minister of Economic Development, through the hard work of the Minister of Mines and Northern Development. We’re well on our way. And of course, the Minister of Energy—

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

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Actually, what I was saying was that was already under way in 2018. This government stopped that progress.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Government side, come to order.

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The opening of the electric vehicle market was for all of Ontario. It was not for a particular group of people. It was for families to have vans to be able to take their kids to school and to soccer games. It was about everybody having access, having roughed-in electric chargers in their garages. But this government cancelled those changes to the building code.

Mr. Speaker, I get the politics of 2018 when this government came in and cut education, cut health care, cut environmental programs. I get the politics of that. But now

they've had their epiphany. Now they understand that the industry has been leading towards electric vehicles. Will they bring back, will they institute rebates so that everyone in Ontario can have the opportunity to purchase an electric vehicle?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. I could hear the member for Don Valley West place her question, notwithstanding the cacophony that was going on over here. If it continues, I will start calling you out by name. Please start the clock.

The response, government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, I don't know where to go with this. Under the previous Liberal watch, the president of Chrysler said that Ontario was the least favourable jurisdiction in which to invest, and if the policies didn't change, Chrysler would have left the province of Ontario. We saw GM close because of the policies of that Premier. We saw high energy prices. And now, all of a sudden, the average family is going to take their \$150,000 Tesla and put the kids in the back and go to soccer. That is the difference in a nutshell, Mr. Speaker.

What we said is, let's put the environment in play—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. We'll start with: The Minister of Energy, come to order. The member for Don Valley West will come to order. The member for York Centre will come to order.

You've still got a few seconds. Please restart the clock. Will the government House leader conclude his response?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, look, we put in place the incentives that will help the economy grow. The Minister of Energy has brought stability to the hydroelectricity sector in this province. The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has removed red tape and barriers to investment in the province of Ontario. We're investing in health care so people can come back into this province. The result is that Ontario is the centre of economic development, job creation and trade because of the policies of this government, not—

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

#### MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Will Bouma:** My question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry. By now, it's obvious that much of the world is supporting innovative technologies and moving towards a green economy, which will ultimately lead to the eventual replacement of fossil fuels. And while it's true that some jurisdictions are farther along the road than others, we can see clearly that there is always progress to be made, both abroad and here at home. As the green wave approaches, what is the minister and our government doing to prepare our province for the next revolution in the green economy?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I want to thank the member from Brantford-Brant for his question and the fact that he knows his constituents, the folks from Six Nations of the Grand River, as they embark on a large-scale battery

storage project, need critical minerals for that kind of technology to work—not just for their community; for that corridor and for the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

In the context of global strife, we know that, unfortunately, countries like Russia and China have a stranglehold on critical minerals. But here's the good news: Last week, the Premier and I rolled out our Critical Minerals Strategy, a well-funded strategy to ensure that, from the prospecting, to extraction, to processing and integration into new technologies—like electric vehicles, electric batteries, technology and national defence—we intend to take our rightful place as a leader in supplying critical minerals.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I think we can all agree that the Critical Minerals Strategy represents a major turning point not just for our province's mining workers, but for our Indigenous communities like my community of the Six Nations of the Grand River. Indeed, I am equally sure that the hard-working men and women within the sector appreciate the support and affirmation of our government.

For too long, the previous government put the mining industry on the back burner. They did not support it in order for it to reach its full potential.

I wonder, however—through you, Speaker—could the minister tell us more about the government's strategy, the opportunity that we have in front of us and how this strategy will put Ontario in a good place to create integrated supply chains, particularly as they apply to advanced manufacturing?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I can't think of a time, certainly in the two chapters of my political career, where there's been a complete alignment of the opportunities in northern Ontario and the opportunities in southern Ontario that, in their aggregate, ensure that northern Ontario will play a critical role—no pun intended—in the prospecting, extraction and processing side. It's why we invested \$5 million in cobalt processing, the first of its kind in North America. It's why we invested in Frontier Lithium last week as part of our Critical Minerals Strategy. It's why we're pouring \$25 million into exploration activities in the north, to ensure that we've properly identified our critical minerals supply.

We know it's world-class. It's an exquisite supply, quantity and quality. We just need to get it to market and we just need the support of people all across the north, which we have, Mr. Speaker. We're moving forward with that strategy, and we're proud of it.

#### CANCER TREATMENT

**Ms. Sara Singh:** My question is for the Minister of Health or the Premier. The people of Brampton continue to be neglected by the government when it comes to our health care system. It's no secret that we've never received our fair share of provincial health care investments. For decades, people living in Brampton have been forced to leave our community to access life-saving cancer care.

I hear from constituents on a regular basis that they have to leave our community to visit cities like Mississauga, Toronto and others in order to access life-saving radiation or chemotherapy treatment at Trillium Health Partners, Princess Margaret Hospital or Sunnybrook Health Sciences.

**1130**

Speaker, provincial projections show that in the next 20 years the number of cancer cases in William Osler's catchment area is expected to double, and within the next 10 years the need for radiation therapy is expected to increase by more than 60%. When will this government make the necessary investments to provide life-saving radiation treatment for the residents of Brampton?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Eglinton–Lawrence and parliamentary assistant.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Our government has been focused on ensuring Ontarians have access to the care that they need, when they need it. Ontario Health Cancer Care Ontario is the government's adviser on cancer and renal systems and flows more than \$2 billion to hospitals to support direct patient care every year.

Ontario Health Cancer Care Ontario oversees Ontario's overall cancer strategy, including critical programs which really support patients with services such as cancer surgery; chemotherapy; radiation therapy; Ontario's cancer screening programs such as Ontario's breast cancer screening, ColonCancerCheck, Ontario's cervical screening programs and Ontario's lung screening programs.

The Ontario Renal Network is also a part of that, which manages dialysis services for the province, and they are constantly tracking performance to ensure improvements to cancer care, chronic kidney disease and access to care. For patients in Brampton—I'll have more to say about that in the supplemental.

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

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Speaker, I urge the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health to read the 2018 Cancer Care Ontario report, which indicated that the Radiation Treatment Capital Investment Strategy—they, in that strategy, emphasized the need for greater radiation treatment capacity in the central west area, listing Brampton as a preferred site, but to date, Brampton has not received its fair share, and we continue to receive the lowest per capita health care funding for all of our health care services.

With decades of obvious neglect, advocates have even accused the Ford government of violating the Canada Health Act by not providing adequate funding to meet basic health care needs in our city. The people of Brampton are tired of waiting in hallways. We are tired of driving our loved ones to other cities to access health care, and the people of this community deserve better. When will this government provide the supports so Brampton can receive the cancer care that it deserves and invest in our comprehensive cancer care plan?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you again to the member opposite for the question. We have read the 2018 report. It was a comment on the sad and sorry state that we found

the system in when we came to government after 15 years of the Wynne-Del Duca government, supported by the NDP 100% of the time.

Ontario Health Cancer Care Ontario launched Ontario's cancer care plan 2019-2023, a strategic guide for improving the cancer system in Ontario, and that's what our government is doing. Thanks to the great advocacy work done by the member for Brampton South and the member for Brampton West, we are making sure we make the investments necessary in Brampton for the first time ever. I think the mayor of Brampton, in the fall, called it a huge step in the right direction, these investments in Brampton.

For 15 years the Liberals, propped up by the NDP, heard the calls for better care in Brampton and did nothing, but this government is acting to make sure the people of Brampton get the care that they deserve.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Roman Baber:** My question is to the Minister of Health. For two years, this government justified the catastrophe it imposed on Ontarians by citing data and experts: two years of missed cancer screenings, depression, overdose, loss of hope and egregious charter violations. But now, we learn that the data wasn't reliable. The burden of COVID on our hospitals was roughly half of what the minister told us. The deaths are 20% to 40% lower.

But nothing compares to her use of the modelling by the science table. Time and time again, I stood up in this House to point out basic flaws in the table's modelling, but when last week the science table warned about the government's reopening plans, the minister dismissed the table as being overly pessimistic in its previous estimates.

Well, hallelujah. With an election two months away, the minister is dismissing the alarmist modelling practices of the science table. My question is, why did it take two years for the minister to call out the science fiction tendered by the science table?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Look, what happens is this: The science table provides projections, we work with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to assess what those would mean, and then government makes recommendations so that we don't hit the high projections. So it is actually good news when fewer people are infected. It's actually good news when we do better than what the science table says. That is, I would say, good news for the people of the province of Ontario.

I've said right it from the beginning: We are doing everything that we can to get Ontario out of the pandemic. But it's not just about that, Mr. Speaker; it is about ensuring that we have a strong economy post-pandemic, and that's where we're at.

I know that the honourable gentleman is busy. He's running for the leadership of the federal Conservative Party, so I'm actually surprised to see him in this House

today. But as a presumptive national leader, one would assume that he wants Ontario to be the economic engine of Confederation, and that's what we're making sure that we have.

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

**Mr. Roman Baber:** Speaker, the science table was wrong time and time again—and it's not about the trajectory of cases. The government House leader doesn't understand: It's not because of altered behaviour, but because we never got the key metrics correct. The factor of mortality or of hospitalization was never wrong; it was always overestimated. Even the most COVID-devout individuals who work in this building started to clue in as early as a year ago that it might as well be called the science fiction table.

It's time for review and accountability. Will the government House leader commit to requesting and assembling all models, graphs, data, memoranda, correspondence and records relating to the modelling that informed the table's periodic modelling, and will he make it available to the public for peer review? If he won't release it, then what went into the modelling and what is he hiding?

*Interjections.*

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

Government House leader to respond.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I guess "science fiction" would be any hope that I might be a senator under the leadership of the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Look, there is a reason why Ontario did better than any other jurisdiction in the world. It's because we listened and we acted. That is something that a responsible government does.

This gentleman got up in his place every single vote, time after time after time, and voted in favour of the very same measures we brought into place that he now says he didn't believe in. So I would say to the honourable gentleman, if you want to be a national leader, like you do, you have to have a plan, and that plan has to be something that people can rely upon. You don't want to be like the people who you sit behind, flipping and flopping all over the place. That is not good for Canada. It's not good for Ontario.

I tell you what, Mr. Speaker: We're going to keep moving forward so that we can continue to make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest in and raise a family. That is something that—

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

## CURRICULUM

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good morning. My question is for the Premier.

Radio-Canada is reporting that the government directed drafters of the new science curriculum to remove examples of climate change action. In fact, the science curriculum doesn't even mention the words "climate change" until kids hit grade 5.

Speaker, this government may want to deny it, but the science is absolutely clear. The crisis is now. Action is essential. It is, indeed, the greatest threat to our planet, our health and to the reality that those children are going to be living with.

It's time this government came clean. Why did the government direct climate action to be removed from the curriculum, and will they reverse this terrible decision?

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

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I am very proud to be able to stand on behalf of the government and speak to the important work that the government has undertaken to address the importance of addressing climate change.

We have been building in resiliency funding. We've been ensuring that each and every community in our province is learning more about the ways we can work together to fight climate change. We've seen leadership from many ministries working together to ensure that our students are also learning about and knowing more about the ways that we can work together as a province to ensure that we're reducing littering, that we're fighting climate change through reducing carbon emissions, by making sure that we have strong, resilient communities. Those are the actions that our government has taken.

Speaker, when it comes to the science curriculum, a very, very important curriculum that I know the people of Ontario have spent a great deal of time working to ensure that—they brought forward their ideas and we heard from experts to make sure that we have a curriculum that prepares students for the jobs of today and tomorrow, that ensures that they are prepared to take up, whether it's jobs in the skilled trades, whether it's jobs in STEAM, whether it's jobs in technology. We are taking every action to make sure each and every student in the province of Ontario is prepared for the job.

1140

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education just stood there and did not deny that they took climate action out of their curriculum. That is outrageous.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. Government side, come to order.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Unbelievable. Speaker, while this government has decided—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, come to order. Minister of Municipal Affairs, come to order.

The member for Davenport had the floor. Please restart the clock.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They don't like being called out for this, because we have found out now that they are putting ideology ahead of science in our children's curriculum, and it's outrageous.

*Interjections.*

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Mr. Speaker, there are more and more alarm bells—

*Interjections.*

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

Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. It's good to hear from you again.

Minister of Energy, come to order.

I'm determined that the member for Davenport will be able to place her question without further interruption.

Please restart the clock. Member for Davenport.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I guess I'm getting under their skin.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, it's outrageous. Secondly, there are more alarm bells ringing today about this government's cuts and their impact on our education system. A new survey of Ontario principals by People for Education was released today and it is a damning indictment of this government's failure to support our schools, our students, our school staff. Ninety per cent of principals said staffing shortages were their top concern. This government's lack of support has pushed our schools and the people who work in them to the breaking point. Only 43% said their schools had the resources necessary to support the mental health and well-being of our students. That is shameful.

When will the Premier get real about recovery and reverse his planned cuts to education?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** My thanks to the member opposite for the question today. It gives me the opportunity to stand in the Legislature and speak about the important investments that Premier Ford and Minister Lecce and the entire government of Ontario have brought forward to the education sector. I want to also just acknowledge the incredible dedication and hard work of so many front-line staff, principals, teachers, educational assistants across this province—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Member for Davenport, come to order.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** —for more than two years.

We do know that, of course, the pandemic had a major impact on the delivery of education here in the province. That's why our government has committed billions of dollars to ensure that we have additional staffing supports; that we have additional HEPA filters, tens of thousands of HEPA filters added to every school in this province; investments in personal protective equipment; and ensuring that we have the supports that are necessary to support our students, including \$25 million for professional assessments, a tripling—a quadrupling, actually—of the mental health supports in place to ensure that our students are supported, substantial investments, historic investments, that are going to make sure that each and every classroom in the province of Ontario is a supportive environment for our students—

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

The next question.

## MUNICIPAL FUNDING

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Solicitor General. I know that the Solicitor General is going to be introducing legislation later this afternoon, but there is still the issue of the occupation of the city of Ottawa for almost three weeks, into February. As the minister would know, the cost for the city of Ottawa for policing alone is \$36.3 million—\$36.3 million. That's on top of the kind of suffering that the people of downtown Ottawa had to live through. Now, I understand that this legislation is supposed to address those occupations at Windsor and Ottawa, but I think the first order of business is to actually share those costs with the city of Ottawa, and the federal government as well.

Last week when I was speaking to the minister—I know that they've changed the police services board in Ottawa, not at the request of the city of Ottawa. The government decided to take their police services board members off. There's a meeting this week. They haven't appointed anybody.

So I have two questions. Number one, will the government commit to sharing policing costs for the occupation of Ottawa with the city of Ottawa, and will the government commit to making sure that their appointees, their political appointees, to the Ottawa Police Services Board will come before the government agencies committee before they're appointed—

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to respond.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I want to thank the honourable member for the questions. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our members of the Legislative Assembly from the city of Ottawa. They have been incredibly engaged with the mayor and council. This is a file that's very important and they have represented their constituents well.

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Steve Clark:** And despite the heckling from the other side. I thought he actually wanted an answer to his question. I'm trying, Speaker, to give it to him.

Again, throughout this whole challenging time over the last two years, our members have stood up time and time again for their local mayors and their local councils. I think rather than maligning the government, he should be celebrating the fact that there are people in Ottawa, like our MPPs, that are standing up for their interests, unlike himself.

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

The member for London West has a point of order.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I rise under standing order 59 that calls on the government House leader to announce the business for the following week prior to adjournment. We did not hear about a ministerial statement being scheduled for today, March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I appreciate that the minister has indicated that a ministerial statement was

planned, at his end, for this afternoon. I would hope that he would not have wanted to take this opportunity to not have us prepare to respond to such a significant day in the life of this province when all of us should commit to doing everything possible to eliminate racial discrimination.

So I wanted to respond to the government House leader's remarks this morning.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Does the government House leader wish to reply?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member will know, because she participates in the House leaders' meetings, that we have changed the way it works here. We actually have House leaders' meetings on Tuesdays.

Now, the reason we switched it to Tuesday is because when we used to do them on Thursday, it would take the NDP a few days to get back to us on what should be the order of the business for next week, or they just never would at any time. So we switched it to Tuesday and then we would give them Wednesday and Thursday, before I would rise in the House and give the order of business. Now, in this instance, the NDP, of course, had Friday and they had the entire constituency week to inquire, Mr. Speaker, and never did so.

The reason why there will not be a ministerial statement later today is because the NDP actually have forced through a motion on the House, which we supported, ostensibly, because we didn't want to look like we were not in favour of such a motion. But unfortunately, what the NDP have done is reduce the time from 20 minutes down to five minutes. But we will respect the request of the NDP.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I don't find that there is a valid point of order, but the information is very interesting nonetheless.

This House will now stand in recess until 1 p.m.  
*The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.*

## INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

### KEEPING ONTARIO OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2022 LOI DE 2022 VISANT À CE QUE L'ONTARIO RESTE OUVERT AUX AFFAIRES

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to enact legislation to protect access to certain transportation infrastructure / Projet de loi 100, Loi édictant une loi pour protéger l'accès à certaines infrastructures de transport.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Does the Solicitor General care to briefly explain her bill?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I would, Speaker, thank you. I'm pleased to introduce the Keeping Ontario Open for Business Act, 2022. If passed, it will protect international border crossings like bridges and airports from illegal blockades that threaten the economic security of Ontarians. The act would provide law enforcement with the tools needed to protect jobs that rely on international trade, and shield the economy from disruptions like the illegal blockade of the Ambassador Bridge, which led to manufacturing facility closures and temporary staff reductions due to supply chain impacts, and halted billions of dollars worth of trade.

Our government is focused on public safety and ensuring that people and goods can move across our international borders unimpeded. We are signalling to the world that Ontario is a reliable trading partner that is open, and will remain open, for business. These measures are scoped narrowly and will have no impact on the right to peaceful, lawful and temporary protests. I will have more to say during second reading.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### HARVEY AND GURVIR'S LAW (PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME TO EXPECTANT PARENTS, REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND THE PUBLIC), 2022 LOI DE 2022 DE HARVEY ET DE GURVIR (FOURNITURE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LA TRISOMIE 21 AUX FUTURS PARENTS, AUX PROFESSIONNELS DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉS ET AU PUBLIC)

Ms. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 respecting the provision of information about Down syndrome to expectant parents, regulated health professionals and the public / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées en ce qui concerne la fourniture de renseignements concernant la trisomie 21 aux futurs parents, aux professionnels de la santé réglementés et au public.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I invite the member for Brampton Centre to briefly explain her bill.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Today we celebrate World Down Syndrome Day. I continue to hear from families across our province who have received inaccurate and out-of-date information when receiving their diagnosis of Down syndrome. This bill amends the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, to require that the minister ensure that

up-to-date, evidence-based information related to Down syndrome is made available to members and to the public. The act is further amended to require that members share this information with expectant parents when communicating a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome.

I am thankful to all of the families and everyone across our community and the Down syndrome community for bringing this bill forward. Hopefully the third time is the charm.

INTERNATIONAL DAY  
FOR THE ELIMINATION  
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to the order of the House of earlier today, I am now going to recognize members to speak for up to five minutes regarding the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I'll start with the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

**Hon. Parm Gill:** Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Today, we join the international community in recognizing the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

On this day in 1960, 69 people in Sharpeville, South Africa, were killed while peacefully protesting apartheid "pass" laws. That was one of many demonstrations calling for the end of racist laws and practices. It was part of a greater movement, and three decades later, the apartheid system was finally dismantled.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is meaningful not only to South Africa but to communities and governments around the world.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario government has absolutely zero tolerance for racism, hate and discrimination in any and all of its forms. We continue to lead anti-racism and inclusion initiatives to build a more equitable and inclusive province. While we have made progress towards ending racism in our communities, we still have work to do, and it's our shared responsibility.

Over the last few years, we have seen a rise in racism and hate in our province, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This should concern all of us.

Our government is doing more than ever before to combat racism in our province. We continue to take strong action in this fight, focusing on community-based solutions and increasing awareness of the impacts of racism and hate in our society. This includes working across sectors and hearing directly from communities to create meaningful change.

The province's anti-racism plan is our road map to addressing racism. Earlier this month, we launched consultations to help inform anti-racism initiatives, public education and awareness programs, community collaboration, and more.

Our government announced a historic investment of \$25 million to help protect faith-based and cultural organ-

izations against hate. These organizations bring communities together and provide a safe and inclusive gathering space to worship, practise their religion and celebrate their culture.

Ontario also doubled its funding for the Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant Program to help more communities combat racism. This \$3.2-million investment will support more community-led public education and awareness projects, cementing our commitment to create a stronger province.

Mr. Speaker, we are removing barriers so no one is left behind.

Last week, I had the honour of launching the Racialized and Indigenous Support for Entrepreneurs Grant, also known as the RAISE Grant. Our \$5-million investment over two years will provide targeted support to Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs to start or grow their businesses.

Now that we are on the road to economic recovery, we need every small business in every community to succeed.

Ontario also invested an additional \$14 million in the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan to help youth access employment opportunities and career-building resources.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the many government initiatives that combat racism and advance racial equity.

We all share a responsibility to take action against racism to ensure our province is safe and welcoming for everyone.

As the minister responsible for citizenship and multiculturalism and also the minister responsible for anti-racism, I'm personally committed to ensuring that people in our province with roots from all over the world feel safe and are able to raise their families right here at home.

We share a vision for everyone to be free from discrimination based on race or religion and have the same opportunity to succeed and prosper, Mr. Speaker. Let's continue working together to build a better, safer and more inclusive province for all of us.

**1310**

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, the member for Brampton Centre.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Today, on International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and every day, we come together to stand against all forms of racism in our province and across the country.

Everyone deserves to be able to take a walk in their neighbourhood, to go to worship, to send their kids to school, to go to work knowing that they are safe and that they are valued. But, unfortunately for communities across Ontario, we are seeing a rising tide of racism, organized hate and white supremacy.

Students in our classrooms across this province deserve to feel safe, yet routinely we hear of racist incidents against racialized children, some as young as six years old, experiencing, for example, anti-Black racism, being called racist names, treated differently and having their opportunities limited. We still see nooses on construction sites, racist vandalism and attacks in community spaces like our

farmers' markets and places of worship, MPPs' offices, on art installations, in our schools and so many other places that should be safe.

Even here, Speaker, in this chamber, we need to do better. Systemic racism is perpetuated through policy and even in the language that we use. As members, we need to be conscious of that, and I'd like to share an example. We often hear, in the chamber, "our First Nations." This is harmful language that perpetuates colonial stereotypes. No one owns First Nations people. They are sovereign and independent. So let's be conscious of the language we use and the policy that we are creating.

As the Seven Grandfather Teachings remind us, we must think of the past, the current and future generations in the work that we do here, and that's why I urge the government to do better and do the important work that is necessary to help eliminate racism and discrimination in our communities. Performative actions are not enough. This starts with fully funding anti-racism work in Ontario and supporting bills that are on the order paper like the Our London Family Act, making sure that First Nations people have access to clean drinking water, making sure that we address racism within our education system. This is work that needs to be done in order to meaningfully address racism and discrimination in our communities.

Together, we can take real action to create the change that we need to see and build communities and systems that are more just, that are free of discrimination and racism, and build an inclusive Ontario for all.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Member for Ottawa South.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's a pleasure today to rise and speak about the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

If we look around us in the world, what's happening in the world—not just in our country—and the kind of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, acts against members of the Asian and Black communities, the systemic racism that First Nations, Métis and Inuit people feel every day—we get up and we speak on these days after something really violent happens, and we say the same things.

It's not that those things don't need to be said, but we have to do more than just saying those things. We have to actually get at the roots of things like systemic racism. We actually have to measure it. We actually have to look at things through the lens of the people who are being discriminated against.

I know that we have a number of pieces of legislation that talk about anti-Black racism. The Our London Family Act, which is really an expression not by us in the Legislature—and I want to congratulate the members from the NDP for bringing it forward. It's the expression of what the community wants to see done. They wrote it. They talked about what they needed to see. They needed to see action.

I'm not sure where the bill is at right now. I know there's a commitment by all members of this House to make sure that it goes forward, and I know that the House leader of the opposition is working very hard at that. It

needs to get done. Otherwise, the things that we say today, they don't mean much. They don't mean much.

It's important that we start to address this. It's important that we start to address access to health care for First Nations, Métis and Inuit. We know it's a problem. We know there's more to be done. I would argue that that's systemic racism, and I don't think I would need to argue with too many people about that.

You know, we've got these pieces of legislation, but we have another piece of legislation in Quebec that essentially says that people can't express their faith at work. They can't show—just by simply wearing something. That's incredible—faith is a thing that centres people's lives—and I don't know how we can accept that.

In here, we have a symbol, the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers here. That's a symbol of a way of life, it's a symbol of faith, and we have it here to help guide us and help us understand how those of us among us understand the world. That's why it's there.

The other thing that I'd like to say is that racism is bias. It's bias, and bias is something that we all have. It's the way human beings are wired. It's the way our brains are wired. And bias is the enemy of justice. It's the enemy of justice, and it's actually only by an effort of self-examination and looking at ourselves and looking at our biases—because we all have them, every one of us. It's only through a process of self-examination that we can check those biases and understand—not only understand but empathize with people who are being discriminated against, who are facing racial bias. That's the only way we can do it. We need to pass legislation here, but as individuals, not just here, all of us, we actually have to go through a process of self-examination to understand how we can change not only ourselves but our society.

## PETITIONS

### LAND USE PLANNING

**Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approved an MZO requested by the city of Cambridge and Broccolini real estate group to develop a 1.3-million-square-foot fulfillment centre in the Blair heritage conservation district; and

"Whereas local residents have raised concerns over the lack of public consultation, and specifically that the newly proposed 1.3-million-square-foot fulfillment centre is completely different and has a 300% larger foot print than the previously agreed 2012 plan for a 14-unit prestigious business park; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stood in the Legislature on November 15, 2021, and stated that the city of Cambridge must complete their due diligence before requesting the MZO and that he would revoke the MZO unless the city of Cambridge demonstrated meaningful public consultation; and



“Whereas the Cambridge Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee, a group of independent volunteers, consulted with nearly 30 concerned residents on February 17, 2022, in its largest public delegation ever and responded by denying development of the 1.3-million-square-foot fulfillment centre in the historic Blair village;

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

**1320**

“That the assembly ask that the minister confirm that the city of Cambridge has failed to meet its obligations to complete public consultation and that the Blair MZO be revoked.”

I fully support this petition and will be signing it and handing it to page Brianna.

#### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I’m pleased to present this petition entitled “A Just Recovery Means Decent Work for All.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—make it easier for all workers to join unions by signing cards, allowing workers to form unions across franchises, subcontractors, regions or sectors of work (broader-based bargaining); and

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

I’m proud to affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Callum.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I have a petition to save eye care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Speaker, it’s unfortunate that this is still ongoing. I’m going to affix my name to it and submit this with page Vivian to bring to the Clerk.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I’m going to have to remind members that we read our petitions but we don’t add additional political commentary to them at the end.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2022

##### LOI DE 2022 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

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

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

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I was able to offer a couple of minutes of remarks this morning prior to the move to question period, and welcome the opportunity to be back here this afternoon to speak to Bill 88.

Just a recap for those who were not here this morning when I began my remarks: I commented on the very unique and unprecedented process that has brought Bill 88 before us today. For the first time in this government's almost four-year mandate, we saw the government move a bill from first reading to committee instead of going through the normal second reading debate process. It's interesting, Speaker, because they introduced this bill on February 28, and that was the very day that the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario learned that there was legislation being considered by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that would effectively dissolve that regulatory body and deregulate the practice of traditional Chinese medicine and the acupuncture services that so many Ontarians rely on.

Speaker, I think we all received emails very quickly after that first day that this bill was tabled, really an outpouring of emails from practitioners of this vital health care service who asked, "Why is the government doing this? Why did the government not consult with us about dissolving a regulatory body that was established in 2013 to protect the public interest? Does the government not understand that dissolving this regulatory body would put the health and safety of the five million Ontario patients who rely on traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture for their health and well-being—that it would put those Ontarians at risk?" Well, apparently the government didn't take that into consideration while it was drafting its bill and when it introduced its bill. It did zero—zero—consultation with any of the people who were directly affected by that schedule of Bill 88 as it was introduced back on February 28.

The government, as they saw this avalanche of emails pouring into their inboxes, as they saw the number of signers to that Change.org petition grow exponentially to over 40,000 people who had signed that petition in little over a week, as the government watched hundreds of people come on the lawn of Queen's Park to protest schedule 5, which had been originally included in this bill, the government realized that they had a problem on their hands, that maybe this lack of consultation was not a good idea, that maybe they should have talked to the people who would be directly affected by this legislation.

So what did they do? The Premier, under siege, announced that he was going to reverse course and he was not going to deregulate the college after all. But they had legislation before the House that was going to dissolve the college. So the government House leader, in a surprise move, stood up and discharged the bill from the order for second reading and referred it to a committee.

There was a very hastily convened committee meeting held, not to receive public input on the bill—which would have been very enlightening, I think, because a lot of people would have had questions about how schedule 5 ended up in this bill. They may have had input about other

schedules in this bill. In fact, I know they would have had a lot of input about the other schedules of this bill and then that would have been useful for the government.

**1330**

We saw previous governments use this procedural process where you refer a bill from first reading to committee so you can improve it, it comes back for second reading, it goes back to committee and improves some more. This is the process by which we get legislation that actually addresses the concerns and priorities of Ontarians. But this government wasn't interested in going that route. This government convened a committee meeting and used the majority of members on that committee to move that bill pretty much immediately into clause-by-clause consideration, just so that they could bring to the table a motion to remove schedule 5 from Bill 88—a very interesting process that brought us to this day, with the newly named Bill 88, which is now called An Act to enact the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022 and to amend various Acts.

This bill that we have before us today does not include that schedule 5 that I talked about. It does not include that proposal to eliminate the regulatory body that was charged with ensuring that the public interest is protected, ensuring that people who have been barred from practising traditional Chinese medicine are not permitted to again return to practice. It would have ended the 70 open investigations that are currently under way, the eight disciplinary hearings currently under way. All of those would have been gone if this original schedule had gone through.

The people of Ontario, I think, are relieved that the government's original schedule 5 of this bill was removed, because the public interest could have been seriously harmed if that deregulation had happened.

I just wanted to make a final comment. Interestingly, today, we are starting the debate on this bill. It's the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. One of the concerns that all of us heard from those hundreds of people who were emailing our office is that this government's action to single out the one regulatory body that oversees a profession that has a majority of Asian practitioners was discriminatory. So again, on this very significant day, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I think it's a good reminder for the government to use that racial discrimination lens when they are bringing forward legislation, to determine whether that legislation could be discriminatory to a particular segment of the Ontario population.

I want now to get back to the current bill that we have before us, the bill which now has four schedules because that committee process resulted in the removal of schedule 5. It's hard to dignify this bill with the title that the government has given it, the Working for Workers Act, because let's face it, Speaker: This is not a government that has ever worked for workers, from the very day they were elected.

Let's just think back to Bill 47, which was one of the very early pieces of legislation that was introduced by this government. They rolled back the planned minimum wage

increase to \$15 an hour, which resulted in about \$6,000 in lost wages for those minimum wage workers, who had to wait until just before an election before this government finally moved forward with that \$15 minimum wage.

They cancelled equal-pay-for-equal-work protections for temporary, contract and part-time workers. We heard frequently during the public input on Bill 27, the first so-called Working for Workers bill brought forward by this government, how important those equal-pay-for-equal-work protections are for temp agency workers. Yet this government has no interest in making sure that employers are paying a worker, who works right beside another worker and is doing exactly the same job, the same wages, just because they may be a temporary worker, on contract or in a part-time position.

This government scrapped the two paid sick days that the Liberal government finally implemented at the end of their mandate and that were in place for a very short period of time in this province. We have seen during this pandemic how absolutely critical paid sick days are to protect public health. Not only did they scrap those two paid sick days back in the early days of their mandate; we gave them opportunities, multiple opportunities, to recognize the error of their ways and support permanent paid sick days in the Employment Standards Act, but no. They voted 27 times, Speaker, against NDP efforts to implement paid sick days in this province.

They reversed the requirement for employers to prove that they are not independent contractors but employees, and instead made it a worker's responsibility to show that they are entitled to the protections of the Employment Standards Act. I'll have more to say on that when I talk about schedule 1 of this bill.

They introduced Bill 124. If ever we have heard a consensus across allied health professions, health care organizations, public policy experts about what is the one sure thing that is going to help to address the workforce crisis that we have in nursing and other health care professions rights now in this province to deal with the burn-out and the exhaustion that so many health care workers have experienced throughout this pandemic, the consensus is to get rid of Bill 124. Bill 124 is a wage cap that limits wage increases of nurses and other public sector workers to 1%, when we are in a month when inflation is at 5.7% and who knows how much higher it is going to get. What is a 1% wage cap when there is a 5.7% inflation rate, Speaker? It is a wage cut. That's what it is. Again, we have given this government multiple opportunities to repeal Bill 124, and they have chosen not to do that.

This is the same government that made health care workers fight tooth and nail for access to PPE throughout the early days of a deadly, deadly global pandemic. They forced health care workers to have to fight in court to have access to N95s.

They've taken midwives to court to try to deny them equal pay for equal work.

They have taken WSIB funds, \$1.5 billion in WSIB so-called surpluses that have been generated by years of cuts to workers' WSIB benefits, and they've given that back to

employers, forcing injured workers into poverty and without the services that they require to be able to live decent lives.

We also heard during hearings on Bill 27, part one of the government's working-for-workers efforts, that 93% of mental health claims are consistently denied by WSIB at a time when workers' mental health, stress and anxiety has never been higher, not just because of the pandemic but because of the financial stresses of losing their jobs for workers who continued to go into work in crowded workplaces without access to paid sick days. There was all that stress about what this is going to mean for their family members if they take home that COVID infection. So you can imagine, also, the PTSD that we've heard that front-line nurses experienced on the front lines of COVID-19, watching those 4,200 deaths in long-term-care homes. We heard nurses talk about the devastating impacts that had on them—nurses, PSWs and others in long-term-care homes—and the trauma they are living with as a result.

This is also a government that has consistently refused to invest in public education, to put in place the protections that are needed to keep education workers and students safe.

So despite the government's efforts to rebrand as a worker-friendly government, I don't think that any worker in this province is going to be fooled, and particularly, they're not going to be fooled by what we see in Bill 88.

Speaker, I am going to spend a significant amount of time on schedule 1 in Bill 88, because that is the schedule that the government likes to claim the most credit for—that this is some kind of historic move forward to protect gig workers in Ontario, by establishing the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act. What this bill does, however, is to signal to all the gig workers across this province—the gig workers we have relied on, in the last two years of this pandemic, to deliver our food, to take us places when we didn't have access to public transportation, to keep our economy going, to keep restaurant takeout businesses functioning. These are the gig workers who are supposedly protected by this Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, and yet what they are being told by this government is that they are actually not real workers, because they don't get the same protections that every other worker in this province relies on under the Employment Standards Act. This government has to create a whole new piece of legislation that is just for digital platform workers, because they are somehow different than other workers and they somehow don't deserve the same rights and protections as other workers. That is something that I have heard most frequently from the gig workers I have talked to when I have sought their input on this bill. This new Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act basically creates a parallel structure, kind of a mini Employment Standards Act. It includes some provisions that are similar to what's in the ESA, the Employment Standards Act, but it is very much a watered-down version that, as I said, suggests that gig workers are not real workers and that they are different in a very legally significant way.

The most contentious aspect, however, of this Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act is the so-called right to

minimum wage. This act says that workers who perform digital platform work are entitled to the minimum wage under the ESA, but the devil is in the details, because that is not an entitlement to the minimum wage for all of the hours of work that a digital worker provides to the app-based company they are working for when they log in and are waiting for a customer or a fare. This bill tells them that they are only going to get the minimum wage for engaged work—so for the time that they are actually delivering a meal or actually transporting a customer. The analogy that many people have used is that it's like paying a cashier only for the times that they are cashing out a customer. It's like not paying a salesperson who may be in a retail store, but there are no customers there. The employer could say, "Well, I don't have to pay you because you're not actually doing engaged work." It sets a terrible precedent, that we have legislation that enshrines the ability of employers to use this piecework model of compensation where they say, "We're only going to pay you for the time that you're actually doing engaged work."

There have been numerous studies out of the US and city of Toronto that have looked at the amount of time that gig workers spend waiting for their next fare or their next delivery versus engaged in the process of delivery, and it is as much as 40% to as high as 60%. So, Speaker, when you think about a \$15-an-hour minimum wage that is only paid for engaged time, and if the worker is only doing engaged work for, say, half of that hour, the other half of that hour they're waiting for their next fare, that minimum wage suddenly becomes \$7.50 an hour. Gig workers see right through this. They understand that a \$15 minimum wage that is only paid for engaged time is not by any stretch of the imagination a \$15 minimum wage; it is a marketing campaign by this government to pretend that they care about gig workers.

Schedule 1 of this bill also provides a right to amounts earned and tips and other gratuities. Well, I have to say what I have heard from gig workers is that this entitlement, the right to tips, has already been in place in Ontario since 2016. So therefore, it's not a new entitlement to include it in this legislation. The other thing I am told is that the tip problems, the problems accessing the money that is provided in the form of tips, are almost always associated with glitches in the app. They're not the result of operator actions unless, of course, it's related to not fixing the glitch in the app. However, the provisions that are set out in this bill dealing with gig workers' rights to tips are not going to solve the real barriers that gig workers experience in accessing their tips.

The schedule also sets out a right to information. It details the information that operators must provide to a worker, in writing, the algorithm for how pay is calculated and other details: how performance rating systems work, when a customer gives a poor performance rating to the gig worker. However, one of the very troubling provisions of this right to information is that the bill outlines that a written description of consequences has to be provided to the worker who refuses a work assignment, but there is no definition in the bill of what constitutes a work assignment. This potential of consequences being applied for a

worker who does not complete a work assignment raises all kinds of alarm bells for gig workers who do not know what that is going to mean.

The bill prohibits an operator from deactivating a gig worker's access to the app. Now, certainly, that is one of the concerns that gig workers have reported frequently, that they are deactivated without any explanation as to why that is happening. So yes, that is a helpful provision, but that is something that could have been dealt with through the Employment Standards Act when gig workers are recognized, as they ought to be, as employees under the ESA.

#### 1350

The schedule includes a right to resolve disputes in Ontario. Yes, it is true that Uber's contract had a clause that said that disputes had to be dealt with in the Netherlands, which is not an option for gig workers. However, this provision about resolving disputes in Ontario has already been settled by the Supreme Court. When they certified the Heller class action, they said that there is a charter right to allow workers to arbitrate cases here in Ontario. So that right is already available to workers here in this province.

What is missing from this schedule is that it ignores any enshrined right to join a union and, of course, it ignores a whole range of benefits that are provided in the Employment Standards Act around severance pay, paid vacation, public holiday pay, termination pay, infectious disease emergency leave, the three temporary—and inadequate—paid sick days that this government was finally shamed into providing that are going to run out in July. None of those protections are included in this schedule.

The timing of this bill is very interesting, Speaker. As I said, it was introduced on February 28. Not even a week before the bill was introduced—February 22, in fact—a Ministry of Labour investigator filed her report into a claim that an Uber Eats delivery driver was not being recognized as an employee under the Employment Standards Act. Anyway, a report was filed confirming that the employer, Uber Eats, had contravened the Employment Standards Act because this driver, Saurabh Sharma, according to this employment standards investigator, ought to be recognized as an employee by the Employment Standards Act.

I just wanted to outline some of the findings of this investigator and some of the violations of the Employment Standards Act that were found to have occurred. First, of course, is the misclassification of this Uber Eats delivery driver as an independent contractor when that person is actually an employee. The investigator found that there was a violation of the payment-of-wages section of the act, which requires consistent pay periods and an established pay day. It found that there was a violation of the unauthorized deductions section of the act, the record-keeping section of the act, the hours-of-work section, the minimum wage section, the public holiday pay section and the vacation pay section. I have to commend the investigator who conducted this investigation for the thoroughness with which she made the judgment that this Uber Eats

driver was actually an employee under the act and had been wrongly misclassified.

Her report, when she describes how she came to this finding, really highlights some of the challenges with the current Employment Standards Act, because there is not a simple test in the Employment Standards Act to determine whether a worker is an employee or is a legitimate independent contractor. Instead what has to happen is that workers who want to challenge their status as independent contractors, when they believe that they are employees, have to go through the courts. It's a very extensive body of jurisprudence, common law that has developed to help the courts determine whether a worker is actually an employee or an independent contractor.

This Ministry of Labour inspector goes through all of these relevant common law factors to determine whether the worker is an employee or not. She references some Supreme Court decisions—the fourfold test, which looks at a variety of factors—and she concludes very strongly that following that examination there was an employment relationship that existed between the parties. Then she went on to document all of the violations of the Employment Standards Act that had resulted from the failure to recognize that Uber Eats delivery driver as a legitimate employee.

In the wake of that investigation—that report was issued February 22—two days later Gig Workers United, which is an advocacy body and a union that recognizes gig workers through CUPW, sent a letter to Minister McNaughton and they said, “We went through the proper established channels available to workers to contest our misclassification and the Ministry of Labour has responded with a decision that we are misclassified workers, and ordered our employer to cease contravening the Employment Standards Act. This decision is no surprise to gig workers, who have been working for years in Ontario to end our misclassification, calling on the government to uphold employment standards through proactive investigations into misclassification and ensure our access to full and equal rights under the Employment Standards Act.”

They go on to say, “In light of this order, we call on the government to support us in full rights and protections under the Employment Standards Act for all gig workers. Anything short of this will be continued misclassification and contradicts our clearly defined rights under the law.”

That letter was sent to the Minister of Labour on February 24. Four days later he turns around and brings into this chamber a bill that goes nowhere near what Gig Workers United had been calling for and what the Ministry of Labour inspector had already noted, which is the right of gig workers to be recognized as full employees under the law.

Gig Workers United is not the only union that expressed concern with the government's approach in schedule 1. CUPW also issued a very strong negative reaction to what is proposed in this legislation. Jan Simpson, CUPW national president, said, “This legislation comes just when it's clear to the Ford government and Uber that

gig workers are winning, and that we're on track to achieve the full employment rights they're entitled to ... The Conservatives misrepresent this legislation as a step forward, but it's really designed as a barrier to unionization and a distraction from the fight for equal rights and employee status.”

UFCW, which has successfully organized Uber Black drivers in the Toronto airport, also issued a reaction to this bill, saying, “While the name of the bill may indicate the government is doing something to help workers, the details reveal that Ford's government is doing very little to help anyone....”

“Instead of providing these workers access to basic rights under the provincial Employment Standards Act, the bill does the opposite by excluding these workers and continuing to recognize them as independent contractors. This denies gig workers many of the same rights enjoyed by all workers in Ontario....”

“The bill claims to guarantee app-based workers like Uber drivers and food delivery couriers the minimum wage, but when you read the fine print, nothing could be further from the truth.”

Speaker, I want to share the voices of some gig workers themselves when they saw schedule 1 of Bill 88. This is from a gig worker in my riding in London West, who writes, “It is a disaster and it looks to me like it was written by Uber itself for the Doug Ford government. With gas prices skyrocketing, more than 50% of Uber trips are being rejected by the drivers because, simply, there is no money in them. The timing of the announcement for the new legislation tells me one thing: It is about the election year, it is about Doug Ford's stretching a helpline for Uber, not the drivers. If this legislation goes into effect, it will be totally not worth it for any Uber driver.”

#### 1400

This was on RideFairTO on Twitter—and I think that this is a very valid point that this gig worker makes. This person writes: “If Uber/Lyft paid drivers properly—at least minimum wage for time worked—they'd be incentivized to use drivers' time efficiently. Less time spent circulating empty; minimized travel distances. Cities benefit directly in terms of emissions, congestion.” Again, that is a lens that I think this government should be viewing all legislation from. What does it do to mitigate climate change, and how does it help reduce carbon emissions? This point is made—that actually paying a real minimum wage instead of only for engaged time would help with congestion and carbon emissions from cars waiting for rides.

Here is some other feedback from gig workers: “It is clear that no actual gig workers were consulted in the creation of this legislation. Your offer has been for a \$15-an-hour guarantee for hours spent delivering orders. We need a wage guarantee that covers time spent moving and not moving.”

This gig worker makes the point that “it would be nearly impossible for me to spend a whole hour delivering orders and not make \$15. This shows me that this is nothing but cheap showmanship on your part, a desperate

attempt to secure votes for your deeply unpopular government ahead of the election, without any regard for your bill's actual impact on workers like me."

Another gig worker writes, "We have to constantly be working in order to be able to afford to work. We don't get any time off. We have to keep up with maintenance and buy technical gear to be able to get out there in any weather. We take on a lot of risks just to be able to deliver that little bit faster. This bill felt like a slap in the face. Minimum wage for our engaged time—which, by the way, none of the app companies show us any metrics related to that."

Speaker, I could go on. There are so many comments from gig workers that are all very similar—and it's not only gig workers and the unions that represent them; it's also experts in the field of labour relations.

Josh Mandryk, a labour lawyer, said, "Creating a stand-alone bill creates confusion and feeds into the false narrative that platform-based gig workers are different from other workers in a legally significant way. In reality, they face the same problems regarding misclassification and wage theft as workers in industries like construction, cleaning, and traditional delivery and courier services, they just use an app to perform the work. These workers deserve full and equal protections under the ESA."

Speaker, that is a point that we also need to keep in mind. This government talks about this bill as dealing with the gig economy. It does not deal with the gig economy. It deals with app-based gig workers. There are thousands of workers across this province who rely on temporary gig contracts to put food on the table. They work in cleaning. They work in truck driving. They work in personal home care services. They work in all kinds of industries that are also very vulnerable to misclassification. And not only does this bill completely inadequately protect those app-based gig workers, but it does nothing for all of those thousands of other workers who are also part of the gig economy in this province.

Deena Ladd from the Workers' Action Centre said that what we see here is a substandard set of rights, as it doesn't cover employment standards like overtime, holiday pay or emergency leave. They are absolutely creating a category of workers that have less rights than regular workers, and this proposed law could impact labour standards for other jobs. Journalist Corey Mintz writes, "Ontario's new gig-work bill might as well be written on DoorDash letterhead." Jim Stanford gives an extensive critique of this bill that echoes many of the comments that I had shared earlier.

Speaker, I think that I have made it clear that from the perspective of gig workers, this bill is doing nothing to actually protect these workers from the precarious and vulnerable working conditions that they face, and is a completely inadequate response to the concerns that gig workers have been raising, especially over this pandemic.

I was heartened to read in the *Globe and Mail* on March 3 a story that said, "Labour Minister Monte McNaughton is considering giving full employee rights to Uber drivers and other so-called gig workers.... Two government

sources ... say Mr. McNaughton intends to bring forward more measures to help gig workers and that nothing is off the table." Speaker, one would have thought that that sham committee meeting that we had on March 9 would have been a wonderful opportunity to bring what's not currently on the table into this bill. Let's put it in this bill. Let's recognize gig workers as the employees that they are.

I want to remind the government that in many ways the work has already been done. I brought forward a private member's bill earlier in the fall that would help prevent misclassification of gig workers by amending the Employment Standards Act to simplify and clarify the test for who is an employee in Ontario and who is an independent contractor. The changes that I proposed in my private member's bill also reverse the onus back to where they should be: It should be the employer's job to show that a worker is not an independent contractor, versus the worker's job to try to prove that they are actually an employee.

Speaker, my time is running by so quickly, and I did want to definitely talk about schedule 2. Schedule 2 in this bill does amend the Employment Standards Act. This, again, would have been the opportunity for the government to make those changes that would have been necessary to actually protect gig workers, but the amendments set out in schedule 2 don't do that. What they do is they exclude two new categories of workers from the Employment Standards Act. They exclude IT consultants and business consultants.

One of the problems with the Employment Standards Act, Speaker, is that there is already a long list of exemptions written into the legislation, and these are professions that either are completely excluded from the Employment Standards Act or only get some of the benefits and protections of the Employment Standards Act. What schedule 2 proposes to do is to exclude these two new categories of workers: IT consultants and business consultants.

There have been lots of questions about where did this schedule come from: What is the pressing public issue that is needed to be addressed by all of a sudden excluding IT consultants and business consultants? I happened upon this news release that came out in June 2020 about an \$800-million class action lawsuit against Procom Consultants Group, which is a temporary placement agency. They were taking on this class action on behalf of a woman named Anna Brown, who was assigned to the Ministry of Transportation as an IT consultant. This class action alleges that IT consultants are employees under the Employment Standards Act, or at least IT consultants who are placed in the Ministry of Transportation or whatever workplace by Procom, which is a temporary placement agency, are recognized in the Employment Standards Act as full employees and therefore ought to be eligible for the benefits and protections that the Employment Standards Act provides.

**1410**

Speaker, I couldn't help notice that Procom is a company that had been represented by Rubicon Strategy and

lobbyists from Rubicon Strategy. Who is the founder of Rubicon Strategy? It's Kory Teneycke, who was manager of the Ontario PCs' 2018 election campaign. It's interesting that Rubicon Strategy represents Procom. Procom had an employee who was an IT consultant and there's a class action lawsuit under way to recognize IT consultants as being entitled to all of the benefits of the Employment Standards Act, and all of a sudden, we see legislation before this Legislature that exempts IT consultants, as well as business consultants, from the Employment Standards Act. That is just an interesting piece of background that I think that the public should know about this bill.

The other part of schedule 2 is a written policy on electronic monitoring. Certainly, Speaker, especially during this pandemic, with so many people working at home, so many workplaces pivoting to allow remote work, we know that there has been increased concerns about surveillance and electronic monitoring of what employees are doing when they are working from home.

Very similar to the Bill 27 requirement on a right-to-disconnect policy, this bill requires employers to have a written policy on electronic monitoring. What it does not do is provide any definition of electronic monitoring. It does nothing to restrict what employers may do with the information that they acquire through electronic monitoring. It does nothing to require employers to go through processes to determine whether it is appropriate to be conducting electronic monitoring at all, nor does it provide any protections for employees who will now be presented with their employer's electronic monitoring policy. If they have concerns about what's in the policy, if they have concerns about the data that their employer is telling them that they're now going to be collecting, there's no recourse set out in this bill for what an employee can do if they have a problem with the contents of the electronic monitoring policy. That, obviously, raises concerns about what happens if an employee doesn't feel comfortable complying with that electronic monitoring policy.

Sharaf Sultan, an employment lawyer, points out that if a non-unionized employee is terminated for not wanting to comply with electronic monitoring, the law can do nothing about it as long as the person is compensated for the dismissal. He says, "We still do not have the answer to the question of what if you don't want to be surveilled? How do you still retain your employment?"

So there are lots of questions that are related to that section of the bill and very few protections for workers—no protections for workers. All that this schedule does is require transparency for workers that they are being surveilled but nothing about what rights they have if they question whether that level of surveillance is appropriate and necessary in the context of that workplace.

The next schedule I want to talk about is schedule 4, the amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. This schedule amends that act to require some businesses or workplaces where an "employer becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that there may be a risk of a worker having an opioid overdose at a workplace where that worker performs work for the employer...." One of the

immediate concerns that that wording raises is the recognition that employers who are aware, who become aware, that there is the presence of harm or hazard in the workplace have an obligation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to address that harm or hazard. The language of the bill talks about this potential for risk, but it doesn't put any burden on the employer to help mitigate that risk other than to have naloxone kits available and in good condition.

I want to share some of the feedback that was provided when we did our consultation about this bill. United Steelworkers, for example, has said that opioid addiction is a serious public health issue, but not just a workplace issue: "There is a need to address the issue in the workplace, but we would submit that more needs to be done with respect to what is a public health crisis," and that "policies to address opioid addiction in the workplace should go beyond a requirement to have naloxone available."

There are also concerns about the lack of specificity about which workplaces will be required to have these kits available. The government talked about high-risk workplaces as being the intended focus, such as construction sites, bars and nightclubs, but there are a vast number of workplaces that were not identified by the government when they issued the announcement of these amendments being introduced that should be included in the list of workplaces that should have these naloxone kits available.

The other concern that I wanted to raise, Speaker—and it goes back to the input from United Steelworkers that opioid addiction is not just a workplace issue. We know from the Canadian Mental Health Association of the huge spike in opioid poisonings and deaths, especially since the onset of the pandemic: 75% of overdose deaths during the pandemic were people who were alone, with no one available to intervene or administer naloxone. Clearly, there has to be a significant investment up front in dealing with the causes of opioid addiction, not just the naloxone in the workplace. As I said, 75% of those deaths were people who were alone, without someone, a co-worker, nearby to administer naloxone.

We have some excellent recommendations for this government about what a holistic response to the opioid crisis looks like. It would begin with declaring it a public health emergency, but it would also include a number of other strategies. The science table put out a report in the fall outlining a range of strategies to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on opioid-related harm in Ontario, including uninterrupted and equitable access to addiction, mental health and harm reduction services; incorporating those services into high-risk settings such as shelters, hotels and encampments; adapting harm reduction services to meet current needs; promoting access to alternative service delivery methods, such as telemedicine programs when in-person services are not available.

#### 1420

CMHA's pre-budget submission this year also made some excellent recommendations for this government, if they are truly serious about dealing with the opioid crisis in this province:

(1) Increase base budgets for CMHA agencies. Repeal Bill 124.

(2) Invest in 3,000 supportive housing units. Invest in associated support services to help people with mental health or addictions issues.

(3) Increase investments in an integrated response to the drug poisoning crisis.

(4) Invest \$10 million in mobile crisis services and \$7 million in safe bed programs for mobile crisis teams.

These are the kinds of strategies that would go a long way, in addition to the naloxone kits in the workplace, in certain high-risk workplaces—construction sites and bars—but these comprehensive strategies are what is truly necessary to address the opioid crisis in Ontario.

I regret, Speaker, that I didn't get to the other schedules in this bill but appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate.

ROYAL ASSENT  
SANCTION ROYALE

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2022.

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2022  
LOI DE 2022 VISANT À OEUVRER  
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions? The member for Burlington.

**Hon. Jane McKenna:** I think we can all agree in this House that we have a responsibility to the taxpayers to spend their monies wisely. I know the member opposite sat beside me when I sat in your spot when I was here prior in the position in this House that we're always humbled and honoured to be here. But after all of the time we've been here, when you sat over where the Liberal Party is now, we realize that—we had 15 years. We had the highest sub-sovereign debt that we've ever had. We have nothing better to show for it with education. We can go on and on.

I would honestly say that you must agree that all of us have a responsibility to do what's best. But I guess where I'm curious is, you say that if we're truly serious about the naloxone kits at workplaces—we're obviously serious, because we're doing something about it. We've listened to stakeholders; they've all said they're thrilled at what we've done up to this point. So are you saying that it's all or nothing, so if we don't start somewhere then we just shouldn't do it at all?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Just before the member for London West responds, I want to apologize to the member for Burlington. I did not refer to her by her official title, which is the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

The member for London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I appreciate the question from the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, but certainly not. I acknowledge that having naloxone kits in the workplace is an important action and there is documented research that shows the high level of opioid addiction among construction workers, for example. However, it is not a crisis that is strictly limited to the workplace, and we need to see a much more holistic response, such as the actions that CMHA had urged the government to take in their pre-budget submission. Supportive housing: You need to address the social determinants of health. You need to address the factors that lead to opioid addiction. You need to address safer supply and the toxic supply that is causing so many opioid deaths.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** I want to thank my colleague from London West for showing, when the title is Working for Workers, how the government treats gig workers as second-class workers. I want to thank you for that, because you painted a pretty clear picture.

But in your allocation, you also talked about the \$1.5 billion that they took from WSIB and gave back to the employers. I'd like to hear from you: What would \$1.5 billion represent to injured workers, and how could that have helped them?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much to my colleague the member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay for his question. Certainly what we know from the injured worker community, from injured worker advocates, is that the majority of injured workers end their lives in poverty. They are denied the benefits that they are entitled to because of an injury that they experienced at work.

I mentioned that 93% of workers who have debilitating mental health conditions are denied access to WSIB benefits, and so as a result they are forced onto ODSP and they are forced onto social assistance programs. We know that those social assistance programs don't come anywhere near to actually enabling someone with a disability, who is dealing with a workplace injury, to live a dignified life.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** First of all, I want to say thank you to the member from London West for your leadoff on this bill. I appreciate it.

Madam Speaker, severe injuries or deaths should never be a cost of doing business. Unfortunately, some businesses treat clients as an expense line and continue to put their workers at risk. For decades, it was happening. We are stopping that now. Our legislation also introduces the highest fines in Canada for companies that fail to follow workplace health and safety laws. If passed, the maximum fines for businesses will increase to \$1.5 million.

The opposition has always repeatedly called on the government—and I do remember that when we were



doing Bill 27, they wanted us to do more—to deter the bad actors from taking advantage of these workers. Now our government is introducing higher fines for the businesses, to accomplish exactly what the member opposite has asked. So can I ask the member opposite: Do you support this bill?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** What causes me great concern is the fact that the Ministry of Labour's own investigator found that Uber was outright violating the Employment Standards Act—a whole laundry list of sections of the Employment Standards Act that were being violated egregiously by Uber, and that's all documented by that Ministry of Labour inspector. And yet, not only did this government refuse to take the action that that should have prompted them to do, which is to recognize gig workers as the employees they are and amend the Employment Standards Act to make it simpler and clearer; instead, they chose to create this whole new category of the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act and give gig workers lesser rights than they deserve under the Employment Standards Act.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I want to thank the member for her excellent and well-researched presentation. We've seen this government move quick when it wants to, during the pandemic and even before the pandemic. When it has its priorities, it moves on them quick. For instance, when it came to long-term care, they jumped all over protecting the operators of private long-term-care homes.

But when it came to gig workers throughout the pandemic, who were suffering—definitely one of the worker groups that were hardest hit—we've heard pretty much nothing until the restrictions are being lifted. Can you comment on what the priorities of this government are when it comes to workers and if you believe that the rights of workers are at the top of their list?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to thank the member for Humber River–Black Creek for the question. I certainly would agree that we've seen the government move quickly when it thinks it's to its political advantage, as we saw with this very bill, when they moved incredibly quickly and in an unprecedented procedural process to remove schedule 5 because they saw it was a political fiasco that they had to fix.

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But never have we seen them move quickly to really address the needs of workers, and in particular to address the needs of gig workers. Instead, we have seen that time after time this government has introduced measures that undermine workers' rights, that undermine the protections that are available to workers, that do nothing to lift workers up and protect them.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Thank you very much to the member from London West. I'd like to follow up on the question that was asked just now. Do you agree that higher fines for businesses that are bad actors and take advantage of vulnerable workers—will you say yes to that, that we should introduce higher fines for them?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** When the member asked the question about holding companies responsible for workplace injuries that vulnerable workers experience on the job, I couldn't help but think of Fiera Foods. I couldn't help but think of the missed opportunity in Bill 27 that this government could have had to hold employers of temp agency workers responsible for the health and safety of those workers on the job. Five Ontario workers died on the job at Fiera Foods and Fiera Foods gets rewarded with a clean WSIB rating that puts it in line to get some of that \$1.5 billion in WSIB surpluses that this government has generated by not providing the supports that injured workers need.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** We don't have time for another question. Further debate?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** It's truly an honour for me to rise in this Legislature to speak this afternoon to the Working for Workers Act, 2022, brought forward by my friend the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

As I'm sure everyone in this House is aware, Ontarians across the province, in every region and every constituency, have been impacted by this horrible pandemic. The prolonged physical isolation, time away from family and friends, financial uncertainty and so many other added pressures have had a profound impact on the mental health of so many individuals and families in this beautiful province. Early in this pandemic we heard of the bravery and dedication of so many front-line workers, mostly in the health care sector, but in many other sectors as well.

The Working for Workers Act, 2022, also referred to as Working for Workers 2, contains proposed amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which include requiring naloxone kits in certain workplaces and staff training on how to use naloxone kits. It is another way to support people with addiction challenges and reduce harms resulting from opioid use. I'll discuss why this is so important in just a moment.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to serve the people of Ontario as the province's first minister responsible for mental health and addictions, but I'm also very proud to represent the people and families of Vaughan–Woodbridge as their MPP. To this day the people and families of Vaughan–Woodbridge have been able to find stable and good-paying jobs in construction and the skilled trades. In fact, the city of Vaughan is home to over half of York region's jobs in the skilled trades. While we know that we're all concerned about a possible skills shortage in the labour market, particularly in the skilled trades, my friend and colleague the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development has made historic investments and policy decisions to break the stigma associated with the trades, so young people have access to more opportunities and quality on-the-job training. With many workers set to retire over the next decade, it's expected that the construction sector alone will need as many as 100,000 additional workers—100,000 well-paying jobs.

In my riding of Vaughan–Woodbridge and across the city of Vaughan, I'm proud of the many labour unions and

associations that have chosen Vaughan as their home. This includes the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario, the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, also known as RESCON, and LIUNA Local 183.

I'm also incredibly proud of the work being done by the Skilled Trades College of Canada's Vaughan campus, based in Vaughan–Woodbridge, that is training the future generations of skilled tradespeople and labourers in this great province.

While our workers have been there to support us before and during this horrible pandemic, it's just as important that we are able to support them. This also means ensuring we are there to protect their health and well-being, and that includes their mental health. Tragically, we have lost many Ontarians to the ongoing opioid and polysubstance crisis in this province. Even more tragic is the fact that many of these Ontarians were employed in the construction sector.

Speaker, the ongoing issues surrounding opioids, addiction and overdoses in this province have been very concerning to me and to our entire government. Most recently, reports have shown us that about 30% of the Ontarians we lost due to the opioid crisis and related causes have been individuals working in the construction sector. We also know that bars and nightclubs across the province have seen tragic increases in the number of opioid use, overdoses and opioid-related deaths.

Madam Speaker, across Canada, we already lose 500,000 days a week of work as a result of individuals having to take time off due to mental health or addiction challenges. This figure includes many workers right here in Ontario. However, Ontario workers never took a break during the pandemic. They were working from one day to the next to help build our province, and have been in the driver's seat of Ontario's economic growth ever since.

In addition to working long hours, even in the midst of a global pandemic, many in the construction sector and skilled trades often become diagnosed with musculoskeletal disorders or other work-related injuries, due to the very nature of the work they do each and every day. Researchers have found that construction workers with musculoskeletal disorders are three times more likely than other co-workers to use prescriptions for pain management. This has led to many of Ontario's construction workers to begin using opioids to help manage the pain they experience and struggle with each and every day. At least 57 construction workers died in the first year of the pandemic—that's 57 too many.

The legislation brought forward by my colleague the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, if passed, will help save the lives of many of Ontario's workers. We know that those who use opioids are at a higher risk of overdosing if they use alone and with no one there to help administer naloxone. With that in mind, I want to quickly mention the important work of the Ontario Construction Consortium, led by Mr. Phil Gillies, and that of my friend the president of the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario, Mike Yorke, for advocating around this important issue and for meeting with me on more than one occasion to discuss possible solutions.

One of those solutions is this very legislation. This important bill, brought forward by the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, takes us one step further to ensuring we provide the tools our workplaces need to protect the well-being of those facing addictions challenges.

Speaker, for nearly four years, our Premier, myself and our entire government, for that matter, have been trying so incredibly hard to find ways to break the stigma around mental health and addictions. Stigma around mental health and addictions is an especially important issue that we need to keep talking about each and every day—not just on Bell Let's Talk Day, not just during Recovery Month, but every single day of the year. For too long, the stigma around addictions and recovery has prevented those living with an addiction challenge from seeking out the help and supports they need to finally take that next step towards recovery. People who are stigmatized often feel ashamed, alone and judged.

In fall of last year, all parties in this Legislature helped to pass the Recovery Month Act, brought forward by my friend and colleague the MPP for Don Valley North. This was the first time a government in Canada enacted Recovery Month into legislation.

Just this past January, we held another important Bell Let's Talk Day campaign focused on eliminating the stigma once and for all.

While we still have more work to do in order to achieve the shared goal of finally breaking the stigma, we are seeing important progress in how we approach and treat mental health and addictions in this province—and this government, led by Premier Ford, is delivering real and meaningful change.

**1440**

Madam Speaker, people who are living with an addiction are just that—they're people. They are Ontarians. They are our friends, our colleagues, our loved ones. They work in the trades, in construction, on the front lines in every region, in every sector.

Unfortunately, many Ontarians struggle in silence due to the stigma surrounding mental health and addictions. We can no longer allow that to happen. We must do better.

Speaker, as many members of this Legislature know, addiction is something I have a very close and personal connection to. Prior to taking office, I used to run a bed-based therapeutic community for men struggling with addiction challenges. It's also where I first became a certified addictions counsellor—and since being sworn in as Ontario's very first minister responsible, I've become a CACCF-certified addictions counsellor, a recovery coach, an Indigenous addiction counselling professional, and telemedicine addiction counsellor as well.

Throughout my career, I've observed the harms related to drugs and their control over people I've met and known throughout my life. I've spoken with individuals with lived experience who were convicted and imprisoned as drug smugglers, dealers and users. I've spent countless hours speaking to the broken, exhausted families they left behind, wondering where they went wrong. I've been in

hospital emergency departments where individuals were being treated for overdoses on substances of all sorts, and where members of local communities struggling with suicidal thoughts have ended up desperately crying out for help, only to be turned away. I've interviewed, assessed and worked with many men who have been damaged by their use of substances, and for the fortunate few, I have seen some survive. Several of these men have since passed away—those who could not get the help because of access issues and fragmentation in a system that was quite literally broken. Some of them were as young as 16 years of age and some as old as 70. Others have turned their lives around with the help of bed-based treatment. The love of their families supporting them made the difference to keep them going, gave them the determination to get to the other side.

I've discussed the issues surrounding addiction and mental health in empty streets, waiting rooms, bleak cells, noisy classrooms, windowless lecture halls, hotel conference rooms, and inside the boardrooms of past provincial governments, right here in this building.

Madam Speaker, when I worked on the front lines with men struggling with addictions, I used to refer to them as TIPs, truly important people. People often talk about VIPs, about how they should be treated as being important, about how they should get special treatment—and in the eyes of the public, VIPs typically do. But in the work I used to do, we referred to the clients as TIPs, the truly important people. They're truly important because they made a choice, and that choice was to either struggle with their addiction or do something about it and turn their lives around. The men I used to help on the front lines wanted help, they sought help, and finally, when they had the chance, they got that help. They changed their lives for the better, and we must always acknowledge their work and celebrate their recovery at every opportunity we can.

The reality is that too many people and families across Ontario continue to be affected by mental illness and addictions, but this government has been doing something about it. The people of this province have made it very clear to us—they want to see action.

Speaker, I come from a generation that often frowned upon people who talked about mental health, about people who suffered from mental health issues. As a kid, as a youth, I was told to just suck it up when you weren't feeling well. That's one of the things that we can't allow to continue happening, especially given the fact that many of the construction workers who are now dealing with these issues are those people who are from my generation. We can't tell them to suck it up. We have to give them the resources, the tools to get better. We can't let them suffer in silence. We cannot allow stigmatization to continue to limit their ability to get help.

Our government, led by Premier Ford, is changing that. We're taking important steps, like ensuring workplaces in Ontario have access to life-saving naloxone kits, to save the lives of those experiencing an overdose, while working to provide all of us with the goods and services we rely on each and every day to live our lives.

We have also taken decisive action to ensure that more Ontarians who want treatment for opioid addiction have access to the high-quality supports they expect and deserve. Most recently, I announced \$90 million being invested through a new addictions recovery fund that is immediately expanding access to addictions treatment in Ontario, adding nearly 400 beds across the system, in every region of the province. That means new beds and more than 7,000 new treatment spots in rural, in northern and in Indigenous communities. We are making a difference. We are taking decisive actions to build and transform the system for mental health and addictions.

Madam Speaker, I've spent many hours focusing on improving access to evidence-based treatment in both bed-based and community-based settings as well as virtual addictions services to support all Ontarians, no matter where they live in the province of Ontario. This new funding builds on the ongoing work to address mental health and addictions challenges, including the opioid and polysubstance crisis in Ontario. Through a comprehensive suite of policies and programs which are often coordinated through local public health units and collaborate with the health sector partners, municipalities and community stakeholders, we will make a difference, because those collaborations are what will bring a change from the fragmentation that has existed in the past.

This new \$90-million investment complements the \$32.7 million we announced to further expand and enhance access to new annualized funding for targeted addictions services and supports, including treatments for opioid addictions. This funding is helping more Ontarians in every region of the province access evidence-based, high-quality addictions services that are addressing urgent gaps in needed supports so that we have a continuum of care that works for everyone, no matter where you live in the province of Ontario. That includes a \$6.9-million investment in annual provincial opioid response investments, including adding harm reduction workers province-wide, expanding rapid access addiction medicine clinics and establishing acute consultation services in areas with high rates of opioid use.

We have finally taken that next important step to ensure our mental health and addictions system fully supports Ontarians as they navigate it. When someone struggling with addiction needs help, they will now have a detox bed available to them, and once they're out of detox, they'll finally have access to supportive treatment and recovery beds in addition to after-care programs so that they are fully supported and aren't left to struggle on their own.

We heard about the need for supportive housing. That is part of the strategy for the government, to invest in supportive housing for people who are coming through, because we recognize that social determinants of health must be addressed if the strategy is to work.

For too long, Ontarians in northern, rural and remote Indigenous communities have been struggling to locate high-quality addictions care close to home. Well, we changed that too. That's why, almost a month ago, Madam Speaker, I was in North Bay at Canadore College, where

the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade joined me to announce \$6.84 million to support 53 new addiction treatment beds, including withdrawal management, which are known as detox beds; supportive treatment beds; and addictions treatment beds. This treatment centre will provide care for hundreds of Ontarians living in Nipissing and the surrounding region. But we didn't stop there. I then travelled across northern Ontario to announce 15 new treatment beds in Sudbury; 34 new treatment beds in Thunder Bay; 37 new treatment beds in Sioux Lookout, what is commonly known as the northern hub; and lastly, 15 treatment beds in Timmins. That's a total of 154 new addictions treatment beds that we've announced in less than a month, with more still to come. Ontarians in the north will finally have the resources and tools they need to begin their journey towards recovery.

You see, Madam Speaker, the beds and the treatment have to be close to home. We can't have these individuals moving around the province, looking for help and support, raising other issues and other concerns in other parts of the province. These investments are targeted to help the individuals closest to home, because we know, and evidence supports the fact, that success comes when the treatment is provided as close to home as possible, and that is what we are doing.

Every one of us likely knows someone who has experienced a mental health or addictions challenge at some point in their lives. In fact, we know, based on existing data, that approximately 30% of Ontarians will experience a mental health or addiction challenge at some point in their lives. That means approximately 4.5 million Ontarians.

**1450**

I'm sure all members of this Legislature will agree that mental health and addictions is one of the most important and pressing public health issues of our time. Madam Speaker, this government will continue to take real action to ensure all Ontarians have access to the high-quality mental health and addiction care that meets their unique needs and have opportunities for treatment and recovery, because every Ontarian deserves those opportunities when and where they need them, and especially as close to home as possible. Our government will continue working towards that.

The suggestion that our government is failing in investing in mental health and addictions—we are now at the point where we're investing \$525 million in new funding to make sure that there is a system that's accessible, that's connected, that's holistic, that's integrated and that's providing the services as close to home as individuals in a culturally appropriate manner.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I've listened intently to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, but I have also spoken with many stakeholders within the system that are begging the government for funding increases, which they haven't seen come. AMHO is asking for an 8% increase, \$120 million annually, to ensure that they're able to keep their services going throughout

various communities. We've waited four years with this government to start to produce some of these services, and now, at the last minute, right before an election, it's starting to come. But there are still many services that are required. We have seen increases of 79% in overdoses. We've seen mental health and addictions—a 74% increase.

My question to the minister regarding this bill in particular is: Why are they only targeting construction sites and bars and nightclubs, when there are workplaces across the province that need those services?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** First off, the investments that are being made are not being made at the last minute because of an election. We have been working on a strategy, and you will recall—perhaps you don't remember the date, but I do: March 3, 2020, when the Roadmap to Wellness came into existence. The Roadmap to Wellness, the foundational document, came out two weeks before the pandemic that changed our lives for the last two years came into effect.

That didn't stop us from working. In fact, I'm extremely grateful to the stakeholders in the sector that were able to pivot and provide such incredible virtual supports to keep us functional during a very difficult time. But the member opposite knows as well as I do that this pandemic existed before we came into government. As a matter of fact, the members opposite, the former government, should have been doing a great deal more and did absolutely nothing to assist us.

But these are steps that are being taken moving forward. The naloxone kits are another step moving forward, as it was with police services—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. Question?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Over the last two years, approximately 2,500 people have died from opioid-related causes. To protect workers on the job and save lives, Ontario is the first in Canada to require naloxone kits in workplaces where there's a risk of opioid overdose. By mandating access to life-saving kits in high-risk workplaces, our government is helping to protect those struggling with addictions from a preventable death.

Through you to the member, why is the government proposing to require naloxone kits? And in what types of workplaces will be they required?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Again, that's an excellent question. What we're doing is working on building that continuum of care. A continuum of care requires there to be bed-based treatment, requires harm reduction, RAAM clinics and other methods—our consumption and treatment sites. Naloxone kits are another aspect that add another piece to that continuum of care that we're trying to establish.

Are there other things we can be doing? Absolutely, and that's the work that we're starting to do. We have never had a base system in the province of Ontario. We've seen a lack of access, fragmentation, disconnects. That's what we're trying to accomplish: to create that continuum of care, provide the supports where we believe they will be

most useful. Construction sites and nightclubs: These are places where we know we can make a difference.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I want to thank the member for his presentation and also, on a personal level, his years of work in helping those battling addictions.

I think we can all agree upon the need to make naloxone accessible. I think that's something everyone can agree on. But one of the things that we all know here is that opioid addictions in most cases result from prescriptions in the first place. What is this government willing to do and planning to do to try to fight against the over-prescription of opioids in the first place so that we can help more people and provide them with alternatives?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** That is an excellent question as well, because we know the opioid crisis and a lot of the situations that have resulted from over-prescription of opioids. One of the things that we have embarked upon is education, not only educating individuals about the use of opioids, but also the doctors on prescribing opioids.

There are different systems that are put in place as well as checks and balances to ensure that they're not being over-prescribed. But one of the things we need to do is educate people more about alternatives. One of the things I've done in the past with the work that I do was look at different therapies to deal with and manage things such as pain. There are other alternatives that are not based on prescribing medication that could become addictive.

We're doing that. We're working diligently to do that and to educate. It is part of the training programs as well. There is a component for individuals to understand opioids and the impact of using them.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Madam Speaker, through you, first of all, I would like to thank the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions for doing an incredible, hard-working, amazing job. Minister, the residents of Vaughan–Woodbridge are blessed to have you as their strong voice. Every time we reached out to you, you were always there to support.

You briefly touched upon the member opposite and talked about the investments—the last-minute investment, the little bit of investment just made into the province. What would you say to the Ontarians who have been watching what our government has done in mental health and addictions?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Again, when we were elected, we made a commitment to invest \$3.8 billion over 10 years. We commenced our investment of \$175 million in our first year. In the second year, we added \$174 million to the \$175 million. In the third year, we invested an additional \$176 million; in addition to that, \$194 million directly related to the COVID response; in addition to that, another \$90 million as the Addictions Recovery Fund.

We are now at the point where we're investing \$525 million in annualized funding to ensure that we have better access, that we have a continuum of care, that people who need help are able to get it where and when they need it. Whether they're Indigenous communities in the Far North

or rural communities—we've added youth wellness hubs, and we're also adding mobile health units to ensure that everyone gets access as close to home as possible.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Just a quick question: One of the things I've known being here is that this institution, this place ignores the minority. I say that because sometimes I'll talk about water. Sometimes I'll talk about access to housing and proper infrastructure. You always hear me talk about water. I have a First Nation that's on its 28th year of a long-term boil-water advisory. Here, me, I just go like this and I'll get water. Our people don't have that.

I say that because this bill, the Working for Workers Act, one of the things that it does—disproportionately impacted are the front-line essential migrant workers, women, BIPOC folks and workers living under disability. How can we do better with minorities?

1500

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** To the member from Kiiwetinoong, I want to say that I have been extremely diligent—and our government as well, fully supporting me—in ensuring that we did not overlook any minority. If you look at the investments that have been made, many of them have been targeted, in many cases, to help groups that have traditionally not been looked after by previous governments.

We have made investments through the Black Health Alliance to help people in the Black community have access to supports and services.

I've travelled extensively through the north, as far as Sandy Lake and Fort Albany and many places in between, to better understand the issues in remote communities and what we need to do better.

We have developed a culturally sensitive approach to dealing with those issues, and we are working very diligently with communities to ensure we give them the best supports that are culturally sensitive.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** We don't have time for another question.

Just before we move on, I believe that somebody with a mike on had their phone buzzing. Please remember to move your phone if you're up speaking, because for the folks up top, it hurts their ears.

Further debate?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I want to rise today to talk about Bill 88. It's interesting, with the bill—when it talks about the Working for Workers Act. There are a lot of workers out there who don't understand how we got to where we are today with a Conservative government, so I want to go through the history here and the attacks that this government has done on workers right across the province of Ontario. The title makes me laugh a bit because there is no more anti-worker party in this country than this PC Party. It would be funny, if there weren't real consequences in this bill. There's no party that has fought workers' rights and kicked workers harder than the PC Party of Ontario, especially this particular one. Thankfully—and I'm going to try to help them with that—workers see through this ploy and, quite frankly, this bill.

When we look at a bill called the Working for Workers Act, we should analyze just who says they are working for workers. We should look at the record of not only this government but the previous PC governments they are proud of.

I'm going to start here. I'm sure most of you guys out here might even recognize the name, after all—the PC Party of Mike Harris.

This morning, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said that the NDP supported the Liberals 100% of the time, which was a blatant lie in this House. I can't say that?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I'm going to ask the member from Niagara Falls to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I withdraw. It wasn't accurate.

But what we do know, and this is accurate—because I think it's fair and balanced that if I say that, I should say it about you guys. You guys were the official opposition. You supported the Liberals 51% of the time—as you stand up and say that. It's absolutely incredible, what you guys try to do here.

For those who need to be reminded, Mike Harris was the same Premier who lifted the law prohibiting the use of strikebreakers. Essentially, he made it perfectly legal for companies to lock out workers and hire scabs. We've got a bill that was put forward here every time that I've been here about scabs, and you guys have voted against it every time. He was fine with companies taking food off a family's table if a company refused to negotiate a fair deal with workers. They wouldn't negotiate an agreement, but what they did is, they brought in scabs, even though—and I want you guys to know this, because you guys should be educated on labour law—98% of every collective agreement is resolved without a strike. Why do you need scabs to prolong that strike and attack workers, communities and their families? It made absolutely no sense to me.

Mike Harris is the one who stripped the Ontario Labour Relations Board of the right to order a union drive, where a company would try to crush a union drive—something workers have the constitutional right to do.

I will say—and Conservatives can correct me—I don't think there are any of your employees that are unionized. Every one of our employees who work in this place here are unionized, and my entire constit office is unionized. They get fair wages, fair benefits and a pension, and I'm proud of that. And yes, guess what? They have the right to file a grievance, and sometimes they do. That's fair too, because it's in the collective agreement. I'll get to that in a little bit, when I get further down here. If there's anything that's not accurate here, please stand up and correct me; just don't say the word “lie,” because I can't do that, and I apologize.

Mike Harris was the one who privatized key parts of our health care and education systems and then crushed the unions of those workers whose jobs he privatized. In fact, in Ontario, we're still reeling from the costs of Harris's cuts, whether it was hundreds of hospital beds—do you know what he did, Speaker? Do you know what he did? Because we're talking about health care now, and

they're supposed to be investing in health care. Premier Harris, at the time, closed 26 hospitals and he laid off 6,000 nurses. How many of you remember that? Put your hand up. I'm sure all you guys would remember that. That happened in the province of Ontario.

And what was the effect of that? There were nine days of action in the province of Ontario. I think there was one in Windsor, London, up north in Sudbury, in Niagara, and we took that issue on. The last one that we ran was with my good friend, my colleague right in front of me, in Hamilton; 100,000 people were there.

The same Mike Harris who sits on boards in long-term care—this is where we're going to go here today. With a huge profit, where hundreds of seniors have died—I apologize; I got that wrong. It's actually thousands of seniors who died: 4,400, to be exact. Last time I spoke here—we haven't done a good job of taking care of seniors. But they also put legislation in place to protect them, so they couldn't be sued, even though we had seniors dying in the long-term-care homes that the military brought forward had died from not even being able to drink water.

What did we do for that? Did we go after them? Did we go after them with fines? You talk about fines in this bill. Did we go after one long-term-care or retirement home? The answer is no. You did not go after them. So when you talk about the fines in this bill, you should've been fining every one of those long-term-care homes.

Do you know what happened? This is off my notes here, but do you know what happened? They came to Niagara just last week to announce long-term-care beds—and I think that's great. I think it's great we're building more long-term-care beds, but they should be publicly owned and publicly operated, because we know they're not going to die. But do you know what they did? They gave money to a place called ConMed in Niagara. That was the one that I talked about here, where we had, I think, just over 40 people die; 100% of the residents had COVID and 100% of the staff had COVID. Why would you be giving money and awarding them when they didn't take care of our seniors? I don't understand that, and it drives me nuts. I'll tell you the truth: It just breaks my heart.

This could've all changed when the Premier came into power. Premier Ford could've changed this. He has been here for four years. I know you're trying to do whatever you're going to do in the last four or five weeks to get elected; I understand how that works. But he could've done this four years ago. He claimed he was for the people, for everyday working folks—how many remember that?—and this is what he did.

The Premier cut our planned minimum wage increase. Instead of going to \$15, he decided not to do it. Do you know what that cost, Speaker? To my colleagues on the other side—who, by the way, are listening very passionately; I can tell—\$5,300 went out of their paycheques every day in those three years. That's \$5,000 that could have gone back into their homes, \$5,000 that could have maybe helped them pay their rent or pay their mortgage.

And this is a little bit off: The affordability in this province has gone where? From four years ago to today, I

challenge anybody to tell me they're better off today than they were four years ago on affordability. Our food: I can't tell you how many seniors—I had a meeting with seniors on Saturday. They were crying, because they can't afford to pay their rent. They can't afford to get food. Think about that—in one of the richest provinces in the world, and certainly in this country.

He capped the wages of workers below inflation. This one here is—I do not understand why the government still stays on this one—workers like nurses and education workers forced to fall behind by the rising cost of living. I just talked about housing, rent, food; I forgot about gas. Hydro rates have gone up. You said they're going to come down; they've gone up.

**1510**

Bill 124: Look at me, guys. Tell me why you won't get rid of Bill 124. You know it's attacking workers. You know it's attacking our retention of our nurses, who have gone through complete—I don't even know how to say what they've gone through in those hospitals as they watched us die in front of them. They might see the odd person die as a nurse, but during the pandemic they've seen hundreds. In Niagara, we've had close to 600 people die from COVID. And with Bill 124, you attack those same workers you call heroes every day. You know what happened there? Because of inflation—I don't have to explain inflation to some of you guys—it's gone up 6%; 5.9% I think it was this month. So when you cap their wages at 1%, that's a 5% pay cut to the very people you call heroes. Does that make any sense to anybody here? You need to repeal Bill 124. I know it's only five or six weeks before an election. Repeal Bill 124.

Madam Speaker, when the Fort Erie hospital closed last month—it was an urgent care centre in Fort Erie—the government closed two other urgent care centres in Niagara because of COVID, even though they said COVID wasn't that bad and we're in pretty good shape and all that stuff. We weren't. But despite the attempts of the community to fight against cuts, more and more services got cut from the Fort Erie health care system. Earlier this year, the urgent care centre was put in jeopardy. Together we said, "Absolutely not." The community stood together, the local mayor stood together, the regional councillor, myself. We said to the government, "We're not going to allow that to happen," and we fought back. I'm proud to say today that the urgent care centre is back and operating. Not one person is staying anywhere else; they've all come back to Fort Erie. There are 34,000 people who deserve health care there.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** That's worth an applause. Sorry, the other side didn't applaud. But I think that's really, really good, quite frankly.

The Premier could repeal Bill 124 so we can attract and retain health care professionals, pay them the wages they deserve. I just explained the 1%, but I didn't explain the violation of their collective agreements. Somebody stood up over there and they talked about shift preference—not today, last week when I was here. I was here one day last

week when they talked about shift preference. That's taken away in Bill 124. There's no shift preference; there's no holiday; there's no seniority. And if they end up getting an agency nurse, that agency nurse may go on days, and they'll tell you, because you have no collective agreement, you have no seniority, because of Bill 124 you've got to work afternoons and midnights, or the weekends. That's what goes on under Bill 124. It's a big mistake.

This Premier denied workers PPE supplies and other protection during the pandemic, even fighting in court to avoid giving workers N95s. The same Premier continues to refuse to pass a bill. I'm going to talk on this one pretty quick: my bill, Bill 119. I was at committee—I think you were at committee, without pointing—and some of you guys were at committee when I talked about this. We talked about it for three years. I'm saying to you, when you talk about the opioid crisis and the skilled trades, you know why they're working? You know why they're doing prescription drugs? Because they know that if they go off injured, they end up filing for WSIB. And you know what happens in WSIB, my friends? Deny, deny, deny. Why do they deny it? So you can take the \$2.1 billion and give it to employers that injured those same workers instead of to the workers. So what they do is, they stay working so they don't live in poverty, so they can get a paycheque. That's what they do. And it's awful.

Bill 119 should have passed in this House a long, long time ago. No worker in the province—you can't stand across with—what's the name of this bill again? The Working for Workers Act. You can't stand in this place and tell me that you support workers when you know that workers get injured on the job and they end up living in poverty. They end up losing their house. They end up losing their family. They can't support their kids to go play hockey. Bill 119: Put it in the bill. This is your second labour bill. I think you called this labour bill 2 or B, or whatever you guys are calling it. I don't know. Put it in the bill. Workers deserve it.

This is the same Premier, it goes on—I wish I had an hour on this bill, I'll tell you. Paid sick days: He got rid of paid sick days. He took women's health care to court to try to deny them equal pay for equal work.

I'm just trying to skip here so I can at least get into a couple of things that have to be said as well. I mentioned Bill 124. Like I said, I need more time on this issue.

Literally thousands of workers are dying every year of workplace cancers and illnesses. Yet the WSIB keeps fighting these workers tooth and nail, denying them their benefits. The ODRA has made this case very clearly to the minister, who they met with, and given him an easy road map to follow to get it resolved. This would finally bring justice to families of paper mill workers in Dryden, who are represented by the PCs; the steel mill workers in Sault Ste. Marie, a PC riding; GE workers in Peterborough, represented by PCs; GM workers in St. Catharines, which is an NDP riding; and the Neelon Casting workers in Sudbury, up north. They're fighting to get compensation when their partners have died, knowing that they were killed on the job.

What happens? Take a guess. Yell it out. What did WSIB do? Help me out here, colleagues.

**Interjection:** They denied them.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** They denied them. Some of these people have been fighting for 30 years. They've come to the Legislature. They've met with the minister. We have to do more.

Because they are still the same old PC Party of Mike Harris; they can pretend they're labour-friendly all they want, but I know the truth. Do you know why I know the truth? Because I'm proud to say I'm a worker. I worked in a plant for 40 years. I worked steady midnights, quite frankly, so I could play some of my sports, but more importantly, I was able to coach my kids. Some of my fondest memories have been when they're playing sports. I know what a worker does every day. But when they get injured on the job, you guys have got an obligation to fix it.

I'm going to go through the schedules quickly, on the gig workers. I don't understand this government, and I'm not alone. My colleague the member from London did a great job. I would give gig workers a true bill of rights. The gig world is here to stay; there's no doubt about that. Drivers of Uber and Lyft and all those delivering food through DoorDash are human beings. But do you know what they are?

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Instead of talking among yourselves, listen to this: They're workers. That's what your bill says: They're workers. Treat them like workers. You're not. You treat them like second-class citizens not involved in the Employment Standards Act, where they're able to get a stat holiday, where they're able to get \$15 an hour. Now, what they're going to say is, "Well, you know, you're not really delivering, so now you're going to get \$7.50 an hour." Think about it, Speaker: A third-world country does that, not a great country like Canada and a province like Ontario. A worker is a worker is a worker in this province, and they should all be covered under the Employment Standards Act and have the same benefits. It's absolutely terrible.

Uber: You guys all know Uber. I'm sure you guys have taken an Uber cab. I can tell you I have never taken an Uber cab; I'm very proud of that. Do you know what they're worth? Colleague in front of me, what do you think they're worth?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's \$2 million.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** So, \$2 million—"million" or "billion"?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Million.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Million? They're worth \$82 billion, and they can't pay \$15 an hour for a full shift. Are you guys kidding me? It's \$82 billion. It has been up to organizations like Gig Workers United and UFCW along with my colleagues and me to fight for workers and truly give workers a voice. They need action from this Premier to actually help them. Their voice is entirely missing in this.

I want to say on this bill, when you talk about workers and you talk about unions, you throw unions out. Unions are smarter than this. Do you know why? They're represented by the Ontario Federation of Labour: 1.2 million workers are represented by the Ontario Federation of Labour. It's a lot of workers. They do not support this bill. You're not going to fool them all the time. So you can throw their names out, but it's not going to work.

**1520**

Schedule 3 of this bill is also written very poorly. It seems this legislation is aimed at addressing the shortage of skilled trades workers and speeding up the process of out-of-province.

There is concern in here. Reason one: We need to be very careful in how we talk about the shortage of skilled trades, particularly the building trades. If the Premier spent time listening to them, he would know that. Is there a shortage of Ontario workers in every trade in the province of Ontario? I believe there is. I believe there's a shortage in hospitals as well. There are shortages of workers everywhere. It's very easy for someone to use the idea of a broad shortage to create a policy that can devalue a trade, lower safety standards and potentially flood industry with unqualified labour, all in the name of cost-saving for employers. We know with this government that when given the opportunity they jump on it, a backdoor way to attack health and safety in the trades. I believe that when we discuss this we need to be aware of that reality and be very careful. I'm looking forward to when we get to committee and the trades come and talk about this.

On the opioid crisis—I've only got 50 seconds left—I've already explained how serious the opioid crisis is in construction. I know that the carpenters, I know the building trades, I know the electricians—we've all talked to them. I spent a great deal of time talking to the trades, not just because I'm the critic. It's because I've known them forever. I represented the trades in a plant for years when I was president of the local union.

Bill 119, the deeming bill that throws workers into poverty: That's where you have to start. Pass Bill 119 so workers, if they get injured on the job, will not have to be denied by WSIB and end up living in poverty. Instead of living in poverty, they're doing opioids, and then they get—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I'm done? Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** You're done.

Questions?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you to my colleague opposite for his passionate presentation. Eighty-nine per cent of people in Ontario agree that the workplace has changed permanently due to COVID-19 and Ontario needs to act to update employment regulations. Can the member opposite stop playing politics and agree that this is a good first step in granting certain rights and protections for these workers?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I put this on so I could hear you better, because the last time you asked me a question, I



didn't put it on and I couldn't really hear that well, so I apologize.

But I'll answer your question. Is it a good first step—because that's what you're asking me, correct? You're asking me is this a good first step? Is it a good first step that we're going to take workers and not allow them to be covered by employment insurance? Is it a good first step that if I'm working for an employer eight hours a day, four of those hours I could be getting \$7.50 an hour? The last time the minimum wage was \$7.50 an hour in the province of Ontario, guess who the Premier was? Yell it over; you asked the question. I'm sure you know: Mike Harris. We don't want to go back to \$7.50 an hour when we see our rent increases; our food is almost unaffordable for people who are making minimum wage in this province; our gas prices, tough to fill up our car. Seven dollars and 50 cents is not a good first step in any bill in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I want to thank my colleague and friend, who's a true champion for workers' rights. At the very end of his very powerful presentation, he mentioned the word deeming. Can the member talk to us a little bit more about deeming and what action needs to be taken?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I appreciate that. Probably one of the things that I've been the most passionate about for the four years that I've been here is the deeming bill. I know you guys never answer me on this, but is there a worker in the province of Ontario who gets hurt on the job who should be sent to live in poverty for the rest of his life? What we do when we deem them making \$20 an hour even though there's no job there, even though my restrictions don't allow me to do it—I'm deemed I can do that job, and they cut my benefits. Instead of the employer taking care of me, and WSIB, you know what happens? I have to go on ODSP and OW. We know those rates are very, very low. Quite frankly, every government should raise the ODSP and OW rates. Deeming—that bill should be passed, and it should be passed before you guys leave government. I've asked you, I've begged you, quite frankly. I almost broke down in committee about this. No worker—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. Question?

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Thank you to the member opposite for your very clear expression.

I understand you are very knowledgeable and experienced with workers. Data also suggests that we need to replace the retiring workers in the skilled trades. It is imminent and it is real. In fact, in 2016, nearly one in three of them in Ontario was 55 years or older.

Can the member please articulate why they would oppose breaking down the barriers like this?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Well, without going through my entire speech again, I think I gave you two reasons why the skilled trades are concerned about the schedule that you put in around skilled trades.

I'll explain it the best I can without having a lot of notes in front of me. What happens with trades workers—and I

believe there is a shortage, but I think there's a shortage in—hairdressing is one of the skilled trades where I know they have a shortage. There's a shortage in a lot of places—nurses.

On this bill, the concern that I read out during my presentation is that if you're coming from a different province than Ontario, you might not have the same training, you might not have the same criteria. So when they come to the province of Ontario—and the trades are saying this; I'm not saying this—there is a concern that their workplaces are going to be more unsafe.

We know we had a young man die last week, 21 years old, in Oshawa, Durham region. He died on the job. Since you mentioned 2016, from 2016 to 2021, we've had more deaths in construction—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. Question?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I want to provide a little bit more context for the member. He started out in his initial submission saying that this government was supportive of the previous government on decisions they had made 51% of the time. That figure is actually correct. However, let's narrow that down.

On all issues from the previous Liberal government that took away rights from workers, I have to say that the Conservative government voted in favour of those measures 100% of the time. I wanted to provide that, member, because I've been sitting in this House for almost 11 years, going on 12 years now, and I've witnessed this time and time again, where workers have been attacked by both the previous government and this present sitting government.

You look at examples as far as this government protecting long-term-care homes, denying justice for families. That's the type of legislation this government has brought forward. Cutting minimum wage, continuing on with the deeming practices against injured workers, Bill 134 removing sick days, minimum wage: The list goes on and on and on—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. The member for Niagara Falls.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's one of the reasons why I stand up and try to remind them. What they're trying to do right now in the province of Ontario is make it like you're standing up for workers, but you have a history, and you can't run from your history. I have a history, by the way. My history is in the labour movement. I'm proud of it; I don't hide it. I've bargained a lot of collective agreements.

But to your point, I didn't know that 100% of any labour law that came in, they voted in favour of with the Liberals. A good example of that—and maybe you can help me at some point in time after this is over—Bill 115. How would you guys have voted?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** They voted for it.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** You voted for it, Bill 115, an attack against teachers. I remember that.

I remember when you guys were in the official opposition. You guys might remember his name. Actually, I talk to him all the time. I think his name is Tim Hudak. He

wanted to cut 100,000 jobs in the public service. Remember that? That was your party. You guys voted that that be part of your platform.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** It's interesting how the member across can criticize other parties for their downfalls and mistakes and everything else, but did you know, Speaker, the official opposition has only been elected to government once in Ontario's history. The last time was 30-some years ago, and they've never invited them back since to form the government. These suggestions that other governments are creating all of these problems, to me, is ridiculous.

1530

I'm going to ask the member an easy question here—I think he can agree with. Canada has a proud military tradition, and our reservists are an integral part of that. Does the opposition believe that we should do less with our brave military members?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's a pretty interesting question.

What I will say is that I'm proud to stand in this House and tell you that my dad fought in World War II. He went over in 1939. He stayed until 1945, and then he stayed an extra year; they had shows and stuff in Europe. I'm proud that my dad fought for my country so that I can run in this place and stand up and stick up for workers. My dad lost a lot of friends.

I think we should do everything we can for our military, including not making cuts to them.

We have military, today, in every one of your ridings, living in poverty. You guys all know it. We're building small houses in Kingston to take care of our military. We've let them down. I go to the Legions, and they're crying because they've got no food and the Legion has to help them. They have fish fries on Friday night, and the older military guys come to get fish and chips.

I'm very proud of the military and very proud of my dad.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** We don't have time for another question.

Further debate?

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's always hard to speak after the member from Niagara, who speaks so passionately about the things that he does. I have, however, noticed over the last three times I've heard him debate Bill 88 that he mentions hairdressers. I know he just recently got his hair cut, so obviously there's not a total shortage of them here.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you. That's why I threw that out there.

We're debating the Working for Workers Act. It sounds really nice. It sounds like "I'm going to cut gas prices," but it doesn't happen; or "I'm going to cut hydro prices," but it doesn't happen; or "It's election time, so I am going to promise you a 20% income tax cut," but it never shows up; or "I'll give you buck-a-beer," but right now you might spend more money trying to find it than you would save. Those, of course, are all those things that the Premier said—like working for workers.

Here's the reality: The Working for Workers Act doesn't work for workers. It's like soup. You threw in a whole bunch of things that aren't good with some things that are good but could be way better, because you were in a hurry, because all you wanted to say was that it's working for workers. It's easy to say it's working for workers, except that it doesn't work for workers.

**Interjection:** Too salty?

**Mr. John Fraser:** Well, we can't get too salty in here, though.

Here's what the bill does. Apart from actually trying to remove the college of traditional Chinese medicine, just because somebody whispered in the Premier's ear, what does it do? It creates a second class of workers here in Ontario—workers who don't get vacation pay, statutory holidays. They only get paid minimum wage for engaged time. I come from the grocery business. That would be like me saying to the cashier who worked with me, "I'm only going to pay you when there's somebody standing at your cash and you're checking them through."

UFCW and Uber got together and negotiated something and said, "Let's put that at 120% to be fair, so they're not actually losing time." The government didn't even acknowledge that—second-class worker.

As the member from Niagara Falls so eloquently said, there's no workplace safety coverage—no health and safety. Honest to God, that's unbelievable. You just gave \$2.1 billion back, and you can't figure out how to protect gig workers. Use some of that money so that people are protected. Why wouldn't do you that? There was \$2.1 billion left in the kitty. Why wouldn't you take even a little bit of that and start something? It's because you're not interested.

Here's the Premier's message to gig workers: "We're working for you. But if you get injured at work, you're out of luck; you're on your own." That's the message.

I heard members across say it's a good step. We're not about taking little baby steps here. You're making gig workers, in legislation, second-class workers—second-class workers. You know what? They're young people. They're our sons and daughters. They're our constituents' sons and daughters, and they have precarious work. I know everybody says, "Well, it's contract work and it's a gig economy. It's nothing new. And we're fixing it." You're not fixing it. You're ingraining their rights as less than other Ontario workers' rights under the ESA, the Employment Standards Act. It's clear. You haven't done the work in the bill. You need to do that.

The other piece in the bill that I'm trying to wrap my head around—and I hope when it gets to committee and we hear in debate—is the exclusion of certain IT and business consultants. I'm trying to understand whether that exclusion, which is based on—some of it has to do if you're a shareholder of the company, but another piece is that if there is \$60 an hour or more, they are excluded from this piece of legislation. Is that the contract rate or the actual pay? It looks to me like it's the contract rate. I don't know if there's anybody here, if the PA is here, if they can explain to me whether that exclusion is based on the

contract rate that's getting paid to the company that's contracting with whatever company it is. I would like to have that clarified. It's not my biggest problem with the bill, but it's a problem.

I don't want to totally say everything in this bill is bad because not everything is bad. There are some good things that are unfinished, half-done and half-baked; in particular, the amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. There was an opportunity to do some of the things the member from Niagara Falls mentioned.

But also in terms of—we know we have a problem with opioids. We know we have it, especially in the construction industry. I'm not sure that the government actually fully consulted on that. The bill is pretty broad. I can see what they're trying to do. It will, again, come down to regulations.

Here's the challenge: We passed a bill in this House, Bill 141, the registry of defibrillators act, which said we were going to have a registry of defibrillators, so we knew where they were in the case of an emergency and also, if you had one, you had to maintain it. It was the member from Eglinton–Lawrence's bill, but the member from Nickel Belt and myself, we all had the same bill, or essentially the same. We worked on it together in committee. We got it forward, just like this piece around naloxone—something really good and something we can all agree on. You know what? That's three years ago. Any regulations? Nothing has shown up.

So I get concerned that what actually is in here is not because you want to do it as much as you want to say it. And that's not a good reason to put legislation forward. That's why this bill should be taken back, and actually make gig workers in this province workers like every other worker in this province. It's half-baked and it's bad for workers.

We actually have to figure out the barriers to people's access to trades and professions. Is this going to work? No, you haven't worked on it enough. You wanted to stick it in the bill so you said something—and you got it and you did fast—because you've got this thing in front of you: June 2, this election date. You want to be able to say, "We're working for workers." You can put that on your brochures. You can put that on your press releases, but it's not working for workers.

It's kind of like 1984; I know I'm dating myself. I won't say the word because I might get—would I have to take "doublespeak" back, Speaker? I withdraw. Sorry, I wasn't sure. I wanted a clarification on that.

Here's the other thing, while I'm up here: I just heard the government say that we're going to raise PSW wages, after four or five—how many extensions? Four, five or six extensions? There's nothing like your employer saying, "You're important, but I'm only going to take it this far." The government is touting this as a solution for workers, right? "It's a solution; we're going to make it permanent." I heard a leak last week that the government was going to make it permanent. It's about time.

But it's actually not a solution for those workers. It's not a solution for health care human resources, because

home care workers in this province don't see that. They're paid \$17 an hour. Right? The government is actually going to come forward and they're going to say this great thing. It's, "We've raised PSW wages," but they haven't solved the problem in home care. They're going to make it worse, infinitely worse, because they're going to say, "We have a solution," and then they're going to park it, because they can say, "We have a solution. We raised their wages."

**1540**

The government said, "We raised the minimum wage. Aren't we great?" You're able to say that; you did raise the minimum wage to what it would have been two years ago if you hadn't cut it in the first place. So my recommendation to the government is, if you want to put forward a bill that works for workers, don't just do it because you want to say it. Do it because you actually want to do it in the bill. Because that's all that's happening here.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Questions?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Very good. Thank you to the member opposite for that presentation. He will know from reading the bill that there's a significant aspect to this bill that's supporting the skilled trades, and we all know from previous presentations on both sides of the Legislative Assembly, there's an acknowledgement of the shortage of skilled trades. This particular bill takes steps, takes concrete steps that are long overdue. He might not like to hear that, but it's true: long overdue, while he stands in this place on this particular bill that supports the skilled trades here in Ontario.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'll tell you, with this bill, we're going to bronze your baby shoes, because I'm not sure that you've learned how to walk yet. While you say they're steps, they're little, tiny baby steps. They don't actually address what needs to be done, but that's what happens when you're in a hurry and you want to say, "We're working for workers; we're decreasing the barriers to skilled trades." Is that going to do that safely? That's something we've got to debate. Are we actually going to solve the problem with naloxone and opioids? Is that going to happen? Are those measures enough?

You're in too much of a hurry. For God's sake, you threw traditional Chinese medicine into the bill. Come on, how is that working for workers? What? I don't understand. It's just like—it's more PC soup—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** The member for Brampton Centre.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Thank you to the member for his presentation on this bill. I think he highlighted a number of concerns that we all have in this House. I wanted to focus on the mental health and addictions aspect of the conversation. I know that for many workers, even prior to this government's election, the process of deeming has been very harmful to workers, their mental health, and especially injured workers who may be now suffering with an addiction as a result of their injury because they weren't able to get the appropriate mental health services that they needed.

Can the member share a little bit of a perspective in terms of why the Liberal government, when they were in

power, did not stop and end the practice of deeming? I know this continues to be a problem. What would this member like to see this Conservative government do?

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'd like to thank the member for the question. The member is right. Deeming is not a practice that supports workers, and that's something that something should have been done about, and could have been done about, and it wasn't. Here's the thing: We have \$2.1 billion that we're totally giving back to employers. Why wouldn't you actually take some of that and protect workers and take a look at deeming? Why wouldn't you actually take some of that money and protect gig workers? Why wouldn't you do that? I don't understand. That would make this bill more meaningful. If you did that, you would have protected gig workers more, from a health and safety perspective.

I'm not saying you had to give it all to workers. I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that the thing is, you should have taken a look at that money and your first thought should have been, "How do I protect gig workers? How do I end a practice where people aren't actually able to survive and thrive on WSIB because of the practices that are there?"

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Next question? The member from Mississauga–Malton.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you, Speaker. First, I want to say you look amazing. As a York ambassador, it's good to see you as the Speaker.

By the way, my question is to the member opposite. Talking about severe injuries or deaths, that should never be a cost of doing business. I do remember talking to you during the committee meeting last time, and you were saying that some businesses treat fines as an expense line and continue to put their workers at risk.

The opposition has repeatedly called on the government to do more to deter bad actors from taking advantage of these workers. Now, the government is introducing higher fines for businesses, to accomplish exactly what the member opposite talked about. My question is very simple: Do you support this bill?

**Mr. John Fraser:** You've made a soup, but it has got some really rotten potatoes in it. That's what makes this bill hard to support.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Further debate? I recognize the member from Oakville.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair here today this afternoon, and it's an honour to rise in the Legislature to represent the residents of Oakville during this debate of Bill 88, Working for Workers Act.

Before I start talking about the particulars of this legislation, I certainly want to congratulate the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development for his work, and of course also the parliamentary assistant, the member from Mississauga–Malton, for your work in developing this act, which truly is leading legislation in Canada. From announcing millions of dollars for the skilled trades to tabling pro-worker legislation, they have made important accomplishments in reducing the skilled trades shortage and protecting workers.

The minister's dedication to workers is providing young Ontarians throughout the province, in my home riding of Oakville and beyond, with opportunities to enter well-paying skilled trades jobs. Our government has been getting down to work to ensure that talent remains and thrives within our province.

Speaker, as our province witnessed under the previous Liberal government, there were hundreds of thousands of jobs leaving this province. We know the condition of the province under the previous government: Businesses were leaving in droves, investments were diverted to other jurisdictions and the province's economic growth was lagging other provinces. This was unacceptable to Ontarians, who needed jobs to support themselves and their families.

However, Speaker, the good news is that jobs are returning back to this province, because of investments and policies introduced by our government. For instance, the manufacturing sector is growing. This is in part because of provincial funding to build a domestic supply chain for electric vehicles and SMR technology. Regional development funds have also assisted businesses in expanding operations which create new jobs.

Oakville is a key municipality in the domestic supply chain. Our government provided \$295 million to retool the Ford assembly complex for electrical vehicle production—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:**—and I know we have some members here who worked at that great company. But these are the kinds of actions that are going to bring Ontario back to be the engine of economic growth that it used to be.

Speaker, Ontarians want jobs, and our government is delivering by creating the right economic conditions. It is essential to note that we are fortifying worker protections with this job growth. They come hand in hand. Last year, the Working for Workers Act, 2021, was carried in this Legislature. That bill reduced barriers for new Canadians who are starting a career, respected workers' personal time and protected workers who use employment agencies. I was proud to speak in favour of that legislation, just as I am now proud to speak on the second "working for workers" bill. Improving labour conditions creates a workforce that benefits employers and the general economy. I'll be focusing my time in debate on several of the main components of this bill, and I believe every member of the Legislature can support this proposed legislation.

Speaker, there's no doubt that digital platforms have created new job opportunities. Every day in Toronto, we see individuals using Uber or Lyft to have food delivered or get a ride. More people are earning their living—either their income or a side income—by becoming digital platform workers. However, being part of the gig economy can create uncertainty in wages, and therefore their overall income.

Our government recognizes the gig economy's unpredictability. Many lack the benefits and basic rights that

workers outside of these occupations have, and this is changing under our government's actions.

**1550**

In early February, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development announced that a plan is being sought to provide gig workers with benefits such as health, dental and vision care that would transfer even if they switched jobs. It would make our province the first in Canada to have this type of comprehensive plan. An advisory panel will determine a practical approach.

The legislation before us is another step that advances labour protections by establishing basic rights for digital platform workers. Workers deserve to have transparency about their working conditions. This could be in the form of calculating pay or having information about a termination. Currently, gig workers do not have the same access to information that workers in other occupations do have. This legislation will extend those rights as well.

If passed, this legislation will extend rights and protections, including:

- the general minimum wage;
- the entirety of the tips they earn, with certain exceptions;
- the right to certain information; for instance, how pay is calculated;
- the right to resolve their work-related disputes in Ontario; and
- protection from reprisal should they seek to assert these basic worker rights.

Workers in these jobs are highly controlled by algorithms that can determine the nature of work and pay rates. Information-sharing with these workers is vital, because it concerns their livelihoods.

Addressing the minimum wage aspect: Everyone who works deserves no less than the general minimum wage. This is a fundamental change that is being proposed. Gig workers have diverse personal backgrounds. Some are students paying their tuition, or fathers or mothers providing for their families, or new Ontarians starting their lives here. We need to level the playing field by extending the minimum wage, as well as ensuring tips are kept. Workers who go above and beyond and earn a tip will receive their tip. Workers will be able to access pay calculation information to ensure the minimum wage is being applied.

But it's more than the minimum wage. There has to be fairness in termination. Reasons need to be provided to drivers or couriers if they're removed from the app, because their income depends on it. Looking at the legislation—written justification needs to be provided to the worker explaining why their access to the app was removed. In addition, if access is removed for a period of 24 hours or longer, the operator has to give the worker two weeks' written notice of the removal.

Workers can also rest assured that the operator cannot intimidate or penalize a worker because they file a complaint or request that this legislation is followed.

Moreover, this legislation requires that any dispute that may arise is settled right here in the province of Ontario.

Currently, dispute resolution outside the province is a barrier for workers. These rights happen elsewhere and can surely be applied in the platform space, whether the worker is a direct employee or a contractor.

Speaker, this is not punishment by any means. Work is work, and there are rights that all workers should hold. Companies operating in this sector are supportive of the changes being implemented.

If passed, the changes will make Ontario the first jurisdiction to provide these protections to workers within the gig economy. The members on this side of the House are putting workers first, and I know that the members on the opposite side can support these efforts as well.

Speaker, governments across every jurisdiction are concentrated on keeping up with technology and the pace of change to ensure users' privacy. This is particularly true with technology in the workplace. Workers have access to company devices and networks, and it's now common to be using devices and networks in homes.

A focus of this proposed legislation is to provide privacy and transparency to employees. Specifically, if passed, employers with 25 or more workers would be required to establish policies on electronically monitoring their workers. The policy would need to contain information on whether or not the employer electronically monitors its workers and, if so, a description of how and when the employer does this. In addition, the employer would need to disclose the purpose of collecting information through electronic monitoring. Again, Ontario is taking the lead by being the first province in this country to implement this requirement.

While electronic monitoring reveals how employees spend their time, workers deserve to know how and when they are being monitored. There are plenty of opportunities to monitor employees. Employers would need to be open on how employees' use of computers, cellphones, GPS systems and other electronic devices are being tracked.

This regulation would promote information-sharing between employers and employees. It does not prevent monitoring from occurring. Employees should have the right to know when and how their workday is being tracked. The regulation will apply to companies with 25 or more employees because we do not want small business owners with very few employees to worry about creating more policies.

Governments need to adapt existing legislation or create new ones in the face of greater use of technology. We know employers are acting responsibly, but with greater flextime between the office and home, employees need to know that privacy still exists.

Speaker, at the beginning of my speech I mentioned that the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development is expanding opportunities in the skilled trades. Since 2018, billions of dollars have been invested into skills development and training opportunities. Consequently, thousands of Ontarians are benefiting and receiving good paycheques. I want to take a moment to highlight some of the major accomplishments that this government has done when it comes to the skilled trades.

We are investing \$1.5 billion into the skilled trades strategy, which includes \$77 million annually to encourage employers to hire apprentices. We've invested \$200 million in the Skills Development Fund, and we're contributing \$13 million to provide free training and paid electricians' apprenticeships for more than 2,500 people. And, of course, we have launched Skilled Trades Ontario to improve training and simplify services. These investments are important and will contribute to shaping Ontario's future labour market.

There are 1.2 million people employed in the skilled trades in Ontario. Ontario needs another 100,000 additional workers in the construction sector alone, including skilled tradespeople, due to retirements and job growth over the next decade. In 2016, nearly one in three journey-persons in Ontario were aged 55 years or older. These statistics highlight the need for urgent action because of the current skilled trades gap that is only growing.

This legislation introduces another avenue to reduce that gap. If passed, this bill ensures those working in 30 in-demand professions and skilled trades can get their credentials processed and continue working within 30 days. Furthermore, steps are being taken to recognize the last three fuel-related trades in the Red Seal Program that are not recognized in the province.

There are 55 Red Seal trades. The Red Seal Program sets common standards to assess the skills of tradespeople across Canada. Recognizing the credentials to every trade will make it easier to fill job vacancies.

Speaker, there are 14 regulatory bodies that oversee the skilled trades professions. This bill requires that these oversight bodies process applications from out-of-province workers within 30 days. Long application reviews and approvals are barriers. If someone wants to move out of our province and start working, every single day counts. Shortening the wait time gets people earning an income sooner. This will dramatically help our economy. It also encourages professionals such as engineers, auto mechanics and plumbers to start a career in our great province.

Businesses will have an easier time finding qualified people who have already received a licence outside of Ontario. Further, it gets roads, bridges and infrastructure built more quickly to improve our economy. Infrastructure projects will always be important, especially with our rising population. Skilled workers are needed to keep pace with the demand to establish new infrastructure. Not having projects completed on time costs the province money. These changes will create a competitive advantage for Ontario. A strong labour force keeps investments in our province.

Speaker, I also want to discuss one more aspect of this bill: strengthening health and safety regulations. We hear in the news the unfortunate accidents that occur on job sites. But severe injuries or death should never be a cost of doing business. Further protection is needed to keep work environments safe. If this legislation is passed, it will strengthen penalties for workplace injuries and death. It will signal to employers that they need to comply with health and safety regulations.

## 1600

The strengthened penalties under the OHSA for violations, including those that result in severe worker injury or death, include \$1.5 million or imprisonment for a term of not more than 12 months, or both for a director or officer of a corporation; and an increase in the maximum fine for all other individuals to \$500,000 from \$100,000.

The legislation will also impose a list of circumstances that shall be considered aggravating factors by the courts for the purpose of determining a penalty under the OHSA. A small selection of these proposed factors include: the offence resulted in the death, serious injury or illness of one or more workers; the defendant committed the offence recklessly; the defendant disregarded an order of an inspector; or the defendant was previously convicted of an offence under this or another act. Employees need to know that when they go to work, every single precaution is being taken to ensure their safety. Disregarding orders or cutting corners can cost lives.

We know there are safe employers. We've passed legislation that provided \$1.5 billion from the WSIB reserve to \$300,000 safe employers. This proposed legislation will encourage all employers to follow health and safety practices.

This legislation also mandates naloxone kits in high-risk workplaces. These kits will be needed in workplaces where there is a risk of a worker opioid overdose. These are life-saving kits. If administered quickly, they can save lives. There is an opioid crisis in this province, and these kits will maintain a healthy workplace. Employees will receive training on how to use these kits. It's worth mentioning that employees are not limited or prohibited from providing these kits to clients, customers and other individuals.

There are high-risk settings that these kits will be used in. For instance, there is known opioid usage in bars, nightclubs and construction sites. Mandating these kits is a safeguard for workplaces. The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development is assessing options for grants to employers to support disruption and training.

Changing regulations in the Occupational Health and Safety Act enhances worker safety. These two major changes will provide greater security to employees on the job. Everyone from company directors to employees has a role to play in keeping the workplace safe.

Speaker, as I wrap up my time in this debate, I want to mention that there is significant progress that will be accomplished by passing this legislation. Labour market conditions will improve, and it will strengthen our economy. We know that safe workers are good workers.

If passed, this legislation reduces uncertainty for workers in the gig economy and increases income. Workers should benefit from the rights that others already have. Previously, our government eliminated the lower minimum wage for liquor servers and increased it to \$15. Additionally, this proposed legislation attracts capable workers from other provinces. This will help increase economic productivity and output. New families can get established and know that a faster timeline is in place to get their credentials approved from other provinces.

With the changes in technology, the government is ensuring employees have a right to their privacy and greater access to information.

Furthermore, this proposed legislation creates a safer work environment. Penalties are being substantially hiked for violations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and I'm sure that the opposition members would be supportive of that. Workers who finish a day at work need to return home safely.

Under our government, we are improving conditions to ensure Ontario continues to lead Canada's economic growth. Ontario used to be the economic engine of Canada for many, many years until, unfortunately, our position dropped dramatically under the previous government and jobs and workers left this province. The good news is times are changing. People are coming back to this province. There are now more manufacturing jobs in Ontario than there were before COVID. We've lived through a pandemic, and there are actually more manufacturing jobs in this province than there were before COVID. That tells you we are attracting workers, and we need to ensure those workers are working in a safe environment. It's collaboration between government, business and labour that will create a safe workplace.

As we recover from this pandemic, of course, our focus continues to be on creating opportunities for the investment that will create this job growth. Our government, through this legislation, is protecting workers, which is in everyone's best interest. Nobody is being left behind.

I know the members opposite can join us in supporting this legislation as we make Ontario the best province to live, work and raise a family. As the member from Oakville, a proud member here in this Legislature, I'm proud to support this legislation. I hope that the members opposite will join us and support this legislation as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Questions?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I want to let the member know one of the major sticking points that I have with this legislation is it's going to be left up to employers to establish a policy, and that policy is going to determine how I get paid and when I get paid. Whether I'm waiting for a fare or waiting for food to be picked up, while I'm waiting there I'm not considered an employee, so my wages are going to be dramatically cut.

Why wouldn't you use this as an opportunity to truly bring—as the title of Bill 88 says, Working for Workers Act—those employees fully whole and have them completely encompassed within the Employment Standards Act, and not have an established policy where the employer will be able to deny certain individuals their wages, which they're rightfully entitled to? Why wouldn't you look at this as an opportunity to really bring these individuals into and to be covered by the Employment Standards Act? Why wouldn't you use, the member from—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Thank you.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member opposite. This legislation, as I mentioned in my speech, is

the first of its kind in Canada. This is the first province to actually bring legislation to support rights for digital platform workers.

This is certainly a stepping stone. We believe that here in Ontario, as a leader, we're making positive changes. Whether it's the minimum wage, the right to certain information, the right to resolve work-related disputes, these are steps that are going to help digital workers. I think it's going to create a more positive environment for these workers to flourish in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** The member from Toronto–Danforth.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I appreciate the opportunity to pose a question to the member. I've been listening to the comments from the member and from others on the government side today, and I do find it quite odd, frankly, to have a Conservative government crowing about its pro-worker credentials—certainly not part of the history that I've witnessed.

One of the questions I do have, and it was touched on earlier: If you like workers so much, why didn't you take this opportunity to get rid of deeming under the WSIB regulations? I've talked to working people who have been injured who were given courses that—I think calling them “Mickey Mouse” would be generous—telling them that they had to assume that they could get jobs with these Mickey Mouse credentials and then deducting from their payments the amount that the WSIB guessed people might be getting paid. It's an outrageous, demoralizing, soul-crushing thing.

I don't know why you didn't take the opportunity to put it in this legislation. Can you speak to that?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** To the member opposite, I would certainly beg to differ in terms of your overall outlook in terms of our government and how we view workers. I recall back to the only time the NDP was in power, and I don't think it was a particularly collaborative relationship with workers and unions. Today, in 2022, the world has changed. We actually have I don't know how many unions—I have union members in my own riding who are coming out to support me, and they are so supportive of our government for all the pro-worker legislation the minister and the PA have brought in to support workers in this province. Perhaps later I can talk about all the great things we've done to support workers in this province—but I think it has been decades of neglect by previous governments that haven't put forward this type of legislation.

1610

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** The member from Richmond Hill.

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Thank you to our member for showing us all the different points on why we should support this bill. Thank you for reminding us that Ontario is growing. We will have a lot more jobs. Business and everything is growing. But we are also in a historic labour shortage, and unfilled jobs are costing Ontario billions in lost productivity.

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

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member for that great question. You're right.

We've been a government that has been committed to the skilled trades since we were elected four years ago. Certainly, one component is the mobility of people from different provinces and now having to wait a shorter time to be able to be licensed in the province that they're choosing as home. So many people are actually moving back to Ontario. Why? Because we're creating the environment for people to flourish here. We're creating the right economic environment. Whether it's plumbers, mechanics, tradespeople, they're coming back to Ontario. We're shortening down that time frame to 30 days, to get them into those jobs. We want them to be able to work. We want them to be able to have the money to pay for their families, support their families. The faster we can do that, the better. That's just one example—and we all know there are many others—of how we've been able to speed up things for skilled trades workers here in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Further questions?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** It's like a different world when they're talking about gig workers and that they're pro-worker and that this bill is working for workers.

We know that Uber drivers and gig workers are always enticed by flexible hours and "You're your own boss." But really, we know that they're actually an employee of that company who should be getting better pay, not just engagement pay.

I just wondered, after the case that went through the Ontario labour board, why this government still did not heed that advice and actually protect gig workers—as they should be.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Again, I want to reiterate that Ontario is the first province in this country that is putting in any legislation with respect to gig workers. I haven't seen another province, including NDP British Columbia, with this type of legislation. So I think we're sitting in a good position to help workers. We want to create a healthy environment, and we want to collaborate, between business and unions and workers, to create the right environment for everyone to be able to work and raise a family, and also for businesses to be able to have a profit. "Profit" is not a bad word. Let's work together to ensure we all do well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** The member from Burlington.

**Hon. Jane McKenna:** I appreciate the member, all that you've said in this, because I was the PA to labour and skilled trades—and there's lots of work done. Obviously, we've got our PA here now.

I just want to enhance a bit, just talking about—because I recognize that as this government, we're all ministries working together and out of our silos. That's why we've

been so successful with everything that's in this bill—so I'm not going to ask you to pick one thing. I just want to talk about how we've made it easier for engineers, auto mechanics, plumbers and other regulated professionals to move into Ontario to fill in-demand jobs, because, obviously, we need them. Can you articulate a bit more on that and what we've done so great in this bill that's giving workers the ability to come and work here?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member. Again, you raise a good point about the skilled trades and the demand for skilled trades in this province. Like I mentioned in my speech, we have the demand for 100,000 people over the next decade just in the construction industry alone. Forget about the other trades. There are tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. We need to create the right environment for them. What do we need? We need a safe workplace. We want good wages. We want mobility rights. We want people to be able to move from Quebec or British Columbia or Alberta and be able to go working right away, not have to wait a long period of time. We want them to be able to get to work within 30 days. That's certainly going to help skilled trades workers.

The other thing I didn't get the opportunity to talk about was what we're doing for the military reservists. I know some people have touched on that, but this government supports those men and women who serve our country in uniform, and we want to allow them the opportunity to serve yet continue to be able to work, and work with employers to protect those people's jobs when they have to go off and serve our country.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Further debate? I recognize the member from Brampton South.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Centre.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Centre. Brampton Centre.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Thank you, Speaker. It's always an honour to rise here in the House and contribute to the debate on behalf of workers and the people across Brampton Centre. Today we're discussing the Working for Workers Act. As many of my colleagues on this side of the House have already shared, it's really hard for, frankly, anyone to believe that this bill will actually help workers and those that have been most impacted throughout this pandemic.

In preparation for debate today, I was reading through many articles that all warned that, actually, this bill would do very little, if anything, to help workers in Ontario. I think it's really disappointing for a lot of people who were hopeful that maybe this government was finally going to do the right thing for workers that, unfortunately, when again they had the opportunity to bring forward legislation to truly help workers in Ontario, they've chosen not to.

I'm going to spend my time sharing a lot of concerns from people across Ontario with respect to this bill. I understand that the bill seeks to address changes in our labour market and forms of employment across Ontario. Actually, this has been an ongoing issue. I remember my early days as a researcher, studying the Employment Standards Act and looking at precarious employment in



temporary help agencies and how they were exploiting workers back in 2012. But unfortunately, even since then, not much has been done to remedy problems that temporary help agency workers experience. They still continue to be classified as independent contractors, many not even considered employees, which means that for many of them, they actually don't receive any benefits or protections under the Employment Standards Act.

I understand that this bill seeks to provide workers some protections through the ESA, but unfortunately, as we have heard from many of those gig workers, contract workers and folks that would be impacted by the changes in schedule 2, very little is actually being done to remedy the problem. In fact, this bill is going to make matters even worse for them.

The misclassification of workers has resulted in many of them not being able to receive decent wages, health benefits or other protections under the Employment Standards Act. I know that this bill focuses particularly on, for example, gig workers who are Uber drivers, perhaps food delivery couriers. But, Speaker, again, when there was an opportunity for this government to really, truly protect those workers, who have been advocating for years now for those protections, this bill really does fall short.

I want to share some words from the Gig Workers United, who have flagged some serious concerns:

"For far too long, gig workers have had to take it into our own hands to challenge our employer and win the basic rights that we've been denied. In a recent decision by the Ontario Ministry of Labour's employment standards officer, our employer Uber Canada has been ordered to cease contravening Ontario's Employment Standards Act (ESA).

"The order was made after a detailed three-month investigation, responding to an ESA claim by Gig Workers United CUPW."

I think, as workers are highlighting, they're "unwilling to accept carve-outs—pay for 'engaged time' only, for instance, or second-tier status, representation, and rights. We've gone through the channels available to contest our misclassification and this victory supports what workers know: Misclassification is the root of injustices we face every day. The solution has been there the whole time: enforcement of the existing employment standards with full and equal rights for gig workers."

**1620**

This is what they're asking for, Speaker, but this bill doesn't actually do that, unlike our colleague from London West's bill, Bill 28, which actually does address the misclassification issue.

I'll quote again from Gig Workers United. They went through the proper, established channels available to workers to do this work. But in light of that, the government did not actually put in place the recommendations that were made and ensure that they weren't being misclassified.

Speaker, it's concerning that when the government has the opportunity to help protect these workers, to ensure that they aren't misclassified, that they receive the benefits

that they duly should, this bill falls short of that. I think there are some questions for people across the province when it comes to how this government can effectively protect workers, why they would not go far enough to ensure that those protections are in place.

What I also hear from a lot of workers across the province, especially those in the gig-working economy and sector, but also folks like hard-working taxi drivers, is that they're really concerned that this government isn't taking into consideration their needs as workers as well. So I would encourage the government to take a more holistic approach and think about the workers in this province and all of the different sectors that we should be protecting and supporting, and do better, frankly.

I know that we have heard—I know every office in this Legislature has heard, certainly—from the traditional Chinese medicine practitioners. I think they are certainly grateful that the government has heeded their warnings and removed schedule 5. But it took a massive mobilization of those workers, of these acupuncturists—who are regulated health professionals, frankly—being, again, just thrown into an omnibus bill by this government, to actually have them remove schedule 5. I think what really concerns a lot of people is that the changes that are being made and some of the proposed legislation we've seen come forward from this government is often done with very little consultation with the community. Actually, no one asked for these changes to schedule 5 and for schedule 5 to be included in this bill, so it's not clear who the government was listening to or who had the ear of the Premier to make these changes and deregulate health professionals who want their sector to be regulated.

I'll share with you, Speaker, that I've been having some physical pain and I've been seeing an acupuncturist for the last few months. She was mortified with the changes in schedule 5 and the introduction of schedule 5 in this bill. For many of them, they wondered why the government would be appealing to a very small group, a minority of individuals, who wanted to see their profession deregulated without consulting the broader industry. This is why: People like Sarah Wong, who's an acupuncturist, and Kelly Goorts, who's also an acupuncturist, along with all of the other registered traditional Chinese medicine practitioners and acupuncturists of Ontario, have had to speak up and launch petitions in order to get this government to do the right thing—which they could have done from the beginning, which is to not even include schedule 5 in this bill. Like many of them have indicated, at a time when regulated health professionals in certain sectors want to ensure the safety and well-being of their patients and clients, this government is moving in the opposite direction, as if they've learned nothing from what deregulating certain industries or sectors may do in our communities.

Acupuncturists want to maintain the highest standards possible. Deregulating their profession would remove some of those standards, and also the standardization across the sector in terms of the practice, as well.

When speaking with many of the acupuncturists that I connected with, many cited that other provinces—like BC,

for example—actually do have language proficiency tests or tests available in other languages for practitioners, something that maybe this government could have considered before they inserted schedule 5 in this bill, had they actually listened to or consulted with the folks that would be impacted. But yet again, the government chose not to have those conversations before they introduced a bill. They chose to listen to, who knows—some friends and insiders on the other side that might have been asking for this change. It's unfortunate that this is what you would sneak into an omnibus bill that's supposed to be helping workers and protecting people in our province.

So I think that it's welcome news that schedule 5 has been removed, but again, it shouldn't have to take large-scale mobilization of people who—as many of them shared—would have never had to do what they had to do in order to get the government's attention. They just want to do their jobs, not have to continue to pressure the government to do the right thing. I think that what I'm trying to really articulate here is that it's unfortunate that the government doesn't do those consultations and doesn't have these conversations with people in our communities, as we've seen time and time again.

Another bill that is certainly impacting workers across this province is Bill 124. Speaker, I think that if we really want to be working for workers and protecting people, this government would have repealed Bill 124 and done so swiftly, so that public sector workers don't continue to have their wages capped. Hard-working nurses who deserve a raise, who deserve to be rewarded for all of the work that they have done throughout this pandemic, for being on the front lines, for putting their lives at risk: Unfortunately, with Bill 124, they aren't going to see a pay increase. In fact, they're going to see their wages capped, and this is really concerning to many of those nurses—I see one of my colleagues from across the way, a government member, shaking his head as if that's some far-fetched reality, but I'm sharing that as this is what workers are sharing with us. At a time where inflation rates are soaring, capping their salaries is going to have a negative impact on those workers, and I urge this government to do the right thing and repeal Bill 124. Help those workers, take care of them and pay them the wages that they deserve. You have the power to do that, and I encourage you to do the right thing for people in Ontario.

I realize my time is flying by so quickly, and I have so much more I need to share. We spoke of the schedule that was removed, and now I'd like to speak a little bit about schedule 4 and some of the changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I think that for a lot of workers, as we've discussed—it is, I think, great that there will be naloxone kits provided in certain sectors, something that members on this side of the House have been advocating for. We need to have a harm-reduction approach applied here. There needs to be a strategy to make sure that someone suffering with mental health or addictions has access to the resources that they need and, in high-risk industries, that the supports are provided.

But what I didn't hear from this government was actually understanding some of the root causes contributing to

the use of opioids in our province. We have a pandemic on its own when it comes to opioid use across Ontario: northern and rural communities not having access to the supports and services they need, and ERs being flooded by opioid-related overdoses.

Speaker, this bill, while helping to ensure that people have access to naloxone kits when an overdose happens, doesn't actually protect workers in the first place, and that's, I think, a major concern. Many people are using opioids because of workplace injuries and injuries that occur in their work that are often left untreated, because they do not have access to the benefits that they need to take time off work or benefits to help heal properly. We're talking about acupuncturists, physiotherapy, massage, for example. All of these other benefits that could be given to workers to ensure they could take care of their health and well-being are not in place for many workers. And so, for many of them, unfortunately, they are turning to opioids in order to address the pain that they are in. There are not enough mental health supports for those workers, and as we have heard time and time again for injured workers, having WSIB claims denied or having them be deemed eligible to work is having a detrimental impact to their mental health and well-being.

**1630**

I want to urge the government to think really critically about the work that needs to happen to ensure that we are addressing the opioid crisis here in Ontario but also making sure that workers, regardless of where they work and what sector or industry they're in, have the supports they need to stay home if they are sick; if they are injured, that they can get the benefits that they need and that they deserve; and that they can get access to the appropriate supports. That's simply not a reality for workers in Ontario.

I think it's also interesting that there is such a limited scope in terms of which sites will be included, these high-risk workplaces. Limiting construction sites, bars and nightclubs as the only places where these kits would be available for workers I think really shows us that perhaps the government does have a very limited view on who is being impacted currently by the opioid crisis and the fact that anyone can be. It's not just workers who are in construction sites or folks who work in our bars and nightclubs or hospitality industry that can experience this. So I think we need to think a little bit bigger and we need to make sure that folks are supported across all industries and sectors.

I'll quote from the United Steelworkers, who understand that opioid addiction is a serious public health issue and not just a workplace issue. As they say, while there is a need to address the issue in the workplace, they would also argue that more needs to be done with what is truly a public health crisis. And so, I would ask the government: What more is being done to help address the opioid crisis in our communities?

I know that colleagues like the members from Parkdale–High Park, Sudbury, St. Catharines as well as Hamilton Mountain have all brought forward legislation. I

think the government should support that legislation and really ensure that the supports are provided to workers, again, not just in certain sectors, but address this from a public health perspective and use a harm reduction perspective in the policies that you are creating. It's not clear that that's currently the framework that is being applied here.

Speaker, I think for a lot of workers, the changes that they see here simply don't actually address the concerns. As I started off, and I'll wrap up with just sharing some words from some of these workers that have been impacted by, for example, a workplace injury. I want to thank my colleague from London West for sharing the story of one of her constituents, Mr. Hurl, who was involved in a catastrophic building collapse and suffered severe post-traumatic stress as well as injuries to his body, and never received the supports that he needed through WSIB.

His family writes in to the member from London West and says that no family should get that call: that their husband, wife, son or daughter has been killed on the job. No family should have to live their lives frozen in time because their husband, wife, son or daughter has been gravely injured and will require years of treatment or therapy.

This is just one story. There's nothing in this bill that's actually going to make things better for a family like the Hurls; nothing in this bill to end the practice of deeming, which is something that this family has been navigating. Despite his injuries, he's being deemed eligible to work.

I want to encourage the government in my last minute here to really think about the place we are right now, the economic crisis that we've encountered, the need to build our economy back, the important role that workers play in our economy and the fact that they are the backbone of our economy here in Ontario. But many of them have felt as though the government, especially this Conservative government, has taken away what could have been wages over the last three years with the frozen minimum wage protections that could have been put in place to ensure that they had health benefits like dental care, vision care, other benefits that would be beneficial to workers. These are policies that would actually help us take care of workers, protect workers and help them to help us rebuild our economy.

I want to encourage the government to do better for workers in Ontario. You have a real opportunity to do that. I encourage you to think of these vulnerable workers, to implement the changes they need to feel protected, to be protected and to be successful.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I think we all know that opioids are a serious problem. Many stakeholder groups advocating for more workplace safety have praised the government. I have one example, Speaker. It's from Phil Gillies, the executive director of the Ontario Construction Consortium. I'll be quick: "We are all focused on saving and improving the lives of construction workers, and we look forward to working with the Ontario government in this critically important endeavour."

Can the member for Brampton Centre explain how she could vote against this aspect of this legislation?

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Thank you to the member for the question. I think we can all understand the importance of supporting workers, especially those in our skilled trades, like construction workers. But as I said through my remarks and as many other members on this side of the House have shared, it's difficult to support a bill that actually doesn't do what it's intended to do. This bill is not going to protect workers the way that they need to be protected. So unfortunately, we won't be able to support, as I think our Liberal colleague said, soup with some rotten potatoes in it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I'm pleased to respond to the speech from my colleague the member for Brampton Centre. I appreciated her reference to my private member's bill, Bill 28, that would have prevented the misclassification of gig workers as independent contractors when they are actually employees.

I wondered if the member could elaborate a bit on what is wrong with the approach that the government has taken by creating this separate category of workers in this digital workers' rights act, versus acknowledging that they actually are employees under the Employment Standards Act.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Thank you so much to the member from London West for the question, and thank you so much for all of the amazing work that you do to help support workers in our province.

I think to answer your question, I'm going to share some words from Thomas McKinney, who says, "It is clear that no actual gig workers were consulted in the creation of the legislation."

The issue is that their offer provides for hours being spent delivering orders. So it's not actually a minimum wage that these workers will be earning; it's only when they're on call or delivering. That's like, again, saying to a cashier that we are only going to pay you when you have someone cashing out. It simply doesn't offer the level of protection that these workers need and doesn't acknowledge all of the work that they do in order to pick up a customer or deliver that food.

Thank you very much for the question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** Thank you, member opposite, for your comments and your presentation.

The one concern that I have is your comment about traditional Chinese medicine. Born in Hong Kong and growing up with Chinese medicine, I know how important it is to have experienced herbalists to know what to prescribe for patients. However, a lot of them were not able to practise because they were asked to go through the test in English, which is not right. Our government is just here to fix something that the previous government should have done, because this is a problem that has been lasting for almost 10 years and there has been a lot of argument over this. We fixed it by allowing them to use the Chinese language.

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We also did something, which is that we listened. We listened to the concerns that they—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. The member for Brampton—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The member for Richmond Hill, your time expired quite some time ago. The member for Brampton Centre to reply.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill for the question. I think that her question was around recognizing Chinese medicine practitioners for the work that they do, and absolutely they should be. I think that many internationally trained professionals do struggle with governments recognizing their credentials. But as I said in my comments and in my presentation, there are other provinces who actually consulted with these practitioners to develop mechanisms to ensure that their credentials were recognized, even offering exams in languages such as Mandarin or Cantonese, something that the government of Ontario has failed to do. What I said in my presentation was that had that consultation actually taken place prior to schedule 5 being included in this bill, perhaps those pieces would have been put in place for those practitioners.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question? The member for—Toronto—Danforth.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Thank you, Speaker. How quickly we forget.

Speaker, my question for the member from Brampton Centre: You talked about the commentary of Gig Workers United on this bill and the problems that they have, the issues they have raised. Could you expand on that a bit? Because I think that for everyone in this room, understanding what the gig workers themselves really want to see happen and what their concerns are would be extremely useful.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Thank you so much to the member from Toronto—Danforth for the question. Thank you, because I think many gig workers have come forward and been opposed to this bill because it simply doesn't actually offer them the protections that they need or doesn't actually increase their wages in any way. In fact, it does the opposite. For many of these workers, their earnings fluctuate from shift to shift, day to day, and week to week, and the bill does not take into account those changes in the structure of their work.

While under the guise of working for workers, the bill seeks to regulate the amount of hours and what are earned wages and how that's calculated. What it actually does, as I said earlier, is that it excludes a big portion of the work that they do. They are not being paid, for example, for that travel time or other aspects of the work. They're only being paid for a small margin of that, which, in fact, is going to reduce their wages, and that's really troublesome.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I appreciate the member from Brampton Centre talking about the naloxone kits and throughout the question of what more needs to be done.

I'm not here to answer the question, but maybe I'll try. In many ways, it's a means to an end. I have one in my office, for example—not that I'm worried about my staff, but we get a lot of visitors.

We know that this would come through as an amendment to the occupational health and safety laws, and you've raised the issue of why some people are addicted to these narcotic analgesics. Well, maybe it was an injury at work. It opens the door. We don't need a law for everything when we have health and safety committees and joint union-management committees. It can open that door for more education and for more information; setting up employee assistance programs, for example. Would you just expand on that? I did industrial programming in this field for 20 years, and there's a lot more you can do without bringing in another law.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Thank you to the member from Haldimand—Norfolk for the question. I think it's an important point, and I would just say that what needs to also be done, in tandem with some of the changes, is actually investing in those workplaces and in those boards, to have the resources they need to properly train workers and ensure that those supports will be available.

What we hear and see in many workplaces is that those additional supports from the province aren't in place to help ensure that education and awareness or supports for mental health or addictions are available for workers.

So I would say to the member opposite that we need to see more investments in our workplaces, to make sure that people have access to the supports they need if they're experiencing mental health or addictions—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. We don't really have time for another question.

Further debate?

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** It's an honour to rise here this afternoon for second reading of Bill 88, the second Working for Workers Act, introduced by the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. I'd like to thank him and his team, including his parliamentary assistant from Mississauga—Malton, for all their great work on this bill, including more historic reforms for workers.

Speaker, before I begin my remarks on Bill 88, I just want to take a moment to thank the minister for working together with the federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to prioritize Ukrainian refugees and to help connect them with over 30,000 jobs and a safe place to live here in Ontario. In the debate on second reading of Bill 50, my private member's bill, the Hungarian Heritage Month Act, I spoke about the incredible impact that 37,000 Hungarian refugees had on Canada after Russian tanks rolled into Hungary in 1956. Sixty-six years later, as more Russian tanks roll into Ukraine, and for similar reasons, I want to thank the minister for doing everything he can to help Ukrainian refugees find new homes and new jobs in Ontario—including some who were visiting family and friends here in Mississauga—Lakeshore and now have no home to return to.

Speaker, I'll begin with schedule 1 of Bill 88, which includes important amendments to the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act.

About 20% of Canadians work in the gig economy, including many hired through digital platforms like Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit, Upwork, Guru, Fiverr and Freelancer, and these numbers are expanding and increasing. Even before the pandemic, gig workers had entered almost every industry and changed many relationships between workers, employees and customers.

According to Stats Canada, gig work is most common among immigrants and youth, and in areas with high unemployment rates. Unfortunately, these workers often face uncertain work conditions, and they don't have important protections, which makes it difficult to predict paycheques or deal with complaints.

As the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee concluded, many of these workers like the flexibility and control of being matched to gig opportunities, but this flexibility should not come at the cost of basic employment rights. In a recent survey for the committee, 89% of Ontarians agreed that the workplace has changed permanently due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Ontario need to act to update employment regulations. Speaker, we agree.

The government has a responsibility to keep up with new technology, as we have done with Ontario Onwards, making government services more accessible online, and with the standing orders, and in so many other areas.

With Bill 88, we're leading the way again on the issue in Canada and across North America.

If Bill 88 is passed, Ontario would be the first province in Canada to grant important rights and protections to digital platform workers, including, in section 7, the right to certain information, like how their pay is calculated.

Section 8 includes the right to a regular pay period and a regular payday.

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Section 9 includes the right to earn at least the general minimum wage of \$15 per hour, because no gig worker should make less than minimum wage for an hour's work.

Section 10 includes the right to keep 100% of the tips they earn, except in certain limited cases.

Section 11 includes the right to a written notice if they are ever removed from the platform, because no worker should be fired without any notice or explanation.

Section 12 includes the right to resolve work-related disputes in Ontario, because no worker should travel outside of Ontario to resolve a workplace dispute.

And, if passed, gig workers would be protected if they seek to exercise these rights by section 13. The regulations for this would be drafted in the coming months. As the minister said, these are smart, common-sense policies that will protect the working class, help middle-class families earn more money and create a better future for everyone.

Next, schedule 2, if passed, would address the issue of electronic monitoring, which has become common. Whether you're a delivery person tracked by GPS or a worker in a skilled trade using a company phone or an office worker now working from home, more and more employees are required to use electronic devices in the workplace.

Over the last two years, we have had the largest shift to remote work in history, with 32% of Canadians aged 15 to 69 working from home in 2021 up from just 4% in 2016. At the same time, employers have more ability than ever before to monitor where their employees are and what they're doing. Unfortunately, many workers may be unaware that they are even being monitored at all.

In recent round tables on privacy issues, many privacy advocates noted that there is no government oversight of workplace privacy in Canada. That's why, if passed, schedule 2 would amend the Employment Standards Act to require employers with 25 or more workers to have a written policy on the electronic monitoring of their workers and to share it with their workers. The policy would need to include information about whether the employer electronically monitors its workers, how it is electronically monitoring them and the purpose of collecting information through the electronic monitoring. Companies will have up to six months to implement these policies, and the government will provide the resources and support they need.

Again, this government is leading the way. If passed, Ontario would become the first province in Canada to require employers to develop and share their policies on electronic monitoring.

Speaker, last year, I had the opportunity to speak in support of Bill 27, the previous Working for Workers Act, which removed barriers for internationally trained professionals to allow them to match their skills to the jobs we need to fill in Ontario. This is crucial because up to three quarters of internationally trained immigrants were working in jobs that don't match their level of skills and experience. As I said before, as we recover from COVID-19, this is a mismatch that Ontario can no longer afford.

Back in 2013, the Conference Board of Canada estimated that Ontario's skills gap costs our economy over \$24 billion, or about 4% of our provincial GDP, because hundreds of thousands of skilled jobs are left vacant across the province. That's why I'm thrilled to see that schedule 3 of Bill 88 would amend the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act to cut red tape and make it easier for skilled workers from other provinces to live and work in Ontario.

Unfortunately, they now face uncertainty and delays in registration, which can make it difficult for them to move to Ontario. If passed, schedule 3 would ensure workers in regulated occupations from other provinces receive a decision on recognizing their credentials within 30 business days or, ideally, even sooner. This would make it easier for engineers, auto mechanics, plumbers and many other regulated professionals that we need here in Ontario to move this province forward, filling in-demand jobs and driving economic growth and our recovery after this pandemic.

Last fall, on International Overdose Awareness Day, I had the opportunity to speak to parents at the Don Rowing Club about the opioid crisis in our community. About 2,500 people died from opioid-related causes between March 2020 and January 2021 in Ontario. That's about eight people dying every day. The total isn't available yet

for 2021, but between January and September, there were 1,675 opioid-related deaths in Ontario, including 95 in Peel region alone. The number of overdose deaths in Peel has increased almost every year, from 46 deaths in 2016 to 156 deaths in 2020. Fentanyl is now detected in over 90% of the cases.

Unfortunately, these trends are expected to continue, but we also know that almost a third of the victims who were employed worked in the construction industry—more than any other sector. We know there are also growing numbers of cases connected to bars and nightclubs.

Schedule 3 would amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require employees to provide naloxone kits and to comply with other requirements where the employer becomes aware that there's a risk of workers having an opioid overdose. This will save lives, potentially hundreds of lives every year. Naloxone can prevent death if it's available in workplaces and it can be administered quickly.

Before the pandemic, I had the opportunity to go on a ride-along with the Peel police, and I saw them administering naloxone to save a man's life. More recently, I've worked with the Port Credit BIA to help them secure naloxone kits for local small businesses in our community. Requiring high-risk businesses to have naloxone kits on hand will help reduce the stigma around opioid abuse and also help to raise awareness about the risk of addiction and overdoses.

As my friend the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions said, "By ensuring access to life-saving naloxone kits where and when our workers need them, our government is helping to protect more Ontarians struggling with addiction from preventable deaths." With this bill, we're taking decisive action to address the challenges on the opioid crisis in Peel region and across Ontario.

If passed, schedule 3 would also introduce the highest fines in Canada for companies that fail to follow workplace health and safety laws. If convicted, officers and directors of businesses that don't provide a safe work environment, that leads to a worker being seriously injured or dying on the job, could face fines of up to \$1.5 million under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

I know members of the official opposition have called for this as well, and we agree. Unfortunately, we know that some businesses treat fines as just another expense, and they continue to put their workers at risk. But severe injury

or death should never be just another cost of doing business. These new penalties help to send a very strong message about the importance of worker health and safety and complying with workplace regulations.

Lastly, I just want to thank the minister for removing schedule 5 from Bill 88. Instead, the Ministry of Health is working with the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario to make the entry-to-practice exams available in Cantonese and Mandarin. Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to visit the Canadian College of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Mississauga, and I want to thank Pierre Chen for the tour and for a very informative meeting.

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Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government introduced a very unfair and broken system that prevented people who spoke mostly Cantonese or Mandarin from practising traditional Chinese medicine or acupuncture in Ontario. They put new Canadians at a disadvantage and our government is fixing that, because we know how important the practice of traditional Chinese medicine is to many Ontarians, including many of my constituents in Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Speaker, to conclude, I just want to quote Smokey Thomas, the president of OPSEU, who will be retiring next month, and I want to congratulate him as well on his well-deserved retirement. He said, "For the first time in dealing with three governments, we actually have a government that is listening and actually doing some very positive things for working people. No matter what any party does," he said, "especially the Conservatives, it will never be enough for some members of the labour movement. It will always be too late ... they'll find something to criticize." But "so much can be achieved through conversation and collaboration, instead of just name-calling. This government is listening to us, and as a result, real working people will benefit."

Speaker, again I want to thank the minister and his team, as well as the parliamentary assistant, my good friend from Mississauga–Malton, for their work on another important bill for working Ontarians that will help to close the skills gap and ensure Ontario remains the best place in the world to work, live and raise a family.

Again, I would urge all members to join me here today in supporting Bill 88 for the working families of Ontario.

*Report continues in volume B.*



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<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
<b>Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)</b>	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
<b>Walker, Bill (PC)</b>	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Vacant	Ajax / Ajax	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Vacant	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

**Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece  
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett  
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto  
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier  
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell  
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece  
Peter Tabuns  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /  
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur  
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma  
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife  
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter  
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa  
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité  
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner  
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey  
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin  
Chris Glover, Mike Harris  
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy  
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner  
Daisy Wai  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité  
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian  
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian  
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe  
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin  
Norman Miller, Billy Pang  
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles  
John Yakabuski  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de  
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard  
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth  
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova  
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison  
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh  
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Kevin Yarde  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité  
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas  
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas  
Goldie Ghamari, Mike Harris  
Faisal Hassan, Jim McDonell  
Sam Oosterhoff, Laurie Scott  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent  
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Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais  
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto  
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha  
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa  
Amarjot Sandhu  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité  
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe  
John Fraser, Vincent Ke  
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller  
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts  
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai  
Jamie West  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de  
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche  
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch  
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle  
Joel Harden, Mike Harris  
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova  
Robin Martin, Jim McDonell  
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Vanessa Kattar

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /  
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations  
d'urgence**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic  
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson  
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth  
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin  
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic  
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly  
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell