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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 March 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 mars 2022

1700

Report continued from volume A.

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Continuation of debate 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 Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to respond to the remarks from the member across the way. The question I have is, why did the government not actually listen to gig workers, the gig workers who are represented by Gig Workers United, by UFCW and others? Why did you not listen to gig workers and give them the full employee rights that they deserve in the Employment Standards Act, especially after a Ministry of Labour decision had just come out confirming that an Uber Eats delivery driver had been misclassified as an independent contractor when they are actually an employee under the Employment Standards Act?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member across. What we have done for gig workers—look at section 7, the right for them to get a paycheque calculated properly. Section 8 includes the right for a regular pay period and a regular payday. Section 9 includes the right to earn at least the general minimum wage of \$15 per hour. Section 10 includes the right to keep 100% of their tips earned. Section 11 includes the right to a written notice if they are ever removed from their platform. Section 12 includes the right to resolve work-related disputes in Ontario so they don't have to go to another jurisdiction when they do have to dispute their issues. Section 13, as well: Gig workers would be protected if they're seeking different—and many more things that are being done for gig workers.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to congratulate my good friend from Mississauga–Lakeshore for his detailed presentation. Through my 40 years of political experience in Canada, federally, provincially, municipally, I haven't seen such a dedicated, outstanding, energetic elected official working for his constituents.

My question is: Some have criticized the proposed rights for gig workers as not going far enough, and of

course there is always criticism—nothing to appreciate in anything we do. Can you please address these concerns by elaborating on how this will raise the floor for these workers and how these changes will be enforced?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to thank the member for all his hard work in his community, because I know he has been busy all the time working in his community very well. There are very few MPPs who do as much as you do in your community.

On gig workers: We are moving forward—because for many years they have been discriminated in this province of Ontario—by adding all these new sections into their agreements here: like I was mentioning, section 7, the information on how they get paid is calculated; as well as section 8, including the right to regular pay periods for regulated paydays; and as I said before, section 9, giving a minimum wage of \$15 an hour for gig workers; as well as section 10, like I mentioned already, 100% of the tips they earn. These are all things that we are doing for our gig workers in the province of Ontario, and we're going to continue working with them moving forward as well.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member from across the way for his presentation. I think one of the things that we didn't hear in his presentation was the desire of government members to end the harmful practice of deeming, something I know our injured workers, the Peel Injured Workers network, would really like to see this government take some initiative on and put an end to, that practice.

Can the member please help shed some light in terms of why this government hasn't stopped the practice of deeming and why this wasn't included in a bill that was supposed to be working for workers?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Brampton for that question, and I want to congratulate her on all her work that she does in her riding, as well. You're a very hard worker in your riding.

I'm just going to speak about what one of your union leaders said. Smokey Thomas, who I mentioned in my speech—

Hon. Doug Downey: He's our union leader now.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: He's our union leader now. Correct.

He said three governments have not done anything or listened to the people of Ontario, and this government is the first government that is listening to workers in this province. He said it's very easy to do name-calling, but working together and moving forward—that's coming from Smokey Thomas, so I want to thank him as well, for endorsing our work that we're doing for workers in this province.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member for his speech. It was a very good speech, and I appreciated his words on this subject, but I'm curious if he could speak a little bit about the importance of the measures that put in place protections for workers in the gig economy, particularly on tipping. I know that the measures that are in place to protect tips that have been given, so that people who are often working on a fairly low income are able to have that supplement for their income—it's very important. I know I have many friends who, throughout university or coming out of high school, had the opportunity to serve, and those tips obviously meant a big deal to them, and it's important that we protect that. I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit about that so I can share some of your expertise on this subject matter with people in my constituency.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for Niagara, as well, for that question. Like I said, section 10 includes the right to keep 100% of their tips, because up until now they were not allowed to do that. So I think this part of our bill to have them be able to keep their tips, like our bartenders do, like our waitresses do—this is a very important step forward for our gig workers moving forward.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I have a question, and it's kind of an inquisitive question. If this gig worker, an Uber driver, is now on the clock when they have a delivery and they're considered an employee, if there's an accident while they're delivering that SkipTheDishes or a person as a passenger—now that they're an employee and there's a car accident, where would they get their injuries? Would it be from the employer, in order to make sure that they get their rehab or whatever else they need? Or would they have to go through their own accident benefits? Is the employer providing the primary injury coverage if they're involved in an accident in the course of their duties as an employee while they're engaged in that transaction?

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Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that. It depends on their contract that they have with SkipTheDishes or Lyft or whatever they're working for. It always depends on the contract that they have.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, I'd like to ask the member a question about the naloxone kits. The government is proposing to require naloxone kits in workplaces. What type of workplaces are they? I wonder if the member can answer that question.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. As you know, we are the first government that has a minister for mental health and addictions, and we are spending \$3.8 billion for addictions in the province of Ontario. As well, the naloxone kit—as I've been doing in my own community, we are working with our BIAs to get them out to our restaurant owners as well as our construction industry. We know that there are a lot of issues there. That's what we're doing as a government, moving forward.

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

Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, it's a privilege to stand up today and talk about Bill 88. There have been a lot of things going on to bring us to this point.

I want to talk about the schedule 5 scenario and a little bit of that history. Obviously, we know that February 28 was when the first reading happened, and it was immediately moved into committee. One of the things that's disappointing for many of the groups in these schedules is that there was no consultation and there were no presenters. You didn't hear from the people that it affected, that this legislation made impacts on. It was then just basically moved for clause-by-clause and then brought back here.

One of the areas I want to look at is schedule 5, which was repealed right out of the act, and it was done because there was a public outcry. Prior to that public outcry, this government made a decision—and we don't know how it was formulated—to proceed with schedule 5, to deregulate the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario. I remember, back in 2013, when this college was discussed in the Legislature. The Liberals, at the time, were putting that through. I did write the Liberal government then. I was working with a traditional Chinese acupuncturist in London about having the language actually inserted into the college—I wrote a letter and tried to convince the Liberals to do that—but that was just one voice; it didn't happen.

So here we are today—where the government's motive or desire to deregulate the college on one sole topic is language. It is, quite frankly, I'll agree, very important, and that's why I advocated for it in 2013. But to throw the whole college away and bring in, just because of that one item—I think what the government could have done was worked with the practitioners, the professionals, the traditional Chinese medicine acupuncturists and come up with a real solution rather than this panicking kind of reaction to schedule 5. If they were so confident in having that in this bill, they should have stuck by it, but by the same token, I'm glad they didn't.

I looked through some news articles when this all happened, because we were all being contacted literally at that moment. The president of the college is Heather Kenny. She was actually connected to the PC government and is now the president of the college. She has basically said that they were surprised by the legislative change, which they found out about after the bill was introduced on Monday. She said that there was no warning from the government that it was considering disbanding the college.

Even if you think about connections, Heather Kenny was the vice-president for the Ontario PCs from 2018 to March 2021 after eight years as a regional vice-president for the party. So it's unusual that she wouldn't even have been consulted as the president of the college.

One of the things I looked up—I've never been to an acupuncturist or a Chinese medicine practitioner, but I

looked up what they do. Acupuncture is mainly used to relieve discomfort associated with a variety of diseases and conditions. As we know, it's a medical procedure. It's health care. It's got dental pain; headaches, including tension headaches and migraines; labour pain; lower back pain; neck pain; osteoporosis pain—all kinds of pain-related issues. So it really is a health issue. For this government to decide to deregulate professionals who actually perform very important medical procedures on the public was a public health risk. I'm glad to see that the government did take that back and repeal it.

The other thing I wanted to discuss, Speaker, is because they are promoting it as a "working for workers" bill and there are some things in there—the government has pointed out there are some protections. But I want to talk with the WSIB part of it because it is something that's very important, especially in London.

I met with Jacob Hurl. He's a survivor of the Teeple Terrace collapse in December 2020. According to the Ministry of Labour's investigation, there was clear negligence which led to the collapse that killed two workers on the job, John Martens and Henry Harder. There were five more workers who were injured.

We've talked in this Legislature about how the WSIB has had—I believe it's a \$2.1-billion surplus. The Liberal member earlier talked about how this could have been money that could be used, even partially, even half of the money, for workers. Well, I would say that the whole entire amount should go to workers. Workers have been suffering under the WSIB for decades. It needs to be looked at and used differently in order to benefit workers. So I disagree with the member from the Liberal Party saying half. I would say the entire amount should have gone back to the workers, because they're the ones who have been suffering because of this really broken system when it comes to injuries they suffer.

Jacob contacted us in London and wanted to meet with us. He's been advocating for change since his accident happened. He's advocating not only for himself, but for John and Henry, their families and his fellow employees who have been the victims of this tragedy. He told me that in many ways, the WSIB system is set up to be unfair for workers like him. He said it makes him feel lesser-than.

He's fighting to make sure that all construction workers like him get access to the best and most accurate information, and he wants a publicly accessible employer registry, where employers are required to disclose their history of on-site accidents and any workplace safety concerns and hazards.

When we talk about employment sectors that are high-risk, construction is a high-risk sector for injuries. So this suggestion needs to be discussed and reviewed in how to protect workers. If you're going to work for a construction employer, yes, it would be great to go look on a registry and find out if they've had violations so that you can make an informed decision.

He also said that we need to make sure that employees and contractors are fully informed of the range of what they are eligible for with the WSIB for at least five years

after injuries, because injured workers like him are asked to waive their rights to sue the negligent party without any idea of what they're eligible for or what they'll be giving up. So that's what they do: They sign a waiver, but they're not informed of what their benefits are and what that entails.

Of course, when you're in a hospital bed and have been injured like Jacob—and I can tell you what happened to Jacob. Jacob was pinned down on the ground under the rubble of a three-storey building for close to four and a half hours, trapped under tonnes of concrete and steel laying on his midsection, almost severing him in half. If we can't take that job seriously and the fact that it's such a high-risk job for injuries, we have to remember that people like Jacob, and many before him—and many, probably, in the future, unfortunately—need to have re-assurances in WSIB that they are protected. Taking that \$2.1 billion and putting it into WSIB would have been the right thing to do to make sure workers get better benefits and are better protected.

1720

You know, when he was trapped under that rubble, under that debris, he suffered a broken hip, a broken femur, a broken sacrum, a broken tibia, three cracked vertebrae, chemical burns to both his legs, two cracked teeth, a laceration to his head, a concussion, blood clots in his lungs, removal of dead tissue in his left leg and post-traumatic stress disorder syndrome, if you can imagine what he went through. So when we're talking about this bill, we need to look at WSIB and we need to make sure that workers do have the coverage that they need when they get injured, and that it's explained to them. When you start a job that is that high-risk, why isn't there an orientation on WSIB so that they know what their rights are, they understand what the coverage is? When we come here, we learn about our benefits. Why isn't that also extended to workers so that they know what they're in for when they start at their job?

The other thing, Speaker, that I wanted to talk about was another workplace in London. It's the Thames Valley District School Board. We're talking about mental health supports. The London Free Press reported last month that the Thames Valley District School Board trustees approved the immediate hiring of a full-time official to oversee staff well-being, after facing skyrocketing employee mental health claims. This is a result of a 44% increase in new staff claims for short- or long-term medical leaves and absences since last year.

We know in the context of this that it's probably obviously pandemic-related, but what teachers have gone through, and many health care workers and essential workers—everyone; workers in general—has been an added component of stress. Hats off to Thames Valley for doing that.

Speaker, in Canada an estimated 40% of workplace leaves are now related to mental health well-being. Linda Nicholls, the Thames Valley superintendent of human resources, said, "This trend is resulting in significant disruption to service delivery within our board," and the

new position would help “assist in effectively addressing this concerning and growing trend.” This is why we need to look at workplaces and understand what the needs are. Thames Valley District School Board saw that there was a need and they went ahead and hired a full-time official to oversee staff well-being. Staff need to stay healthy in order to make sure they—all those workers—are providing that education to our next generation, our children. If their work environment isn’t healthy, how does that translate into doing their job for our children? So I wanted to bring that up as well.

The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions was also speaking about this earlier, and I wanted to also talk about that because, again, this is a huge problem in London. I met with Family Service Thames Valley and they said that their wait-lists have doubled to five months. Even their priority wait-list is now four to six weeks long. They told me that they’re witnessing in the intakes—the acuity level is so high. It’s such an immediate need when people come to them. So it’s something that needs to happen.

I did write the Minister of Health and the minister of mental health and addictions about the family services. I also wrote them about the Salvation Army Centre of Hope’s recovery community centre. This is a facility that has beds for people who need rehab. What they do is they actually live there, they have three meals a day, and they provide transition back into the community. Sometimes people stay there for a couple of years, because addiction problems aren’t just, you know, you go into a treatment centre and it’s solved. They’re lifelong health issues.

What’s happened with this 26-bed program is that they can’t continue that service, so they’re going to shut down the beds. The city was helping them with it, because during the pandemic we all know what was going on in our streets and in workplaces and in homes. The city was helping fund it, and they were also raising money through charity, but now these things have dried up. So the Salvation Army Centre of Hope has written the minister for some funding. They need \$600,000 to keep this program going. Today he was talking about how we need to have treatment centres in places where people live, so they don’t have to leave their community. This is a wonderful program that’s working. They have the data. He wanted to talk about “evidence-based”—and they have that evidence base in order to justify keeping those beds in London and that amount of money, which is \$600,000, that it takes to operate those beds.

It’s really important when we’re talking about working for workers, protecting workers, that we talk about the gig workers. I’m so proud that the member for London West introduced a bill in order to make sure that that misclassification is dealt with. Unfortunately, the government hasn’t seen that far into the future. It has taken some steps, but it isn’t fixing the problem; it’s temporarily delaying the problem.

I talked earlier, in one of my questions to the government, about the case that happened at the Ontario Labour Relations Board, where it was clear that—it was an Uber

Eats bike courier, and they made a case that they hadn’t received the right amount of wages. It turns out that the amount they thought was the amount that they were owed, which was \$200, ended up to be \$1,000—and the decisions were given that these people are, for all rights and purposes, employees.

When we are saying to gig workers, “We’re going to protect your workplace, and this is how much we’re going to give you,” remember, this government—again, they’ve made decisions, and they backtrack on them. I think about the minimum wage. That was one of the things they came in and immediately tossed out. Now they’re saying, “We are now giving you minimum wage.” Some of those things are a little bittersweet, because people who were counting on that minimum wage back in 2018 already would have been lacking—I think it’s around \$5,300, if they would have had that minimum wage continue from 2018. But now here we are and they’re putting in minimum wage.

It’s really disappointing to know that there are people who bring in legislation, who know that it’s going to make a real difference—and it’s a long-lasting difference; it’s not just half of the work done—and then it really doesn’t translate into what the intent of the legislation is.

Yes, this bill needs to be discussed. It would have been great to have consultation with workers. The government’s own advisory committee, the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee—from what I understand, there wasn’t someone on that advisory committee who was a labour representative. So you still weren’t able to hear from a workers’ perspective, even on your own Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee. It’s really insulting, I’d say, to put it to committee and not have a public presentation where people can come and speak to you about their concerns, about their ideas, and advocate for what they think can make this bill better. That is what committee does, and to shut that down is discouraging, I think, for people who they propose to say that this is going to affect. Have you heard from gig workers? They would tell you. Have you heard from unions about how they can make that workplace better? You’ve lost an opportunity.

You’ve done some things, as you constantly mention, but there are things that could be done that could be long-lasting. If you want to make decisions, if you want to create a legacy, these things, when it comes to legislation, if they actually change people’s lives—that would be, ultimately, what I think legislation should do, and for the better, and protection, to change people’s lives for the better.

With that, I welcome the questions. But I did want to put that out there.

I hope this government, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and the health minister will read my letter, when they get it, about the Salvation Army Centre of Hope recovery community centre and give that money back to London so we can have those beds.

1730

The government does talk a lot about mental health and supporting mental health and addictions, and this is an opportunity for them to really show it, because losing

those beds means that London is going to suffer. I believe London is the sixth city in Canada with the highest opioid crisis happening for drugs, for addictions. So these services need to stay in our community. We need to enhance them so we make sure that people can move on with their lives, can give back. We all want that. We want everyone to be productive members of our society, but we have to have those initial foundational things in place when it comes to health care, when it comes to mental health, when it comes to addictions, to make sure they're there.

This morning I made a statement about a young woman, Kristin Legault-Donkers. She was 25 years old, and she suffered terribly with mental health. She tried to navigate the system to continue to see the next day. She wrote children's books, so she was well known in London for that. She died on March 11. She died by suicide. She lost hope.

Those are the stories that we need to understand that what we do here affects real people. It's not just pieces of paper that we create; they actually make a difference to people: a worker like Jacob Hurl, a young woman like Kristin Legault-Donkers. If we can put those things in place and really protect workers when they get injured and really have those mental health and addiction supports that people need when they need them, not wait until they're in crisis and it's too late, like Kristin, it would be a much better place for everyone.

I know this government wants to do the right thing, so I ask that they look at those letters that I sent and please do the right thing and support London.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Bill 88 introduces the highest fines in Canada for companies that fail to follow workplace health and safety laws. This change will support and protect Ontario's workers by ensuring that businesses are making and ensuring the highest safety standards. Will the member from London-Fanshawe be supporting this legislation?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I appreciate the question from the government member. There's always so much in the legislation, and it's never cut and dry. One of the things that the government did right was to take out schedule 5, the traditional Chinese medicine—deregulating the college. So that's a good thing. They've shown that when they've done something that isn't quite right, sometimes—not all the time—they will listen.

As far as whether or not I'm committed to supporting this legislation, I'm still reading it. I was actually reading some of the schedules in the trades section as well, and the government collapsed that college. There are a lot of things that are changing all the time, and very quickly, with this government. So to the member, to answer his question, at this time, I haven't confirmed that yet.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member from London-Fanshawe for her presentation. As I think we have articulated on this side of the House, this bill really does very little to actually protect workers. I wonder if the member can elaborate on some of the measures that could

have and should have been included in this bill to actually provide workers the protections they need here in Ontario.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you very much. I have to say—I touched briefly on it—it was the member for London West, her bill, Bill 28, correcting the classifications of gig workers. That would go such a long way. Once you do that, then it's open for them to actually be under the ESA, and they'd get their vacation pay and they'd get the three sick days right now. The government took those away and now they're going to bring back some sick days, but again, at least they would get those sick days.

Not having Bill 28 pass in this Legislature is really doing an injustice to gig workers. If this government called that bill and put it to committee, you would see an influx of gig workers coming to let you know what a difference that would make to their lives, and not just some of the measures that you've put in this bill.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge and thank the member from London-Fanshawe for speaking on this bill.

For the last decade, we've seen more than 300,000 jobs leaving the province. And now we have another issue, which is, we have 330,000 unfilled jobs. Talking about the labour mobility—our government is calling on tradespersons and skilled professionals from across Canada to come to Ontario. What we're doing would make it easier for engineers, mechanics, plumbers and other regulated professionals to move to Ontario and fill these in-demand jobs and drive growth.

My question to the member is very simple. Data suggests that we need to replace retiring workers in the skilled trades—it is imminent and real. In 2016, nearly one in three journeypersons was 55 or older. Can the member opposite advise—would they support this bill and help us to prosper Ontario?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: In my family, I have four brothers—one has passed on, though—I have uncles and cousins, and the majority of them work in the trades. They are wonderful people to have in your family when you have a leaky faucet or you need your driveway cemented or your home painted. They come very well equipped and are always generous with their time, and they're very skilled.

If there are ways to make things better for trades workers—and we need to encourage more women into the trades, I have to say—I certainly feel that that is something we need to look at.

When I look at that schedule, though, I did see something, when someone wants to have an internal review appeal—I'll add to that later, but that was one of my concerns.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's always a pleasure to listen to my colleague the member for London-Fanshawe. She's obviously so deeply connected to the London community. I really appreciated the references she made to Jacob Hurl, a young man who was seriously injured in the Teeple

Terrace building collapse, and Kristin Legault-Donkers, a young woman who died by suicide in our community. We both received the letter from Jacob Hurl's father, who points out that in the construction industry alone, 21 workers are killed and 357 are gravely injured, on average, every year.

Speaker, I wanted to ask the member for London–Fanshawe if she thinks that this bill does anything to help those construction workers who face serious injury and death on the job.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I thank the member from London West for that question. There is the provision in there for naloxone, which specifically addresses addictions, but construction work is so much broader, and I don't think that is being addressed. There are so many Jacob Hurls in our province. And the two gentlemen I mentioned, who passed away—there are so many Henrys and Johns who pass away in our province.

No, this bill needs to have gone much further. There is that one, I say—like the one addressing the high-risk area of construction, which needed to happen. When I think about WSIB and the \$2.1 billion, I think of what a difference that could have made to the construction trade and the safety of workers in the construction trade. So, no, to answer your question, it doesn't go as far as I would have liked it to have gone to make sure that workers are safe.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to the member opposite for her presentation.

Data suggests that the need to replace retiring workers in the skilled trades is imminent and real. In 2016, nearly one in three journeypersons in Ontario was 55 years old. Can the member opposite articulate why she or her party would oppose breaking down barriers like this?

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Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: So, as I said earlier, I have a lot of people in my family who work in the trades, and my father was one of them—he's no longer with us—and he worked long before he was 55 years old. What happened with my father, he used to lay pipes in ditches, and it was raining one—I would assume for a couple of days. He went to work, and what ended up happening is that there was a mudslide where he was laying the pipes, and he ended up covered in mud. Thank goodness it was only his leg that was broken. But when I say that right now, I'm getting a little bit sentimental about that, because I could have lost my father at a very young age. He worked hard. He worked really hard. After that injury, he couldn't continue to do that job, so he did something else.

But, you know, no one disputes that trades workers have high-risk jobs. They need to be protected and we need to do all we can to make sure they go home safe to their families.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We've got time for one more quick question. The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to the member for London–Fanshawe for her debate this afternoon.

Definitely, a major topic within this bill is talking about naloxone kits being provided to workplaces. I fully support them being given to construction workers, to bars and nightclubs, but we know that the rate of overdose and death by overdose is so high. Does she think that it could also be used in other workplaces? We've heard from steelworkers. We've heard from many workplaces. What is her opinion on how broad that could be when it comes to other workplaces in the province?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Oh, I only have 20 seconds. I think that we should broaden that, and we need to make sure that people that are accessing the naloxone kits are fully trained and that there's always someone on site able to use it, and also making sure that there's community supports outside of the work when people are looking for help when it comes to mental health and addictions.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a pleasure to be able to stand in this House, and I want to just thank the good people of Niagara West for the opportunity to be able to bring here their concerns, and to be in this House as their representative and to speak to the issues that are so important to people in the beautiful riding of Niagara West and across the Niagara region.

Of course, many of the issues which we have the opportunity to debate in this House pertain to the mutual concerns of all Ontarians. I know that the legislation which we have the opportunity to debate this afternoon, and which I believe I have the privilege of being the final speaker to today, is an important one. It's one that I know was going to have an enormous amount of impact in the lives of Ontario workers. It's going to benefit Ontario's workers; it's going to ensure that the foundation that was laid in the last piece of legislation, the Working for Workers Act, 2021, is going to be built upon and to be built up.

Speaker, I do recognize that the work that is under way is important work, but it's also work that recognizes our continued commitment to doing more to support people in this province who are going out each and every day, working hard to put food on the table for their families, coming home to bring a paycheque to take care of their family members, their children, to perhaps support elderly parents—incredibly important in the work that goes on to build up this province.

I think about the cranes that we pass by as we drive around our ridings, as we perhaps drive through even the GTA—there are a few cranes up across the GTA and into Niagara as well. I think about the millions and millions of people who have to put so much effort into ensuring that these buildings are going up, that the services that we rely on are there, that the goods that we depend on, that we expect when we might go shopping online or in person—and I encourage everyone to go out and shop in person now that more and more things are open.

There are so many people who have unique stories, who have unique values that they bring to the workforce, and today's legislation that I have the privilege of speaking to is about ensuring that their values are being supported, that

each and every day, when they go off to work, they know their government has their back to ensure that they come home safe, that they come home alive, of course, and that they come home with more money in their paycheque for their family.

As the member for Niagara West, I want to just acknowledge the work also of the team at the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. I want to acknowledge Minister McNaughton and his excellent work on consulting with both labour partners and with the business community—I had him down in the Niagara region a couple of times in the last year—hearing from local workers, speaking with local unions, speaking with local businesses and hearing about the things that needed to happen in order to make this piece of legislation a reality.

I also want to acknowledge his team. It always takes a team to make any bill come alive. I've experienced that in my own office, and I just want to acknowledge the work that has gone on there. As well as his parliamentary assistant, the wonderful member for Mississauga—Malton, who I had the privilege of making an announcement with on behalf of the Ministry of Education on Friday morning in Mississauga—Malton—so, big acknowledgement of his incredible work in his community.

It's also good to see so many people here in the House today. As we know, Speaker, the pandemic had an unprecedented impact on the way we work. We know that the pandemic had a major impact on the way that so many people worked across this province. Throughout the pandemic, we saw also that here in this Legislature we were able to work together with members from all sides of the aisle, and I hope this collaborative work is going to continue, especially on bills like the one we're debating today.

I also want to acknowledge the community spirit and resilience of my constituents in Niagara West. It's been a difficult time for so many, but we saw the front-line health care leaders, the community-active heroes and committed local volunteers in Niagara and across the province—we've seen them come out of this and emerge stronger than ever.

Speaker, whenever I meet with employers in my riding and we talk about the products that they build, and we speak about the unique characteristics of whatever widget it might be that they're making in that particular site—and I just want to acknowledge the incredible amount of diversity of product that comes out of Niagara West, from value-added agriculture, of course, the wine that everyone knows, to ball bearings, to auto parts manufacturing. I bet you didn't know that every time you're on a piece of equipment that has a major airstop, that's made right in Niagara West, in Beamsville, in my riding—so those are all produced. If you're on the GO train and you hear the whistle go, you hear the air brakes going, those are built in Niagara West.

We have a lot of amazing parts that are built in Niagara West and amazing products, and whenever I speak with my local employers and I ask them, "What are you most proud of?", the answer unanimously comes back: "The

people." It's always the people who are here. It's the employees. It's the team members who come together to make these products, and to come make better possible, who come with their innovation, with their ideas, who come with their passion and enthusiasm for the product that is being built there or produced there or cultivated in that place. That is what I hear from the employers in my region. That's why they want to provide safe workplaces for their employees, and that's why our government is making it easier for them to do so.

Through a series of legislative changes in this legislation, we are building on our province's plan to support, protect and attract workers, making our province more competitive and ensuring that Ontario remains the best place to live, work and raise a family. I'll be touching on a few of the legislative items included in this bill this afternoon, Madam Speaker, but I'd like to also start with one of the most important, because it's an item that is going to save lives and make Ontario a leader in protecting people's health and safety.

While we've all been working to battle the COVID-19 pandemic over the past few years, another pandemic has quietly also been taking place. Between March 2020 and January 2021, approximately 2,500 people died. They lost their lives from opioid-related causes. One of the life-saving tools that we now have, which is available to us to help prevent death, is a drug called naloxone, or Narcan. Naloxone is a fast-acting drug. It's sprayed up an individual's nose and reverses the effects of opioid overdoses in minutes. I hope that most of us would have one in our constituency office and have had the opportunity to speak with perhaps local outreach workers who, of course, have these. But for those who may not know much about opioids, this is a very important drug, because opioids affect the part of the brain that controls breathing. It's crucial for naloxone to be administered as soon as possible to ensure that breathing is able to recommence, so that oxygen is able to reach that person.

That's why, as part of the Working for Workers Act, we are amending the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require employers to provide naloxone kits in the workplace, to combat the risk of a worker opioid overdose. This step will save lives. We'll be the first province in Canada to do this, which is a step forward in our government's plan to protect those struggling with addiction from preventable deaths. It's a decisive action we're taking to address the challenges of the opioid crisis.

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While the change is under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers, the kits can also be used in an emergency to help clients, perhaps, customers, and even the general public. With increased access and availability of these kits, it means less time is going to be spent trying to find one. It means less time waiting for medical help to provide the first step of intervention and a greater chance of survival. This legislation is also going to be requiring training to ensure that workers are familiar with how to use the kits and administer the drugs.

Our government, led by the advocacy and dedication of my friend and colleague—and a friend of so many in

Ontario—Michael Tibollo, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, has taken steps already to promote the use and availability of naloxone and support those suffering from addiction. I thank Minister Tibollo for weighing in on this in his earlier remarks while speaking to the bill.

Another important change that's being made to the Occupational Health and Safety Act is regarding fines for bad actors. Speaker, the vast majority of businesses do want to make their workplaces as safe for their employees as possible. I know I spoke about that, which is what I hear when I'm out in my communities, and I know it's exactly what so many of my colleagues hear when they're in theirs. And yet there are those who don't follow the law, and they treat worker injuries as, "Meh, it's the cost of doing business." That is unacceptable. As the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development has said before, this stops now. Hurting a worker is not simply the cost of doing business in Ontario.

As part of our ongoing commitment to support and protect workers, we're proposing to strengthen penalties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act for violations that result in severe worker injury or death. The maximum fine upon conviction for officers and directors will increase from \$100,000 to \$1.5 million, a 15-times increase. As well, the maximum fine upon conviction for other individuals will increase from \$100,000 to \$500,000. The hope, Speaker, is that these fines will never need to be levied. I know we all hope that workers are being kept safe and that we'll never see a business charged under this, but the reality is that by increasing these fines to the highest in Canada, we're sending another message to employers about the importance of compliance with Ontario's rules and laws governing worker health and safety: We will not take workers for granted.

While the Attorney General has made tremendous efforts and advances in modernizing our justice system and accelerating the delivery of justice, we can also recognize that there are still delays, and to further support healthy and safe workplaces, we're proposing to increase the limitation period for commencing prosecution to two years, up from one year, as it is currently. These changes are good. They're good for people, they're good for business, and I'd really like to thank the minister for bringing forward these proposals.

I know, Speaker, many in my riding were disappointed when they heard that the opposition had decided to vote against the minister's previous Working for Workers legislation. I know that they had been hoping to see the NDP stand up for a \$15 minimum wage. I know that they had hoped to see the opposition stand up, finally, for workers. But I hope that this month we are going to see the opposition see the value in protecting workers and potentially save lives by supporting this bill. I know that's the hope of all members on this side of the House.

Another schedule in this bill I'd like to spend a little bit of time to explain and speak about this afternoon is schedule 3, which proposes amendments to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades

Act, 2006. We've heard a lot from the Premier about this issue. We've heard about the skilled trades shortage that we're facing here in the province of Ontario. I know it's something I hear about as well regularly in my community. Most of my friends work in the trades. Most of my family is involved in the trades or in agriculture. And as we recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to the hard work of the people of Ontario, our economy is ready to grow and to thrive as a result of these kinds of hard-working people here in the province of Ontario. But we do need people to fill the jobs. We need workers—338,835, to be precise. A fair amount of work needs to be done, and a lot of paycheques are ready to be rolled out.

While we continue to promote upskilling and offering second-career training for domestic workers, we're also looking to attract workers from other provinces in Canada to relocate and work here. I'm sure we all have stories in our families or in our lives of friends or perhaps close acquaintances or even just people we've heard of who have decided, for whatever reason, to relocate to another province. Maybe they went to work in Alberta during the oil booms. Maybe they went to work in BC in lumber. Perhaps they decided to go and change their pace of life on the east coast. The reality is that we all know that the best place to live, to work and to raise a family is right here in Ontario, so we want those people to relocate back to Ontario.

We're already home to the best workers in Canada, and we want to continue building on that talent pool to keep Ontario the best to live, work and raise a family. That's why we're taking actions in this legislation to make it easier for skilled workers across the country to continue their careers in our province. The proposed amendments to schedule 3 will ensure that those working in 30 in-demand professions in skilled trades will get their credentials processed within 30 business days. These are the types of service standards that Ontarians and soon-to-be Ontarians should expect when it comes to their government. Lengthy, complex and unclear application processes serve as a barrier to those coming to our province. So, we're giving Ontario a competitive advantage by introducing the 30-day service standard, which includes the time it takes for regulatory bodies to both make a decision and communicate it. We'll be leading the country in making this a priority.

What this is going to do in practical terms is make it easier for engineers, auto mechanics, plumbers and several other regulated professionals to come into our province, fill vacant, in-demand jobs and drive economic growth here in Ontario. It might seem like it's going to be a challenge to condense a process that often takes months into such a short period of time, but there's no reason for it to take this long. As you know, we're all up for a challenge. We need to leverage all of the tools and resources we can to make decisions quickly and communicate back to the people in a timely fashion. We're going to keep working with registrars and other stakeholders through the

implementation process, because we want to make sure that it's as smooth and trouble-free as possible.

Speaker, I'm sure you're familiar with another program. I've heard a great deal about it from my cousin who's a plumber and recently moved out to BC, and my other cousin who moved here as an electrician. The Red Seal Program is a partnership between the federal government and provinces and territories which sets out a common standard for apprenticeship training and certification. There are 55 Red Seal trades, but Ontario currently only recognizes 52. We're going to be changing that. Under the legislation, we're going to make sure that Ontario will recognize all 55 Red Seal trades and bring the total number of trades recognized in Ontario from a mere 144 to 147. All of the Red Seal trades will be subject to the new 30-business-day service guarantee.

In addition to these changes, we're harmonizing training standards for many of the trades and making it easier for apprentices to come from other provinces and continue their training here in Ontario. Over 1.2 million Ontarians are employed in the skilled trades, but we do need more. Our skilled trade workers are crucial to our province and to the immense investments in infrastructure that we are building. We're building roads, we're building bridges, we're building highways, homes and public transit in each and every community across this province, and we need people to get that work done.

Interjections.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: That was an improvise.

By reducing red tape and making clear commitments on timelines, we're tackling the labour shortage and making it easier to welcome workers from other provinces to Ontario.

Since the first day on the job, I know the Minister McNaughton has gone to great lengths. He has promoted the skilled trades as a career path and he has spoken about the importance of skilled trades.

I want to take a moment to also remind the House about some of the other things that we've done. We announced an additional \$90 million over 30 years last November. We invested \$2.9 million to expand the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, bringing it to a total of \$20 million. We've encouraged employers to take on more apprentices and increased apprenticeship training by over \$77 million. In Niagara West we've seen incredible investments in the Youth Skills Studio, a partnership between the town of Lincoln and Civiconnect.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I was there.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: You were there. The member from Mississauga–Malton was there when we announced that important move to ensure that local businesses are being supported with their technology-based needs.

We've shut down the disastrous College of Trades established by the Liberal government as the epitome of bureaucracy. We're making sure that online services will allow apprentices to manage their careers in one place, reducing forms, reducing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I have to interrupt the member for Niagara West, based on the time. You'll have time to finish your remarks the next time the bill is called.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Vacant	Ajax / Ajax	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Vacant	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jim McDonell
Sam Oosterhoff, Laurie Scott
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Hogarth
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa
Amarjot Sandhu
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Aris Babikian
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe
John Fraser, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Jim McDonell
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Vanessa Kattar

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell