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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 March 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 mars 2022

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PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

FAIRNESS FOR ONTARIO'S
INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED
WORKERS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 POUR UNE PLUS GRANDE
ÉQUITÉ ENVERS LES TRAVAILLEURS
DE L'ONTARIO FORMÉS À L'ÉTRANGER

Ms. Begum moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 98, An Act to establish a framework for the recognition of internationally trained and educated workers in Ontario / Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à établir un cadre pour la reconnaissance en Ontario des travailleurs formés à l'étranger.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for their presentation.

Ms. Doly Begum: Let me begin by thanking my co-sponsors, the members from Humber River–Black Creek, Ottawa Centre and London North Centre. I also want to take a moment to thank the member from Nickel Belt, our health care critic, for her guidance, and the leader of the official opposition, as well as all our caucus members for their enormous support. I'm also grateful to have an incredible team of staff who have helped gather so many stories, had so many conversations with stakeholders and people from across the province and helped put this bill together.

Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest to speak to Bill 98, an act that will finally bring fairness to so many workers across the province and help our health care system and the economy. Our great province is home to thousands of immigrants with thousands of different stories—first-generation immigrants, multigenerational immigrant families, refugees, people coming to our province to study or to work—but there is one sentiment that rings true to all those who build their lives here in Ontario: It is the hope for a better life for themselves, for their communities and for their future generations.

My own family came here over 20 years ago with that hope to build a better life for us, and that hope, hard work and a faith in the promise of what life can be in this

province is why I stand here today representing my home community of Scarborough Southwest, the place that my family made their own years ago.

Every single one of us in this House represents our communities. We may not always see eye to eye, we may have different political stripes, but we are all here because we believe in the future of our province and the future of all Ontarians, and are committed to delivering that future. This is why we have brought this bill forward, a piece of legislation that takes a step towards delivering that hope not only for our immigrant communities, but for everyone in Ontario.

It is not uncommon to hear stories about doctors or professors who immigrated to Canada, highly educated and passionate individuals, who were forced to leave their fields to drive taxis or Ubers and take up minimum wage jobs just to make ends meet. It is not uncommon to hear stories of people who came to Ontario through programs like the Ontario immigration nominee program—an incredible opportunity, no doubt—where their skills are assessed and assigned points for their application, but once they come here, their degrees, credentials, professional designations and experiences are not recognized.

Speaker, how do internationally trained health care workers familiarize themselves with our health care system or complete the necessary criteria when they are not even given the pathways to demonstrate their skills or meet the requirements? Why are internationally educated and trained nurses still being asked to work in roles that they are not trained for, like PSWs, instead of making it possible for them to become licensed? Why are internationally trained dentists, on whom our province heavily relies, waiting years and years to be called for their exams? Why are professors, academics, many with years of experience, coming to our province and then becoming deskilled? How can we simply accept \$50,000 to \$100,000 of debt as the norm as someone tries to navigate the certification process, and that many are suffering from mental health declines because of barriers to get their credentials recognized?

I know that many of us sitting in this chamber know these realities, but we may not have the lived experience of what it is like to navigate these complex systems, and we're not the regulators or the licensing bodies, nor are we the organizations that provide the local supports to these immigrants. That is why finding the answers to all these questions has to involve the professional bodies who oversee the processes. It has to involve the community-level organizations, and it has to involve the people impacted by these barriers.

We have the opportunity with this bill to bring them together and help find the solutions. This bill gives us the opportunity to not only find the gaps within our system, but also to hear from experts on what works and look at solutions like specific investments, practice-ready assessments and programming in other jurisdictions—even in other provinces in Canada—that have been successfully implemented. With Bill 98, we will finally take the steps towards addressing the gaps within our system that have led to generations of suffering for immigrants in Ontario.

When drafting this bill, I heard from dozens of people from all walks of life who shared their stories—the harsh realities of their experiences—and joy in finally seeing a glimmer of hope, Speaker, that maybe some day, even if it's not themselves, a passionate or talented physician who came to Ontario for a better life can finally care and protect Ontarians with their expertise and practice.

I heard from Fariha, a young Canadian whose parents immigrated here as internationally trained physicians. She wrote, “Having parents who were internationally trained doctors and seeing them struggle every day to find jobs after arriving in Canada under the skilled migrant program was very painful as a teenager. Canada has many highly qualified internationally trained personnel who could help solve the broken health care system. They are working jobs that do not utilize their skills. The systemic barriers make it very hard for many individuals to contribute to the health sector despite having skills and training. No one is asking for a free pass to work but a system that values their expertise and allows them to join. If they are lacking a certain skill, then why not allow them to learn and then contribute?”

Fariha is right: As Canadians, we are proud of our health care system, a system that aspires to ensure everyone can access health care. Yet, over the past two years, Ontario's health care system was brought to the point of breaking: physicians, nurses, health care workers working unnaturally long hours, risking their lives, their health, working within a system that is stretched too thin and forcing them to make unthinkable decisions.

What our health care workers experienced was unimaginable, and we're grateful for their dedication, Speaker. But we cannot and should not put our health care workers in this situation, ever. In fact, when we think of what's ahead, with the huge backlog of surgeries and treatments that have been put on hold for the past years, we may be facing another health care crisis. We need to do everything possible to ensure a health care recovery that works for Ontarians, and the way to do that is by integrating the thousands of already qualified and trained professionals in Ontario.

In a province like ours, people should not be waiting for months or years for surgery or to see a specialist or even to get a family doctor. I heard from Ontarians, even those who are not internationally trained professionals themselves, who reached out to us in support of this bill. Why? Because it's common sense. Every Ontarian deserves to access adequate health care when they need it, not eight months or a year after.

As the pandemic ravaged through our province, through the lives of so many, as we lost loved ones and saw an immense amount of suffering in our communities, it took a toll on internationally trained health care workers, as well, whose life's work has been providing health care in their own countries—quite frankly, saving lives—as they saw the pain that people in their communities were feeling and not being able to help because our system just does not allow them to work.

One physician wrote this: “I'm an international medical graduate that's worked seven years in emergency, battling dengue crisis situations in one of the busiest hospitals in Sri Lanka. I've treated in war zones and volunteered for MSF. And for the last two years in Canada, I watched from the sidelines, my hands tied because of regulations and restrictions. We are available! We are ready! And we are qualified! What is the point of educated labour, especially in a health crisis?”

Speaker, despite the barriers and the rejection from our system, many of these health care workers found ways to support community clinics or volunteered in hospitals. Working-class immigrants, young and old, many of whom already do multiple jobs to make ends meet, came forward to offer their expertise for free simply to help us get through this pandemic. And yet, they saw that the province decide to fly in a handful of doctors from other provinces, while they—residents of Ontario—were not allowed to practise or, in some cases, were offered minimum wage to work.

A dentist reached out to me to share his story: “I applied for Canada's Express Entry under the skilled worker category. We were happy that we were selected on the basis of our education and work experience, the Canadian government gave us permanent residency. But to my shock, the same degrees and experience which were criteria for” permanent residency “in Canada were no more valid when I entered the country. I lost my title and my self-esteem that now I am under the general labour category because without all exams, I can't have any job in my profession.

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“Getting a licence in dentistry is also not a straightforward process, I have to study and take coaching for that. If I study, I cannot feed my family or if I work as a general labourer or security guard or any survival job then I cannot study. There is no support from the government in any way, we cannot afford a car, house, rent, anything, with inflation going up so high. I am surviving on the savings from back home and it has been giving me lots of mental stress and I don't know how long it will last.”

Speaker, over the past four years, I have heard so many stories from residents across Scarborough Southwest, many of whom shared the exact same stories, whether they were dentists, physicians, nurses etc. If I shared all the heartbreaking stories—and I see that my time is almost up—every instance of being turned away just for where they're from or their accents or from looking different, I would be here for maybe a whole week. So I'll end with

this, Speaker; one last story from a nurse. The nurse is Nic Tolarba. He wrote:

“I started working as a registered nurse in the Philippines in 2008. In 2013, I immigrated to Canada as a live-in caregiver as many Filipinos who have nursing backgrounds had to do. I spent years and thousands of dollars in order to be recognized as an RPN in Ontario. It was either spend thousands of dollars on schooling I had already done, or return to the Philippines to practise. In 2021, I faced similar barriers to be recognized as an RN. I am now finally completing an RN clinical placement, with the hopes of being able to practise as an RN in Ontario. But even then, I don't know if I will be recognized.”

He goes on to speak about the thousands of dollars that he had to spend, and he's still looking for hope.

So, Speaker, I implore the House, my colleagues from all political stripes, from across the aisle and all parties, to stand with the thousands and thousands of people who have shared their stories. We have over 800 people who have signed the petition just over the past two weeks when hearing about it, not to mention the many people who came forward through the past year to share their stories as well. We have also heard what's happening in our health care system. So I ask you to finally deliver on that promise of what Ontario can be for all Ontarians, vote for Bill 98. Provide the support that all of the internationally educated and trained workers are asking for, and provide the support that our health care system needs. Vote for Bill 98.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It's an enormous honour to stand to speak in support of my colleague from Scarborough Southwest's bill. It is absolutely crucial—absolutely crucial—that the government pass this bill and enact it into law. First of all, it makes absolutely no sense for Ontario as a province, for Canada as a country, for Toronto, to be bringing in skilled immigrants, to have them need to use those skills in order to gain admission to Canada, and then to be deskilled when they get here.

Before I became an MPP, I used to teach diaspora studies at the University of Toronto, and before that, I did a PhD thesis which involved dozens and dozens of interviews with Somali refugees and immigrants to Canada. In both of those instances, I heard so many stories of the type that my colleague was just telling you: people who came to Canada who were highly skilled, who were professionals. The first wave, in particular, of Somali refugees who came to Canada were all highly skilled and professionals. When they came here, we had doctors, we had engineers, we had lawyers, we had all manner of professionals who could not work in their fields, and could not—for the Catch-22 reasons that my colleague laid out—get their credentials recognized in order to be able to work in their fields.

So they found themselves driving taxicabs, and they found themselves working as security guards. It plunged their families into poverty, where they had the skills to contribute to our economy in ways that we need and that they need. It had enormous impacts on their mental health

and their self-esteem to not be recognized as the professionals they are.

Every labour economist in this country is begging for us to have more skilled labour immigrate to this country, but it does absolutely no good whatsoever to have skilled labour come to the country and then to tell them, “I'm sorry, but the only thing that you can do is stand as a security guard in a parking lot or work as a taxicab driver, when you are an engineer or when you are a doctor.” It makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. It is high time that we fix this glaring problem in our labour recognition of skilled immigrants who come from overseas, and I beg the government to finally be the legislative body in this province that does something about it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Madame la Présidente, les travailleurs formés à l'étranger ont beaucoup à contribuer à notre économie, mais leur contribution est freinée par des obstacles administratifs. L'opposition officielle a déposé ce projet de loi qui est très semblable à celui que j'avais déposé il y a quelques mois. Ça me fait donc plaisir de l'appuyer.

Dans ma circonscription, il y a une importante population de travailleurs possédant des titres de compétence obtenus à l'étranger et qui ne peuvent pas travailler dans leur domaine. L'ensemble de l'Ontario compte 316 000 emplois vacants. On pourrait remédier à cette situation en s'attaquant au protectionnisme des organismes de réglementation.

À ce jour, le gouvernement n'a introduit aucune mesure pour permettre la poursuite de la certification des travailleurs de la santé formés à l'étranger. Et ce, en dépit du fait que des infirmiers et infirmières titulaires de diplômes étrangers ont été temporairement autorisés à exercer en Ontario en raison de la pandémie et qu'ils ont bien fait leur travail. Cela aurait dû prouver au gouvernement que les titres de compétence étrangers dans le domaine des soins de santé sont souvent appropriés. Les immigrants que j'ai consultés disent qu'ils trouvent insultant, en fait, qu'ils puissent aider pendant la pandémie mais qu'ils ne soient pas considérés comme assez bons par la suite.

Le secteur des soins de santé est actuellement celui qui connaît la plus grave pénurie de main-d'oeuvre en Ontario, avec 38 000 emplois vacants. Les programmes de transition constituent un moyen efficace de remédier au manque de connaissances des titres de compétence étrangers.

L'Université Ryerson, par exemple, a un programme qui met en relation les travailleurs sociaux formés à l'étranger avec des stages qui leur permettent d'obtenir leur équivalence canadienne. Ce programme de 13 mois à temps partiel permet aux immigrants d'être rémunérés tout en travaillant pour obtenir l'équivalence. Cela permet d'éviter que les immigrants ne soient pas en mesure d'obtenir leur certification canadienne parce qu'ils doivent travailler et subvenir aux besoins de leur famille. Ce problème a été expliqué à au moins deux reprises aujourd'hui. Il y a 89 % de ces diplômés dans ce programme qui sont embauchés par la suite.

Nous devons également permettre une plus grande évaluation des connaissances et des compétences des gens.

Actuellement, en Ontario, soit nous reconnaissons les qualifications d'une personne, soit nous l'obligeons à recommencer complètement ses études. Il doit y avoir une voie entre ces deux types d'action. Il est nécessaire de mettre les gens à jour sur les règlements canadiens, bien sûr, mais il n'est pas nécessaire de les faire repartir à zéro.

Il serait également important de donner de meilleures informations aux immigrants, en particulier sur les programmes qui ne sont pas gérés par le gouvernement. Et même Expérience Globale Ontario est un site Web qui est très désuet et difficile à trouver.

Les intervenants m'ont dit qu'il y a un manque de coopération entre les niveaux de gouvernement qui rend le processus d'obtention de la certification en Ontario inutilement difficile. Le gouvernement devrait collaborer de façon plus constructive et plus étroite avec le gouvernement fédéral pour faire en sorte que les immigrants puissent travailler dans les domaines où nous avons besoin de leurs talents.

Et je vais vous dire qu'il existe plusieurs exemples qui m'ont été rapportés, notamment un ingénieur avec 20 ans d'expérience qui ne peut pas travailler en Ontario, un médecin libanais de formation qui n'a pas été autorisé à travailler ici et qui est parti pour être chirurgien à San Francisco, une femme titulaire d'un diplôme en droit civil qui a été obligée de refaire toutes ses études, et un homme qui a obtenu une maîtrise en ingénierie à l'Université d'Ottawa et qui a été informé par la suite qu'il devait refaire ses études avant de pouvoir travailler comme ingénieur. Des exemples comme ça, il y en a des centaines, et c'est très incongru que ça continue de se passer.

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Donc, ces histoires témoignent vraiment d'un système qui est injuste et qui désavantage non seulement les immigrants mais également notre économie. J'espère que nous sommes tous d'accord pour dire qu'il faut faire davantage pour permettre aux immigrants de réaliser leur plein potentiel dans notre économie. Le projet de loi de mes collègues est un moyen d'initier ces solutions. C'est pourquoi je l'appuie.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's always an honour to rise in the Legislature. Today, Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking Ontarians for their discipline, sacrifice and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to thank our front-line workers, health care professionals and educators for staying strong and making sure that our community can stay together during this tough time. Madam Speaker, this is team Ontario, and thanks to that team Ontario, we have been able to put COVID in the rear-view mirror.

Today, as we're talking about this important bill, I want to start by saying thanks to the member opposite for talking in continuation for which we have already started, and I will be supporting this bill.

Ontario remains the number one destination for newcomers to Canada, receiving more immigrants than the combined total of all western provinces and territories.

Immigration is one of the key economic drivers of Ontario's growth, and immigrants fill critical gaps in labour supply and the talent needs of our booming economy. Based on our current immigration target, newcomers to Ontario will add up to \$2.9 billion to Ontario's GDP by 2023.

Some 72% of the province's population growth over the last 10 years has been contributed by migration. By 2035, when five million Canadians are ready to retire after long and hard work and serving the community, the worker-to-retiree ratio is going to go down to 2 to 1. It will be young newcomers spreading innovation and caring for Ontario's prosperity.

Every year, our province continues to open up the door to thousands of internationally educated professionals and their families. Our government understands the strength in diversity, and with more and more workers set to retire over the next decade, we rely on newcomers, who already make up about 33% of Ontario's workforce, to fill in the talent demand of the province.

That is why, Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, I will be supporting Bill 98. This proposal to establish a foreign credential advisory committee merits further review and discussion. Broadly speaking, it aligns with the work the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development is already doing on several fronts to reduce barriers to those with foreign credentials.

Being the representative of one of the most immigrant-based ridings, with 61% of my constituents being born out of Canada, I want to speak about why addressing foreign credentials is extremely important. In 2021, over 107,000 people came to Ontario and began to call it home. This is the largest number of newcomers to any province. Through you, Madam Speaker, I'd like to say to them that our government is committed to making sure that you live in the best place in the world to work, raise a family, invest and thrive.

But we need to recognize the reality here, Madam Speaker. Many of our policies impacting immigrants are outdated and far from welcoming. We had many of my colleagues talk about this in the past, when we were working on Working for Workers Act 1. Many highly skilled internationally educated workers are unemployed.

At this moment, Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge and recognize that in the visitors' gallery, I have the members of the Association of Professional Driving Instructors of Ontario. Many of them are actually foreign-trained professionals, including Zameer Hussain, Rehan Muhammad, Deepak Jain, Pardeep Mudhar, Jaspreet Thaira, Priti Lamba, Sam Chong, Bob Karmakar, Abid Dhillon, Zubair Muhammad, Sarita Singh, Neelam Sharma, Umar Malik, Arooj Qaiser, Aqeel Ahmed, Barjit Singh, Rajiv Kalia and Balbir Joshan. All these people have professional educations, but when they came to Canada in order to meet the needs of the family, to put food on the table, they had to look for other alternative work. I want to say thank you. You are not just moving over and taking care of Ontario, you're actually making our dreams come true for many of our families. When people land here, you help

them to get a driver's licence and you help them get the independence they need to thrive in Canadian life. Thank you so much.

Madam Speaker, we see this plain and simple in the statistics: The unemployment rate is highest for immigrants who just arrived in Canada at 9.6%. With more years in the country, with more Canadian experiences, it falls down to 5%, the same as those born in Canada. Only 25% of the internationally trained immigrants in Ontario are employed in the regulated professions for which they are trained or have studied. Some 44% of the internationally trained engineers living in Ontario are not working as engineers. There are still barriers that immigrants face, no matter how skilled and talented they are. Trained, educated newcomers in the province struggle to find good jobs.

The Ontario government is committed to making sure to remove these barriers and provide these individuals with help. When immigrants first arrive, the first gatekeeper is getting their credentials recognized. Then starts the tough and the tricky journey of having a Canadian experience. They land here; they go for work; the employer wants them to have Canadian experience; to get Canadian experience, they need to work—and that battle goes on. In fact, the devaluation of foreign credentials is one of the most widely cited factors negatively influencing outcomes for newcomers. We've seen many movies talking about this. We've seen many people talking about it all the time.

In the past year, for example, our government completed two rounds of stakeholder consultations related to foreign credential recognition. To help internationally trained immigrants in Ontario build better lives for themselves and their families, we proposed changes like:

- eliminating Canadian work experience requirements for professional registration and licensing;
- reducing burdensome duplication of official language proficiency testing;
- allowing applicants to register faster in their regulated professions when there are emergencies; and
- ensuring the licensing process is completed in a timely manner.

Madam Speaker, if we are going to make sure that our province is the best place for newcomers, if we want everyone to thrive in our province, we cannot have regulatory bodies putting unnecessary barriers on them. We need to make it easier for people to settle here and find jobs and contribute to society. If we do so, it is a win-win situation.

In 2018, if we look at it, there were over 400,000 skilled professionals looking for jobs and investments in the province. Those workers needed work, and Ontario needed them to fill the jobs. Now we still have a problem, but it's a different problem. Now we have 300,000 jobs that are going unfilled. Jobs without people and people without jobs is a global challenge, and we have to change to address this in our province as well.

Our ministry has been working hard on programming and helping and supporting and making sure this historic labour shortage in the province is gone. That is why we

expanded the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, a school-to-work transition program, to a total of \$20 million annually. To everybody who is listening, if you have children in high school, consider looking at the OYAP program so that we can have a pathway for those kids into the skilled trades.

Furthermore, we have increased financial supports for individuals applying to Second Career by increasing weekly basic support to \$500 a week. I'll give you an example. At the airport, there were taxi drivers when there were 40-million-plus people coming, and travelling, and now we are at 10 million. The demand has gone down, and there are a lot of those taxi drivers looking for a job. Now is the time you can look at Second Career as an option, where your government is going to pay your weekly basic support up to \$500 a week.

We have also invested over \$200 million into the Skills Development Fund to allow organizations with innovative projects to address challenges with hiring, training or retaining workers.

Madam Speaker, we are doing all of this because we know that people want to come and live, work and invest in Ontario. Ontario is the largest automotive manufacturer in North America. It is a top-tier IT cluster. Ontario is an economic engine in the world. We need to attract and keep talent and our newcomers here, and then we have to make sure they're not being denied the chance to contribute. By providing newcomers with a clearer path to starting their career, we're going to give them an edge over other places.

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It is predicted that by connecting newcomers to the jobs that match their qualifications—it's simple math: They're going to start working, they're going to make more money, they're going to contribute more to the taxes, they're going to spend their money, and that will add to the GDP of our province. It is expected that Ontario's GDP will increase between \$12 billion and \$20 billion for the next five years.

Finally, to close, I want to say Bill 98 echoes the spirit of what our government is doing: creating an inclusive and prosperous Ontario where there is equal access to opportunity for all. We are lucky to live in a province as rich and talented as Ontario, and it is time we take steps to unleash the talent to its full capacity.

I want to say thank you again to the members who are here, and thank you for your community service. With that, Madam Speaker, my recommendation would be to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It really is a pleasure to stand here and speak in support of Bill 98, Fairness for Ontario's Internationally Trained Workers Act. I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague the member for Scarborough Southwest, an extraordinary MPP showing leadership here again in introducing this important bill.

There could not be a more critical time for us to address the issues affecting our foreign credentials system. Speaker, there are, as we all know, far too many barriers preventing internationally trained and educated professionals from

entering our workforce at a time when we desperately need more health care professionals, when wait times for health care services are too high, when our health care heroes themselves are incredibly burnt out. We need to fix this system, and we need to do it urgently.

Highly skilled professionals who have years' worth of academic credentials and work experience—physicians, nurses, dentists, PSWs—come into our province with hopes and dreams of entering the workforce and contributing to our economy and health sector. I hear from them every day. They are shut out, facing barrier after barrier, from challenges to getting their credentials recognized to navigating discriminatory hiring practices. Unfortunately, this government and the previous Liberal government built a broken system, and they have refused again and again to truly address the barriers.

In fact, when this government introduced Bill 27, the so-called Working for Workers Act, they specifically left out health care workers when it came to reducing barriers for regulated professionals, not to mention completely leaving out non-regulated professionals. We are in a dire situation right now. We need change, and that's why I am so proud to support this bill, which will address the barriers faced by those internationally trained professionals.

I want to mention as I wrap up here that the bill has some really important and concrete strategies to make it easier for health professionals to have their education and experience finally recognized in this province, and to start working so that we can start supporting those newcomers, delivering better health care and building our economy. This means health professionals can get to work more quickly, it means we can reduce wait times and provide better care for patients, it means we can work towards filling staffing shortages and—most importantly, Madam Speaker—it shows great respect and dignity for those newcomers.

It's time for us to fix this broken system. I call on the government, please, to prioritize the well-being of health care workers and all Ontarians in this province. Please support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I rise in strong support of the Fairness for Ontario's Internationally Trained Workers Act, and I'm a proud co-sponsor of this bill. I thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for introducing this legislation, and my co-sponsors, the members from Ottawa Centre and London North Centre.

Speaker, my late father came to Canada as an internationally trained engineer, but his skills and knowledge were not fully recognized here. This forced my parents to move across our country many times to find gainful and stable work. My wife is an internationally educated health care worker, and her degree is not fully recognized here either. I've heard this story from so many friends, neighbours and people that I've met over the years.

We hear about the need for skilled workers all the time, yet there are so many internationally educated and trained workers living here today whose skills are not recognized,

and so they are forced to take whatever job they can get to pay the bills. Not allowing them to realize their full potential affects us all.

For example, right now, so many families across our province are unable to get the medical care they need because there aren't enough family doctors. Study after study has shown that not having a family doctor can lead to more severe negative health outcomes.

Speaker, there are many internationally trained physicians here right now who can help fill this shortage, people like Fatima Ibrahim, who lives in my community. Fatima earned her medical degree in 2017 and came to Canada after completing two years of her residency abroad. She said that before coming to Canada, many people warned her how difficult it would be to get a residency placement here. She has friends who are medical doctors who wanted to come to Canada but gave up because there was no guarantee that, even if they passed the exam, they would be able to get a residency placement. In fact, she says that there are many internationally trained doctors who have been here for over 10 years and have passed the exam, but still have not been granted placements. She said she's worried about the uncertainty, and while she is still taking courses and she is trying to get a residency placement, she is also applying for jobs that are well below her qualifications.

But it's not just doctors. There are so many internationally trained health care workers who are here right now working other jobs because they can't get the credentials to work in their area of expertise.

Our health care heroes have been run off their feet, and this pandemic has shown us the real need to hire more doctors, nurses and other health care professionals.

Speaker, there are countless internationally trained workers living here in Ontario. We are in great demand of their skills, their knowledge and their expertise. Let us all vote together for this vital motion, the Fairness for Ontario's Internationally Trained Workers Act, so that these skilled workers can work in the fields that they know best. It isn't just good for them, it's good for all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: I have to begin, as my colleagues have done, by giving some love and appreciation to the MPP for Scarborough Southwest. Thank you very much for moving this, my friend. I know how hard you've worked on this.

Speaker, the member is a community organizer. It's one of the things I like so much about the work she does. Before this work, you were organizing to make sure people had fair electricity rates. You were organizing to make sure people in your community could get a decent shake. This is just an extension of your life's work.

We appreciate it in this moment, because it's not easy to come to grips with the fact that despite—we're here serving this province because we love this province. We love this country. But it's tough to realize that this country invites people here under false pretenses. We have a point system in our immigration system that brings people here,

often it could be argued, poaching brilliant minds from around the world, brilliantly skilled people from around the world, and it brings them here and it holds them back. There is logjam after logjam; there is obstacle after obstacle. People have spoken about it this afternoon. It's up to us if we actually want to change that.

I want to talk for a moment about some folks who have experienced exactly this. I talked about it in a press conference that the member held earlier today. I was a university professor. I started off in North Bay at Nipissing University. The head of my department convened a meeting and told any of us looking for a family doctor in North Bay to forget about it. "If you want a family doctor in North Bay," we were told, "hire a cab in Toronto." Some people laughed but my mouth dropped open. I couldn't believe the degree of insensitivity. I couldn't believe the kind of callousness of not finishing that thought about how unfair that situation was.

Today, I had the opportunity to talk to two internationally trained physicians, one of whom has been doing the rounds of fellowships—low-paid labour, in this great city, in Toronto—having actually tried to break in to a residency position in the province of Alberta and failing because so many internationally trained professionals are on that hamster wheel, trying to find that space, at a time when we need them the most. So I ask you, Speaker, what province, what country puts people we urgently need in a situation like this?

We have to have conversations with the colleges regulating all health professions. We have to have urgent conversations with all of them. We respect what they're doing, but if we are keeping people out whom we urgently need in, that has to change. I completely agree with what the member is saying.

I talked to another internationally trained doctor today who was in Ottawa for a long time, who started as a custodian in some of our public schools. It's an honourable job and an essential job that we need, but we have an orthopaedic surgeon trained at a renowned international institution working as a custodian in one of our schools when we urgently need family doctors and medical professionals in our city of Ottawa. Having not found a position, that person, that person's spouse and that person's family are now in the province of Saskatchewan running on that hamster wheel.

Let's pass this motion. Let's say "enough" to these ridiculous obstacles. Let's respect these professionals for the excellent people they are. Pass this motion today.

Thank you, my friend.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate? Seeing none, the member has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank all the members from across the aisle who spoke in support of this bill. I am

grateful to have all your support, and I appreciate the stories that you have shared.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the other people from across the province who have given their ideas and their feedback as well as some of the organizations that we have worked with: Dr. Ayesha Mohammad, Dr. Makini McGuire-Brown, Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan, Dr. Sayeeda Yasmeen, Dr. Ahmed Al Khatib, Ben Corpuz, Dr. Abdul Awal, Dr. Luca Salvador, Dr. Agafya Krivova, Alex Banaag, Dr. Mohammed Ali, Dr. Asaduzzaman, engineer Nowsher Ali, engineer Saifur Rahman, Azizur Rahman, as well as many other internationally trained professionals that I unfortunately don't have enough time in this House at this moment to name but I have talked about when I spoke about Bill 27, for example.

I also want to thank the RNAO, the CPSO, the OAO, the ONA, Access Alliance, Bangladeshi information and employment services and, of course, Internationally Trained Physicians of Ontario, Internationally Trained Dentists Association of Canada and Internationally Trained Medical Doctors Bridging Program for the love and support that they have shown and for the feedback that some of them have given as well.

I also want to take a moment, Speaker, to say that this bill is not just my bill or the opposition members' bill, it is the ask of thousands and thousands of people and the culmination of the struggles and their stories that they have experienced. And, essentially, it is a first step to get to that hope for a better life that I spoke about. As Ontarians, I know we can do better, and we must do better. I hope that today all members of the House will vote for Bill 98 and pass the Fairness for Ontario's Internationally Trained Workers Act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Begum has moved second reading of Bill 98, An Act to establish a framework for the recognition of internationally trained and educated workers in Ontario. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless—

Ms. Doly Begum: Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly? Good. Thank you.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, March 28, 2022, at 10:15 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1843.

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
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Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
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Karpoche, Bhutilla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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Miller, Paul (IND)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
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Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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