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5 avril 2022

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 April 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 avril 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. McNaughton moved third reading of the following bill:

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

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise in the House this morning. I want to begin by personally thanking my parliamentary assistant, the member for Mississauga—Malton—he's the PA at the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development—for working alongside me as we help ensure that our government is working for all workers.

I also want to thank the Premier for his continued leadership throughout the last four years, and particularly on this bill and other historic legislative changes our government has made to put workers in the driver's seat of Ontario's recovery and build a stronger province.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those front-line workers in our communities right across the province—Speaker, the thousands of front-line workers across every corner of our province who have braved it all to keep us safe during the pandemic. It's because of them that Ontario is coming back stronger than ever. I want to thank these workers for their dedication and for their perseverance. We all know that it hasn't been easy for any worker across the province or their families.

Ontario must be a place where the economy is about the people on the front line. As we look to Ontario's future, we need to make sure our labour laws keep pace with advancements in technology and changes in the way people work. We need to ensure we have skilled tradespeople to build the highways, roads and bridges to get people and goods where they need to be. We need to ensure workers are paid a fair wage, have benefits, have the opportunities for jobs with pensions and ensure that

they have greater opportunities for career advancements and upward mobility.

This will require a lot of work by a lot of people working together. Our future is bright, but it has to be brighter for many more people. That's why we're relentlessly working for our workers. Mr. Speaker, Ontario was built and is built by workers who shower at the end of the day, not the start. To accomplish our mission, we need all hands on deck. Things only work when everybody works together—workers, labour leaders, business and government. We all want to build our roads and bridges, build broadband, build our health care and long-term-care system and build projects that our communities need, be it a new school or an ice rink. We all want to build an Ontario where hard work pays off and big dreams come to life. To do that, we need everyone pitching in.

Today's bill, Bill 88, although historic, is part of a much larger, ambitious plan that this government has been tirelessly putting into motion over these past few years to ensure Ontario is the best place to live, work and raise a family. Late last year, the Legislature passed unprecedented changes, including our first Working for Workers Act and the Build Ontario Act, to rebalance the scales and put more workers in the driver's seat.

These changes further protect and support our workers and help them earn bigger paycheques for their families by protecting work-life balance by requiring employers to have a policy on disconnecting from work; putting more money in workers' pockets by raising the general minimum wage to \$15 an hour as of January 1 of this year; giving workers more control over their careers, and helping small businesses and start-ups find the skilled workers they need by banning non-compete agreements; making it easier for internationally trained individuals to practise in their profession by recognizing international credentials; and giving delivery drivers the basic human dignity of access to a restroom at businesses they are serving.

Many of these changes were truly unprecedented, but Ontario is a province of leaders. We're not afraid to chart a path forward and be the first in Canada—or even North America—to act. The bottom line is clear: Better jobs—with pensions, benefits and bigger paycheques—are right here for the taking in Ontario, because we're taking a side, and it's the side of those who work hard every single day.

With Bill 88, we're building on the progress we made by going a step further. These legislative proposals would, if passed, support the people of Ontario by protecting privacy through providing transparency on electronic monitoring to workers, keeping workers safe on the job

and attracting more skilled trades workers to Ontario. They would provide additional supports for our brave men and women in the Canadian forces and crack down on businesses that repeatedly violate health and safety laws that put workers at risk. They would help ensure that those in key regulated professions who want to live and work in our great province will receive their licence to work within 30 business days.

Since the passage of our first Working for Workers Act last year, our government has continued to stand up for workers and make bold changes that improve their lives. This includes recently raising the minimum wage from \$14.35 to \$15 per hour on January 1. Along with this change, liquor servers are now earning the general minimum wage of \$15 per hour—a 16.3% increase over their previous rate. We've all seen how hard our servers work and how important they are to making our favourite local restaurants what they are. They should never be making less than the general minimum wage. Not only that, but students under 18, homeworkers and hunting, fishing and wilderness guides also saw an increase in their special minimum wage rates.

Ontario's workers, as I mentioned earlier, have been the unsung heroes of this pandemic. They've stocked shelves, kept our supply chains moving—they've helped us in so many ways. They helped us enjoy a meal among family and friends at our favourite local restaurant. In fact, the industries employing the most minimum wage earners are accommodation and food services, and retail, with nearly 37% of workers earning the general minimum wage of \$15 per hour in retail and almost 24% in accommodation and food services.

0910

As a result of our actions, Ontario's new general minimum wage is now one of the highest in Canada. This is real, meaningful support to help workers deal with the rising cost of living. These raises help the workers who need it most by providing over 700,000 workers and their families with bigger paycheques, which means a stronger economy for everyone. Because when our workers are supported, they build strong families and stronger communities, and that's good for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, for years the way we work has been changing, but obviously the pandemic has dramatically accelerated the rate of change here in Ontario and everywhere around the world. More people are working remotely than ever before, and many employers have adapted to new technologies. These changes are presenting new challenges and opportunities for workers and businesses across our province and around the globe.

The future of work is already here, and we need to ensure that Ontario workers continue to be protected and that our economy remains strong. That is why last June our government established the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee to examine the changing landscape of work and to provide recommendations that position Ontario to lead our nation coming out of the pandemic. Through their research and discussions with workers and other people, they looked at how we could adapt to the

changing nature of work and the opportunities these changes present, as well as lead economic growth by helping workers develop their skills and by ensuring that Ontario's employment laws continue to protect our workers.

The committee submitted their final report last fall. Their research and consultations confirmed many of our assumptions about the future of work, such as an increase in remote work and the need to address looming labour shortages in the skilled trades, health care and other sectors. Their recommendations laid the foundation for our bold plan to address the challenges we face. I'd like to once again thank Rohinton Medhora, the committee chair, for leading such a thoughtful and thorough process, along with Kathryn Marshall, Vass Bednar, Mark Quail, Sean Speer, Mark Beckles and Susan McArthur. They provided many valuable and thoughtful recommendations.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, their advice led to our bill the House passed late last year, as well as the bill that I'm speaking about here today. And I'm proud to say that we've already implemented several of their key recommendations. This includes changes passed last year through our first Working for Workers Act, which protected personal and family time by requiring larger employers to have right-to-disconnect policies for workers and the banning of non-compete agreements, which hold both workers and small businesses back.

Other recommendations included advising on how to expand health and other benefits coverage for workers so that benefits coverage isn't tied to employers. Most workers in Ontario with full-time permanent jobs have medical insurance and dental coverage through their employers. In comparison, less than a quarter of those who work part-time or in precarious jobs have similar benefits. This means these workers and their families often have to make difficult choices between their health and other necessities, like food and shelter. Independent contractors, low-wage workers, newcomers, younger workers and gig workers are also less likely to have workplace benefits. That is why, in response to the committee's recommendation, we recently announced the appointment of a portable benefits advisory panel to seek advice on designing and implementing a plan that provides workers with benefits, such as health, dental and vision care, even if they change jobs. This would make Ontario the first province in Canada to pursue such a comprehensive benefits program.

I'm also pleased to share that we have now appointed the five experts to this panel: Chair Susan McArthur, the co-founder and executive chair of LockDocs Inc.; Sunil Johal, the vice-president of public policy of CSA Group; Brad Nicpon, a partner with McCarthy Tétrault; Marlayna Perrone, a professional sommelier and advocate with first-hand experience working without benefits; and Allan Shapira, a senior partner and managing director with Aon Wealth Solutions. These panel members represent a variety of sectors and have expertise in financial, legal and labour issues. They not only have experience in the structure and administration of benefit plans, but also offer the perspective of those who do not currently have benefits.

As a first step, the panel will conduct research and consultations over the coming months on how benefits could reside with workers, not their employers. This includes assessing existing gaps in benefits coverage for different types of workers and analyzing best practices and innovative models from other jurisdictions. They will submit a final report in summer 2023 with recommendations on how to best administer and implement a new benefits program. This will help millions of people and their families get greater access to benefits coverage, especially workers who do not have health and dental coverage through their employers, and it would offer peace of mind to workers who currently have coverage that they can take bold steps in their careers, knowing a safety net is there to catch them.

In addition to the establishment of our portable benefits panel, the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee's advice also guided many of the proposals in our second Working for Workers Act legislation that I'm speaking to today.

First, I'd like to touch on a proposal that would support and protect digital platform workers who offer rides or deliver food and other items for companies such as Uber, DoorDash and Instacart. The committee spoke with workers, employers and unions about how we can better support our workers in this changing landscape of work. They came back saying that gig workers feel particularly vulnerable in their jobs. Not only that, but their Ipsos survey found that the majority of people in Ontario also thought we could do more for these workers, with 62% of people agreeing that the province should guarantee a certain minimum level of income for technology platform or gig workers.

Over the past couple of years, we've seen a boom in Ontario's gig economy as our province collectively relied on these app-based workers to see us through the height of the pandemic. These people worked on the front lines throughout the pandemic, providing ride-share, courier and delivery services. They got us where we needed to go and, for many of us, brought essential goods like food and medicine as we isolated to keep our friends and neighbours safe.

Data now shows as many as one in five Canadians work in the gig economy—a number that is only predicted to increase. However, these workers often face uncertain working conditions, including finding it difficult to predict paycheques or resolve workplace complaints. Today, we're continuing to stand up for these workers by addressing the challenges many of them are facing.

Many digital platforms use algorithms to determine when and how quickly workers are given their next delivery or customer; however, most digital platforms do not share how this works with their workers, making it unclear why other workers may pick up more work than them or why they get more work at some times than others. Some digital platforms also do not provide their workers with clear explanations on how their pay is calculated. This makes it difficult to predict their earnings. Furthermore, digital platforms can currently remove

workers from their platforms without providing an explanation why. If workers appeal the decision, they may not be able to speak directly with a person.

With our proposed Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, as part of this bill, we are sending a message that this stops today by giving these workers the rights and protections they deserve. This would include guaranteeing digital platform workers the general minimum wage for each work assignment; the right to keep their tips; the right to certain information about their work assignments, including how their pay is calculated; the right to resolve their work-related disputes here in Ontario; and protection from reprisal should they seek to assert their worker rights. **0920**

Speaker, I think we can all agree that gig workers in Ontario should never make less than minimum wage—nobody should make less than minimum wage. These workers should also not be removed from the operator's platform without explanation. And they should not have to travel out of Canada to resolve a work-related dispute.

By passing these changes, Ontario would be the first jurisdiction in Canada to guarantee foundational rights and protections for our hard-working digital platform workers who help us get around, or deliver to our doors, by providing ride-share, delivery or courier services. There is no blueprint in Canada for these changes, but, without a doubt, gig workers in Ontario are significantly better off than their counterparts in any other province because of these changes. These core rights are a foundation in our mission to help all workers earn bigger paycheques to take care of their families, not an end point. We would once again be leading Canada by requiring platform operators to give digital platform workers the rights that others have.

Speaker, advances in technology have allowed our workers to reach new heights, and we're accomplishing more than we ever thought possible. Ontario continues to get stronger every day. Our economy is bouncing back, jobs are returning and workers have more opportunities than ever to earn bigger paycheques. But as the world of work changes, we need to make sure our laws are adapting to protect our workers and their families.

One of these areas is the electronic monitoring of employees. Delivery persons are being followed by GPS, construction workers are using phones and tablets on the job site and office workers are logging on from home—often from kitchen tables, living rooms or other shared spaces. We cannot leave our workers in uncharted territory and we cannot wait for others to find the path forward for us. The people of Ontario are leaders and, as a government that is working for workers, we must act decisively. That is why, as part of Bill 88, we are protecting privacy by proposing that employers with 25 or more workers will be required to have a written electronic monitoring policy in place for all of their employees. The policy would need to contain the information on whether the employer electronically monitors its workers, and if so, a description of how and in what circumstances the employer does this. In addition, the employer would need to disclose the purpose of collecting information through electronic monitoring.

Our new legislation, if passed, would be the first of its kind in Canada. Ontario would once again be breaking new ground and taking historic steps to protect privacy by addressing electronic monitoring in the workplace. Our government is breaking down barriers by increasing transparency. We're empowering our workers by giving them the tools they need and deserve. This is just one of the ways we are rebalancing the scales and how we're putting our workers in the driver's seat of our future.

Our proposed legislation also includes new actions that would further protect workers on the job and save lives—because every worker deserves to be safe at work and to come home at the end of a hard day's work. Severe injuries or death should never be considered a cost of doing business in Ontario. Unfortunately, some businesses pay fines and are not deterred, even after repeated violations, continuing to put their workers at risk. We're stopping that now.

As part of Bill 88, we are proposing to increase the maximum fines for officers and directors of businesses that fail to provide a safe work environment that leads to a worker being severely injured or dying on the job. If convicted, businesses and their officers and directors could face fines of up to \$1.5 million. Other individuals with the business could be fined up to \$500,000. This is a significant increase from the current maximum fine of \$100,000, making Ontario's penalties the highest in the country. These increased fines would reinforce the importance of putting worker safety first, further penalizing those that treat injuries as the cost of doing business.

We're also taking further action to promote safety in the workplace and address the opioid crisis. From March 2020 to January of last year, there were approximately 2,500 opioid-related deaths in Ontario, including in workplaces. Of the victims who were employed, 30% were construction workers, by far the most of any industry impacted. Bars and nightclubs are also seeing increased opioid usage, which often involves recreational drugs laced with deadly opioids such as fentanyl.

Everyone in our province knows someone who has been impacted by the opioid pandemic. These are brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers, and we need to do everything in our power to save lives. That is why our government is proposing to bring life-saving naloxone kits to workplaces where there is a risk of a worker having an opioid overdose. Naloxone is an effective first aid intervention and can prevent death if administered quickly.

Requiring these businesses to have naloxone kits on-hand will help reduce the stigma around opioid abuse, raise awareness about the risks of accidental overdoses and save hundreds of lives every year. Staff training would also be required to ensure they are familiar with how to use these kits. In addition, these kits could be used to help clients, customers or anyone else in an emergency under the Good Samaritan Act. We'll also ensure there isn't a financial burden on businesses: Provincial grants would be available to cover costs related to the kits and training.

I'd like to take a moment to highlight other actions our government is taking to protect worker health and safety

throughout this pandemic. According to the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada, Ontario's occupational health and safety record is among the best in Canada, with our province achieving the lowest rate of worktime lost to injury among any province or territory since 2009. Despite this, we are constantly looking for new and better ways to protect our workers. That is why, last year, my ministry released a five-year Prevention Works strategy to protect workers from workplace injuries and illness. The strategy aims to help workplaces comply with and exceed workplace health and safety laws and standards to keep workers safe, focusing on occupational illnesses, employee mental health, and workplace violence and harassment.

In support of this strategy, late last year we invested more than \$6 million to support research led by the Occupational Cancer Research Centre to identify the causes of workplace cancers, prevent them from occurring and better support workers already impacted by occupational illness. This investment will help scientists identify and track occurrences of workplace cancer and exposure to harmful substances, research the causes of workplace cancer and, ultimately, help improve the recognition of occupational illnesses in the province.

We also recently announced a \$1.7-million investment to support mental health training and resources for mining and forestry workers in northern Ontario. Unfortunately, research shows that mining and forestry workers are at higher risk of experiencing anxiety, stress and depression. Our miners and forestry workers operate in challenging environments, day in and day out, to deliver materials that communities across Ontario rely on. While these jobs provide rewarding, meaningful careers, we need to acknowledge the mental toll they can take.

To address this, Workplace Safety North has developed a three-year program that will deliver in-person and online training for mining and forestry operations and improve mental health outcomes for workers in the industry. As part of the project, workers and employers will have 24/7 support, including an online portal with mental health tools and free resources and awareness sessions for small businesses. These services will help reduce the stigma associated with mental health challenges so that workers can ask for support when they need it.

0930

Speaker, as I mentioned previously, our first Working for Workers Act also included several actions to support workers and workplace safety. One of these includes requiring temporary help agencies and recruiters to have a licence to operate here in Ontario to help protect vulnerable employees from being exploited. Inspections by my ministry's officers have shown that there are multiple temporary help agencies in Ontario that are illegally paying people below the minimum wage and denying other basic employment rights. In doing so, they gain an unfair competitive advantage over law-abiding agencies by undercutting rates. That is why we will enable officers to levy penalties against an unlicensed temp help agency or recruiter, or a business that is using an unlicensed operator. As well, those who use deceitful

recruiters could be required to repay workers for illegal fees charged, and we will hire a dedicated team of officers to crack down on temporary help agencies and recruiters who are exploiting and trafficking domestic and foreign workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented an unprecedented challenge for workers and employers across Ontario—a challenge our government acted on by introducing new and historic measures to further support and protect the workers and workplaces of our province. This includes introducing and extending the worker income protection benefit program, which provides up to three paid sick days for certain reasons related to COVID-19. To date, this program has helped over 375,000 workers by providing them with up to \$200 a day for three days if they need to miss work for reasons related to COVID-19, such as to get vaccinated, self-isolate or care for a family member. To support employers, Ontario has continued to reimburse businesses for providing this support to their workers, which has now totalled more than \$144 million. The top three industries that have submitted claims include manufacturing, retail and construction—sectors that have been hard hit by the pandemic and which have relied on this support to see them through.

Next, we also introduced an unlimited job-protected infectious disease emergency leave, which workers can use if they need to miss work because of specified reasons related to COVID-19. We also hired over 100 new occupational health and safety inspectors to support business inspection campaigns and help ensure employees, businesses and the public are protected. We released free tools and resources to help businesses comply with COVID protocols, including an online workplace safety plan builder, which allows workplaces to think through some of the COVID-19 risks in their workplace and then choose actions to make their workplace safer. Together, these actions have enhanced worker and workplace health and safety protections and will continue to guide us as we emerge from the pandemic.

Returning back to today's bill, next I'd like to discuss our proposed action to support military reservists. Canada has a proud military tradition, and our reservists are an integral part of that. We rely on these brave women and men in times of need to provide support and protection without a second thought. I'd like to thank all of Canada's military personnel for their service and bravery.

Reservists are deployed on international operations and here within Canada. This may involve providing assistance in dealing with an emergency or its aftermath, including search-and-rescue operations; recovery from national disasters, such as flood relief; military aid following ice storms; and aircraft crash recovery.

Throughout the pandemic, the Canadian forces have been ready to respond wherever and whenever they were needed. They were deployed to long-term-care facilities, they distributed personal protective equipment and they helped with contact tracing efforts. They were and continue to be heroes. We also know that it hasn't been easy. Regions across Ontario have seen the number of new

recruits cut in half due to the pandemic, and this shortage of reservists and troops has put a heavier burden on current reservists and military operations.

Currently under the Employment Standards Act, reservist leave is available for deployments, but reservists are required to be employed with their employer for at least six consecutive months before they qualify for job-protected leave. This is far longer than other jurisdictions in Canada. To make it easier for reservists to serve their country, we're reducing this unnecessary burden to three months. We're also proposing changes that, if passed, would broaden the reasons for taking reservist leave to include participation in Canadian forces military skills training. With these new proposals, we are going one step further to support, protect and attract our best and brightest to the Canadian forces.

Speaker, the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have shown us the importance of being visionary amid a rapidly changing world. The pandemic has impacted every sector of our economy. It's changed the way we work, the way we live and the way business is done. As we move towards our economic recovery, we must heed the lessons the pandemic has taught us. We need to be agile, we need to have the courage, and it will take bold actions to build a stronger Ontario. Speaker, our legislation does just that.

Our government is working for workers by implementing first-of-their-kind changes that deliver better workplace protections, bigger paycheques and greater opportunities for workers across our province. We're building a stronger economy for workers and businesses. Part of that means tackling the labour shortages we're seeing in all of our communities across Ontario. This is truly a first-of-its-kind challenge.

Businesses are ready to hire, but many are having trouble finding workers. Shopkeepers and merchants on main streets say, "I want to hire, but I just can't find the workers." I've heard it; all of our MPPs have heard it; the Premier has heard it. Each of these jobs is a paycheque going uncollected. That's a wasted opportunity for workers, families and our communities.

Recently there were over 330,000 vacant jobs in Ontario, including rising job vacancies in skilled trades-related occupations. That's more than the population of Windsor. Unfilled jobs cost our province billions in lost productivity. Worker shortages like this impact our economy, disrupt our supply chains and the services that all of our families rely on. Even worse, they can force companies to close or relocate, affecting local jobs and local economies. For the rest of us, we feel the labour shortage in our everyday lives. Be it long wait times, lineups and travelling far from homes to find basic necessities, we're quietly making sacrifices because our economy doesn't have enough people in enough jobs.

That's why our government is working to support the incredible talent we have right here in Ontario. As the Premier has said, Ontario has the best workers in the world. We've invested \$1.5 billion over four years in programs to attract more people to the skilled trades, train

for in-demand jobs, retrain people who lost their jobs and encourage more employers to hire and bring on apprentices. Through this work, we are helping to create opportunities and keep and attract talented workers.

But we need to do more. Now is the time to act. It's never been more important for our province to keep, train and attract more skilled workers, because our government is building Ontario, with over \$148 billion in infrastructure projects, including bridges, roads, highways and hospitals.

By 2025, it is estimated that as many as one in five jobs in Ontario will be in the skilled trades. At the same time, one third of tradespeople are nearing retirement. We're projecting a shortfall of 100,000 skilled workers just in construction over the next decade. There are opportunities in the trades for well-paying careers with pensions and benefits, doing meaningful work that includes opportunities for entrepreneurship. Those opportunities should not go to waste, and our businesses and economy should not be held back by a lack of skilled workers. Without workers in these jobs, companies can't expand, prosper and create even more jobs in and out of the trades. Without enough workers in these jobs, our government's historic investments in subways, in highways, in hospitals can't be built on schedule.

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That is why our government is taking action to prepare our workers for the future. That is why our investment to support the skilled trades strategy helps break the stigma around the trades, simplify the system and encourage employers to participate in apprenticeships. Initiatives under the strategy include expanding our investment in the Pre-apprenticeship Training Program to \$28 million to provide potential tradespeople with the training they need to launch rewarding careers in the trades; investing a total of \$20 million annually in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program to expand the program and provide more opportunities for students; and, finally, we're going to finalize the second round of projects under the Skills Development Fund, a more than \$200-million initiative that supports innovative training projects, that connects job seekers with the skills and training they need to find well-paying careers close to home.

The Skills Development Fund seeks to support projects from a range of applicants that unlock the potential of skilled trades and broader training initiatives to support those impacted by COVID-19. The first round of funding for the Skills Development Fund last year supported almost 150 projects, including many focused on the skilled trades, and helped 280,000 people around our province take the next step in their careers.

Speaker, we also launched our new agency, Skilled Trades Ontario, replacing the Ontario College of Trades or OCOT. Skilled Trades Ontario is responsible for promoting trades and apprenticeship, updating apprenticeship training and curriculum standards. It also provides 24/7 online support for clients and delivers a one-stop-shop customer service approach that is long overdue.

Together, these actions will simplify the journey to becoming a tradesperson, making it more straightforward

to start, more straightforward to follow and more straightforward to complete. Registration times will be cut from 60 days under OCOT to 12 days or under, under the Skilled Trades Ontario agency. That is truly a win for all of Ontario and for all of us.

Today's legislation also includes proposed actions to make it easier for regulated professionals, including skilled workers, to come to Ontario from other provinces and territories. If passed, this would ensure that workers in 14 regulated professions, including 23 compulsory trades, would get registration decisions in 30 business days. That's a crucial step in cutting red tape, making it easier for workers from other jurisdictions to find good jobs here in Ontario. Workers would not have to wait for weeks to know whether their application has been received, months while it's being assessed by regulators and then weeks for the decision to be sent.

To be competitive, we must cut the red tape holding back our workers and put them in the driver's seat. That's why Ontario will move forward with recognizing all Red Seal trades, why we're making it easier for workers who are trained to work at heights to do so here in Ontario and why we're aligning curriculums so apprentices can easily keep training when they move.

Speaker, the Red Seal program sets common standards for the skills of tradespeople across Canada. Tradespeople who have successfully passed the Red Seal examination receive a Red Seal endorsement on their provincial or territorial trade certificate of qualification. The Red Seal endorsement makes it easier for out-of-province skilled workers to come to Ontario. That's why Ontario is already participating in 52 of the 55 Red Seal trades, and now we're taking steps to recognize the remaining three occupations as trades under Ontario's skilled trades legislation and to have these three trades recognized as Red Seal trades in Ontario.

To start this process, we will begin to take steps to name gas fitter class A, gas fitter class B and oil and heat systems technicians as Red Seal trades here. This recognition will not only boost the prestige of Ontario workers in these occupations, it will also make it easy for workers from other provinces and territories in these trades to start working in our province. We're keeping and attracting the best, and building a stronger Ontario.

Speaker, our Working for Workers Act stands up for workers across Ontario from all sectors of our economy. No matter what job you do or where you do it from, be it on a construction site, delivering food, stocking shelves or logging on to a laptop from home, Bill 88 has something for you. It protects privacy by requiring employers to provide information on electronic monitoring of employees, empowering workers to know how and when they are being monitored. It protects the jobs of military reservists, so they don't need to worry about providing for their families when they return home from defending our great country. It guarantees certain rights and protections for the digital platform workers who deliver our groceries, help us get around and so much more. It protects workers on the job by mandating that workplaces with a risk of a

worker having an opioid overdose have naloxone kits on site and by increasing occupational health and safety fines to be the highest in Canada for businesses that fail to keep workers safe.

Ultimately, this bill creates a better future for the workers of today and tomorrow by ensuring their basic rights are protected and our labour laws keep up with the changing world of work. Workers across Ontario are all different. The types of work they do are different. But it is our dedication to building our province that unites all of us.

This legislation sends a clear message to workers that our government has their back. It supports the drivers who get us where we need to go and who bring us essential goods and services. It supports transparency at work, whether we are on a work site or working from home. It reduces barriers for qualified workers to come to Ontario and protects their health and safety. It builds on what our government has already done to promote economic growth.

By taking these steps now, we can position Ontario as a global leader and the best place in the world to live, pursue a career and raise a family. As I said at the start, Mr. Speaker, things always work best when labour, business and government work together. We all want to get it done. We all want to build an Ontario where hard work pays off and big dreams are made real. To do that, we need everyone pitching in. We're all in and, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're going to get the job done.

I urge all members to support this bill—truly game-changing and life-changing legislation for many workers across the province. We need to ensure that every worker in Ontario has the opportunity to earn more take-home pay—bigger paycheques for themselves and their families. That's how we build strong families and stronger communities in every corner across Ontario. We need to ensure that we're bringing in more health and safety measures for workers. How can you be opposed to bringing in naloxone kits in workplaces where we're battling an opioid pandemic in this province? We have an opportunity to ensure that every worker has the chance for a better job, a bigger paycheque and a career with a defined pension and benefits. That is something that all of us should be supporting in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to share a couple of stories. We all meet workers who have an amazing story—an inspiration to all of us—but I want to share one story with a young lady named Nattisha that I met a number of months ago. She told me that she came from an at-risk community in Toronto. She lived in community housing. She was a single mom on social assistance, with two young daughters. She had the opportunity to try the different skilled trades through the government's pre-apprenticeship program, where they had four or five weeks to try all different trades.

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She decided that she wanted to become an ironworker, which is—for me, I'm afraid of heights, so it wouldn't

have been one that I would have chosen, but Nattisha started an apprenticeship program to become an iron-worker, and about a year ago, she became a licensed ironworker, a journeyperson in the trade. I found her phone number and gave her a call one night. I said, "Nattisha, congratulations. I'm just curious, how much are you earning?" She said, "I'm earning \$44.08 an hour, with a defined pension, with benefits." I asked her, "What are you most proud of?" She said, "Well, two things: For the first time in my life my young daughters are looking up to me. I'm in a career that they can be proud of and that I can be proud of." She went on to say that for the first time in her life, she was able to afford a car.

These are the careers that we need to be promoting across Ontario. That's why I continue to say that going to university is not the only way to be successful in life. There are amazing opportunities in the trades. There are 140 different trades to choose from. And I'm proud of our government's investment: \$1.5 billion over four years to end the stigma around the trades, to ensure that we have a simplified apprenticeship system and to ensure that employers are bringing on apprentices, because they obviously have a key role to play in ensuring that apprentices get the full scope of the trade and the hours to become licensed.

Secondly, I just want to share a story about providing more opportunities to people in Ontario. I was actually in Hamilton a number of months ago. Our government partnered with the John Howard Society to help people with criminal records, criminal backgrounds, to find meaningful opportunities, to find upward mobility in their careers. I met a young lady named Colleen. She's married with three kids. I remember calling her. She was a participant in this program. She told me that for years and years she would get to the final stage of an interview, and they would ask, "Do you have a criminal record?" and obviously she would tell them that she did, and she would be turned down for that job. So we partnered with the John Howard Society in Hamilton. They had a target of recruiting 40 people with criminal records to find work in manufacturing jobs in Hamilton. All of them would come with pensions and benefits. Well, they thought that it would take a year. Literally within a matter of weeks, they fulfilled their commitment to find 40 people with a criminal background a defined, meaningful job.

So when we talk about all hands on deck to build a stronger Ontario, we're doing this because it's changing lives, it's building stronger lives for those individuals. It's giving them more freedom. It's building stronger families, it's building stronger communities, it's filling labour shortages across the province. It truly is a win for everyone. And we have to continue to really look at these innovative training projects. I referenced the Skills Development Fund. That project in Hamilton was funded through the Skills Development Fund.

Speaker, I think of Colleen, who is now providing more take-home pay for her three kids and her family, with pension and benefits. Those are good things. I think of some of the changes we're making for people on social

assistance. The Auditor General pointed out that under the former Liberal government, only 1% of people left social assistance. That, to me, is an injustice. Why would we not help people on social assistance find meaningful opportunities? That's why we're reforming the Employment Ontario system: to help people find meaningful jobs. We're providing people on social assistance \$28,000 a year. That includes child care expenses. That includes a living allowance while they take training. All of these training programs are 12 months or under. We're now paying for work boots to get people started in a job. We're paying for uniforms for their first day on the job. We're sitting through job interviews to help people on ODSP, for example, get through that interview and land a well-paying and meaningful job. We're buying transit passes in communities across the province to help people get from point A to point B and get to that job.

All of this, Speaker, comes from the position that meaningful jobs change lives. This is how we're going to build a stronger Ontario. All of the changes we're doing, we're leading Canada. In many cases, we're leading North America.

I think of our first working for workers legislation that we passed, to recognize international credentials. Only 25% of immigrants today here in Ontario are working in a profession that they've studied. That's an injustice to them, but it also costs our economy billions of dollars every year because these people aren't working in jobs that they've trained for. We became the first province in Canada to recognize international credentials. Quite frankly, all governments of all different stripes should have dealt with this many years ago. But we took this on in the fall, and this is going to give a hand up to so many newcomers who make all of our communities stronger.

I think of the right-to-disconnect policy—again, the first in Canada to allow people, when they go home, to be disconnected from work, to truly be off-the-clock when they're at home, to go home and hug their son, daughter or spouse, to spend time with them and get away from work. We're the first to do that, Mr. Speaker. I mean, obviously the pandemic has changed everything. I've mentioned about technological changes where people are working, but this is good news for workers in Ontario.

But we're not done. This legislation here today, Bill 88: We ask the opposition to support us, to support getting tradespeople here from other provinces. This is supported by unions. I've worked closely with our labour partners since becoming Minister of Labour back in June 2019. I remember those first three months, meeting with literally hundreds of labour leaders and sitting at the table all the way through.

I remember in March 2020, when the pandemic hit the province of Ontario, we had other political parties and others out there, telling us to shut down construction, to close construction outright. But, Mr. Speaker, do you know what that would have done? It would have prevented us from building hospitals. It would have prevented us from building testing assessment centres. It would have prevented people from going to nuclear plants to work to

provide energy to our homes. It would have stopped workers from putting broadband in our northern communities, in our rural communities. It would have stopped the expansion of natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I took a different approach. We reached out to our labour partners, to our labour leaders. We reached out to workers in construction. We reached out to contractors and industry associations to say, "How can we keep construction open, but keep workers safe?" That's why we invested in health and safety programs. That's why we brought in more controls in the construction industry. I'm proud to say that because of that decision, 550,000 women and men continued to work during COVID-19 on construction sites, and relatively, it's been a very safe industry. It's something that I think we can be damn proud of, as a government, that we kept construction open.

Speaker, these are good, union jobs, with pensions and benefits. We need more people picking up careers in the skilled trades. We need more people working in construction. I think of my good friend the member from Sarnia-Lambton. He came from industry in Sarnia. Heck, the member from Sarnia-Lambton was a union member. He also was on management. He was a champion for the skilled trades. Could you imagine—to the member from Sarnia-Lambton—that we shut down industry in Sarnia? No, but that's what opposition parties were telling us to do. I mean, the leader of the Liberals said, "Just shut construction down for two weeks." You can't turn these job sites and industries down for two weeks and expect to get them back open again. These are gigantic projects. Again, it just speaks to working with labour, government and business to build a stronger Ontario for everyone, to build more opportunities for everyone and to help fill the labour shortages.

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I remember I was with the member from Carleton up in Ottawa, and the member from Ottawa West-Nepean as well, where we announced a partnership with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the IBEW. We worked with the IBEW. We're training 2,500 electricians. We're giving them free apprenticeships and free upskilling, because there are electricians out there who need to upskill to work on electric vehicles, for example.

Of course, we can all be proud of Premier Ford's leadership—I think down close to home for me and you, Speaker, in Windsor, the news yesterday about General Motors at the plant in Ingersoll, thousands of jobs are coming back to the automotive sector. It's because of the leadership of Premier Ford, and innovative training projects to ensure that we have the trained workers, not only for today, but for tomorrow.

I just want to point out to the member from Carleton, I'll never forget the speech she gave that day in Ottawa when we did this partnership with the IBEW. Her dad came to Canada in 1988 from Iran—

Interjection.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Oh, 1986, excuse me—and he is a member of the IBEW. He is ensuring that we

stay connected throughout the pandemic, but truly a great story that you shared. Again, this is about how these opportunities create stronger families, more opportunities for people and really do help businesses.

In closing, we just encourage—put the partisanship aside on this bill. There are a lot of good things in this. Naloxone kits: How can you vote against protecting those workers in providing life-saving naloxone kits? How can you prevent skilled workers from coming to Ontario? How can you be opposed to being transparent when it comes to telling workers when they're being monitored through tracking devices?

I think of probably the story that disgusted me the most during the pandemic was when there was a warehouse that was literally tracking movements of their workers and how long they spent in the washroom. This is Ontario; we're not going to tolerate that.

And for the opposition to be playing politics on this, it isn't in the best interest. I implore everyone to unite together and work together. Let's do what's in the best interests of working families and hard-working women and men across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We do have time for questions and responses. The member for London—Fanshawe is first.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I want to share an email I'm sure all of us got, from Richard. He's a worker at SkipTheDishes. He says that "nowhere in the bill is the term 'work assignment' defined. This is a critical problem with the bill. As per the SkipTheDishes model, there are three possible definitions of 'work assignment.' Each will result in dramatically different calculations on a driver's active time and will thus result in dramatically different impacts on my earning potential."

He says, "The critical take-home message is that under any potential 'active time' model, I will make less money than I currently do. Bill 88 has no potential to do anything but cause me to earn less money than I currently do. The Working for Workers Act will only cause me to lose money each week."

So, Speaker, my question is, why is the government refusing to pass the member from London West's Bill 28, the Preventing Worker Misclassification Act, that would actually help gig workers like Richard?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I thank my friend from London—Fanshawe for that question.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we're leading not only Canada but North America in a number of the changes we're bringing forward. We are the first in Canada to bring forward foundational rights for gig workers. But I've said clearly this is not an end point; this a major start.

Workers in the gig economy are going to be far better off under these changes. They're going to be guaranteed at least a minimum wage during active hours. They're going to know how they're paid. They're getting a pay stub for the first time. They're going to resolve workplace disputes here in Ontario. Their tips that they earn are actually going to be on top of their wages that they're earning. We're making sure that that happens in legislation.

Again, technology's continuing to evolve; every single year there are thousands more workers in the gig economy. I think this is something that our government after June 2 or future governments have to continue to monitor to continue to improve things for workers out there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Sarnia—Lambton seems to have a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to applaud the Minister of Labour and skilled trades and immigration etc.—he's got all those different titles and he does them all very well.

He touched on Nova, the petrochemical centre of Sarnia, Ontario. Of course, the Nova project—they're spending over \$2 billion there. It would have been a tragedy—well, we couldn't have allowed it to happen. It would have been a catastrophe to shut that plant down. It's right in the midst of being constructed—\$2 billion-plus, with \$100 million from the province of their own money to see that project completed.

Having said that, I wonder if the minister could speak on a program—I haven't got a lot of time; I don't think you touched on it in your speech: Helmets to Hardhats.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Again, I want to thank the member from Sarnia—Lambton. There is likely no one in the Legislature that is more of a champion for men and women that shower at the end of the day. That's who we're doing this for. There are a lot of people in politics that forget about those blue-collar workers out there, but I can tell you that this government doesn't and this member doesn't.

One of the partnerships that I am most proud of is our partnership with Helmets to Hardhats. Helmets to Hardhats, which is run and led by our good friend Joe Maloney, the former head of the boilermakers' union, they take people who come back from active service and get them into a career in the skilled trades. They help with mental health supports, shelter and then get them into an apprenticeship program. I'm proud to say that over 1,000 people who served in the Canadian Armed Forces are now in the skilled trades.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I think this government is really prone to unilateral decision-making. Each time legislation gets tabled here, they talk about overwhelming support, and then when it gets to the committee process, you have a very open, public process, people coming and criticizing and saying, "Well, we need to change this or maybe improve this." There's a schedule in here that the gig workers have spoken quite against and have asked for changes—to pull it entirely or make changes.

I'm reiterating what my colleague has said: Why doesn't this government listen to those who are affected most by their legislation when they come to committee and make changes?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, I met personally with dozens and dozens of gig workers. I know there are some voices out there that would like to see some other things, but I can tell you that the majority of gig workers are supporting the foundational rights that we're bringing forward.

Again, I'd say to the member opposite, this isn't an end point. Under this legislation, gig workers are going to be much better off. They're going to be much better off working here in Ontario than in any other jurisdiction across the country.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that we have been listening. That's why we brought in foundational rights for gig workers. It's why we cracked down on temp help agencies. It's why we're bringing in portable benefits. There are millions of workers in Ontario today that don't have benefits. Under Premier Ford and our government, we're going to expand benefits to millions of workers across the province.

Look, Mr. Speaker, we're just getting started.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm going to go back to the military reservist leave piece in the bill. The Brockville Rifles is a primary reserve infantry regiment with the Canadian army in my riding since the 1800s, long and established. We value some of our partners in terms of this particular piece in the legislation. I know it's near and dear to my constituents, and certainly I want to continue to support the Brockville Rifles in any way, shape or form that I can.

I just wondered if the minister could outline some of the partners that he has worked with to create this piece in the legislation.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the minister, who is just such a strong champion for people in his riding, those of the Canadian Armed Forces, in the military, military reservists.

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Before I answer his question, I do want to pay tribute to the minister. He has single-handedly saved Kemptville College. I think of the skilled trades training that they're doing; it's because of this minister pushing to ensure that Kemptville remains open and continues training the people of today and for generations to come. Mr. Speaker, I remember being in Kemptville with the minister when we were in opposition. The Liberals, supported by the official opposition, gutted the college and wanted it closed. But through his leadership and his push and his drive, working with local partners, we're saving that college.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank him on the reservists—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): And I'd like to remind you, you're out of time.

The member for London West has a question.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I was at the committee that had public hearings into this bill. The committee heard from many, many gig workers and representatives of gig workers. One of the things committee members were told is the risks that gig workers face when they are doing their jobs. They talked about policies that are set by the app companies that incentivize even more risks and make the work even more dangerous, and yet gig workers have no access to WSIB, no access to EI. If they're injured, they have no access to occupational health and safety.

None of this is reflected in the digital platform, the workers' bill of rights. So I ask the minister, why does he not care about the health and safety of gig workers in Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to say that we're going to be the first jurisdiction in North America to bring forward portable benefits for millions of workers, including gig workers. They're going to have access to health benefits—benefits like dental and vision. Mr. Speaker, we are going to be the first in North America to do that.

I have to say to the member opposite—I mean, I flipped through this Green New Democratic Deal that says you're going to transition workers from legacy industries into new jobs. That means hundreds of thousands of skilled trades workers will no longer be working in Sarnia, will no longer be working in nuclear facilities.

I was just up in Kapuskasing. We announced 100 jobs at the pulp and paper mill. Under the new deal here with the New Democrats, are those jobs going to be gone?

Mr. Speaker, we need to stand up for blue-collar workers. This party opposite has abandoned workers, and we will take no lessons from the NDP or the Liberals. We're supporting workers every single day with our second piece of legislation to ensure they're earning bigger paycheques.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Well, there's seven seconds, Bob. You're not going to get a question in.

At this time, normally we'd go to further debate. It's a couple of minutes before we get to members' statements—I'm going to look to the desk for direction. Members' statements it is.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOME CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to set the stage. My constituent Lynn Johnston wants to share her experience with home care. Her husband, Joe, is 76 years old, had surgery February 24 and March 4. So you'd expect that they would get home care supports. Nope, that's not what happened. When home care was set up for Joe, Lynn was given two options: drive Joe to the local ParaMed location twice a day or administer intravenous antibiotics for Joe at home by herself.

As you can imagine, Speaker, given that Joe was released from the hospital just last month following two surgeries and Lynn has only 45% use of her dominant arm, neither of these options was ideal. After receiving the limited training ParaMed offered, she administered the IV at home, but what followed was a series of alarms that ParaMed had not informed her of how to troubleshoot. When she decided it would be better to get Joe to ParaMed's clinic instead, she was left to navigate an entirely frustrating and not-so-friendly customer service

system. ParaMed did not return calls, nor inform her of her appointments despite billing the Ontario government for them.

Under the Conservative and Liberal governments, these are the only options for Ontarians: a deficient home care provider or an overburdened caregiver system. I wonder if the Premier or any of my colleagues in this Legislature would feel comfortable administering an IV to their spouse with little-to-no training. ParaMed in London has a long, troubled history of how this for-profit company is allowed to continue to collect public funds with no oversight, no strings attached, no transparency and no commitment to delivering quality of care.

What the NDP would do: We would deliver home care to help people live at home longer. We would end the for-profit understaffed patchwork of home care companies and make seniors not wait and make sure seniors get the care they need now, not in the future.

CANADIAN MEN'S SOCCER TEAM

Mr. Michael Parsa: Good morning. Last Sunday, we as Canadians witnessed something special as we watched our men's national soccer team officially punch their ticket to the 2022 World Cup. Our soccer team hasn't qualified for the World Cup since 1986, which was 37 years ago.

As a huge soccer fan and growing up playing the sport, I was beyond excited to watch the team that I have followed my entire life finally qualify for the largest and greatest tournament on Earth.

Speaker, I would like to point out that not only did they qualify, but they finished top in the CONCACAF group, with 28 points ahead of powerhouses like Mexico and the United States.

There was just something special about this group when they began qualifications. It was extra special as Aurora's very own Alistair Johnston, a local Auroran who played on both the Aurora Soccer Club and the Richmond Hill Soccer Club, took part on the team. Watching a local resident play and be a part of something so special is remarkable, and I was thrilled to see them pull through and qualify.

To Alistair Johnston and the entire team, I want you to know that I, along with 38 million Canadians, will be cheering you on as you begin your 2022 World Cup journey in Qatar. I can't wait for them to play in November, and I know that the entire group will continue to shock the world and make us all proud. Go, Team Canada!

SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: When I walk the dogs to the beach, I often meet Vince out walking one of his little dogs he cares for on behalf of his neighbours. Vince is in his seventies and this is how he supplements his income, which he needs to do.

Like many seniors, Vince has lived in his little triplex for decades, and like many, he has faced eviction notice

after eviction notice. The building he lives in is owned by a local realtor who lives in a huge house a few streets over, which the whole neighbourhood knows, so when he sends Vince an eviction notice on the grounds that he wants to move into Vince's tiny apartment, nobody, not even the Landlord and Tenant Board, believes him. But that doesn't stop him from trying. Vince is fighting his seventh eviction notice.

Just up the street from Vince, on Queen Street, are small apartment buildings that are increasingly owned by large corporations that are squeezing their tenants out to get the most profit out of the buildings they can. This is what the financialization of housing does. Many of these tenants are seniors like Vince. If they are forced out, they will have nowhere to go.

Speaker, seniors are calling us and telling us that they are hungry and scared. Solving the housing and food insecurity crisis is about caring for our elders.

Yesterday, the minister threw up his hands and said he couldn't fix it. That is not governing. Our elders deserve better. If the NDP were in government, this would have been solved by now. We need to do better.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Billy Pang: I am happy today to share this government's \$14.5-million investment to build a new Markham Centre elementary school. As part of the Ford government's \$600-million commitment for improving education across Ontario, this new school will create 638 new student spaces.

Markham–Unionville is a growing community, and this new school will continue to ensure my constituents receive the highest quality of education this province offers. I look forward to seeing the positive impact that the new student spaces and public facilities have on our community.

This is an amazing example of our government investing in state-of-the-art schools for students in my riding, while promoting STEM education and preparing them for the jobs of tomorrow. With investments like this, I am confident that Ontario will be set up for economic success and remain among the best-educated populations in the world.

Mr. Speaker, with the rapid and steady growth of young families in Markham–Unionville and other cities in Ontario, our government is committed to meeting such demands by building more schools.

1020

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Joel Harden: Good morning, Speaker. Last week was a really rough week for folks in Ottawa Centre. It was rough because, if you have ever visited Dow's Lake and the beautiful Rideau Canal, you will know that there's a gorgeous park called Queen Juliana Park just across the street, toward Carling Avenue, and right now Queen Juliana Park is home to an incredible amount of new tree stumps. The Ottawa Hospital is moving forward with the

plan to clear 750 mature trees from the experimental farm in that area to make way not for a new hospital, Speaker—a four-storey parking garage, with 2,500 spaces, is the first thing that is getting built in our city, to the detriment of our urban tree canopy.

I have spoken out. Bike Ottawa has spoken out. The Ottawa Disability Coalition has spoken out. The Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition has spoken out—elders like Norm Odjick, Albert Dumont, who is the poet laureate for our city, and Irene Compton from Minwaashin Lodge. No one is listening.

The Ottawa Hospital board will not listen to city residents. The province of Ontario, apparently, will not listen to Ottawa residents. The federal government will not listen to Ottawa residents. For some reason, a parking garage is necessary.

So I am making a desperate plea: We need a lawyer to pick up a legal injunction to stop the construction of the Ottawa parking garage. I will be making this an election issue in the upcoming election on June 2. Call me, contact me if you can help stop a parking garage over our health.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces has been devastating and is taking a terrible toll on civilians, the armed forces and the country itself. While this humanitarian crisis is the most important aspect of this war, another huge factor is its impact on world agriculture, including fertilizer and grain supplies.

It is important that we find ways to maximize our food production this year. Ontario is Canada's most productive region and I know first-hand that our farmers are eager to do what is required to produce the food we all rely on.

The three major fertilizers used in world crop production are nitrogen, phosphorous and, of course, potassium. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put a massive portion of the world's fertilizer supply at risk, adding to concerns over soaring global food inflation. Ukraine is one of the world's most important exporters of grains like corn and wheat, as well as of vegetable oils. Canada is the world's fifth-largest wheat producer, the 10th-largest corn producer, the seventh-largest soybean producer and is the sixth-largest barley producer.

I sat in on a meeting with the Grain Farmers of Ontario, the OFA and the Ontario Agri Business Association recently. Together these organizations represent over 50,000 farmers and all the agriculture retailers in Ontario. Prices for staple crops like wheat, corn and soybeans are soaring while rising costs for farm input costs, such as fertilizer, could add a further increase to the price of food. Food prices could increase between 8% and 22%.

Simultaneous drought conditions in western Canada and South America have created great concern and uncertainty heading into this year's planting season. Depending upon how the agriculture and other related sectors respond to this crisis, it could very well determine how much food will be available around the world.

ARMENIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Donna Skelly: Last week our government proclaimed the month of May as Armenian Heritage Month. Ontario is home to more than 100,000 people of Armenian heritage, many in my hometown of Hamilton. Over the past century a vibrant community was established in the east end, centred near the St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian community centre. Members of the business community, such as the Alexanian and Vartanian rug companies, are household names in Hamilton.

Armenians first came to Canada to escape the atrocities of the Armenian genocide. In the 1920s Canada began taking in orphaned Armenian children. More than 100 Armenian children lived on a farm near Georgetown. They became known as the Georgetown Boys. One of those boys was an eight-year-old named Toros Toumajian. Toros, who changed his name to Ernie Jackson, was the father of Hamilton city councillor Tom Jackson.

Tom is deeply touched by this government's acknowledgement in designating May as Armenian Heritage Month. Tom said, "As a descendant of the Georgetown Boys and on behalf of the 2,000 families of Armenian heritage in Hamilton, and on behalf of the thousands of Armenians who call Ontario home, I want to applaud and express my sincere gratitude to the government of Ontario for this recognition."

Tom Jackson offers his heartfelt gratitude to Premier Ford, MPP Aris Babikian and members of the Legislature for this recognition.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Last week, a delegation of Indian residential school survivors, leaders, knowledge keepers and youth travelled to the Vatican to meet with Pope Francis. The Pope acknowledged and apologized for the Catholic church's role in the Indian residential school system which inflicted spiritual, cultural, emotional and physical abuse on the children that attended residential schools.

While the Pope's apology may be a start, reconciliation is an ongoing process that must be followed by concrete actions. We have seen this action being taken over the past year, with more than 1,800 unmarked graves being identified in Canada—over 1,800. Now, through the Indigenous-led process and ownership of records, Lac Seul First Nation is leading the search on the grounds of Pelican Lake residential school. I stand in unity with Lac Seul and all those doing this work. Finding and bringing home our children will not be easy. It is a difficult task. It is a stark reminder of the abuse our children suffered at the hands of the church and state. However, it is a necessary responsibility.

With Lac Seul taking charge, I know it will be done with tremendous care and respect, honouring survivors, their families and all the children who did not get to come home. Meegwetch.

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Economic recovery is one of the greatest concerns in my riding of Richmond Hill. Last week, I had the honour of attending the Richmond Hill Board of Trade's signature event, the Power Hour, where representatives from three levels of government shared their outlook and welcomed questions from the floor.

Businesses expressed their appreciation of the provincial government's support through the business costs rebate, the small business grants and the provincial interest and penalty-free period. They are all excited with the \$10 daycare program. The immediate savings of 25% right now and 50% by December 22 is timely for families. That means more females can get back to work.

They're very happy that the manufacturing sector is coming back and jobs are being created. This will stimulate business across the province. Business in Richmond Hill is confident that our economy is recovering.

I ended with four Ps of encouragement for the people who attended:

(1) Protect: Take the vaccination.

(2) Be positive: Having a positive attitude gives good health and insights.

(3) Plan: Reassess a business plan. Do they have the right clients or should they go digitally and develop the business globally and locally?

(4) The last one is proactive: Act swiftly and adapt to the marketplace.

Yes, Ontario will soon be the economic engine for Canada.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Today we are honoured to remember and pay tribute to a former member of our provincial Legislature, the late David Ramsay, who was the MPP for Timiskaming during the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments, and MPP for Timiskaming–Cochrane during the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments. Many of Mr. Ramsay's former staff are here with us today in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome.

1030

Also in the Speaker's gallery is Ms. Judy Marsales, former MPP for the riding of Hamilton West during the 38th Parliament and chair of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians, and Mr. David Warner, who was the Speaker during the 35th Parliament. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. We're delighted to have you back.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to rise to introduce my uncle, Norman MacLeod, from New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, who joined me yesterday as we hosted the Scottish culture minister here in Ontario to celebrate Tartan Day.

And while I have the microphone, I do want to pay tribute to our former colleague who has passed away, the honourable David Ramsay, who I had the pleasure of

serving with. I know there will be tributes later. He was a gentleman and a very kind individual.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the Legislature this morning the president of the Ontario Party, Mr. Raphael Rosch. Welcome.

DAVID RAMSAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance for the late Mr. David Ramsay, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government, five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition and five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late David Ramsay, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government, five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition and five minutes allotted to the independents as a group. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'm honoured to stand today to pay tribute to the late David Ramsay, MPP for Timiskaming and then Timiskaming–Cochrane from 1985 until 2011. I had the pleasure of working with David as his critic when he was Minister of Natural Resources and Minister of Aboriginal Affairs between 2003 and 2007. In my experience, David was a true parliamentarian. I found him approachable and willing to discuss issues when I was his critic, and I know I'm not the only one. Former MPP Norm Sterling said the same thing when he paid tribute to David upon his retirement.

David was born in Australia, was adopted and moved to Canada at a year old. He lived in Oakville, attended Concordia University in Montreal and then moved to a farm near New Liskeard with his bride, Kathy. Elected in 1985, David was an MPP for 26 years and served as minister in both the Peterson and McGuinty governments. I'm sure others will talk more about his political accomplishments.

David's legacy is unique because he is the only member of this chamber to have successfully been re-elected a number of times after having crossed the floor. I can only think of one person who was more successful after crossing the floor, and that would be Winston Churchill. In the British Parliament, crossing the floor is referred to as "ratting." Churchill is quoted as saying that anyone can rat, but it takes a special person to re-rat. I would say it takes a special person to get re-elected after ratting.

David was first elected in 1985 as an NDP, but 17 months later joined the Liberal Party. In preparing for this tribute, I called the former member with the longest memory I can think of, and that is Sean Conway. In 1986, Sean was Minister of Education in the Peterson government. He told me that when David was thinking about crossing the floor, he asked for Sean's advice. Sean

strongly, strongly recommended against crossing the floor—likely that he'd lose the next election, and many other concerns. He suggested if he really wanted to do it, he should make a statement of principle, then sit as an independent and then approach the riding association, and then later the entire Liberal caucus. David did not follow this advice. The next week, he crossed the floor and joined the Liberals.

Shortly after this, Sean, who was exhausted after a year of being Minister of Education in the Peterson government, went on a holiday to London, England, where he had a memorable lunch at Canada House with former Conservative ministers Roy McMurtry and Tom Wells. Roy was then the Canadian high commissioner to England. Midway through the lunch, Sean received an angry phone call from the NDP leader and future Premier Bob Rae, who accused him of stealing his member, luring him to join the government. Rae had learned that Sean was the last person to speak to David and was not happy.

Well, crossing the floor didn't affect David's electoral success. In his first election as an NDP, David won by a little more than 2,800 votes. In the next election, running as a Liberal, David won by some 4,300 votes, and he went on to win five more elections after that. And, when David retired, the riding went back to the NDP. To me that proves that the voters in Timiskaming–Cochrane were voting for David Ramsay and not for the party. I can't think of a better compliment than to say he was elected because he was liked and trusted by the people in the riding.

David was also liked and trusted by his staff. David treated his staff like a second family. A number of his former staff are here today. Joining us here today are: Ginette Albert, who worked for David for many years; Kevin McGuire, who worked for him in both the Peterson and McGuinty governments; Amanda MacKenzie; Amy Swanson; Anne-Marie Flanagan; Babak Abbaszadeh; Derek Luk; Eric Bianchini; Hillary Thatcher; Jennifer Tuck; James Harvey and Melissa Wilson. Welcome to Queen's Park. I hope I haven't missed anyone. Thank you for taking the time out of your day to join us here today. I understand you'll be gathering at David's favourite spot, Swiss Chalet, later to share fond memories.

I reached out to Craig Hughson, who was senior policy adviser for David at natural resources. Craig is overseas in Dubai, so he can't be here today, although he did text me to say he's watching from Dubai.

Apparently on the many road trips that a Minister of Natural Resources must take, Minister Ramsay seemed to be able to locate the local Dairy Queen in every community, and that was before GPS.

As those of us who have large ridings will probably understand, it seems that David was known to drive a little over the speed limit, but when his staff was driving, he was a little more conscious of the speedometer. Craig told me that on an occasion where he was driving Minister Ramsay, MPP Mike Brown and an OPP officer, David looked at the speedometer and very calmly told Craig that if he had an accident, he would cause two by-elections and a police funeral. Craig says he slowed down after that.

Of course, like all of us, David had a family and interests outside of politics. David was a passionate sailor. He and Kathy kept a boat on Manitoulin Island and loved to sail Georgian Bay and the North Channel.

As we all know, there are parts of Ontario where the cellular coverage isn't great, including around the North Channel, and a cabinet minister does need to be able to check emails and get phone calls periodically. I understand that in order to get cellular service, David was known to climb a tree with his phone to return calls, leaving Kathy a little concerned about the dangers of the job.

In 2011, I remember asking David what he was going to do with his retirement, and he told me of their plans to sail to the Bahamas, something I understand they did and very much enjoyed.

After David retired, he and Kathy moved to Nova Scotia to be close to their children and grandchildren, and I am sure it's only a coincidence that it is another great sailing destination. I am glad that David and Kathy got to enjoy more time sailing and more time with their family after his retirement.

On behalf of the government members, I want to thank David's family for the sacrifices that allowed David to serve in this place for so many years. Our thoughts are with his wife, Kathy; their children Michael, Danielle and Erin; grandchildren Isaac, Cameron, Riley and Abbey; and with David's friends, including, of course, his former staff who are here with us today. Thank you.

1040

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an incredible honour today to pay tribute to a predecessor in this seat of Timiskaming–Cochrane, Mr. David Ramsay, on behalf of the official opposition. David was, in his time, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs; Correctional Services; Agriculture and Food; and Natural Resources. Without question, he was the longest-serving member of any riding that held the name "Timiskaming" in it, and the only one to do it from two parties.

With that, I would like to go back a little bit in history to talk about David in the riding. If you go back to 1985, we had Mr. Ed Havrot as our MPP; I had the privilege of doing a tribute for him, as well. Ed shot from the hip. David was different. David was actually, I would say, a calming influence. We thought, "It's going to be smooth sailing from here on in." And a year after his election, boom. He switched parties. To switch from the orange team to the red team was quite something. Now, it didn't bother me that much because I was blue back then.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I had to say it. I had to say it. But in the research package, there was a time when David Ramsay was blue, as well.

But the fact that David crossed the floor—it was incredibly tough. As I was thinking about what to say today, it had to be incredibly tough, not just to cross the floor here, but to go home to the people who supported you on one side. It was incredibly tough, and he survived it. He not only survived it, but he excelled in it. He increased people's confidence in him, and that is a true testament to his personality.

I really got to know David during one of our biggest issues in Timiskaming, and that was during the Adams mine fight—and a fight it was. The area was divided, and David was in the centre of it. If there was one thing that David Ramsay excelled at, the only thing he maybe could have been better at than as a member of provincial Parliament was as a poker player, because he did keep some of his feelings close to his chest. It frustrated me sometimes, because we didn't always agree, but I think we respected each other.

Just before the 2003 election, the Liberals promised to stop the Adams mine, and for a while David Ramsay and I were almost friends. After the election, when that didn't happen right away, David one time—we were on a plane travelling to Toronto—poked me in the shoulder and he said, "John, I would just like to remind you that politics is a team sport." Okay, I could live with that.

But in 2007, I ended up running against David Ramsay for the NDP, of which I am proud to be a member, but not actually to become a MPP. When the Adams Mine Lake Act was passed, I was also being sued. No one did anything about that, and I was going broke, so we decided to run for the NDP to bring some light to that issue and hopefully the government or somebody would tell the company who was suing me to drop the lawsuit. And that happened.

In that campaign, David Ramsay was a hundred times the candidate that I was—unbelievable. He could talk to a five-year-old or to a captain of industry and treat them all with the same level of respect, with the same level of dignity. They all learned something from him.

I would just like to clarify something. We came within 634 votes of taking out David Ramsay, and there was no one more surprised—no, there was one person more surprised than David Ramsay: That was me, obviously. But I would just like to take a minute to say why, and how politics is local.

David Ramsay was the Minister of Natural Resources, and that spring, the blueberries froze in May. When the blueberries freeze in May and the election is October 7, the black bears are really hungry by around September, and there were black bears everywhere. So when you go to knock on a door, two things you would look for: first, a black bear, just in case; and, second, damage from black bears. You would go to the door and knock—and this is a testament to David Ramsay—and almost every door, they'd open and I'd say, "I'm John Vanthof, running for the NDP." They would say, "No. We are solid David Ramsay supporters." They didn't say Liberal supporters; they said David Ramsay supporters. I said, "Yes, great. I've worked with him. He's a great guy. But do you recall that the McGuinty government promised they were going to clean up the nuisance bear problem? How is that working out for you?" David Ramsay had—really, there was nothing you could do about that. I want to say that publicly, because he was a great representative.

I know I'm going over time, but I'd like to thank very much for many of his staff members for being here. I also have a staff member who worked for David Ramsay,

Darlene Bowen. She was still friends with David when he passed. And she also told me that she worked for him for two years and she drove with him to a lot of events, but she only let him drive once. Once was enough.

He treated everyone—during that campaign, I made lots of mistakes. I was young. I wasn't smooth. I'm still not smooth. There were lots of times where his experience, his skill, his knowledge—he could have done many knockout blows, and he didn't. He was always gracious.

I'd like to take this opportunity—I've always regretted that I've never had the opportunity to tell him in person. The last time I talked to David Ramsay, or the last time I saw David Ramsay, was about two years after I was elected. We were going through—it was the McGuinty minority government, and it was a really tough time. We were at an event and somebody walked up and said, "Vanthof, how does it feel to be the MPP?" I said. "You know what? In the last couple of years, I've developed a whole new level of respect for David Ramsay." He was a couple seats over, and, as I walked out, we nodded at each other and smiled. I've always regretted that I've never able to shake his hand before he passed.

I'd like to thank his staff, but very much thank his family. And to David: May you have fair winds and following seas. On behalf of the people of Timiskaming—Cochrane, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour today to rise to pay tribute to the former, late MPP David Ramsay. I'm going to be brief, because I want the people who actually served with Mr. Ramsay to have more time, but I wanted to make one critical point that I admire so much about David Ramsay: He had the courage of his convictions and the personality to win over his critics. If there was ever a controversy in northern Ontario, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane nailed it. If there was ever a Minister of Natural Resources who was going to make northerners happy, would have gotten rid of the spring bear hunt, and Mr. Ramsay didn't do that.

1050

I can tell you that as one of those dreaded southern environmentalists who fought so hard against the Adams mine landfill, it was such a joy to have a northern Minister of Natural Resources bring in the Adams Mine Lake Act in 2004.

I want to say thank you to MPP Ramsay's family, friends and colleagues for sharing him with us, because he has made Ontario a better place to live.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's truly a privilege and an honour to say a few words about David James Ramsay, member for provincial Parliament for Timiskaming—Cochrane from 1985 to 2011. And a lot of the words that you're going to hear me speak today come from people in the gallery and his colleagues outside the Legislature, and so I hope they truly reflect how people felt for David, which I think is David's lasting and enduring legacy.

First elected in 1985 as an NDP member, and then becoming a Liberal about a year later, he then won six successive elections. That's pretty incredible and it's a testament to his deep dedication to the people of Timiskaming—Cochrane and the things that were important to them.

Here's what he said when he retired in 2011:

"You know, I never fail to realize how down on a lot of people's luck that they are every day, and they come in and sometimes we can make a difference in their lives...."

"And I think in the end, that will be the enduring thing."

You notice that he said "we." David never used "I" a lot. He understood it was a team sport, whether it was with his colleagues or with his staff.

For 26 years, David held many positions of responsibility—in caucus, as a minister of the crown. He handled difficult issues with care and common sense.

Ginette Albert, who worked with him for a very long time, said this about David: "David took his work seriously and always tried to do his best to do what was right."

And David was a listener. That's was a big part of his success: He truly listened.

I understand that the ministry David liked best was the Ministry of Natural Resources, because it meant so much to his community and to the north. My first interaction with David was when he was the Minister of Natural Resources and I was working for Premier McGuinty in Ottawa, and the member for Nepean will remember this. At the time, a family in Ottawa South took in an orphaned baby deer into their home and then kept it in captivity as a pet.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, of course, Bam-Bam.

Mr. John Fraser: So as the story goes, Bam-Bam the deer was rescued by about a dozen Ottawa police and conservation officers, who were, let's just say, very well-armed. The ensuing mess was incredible. It was all over the news: "Free Bam-Bam the deer." Quite frankly, the phones at the constituency office rang for four days straight. There was never a line open.

There's a lot more detail on this, and the member for Nepean will share the story another time. It's a really crazy story. It was really a difficult situation because people were truly concerned and upset, as often people are in the cases of animal welfare. But you can't just keep a baby deer. That's not the way things work.

Here's the thing: David and his staff found a solution, for which I am forever grateful. And there are many other stories. They can recount them, like "Mike the Moose," flying squirrels, and other crazy animal wildlife stories.

The truth is, the Ministry of Natural Resources is a hard ministry. It requires political skill to balance the many competing interests that are there. And with the skill of a sailor who always understood where the prevailing winds were coming from, David handled all those files very deftly.

He was well-respected by his colleagues. Premier McGuinty said this:

"David brought good humour and good will and good insights to Queen's Park every day."

"David was equally at home and humble whether serving Ontarians as minister of the crown or helping his constituents. He never forgot where he came from or what he was sent to do."

Monique Smith said this: "David always had a sparkle in his eye. He was a lovely colleague and friend."

David had a great sense of humour. There is a story floating that David met Bob Rae after Bob became a Liberal, which was some 20 years after David had left the NDP, and his first comment to him was, "Welcome aboard."

David really liked people. He always displayed a genuine interest, and as I said before, he listened. I think he understood that the most important things in life are your relationships with others. He built a lifelong relationship with the staff who worked with him here at Queen's Park and in the riding. Some of them are in the gallery today. Kevin McGuire, his former chief of staff, said David would tell him to not book anything at lunchtime so he could sit down and have lunch with his staff. He treated his staff like family. If someone was having a difficult time, he always made himself available.

He loved ice cream and would drive by a Dairy Queen, apparently, any time he could. I can relate to that. He'd buy a container of Häagen-Dazs ice cream and just bring a spoon.

Interjection: I can relate to that.

Mr. John Fraser: I can relate to that too, yes. He also loved Swiss Chalet, or "chalet barbecue," as they told me he called it. I know that his staff are going to go out and have a lunch in his honour today, and that's just great.

The most important thing is that David was a loving husband, father and grandfather. He was always in a rush to get home to his family, and as you heard, he got quite a few speeding tickets as a result. We all know that as members, our responsibilities steal time away from our families. David understood this. It's not easy, especially on our families. We give up a lot; our families give up even more. So thank you to his wife, Kathy; daughters, Danielle and Karen; son, Michael; and his grandchildren, Isaac, Cameron, Riley and Abbey. Thank you for sharing him with us and the people of Ontario.

Twenty-six years is an incredible legacy of public service. David brought to that service dedication, common sense, a sense of humour, and most importantly, a genuine interest in the people around him, and it's been a real honour to pay tribute to him.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you to the members for their eloquent tributes. Together, we give thanks for the life and public service of Dave Ramsay.

Applause.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(g), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and therefore, the

afternoon routine on Wednesday, April 6, 2022, shall commence at 1 p.m.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sara Singh: Good morning. My question is to the Premier. Speaker, people across Ontario believe long-term care should be a safe place to live. But for many of these for-profit care providers, they see these homes as just real estate transactions. Last week, Ontario seniors who live in places managed by Chartwell—the company led by former PC Mike Harris sold off 16 homes and flipped another three as a way to turn a quick profit. Outrageously, the company will net \$277 million after this transaction.

Let's be clear: These companies aren't using these profits to reinvest in better standards of care or even to help hire more staff. This profit is for their shareholders. Why does this government think that it's appropriate for private long-term-care operators to net hundreds of millions of dollars in real estate transactions?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, I think this has less to do with Chartwell and more to do with NDP ideology. What the member and her party are suggesting is that the long-term-care system be nationalized in the province of Ontario. What they are wanting to do is spend billions of dollars buying buildings.

1100

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have chosen a different path. We are choosing to invest billions of dollars in building new long-term-care homes, billions of dollars in increasing staffing in our long-term-care homes—all things that would be at risk should the NDP proposal of nationalizing long-term care ever come to pass in the province of Ontario. It would put to risk the \$40 million of additional funding that this government has earmarked for homes in Brampton.

Again, what we're going to continue to do for long-term care is improve staffing. We're going to build modern new state-of-the-art facilities to finally catch up after 15 years of neglect in the system. We're putting in the resources and making the investments needed to make long-term care the best not only in Canada, but North America.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: What New Democrats are fighting for is to ensure that billions of dollars don't go to for-profit care providers and that we reinvest in providing care with dignity to seniors in this province.

One of these homes, Chartwell, which has been sold off, hasn't even finished construction yet. The company—which bills itself as a real estate trust, not a long-term-care provider—says the whole point of these sales is to find “meaningful management synergies.” That doesn't sound like improving care to us.

It's clear these big companies are using long-term-care homes and real estate speculators to rake in hundreds of millions of dollars. But when it comes to offering better supports for elders and people with disabilities, that is nowhere to be seen.

The company also says that these deals won't be finalized without the government's permission. Will the government do the right thing, stop these transfers to yet another for-profit provider and instead invest in not-for-profit care in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: To be very clear, the government will not nationalize long-term care in the province of Ontario. We will not spend billions upon billions of dollars buying long-term-care homes. What we will do instead is put billions of dollars into improving care, billions of dollars into building new long-term care, because what we're focused on is people, places and community.

What we're doing is building long-term-care homes across the province in smaller communities that have never had long-term care before. We're investing in people, not only the people who work in long-term care, but the people who live in long-term care. For far too long, under the Liberals and the NDP, a long-term-care facility was just that: a facility. We're making long-term care homes, because we recognize they are where people live and where they will have memories for many years to come. We're improving staffing, improving the homes.

We will not do what the NDP are suggesting: nationalizing a system and wasting billions upon billions of dollars on buying homes. Instead, we'll build the system and make it better for people.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: The government House leader and Minister of Long-Term Care and home care has made it clear: He is okay with companies like Chartwell profiting by \$277 million off the backs of taxpayers and seniors in this province. That is shameful here in Ontario.

Instead of treating these long-term-care homes like real estate, we could treat them as decent places to live. What we saw during the pandemic was horrific, and we know that the government bailed out for-profit homes and failed to provide the support necessary for seniors.

It doesn't have to be this way for elders and people who live in long-term-care homes, like people with disabilities. They deserve dignity, with enough staff to care for them. They deserve quality food and comfortable accommodations. But that's only possible if we take the profits out of long-term care.

Why does this government continue to reward for-profit providers with taxpayers' dollars and not invest in the dignity and care that long-term-care residents deserve?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, not one member of the NDP stood up when they held the balance of power between 2011 and 2014 and made long-term care a priority. Did they ever make four hours of care a priority when they held the balance of power? No. Did they make building new facilities a priority? No. Did they make—increasing staffing? No. Did they say that we needed long-

term care in communities across the province, small communities, large communities? No, Mr. Speaker. This government has done just that.

What the member is asking me to do is to close down the 680 beds that we have brought to Brampton. She wants me to close those beds and redirect the \$38 million in staffing to the NDP policy of nationalizing long-term care. Well, it won't happen, Mr. Speaker—not on our watch, because what we're going to continue to do is make up for the failures of the Liberals and NDP by bringing in new long-term-care beds: 30,000 new beds, 28,000 upgraded beds and 27,000 staff.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Ms. Sara Singh: My next question is also for the Premier. The Ontario government's rollout of the antiviral drug Paxlovid has been anything but smooth. For immunocompromised Ontarians, getting a prescription for this drug has not been easy. The CBC reported on Friday that one Ottawa woman waited all week to get her prescription, even though the treatment with this medication needs to begin within the first three to five days of an onset of symptoms for it to actually be effective.

The CBC reports that Ontarians are only able to access these potentially life-saving antivirals at a provincial testing centre after someone has confirmed and tested positive for COVID. Why is this government not rolling out wider distribution of this drug to help Ontarians get access to the life-saving medication they need and to help us get this pandemic under control?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Originally when Paxlovid was first approved, we received very small quantities of this antiviral. It was distributed through 26 select sites across Ontario, including clinical assessment centres. However, the situation has changed since then. We are now receiving higher quantities. We have received over 40,000 courses of Paxlovid to date, and we are now looking at expanding so that people can receive Paxlovid, should they need it, from centres across Ontario.

We know that there are many people who want to receive it. They can receive it through their primary care physician, who can obtain it through an assessment centre, or they can receive it at the assessment centres. However, because we are now receiving larger quantities, we are looking at other points of distribution so that people can access it more easily.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: The federal government actually provided Ontario with over 100,000 courses of the drug Paxlovid, but that hasn't been widely distributed. Dr. Menaka Pai says that too few Ontarians even know that they can be eligible for this drug: "People who are eligible need to know what steps to take to access the drug. People need to know where to go to get the drug. Those barriers are tremendous. And if we don't tackle them, the societal

benefit—and the individual benefit—of Paxlovid will not be realized."

Speaker, in provinces like Quebec, pharmacists, physicians and nurse practitioners are all allowed to prescribe this drug. Why isn't the government of Ontario allowing more prescriptions for this antiviral drug here in Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We certainly are allowing for more prescriptions, however, it should be noted that Paxlovid is not suitable for everyone, because there are contraindications with over another about 100 different drugs. Some people, even though they may want to take advantage of it, can't take it for health care reasons.

However, we do recognize that many people are not aware of when they can obtain Paxlovid. We are going to be expanding our education process, so that people will know that more widely. We are looking to make sure we have broadened access for everyone, and we want to make sure that other parties can be involved in it, including pharmacies, in the future. So there are many different points of distribution that we're examining, so that anyone who can take Paxlovid and is indicated for it will be able to receive it.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: No one wants to see things get worse in a sixth wave here in Ontario. This medication could be and should be a part of the province's response, but access is the issue. For Ontarians who are not close to a provincial testing centre, it means that getting access to this life-saving drug will be very difficult.

The Ontario government has the tools to get this drug into the hands of rural and remote communities, but they continue to lag behind other provinces. It shouldn't have to be this difficult for Ontarians to get access to this form of health care, especially when Ontario has, as the Premier has stated, over 100,000 courses of this drug already available.

Speaker, what steps will this government take to deploy the antiviral drug across Ontario, to help COVID-19 patients recover quickly?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, people who need Paxlovid can obtain access to it through their primary care provider, who can request it from the clinical assessment centre, so that even if a person doesn't live in an area where there is a clinical access centre, they can obtain it through their primary care physician, nurse practitioner, whoever it happens to be.

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We are also going to be expanding access and availability of Paxlovid, because—the member is quite right—we have received increased quantities. We are also embarking on a clinical education program for providers, but also for the people of Ontario to let them know that this is another tool that we can use to limit the spread of COVID within our communities, and to keep people from having to access hospitals and urgent care as well. We are making access available and expanding access for everyone in the province to be able to receive it if they need it.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Last week, RBC bank released a new report on housing affordability, and it's grim. Housing affordability has dipped to its worst level in 31 years, which means the dream of owning a home has gone up in smoke. And it means the dream of even renting a home that you can afford has also gone up in smoke. An individual needs to earn over \$118,000 a year to afford an available two-bedroom apartment in Toronto today.

The housing affordability crisis is this government's legacy. You've got less than 60 days left. What is this government's plan to make housing affordable for Ontarians now?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the member opposite: Yesterday was a sad day for anyone who wanted to realize the dream of home ownership. New Democrats—again, Speaker—voted against our government's plan, More Homes for Everyone, just like they did in 2019 for our plan, More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan, and just like they did when they voted against the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act. Over and over and over again, New Democrats have ensured that anyone who wanted to realize the dream of home ownership was going to get a big, fat no from the NDP.

On this side of the House, we embrace the Housing Affordability Task Force report. It's going to be our long-term road map. In the interim, we needed to do some immediate measures like the measures that are in More Homes for Everyone. On this side of the House, we're going to keep putting forward suggestions. I know what's going to happen, Speaker: This member is going to continue to vote against it.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the minister for raising your new bill. This government's new housing bill has been widely criticized by planners and municipalities because it financially punishes municipalities and could actually slow down building approvals. This is what Toronto's chief planner Gregg Lintern had to say: This bill "could have the perverse effect of delaying development by sending more planning applications to the backlogged Ontario Land Tribunal."

And there's nothing in this bill to make it quicker and easier to build more affordable missing middle housing like townhomes, duplexes and triplexes in neighbourhoods we want to live in, even though your very own Housing Affordability Task Force, with your very own hand-picked experts, recommended that you do exactly that.

Minister, what is your plan to build more affordable missing middle housing so Ontarians can afford to live in this province?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I guess I would have thought, in one of these two questions, that the member—

since she just recently contravened the Members' Integrity Act by breaking parliamentary convention in her own constituency—I thought perhaps she would start her question with an apology to the people of University–Rosedale. But I guess that's not in the cards today.

I'm going to quote a couple of reports from the Altus Group, in 2020, that were commissioned by the Building Industry and Land Development Association. It talks about subdivision approvals in Ontario taking between seven and 15 months. It talks about how rezoning takes an average of nine to 25 months. These timelines are too long. People who want to realize the dream of home ownership can't wait 25 months. So our plan, as part of the plan they voted against yesterday, would gradually refund permit fees if municipalities don't hit those very, very important marks.

Again, Speaker, on this side of the House, we want to work with our municipal—

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

The next question.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Just yesterday we saw yet another vote of confidence in Ontario from a major auto manufacturer, General Motors, which is committing to investing and expanding their vehicle production right here in Ontario.

Under the previous Liberal government, 300,000 manufacturing jobs left Ontario, devastating many communities. But, now, under this government, we are seeing jobs and historic investments from some of the world's biggest auto manufacturers.

Speaker, through you, could the minister tell us what our government's recent announcement means for the people of Oshawa and this province?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Over the past 16 months, Ontario's auto sector has announced over \$12 billion in green steel, EVs and electric vehicle battery manufacturing. Yesterday, we were extremely proud to support GM's \$2-billion investment to reopen Oshawa and retool Ingersoll for electric vehicle production.

In Oshawa, GM's historic investment will add a third shift to build the lightweight Chevy Silverado for a total of 2,600 new local jobs. At their CAMI plant in Ingersoll, GM will manufacture the BrightDrop. It's a brand-new, all-electric vehicle and, Speaker, I've got to tell you, I drove it yesterday and it is a sweet ride.

This investment from GM will position yet another Ontario automaker to manufacture the next generation of EV vehicles, the cars of the future, and we will continue to support Ontario's auto sector and the thousands of jobs.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, Minister. This announcement is clearly great news for the people of Durham region and Ingersoll who will have their future

secured for generations. Investments like these are truly transformative. For Oshawa, GM has been a pillar in the community, and I'm sure this is welcome news for that local community. This announcement goes a long way to repairing the damage to our economy caused by the previous Liberal government.

Back to the minister, through you, Speaker: Could the minister tell us how our government has taken action to secure Ontario's automotive sector for generations to come?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Since taking office, our government has worked very closely with Ontario's auto sector to ensure that the cars of the future are built right here in Ontario. Driving Prosperity was our plan to position Ontario as a North American leader in electric vehicle production, and the plan is working.

We've been able to secure, as I said, \$12 billion in investments in 16 months. This is unprecedented in the history of our province, and it is truly game-changing. It shows just how important it is to create the right environment for job creators, like reducing the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion every year.

Speaker, we're just getting started. Wait till we stand here next week.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, Speaker. *Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

Families in northwestern Ontario are facing a dire shortage of doctors. Two weekends ago, Red Lake's only hospital closed its emergency room for 24 hours because there weren't enough physicians to run it. Nearly 6,000 residents had no emergency room. This is not an isolated problem, Mr. Speaker. It has been narrowly avoided in Sioux Lookout, a health care hub for area First Nations.

This government knows the doctor shortage crisis in the north will lead to more emergency department closures. What is the government doing to ensure that hospitals in the north can keep their emergency rooms open?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: The biggest thing we're doing is increasing enrolment in our medical schools so we have more doctors in the province of Ontario. We're adding another 160 undergraduate seats and 295 post-graduate positions over the next five years to make sure that we graduate more physicians and that more will be in northern Ontario because the Northern Ontario School of Medicine is receiving 30 undergraduate seats and 41 post-graduate seats. That's going to go a long way to making sure that people who are trained in the north and who are from the north will stay in the north and practise medicine thereafter.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: We need solutions immediately, not five years down the road. Overworked and burnt-out physicians across the north are trying to keep hospital

doors open to care for their patients. One physician worked 10 24-hour shifts in a month because of a lack of doctors to fill these shifts. Physicians are only supposed to work a maximum of four of these shifts. The well-being of doctors and patients is at risk.

When will this government take the urgent action needed to end the doctor shortage in northwestern Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: First, let me express my appreciation to doctors and all front-line health care professionals for the tremendous work they've done over the past two years. That's why we are adding to the ranks so they are going to be able to not work extra shifts, to be able to take time with family and friends. We have committed over \$6.2 million across 32 primary care teams in areas of greatest need in the province, and that would include mostly in northern Ontario. That helps people stay connected to care within their communities and not having to go into hospital by reason of default.

We're building up both by increasing the number of medical physicians in schools, but we are dealing with it now by making sure that local teams, primary care teams, have the resources they need to care for the people in their communities and, as I said before, that's particularly in northern Ontario.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Through you, Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Minister, because of COVID, lockdowns and rising costs in food, Internet, electricity and accommodation, my offices have been inundated with calls from desperate ODSP recipients. These recipients just don't know where to turn. As you know, a single person's maximum allowance for basic needs and shelter is \$1,169 per month, while the maximum allowable for a couple's basic needs and shelter is \$1,750 per month.

The ODSP recipients have not had increases in years. The ministry is simply saying at this point in time, they are in transition and are working on this, but there has not been a cost-of-living increase and the rate of inflation is rising quickly. It's more expensive to shop, let alone live, on the bare minimum called "basic needs," which does not cover their biggest single bill: rising housing rents.

Minister, what is your ministry prepared to do now in the short term to provide for ODSP recipients? My riding's constituents, now more than ever, must choose between shelter, heat—

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

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. In addition to raising the rates when we first took office in 2018, and in addition to the \$1 billion in social services relief funding and the approximately \$8.3 billion we spent annually, I've also been

advocating for the federal government to come to the table to fulfill its campaign promise that it made to create a Canada disability benefit. We know how important this is to individuals who have lost their job or who are unable to work, and that's why I did meet with my federal counterpart, Karina Gould. We urged the federal government to move quickly on delivering a national disability benefit.

We're going to continue to work with the federal government to deliver positive results for Ontario's disabled community, and we're going to continue to find ways to create sustainability in this. This is a multi-ministry effort, and I will deal with that in my supplementary.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: I appreciate your response, but it's not just my ODSP constituents; it's ODSP recipients throughout Ontario. They're desperate for solutions now.

My understanding is that those who are able can earn up to \$200 a month on top of what they receive from your ministry. If they earn more than \$200 a month, the government will claw back 50% above the \$200, which means if a recipient earned \$300, their net monthly earning would be \$250. I'm interested in identifying what percentage of ODSP recipients take advantage of earning extra money; I think that that number could be low.

My question to you, Minister: Would your ministry be willing to further incentivize those ODSP recipients who are able to work, which would hopefully encourage more to get back into the workplace and off of ODSP?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I appreciate the question. I think this is so important. We have a program that works very well with other ministries, whether it's the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and I think that that's such an important area. We're working very well with our ministries to make sure that people can find work. When they are retrained and micro-credentialing, the education ministry is providing child care supports for people who need that to be able to work. We're looking across the spectrum of people who are really being served by our government in multiple industries, making sure that they are able to get the supports to retrain, to be trained and to be supported if they're unable to work. As I've said, it's a multi-ministry effort to create these things, supports for individuals, and understanding how we need to also review and renew, and that's what our government is doing to make sure that we serve our most vulnerable people.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question today is to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. This morning, Minister, you gave an excellent leadoff speech on Bill 88, the Working for Workers Act, which highlighted our government's continued support for workers in Ontario. I was excited to hear that, if passed,

this legislation would grant digital platform workers the right to a general minimum wage, which would make Ontario one of the leading jurisdictions in Canada, if not North America.

Everything we're doing as a government is to help workers get bigger paycheques to support themselves and their families. Through you, Speaker, can the minister enlighten us and tell us how our government is getting it done for workers through the planned increase to the minimum wage?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton for always being an advocate and a champion for workers, those thousands of blue-collar workers in Sarnia–Lambton who continue to build our province.

Speaker, no matter how or where you work, every worker in Ontario should have access to benefits such as health and dental. That's why I proudly appointed our portable benefits advisory panel. These experts will support the design and implementation of a new benefits program for Ontario workers.

To rebalance the scales and give average people the confidence they need to drive their careers forward, our province is expanding benefits to millions more workers who currently don't have benefits today. This will make it easier for them to move between jobs, help businesses attract top talent and give workers more certainty about their future. We're going to continue, under the leadership of Premier Ford, to work for workers every single day.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the minister for that great response. It's great to see another rise in wages.

As the way we work continues to change, many workers now have multiple employers during their career, work for themselves or actually work in the gig economy. We know that wages are important, but we also know that workers need benefits to go along with their income. Less than a quarter of those who work part time or are in precarious jobs have those benefits, which means these workers and their families must make difficult choices.

Speaker, to the minister, through you: My question is, can the minister tell us how our government is tackling this issue?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. Our future of work committee found that 89% of people in Ontario agree that "the workplace has changed permanently, and Ontario needs to act." The future of work is here, and our government is working for workers to make sure no one is left behind. Our advisory panel of experts will help make Ontario the first province in Canada to pursue such a comprehensive benefits program. This could be a game-changer for gig workers and service industry workers who often switch jobs throughout their career.

Speaker, we believe workers deserve the peace of mind of health and dental coverage. That's why we're bringing the best minds together to lift workers up in every community across Ontario. Our government is relentlessly

working for workers every single day by taking steps to build for tomorrow and for decades to come.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Chris Glover: Every Sunday for the last couple of years I've been delivering meals to people experiencing homelessness. A couple of months ago, I came across a person with a badly infected leg, with open lesions on his leg. I talked to Seeds of Hope, which is a charitable foundation that supports people experiencing homelessness, and they sent a street nurse out. I asked him if he would go to the hospital, but he refused. They sent a street nurse out, and she gave him some primary care and was able to save his leg and possibly his life.

1130

There are 8,500 people experiencing homelessness in Toronto; Homes First reports that 30% have mental health issues and 25% have addictions. Speaker, 30 died in January and another 30 died in February on the streets of Toronto.

Street nurses save lives. They help with overdose prevention. They provide access to medication and to primary care.

My question to the government is, why are you firing 43 street nurses, who help people experiencing homelessness on the streets of Toronto?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: This, of course, is a city of Toronto initiative, as the member will know. They have always been clear that the Toronto shelter initiative was a temporary program in response to COVID-19, and it's going to be in the process of winding down over the coming year. However, our government is pleased to report that we have invested \$11.8 million to the Toronto shelter initiative to provide health supports to the homeless population as this is in the process of winding down. They have done tremendous work, but this funding aligns with the continued support with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for dedicated isolation space as well.

With respect to the nurses, we agree that they have done tremendous work. However, the situation is such that we know that these nurses will be able to find employment in other areas. We know that we need nurses in many locations. There are other parts of different hospitals where they can be employed—places like St. Michael's Hospital as well, which does work a lot with homeless populations to provide them both with the health care supports that they need as well as the social determinants of health issues that they need, in helping them to find housing, in order to find food and all of the other essentials that they need. So—

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

Supplementary.

Mr. Chris Glover: Your funding may have been temporary, but the homelessness crisis is not temporary. The mental health and addictions crises are not temporary.

Last Sunday, I met a woman—I was delivering some meals to her, and she had had fentanyl the night before. She was coming down, and she said, "I need a place to crash." So I phoned the central intake, I put her in an Uber, and we got her to a shelter. While we were doing all this, I asked her, "If I could get you into a residential treatment program, would you go?" She said yes, so for the next couple of days, I phoned detox centres, I phoned residential treatment centres. There's no space available.

People are dying on the streets of Toronto because this government refuses to treat homelessness and the addictions and mental health issues that many people experiencing homelessness are experiencing as an emergency. In fact, you voted down declaring homelessness a state of emergency. You voted down my motion to build 70,000 affordable homes and 30,000 supportive housing units.

Why does this government not treat homelessness as an emergency? Stop cutting funding, stop cutting nurses, and actually provide people with both the homes and the mental health and addiction supports they need so that they can rebuild their lives and get off the streets.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that very important question.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the social determinants of health, including housing, are extremely important issues to address. That's why our government has worked and created a cross-ministerial approach to dealing with the issues of mental health, addictions and, of course, housing. Our government has invested and continues to invest money in providing supports to individuals who need help when it comes to their addictions. As you will recall, in February we announced \$90 million in the Addictions Recovery Fund, and we opened over 400 treatment beds, which are equivalent to 7,500 new treatment spots.

This problem did not get created in the last four years. This is a problem that existed long before the pandemic, and it's something that only this government has come forward to actually do something about—not the Liberals and not the NDP, when they had the opportunity. In fact, they did the cuts—

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

The next question.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. The deadline to table the province's budget was last Thursday, March 31. It is now April 5, and still, we have not seen the Premier's budget, so I would first like to take a moment to wish the Premier a belated happy delayed budget day.

It seemed like the Premier's pledge to table a budget before April was a serious promise, seeing as it came with an ironclad guarantee. However, it doesn't seem as if the Premier takes his promises seriously. While breaking promises has become a habit—we have seen broken promises when it comes to clearing the wait-list for children with autism—the reality is that Ontarians cannot give

themselves budget extensions for the services and the supports they need now.

Perhaps the Premier delayed the budget to campaign, perhaps on his spring election. Speaker, does the Premier think it is fair to make Ontarians wait, especially when they cannot pay their bills with promises, especially broken ones?

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

Interjections.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for the question. This is coming from a member of a government that missed eight of 14 of their third-quarter finances when they were in power, right? So we're definitely not going to be taking lessons from a government that failed Ontarians 15 years in a row.

What we're going to do is, we're going to work hard every single day to make sure life is affordable for Ontarians. They chased jobs away from Ontario; we're bringing jobs back. They failed our health care system; we're investing in our health care system.

When it comes to long-term care, they have to stand and face the music. They failed the people of Ontario. Under the leadership of Premier Ford and this Minister of Long-Term Care and everyone before, we are delivering for the people of Ontario every single day: 30,000 new spaces.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Forget it. Go on to the next question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Please restart the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Let me clarify the record, because as of 2018, Ontario Liberals had presided over 800,000 jobs that were brought back since the Great Recession. Just to correct that record—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: But, Speaker, perhaps the budget delay by the government—

Interjections.

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

Okay. I have to be able to hear the member for Scarborough—Guildwood. If the interjections continue, I'll call you out by name.

Please restart the clock. Member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Perhaps the budget delay is all about this government's broken promises, but also, what about avoiding scrutiny—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will come to order.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Last week, I wrote to the Auditor General in regard to the Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act, and the AG's pre-election report on the multi-year fiscal plan. While her response confirmed that the AG still intends to release a statement once the 2022 budget is released—whenever that may be—the issue, of course, is that we still do not know when that's going to happen.

Speaker, a pre-election review by the AG is an important accountability measure that Ontarians rely on for good governance and to review their province's finances. Giving the AG at least a few minutes to review the budget is not enough. She historically has—

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

Again to reply on behalf of the government, the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Again, I thank my colleague for the question. What we have been used to here in this province the last four years is that we've been getting a clean audit. I know that was foreign to the previous government, but every time we put our numbers forward, we get a clean audit from the Auditor General, who I work very closely with on the committee—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

1140

Mr. Michael Parsa: But let me tell you: She talked about jobs. I'd be more than happy to respond to you. Mr. Speaker, 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member from Ottawa South, come to order.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Under this minister, we're bringing hundreds of thousands of jobs back to Ontario again. They closed 600 schools. Under this minister, we're opening schools and investing in our students.

And when it comes to health care, as I mentioned earlier, they failed the people of Ontario. They failed our seniors. That's not what's going to happen under this government. We are going to continue to deliver for the people of Ontario. We're going to continue to make sure Ontarians live in a more affordable—we want good-paying jobs coming back to Ontario, and this minister—

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

The next question.

ONTARIO PARKS STORE

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. With spring and summer right around the corner, Ontario's provincial parks are a phenomenal resource for everyone in Ontario to get outside, get active and spend time in nature. Not only are Ontario's parks a wonderful place to hike, swim and enjoy the great outdoors, they're also a great place to learn about the natural environment, and I've heard about

a wonderful new way for Ontarians to support provincial parks and my constituents are eager to learn more.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please share how Ontarians can support our great outdoors when online?

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate the question from that phenomenal member who, like me, I know enjoys getting out and enjoying our great outdoors.

Speaker, I'm really proud to stand in this House today to say that the Ontario government, under Premier Ford's leadership, has launched, for the first time ever, a permanent online parks store. For generations, families have been making memories in Ontario Parks that last a generation. Now, they have access to some of the favourites: bottles, hoodies, T-shirts, those crests. And the best part: 100% of those proceeds go back into Ontario's provincial parks, back into expanding the trails system, back into expanding the canoe routes, back into protecting our protected areas for generations to come, working with endangered species.

Speaker, there's so much more. We're so excited.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I would like to thank the minister for his passion and enthusiasm when it comes to Ontario's provincial parks. Ontarians can rest assured they have a dedicated member responsible for our parks, and it's exciting to hear about this wonderful new initiative brought forward by our government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if I or any other member of this House were interested in visiting the Ontario Parks Store, could the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks point us to where and how we can visit this store?

Hon. David Piccini: I thank the member again for that question. I'd also like to also acknowledge the incredible, hard-working team at the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, especially the Ontario Parks staff, who have been on the forefront of this transformation.

For years, under previous governments, we literally lived in the Stone Age. Well, today, thanks to our digital-first agenda, you can now, with the click of a button, go online, order your favourite parks merch and support Ontario's provincial parks.

This is an incredible opportunity, and we're not stopping there. We're starting discussions for a parks foundation. We're electrifying park sites. We're expanding opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors at our favourite provincial parks, and now we can look good doing it, Speaker.

So again, I'd like to thank the incredible team. For all Ontarians watching, go online. Visit shop.ontarioparks.com. Go online, visit the parks store, purchase your favourite merchandise. It's going back into the parks we love, supporting our endangered species, like the Blanding's turtle restoration projects, and so much more.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Emergency wait times in my riding of Hamilton Mountain

continue to be a serious issue. Mrs. Nates and her 90-year-old husband, Thomas, went to the ER a few weeks ago due to a nosebleed that would not stop. Mr. Nates sat for three hours in the ER with a bucket and towels. Eventually, he had to be transferred to a different hospital for treatment. A senior left in an ER for over three hours, Speaker, with just a bucket and a towel to deal with a medical emergency—that is not care. That is understaffing and underfunding at work, and Ontarians are the ones who are bearing the brunt.

Let's not forget it was this Premier who promised to end hallway medicine within one year of being elected. That time has come and passed. Why has this Premier allowed even more hallway medicine to continue in Ontario?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I'm sorry this person had a very unfortunate experience in emergency, but that's certainly not reflective of what's going on across the entire province.

We have put over \$4.8 billion into our public health care system in the last four years. We've increased the spending by \$4.8 billion, plus an additional \$5 billion to create another 3,100 beds across the province, including in places like Hamilton, to make sure that we can care for the patients that we needed to care for during the height of COVID, but now we're dealing with it in terms of the surgical recovery.

We have put the money into it. We are making sure that we're training the people to be there so that people can be responded to in a quicker time than the person that you have referred to. That is what is actually happening across the province of Ontario. Because of our investments, people are getting the care that they need in emergency, as well as in the hospital if they need to be admitted.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: The ER journey didn't end there for Mr. and Mrs. Nates. The other night, Mr. Nates fell and injured his hip. This time, they waited over five hours in the ER to be seen. Mr. Nates was so past the point of exhaustion that they ended up leaving without an X-ray because there were still eight patients ahead of them. This is after waiting six hours.

Mrs. Nates was a nurse for many years in this province. Both she and her husband have worked their entire lives in the province of Ontario, yet neither one of them can get the medical care that they need when they need it the most. Speaker, it doesn't have to be this way. When will the Premier invest in alleviating—that's a good word today—ER wait times in Hamilton so that no more patients have to be left stranded and waiting while it's hallway medicine from this Premier?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government has made significant investments in our health care system over the past four years to make sure that everyone in Ontario who needs to be admitted to hospital can be, and can be admitted to a hospital room rather than waiting in hallways or other inappropriate spaces.

We have increased our spending by \$4.8 billion into our public health care system. We've created 3,100 extra beds. We have also helped hospitals with their COVID expenses as well, and we continue to make investments to make sure that the health care professionals that are there will be there. We're creating another 160 medical graduate spaces and 295 post-graduate spaces.

We're also helping our nurses, because they've been on the front lines during this entire pandemic, with a bonus of \$5,000. That's \$763 million. We're also investing over \$22 billion over the next 10 years to create greater hospital infrastructure. If that's not paying attention to our health care system then I don't know what is to the NDP.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Before the pandemic, there were signs many people across this province, young and old, were feeling less connected than they did in previous generations, spending more time online, seeing friends less and spending less time volunteering in the communities. All of these things have an impact on our productivity, our health and our well-being.

The pandemic only exacerbated this serious public health problem that is loneliness and social isolation. Bill 104 would require the government to take action on this important issue. Will the government support it?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank the honourable member for the question. I understand the member's bill. It's obviously a very thoughtful piece of legislation and I do thank her for bringing it forward. It is something that we on this side of the House will take a look at.

Private members' bills on this side of the House are left to the decision-making of the members themselves, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell the member that there has been good, positive discussion, at least on this side of the House, with respect to the importance of the bill. I know that the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has also spoken about the bill, as has the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. We are all looking at that, because it is very clear—I don't think it's a partisan issue, by any stretch of the imagination. We understand the challenges over the last couple of years for people, and certainly the lack of resources that were left on the table back in 2018 when we came to government.

1150

I thank the member for the question.

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the government House leader for being open to this issue and this discussion. I will note that Dr. David Williams tabled a report in this House in 2019—it was actually a 2017 study he did, but he tabled it in 2019—recognizing loneliness and social isolation as a serious public health issue. He has done some great research that I think is in that report.

Being disconnected, according to often-cited research, is as dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It's also a major risk factor for abuse and neglect. The time for a comprehensive, province-wide strategy is now. Will the government commit to it?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that very important question. We know that our children, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have suffered a great deal. We've noticed it with respect to eating disorders and the complications resulting from that. We acted very quickly on that. We made investments of \$8.1 million, followed by additional investments of \$11 million for eating disorders. In addition to that, we are looking particularly at the lifespan of the individuals to ensure that we are giving the right supports that are appropriate to the age of the individuals.

The issues that you raised about isolation, anxiety, depression: These are all things that, yes, we're aware of and need to do something about, especially because if we work with the individuals and build resiliency in their youth, by different therapies that are available to them, by embedding those programs into education, we will be able to help them and ensure that they have a healthy and productive adulthood.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the latest global climate report warned that the world was hurtling towards a climate danger zone: a time not only of more extreme weather events but also a time of dropping standards of living and hunger for billions of people.

At the same time, this government is ignoring its own inadequate climate plan and has added to the climate pollution we have faced over the past four years. Now we hear from the Daily Commercial News, the construction industry newspaper, that the government is undermining the steps needed to bring new construction into the 21st century with a building code that will not only protect the climate, but will protect building occupants. They are ignoring those steps that we need to have taken.

Why won't the Premier direct that the new building code be designed to help people by cutting their energy bills through energy efficiency?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, Ontario is on track to meet our emissions reductions targets by 2030. For the working families who work at General Motors on the forefront of the largest-ever electrification of the automobile sector in Ontario's history, they know that thanks to the leadership of this minister we'll get it done, tackling the largest source of GHG emissions, being the transportation sector.

For the inspiring youth I met who participated in Ontario's first-ever youth environment council, who

wanted us to embrace the circular economy, increasing the recycling of post-consumer goods, reducing the amount of harmful methane emissions in our landfills: They know we'll get it done.

For the many new workers in the trades working on the forefront of the cleanest steel transition in Canadian history, phasing out coal through the production of steel through the electrification of the arc furnace, leading to six megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions reductions: They know that we'll get it done.

Speaker, we'll take no lessons from the members opposite, whose climate plan was to drive out industry, impoverishing Ontario working families. We're working with them. We're leading through GHG reductions, and we're not going to apologize for doing that.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier—and it would be useful if the minister would read the Auditor General reports on the progress of his plan; I think he would have very different story to tell.

We know that in a world where the climate is not stabilized, Ontario will face growing costs to deal with extreme weather. We're already spending \$5 billion per year, and without action in the next few decades, we'll be spending \$40 billion a year to deal with extreme weather impacts.

Development of green building technology in Ontario and green building products would give us global advantage in selling products and services around the world. The development of substantially greener building stock could provide more highly paid and highly skilled jobs. And at the same time, we could save people money on energy costs for their homes and their businesses while reducing the risk they face with the world getting hotter every day.

Why won't the government protect Ontarians, protect our jobs, protect our future by bringing in a building code that substantially cuts energy use?

Hon. David Piccini: Again, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. But we know that with reckless policies like their green new deal, we won't be working with workers; there will be none left. We're not going to be working with industry either; we will have driven them out.

I had the opportunity to visit Mattamy Homes and see some of the incredible leading work that they're doing. Do you know what they said? That the gatekeepers and the NIMBYism supported by the NDP was the biggest barrier to a more sustainable future. That's what the building sector has to say.

Thanks to this Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we're working with all partners, municipalities, upper tier, lower tier. They've thanked us for the first ever climate change impact assessment—

Interjections.

Hon. David Piccini: They can try and shout me down, Speaker, but they know they had the opportunity to do that. They could have; they didn't. We did. We're working

with industry. We're seeing greenhouse gas emission reductions. We're leading, thanks to the incredible talent in Ontario. We won't take any lessons from the doom-and-gloom misery party, who would lead—

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

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. I know that the Premier is relishing his role as Tinker Bell, spreading election promises just like pixie dust—pixie dust that he hopes is going to make us forget all of his election promises in 2018. Who can forget the 20% income tax that none of us have ever seen?

Interjections.

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

Obviously, the language that the member is using is irritating the other side, and I would ask him to consider that as he continues his question.

Please start the clock. Member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: We know they said they would have a plan for autism, but they've doubled the wait-list. But the latest promise, the gas tax promise, which the Premier has never delivered on until now, is, "I'm going to reduce your gas taxes after the election, for six months." Well, that is pixie dust, because it's disappearing pretty fast. Even buck-a-beer held its fizz longer than that.

Speaker, through you, will the Premier finally admit that he has not lived up to his election promise of 2018 to reduce gas taxes?

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I think Ontarians know too well what that member and the party that they represent—they made a lot of promises. The only difference is, they broke every single one of them after they got re-elected, so we're used to that.

It's the exact opposite here. It's true; we made promises and we delivered on every single one of them, and we're going to continue delivering on them. The latest example is what the member is alluding to—when we said we're going to do everything we can to make life more affordable after a very difficult two years for Ontarians—for us to continue to lower costs for Ontarians, which is a further 5.7-cent reduction per litre at the pumps for Ontarians. This is on top of the 4.3 cents that was reduced before.

Now, here's the difference. We're also asking the federal government to do their part. As we fought the carbon tax to lower the price and cost of living for Ontarians, we're asking the federal government to do their part, and of course, the members in opposition, both sides, continuously support—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. John Fraser: So here's a list, then. A 20% income tax cut: It didn't happen. A plan for autism: They doubled the wait-list. Gas tax: It's not going to happen after the

next election. It's two election cycles before it's going to happen.

But here's the thing. Here's what the Premier said last election: "Take a look at your current hydro bill. We are going to reduce them. They will go down by 12%." Guess what? Hydro rates have gone up by 4%.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: By 4.3%.

Mr. John Fraser: By 4.3%.

It's just another empty promise by the Premier. How is it that hydro prices went up instead of down, like the Premier said? Just saying something at the time of the election that sounds good doesn't actually provide relief for Ontarians.

Speaker, how come the Premier did not meet his commitment to reduce hydro prices in the province of Ontario, just like he told the people of Ontario at the time—

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

I'll allow a response. The member for Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I can tell you that the people of Ontario don't think rate reductions, rate relief, whether it's automobile drivers, whether it's hydro users, whatever—that is real; that's not pixie dust.

Our government has committed to making relief for the people of Ontario, and we will continue to.

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

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 5, 2022, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREEN SHIRT DAY ACT, 2022 LOI DE 2022 SUR LA JOURNÉE DU CHANDAIL VERT

Mr. Parsa moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 112, An Act to proclaim Green Shirt Day / Projet de loi 112, Loi proclamant la Journée du chandail vert.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I'm sure all members here in the Legislature and those watching at home remember the tragic accident that took place on April 6, 2018, involving the Humboldt Broncos. Canadians across the country were heartbroken to hear about the crash and the lives that it claimed. In particular, one defenceman by the name of Logan Boulet tragically succumbed to his injuries on April 7, 2018.

Speaker, before the accident, Logan shared with his family his decision to register as an organ donor, which he was inspired to do by his coach and mentor, Ric Suggitt, who unfortunately passed away on June 27, 2018, as a result of the accident. After Logan's passing, his parents, Toby and Bernadine Boulet, fulfilled Logan's wishes and donated his organs, which saved the lives of six other individuals.

Speaker, after the news spread of his selfless act, it is estimated that almost 150,000 people registered to become organ donors, which became known in Canada as the "Logan Boulet effect."

This is exactly what this bill seeks to achieve. We want to remember Logan Boulet and the selfless decision he made to save lives. I hope this bill will encourage Ontarians to donate and save lives across the province and across the country.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I want to thank Sally Palmer for this petition.

"Raise Social Assistance Rates.

"Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and woefully inadequate to cover the basic costs of food and rent;

"Whereas individuals on the Ontario Works program receive just \$733 per month and individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program receive just \$1,169 per month, only 41% and 65%" respectively "of the poverty line;

"Whereas the Ontario government has not increased social assistance rates since 2018, and Canada's inflation rate in January 2022 was 5.1%, the highest rate in 30 years;

"Whereas the government of Canada recognized through the CERB program that a 'basic income' of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to increase social assistance rates to a base of \$2,000 per month for those on Ontario Works and to increase other programs accordingly."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to Mila to take to the Clerk.

HOUSE Sittings

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Pursuant to standing order 70, I wish to inform the House that tonight's evening meeting is cancelled.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you for that information.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2022, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to lead off this third reading debate on Bill 88, as the official opposition critic for labour. I'm going to perhaps repeat some of the remarks that I offered in the second reading debate, but I will also really focus on what was said by the deputants who appeared before the standing committee that received input on this bill, and also the written submissions that were made to that standing committee—in an exceptionally short period of time, I should add, Speaker.

This bill, the Working for Workers Act, version 2, creates the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, and it also amends a couple of other statutes. I am going to focus most of my remarks on schedule 1, the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, because that is the schedule that elicited the most feedback from the people who appeared before the committee when this bill went forward for public input.

Who are digital platform workers? They are workers that we commonly refer to as gig workers. The vast majority of these gig workers work as food couriers for SkipTheDishes, for Uber Eats, for DoorDash, or they work as drivers for Uber, Lyft, or other rideshare services. These gig workers, the food couriers and the rideshare drivers, make up about 90% of the gig workforce in this province—actually, in this country. We know from research that about one in five workers in the Ontario workforce is working in some capacity as a gig worker.

Not all gig workers are engaged in digital platform work. There are many other workers who work gigs in the entertainment industry. They may work for very short-term contracts, as contract cleaners, as truck delivery drivers, as home health aides—many different kinds of occupations that other non-digital gig workers may be

involved in. But this bill is specific to the digital platform workers.

1510

Let's remember, throughout the pandemic, these were the workers we relied on, in ways that many of us who had never used an Uber before or never ordered food through SkipTheDishes became very familiar with. They provided an essential service that really kept our economy going, that kept our lives going. There were many people who were in isolation who relied on an Uber driver to bring medication to their house. They relied on Uber drivers to deliver groceries to their door. Many of us who wanted to support local restaurants while dining rooms were closed to in-person dining used apps like SkipTheDishes and DoorDash and Uber Eats to be able to support those local restaurants and small businesses.

The people who work in these jobs: Many are racialized. Many are newcomers. Several of the gig workers who spoke to the standing committee about this bill talked about the fact that they were recent arrivals in Canada and were looking for work that would provide that Canadian job experience they need in order to be able to get a job that's more reflective of their skills. These food courier businesses and these rideshare services provided that opportunity that these racialized and immigrant workers needed to get that foot in the door of the Ontario labour market. That is the reality of the gig workforce. It's also the reality of those other contract workers I mentioned earlier—contract cleaners, truck delivery drivers, home health aides, and many other things. That workforce also tends to be largely racialized, largely immigrant and therefore very vulnerable to exploitation and to precarious working conditions. That is what we heard often from the people who appeared before the committee.

The work that these workers do, whether in the pandemic, before the pandemic or after the pandemic, carries with it significant health and safety risks. Many workers who came to the committee talked about those health and safety risks. Anybody who has ever ridden a bike in Toronto knows how dangerous it can be, trying to navigate car traffic and transit vehicles on roads, racing to get the food to a customer's door. They talked about the fact that they work in all weather conditions: sleet, snow, rain, hail, 40-degree humidity, whatever. They are out there doing this work so that those of us who use those services can benefit from the essential services these workers provide.

One of the troubling things that we heard at committee was that in many cases, the health and safety risks these workers face are heightened because of policies that are put in place by their app company employer.

One of the deputants talked about the fact that Uber changed the length of time that a worker has to respond to a ping with an order—to say whether they were going to accept the order or reject the order. They changed the time to 10 seconds. You can imagine, Speaker: You're a food courier on a bicycle, trying to navigate busy Toronto streets—and the reality of the work that these workers do is that it's quite concentrated in short periods of time. It is the busy dinner hour, when lots of traffic is around as other

workers are trying to get home, and it is over the lunch period, when most of these orders come in.

So just picture yourself: You're a gig worker. You're on your bicycle. You're carrying your own phone. You're responsible for the maintenance of your bike. You have purchased your own gear. You are responsible for all of the tools of the job, except for the main tool, which of course is the app—and the app is what enables these workers to do their work. You're on your bicycle, your phone pings, and you have 10 seconds to look at your phone and make the calculation as to whether accepting this order is going to be financially feasible for you or not, given the order that you're currently doing or what the distance is, what the time is or what the bonus is that's being provided to do this order. Workers have 10 seconds to make that split decision. One of the workers talked about the fact that this really increased the risk that Uber Eats food couriers were facing, because they had to make these split-second decisions. And those who are driving are looking at their phone, as they're in busy traffic, trying to make these decisions. Fortunately, Uber apparently changed that policy, to lengthen the pinging time beyond 10 seconds. But that gives you a sense of how vulnerable these workers are to the policies that are set by the company and how their health and safety are affected by those policies.

Another gig worker appeared before the committee and talked about the fact that he commonly took his food deliveries to homes where the residents were not wearing masks and refused to put on masks. He ended up with COVID.

The reality that gig workers face in this province is that they have no access to paid sick days. Even after this government was shamed into introducing the temporary and inadequate three paid sick days that they finally brought forward to help people get vaccinated or stay home if they had COVID or a family member had COVID—even that inadequate program is not available to any gig worker in this province. It wasn't available during the first five waves. We're now in the sixth wave of this pandemic. It was never available throughout those past two years, and it won't be available as a result of this bill that we are looking at today—nor will there be any support for workers who are injured if they get doored when they're on their bicycle trying to navigate busy Toronto streets; it won't provide any support for workers who may, through no fault of their own, end up in an accident.

We heard from one worker who had to be off work for four months, I think he said, and he had no income support. He was not able to collect EI and was not able to access WSIB, because in the eyes of this government, that gig worker is not an employee under the Employment Standards Act and doesn't have any access to those protections that other workers have.

Given what I have described to you in terms of the reality of gig workers' lives, gig workers came together in the fall and drafted a gig workers' bill of rights. This bill of rights was created by gig workers. It was endorsed by gig workers. It was endorsed by Gig Workers United,

which is a community union that is organized under the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. It was endorsed by Uber Drivers United, which is organized by UFCW, the United Food and Commercial Workers. It was endorsed by the Ontario Federation of Labour, which is the voice of over one million working people in this province.

1520

This gig workers' bill of rights sets out the minimum rights that they are calling on government to guarantee to ensure fairness and non-discriminatory treatment for gig workers. I'm just going to highlight a couple of the elements of this. It's a 10-point bill of rights, but I want to highlight some of those points:

"(1) A worker is a worker; full employment rights with no carve-outs from minimum wage, sick leave, vacation pay and other minimum employment standards.

"(2) Payment for all hours of work: paid time from when workers sign in until they sign out of the app with a clear and concise breakdown of how pay is calculated.

"(3) Compensation for necessary work-related expenses to ensure gig workers' real wages are not reduced below the minimum wage.

"(4) Full and equal access to regulated benefits programs like" EI, CPP and WSIB injury compensation.

"(7) Put onus on employers to prove that workers are not employees, instead of workers proving that they are not independent contractors. Enshrine" a clear "test for employment status.

"(8) Recognize gig workers' right to form a union, with the union they choose, to have a collective voice at work."

I've pulled out some of the 10 points of the gig workers' bill of rights, and I did that because I am struck—as I'm sure you were, Speaker, when you looked at Bill 88—by how far short Bill 88 falls in terms of what gig workers are really looking for from their government.

I know that this Minister of Labour is aware of the gig workers' bill of rights. This bill was developed in the fall. There would have been lots of opportunity for the Minister of Labour to incorporate some of these fundamental principles of the gig workers' bill of rights into this legislation that we have before us today, which is called the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act.

What has been the reaction to the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act? Well, Gig Workers United immediately issued a release the day the bill was tabled that said, "We are unwilling to accept carve-outs—pay for 'engaged time' only, for instance, or second-tier status, representation, and rights."

CUPW issued a statement that said Bill 88 provides "substandard rights and conditions for app-based gig workers. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers sees this legislation as a setback for workers who are organizing to use collective strength to improve their work lives."

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

I want to recognize UFCW for its work in terms of negotiating an arrangement with Uber, an agreement with

Uber, in the complete absence of any leadership from this government to help gig workers get the benefits and rights and protections that they deserve. UFCW stepped in to help close that gap a little bit and try to move gig workers forward.

Of course, I also want to commend Gig Workers United for the advocacy that they have done on behalf of gig workers in Ontario.

I want to talk a little bit about the feedback that we heard during the legislative hearings on this bill. What this bill does is create a bill of rights, a number of rights that are available to digital platform workers and to them alone. So it takes those workers out of the Employment Standards Act—currently, they’re not recognized in the Employment Standards Act; they are regarded as independent contractors and therefore not able to access any of the provisions of the Employment Standards Act. This legislation, Bill 88, creates this stand-alone bill that is exclusively for digital platform workers. It gives them lesser rights than any other worker in this province who is covered by the Employment Standards Act. It effectively creates this second tier of digital platform workers who don’t get the same protections that other workers in this province have under the Employment Standards Act. That was brought forward by many, many of the deputants who appeared before the committee.

I’m going to quote from the transcript of the committee, because there was a lot of really important feedback that was shared with members of the committee. Unfortunately, it was ignored by this government in making amendments to this bill.

Jennifer Scott, the key organizer of Gig Workers United, said, “When I read Bill 88, I see what Uber wants. I see what apps have been lobbying for and fighting for for the past three years.”

Speaker, as you may know, Uber has been engaged in an active campaign around the world, actually, to try to ensure that workers for Uber are not recognized as employees under employment standards acts in various countries across the world. The courts have weighed in, in many cases, and made decisions that employees of Uber and other app-based companies are, in fact, workers. Uber has been engaged in an active campaign to try to prevent that from happening here in the province of Ontario—and I would say that they have a right to be worried because, ironically, just a couple of days before the government introduced its Bill 88, its legislation that creates this separate statute for gig workers, a Ministry of Labour investigator made a ruling on behalf of an Uber Eats delivery person, Saurabh Sharma. The Ministry of Labour investigator found that Saurabh Sharma is actually an employee of Uber Eats, and that because Saurabh Sharma met all of the criteria that determined whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor—because he met the criteria to show that he is an employee, he was owed, by his employer, over \$1,000 in lost wages and other payments that should have been made to him.

The Ministry of Labour investigator found that Saurabh has been wrongly misclassified as an independent

contractor under the Employment Standards Act when he is really an employee and, therefore, that his employer, Uber Eats, had violated a number of sections of the Employment Standards Act. They had violated section 11, payment of wages; section 13, unauthorized deductions; section 15, record-keeping; sections 17, 18 and 20, hours of work; section 23, minimum wage; section 26, public holiday pay; and section 35.2, vacation pay. As a result of this misclassification of Saurabh Sharma as an independent contractor when he’s actually an employee, the employer is ordered to make up those payments that had been denied to Saurabh because of his misclassification.

1530

One of the interesting things that I noted in the investigator’s decision on this claim was around minimum wage. The investigator reviewed his receipts for the income that he had earned over a number of pay weeks and found that there was one week in which he earned an hourly wage of \$3.41 an hour. So, certainly, there is a need for food couriers like Saurabh Sharma, who are doing this work for app firms like Uber Eats, to be able to earn a minimum wage, because a minimum wage is one of those basic fundamental rights that every worker in this province should be able to rely on.

This government has brought forward a bill in which they claim that they have addressed this problem. They claim that gig workers in Ontario will now be able to earn a minimum wage. Speakers who came before the committee saw right through that, because what this government does not say when they talk about gig workers earning a minimum wage—they don’t add the fact that the minimum wage is only going to be available to gig workers while they are doing engaged work, so while they are actually delivering a package or a food delivery or whatever it is, or while they are actually transporting a passenger in their car.

I don’t think you have to do a lot of math to figure out that a minimum wage that applies to only a portion of the time that a worker is working is not a minimum wage. There is lots of evidence, both from the US and from here in Toronto—a recent study that shows that for most gig workers, they can spend 40% of their time or more waiting for an order or waiting for a delivery.

In fact, one of the written submissions that was provided to the committee, by RideFairTO, which is an organization that represents Toronto gig workers, said, “The legislation establishes a wage floor for gig workers that is far below that of most Ontarians—on average, \$7.20 per hour before expenses for Toronto’s ride-hailing drivers.” You’ll recall that earlier, Speaker, I talked about the fact that gig workers have a lot of expenses. They have their gear. They have their bag. They have their phone. They have their bicycle or their vehicle; if it is a vehicle, they have insurance, they have maintenance costs etc. So RideFairTO estimates that this veers into negative earnings when work is slow, and that this minimum wage legislation would have numerous unintended consequences for Ontario communities, including rising congestion, increased emission and the numerous knock-on

effects stemming from these impacts. They estimate that Bill 88 would effectively set a minimum wage for ride-hail drivers as low as \$1.20. They have a calculation: 48% at \$15 an hour to take into account non-engaged time, minus \$6 an hour in operating expenses.

So as much as the government would like to pretend that this legislation will give gig workers a minimum wage, gig workers know better. Gig workers know that \$1.20 an hour is—any notion that that comes anywhere close to a minimum wage is laughable; even if it's 40% that they're not paid, it's still far below an actual minimum wage. One of the most frequent concerns that was raised in the committee is the fact that this government is promoting this as ensuring that gig workers get paid minimum wage, when the reality is the opposite; it pays far below minimum wage.

The other common issue that was raised by the people who appeared before the committee was around misclassification. Gig workers consistently talked about the fact that the concerns of gig workers—the issues that they confront every day in their jobs stem almost entirely from the fact that they have been misclassified as independent contractors when they are actually employees and should be recognized as employees.

I want to make sure that you, Speaker, are aware and that people who are listening are aware of what recognition as an employee would mean under the Employment Standards Act. When you are covered by the Employment Standards Act, you have access to minimum wage, payment of wages, tips and gratuities, vacation time, vacation pay, notice of termination, termination pay, severance pay, overtime pay, limits on working hours, breaks, public holidays, public holiday pay, record-keeping requirements, sick days, infectious disease emergency leave, pregnancy leave, parental leave, protection against reprisal, and, most of all, the right to unionize. All of these rights and protections are denied to gig workers because they are not covered by the Employment Standards Act. What this government has done by creating this separate legislation, the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, is really entrench their lack of access to these rights and protections under the Employment Standards Act.

One of the questions that was asked during the committee of Saurabh Sharma, the Uber Eats food courier who successfully challenged his employer for misclassifying him, was, if this legislation was in place, if there was a stand-alone digital workers' rights act—if that legislation existed at the time that he took his claim forward, did he think he would be successful? He said no. And that was repeated by a number of other deputants who appeared before the committee—that having a separate bill in place, having legislation that creates this false narrative that digital workers are somehow different from other workers and don't deserve the same rights as other workers, will make it much more difficult for other employees to try to correct their misclassification.

Misclassification is illegal in Ontario. However, it is very difficult to try to get a misclassification corrected, because there's an onerous and cumbersome and

complicated and intimidating process that a worker has to follow in order to address their misclassification.

I was really pleased by the number of deputants who appeared before the committee and said that what is really needed is a new test within the Employment Standards Act to make it easier and simpler for people to be recognized as employees under the Employment Standards Act. You will be aware, Speaker, that I brought in a private member's bill which would do just that. It would clarify and simplify the test for who is an employee under the Employment Standards Act, and it would make it easier for those thousands of workers who are routinely misclassified by their employers to access the benefits and protections of the ESA.

1540

I want to recognize some of the groups who appeared before the committee and said that is the solution. The solution to the issues that gig workers face is not a Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act; it's recognizing gig workers as employees under the Employment Standards Act. We had CUPE and Justice for Workers. At least seven of the gig workers who appeared before the committee talked about the importance of enabling gig workers to be recognized as employees under the Employment Standards Act. The Decent Work and Health Network appeared before the committee to talk about the public health imperative of making sure that precarious and vulnerable gig workers have access to those basic employment rights that every worker in Ontario should have access to.

A number of the people who appeared before the committee specifically called on this government to eliminate schedule 1, to take it right out of this bill, to get rid of any kind of separate legislation for digital workers that suggests that they're somehow lesser workers and not deserving of the same rights and protections as everybody else, and strengthen the Employment Standards Act, make it easier in the Employment Standards Act for workers to be recognized as the employees that they are.

There were calls for the government to implement my private member's bill, the Preventing Worker Misclassification Act, which I wish this government had listened to.

A couple of the deputants made the important point that this is a government that has been dogged from the day they got here in terms of their commitment to what they call eliminating red tape. We have seen that, in practice, that has meant gutting environmental protections. It has meant removing some of those ratio number requirements with child care providers and all kinds of things that they call "red tape" but that most people in this province—I think the vast majority of people in this province—see as important to be able to protect the public.

However, what we heard at committee was that this government is going in the opposite direction; they're adding red tape. They're creating a whole new level of bureaucracy that is going to be set up to implement and oversee the digital workers' rights act when we already have a structure in place in Ontario. We have the Ministry of Labour, and we have all of the ministry officials and

investigators and others who are tasked with enforcing the Employment Standards Act. Creating this parallel, watered-down version of the Employment Standards Act is exactly the opposite of what this government says that they are committed to in terms of red tape.

The other point that was raised by people who appeared before the committee was that the majority of Ontarians also want to see gig workers get the same rights and protections as other workers in this province.

Last summer, this government set up an Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee. The report of that committee came out, and one of the findings of that report was that 69% of Ontarians support full Employment Standards Act rights for gig workers. So it's interesting that this government decided to ignore the fact that there is strong public support for recognizing gig workers as employees under the Employment Standards Act and instead decided to go in this other direction.

There was an interesting story that came out in the *Globe and Mail*, about a week after this bill was introduced, where sources inside the labour ministry claimed that the labour minister is looking at full employee rights for Uber drivers and other gig workers. We have heard the minister say that this is a beginning point, not the end point. The thing is, it's not like this bill is a baby step forward; this bill actually takes us backwards. It goes back to what I was saying before about Saurabh Sharma and the claim he filed for misclassification with the Ministry of Labour. This bill will make it harder in the future for gig workers to challenge their status as independent contractors and to access those employment rights that they should be able to benefit from.

I mentioned that, around the world, Uber is facing law-suits from workers who are trying to access those employment rights and protections that they should have access to under whatever employment standards exist in various countries, and the courts are making those decisions. The courts are taking it out of the hands of governments, out of the hands of companies—multi-billion dollar companies like Uber—and they are ruling in favour of workers. They are ruling that gig workers are employees and gig workers should be able to access all of the benefits and protections that exist for other workers under employment standards acts.

We know there are currently at least a couple of class action lawsuits going ahead right now. There was a class action lawsuit certified in Ontario against Uber Canada that is on behalf of close to 400,000 people who have driven for Uber, and that class action lawsuit is being launched to enable those Uber drivers to access benefits they should have received as employees under the Ontario Employment Standards Act. There's a class action lawsuit that has been certified in Manitoba as well.

There are numerous court decisions that have been issued in many other jurisdictions, in the Netherlands, Spain, Italy and the UK, that have all found that gig workers are employees and deserve to be recognized as such.

Now I want to talk a little bit about what happened—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt the member from London West.

I'm just wondering whether the members on the government side who are enjoying a ministerial briefing could perhaps have that briefing out in the lobby so I can listen without having to put an earphone on to hear the member from London West. Thank you.

Back to the member.

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

I want to talk about what happened at committee with the amendments to this bill. As I have said, there were many deputations to this committee that talked about the need to just pull all of schedule 1; or if you're not going to pull schedule 1, at least fix the minimum wage provisions of schedule 1 so that gig workers are actually going to be able to benefit from an actual minimum wage, instead of a minimum wage that's calculated at 40% of a minimum wage or less.

1550

All of that feedback was received by members of the committee. Of course, government members have a majority of the seats in the committee, and they heard that input and decided to ignore it.

The government did bring forward an amendment dealing with performance ratings. This amendment called for information that is provided to gig workers about performance ratings to be aggregated rather than be given at the time that a customer provides the rating. The day that we did the clause-by-clause of this bill and the government brought forward this amendment, I thought this was very curious, because not a single deputant who appeared before the committee had made this recommendation that performance ratings should be aggregated, rather than be given immediately after the delivery or the ride has been completed.

What we did hear during committee about performance ratings was concerns from gig workers themselves, who, as I said, are a largely racialized workforce. Many, many newcomers and immigrants work as gig workers. They talked about the fact that performance ratings can be very, very harmful to their job prospects. Some of them talked about having been just arbitrarily deactivated after a negative performance rating had been given by a customer. Several of them talked about the fact that there is research showing that performance ratings can often be biased and discriminatory. And so workers who are already vulnerable—these are already precarious workers—are at the mercy of the performance rating that is provided to that worker following their delivery.

Going back to the health and safety concerns these workers face, they know that they have to get that delivery to that customer as quickly as possible so that they can get a good performance rating, because if they're too slow, the performance rating will go down, then the rate of pay that the gig worker gets might go down, or they could just be deactivated from the app.

This motion to remove transparency from performance ratings, to take away the ability of the gig worker to know which customer it was who provided a negative

performance rating, and instead aggregate the information about performance ratings really was a bit of a surprise when this amendment came to committee.

I did take a look at the written submissions that were provided by DoorDash and Uber, and DoorDash actually made this recommendation. They said that a written disclosure of a performance rating after every order may harm customers. They said, "Workers are often making deliveries to customers' homes and may pressure customers to provide a good rating or retaliate against them should the workers receive a poor rating." Uber also said, "Earners may unduly pressure customers to provide a positive rating, and could harass customers who give a poor rating." So the one piece of input that this government listened to and decided to make an amendment to this bill based on came from Uber and DoorDash. The day that bill was tabled, there was an editorial that said this is a bill that could have easily been "written on DoorDash letterhead."

I quoted Jennifer Scott and many other gig workers who appeared before the committee who said this bill speaks to the interests of Uber and the app companies and not to the interests of gig workers. That was proven by the fact that the only amendment that this government decided to introduce was about performance ratings, in response to written submissions that were provided by Uber and DoorDash and in total disregard to what gig workers had told us about the systemic racism that they deal with in the course of their work on a daily basis. It was a real eye-opener for me to see that government amendment come forward and then to realize where that amendment came from.

In the last little while that I have, I want to talk about a couple of the other sections of this bill.

Schedule 2 deals with two things: (1) It creates new exemptions for two new categories of workers from the Employment Standards Act, and (2) it creates a requirement for companies to have electronic monitoring policies in place. Creating this new exemption for IT and business consultants from the Employment Standards Act is something that we absolutely cannot support. The fact of the matter is that, already, even though we talk about the Employment Standards Act as applying to all workers in this province, only 25% of our workforce is fully covered by the Employment Standards Act. There is a wide variety of exemptions for certain types of workers, certain occupations, that are either completely excluded from the Employment Standards Act or only have certain protections under the Employment Standards Act. So the last thing that we would want to do is exclude new categories of workers from the Employment Standards Act.

The context of this amendment is rather interesting. The government didn't really offer an explanation as to why this proposal was being included in Bill 88, but I did notice that there is currently an \$800-million class action lawsuit that has been launched against Procom, which is a temporary placement agency, because Procom was not adhering to the Employment Standards Act and paying employees of the placement agency as employees or recognizing

them as employees and giving them all of those rights that they would have under the act.

The representative case in that lawsuit is a woman called Anna Brown, who was assigned to the Ministry of Transportation as an IT consultant. It's really interesting that there's an \$800-million class action lawsuit going on where the lead case is someone who was assigned to the Ministry of Transportation as an IT consultant, and the case involves the violation of the Employment Standards Act, and then all of a sudden, legislation appears in this Legislature that exempts IT consultants and exempts business consultants from the Employment Standards Act.

The other part of schedule 2 that I mentioned requires workplaces to have electronic monitoring policies. Certainly, there are legitimate concerns from workers about the electronic monitoring, the surveillance, that may be happening in their workplaces, and workers not knowing what technology is being used to surveil employees.

1600

There's a good article here from the Brookings Institution where they go through all of the different kinds of technology that employers can use: keylogger software, video surveillance, attention tracking through webcams, biometric data, monitoring eye movements, facial expression, monitoring web browsing, app utilization, monitoring email, Slack and other kinds of software that may be in use in the office. So there's a lot of technology that is available to employers, and yes, we agree that workers have a right to know if they are being monitored and what any data that's collected through the monitoring is being used for.

We had a couple of presentations to the committee specifically about this schedule of the bill. We had a presentation from Dr. Teresa Scassa, who is a Canada Research Chair in information law and policy at University of Ottawa. She pointed out that the problem with this schedule is that there's no definition of electronic monitoring. She provided to the committee, based on her expertise, what she felt would be an appropriate definition of electronic monitoring. That definition of electronic monitoring came forward as an amendment for this government's consideration, but they decided no definition of electronic monitoring is necessary.

The other concern about electronic monitoring is the fact that there's no recourse for employees. Requiring an employer to have a policy on what kind of monitoring is taking place doesn't provide any recourse for workers who aren't comfortable with the level of electronic monitoring that's taking place or who want to challenge the uses of the data that is collected through electronic monitoring, and there's no protection for workers who could be terminated because they have concerns about the electronic monitoring policy.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner also came to the committee. She suggested that employers should be required to submit to her office a copy of their policy so that she could undertake a review and make sure that there is no significant overreach of employee privacy going on through these policies that are put in place. To me, that

wouldn't have dealt with the fact that there's no recourse for workers who are terminated if they have concerns about the policy, but it would have allowed some kind of analysis of what these policies are looking like—is there overreach, what kinds of technology are being used, and what uses is data being put to? It would have provided some insights into that, and then the opportunity to put limits—the limits that need to be in place on that ability to surveil in the workplace. Again, that was an amendment that an independent officer of this Legislature, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, brought to the committee, but nope, this government said they weren't interested—not going to go there, not going to happen.

It was a disappointing process, but not unexpected. I have learned from this government that there's not a lot of openness to amendments that are brought forward to try to strengthen legislation. In particular, it's not as if these amendments are dreamed up by the official opposition just to advance our own agenda. These amendments come directly from the people who appear before the committee.

We recommended that schedule 1 of the bill, the digital workers' rights act, be removed. This government had no problem removing the schedule 5 that used to be in there dealing with traditional Chinese medicine, because they saw that as a threat to their political self-interest. They had no problem removing that schedule of the bill. We hoped that they would show the same respect to gig workers, listen to what gig workers were calling for, and remove schedule 1 of the bill, but they did not.

Not only will this bill not do anything to actually protect gig workers, but it will undermine the ability of gig workers to pursue access to the Employment Standards Act through channels like Saurabh Sharma followed when he launched his investigation with the Ministry of Labour. This bill suggests that gig workers are lesser workers than every other worker in this province, that they don't deserve the same rights and protections that other workers have access to under the Employment Standards Act. They have to have a short list, sort of a hodgepodge of new rights and protections that this government has dreamed up without ever talking to gig workers.

That was another thing that we heard repeatedly from the committee—there was no consultation, zero consultation with the organizations, the unions that represent gig workers, the Ontario Federation of Labour or with gig workers themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a question for the member from London West. I realize I only have one minute and that's not much time. It reminds me of a Ronald Reagan story where he talked about Henry VIII, who apparently said to each one of his six wives, "I won't keep you long."

With respect to Bill 88 and the opportunities we're offering to people who are in the militia, the volunteers in our reserves who have to take time off work for skills training, we are cutting in half the time they must be employed in their day job to qualify for this kind of leave. I just wondered if you wanted to say a few words about that.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, we supported that section of the bill.

It's too bad that the government refused to listen to the gig workers who came before the committee and talked about the fact that Bill 88, in its current form with schedule 1 and the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, is an attack on gig workers and that this bill is not supportable so long as that Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act is included. This government was happy to remove the traditional Chinese medicine practitioners schedule of the bill; they should have done the same with the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my colleague from London West, on behalf of our caucus. I can't imagine the amount of work—on top of being House leader, putting her own bill forward, being labour critic and handling all of this tremendous amount of work, and we all appreciate that.

Now that this government has clearly failed to protect gig workers, I would imagine it's more important than ever for them to belong to a union. I wonder if my friend from London West could comment on how important that is now that the government has failed to protect those workers. Do we have adequate laws in Ontario at the moment to assist them in being able to join a union?

1610

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague the member from Niagara Centre for his question.

Yes, the big challenge for gig workers is that our Employment Standards Act here in Ontario declares that they are independent contractors, and independent contractors do not have a right to unionize. That is why my bill, clarifying and simplifying the test for an employee in the Employment Standards Act, making "employee" the default rather than "independent contractor"—that is why my bill is so important, because recognition as an "employee" is what has to be in place in order for workers to be able to unionize. It is unfortunate that this government chose not to go in that direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries has a question.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I thank the member opposite for her dissertation here today. I understand her passion for gig workers.

I can say, as the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, that no sectors have been hit harder in this pandemic than those that were forced to shut as a result of public health protocols at the time. Therefore, I have seen hundreds of thousands of people either leave the sector or who were underemployed during that time.

What concerns me now is that we're looking at a massive labour shortage across the entire province in these sectors as a result of what we've just been through for the past two years, which is why I support this legislation. With historic labour shortages and unfulfilled jobs, that means it's costing Ontario billions of dollars in lost productivity.

I would ask the member opposite why she wouldn't support this legislation in order to support the hardest-hit sectors, which will benefit from this legislation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: As I said at the beginning, digital platform workers are just one category of workers in the gig economy. There are actually many, many workers in cultural industries who also are gig workers. They're musicians and other cultural workers who deserve the benefits and protections and rights that are available under the Employment Standards Act. Those are other workers who have historically been excluded from the Employment Standards Act because they are regarded as independent contractors, which leaves them with no paid sick days, no vacation pay, no termination pay, no access to WSIB, no Occupational Health and Safety Act protections. I would have hoped that this minister, if she cared about those cultural workers, would have supported my bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I want to thank my colleague the member for London West for her really thoughtful unpacking and disquisition of this bill. In listening to her, it becomes absolutely clear that this is anti-worker legislation masquerading as pro-worker legislation. It is a wolf hiding in a sheep's suit.

I wonder if the member would be able to expand on what could be done to salvage, fix, or completely reorient the bill in order to make it actual pro-worker legislation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for Beaches—East York for the question.

She is absolutely right; this is an anti-worker bill, and it's actually not surprising when you look at the record of this government. This is the government that, months after they were elected, came in and cancelled the planned minimum wage increase; froze minimum wages for three years; scrapped the two paid sick days that were in place; voted 27 times against my bill to introduce paid sick days; and capped public sector salaries at 1%, which affects nurses and many other health care workers and other public sector workers. They have been taking midwives and nurses to court to try to deny them pay equity. They're taking WSIB funds that should go to support injured workers and rebating that to employers. It's no surprise that after that record, this government is introducing—its final act is another piece of anti-worker legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member from London West.

We all know that opioids are a serious problem in Ontario, and many stakeholder groups advocating for more workplace safety have praised our government for introducing having naloxone kits in the workplace. I just want to check why the member would be opposing this, and can you explain why you will vote against this?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: We supported the schedule that dealt with the requirement for employers to have naloxone kits in the workplace. We talked at the same time about the

importance of this government moving forward with a much more holistic strategy that doesn't just view opioid addiction as a problem for construction workers.

The fact is, this government didn't want to support this bill when it included traditional Chinese medicine practitioners in schedule 5, so they removed schedule 5. Why did they not remove schedule 1, the digital workers' rights act? Why did they not listen to all of the deputants who appeared before the committee and called on this government to scrap that part of the bill—or, if they couldn't scrap, at least deal with some of the most egregious parts of it, like that minimum wage that is not a minimum wage?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for a quick question and a quick answer.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you to my colleague from London West.

I think this is an anti-labour bill; it's pretty clear. I'd like you to give more examples of why it is also an anti-labour bill.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, a worker is a worker. We should not be creating this false dichotomy that some workers are deserving of full rights under the Employment Standards Act and other workers—digital workers, gig workers—have lesser rights under this lesser kind of legislation. A worker is a worker in Ontario, and every worker should be able to count on the same benefits and protections of the Employment Standards Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm very honoured to stand today on behalf of the people from Mississauga—Erin Mills to support Bill 88. I would like to thank the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development for introducing this unique piece of legislation.

As much as I would like to cover every schedule of this bill, my 20 minutes will not be enough. I'd like to cover three topics, because those three topics, in my opinion, show how our government moves fast to protect the interests of Ontarians.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government tackled many files which had been previously neglected and ignored. In many cases, the previous government turned a blind eye to issues being faced by the people and workers of Ontario and my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills—be it the issues of new immigrants' professional credentials, be it long-term-care homes and PSW issues, be it mental health issues, or the specific issues we are addressing today in this bill. Changes in today's work environment and the growing of online business and the transformation of everything to online is the reason for this bill—and many will be coming in the future as well.

Mr. Speaker, one in five Canadians currently take work via a digital platform, and in my personal opinion, this number will grow rapidly. That's why our government introduced a special ministry for digital government. It is a testament to our government's recognition of the change, the transformation, the need to remove red tape, making access easier—I would even say making life easier for the people of Ontario.

This is why we invested in expanding Internet coverage to northern Ontario. That's why this government committed to making sure everyone in Ontario has high-speed Internet by 2025. That's why we just recently introduced low-income-family Internet for \$20. It will make sure no one is left behind—low income, seniors, everyone. Getting high-speed Internet is opening a window on a new world, access to knowledge, news, services, and even for a job—not just searching for a job, but actually doing an online job for a company anywhere in Canada, or even anywhere in the world, from wherever in Ontario.

1620

The working environment is dynamic in nature. Every day, there is something new—new challenges or new needs. Internet, online businesses and all electronic businesses have been emerging business models for the past 10 or 15 years, I would say. Now we are in a new era where everything is moving to online—the Internet of all things. The pandemic caused it to be accelerated and, boom, day by day, more workers and corporations are moving to online and remote-work models. As usual, change comes with challenges for both employees and employers. We need legislation such as this bill to regulate the relation and protect the workers, and at the same time protect businesses' rights. This is what is at the core of this bill.

We used to connect to the Internet when we needed to perform a task, but now we are fully connected 24/7, which means that employers have access to their employees and their devices, which could be a phone with a mike and a camera. That's a great threat to the privacy of the employees and their families. That's why schedule 2 of this bill is so important—to impose a requirement on employers that employ 25 or more employees to have a written policy with respect to electronic monitoring of employees. We are drawing the line between the rights of the employees and the employers' right to monitor the work of their workers. Not only do employers have to declare to their employees what is being monitored—but also what this collected information can be used for.

Schedule 1, which is the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, is an historic schedule, in my opinion. It regulates employees' right to information, right to a recurring pay period and payday, right to minimum wage, right to amounts earned by the worker and to tips and other gratuities, the right to notice of removal from an operator's digital platform, and the right to resolve digital platform work-related disputes in Ontario.

For a long time, gig workers were considered a kind of temp worker—and with this term “temp,” their rights were ignored for a long time. I understand that the flexibility of this model of work suited a special vertical of workers—students, second-job workers, people who needed a special schedule of work for whatever their personal or family needs—but that does not mean that they should be overworked or abused. The companies that employed them managed to find a financial motive to hire them, tracking their hours, doing their payroll, collecting taxes and collecting feedback information to be able to evaluate their work. So I see it's fair to say that we need to protect their right to be paid fairly.

No one in Ontario should make less than the general minimum wage for their time worked. No one in Ontario should be fired without notice, explanation and/or recourse. No one in Ontario should have to travel half the world and hire a foreign law company to solve their workplace disputes. The majority of those multinational companies know very well that gig workers are vulnerable and in dire need of the job, and do not have the means to challenge them, with their huge legal departments.

That's why I think this bill, for the first time, is recognizing the gig workers—current and the ones coming in the future, emerging to online businesses. It is setting the precedent to this vertical, sending a comforting message to those workers: “You are protected. We are here to protect you.” I can even say it gives a framework to the employers to continue growing their business in this direction: “Here is a regulated relation you can build your business on.” It is a win-win situation. It gives stability to workers and employers at the same time. I know that the other side of the House might not agree. But this is the first step, and there will be more steps to come. As I mentioned, the work environment is dynamic.

Now we come to a dear part of this bill, schedule 3, Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act.

When a new immigrant comes to Canada, gets a temporary job and works hard on his or her credentials so they can get back to their original profession, that could take two to four years, depending on the profession. They then jump through hoops to get Canadian experience, which might take two to three more years. Then they are in a position to be able to start searching to get a job—finally. I would estimate that this immigrant will get his or her Canadian citizenship—which takes about four to six years—before he can get a job in his main profession, which usually he or she has been practising until a few days, five or six years ago, before they leave their original home country. If this new Canadian can't get a job within the province he or she got their licence for, they start thinking about moving to a province like our great Ontario. She or he will get the shock of their life: “You are not licensed for Ontario, and you might need to put in another few years to be able to mobilize your licence in Ontario.”

Schedule 3 is making sure that Ontario stays welcoming to domestic professionals and skilled trades.

Mr. Speaker, as an immigrant myself, I experienced those challenges first-hand. My family—me and my wife and our two sons—had to take this journey, as my wife is a family doctor. It took her a few years to get her exam and credentials. Then, because of the Canadian experience issue, she had to seek a job in a different province, which she accepted, and left her family, us, to serve in a low-service area in the northern part of another province, supposedly for two years, to fulfill the Canadian experience requirement.

But then we hit another wall: Moving her licence to another province is like if she's moving to another country. We applied—80 pages of applications—to get a

licence in Ontario. It took her seven years—another seven years for a licensed professional to move from a province in Canada to another province in Canada.

I did my best to advocate for her and many thousands of immigrants who are in similar situations. I reached out to the previous Liberal government to help, but they didn't.

I cut a promise maybe close to 15 years ago to speak up and be the voice of those thousands and thousands of immigrants who suffered, who are still suffering, and who maybe will suffer.

That's why I'm thankful to the Premier and to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development for bringing these changes—for bringing Bill 27, which eliminated Canadian experience as a qualifier for credentials in 23 different professions or skilled trades, and for bringing this bill, Bill 88, which, if passed, will give fairness to domestic professionals who are coming to Ontario from everywhere in Canada.

Ontario welcomes all Canadians with open hearts, open minds, open jobs—and open for business. We are the government that will get it done.

1630

We could be debating that schedule here for a few minutes, or even hours—a schedule which could be half a page in a 30- or 40-page bill. But these few lines and few minutes of debate could open doors, could affect the lives of thousands and thousands for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this bill. I'm humbly saying to my family and to many families who trusted me to be their voice: Promise made, promise kept.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for five minutes of questions.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ten, even though we finished early? Okay, we'll have 10.

Member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourguoin: I want to thank my colleague for his speech. I know at the end he was emotional.

I don't doubt that you want to make sure that immigrants are well taken care of. But I have to ask: Why make workers second-class workers in this bill? Why are gig workers and app-based workers not regular workers like everybody else? Why can't they be part of the ESA? Why aren't they entitled to WSIB, entitled to all the other benefits that workers have? You say you're there to make sure that they feed their families, and you're talking about how they need all this—what you said in your speeches. But that's part of it, sir—it's protecting these workers, and this bill doesn't do that. In fact, it creates a second class of workers. I'd like to hear your explanation for this. This is not helping workers. Trust me; I've been in labour movements. I was a negotiator for 21 years—and that doesn't do it.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to the member.

Again, I am not going to get into the exact point you're asking about for a small reason. The whole model of the gig workers is different than the full-time or part-time. Even if we compare part-time workers to full-time workers, there is a difference. The benefits are different, and the

support is different. Gig workers are a new category. Before this bill, there was not that category. Just recognizing the nature of this gig work is a good step towards that.

There will be more bills to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Markham—Unionville has a question.

Mr. Billy Pang: I appreciate the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for his remarks, especially on the digital issues.

Currently, one in five Canadians take on work via a digital platform.

Can the member please explain in detail what's included in our government's proposed digital platform workers' rights?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: As I mentioned in my speech, the multinational companies that are creating those electronic or virtual digital platforms actually control the pattern of the business. They control who can log in, who can actually get business or not. So they can eliminate any worker without any explanation; they don't need to explain. They can actually, through the algorithm, eliminate a worker. They allow him access, but the engine of the software doesn't pass business to him. That's the kind of the rights of those gig workers who are using those platforms—to be able to get a fair share.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: What gig workers are asking for is in fact the rights and protections that other workers already get under Ontario law. What this does is not only not give them those rights, but it effectively puts them in a ghetto and says, "Now it's even harder for you to get those rights."

How do you answer them when they express their shock, surprise and disappointment?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Again, I'll go back to the same point I talked about: The nature of gig workers is different. If I have a controlled environment, like full-time or part-time or even a location, I can definitely create some regulation around that. With virtual life and online platforms, there are many parameters out of the control even of the employer himself and even the government.

This is a first step, as I mentioned. When we did the Working for Workers Act, Bill 27, it added some steps. This bill, Bill 88, is adding more steps. I think this is an evolving effort from our government to protect those gig workers—maybe it's not perfect, but it's evolving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my colleague for his great presentation—certainly, a strong voice for not just his riding, but his extensive experience in his life as an educator.

With the historic shortage of labour here and the unfulfilled jobs that we have in Ontario, and, as a result, billions in productivity that's being lost here in the province—I'm wondering if the member can share with this House how this legislation will cut red tape and also

make it easier for skilled professionals to come to Ontario and fill some of these jobs that are going unfilled.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

We have lots of jobs in Ontario which are not fulfilled—looking for skilled workers or professionals. When we are trying to find professionals, we are not opening the door for domestic professionals to come to Ontario. We have other provinces which might have some skilled workers who would like to move to the great province of Ontario. This bill will allow them, will help them, with the mobility of their credentials and licence, to move to Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Hamilton Mountain has a question.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member opposite for his portion of the debate. It was quite interesting to hear of the trials and hard times that your own family had—coming to Ontario with foreign credentials, and what they had to go through.

We weren't very clear that health care workers were covered under that schedule—so I hope that it does, because New Democrats have been fighting for foreign workers' credentials for quite some time. It's those same workers who come to this province who are doctors and other professions, and they're finding themselves in these gig-worker jobs. We've seen very clearly the breakdown of actual wages that those same employees would gain, and it's actually lower than minimum wage.

Why would your government impose something that actually made it worse for those same gig workers? You're supporting this bill. Do you not believe that those workers—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. Back to the member to respond.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: First of all, I 100% agree on your points. Yes, definitely, I support the bill, because I think that having a minimum wage for gig workers generally is a step forward, because there was none before. This is the first time. This is the first province in Canada to put in regulation to address the gig workers.

1640

I understand you're talking about the minimum wage. I attended some hearings, and it depends on how you calculate that. There are many ways to skin the cat, because it's not a 100% architected job model yet. I know that we are trying to make sure of the right of workers to minimum wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Sarnia–Lambton seems to have a question.

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

My question to the member—I caught most of his remarks, and it was about the ability now with this bill to support workers with portable benefits. I wonder if the member would speak to the ability of portable benefits.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Again, there are many gaps I would say that this bill covers. Some of those gaps are related to being able to access jobs, to be able to get the

right, as I mentioned, to minimum wage, at least. That's the spirit of this bill, to give gig workers at least minimum wage. No one in Ontario should work for less than the minimum wage. But again, it depends on how we look into it, how we calculate the amount of time put in place.

I was even telling some of the constituents that I think the politicians are working for less than the minimum wage because of the amount of hours we put into the job, the amount of work we do in the evenings and then weekends. I understand that. Again, it's not black and white. There are some ways to do things, and I think the bill will address—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. We have time for further debate.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 88. I've not yet had an opportunity to speak to it, and it's certainly something that's near and dear to my heart as a former union representative and also an executive director of a not-for-profit. We were actually one of the first certified living wage employers in the Niagara region.

Making sure that workers have enough to live on is, I think, something that everyone should be concerned about, and I don't think we talk enough in this place about living wages.

Not so long ago, I believe in December, Jim Stanford, who I'm a big fan of, had an article in Toronto Star, where I thought he laid out the issue with gig workers very succinctly and kind of outlined that there's really two paths that we can go down. One is the path of best practices in jurisdictions like the European Union. The European Commission recently came out with a study affecting 27 different countries, and they went down the road of making sure workers were recognized as workers and making sure that they had all the rights. Then there's another road to go down, which is making workers second-class citizens. I think we know which road the government has gone down.

From its start in the ride-share business, gig work has spread into many other sectors: food and package delivery, technology, consulting, odd jobs, and even human services such as home care or disability services. And I'm going to talk a little bit about home care as well.

Statistics Canada estimated that as many as 8% of Canadian adults performed gig work in 2016, and that share has certainly grown since then. Under this business model, workers are in a legal limbo. Platform companies claim they're not employees. The platforms control prices, wages and dispatch algorithms. But workers can choose when to log on or off, so the platforms pretend each is an independent business in its own right. Workers are, thus, hired and fired without notice or cause, not paid for waiting time and denied other benefits, including pensions, workers' compensation and paid holidays.

Gig workers, meanwhile, would like the stability and protections that others take for granted, and they'd welcome the power to negotiate improvements in the terms of their gigs. We heard in an answer to a question earlier our labour critic talking about how her bill would have made it possible for workers to join a union and collectively bargain.

The current limbo can't last. Many gig jobs are just too similar to paid employment for the facade of independence to be maintained. The fiction that gig workers each run their own independent business is crumbling, and the exploitative and often dangerous conditions they face are sparking demands for change. And so the government has gone down this road of treating workers as second-class citizens, and we're all very proud of our labour critic for introducing a bill that goes down the other road of treating workers as workers, with all the full rights of any other worker.

In October, bringing that bill forward, our critic said, “An employee is an employee, and deserves the same rights and protections under the Employment Standards Act no matter where they work—rights like minimum wage, vacation days, and fair treatment in termination.... Unlike some companies and governments prepared to use our labour laws to deny workers their rights, New Democrats are standing up for gig and contract workers.”

“If passed, the bill would make Ontario the first province to legislate the gold standard ABC test for worker classification, which puts the onus on employers to prove that the worker is not an employee.

“We know that some companies and powerful lobbyists would rather see legislation to create a new subclass of worker”—and that, Speaker, is exactly what’s happened—“so they can ignore their responsibilities and deny their workers basic rights and protections, but we’re going to fight to make sure Ontario does not go the route of downgrading workers.”

And we on this side of the House are going to continue that fight, and it’s great to see unions getting involved. We all saw the presentations made at committee and how hard unions are fighting for these workers.

Jennifer Scott, the president of Gig Workers United, said, “The gig workers’ bill of rights was written by gig workers to end exploitation of workers and raise the bar for rights and protections in the gig economy. The bill meets one of the demands in the gig workers’ bill of rights and shows that the NDP are listening to working-class people. We call on the Ontario government to support the bill; stand with gig workers to take an important step forward in making Ontario a better place to work.”

That was an option that this government had back in October and they decided to go down the route of taking rights away from workers.

Veronica Zaragoza, the organizer with the Workers’ Action Centre, said, “For 10 years I worked as a building cleaner. I have cleaned everything from malls, grocery stores to large office buildings. During this time, many of my employers asked me to provide a company name to write my paycheques. At first I did not understand why. Until one time after receiving my pay, I went up to my boss and asked why I was being paid less than the minimum wage. He told me I did not have to be paid minimum wage as I was considered an independent contractor. Allowing misclassification means allowing exploitation. If the Ontario government wants to protect workers, they need to put an end to misclassification.”

This is very clearly the message from unions and from workers. But this government, with their Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee’s recommendation, decided to create a third class of worker.

Our labour critic said, “People deserve basic rights and protections no matter where they work....

“By creating a third category of worker,” this government “would be dooming gig workers to never be considered ‘employees’ and never have those basic rights and protections.” They “would be caving to massive corporations like Uber and Lyft, and making it easier for them to treat their workers as non-employees, unworthy of full employment rights. We cannot let” this government “satisfy the demands of the tech behemoths at the expense of the workers who deliver food, package goods in factories and care for seniors as home health aides.”

Speaker, for the government to go down this road, I think they have shown that one of the things they don’t care about is that workers make living wages, and this is something I’ve pursued for most of my life, both in the labour movement and as an executive director, making sure that we understand that anyone who goes to work has a right to put a roof over their head and food in their stomachs.

I’ve enjoyed working with poverty reduction networks across the province and in Niagara who have fought hard to make sure that we understand that and have run living-wage certificate programs to encourage employers to pay their employees a living wage and to make that a selling point for their business.

1650

An often-used quote is from Henry Ford, who said of his motor company, “I need to pay my workers enough so that they can afford to buy one of my cars.” There’s an inherent logic in that. It’s something that goes beyond partisanship as well. I know lots of Conservatives who believe that someone who goes to work and works all day, works full-time, should make enough to live on, to put a roof over their head and food in their stomach. You don’t have to be a New Democrat to believe that. Lots of people from across the political spectrum believe that, but apparently this government does not.

One of the quotes that I’ve always liked, in speaking about living wages, is talking about businesses—and it’s a perfect description of these platforms—that when you pay workers less than a living wage, you’re subsidizing your business with poverty; you’re subsidizing the business with the poverty of the workers. That’s precisely what these platforms are doing. They’re subsidizing their businesses with the poverty of the workers that work for them.

I also think it’s interesting that the government, with an opportunity like this, chose not to specifically address certain sectors of the economy. One of the things I had the pleasure of doing in working for the service employees was representing home care workers—this is back prior to 2010. The big issue, as it still is, is that these home care workers who are drastically underpaid are driving from job to job throughout the day and not being paid for the time in between; they’re gig workers. That’s what I always identify when I hear the term “gig worker” because those

are the workers I represented and I saw how difficult it was for them to make ends meet, and this ridiculous notion that you can increase a wage to the provincial minimum wage, but still allow that to happen—it's very simple mathematics—the employee is going to be nowhere near minimum wage, so that desperately needs to change.

If we think about the problems that we have in the home care sector and how dependent we're going to be on home care to solve the health care crisis, that is the one area that I think the government maybe should have thought outside the box and took an opportunity to address, because we're never going to be able to make the investments in home care when we have employees that just can't make a living because they're gig workers in the health care sector.

Speaker, it was already tough for workers before COVID-19 hit and things have only gotten tougher, and despite this recent attempt by the government in a number of bills to come off as being helpful to workers, the truth is the government has shown nothing but contempt for workers since they were elected in 2018. They've never been working for workers. They've been working for their friends; they've been working for those that donate to their party; they've been working for certain developers; they've been working for big box stores, banks and insurance companies, but not for workers.

There's a long list of evidence to support that, Speaker, and just a few of the greatest hits—I know the House leader in her speech glanced over these, but they started out by cutting a planned minimum wage increase right off the bat, taking money right out of the workers' pockets before the pandemic even began. They capped the wages of workers like nurses and teachers behind inflation, forcing them to fall behind the rising cost of living. Bill 124 was one of the most disgusting pieces of legislation brought forward by this government, hurting the very workers we came to depend on and limiting them to a reasonable raise, never mind one that they deserve.

The government denied workers PPE supplies and other protections during the pandemic early on, even fighting in court to avoid having to give workers N95s at one point. They took away workers' paid sick days and refused to reinstate them during the worst of the pandemic. They took women in health care to court to try to deny them equal pay for equal work. They took WSIB funds that should support injured workers and handed the money over to corporations instead. They imposed back-to-work legislation. They've been cutting teacher and education worker jobs, public health jobs and more since before the pandemic. So how is this, Speaker, working for workers? This myth that this government cares about workers and wants to pass legislation to support them—but every piece of legislation either does nothing at all or makes the problem worse.

One of the most telling and obvious examples of this government's disconnect with workers was how they treated hospital workers in my community and across Ontario during the pandemic. COVID showed the vital role that nurses play in every aspect of health care. And at the height of the pandemic, front-line health care workers

were reaching out to my office, many of them at the breaking point. Nurses are working tirelessly, often with minimal support, and sadly, some in the community are gig workers. At one point, in Niagara, our ICU capacity was at 108%, and our level three ICU 164%.

Despite this unprecedented strain on our health care system, this government refused to support nurses and other health care workers in their work. Front-line health care workers reported that when they were exposed to COVID-19 in the line of duty, they were being sent home without pay. Think about that: While the Premier was able to take 12 paid sick days for his isolation, the health care workers on our front lines were left with nothing. It doesn't sound like a government that's working for workers.

I raised the issue of unpaid isolation numerous times with this government and the minister. The Niagara Health system, the hospital, had to step up when this government wouldn't and provide isolation pay while the government dragged its feet. How could this government in that situation place additional stress and anxiety on the backs of workers who are already carrying us through the crisis? And here they are doing the same thing. Lots of gig workers supported us through the pandemic, Speaker, and the government is passing a bill that's making life even more difficult.

Working people showed courage, compassion and grit throughout this pandemic. Every single one of them deserves better than this. They deserve respect, and gig workers deserve to be able to afford the life they're working toward.

Bill 238, Speaker—you remember that—legislated the freezing of WSIB premium rates paid by Ontario employers for 2021 but did absolutely nothing to address the long-standing issue with WSIB and the plight of injured workers. COVID-19 is as much a workplace illness as anything else. We heard from our House leader earlier about the issues with WSIB as it relates to gig workers. My friend from Niagara Falls has talked many, many times about the issue of deeming and the problems with that, yet this government has failed to address any of it.

Recently, we heard from members of the Niagara region emergency medical service who were expressing concern that they're understaffed and under-resourced and burnt-out as the demand for emergency services continues to rise. We spoke to the president of the union in our area who said that patients calling 911 have to wait because there are no ambulances available. If they're working for workers, why won't this government support paramedics in their work and commit to hiring more paramedics, more full-time dispatchers, and ensure that the people of Niagara and across the province, when they call 911, can get the care that they deserve? Does this sound like a government that's working for workers, Speaker?

Paid sick days, another issue that we've talked about many times: Imagine what a gig worker has to do when they're sick. The government hasn't supported workers who maintain our food supply, stock our shelves in grocery stores, or gig workers. They too have been lauded as

heroes, but receive no recognition of that heroism with policies that will actually improve their lives and their livelihoods. Where was the government for these workers?

Speaker, I've talked about the issue of the rising cost of living. It's hard enough for everyone else; imagine how hard it is for gig workers as they struggle with their employment, as they struggle with WSIB, as they struggle without having all the rights that other employees have.

A government protecting workers would take real, substantive, timely action to address the soaring costs of living. They'd bring back rent control—rent control that this government eliminated just months into its term. They would tackle the completely unsustainable price of owning a home. They would build social housing and co-op housing. That's what a government that is working for workers would do.

1700

We all know the Liberals didn't help working folks when they had the chance. They froze the minimum wage for years as well, right up until they needed an election promise. They let the price of everything skyrocket, from housing to hydro and auto insurance. They cut jobs too—1,600 nurses.

The NDP is here for working people. We will never give up on wages that actually pay the bills, investments in health and safety, respect and dignity for injured workers, and real solutions for gig workers and those in precarious employment situations. Working people know that we stand for them before and after the election. I know that we're all very proud, on this side of the House, of the work that our caucus has done.

Our labour critic and my friend from Niagara Falls worked hard in committee, listening to the unions and the many people who came to committee and said how inadequate this bill is—not only inadequate, but how it could actually hurt gig workers further.

I think that it's incredible—we just dealt with this with the housing bill. For the government to strike a task force and not have any workers on the committee really shows the disdain they have for workers, and that they're not really interested in what workers have to say—just like they left municipalities out of their housing task force; they're not interested in what municipalities have to say.

Speaker, if you want to solve a problem that involves workers, you have to listen to workers, and you have to involve them in the conversation. I'm very proud of our party for doing that. It's too bad that the government chose not to listen to workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member opposite, and I appreciate his contributions this afternoon to the debate. I understand, obviously, that the role of the opposition is to point out areas that, from their perspective, they feel could be improved and built upon. I respect that and understand the important role of the opposition in fulfilling their duty.

I do want to take a step back and ask a question about the increased fines that we're seeing in place. We heard a

lot from the member opposite about the enhancements to the gig benefit package, and that he's not happy with that. But I am wondering if he is pleased to see that we're taking serious action to ensure that bad actors who, frankly, hurt workers are being punished and receiving fines that ensure that they stop these types of actions and don't view hurting workers as simply the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member for his question. I'm not sure how to answer that when you have, basically, a system that hurts gig workers. Rather than do anything to help them, the government passes a bill that could actually make things worse—but they have a few little fines here and there for employers.

The overall problem is that they're not considered actual employees. That's the problem that needs to be addressed. Until they're treated as employees and until they're allowed to join a union as real employees, I don't see how any fines or anything else is really going to help, in the big picture.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Beaches—East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much to my colleague for that very thoughtful discussion.

It seems to me that there's a real problem of understanding. I have encountered many people who are precariously housed or unhoused, who are currently living in shelter hotels, who are gig workers. It is absolutely shameful that people who are working as hard as they can still cannot afford to put a roof over their head and food on their table.

I want to understand how government members think they are being fiscally responsible when, in fact, it is so much more expensive to have to house people in a shelter hotel than to ensure that they can actually make a decent living wage when they're working full-time.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend for the question. I think the way that you finished the question really is the answer—and that is a living wage.

What the government doesn't seem to understand—their failure to understand the calculation that goes into what is a minimum wage for gig workers is that there is a cost of living. That's why I'm such a big fan of living-wage calculations—because in each region, they're calculated for workers based on if 70% of their income is taken up by the basic necessities of housing, food, clothing, transportation, child care. When you make that total calculation, that's a standard by which to judge whether a worker is making a living wage. If you do that with gig workers, it's very, very clear that they're not only in poverty but, as my friend points out, sometimes even homeless.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to be in here with Mr. Burch, the member from Niagara Centre—and it's truly a pleasure, as well, with his son Jackson Burch being in here. We're having a bit of fun with him. Making

sure we hold his dad to account is one of our jobs in this Legislature.

I found him to be very reasonable, but I didn't hear him say a whole lot about the reservists, so I just want to quote something and ask if he would support it. I'm going to quote Nick Booth, CEO of True Patriot Love Foundation, Canada's foundation for the military community: "Canada's military reservists are a crucial part of the Canadian Armed Forces. This bill will provide much-needed stability and support to those reservists who wish to deepen their experience within the military, without putting their civilian livelihoods at risk. All of us at True Patriot Love Foundation applaud Minister McNaughton and the Ontario government for this step forward to increasing job protection for those who choose to serve our country."

I truly commend the minister for doing this, and I would ask the member opposite if he will support it—particularly, this piece of the legislation that will serve our country for many years to come.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a very specific question that, to be quite honest, I have to become more familiar with. But if our reservists and Armed Forces are in support, then it's something I would certainly be willing to look at supporting. The problem is that it's within a bill—as so many other things are—that we don't support. So it's difficult to only support one piece of a bill that we don't agree with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourguoin: I want to thank my colleague for Niagara Centre.

You talked about your history in labour. When I look at this bill, I see this as anti-union, anti-worker—because as the union was certifying these workers, they were winning; they were winning in front of the labour board. What this government is doing is legislating so that unions don't have success in organizing these workers. I'd like to hear your view on this, since you were involved in organizing and in labour.

How does this bill hurt these workers by declaring them independent workers?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend from Mushkegowuk–James Bay for that great question. I know that he has a long history in the labour movement as well.

Earlier, the government House leader spoke about this issue. What this bill does in creating a third class of worker is—the government House leader said it—it basically stops those workers from joining a union, so I agree that it really does trample on their right. I'm someone who believes that every worker in the world should have the right to belong to a union and to collectively bargain, and this bill clearly takes that right away from them. I don't see how the government could, in good conscience, support something that takes a basic right away from workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: The members from the opposition gave us a lot of insight, but they always keep focusing on one or two—stuff that they are very interested in. But there is a lot of good stuff in our bill.

For example, 89% of people in Ontario agreed that the workplace has changed permanently due to COVID-19, and Ontario needs to act to update employment regulations.

Can the member opposite agree that this is a good step in granting certain rights and protections for these workers?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I think I understood the question; I apologize to the member if I didn't. There was a lot of other talking going on.

I don't think that it's a good step forward for workers because, as I just mentioned, it takes away their right to join a union. Schedule 1 should clearly be removed from the bill. I don't see how you can consider something a step forward that takes away a worker's ability to join a union, collectively bargain, and maybe someday make enough to live on.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Niagara Centre for doing such a great job on his portion of the debate for Bill 88.

We have definitely heard from many gig workers around this province how this bill would negatively affect them—and coming from the Niagara area, I'm sure with multi-tourism industries it would be that much worse.

Maybe the member would like to touch on how this would affect the Niagara region, in particular?

Mr. Jeff Burch: That question makes me think about home care workers I talked about earlier and a group of workers I had the privilege of representing, as their union rep, years ago.

We have a real health care problem in Niagara with the amount of resources, with the amount of staff we have, with the number of beds in long-term-care facilities, and the solution to that is going to be home care workers. Those workers have been gig workers since before the term "gig worker" was invented. Until we give them decent working conditions and until we make sure they're treated with dignity and respect, I don't see how we're going to solve the health care crisis in our region or anywhere across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Guelph has indicated that he'd like to join the debate this afternoon. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to participate in third reading debate on Bill 88. My time is limited, so I'm going to get right to the point. I will be voting against Bill 88 because schedule 1 of this bill will likely make life worse for the very gig workers the bill is supposed to be making life better for.

The rise in independent contractors has been on the rise for the last decade, yet there has been no meaningful legislative protection for this class of workers. This bill had a chance to do that and failed.

As I have stated in this House before, while there is room for evolution in the technology and the way we deliver goods and services, there must also be evolution in our laws to ensure that hard-working Ontarians are not exploited.

The misclassification and mistreatment of gig workers is unfortunately commonplace. As the Workers' Action Centre has pointed out, "Gig work is commonly promoted as flexible work, where the worker has complete control, but, in reality, it is the company that has control over pay, rates of pay, when assignments are offered, and can punish or fire workers through deactivation."

Let's be clear: Gig workers deserve benefits, a real and effective minimum wage, sick days, workplace insurance and workplace protections, but the government has missed the mark with this bill—treating gig workers as second-class workers by not including them as workers with the same rights as other workers under the Employment Standards Act.

Bill 88 actually undermines gig workers' fight to be treated as employees, as the new legislation only guarantees minimum wage when doing active work—when oftentimes they're waiting to do active work and not being paid.

I also have a concern that this bill takes away the hard-fought rights that gig workers were recently given in the recent Ministry of Labour decision that found that a gig worker, Saurabh Sharma, a bike courier for Uber Eats should actually be classified as an employee under the Employment Standards Act, which grants these gig workers better protections and access to a real minimum wage.

Gig workers called for the removal of schedule 1, but the government did not listen. How can you say you're bringing forward legislation to protect gig workers when the very workers the government says they're trying to protect actually say it's going to make their lives worse and take away hard-fought rights?

Speaker, I will be voting against this bill, and I recommend all members of the House do as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have five minutes for questions.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the member's concerns, and that he has risen and shared his particular perspective on this legislation.

I'm going to return to the question, really, that I had for the member for Niagara Centre as well. You have these concerns with this part of the bill, and I respect that; I understand that. But you have to vote; you have to vote one way or the other.

I'm assuming you support the measures that would, of course, improve access for those who are on leave to join the military. I'm assuming you would support measures to improve access to naloxone kits. I'm assuming you would support measures to increase fines for employers who treat hurting workers like the cost of doing business. I'm assuming you support those because I don't see you shaking your head.

So what makes you decide that, despite all of those good things, because there's that one part that you don't like, you're now going to vote against it?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, the whole reason the government said they were bringing this bill forward was not a few of the small good things that the member

opposite just talked about. They said they were bringing forward this bill to protect gig workers, but it actually undermines the rights of gig workers. It makes life worse for gig workers. Gig workers don't even want what's here because it's removing some of the hard-fought rights they've won.

Yes, I want to expand naloxone kits, absolutely. But if you want to talk about how we can solve the drug poisoning crisis, why don't we expand mental health and addictions services under OHIP so people can actually get the treatment, supports and services they need?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Niagara Centre has a question.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friend for his speech.

Does he support the right of gig workers to join a union?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'll be very short with this one. Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Next question?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Data suggests that the need to replace retiring workers in the skilled trades is imminent and real—in 2016. It's as real in the region of Durham as it is in Guelph. Nearly one in three journeypersons in Ontario was 55 years or older.

Is the member from Guelph going to vote against breaking down barriers like I just described?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I assume the member opposite is referring to schedule 3 of the bill. If I could just vote for schedule 3, yes, I'd probably vote for schedule 3 of this bill. But the reality is, how can I vote for a bill with schedule 1 in it, which takes so many hard-won rights away from gig workers?

We have to be honest with the people of Ontario. The government likes to put forward bills that have a few good things in them—and I'm happy to work across the aisle to support the good things, but I will not vote for the things that will make life worse for the workers in my riding.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

And I'll say to the member from Whitby, we have been quiet all afternoon. You're just arriving, and you're trying to take over the debate. You're not going to do it.

The member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay has a question.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I want to thank my colleague for his presentation. I'd like to hear from you, why do you think this government is so adamant about making second-class workers with this bill? In your point of view, why do you think they're so adamant about this?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. You know, I'm curious about the answer to this question, frankly, because gig workers were finally starting to win some hard-fought rights. They were finally starting to establish themselves as not being second-class workers and actually being classified as workers under the Employment Standards Act. They were finally looking like they were going to secure the right to have a union, and then the government brings forward legislation that

actually undermines those hard-fought rights, actually makes things worse for gig workers.

1720

Speaker, more and more Ontarians are working in the gig economy, and I believe those of us who want to stand up for the hard-working people of this province have to stand up for those workers' rights, and I question why the government would bring a bill that would undermine those rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: It is a pleasure to rise in this House this afternoon and speak in support of this bill put forward by my good friend and colleague the Honourable Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. I know how difficult it is putting legislative packages like this together, especially right after introducing another bill in the fall, so I'd like to thank the minister and his team for putting this bill together.

It is also great to see that our House is now coming back in person, most of us, to discuss this bill. We adapted quickly to the pandemic to ensure that the Legislature could continue to function, that government could continue to support the people of Ontario. Throughout the pandemic, members on all sides worked together, and I hope this collaborative work can continue, especially on bills like this one that we're debating here today.

I'd also like to thank those in my community of Richmond Hill for their efforts throughout the pandemic. This has been a difficult period for all of us, but thanks to your efforts these past two years, we're in a position to emerge from the pandemic and build a province that is stronger than ever.

Employers want to provide safe workplaces for their employees, and our government is making it easier for them to do so. That is what this bill is all about. Through this series of legislative changes, 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 during my time, but I'd like to start off with the one that is the most important. This particular item will save lives and make Ontario a leader in protecting people's health and safety in Canada.

While we've all been battling the COVID-19 pandemic the past few years, another epidemic has been taking place: the opioid crisis. Between March 2020 and January 2021, approximately 2,500 people lost their lives from opioid-related causes. One of the life-saving tools we have available to prevent deaths is a drug called naloxone, or Narcan. Naloxone is a fast-acting drug. It is sprayed up the individual's nose and it reverses the effects of opioid overdoses in minutes.

For those who may not know much about opioids and what they mean, they affect the part of the brain that controls breathing, which is why it is very crucial for naloxone to be administered as soon as possible. This is why, as part

of the Working for Workers Act 2, we are amending the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require employers to provide naloxone kits in the workplace to combat the risk of worker opioid overdoses.

We will be the first province in Canada to require this. It's a step forward in our government's plan to protect those that are struggling with addiction from preventable deaths. This is decisive action we are taking to address the challenge of the opioid crisis. And while the change is under the OHSA to protect workers, the kits can also be used in an emergency to help clients, customers and the general public.

Increased access and availability of these kits means less time spent trying to find one, less time waiting for medical help to provide the first step of intervention, and a greater chance of survival. The legislation will also require training to ensure workers are familiar with how to use the kits and administer the drug.

I have had a naloxone kit in my constituency office for a few years now. Speaker, I'm happy and find it lucky that we have never needed to use it at all, but still, it is important for us to keep it there just in case somebody needs it or somebody walks into the room and we know that it is there to save lives.

Our government, led by the advocacy and dedication of our amazing minister, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Michael Tibollo—he has taken several steps to promote the use and availability of naloxone and support those suffering from addiction. And I know Minister Tibollo has so much more to say on this, so I'll have to leave it to him to explain it further in the next couple of days.

The other change made to the Occupational Health and Safety Act is regarding the fines for bad actors—how important that is. Again, Speaker, the vast majority of businesses want to make their workplace as safe for their employees as possible. But there are some who don't follow the law, and then they treat the workers' injuries as the cost of doing business. As the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development has said before, this needs to stop, and it needs to stop now.

As part of our ongoing commitment to support and protect workers, we are 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, and the maximum fine upon conviction for all other individuals will increase from \$100,000 to \$500,000. We hope that these fines will stop and make them think twice and put some good measures in place. We need this because workers have to be kept safe. By increasing these fines to the highest in Canada, we're sending a message to employers about the importance of compliance with Ontario's rules and laws governing worker safety and health.

While the Attorney General has made tremendous efforts and advances in modernizing our justice system and accelerating the delivery of justice, we recognize that there are still some delays. To further support healthy and

safe workplaces, we're also proposing to increase the limitation period for commencing prosecution to two years, up from the one year it is currently.

These changes are good for people and businesses, and I'd really like to thank the minister for bringing these proposals forward. I was disappointed in November when the opposition decided to vote against the minister's previous Working for Workers legislation. I hope that this month, they see the value in protecting workers and potentially saving lives by supporting this bill.

1730

The other schedule of this bill I'd like to talk about in detail is schedule 3, which proposes amendments to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act. As the Premier stated last week, we are facing the largest labour shortage in generations. 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 thrive. But for that to happen, we need workers to fill jobs—338,835 jobs, to be exact.

While we continue to promote up-skilling and offer the Second Career training to domestic workers, we're also looking to attract workers from other provinces in Canada to relocate and work here. Ontario is already home to the best workers in Canada. We want to continue building on that talent pool to keep Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family. This is why we're taking action to make it easier for skilled workers across the country to continue their careers in the province. The proposed amendments in schedule 3 of this bill will ensure those working in 30 in-demand professions and skilled trades will get their credentials processed within 30 business days.

I just heard from my colleague how his family suffered when his wife had to work in another province. We are changing it, and these are the types of service standards Ontarians deserve and expect.

Lengthy, complex and unclear application processes serve as a barrier to those looking to come to our province, Mr. Speaker. We are giving Ontario a competitive advantage by introducing this 30-business-day service standard, which includes the time it takes for regulatory bodies to both make a decision and to communicate it, and we'll be leading the country in doing so. This will make it easy for engineers, auto mechanics, plumbers and several other regulated professionals to move to the province, fill the vacant in-demand jobs and drive our economic growth right here in Ontario. It may seem like 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 at all. 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 manner. We will continue to consult the regulators and other stakeholders throughout the implementation process to support the transition to make it as smooth and trouble-free as possible.

Speaker, the Red Seal program is another partnership between the federal government and the provinces and territories and sets a common standard for apprenticeship training and certification. Of the 55 Red Seal trades,

Ontario currently only recognizes 52. However, we are changing it. Under the proposed legislation, Ontario will recognize all 55 Red Seal trades and bring the total number of trades recognized in Ontario from 144 to 147. All of the Red Seal trades will be subject to the new 30-business-day service standard. In addition to these changes, by harmonizing training standards for many of the trades, we're also making it easier for apprentices from other provinces to continue their training in Ontario.

Over 1.2 million Ontarians were employed in the skilled trades last year, but we need more. Our skilled trades workers are crucial to our province and are necessary to help us to build roads, bridges, highways, homes and public transit across our province. These are the things that we need when we say more homes, more highways. We need all of these. We need skilled trades workers.

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

Since day one, the minister has gone to great lengths to promote the skilled trades as a career path of choice for young Ontarians, and given the importance of the skilled trades, I want to take a moment to remind the House of some of the other things we have done to grow this sector.

Last November, in response to the apprenticeship youth advisors' report commissioned by this government, we announced an investment of an additional \$90 million over three years to further promote the skilled trades to young people. We also invested an additional \$2.9 million to expand the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and provide more opportunities for students, bringing it to a total of \$20 million annually. And to encourage employers to take on more apprentices, the province's investments in achievement incentives and pre-apprenticeship training will increase to over \$77 million annually starting in 2022-23. These initiatives bring the government's total investment in the province's skilled trades strategy to approximately \$1.5 billion between 2020 and 2024.

Earlier this year, our government delivered on its commitment to wind down the disastrous Ontario College of Trades established under the Liberal government. The College of Trades was the epitome of bureaucracy. For example, prospective tradespeople had to physically mail documents to offices for one service, call in for the second and appear in person for the third. This was confusing and prevented many apprentices from pursuing their interests. Just imagine where we would be if all of these people who had finally given up on the process—when they could have been working in our skilled trades workforce already.

Instead of imagining, we're taking action to ensure this doesn't happen again. In January, we launched Skilled Trades Ontario to improve trades training and simplify services. The new agency will promote and market the trades, develop the latest training and curriculum standards and provide a streamlined, user-friendly experience for tradespeople.

New online services will allow apprentices to manage their careers in one place with an online, one-stop shop for

scheduling classes and exams, submitting forms, paying fees and more.

Very importantly, it makes it easier for more people to learn about and enter the trades, and reduces processing and registration times for applicants from 60 days to just 12.

I know I'm running out of time. This bill really delivers a lot, but I'll continue until my time is up.

1740

Our government's plan is to build a stronger Ontario for everyone. To do so, we need to support workers and businesses.

While I have spoken, so far, about how we are supporting workers, I want to say that we're also doing the best we can to support businesses.

When the government first took office, costly and burdensome regulations were squeezing the businesses in every economic sector, driving jobs and investments out of Ontario. That's why we made it an urgent priority to remove the regulatory roadblocks for businesses and to reduce their costs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I apologize to the member for interrupting, but your colleagues have been waiting patiently to pose a question or two to you.

The first question goes to the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: We know there are roughly 800,000 gig workers in Ontario; one in five workers in Ontario. Why is your government creating a second-class tier for them? They're not covered by the Employment Standards Act, which would give them WSIB, health and safety, the right to join a union, statutory holidays.

Why do you feel that, in schedule 1, gig workers don't deserve to have the same standards as everybody under the Employment Standards Act?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, member from the opposition, for asking me this question. This is part of what I still want to cover, but I can answer you in a little bit more detail now.

Our government is introducing foundational rights for digital platform workers in Ontario. No one in Ontario should make less than the minimum wage for time worked. In fact, we are one of the first provinces that responded to this and worked on this and helped the workers. If passed, Ontario will be the first province—and then Ontario gig workers will have the general minimum wage, the entirety of the tips they earn, the right to certain information, the right to resolve work-related episodes. I think we will continue to work on this. This is only the beginning. This is not the end. We're starting to work on—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Someone from your own side has a question now, and that would be the minister for all of these things—tourism, culture, sport and culture industries.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Whatever you want to call me, Speaker, as long as you don't call me late for dinner, as my father would say.

I want to say thanks to the member for her dissertation. The member from Richmond Hill has brought a great deal to this assembly, and I really think that the work she has done for not-for-profits across the province is something we should congratulate her for.

When you think about the not-for-profits in this province—many of which are supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation from this ministry—many of these organizations are run by volunteers, but they're also fuelled by small staffs. As I have said many times in this assembly, and earlier today, we are seeing critical staff shortages in the sectors that I represent.

I'm wondering if the member from Richmond Hill might want to talk a little bit about the impact this labour shortage has had on these sectors that she so valiantly champions, and how this piece of legislation will help us get more people—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Back to the member to respond.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much, Minister, for asking me that question.

Yes, we care about the not-for-profit sector, but we also care about businesses, big or small, when we have labour shortages—I already mentioned that we have over 300,000 in shortages of people in this area. We are cutting all the red tape. We are working with the different provinces. We are able to train the workers, attract them in different ways so that they are coming to Ontario. We're cutting the time—instead of getting them to go through one, two, three different processes again, we're shortening it so that they can come and work together with us. We reduced the time—we are having them start working with us in 30 days, and we are training them. We're supporting our businesses on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Beaches—East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I wonder if the member for Richmond Hill understands that gig workers, when you ask them, do not think this bill is in their interest. And if she does understand this, why does she think her government is persisting in putting it forward?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much to the member opposite.

I was just saying that we realize what we need to do for gig workers, and we are actually the first province that is responding and planning on this, and we are continuing—this is not the end of it. We will continue to work on this.

We appreciate all the input you give us. Let's just work together and pass this bill. At least we will have something to start it off, and we will continue to work on this—if you continue to work with us and make this bill pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Sarnia—Lambton has a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It has been a pleasure to listen to the debate all afternoon here.

I'd like to ask the member from Richmond Hill what impact she thinks, if any, having higher fines in the workplace for injuries will have on safety in Ontario and making safer workplaces.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to my colleague.

I had been running my own business before, and I know how important it is to do work in the right way. But some businesses have to cut corners. They try to push things ahead. They may not think about the workers as the number one priority. In fact, this is really the best way to do business. However, they know that they will be having some fines, but then they put it as a cost of doing their own business.

When we raise fines for the individual from \$100,000 to \$500,000, this in itself is deterring businesses from exploiting the staff, as well as the workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ten seconds.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: We will continue to protect the workers, and we will ensure that businesses understand what they have to do for their workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Niagara Centre has a question.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill.

I'm going to be very specific. We've heard that there's no question that this bill makes workers second-class workers. Why does the member believe that gig workers should not be allowed to join a union, which is a basic right?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member opposite. I thought I had already got that question very clear.

We are one of the provinces that started this. We see the importance. This is the digital platform. There are a lot of areas that we have to really go through, and we're working on it. This is not the end. Let's be patient. Let's get this bill passed, and then we'll continue to work on this. We understand that; we've been listening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill has a question.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my colleague, whom I have the pleasure of serving the city of Richmond Hill with, for a great presentation.

My question to my honourable colleague is about the protection of the privacy of workers here in Ontario. I can guarantee you that my colleague will agree that since we got elected, people in Ontario, especially workers in Ontario, have been looking for leadership in our government, and they have been getting it from our government.

The question is on the protection of employees or workers when it comes to electronic monitoring by employers—part of this bill talks about the fact that it is now businesses with 25 or more employees or workers. I'm wondering if my colleague can elaborate a little bit on that area for me?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much to my colleague. He is my greatest colleague—just a little bit north of where my Richmond Hill riding is. He's also sharing part of Richmond Hill with me. I thank him for working so hard, not only for the Richmond Hill community, but in this House.

Yes, we see the importance of the electronic monitoring. Especially these days, a lot of employees are working

from home. Also, they will be working soon on different electronic devices. We have to make sure that we will have different kinds of rules and regulations set very clearly by the employers so that their employees, their staff, will know that they will still have their privacy. Everything will be clearly outlined for them.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you, I had an interesting day today. I was at McDonald's at 8 this morning for a 90th birthday, I opened up seven businesses—but I want to at least get here and talk on this bill.

I'm going to start by telling you that I was in committee, and your government—every one of our amendments that was reasonable, you turned down. You didn't think that anything the opposition was saying would help the bill, particularly around schedule 1.

This morning, during what I told you I was doing—I happened to go home for half an hour. Because I don't lead an exciting life, I turned on this station to watch us, and the minister was speaking. I always like to hear what the minister is saying—until the end of it. The minister said this very clearly: He's not going to take any lessons from the NDP when it comes to workers. So my answer to that is that the OFL put on a presentation at committee. They represent 1.2 million workers. They're opposed to the bill. Yet you didn't even consult with them. Fifty-three unions you decided you didn't have to talk to, and you just rammed this bill through.

CUPE came in later in the afternoon. They represent 280,000 workers in the province of Ontario. I asked their president, Mr. Hahn, Freddy Hahn, Brother Hahn, "Did they talk to you about this bill?" They didn't talk to him.

So you can't stand up here and say that you're for workers when you don't talk to us.

Everybody knows that I belong to UAW, I belong to CAW, and I belong to Unifor. That just means I'm old, in case you're wondering. I belonged to all those unions over the years—and I didn't ask much for employees, but I asked them to talk to us and consider what we had to say; you guys chose, on this bill, on schedule 1, not to.

And then what happened over the course of the days I was at committee—I almost started to cry at night thinking about what these workers are going through. One of the workers told me, and you guys might not know this—I don't know if they're having a caucus meeting over there or not; they don't want to listen to me—78% of the 800,000 workers who work in this industry are workers of colour; 56% of the workers are new Canadians. One of the presenters—I didn't get his permission to use his name, so I won't—told me he works seven days a week, 14 to 16 hours a day, here in Toronto. He's trying to provide for his young family. He had a hard time talking to us about it. He talked about engaged time. Engaged time is when they get the order, they pick the order up and they deliver it to the house. That's the only time, in this bill, when they get paid.

I'm going to be very honest: I get paid \$116,000—you guys over there are probably about \$140,000 to \$170,000. Nobody, no MPP here, goes to work and doesn't get paid.

So I'm asking you: How can you bring a bill, in one of the richest provinces in the country, in one of the richest countries in the world, and ask workers, while they're waiting to get an order, that they get paid zero—never mind the minimum wage; that's a smokescreen in this bill. They get paid the minimum wage when it's engaged time. That's it. When they're not being engaged, they get zero.

A worker is a worker is a worker, and when you go to work, you should be paid from the time you punch that clock or you start your shift until the time you go home.

If you're covered by the Employment Standards Act, you actually have rights on the number of hours you could work before they would have to pay overtime.

They don't get overtime—and then he told me, out of that, he has to pay for his car insurance, he has to do the maintenance on his car. If you own a bike—a lot of those bikes have to be really, really good. They're delivering our food, because—you guys call them heroes, as you write a bill that just absolutely attacks them. It's disgraceful, in my eyes.

No worker in this province should be treated like this—and it bothered me, because I've always gone to work. Since the day I graduated from school, I've always had a job—and the minute I went to work, I got paid; the minute I punched out, my pay stopped, and I'd put in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. Some people would argue that, if they're the employer, and I understand that.

But how do you bring this forward? When the minister stands up and says he's for workers—and then you come across a bill like this, that actually, I'll tell you the truth, brings tears to your eyes.

I'll just read something from—I won't say his last name: "Quite frankly, Bill 88 is ridiculous. While this bill claims to be paying minimum wage, this is only for engaged time. A food delivery carrier goes out on the road willing to work, wanting to work, and yet if they don't receive an offer, they're not being paid for that time." That was what came across as really interesting to me. These workers who are doing these jobs love their jobs. I don't know if anybody realizes that. They like their jobs. They're doing it because they like it, but they want to be compensated fairly.

That they are willing to work or wanting to work—what other job treats an employee like that? We have people who sit around in offices—I'm not going to go into that; that's a little negative for other people. You can make light

of how easy food delivery work is, but it's not easy. I can tell you that it's much harder work than I've ever had to perform. As a food delivery carrier—and this is interesting; pay attention to this. I don't have a lot of time, so I'd like you to pay attention to it—they work in all kinds of weather: rain, snow, ice, wind etc. They endure working whether it's plus 30 or minus 30. When you're doing work whether it's plus or minus 30, is that not worth more than the minimum wage—actually, it's not even the minimum wage. If an order doesn't come in—and listen to this. Instead of huddling up over there, I want you guys to hear this. I know some of my colleagues over there will understand this: If it doesn't come in, do you know how much they make? Speaker, help me out here. You're only here for a few more weeks. You've done a great job as a Speaker, by the way. They make exactly zero. I'm going to repeat that again: zero. How is that going to help someone who's desperately trying to pay rent or even eat a meal?

He said a lot more.

So I want to ask my colleagues who are listening: Do you think that any worker in the province of Ontario should go to work and get paid zero for the time he's at work? Do you know where you'd see that, Speaker? Maybe a Third World country—maybe, because they've done a lot better. But do you know what these main employers are worth—SkipTheDishes, DoorDash and those? Do you know how much they make in a year? Anybody, yell it out. A couple of millions of dollars? Four million dollars? It's \$84 billion. That's what these companies are worth. Are you telling me they come into our country, into our province and they can't follow the Employment Standards Act—and that you write a bill that they probably wrote for you, by the way? That's what it looks like.

Miss Monique Taylor: They registered in the beginning of February.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't have that stat.

But think about that: \$84 billion. They come into our province and into our country, and they don't want to abide by our rules, and your government allows them to do it. It's absolutely disgusting, quite frankly. And then to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I apologize to the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Am I done?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Yes, you're done for the day on this debate. At 6 o'clock, we move into private members' public business.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anand, Deepak (PC) | Mississauga—Malton | |
| Andrew, Jill (NDP) | Toronto—St. Paul's | |
| Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP) | London—Fanshawe | |
| Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC) | Wellington—Halton Hills | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative |
| Arthur, Ian (NDP) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | |
| Baber, Roman (IND) | York Centre / York-Centre | |
| Babikian, Aris (PC) | Scarborough—Agincourt | |
| Bailey, Robert (PC) | Sarnia—Lambton | |
| Barrett, Toby (PC) | Haldimand—Norfolk | |
| Begum, Doly (NDP) | Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest | |
| Bell, Jessica (NDP) | University—Rosedale | |
| Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP) | Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York | |
| Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC) | Pickering—Uxbridge | Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances |
| Bisson, Gilles (NDP) | Timmins | |
| Blais, Stephen (LIB) | Orléans | |
| Bouma, Will (PC) | Brantford—Brant | |
| Bourgouin, Guy (NDP) | Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James | |
| Burch, Jeff (NDP) | Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre | |
| Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC) | Markham—Stouffville | |
| Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC) | Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord | Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives |
| Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC) | Willowdale | Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée |
| Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC) | Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes | Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associé des Transports (RGT) |
| Coe, Lorne (PC) | Whitby | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Collard, Lucille (LIB) | Ottawa—Vanier | |
| Crawford, Stephen (PC) | Oakville | |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC) | Mississauga—Lakeshore | |
| Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte | Attorney General / Procureur général |
| Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord | Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités |
| Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC) | Newmarket—Aurora | Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre |
| Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC) | Nipissing | Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce |
| Fee, Amy (PC) | Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler | |
| Fife, Catherine (NDP) | Waterloo | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre |
| Fraser, John (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | |
| French, Jennifer K. (NDP) | Oshawa | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC) | Kanata—Carleton | Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Gates, Wayne (NDP) | Niagara Falls | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Ghamari, Goldie (PC) | Carleton | |
| Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC) | Milton | Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme |
| Glover, Chris (NDP) | Spadina—Fort York | |
| Gravelle, Michael (LIB) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
| Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
| Harden, Joel (NDP) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| Harris, Mike (PC) | Kitchener—Conestoga | |
| Hassan, Faisal (NDP) | York South—Weston / York-Sud-Weston | |
| Hatfield, Percy (NDP) | Windsor—Tecumseh | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Hillier, Randy (IND) | Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston | |
| Hogarth, Christine (PC) | Etobicoke—Lakeshore | |
| Horwath, Andrea (NDP) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle |
| Hunter, Mitzie (LIB) | Scarborough—Guildwood | |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin—Caledon | Solicitor General / Solliciteur générale |
| Kanapathi, Logan (PC) | Markham—Thornhill | |
| Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP) | Cambridge | |
| Karpoche, Bhutila (NDP) | Parkdale—High Park | |
| Ke, Vincent (PC) | Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord | |
| Kernaghan, Terence (NDP) | London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord | |
| Khanjin, Andrea (PC) | Barrie—Innisfil | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement |
| Kramp, Daryl (PC) | Hastings—Lennox and Addington | |
| Kusendova, Natalia (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre | |
| Leece, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | King—Vaughan | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | |
| MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC) | Nepean | Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture |
| Mamakwa, Sol (NDP) | Kiiwetinoong | |
| Mantha, Michael (NDP) | Algoma—Manitoulin | |
| Martin, Robin (PC) | Eglinton—Lawrence | |
| Martow, Gila (PC) | Thornhill | |
| McDonell, Jim (PC) | Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry | |
| McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC) | Burlington | Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine |
| McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC) | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences |
| Miller, Norman (PC) | Parry Sound—Muskoka | |
| Miller, Paul (IND) | Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek | |
| Mitas, Christina Maria (PC) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | |
| Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Atikokan | |
| Morrison, Suze (NDP) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC) | York—Simcoe | Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports |
| Natyshak, Taras (NDP) | Essex | |
| Nicholls, Rick (OP) | Chatham-Kent—Leamington | |
| Oosterhoff, Sam (PC) | Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest | |
| Pang, Billy (PC) | Markham—Unionville | |
| Park, Lindsey (IND) | Durham | |
| Parsa, Michael (PC) | Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Pettapiece, Randy (PC) | Perth—Wellington | |
| Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC) | Northumberland—Peterborough South | Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs |
| Rakocevic, Tom (NDP) | Humber River—Black Creek | |
| Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC) | Mississauga East—Cooksville | Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique |
| Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC) | Mississauga-Est—Cooksville | Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones |
| | Kenora—Rainy River | Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts |
| Roberts, Jeremy (PC) | Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean | |
| Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC) | Sault Ste. Marie | Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs |
| Sabawy, Sheref (PC) | Mississauga—Erin Mills | |
| Sandhu, Amarjeet (PC) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC) | Brampton South / Brampton-Sud | President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor |
| Sattler, Peggy (NDP) | London West / London-Ouest | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Schreiner, Mike (GRN) | Guelph | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock | |
| Shaw, Sandy (NDP) | Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas | |
| Simard, Amanda (LIB) | Glengarry—Prescott—Russell | |
| Singh, Gurratan (NDP) | Brampton East / Brampton-Est | |
| Singh, Sara (NDP) | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Skelly, Donna (PC) | Flamborough—Glanbrook | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Smith, Dave (PC) | Peterborough—Kawartha | |
| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC) | Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte | Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie |
| Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP) | St. Catharines | |
| Stiles, Marit (NDP) | Davenport | |
| Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto—Danforth | |
| Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC) | Mississauga—Streetsville | Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain | |
| Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC) | Scarborough—Rouge Park | |
| Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC) | Huron—Bruce | |
| Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC) | Vaughan—Woodbridge | |
| Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC) | Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming—Cochrane | Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances |
| Wai, Daisy (PC) | Richmond Hill | |
| Walker, Bill (PC) | Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| | | 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 Bourguoin
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