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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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Report continued from volume A.

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WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE
ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ

Continuation of debate on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 190, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'emploi et au travail et à d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm proud to be able rise this afternoon to speak to the fifth Working for Workers bill that has been introduced by this government. It's safe to say in Ontario today there's a lot of workers that are really struggling. They are earning too little to survive and live good lives, pay for their rent or their mortgage, buy a home, pay for food, pay for their bills, have vacations, look after their children. It's a very expensive province.

We have been calling for a long time for some measures to lift the working floor to improve working conditions for Ontario workers. That means raising the minimum wage. It means increasing health and safety standards so that if someone is at the workplace, they get to come home without being injured or killed on the job. It means enforcing the laws that we have, and I'll be discussing this when I go through the bill a little bit, because some laws aren't being adequately enforced. It means replacing precarious, temporary and gig work with more stable, permanent jobs that allow people to earn a good wage and provide for themselves and their family. It means bringing in paid sick leave that's commensurate to what people need.

This bill doesn't do that. This bill—certainly, there's a lot of measures in here that are supportable. But I would classify this bill as tinkering around the edges, which is similar to some of the other bills that this government has introduced when they're talking about working conditions. As my colleague from Sudbury likes to describe it, there's a lot of sizzle, but no steak.

I'd like to go into some sections of the bill. There's a lot of detail in this bill, so I'm going to focus on the sections that are most relevant to my riding and the issues that constituents raise with me.

There is a move in this bill to make it easier for high school apprenticeship programs, so to make it easier for students to choose a trades path and not an academic path in high school. It's certainly true that we do need to make it easier for students to choose a career in the trades. These jobs can be very well-paying jobs. They can provide stable employment for people. It can be a very good choice for people who think that that's going to work for them. I do have some questions, though, and some concerns: What happens if a student starts the apprenticeship stream program and then finds that it's not going to work for them and they'd prefer to go back to the academic stream? What are they missing out on? What critical learning in math or English are they missing out on, if they choose that apprenticeship stream and then find that it's not going to work for them?

The second thing I think about when I think about trades and helping young people move into a career in the trades is the underfunding of our public school system. The reason why I say that is because we have Central Tech in University–Rosedale. Central Tech used to be a school that had over 3,000 students in it. It was, across Ontario, a trade school that was a magnet for most of the GTHA. Young people went to Central Tech to begin a career in the trades. In fact, there still is a trades program there. It's called the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. It's within their technical department. About 86% of the students enrolled in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program have been signed on as apprentices in their desired trade. It's a great program.

The challenges we see with that program when I've talked to teachers there is that it's extremely hard keep qualified teachers—teachers who not only have an undergraduate or a master's degree so that they can teach, an education degree, but also are skilled tradespeople. It's a very unique skill set. These people have a lot of options available to them. Being a teacher in the TDSB school system is quite difficult right now—people are leaving—so Central Tech is one of those many schools that have worker shortages, especially within the trade sector.

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The second thing I've noticed about Central Tech is that it's critical that we upgrade the equipment there. In order for people to learn how to become a carpenter or a plumber or an electrician, they need to have access to equipment at school that is well-maintained and up to the standard that you'd see if you'd start working on a job site. Unfortunately, there's not enough funding for our school boards to provide the upgrades that are necessary for this equipment to be really good teaching tools. That's an issue.

If we address these issues around lack of access to school funding, I think that we can make high school apprenticeships a more attractive option for students, so I'd really like to see the government consider that piece.

The other thing I'd like to talk about in the bill is the move by this bill to bring in tougher fines for employers that break the law. When we're thinking about breaking a law, the issue that we often hear about is what's called wage theft. An employee is promised \$22 an hour, but when it's time for them to get their paycheque at the end of the week, they find out they're receiving \$50 less. It's not uncommon. I had it happen to me when I was young; many people have.

I want to quote from the Workers' Action Centre. Their main office is in my riding; I communicate with them regularly. They do excellent work. This is from Ella Bedard, an organizer with the Workers' Action Centre. They say:

"There's an epidemic of wage theft in this province.

"Increasing fines will not, by itself, address the crisis.

"As we have been saying for years: Workers need proactive inspections to ensure employers obey the law and we need effective collection of stolen wages when the Ministry of Labour has ordered an employer to pay back workers' wages."

That seems really fair. If you have an individual—just one individual—who wants to get their wages back from an employer that has accessed a paralegal—the human resources department is well aware of how to use the legal system; it's not a level playing field. Employees need to be able to contact the ministry if things aren't going well for them and to make sure that the ministry has their back and can intervene if they're finding they're not getting the wages that they're owed.

The Toronto Star did an investigation into wage theft to look at how serious the problem is, and it is very serious. Looking at Ministry of Labour data, between 2020 and 2022, with Ontario workers, there were 8,400 successful claims for workplace violations, and these workers were owed a total of \$36 million. That's a lot of money. But here's the problem: The Star also reported that by the end of 2022, government collection recovered less than 40% of the money that was owed to workers.

I can't imagine, paying the rents that we do, paying the amount that we have to pay when we go into a grocery store—this is money that workers really need. I think it is important that the government has their backs when they're facing a situation where an employer is not paying them what they are owed.

What we do need is protection from wrongful dismissal so that if a worker does speak out, they are not fired as a punishment for speaking out. We need more proactive inspections of workplaces to ensure that employers are following the law. I think this is really essential. Any worker out there is going to think very carefully about if they want to stand up to an employer and risk losing their job, and when we have a complaint-based system, it means that workers do need to take that risk and risk their livelihood in order to get what is owed to them. I think

that's a problem, and we can address that—the government can address that—by bringing in more proactive inspections.

The third piece we're recommending is that there's meaningful collection on orders so workers get the money they're owed. You would think—I remember when I was young and I just assumed that every law was properly enforced. Now that I'm a politician, I realize that there are a lot of laws that aren't enforced. This is a law that needs to be enforced. It's important. We're not seeing that in this bill. We would like to see this in future bills. What we are seeing is a decision to increase the fines for employers that break the law—good. It's important that we increase the fines, but let's also augment that with measures that we know are necessary for wage theft to be eliminated and for workers to have good working conditions, where their employer follows the law.

The other thing that I found really interesting—and I want to credit my colleague the MPP for Sudbury for pointing this out—is that while fines for certain instances have gone up, fines for administrative penalties, which is the bulk of penalties that employers have to pay, have actually gone down. If there is an administrative penalty violation under the Employment Standards Act, a \$350 penalty is now a \$250 penalty, a \$700 penalty is now \$500, and a \$1,500 penalty is now \$1,000. And these are the penalties that bad bosses are most likely going to be levied with. So I think that is interesting that you've raised them in some cases, but then you've lowered them in others. It's an interesting observation.

There is a move in this bill to prohibit sick notes. I would like to congratulate the MPP for London West, Workers' Action Centre, the union movement and workers for advocating for years now for sick days to be reinstated in Ontario. It's essential, it's important, and that movement and that work will continue.

It is a good thing that employers will be prohibited from requiring a sick note from a qualified health practitioner as evidence of an employee's entitlement to sick leave. It's a good thing. In my riding, I think it's particularly helpful because we have a huge doctor shortage. Getting a doctor in my riding is extremely difficult. Keeping your family doctor is even more difficult because many of them are retiring. We need to make sure that our family doctors and our health care providers, our nurse practitioners are doing the most important work. Writing sick notes for an employee is not the most important work that they should be doing. So it's a good move that that has been removed.

What we would like to see is a commitment from this government to move forward with enshrining paid sick days for all employees across Ontario, because when we bring in an adequate amount of paid sick days, it means people are not at risk of losing their job just because they've got COVID or they've got a serious flu. It's important. It's also important because we don't want people who are sick going to work. If you are a grocery worker, you are interacting with maybe 30 or 40 employees in the grocery store, and then you're also interacting with 100, maybe 150 customers during your shift. There is

no good reason why someone who is very sick should be going to work and potentially infecting so many people when we should be providing and mandating paid sick days so that people when they are sick stay at home and get better.

It's very sensible legislation. My hope is that in future pieces of legislation, the government will realize that having paid sick days is good for the economy, it's good for people and it's good for our health care sector. I look forward to seeing it in future bills—because I am hopeful. That was a dig at you, member for Waterloo.

The other thing that I would like to talk about is schedule 3. Schedule 3 will provide fair access to regulated professions and compulsory trades. Now, we're still going through the details to fully understand what this means, but our initial take is that this could mean that foreign-born professionals, who may not have documentation, are being provided an alternative way to establish credentials by other means. It's not clear, but our hope is that's what it means.

If that is the case, if there is a simpler and easier and more efficient pathway for foreign-trained professionals to come here, have their credentials recognized so that they can work in the workforce, then that is a good thing. My hope is that this is what this schedule means. As I mentioned earlier, we have some pretty serious work shortages in downtown Toronto, especially within the health care sector. It's not just among family docs; it's also nurse practitioners, personal support workers, home care workers. There's a real shortage there. I will be continuing to look into these details to see if this Working for Workers bill makes some headway in addressing that problem.

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I want to also make reference to the recent press conference that was held to announce the Working for Workers law. In this press conference, there were a lot of things that were mentioned, such as the requirement that sanitary products be available on all construction job sites, that there will be job-protected leave in line with federal levels, that there will be a new secondary-school-to-trades program—interesting.

The challenge we see is that these three points, based on our reading of the bill, are not in the bill. So we're wondering where they are. Are they going to be in regulation? Are they going to be in a future bill? Was that just some mistakes in the press conference? I don't know. But we don't see those three points in this bill, so we're curious about that.

I'd like to conclude by acknowledging a win. Schedule 6 is a move to add wildland firefighters and inspectors to the class of firefighters under the act entitled to presumptive WSIA coverage for various cancers, heart conditions and PTSD-related injuries. This is a measure that the NDP has been advocating for for some time. It defies logic why some firefighters are eligible for WSIB coverage if they have a health condition that was likely caused by their employment, yet wildland firefighters were not eligible even though they work in dangerous, difficult, painful and

sometimes life-threatening conditions. It's a good move that that measure is in here.

What wildland firefighters are also calling for is for this government to move forward with providing wildland firefighters with full-time permanent jobs. My hope is that the government augments this move to include wildland firefighters under the WSIB coverage for certain conditions with a commitment to provide these workers, these firefighters, with good jobs—makes a lot of sense to me. We certainly support it.

I want to also acknowledge a measure that is being pushed by my colleague, the MPP for Sudbury, and that is to also look at other workers that are far more likely to obtain occupational cancers on the job—expanding that WSIA coverage to other workers that work in vulnerable sectors. He made the point of referencing underground miners. It makes a lot of sense to me, too. He presented some statistics to me which I think are important to read. The Occupational Cancer Research Centre confirms that 40% of all occupational lung cancers are related to mining, and 11% of occupational bladder cancers are also connected to mining. That's an issue. My hope is that, in future bills, there is a move to look at other workers that are in working conditions that can lead to long-term health conditions later in life and looking at expanding who is eligible for WSIB coverage.

To conclude, there's a lot in this bill that is certainly supportable, and I've mentioned a few. I want to thank my colleagues in the labour movement for successfully advocating for the government of the day to include them in this bill. That needs to be recognized. From the MPP from London West, to Workers' Action Centre, to OFL, to the labour council, to Unifor, to CUPE, there's a lot of work that's being done on the ground and in workplaces to improve conditions.

What I would like to see in future bills is a commitment from this government to raise the minimum wage so people who are earning minimum wage can afford the rent, can afford food, can afford to provide for their children, give them clothes, give them a good lunch. I would like to see this government enforce the laws that we have, especially when it relates to health and safety and wage theft. It's extremely important. I would like to see paid sick leave, so that if someone is sick, they stay at home and get better and they don't go to work and infect other people. It's good for the economy, it's good for our health care sector. And I would like to see this government make a firmer commitment to addressing the precarious work that we see in Ontario—the gig workers, the people that don't have access to employment insurance—and do more to create more permanent, full-time, unionized jobs in Ontario. That's what I would like to see.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Trevor Jones: I want to thank the member from University–Rosedale for her submission. On another note, I want to thank the member from University–Rosedale, who always properly articulates summaries of petitions. Even though I don't agree with them all the time, she does

an exceptional job, and her caucus could learn something from her.

With respect to this legislation, I think we all love to see legislation that's everything to everyone. It's not always possible; although I would argue this comprehensive bill makes an excellent effort and makes real progress.

I would like to know if the member from University–Rosedale would endorse a bill that actually supports women in the skilled trades and makes Ontario work sites open and accessible to everyone.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington for your compliment. I hope it was a compliment and not a dig.

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It was a compliment? Okay, good. It doesn't matter; I'm used to digs in this place, but I was just wondering. I can't tell. I don't know your tones yet.

To answer your question, we're very much in support of increasing the number of women who choose a career in the trades. As I mentioned in my speech, one thing that very much interests me is ensuring that people can have a career in the trades, not be discriminated against at work, know that there are other women there who work in the workplace, know that they're going to get equal pay. Those kinds of measures I think I would very much like to see from this government. Thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from University–Rosedale for a very strong summary of the legislation and her concerns. She was talking about skilled trades in our high schools and she mentioned Central Tech. My father worked at Central Tech for many years. A little-known fact, but Good Will Hunting was filmed at Central Tech, where my future boyfriend Matt Damon was also a janitor and put that math equation on the chalkboard—don't tell my husband.

Anyway, you mentioned the importance, though, of having the appropriate equipment, right? Because skilled trades is experiential learning. You need to have the tools of the trade at your disposal in order to be successful. And what we have seen in our high schools, which is a barrier to the success of the skilled trades program that's contained within this bill, is a lack of upgraded, modernized equipment.

How hopeful are you as the member for University–Rosedale that Central Tech will see an upgrading, a modernization of this equipment so that the skilled trades program can truly be successful?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for that question. We talk regularly with Central Tech staff—because it's just such a beautiful school, it used to fit over 3,000 people, and it's so underutilized now. When you walk through the hallways, they feel empty. One thing that is so wonderful about that school is that they do have the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. It is a pathway to sign people up as apprentices in their desired trade. But the principal and vice-principal keep telling me very clearly that they're having a really

hard time keeping qualified teachers and that they don't have the funding to adequately upgrade the equipment.

When I think about the Toronto District School Board budget right now, I worry that the situation Central Tech is in is only going to get worse. We know that the TDSB has a shortfall of \$26 million in the coming year. We know that the TDSB is going to be cutting, not investing, when it's clear that investing is necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member for University–Rosedale for her comments. I'll echo what the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington said: It's always truly quite fascinating to hear you. You're so eloquent, so it's totally a compliment to you.

1700

I wanted to check in with you about your feelings on how employees are treated in the workplace. There are bad actors out there. There has been past legislation that has gone to protect vulnerable employees, and there are some features in here, too, that involve increasing the penalties for employers who violate health and safety standards. We really don't want to have exploitative practices and we want to improve workplace safety with this bill.

So I'm wanting to get your thoughts as to how far we should go. Is this a step in the right direction in this particular piece of legislation?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for your question.

The decision to increase fines for bad bosses and bad employers that don't follow employment law is a good move; it's important. What we also see is that even with the fines that we had previously, employers that broke the law were very rarely getting the maximum fine. They were getting far below that. We're also hearing from employees that much more needs to be done to ensure that employers follow the law.

Our recommendations are that there needs to be protection from wrongful dismissal, so if an employee speaks out about something that's really egregious in the workplace, they're not fired.

The second thing is more proactive inspections, because there are many employees that are just never going to speak up. They're too scared; they need that job. So ensuring that there are more ministry staff, bylaw officers and inspection officers going into big employers to make sure that they're following the rules is important.

And then finally, ensuring that there's meaningful collection on orders so that workers get the money they're owed—and in that case, I'm talking about wage theft. If someone is paid \$50 or \$100 less than they were supposed to be paid—or even more, in some cases—that's the time for government to step in.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for University–Rosedale, on her remarks and also her ongoing advocacy for workers in this province.

I was glad to hear that she connects regularly with the Workers' Action Centre, an organization that I have also worked closely with. One of the concerns of the Workers' Action Centre is the lack of protections for gig workers in this province.

This government created a Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, which is kind of a lesser version of the Employment Standards Act. It means that many gig workers don't earn anywhere near the minimum wage; they don't get access to the same kinds of protections that other workers in this province get. I wondered if the member could comment on this government's approach to gig workers and whether gig workers actually deserve to be treated like the employees that they actually are.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for London West for that question.

We've regularly communicated and worked with gig workers in our riding—Uber workers; DoorDash—and many of them tell stories of earning \$4.50 an hour because they're only paid for when they're actively on the job. They're not paid when they're waiting for a job, which is really kind of absurd. If you walk into a store, that worker who is at the store is paid even if there are no customers in the store at that given moment. It's really absurd.

I know that the NDP have introduced legislation to basically have an ABC test to easily determine if an employee is a gig worker or consultant or an employee. The test is very clear. It should be implemented by this government. Overwhelmingly, Uber workers, DoorDash workers, gig workers, many of them, should be classified as employees. They should be protected by employment standards legislation. They should be eligible for benefits. They should get all the things that employees get that gig workers don't get, and I urge this government to look into that legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): A very quick question and very fast response.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Quite often over the last few years we've been hearing about a huge shortage of workers, whether it's skilled trades, health care, education. Does the opposition agree that reducing barriers for internationally trained professionals will create a more inclusive workforce and address the systematic challenges for skilled immigrants?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. We agree. We have seen in our riding big issues with foreign-trained workers coming to Toronto and driving a taxi instead of using their health care professional skills. It's a huge problem.

We just had a meeting with internationally trained doctors who have been trained and worked in Hong Kong. They're ready, they want to work in Ontario, but they can't. It's just too difficult for them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member. That was a quick response. I appreciate that.

Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's always an honour to rise and speak here. Today we're discussing part five of Working

for Workers. Now, what really amazes me is that the government has kind of two—well, no, they've got three settings. There is fast, slow and reverse. On some stuff, they will get you here in the middle of the night and they will front-load. They will just ram it down your throats. If they need to do it and they need to move quick, they move quick.

I remember when I had read about the OEB decision as an example, where basically—imagine the OEB saying to Enbridge, to the energy sector, “Hold on, we're not going to allow you to charge customers,” and mere hours later this minister is on the phone, announcing that their decision sucks and “You need to take it back.” And then you've got other things where people are waiting and waiting and waiting.

Now, is this bill supportable? There's definitely supportable stuff here.

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you very much. Look, some of the stuff they do is all right. I'll admit that. It happens, right? I mean, a broken clock is right twice a day, isn't it?

But the reality is, it's taken five bills, and it's sort of being dribbled out. Workers are out there waiting and they're probably being told, unions are being told, “Just wait around, it will get better. It will get better.” And so, we are here at the fifth iteration of this bill.

So are there good things here? Absolutely. I've met with firefighters, and the fact that firefighters or first responders at times are dealing with health issues, cancers four or five or 10 times the rate of others, and they're being treated presumptively that maybe in fact it is a workplace hazard, and the fact that we're getting around to legislation to deal with that—definitely. In fact, New Democrats were the ones who have been talking about this for years, putting this forward, pushing this and, finally, the government in this—again, it takes time. This is in the slow setting; this isn't in the reverse one. In the slow setting, they're finally getting around to dealing with that, looking at that, but it definitely makes sense.

Sick notes: You're always in a tough bind, right? You get up and you've got a splitting migraine. You're sick—I don't know what—you're throwing up all over yourself, and the employer—the pages are even getting stunned by that one there, right? And your employer is saying, “Come into work,” or “Leave your house and go get a sick note, deliver it to us,” or now I guess you could text it or whatever, “and then go back to bed.” I mean, that doesn't make sense.

The fact that the government is trying to move towards giving workers—maybe not the number of sick days they need, but a couple. Allowing them to get around that is a good thing because it doesn't make sense in the first place. Now, based on the way in which you read the legislation, it might actually give employers other ways of making workers have to provide notes and whatnot. I don't know if the way it's worded is perfect, but I'm going to take them at face value and say that they're trying to get us in a positive direction with regard to this.

Now, they don't have a good track record on sick days, because we were in the midst of a pandemic—people locked down, the spread happening all over the place and people all of a sudden are getting sick—and rather than providing 10 paid sick days for workers, they were just telling workers to go into work. So here you are, getting commercials—do you remember those? Every day, the Premier would go up and they were lined up like Canada geese. Did you ever see the way it was set up there in that room? And they're being told—and then the Minister of Health is telling you what to do, wash your hands and all of this stuff, giving us hygiene lessons. But then, New Democrats are in the chamber here, saying, "Okay, you want to stop the spread. Why don't we actually have 10 paid sick days?" "No, we're not going to do that." So it kind of impinges a little bit on the credibility of the government when it comes to that stuff.

1710

But do you really want to help workers? Does this government truly want to help workers? It's going to take a lot more than this legislation to be able to do that, because there are things that workers have been demanding, like ending deeming; properly classifying workers, like gig workers, who are struggling; equal pay legislation; enforcing workplace violations that are happening.

Now, in fact, fines, in many cases under this government, are dropping, but what they like to do is announce over and over increasing fines in different areas. But if you don't increase enforcement, it doesn't matter what you increase the fine to. You could literally return corporal or even capital punishment, but if you don't have inspectors and no one is enforcing it, these fines just simply never get enforced. So is this a deterrent for bad employers? Absolutely not, because you've got to enforce, but they're not going to do that.

You want to help workers? International training: Again, we talk about shortages—nursing shortages, doctor shortages, family doctor shortages—and we have small, tiny, incremental moves, announcements that we're going to deal with that, to respect internationally trained credentials. But it seems to be literally taking forever. Of course, like I've said, the government has three speeds: fast, slow and reverse—and we've seen a lot of reversing. But they're taking forever on that front.

Respecting workers: Does anyone here believe that this government is respecting public health workers? Because I really don't believe that. We saw Bill 124, limiting to a 1% increase. And what are they really doing? What are they doing to our public health care workers? I believe—and it's not just me—that this is the planned obsolescence of the public health care system.

Now, we know that privatization is like religion to Conservatives, because they believe if you can make a buck out there and you can make a rich guy richer, they're going to let—I mean, this is religion for them, right? They're going to do it at every cost. Any opportunity to do that, they're going to jump on it. And they know some of that stuff is not palatable to the average Ontarian, because

they always say they're for the little guy, so they have got to repackage it in different ways.

One of the ways in which you do that for the public health care workers—who are workers too—is to make their job simply untenable; to make it harder and harder and harder. And what happens? Workers get burnt-out and disgruntled. And what do you do? Now, what you've got are these private health care agencies on the side, siphoning off workers, public workers.

And then you end up with Tory mathematics, in this instance, because there is a public health care worker making \$30, \$35, \$40 an hour—maybe less, and they should be paid more—and then you have got private agencies coming in, swooping in, and sending their private nurses to go and work and essentially replace public-nurse-hour shifts in hospitals.

What does it cost the taxpayers? Double, triple the amount—a hundred dollars an hour. And where does a lot of that go to? The employer. At least 25% or more goes to the employer. So we have a government that has a powerful track record on making employers incredibly, incredibly happy. And does it make sense for our workers? Does it make sense for our public health care workers? Absolutely not.

What happens? Our public health care system gets worse and worse and worse, and the private health care system gets bigger and bigger and bigger. And what is it? It's all part of a grand strategy to privatize literally everything. Why? Because it is the Conservative religion. So what else—

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Oh, here it starts again, the heckling, and it hurts. It really hurts me, but it's happening. It's more. It's hurting.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I thought you were better than that.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Oh, all right. I thought so too.

Affordability: We're in the midst of an affordability crisis, and who is this government interested in protecting? The people making the money, driving the affordability crisis. That is their bread and butter. That's their donors. It's all of it.

I mean, we heard a question this morning about grocery prices out of control, and I could've written their response—because it's called question period, not answer period, for a reason. Their response, of course, was carbon taxes, right? That's the reason for literally everything. The fact that public health care nurses are leaving the profession: carbon tax. Literally everything is carbon tax.

Again, New Democrats on this side here have supported these efforts with regards to the carbon tax. We don't need to be convinced. But if that was the end-all, be-all when it comes to this crisis—now, those same workers that are getting small, incremental change, iteration after iteration of Working for Workers—I mean, it keeps coming. And you know on their brochures, by the way, they're going to say, "Oh, we had five bills on workers' rights." That could've all been done in one bill, but they

stretch it out like an accordion, and they're going to tell you they're doing all of this.

But what happens with regard to grocery prices that these workers are having to pay? Well, these grocers, their profits are up 10%, so if they were getting choked to death by these carbon taxes, how could their profit margins be going up? They'd be losing things, selling off everything. Oh, my God, you'd have managers and CEOs without suit jackets, because they would've had to sell them off because of this carbon tax. But no, they're not. They're actually complaining, and they're making more and more money.

So even if you're able to do whatever it is to help with whatever—oh, and the other thing was, a minister got up and said this. Get this. I mean, this is absolutely nonsense. He actually went so far as to say, “Oh, you know, the NDP are against the actual farmers creating the products themselves”—furthest from the truth.

I remember watching a Marketplace episode. Do you know what a grain farmer, I heard, gets on a \$5 loaf of bread? What do you think they get? Does anyone know what a grain farmer gets? Come on, government people. What do you think a grain farmer gets on a \$5 loaf of bread? No one knows, right? Of course not. They're not interested in farmers over there.

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Oh, they're heckling again. Speaker, please. Come on.

Interjection: It hurts them when you tell them the truth.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's so difficult, right?

What do they get? Something like eight cents or 12 cents. And yet, when you go to buy the bread, it's five bucks, because I don't know how many people have got their hands into the pockets of the grain farmers and they're taking it out. It's got to be carbon tax on the far end, because it's all gasoline. It's like you get your bread and it's soaked in gasoline, and that's why it costs \$5.

It's difficult, right? And they know it's difficult, because they've got to sell it. They know, in good conscience, that they're really overselling it. We've talked about it before.

I mean, we've got some fantastic government members, but there's nothing else they'll talk about other than the carbon tax. I've said it: I'm washing my hands, and it's, “Carbon tax, carbon tax, carbon tax,” and you can't—anyways, they know better.

We know that they're not treating our public health care workers well. The cost of everything—workers are going out there making peanuts because the guys at the top are making all the money and complaining that they're poor, raking in profits. But the cost of rent: Are they going to help them with that? Vacancy decontrol? Forget it.

Education costs: We had a post-secondary education question come up. With great respect to the minister, the answer to that—because we had thrown it out there, saying that Ontario students pay the highest per capita education costs and we were corrected. We were told, and I haven't fact-checked that, that—this is what the brag was: “No, we're actually paying the fourth highest.” I would say, if

I'm going to brag about it, it's when we are paying the least, right? But if we're that high up—and that's a barrier, because people are facing a barrier to education.

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We had a grant for low-income families who want to go on and become workers. For low-income students to access education, there shouldn't be a barrier to even become a worker, but they tore that up, ripped it into shreds; who cares, right?

The list goes on and on and on, but I want to end up, as we debate supportable legislation, as we debate an omnibus bill that doesn't have their usual poison pill—and I do want to address that. You've got to love question period, where they have a government budget—

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: And I know that the government members are listening so intently right now. Every single budget bill is a confidence motion. So if the opposition supports a budget bill—and we have done stuff like that during the pandemic; we were all shoulder to shoulder there, facing this thing on. But if we support the budget, we're basically saying we have full confidence in this government to run the province of Ontario. And do you know what we don't have with this government? Confidence in them running the province of Ontario, because there are a lot of things that are going wrong.

What they do is, within the budget bill, which has a lot of stuff that ranks from not the best to completely odious—a little bit here, a chocolate chip in there, a chocolate bar, a little sweet thing, maybe something okay. And then what do they do? They lord it over you in question-not-answer period, with the fact that you guys didn't vote for—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies to the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the deputy House leader.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Please continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member.

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: You know what? On behalf of the official opposition, I want to thank you for that. It makes up for all the heckling. It feels good to be able to continue to speak because I want to end up talking about a class of worker that I think is completely underappreciated, a class of worker that is dear to our hearts, and that is the government MPP. I want to talk about the government MPP, as I wrap this up.

They've got a tough job. They've got one of the toughest jobs in the province of Ontario because they've got to wear bad decisions sometimes. And those decisions come in massive amounts. As I told you, there is fast, slow and in reverse. They've got to get up there and defend

those reversal decisions. They got to get up there and defend completely unpopular stuff at times—and they do it and they do it with gusto. And they come here straight-backed after things that we all find out about.

For instance, not that long ago, we found out—if you want to talk about gravy—that their boss had tripled his office team to have 50 people who are out there making more money than these government MPPs, paying into a public pension, unlike these government MPPs, doing all of that—and they come in every day chipper as a beaver building a dam, smiling, taking orders from the assistants of their bosses.

Some of them, if they listen enough, and their smile is big enough and they can spin faster than a laundry machine on full spin, might be a minister. Now, being a minister under this government doesn't mean you still don't have to take orders from the 50; I'll call them the 50. You've still got to do it. You've still got to take orders from those assistants. They are still going to tell you what to do.

Now, if you are not as loved and you don't make it to a minister, they will make you a PA, they will give you a little bit more money, but you've got to follow in line, you've got to stay in line, and you've got to keep the smiles going, and you've got to defend all the bad decisions. It is a tough, tough, tough job. And you know what? If you don't listen at all—and most of you are a PA, anyway. I mean, we've never had so many PAs, right? The thing is, if you don't listen, then you don't get that.

But the reality is, it's a tough job, because the truth is they do have to wear their decisions. I know how tough it was for them during the pandemic, and I respect each and every one of them. They are individual people with independent minds that have their own needs, their own communities' needs, and they are here first and foremost to those communities, and hopefully, to their own conscience. I believe, and I have said it before, that, individually, they have strength. They have a backbone if they wish to use it, to stand up when they need to. Because there are some things not worth a parliamentary assistantship. There are things not even worth a ministership. Because, at some point, when they are long out of this chamber, they are going to look back to what they did and didn't do and have to live with the decisions that they did or didn't make in whatever state of life they are in or whatever it is. They are going to have to live with those decisions, just like their families will have to live with it, just like my family and just like every Ontarian has to.

So I will say, we are debating something today that is supportable, that incrementally takes us to a better place for the workers of Ontario. Is there more that needs to be done? There is a lot more. We are facing some of the most difficult times that we've had to face.

Together, we can have solutions. But they will only happen if we work together, if we put the importance of the people we represent and all Ontarians ahead, sometimes, of what we are being told to do or to fall in line with regard to some of that. I believe in each and every member of this House, and I hope that they will, every day, come

in and smile, but once in a while, maybe say, “No, I'm the MPP.”

So thank you for this. Thank you, as always, for this opportunity. It is an honour to speak for my lifelong home. I look forward to the vote when it comes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): On that chipper note, questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to sincerely thank the member for Humber River–Black Creek. He does a tremendous job in here and I am so thoroughly entertained with his remarks.

I actually wanted to ask a question with respect to the Working for Workers Five Act stipulation that allows high school students who want to spend a career in the trades to be able to spend 80% of their time in training. One of your former members of the NDP, Cheri DiNovo, NDP MPP for Parkdale–High Park, noted, “Who needs to learn history, science, reading...when you stay uneducated and vote Conservative?”

So being a university-educated professional engineer, and clearly, I vote Conservative and I'm a Conservative MPP, I guess, how am I supposed to take this? I'm wondering if the member might be able to comment on the former NDP MPP's comment on X and its relevance to those of us that are educated and vote Conservative.

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: Well, thank you for that question. From engineer to MPP to journalist, I have watched the transition unfold.

Listen, I believe that Cheri is a minister somewhere in a church here downtown. If you'd like, we can go together, and you can ask her yourself.

But I'm going to say this: As I've mentioned earlier, I'm going to say that we are debating something that's supportable. There are things within this legislation that make sense. There are improvements here for workers, and there are many, many more improvements that I think we need to undertake for workers in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I want to thank the member for his speech. I quite enjoyed it, and there are some lines that I hope to steal in the future.

But I want to go to the question of nurses, agency nurses and morale in the health care system. As you noted, people who are working as agency nurses bill out at a rate much higher than most other health care workers. That isn't making them rich, but I have some concerns about the impact it has on the morale of the workers who are being paid a wage that doesn't reflect their value. Could you speak to the impact of those morale pressures in a health care setting?

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: We spent an entire pandemic calling our front-line workers and especially our health care workers heroes, but do we treat them with that respect? You give someone the title of hero, but do you give them that respect? Certainly, Bill 124 was not showing that respect.

The job is increasingly harder and harder. There are people that work in hospitals, nurses that are doing everything they can when we are at our worst to make us better—ourselves, our parents, our kids, our grandparents, our loved ones, all of that—and what we are not showing them is respect. So many of them are leaving the industry entirely, leaving the field entirely, and we suffer as a result of that.

People go out there, give all of their heart, especially in the public health care system, and we need to pay them a respectful wage so that they can continue do that job without having to fear that they're not going to have food when they come home to feed their own kids. It's simply not respectful, and our health care workers do not deserve that.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's great listening to the member opposite; I always enjoy it.

I want to carry on from the member from Windsor–Tecumseh—a comment that he made.

It sounds to me like you're supportive of this legislation. It's tough, maybe, to get out of your mouth that you are going to support it, because it is a government bill.

Having said that, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh brought up an interesting point. Cheri DiNovo, a previous NDP MPP, did actually say, “Who needs to learn history, science, reading...when you can stay uneducated and vote Conservative?” That was in relation to Minister Lecce talking about having more time spent in training for high school students who are oriented to the trades.

Do you think comments like that are what's responsible for all the unions, the union workers fleeing the NDP—the traditional support that you've had? Do you think a comment like that is what's driving those people away from the NDP?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I don't know if they think that this is a real “gotcha.” Why don't we dig up the Hansard on Randy Hillier? This is silliness. I would like to see the context of it. Certainly, on its face, I don't agree with those statements. The reality is, she's not a member of the chamber right now, so it's silliness to debate it.

The reality is, under six years now of Conservative government, we are seeing the highest level of apathy I have ever seen in a provincial voter—because we are now looking at the lowest per capita turnouts that we've ever seen. When you talk to people at the doors, what they're saying is that they don't have trust in any politician altogether, and that's after over an entire six years now of a Conservative government in Ontario.

So I could tell you that where you're going is not exactly where I think you want to go, and that's not something to be too proud of.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Humber River–Black Creek. He's a great member on that side, and I get along really well with him.

Back to Cheri DiNovo: We all do understand that she is against the skilled trades for our young students, getting into the skilled trades. But one question I want to ask: Would you know if she's against the carbon tax?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: To the two members: Maybe after work we can go to the church. If she's there, we can ask those questions of her. I have no idea whether she is or she isn't.

Certainly, as you know, the New Democrats have been onside with regard to the carbon tax. But I have to tell you this: All of the carbon tax—and I get it, you've got a quota; you've got to say it a hundred times a day—it's not going to fix all of our problems.

And the truth is, they know it, because at the end of the day, they're never, ever, ever going to tackle big corporate gougers that have their hands way in our pockets, like the insurance industry and others—not the life insurance industry that he tried to take on, and his government didn't let him take it to the next step. There are a lot of gougers out there. And the last person who's going to stand up to corporate gouging, not just in Ontario or in Canada, are Conservatives.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: The Conservative members, the members opposite, were talking about where Cheri DiNovo stood on a number of issues.

I'll ask a question about a Conservative member, about the Premier, to my colleague from Humber River–Black Creek: Do you know where the Premier stands on the greenbelt?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Well, that was very interesting—how even in the 2018 election, there was, “We're going to go into the greenbelt,” and then a back-away from it, then “We're going to go into the greenbelt” and a back-away from it, and then harming conservation agencies. Imagine how incredibly unpopular that is. On that particular issue and other things, this Premier had no problem to make people out there very happy while people in here, on that side of the House, are unhappy. And what did this government have to do? Walk it back—and they're still standing.

So I can say that there have not been a lot of helpful things for Conservatives with regard to the greenbelt, and they've had to take back this and about an entire condensed month of mistakes. So, yes, it's not a thing to be proud of.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Hon. Rob Flack: As always, I enjoyed the wisdom from my friend opposite, in terms of his ability to communicate. Well done.

When I was in high school, the skilled trades were considered lesser-than: “Go get a post-secondary education. That's the thing you should do.” Some of us here might agree. It was wrong then, and it's wrong today. We're seeing more and more people enter the skilled trades.

What I like about this bill and what I like—what this government is doing is creating the environment to get

more skilled trades, and in particular, housing. We need a lot of skilled trades—a lot more than we have. We need to attract those people. This bill is creating the environment to get that done. I would hope he would agree that by passing this bill, that job will get done.

Why is he against the success this government has created to get homes built, to create more people—and how do we get more people, international workers, to come back or to come to this country and get the job done, for getting more homes built faster?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Speaker, I will only answer questions about Cheri DiNovo, because this is the Cheri DiNovo bill. I don't know what he's doing. I was about to call a point of order on him.

He knows very well that there are things we support.

If you really want to support the skilled trades, why don't we return more of a focus on skilled trades in our high schools? Why don't we give more opportunities? Let's stop closing the auto shops. Let's start improving shop classes. Let's start giving students across this province more hands-on training at the high school level, encouraging them, because the skilled trades offer incredible opportunity. In those skilled trades that build the homes and all of the things that we have here and we often take for granted—let's give more and more of those opportunities. If you've got bills or ways to get that done, of course New Democrats will support those.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I am so pleased to be here tonight to participate in the debate on this bill, especially since this was an unforeseen development on my part. I figured, with the NDP massively in support of working for workers and massively in support of skilled tradespeople, and massively in support of this, that we wouldn't even be standing here at 5:35 at night debating something that everybody agrees on. But apparently, we've got to debate it. I'm not sure why we don't just pass it and vote and all go home. That's what we'd all like to do.

Hon. Stan Cho: Can we try that?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: We can't try that, because I stood up to start speaking. Now we have to speak for the next 20 minutes.

So now I'm going to talk about Working for Workers Five—why five? Why not 15? Why not 25? Because we will never stop working for workers; we will continue doing it and doing it and doing it. We will never stop working for workers. This is just another one. We're going to keep producing these. We're going to keep working for workers. You can anticipate that we will go through this over and over and over again, because we will never stop. Why? Because workers are important. Let me tell you why workers are important.

The members of this chamber have heard over and over and over again, so many times, that I grew up on the second concession of Anderdon township, and that was probably the best place in the world to grow up. I grew up with a great group of people in the Anderdon township.

Some of those people were related to me, and some of them were not.

One of the people I got to know as I was growing up was my brother's girlfriend. My brother's girlfriend was a lady of German descent, and of course, her family were of German descent as well. Over the course of time, my brother married this young lady he had been dating, and I got to meet her greater family. Her father was Meinhard Schuetter. Meinhard Schuetter was an immigrant from Germany. He had a thick German accent, and he had a big barrel chest. He was tall, and he was loud, and he was larger than life. He spoke with a heavy, heavy accent that I couldn't possibly replicate in this chamber; I won't even try. Meinhard Schuetter was an excellent, excellent man; a fantastic example of what it meant to be a skilled tradesperson and a person utterly dedicated to his trade and to developing his trade, practising his trade, and passing it on to others.

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This man was an immigrant from Germany. Like so many other people, he immigrated to this country after the war, built a family, built a home, built a life for himself, built a career for himself and passed his experience on to others.

Part of the wisdom that Meinhard Schuetter passed on to others was family wisdom. One of those things that I learned from Meinhard Schuetter was this: little children, little problems; big children, big problems. And if Meinhard Schuetter was alive today, I would walk up to Meinhard and I would say, "Meinhard, you are absolutely right." I think all of us who are parents would agree.

The other things that Meinhard passed on were his skills. Meinhard worked in the town of Amherstburg in the manufacturing sector. He was a skilled tradesperson. The manufacturing sector in the town of Amherstburg is not what it is used to be. The town of Amherstburg is my hometown. It's in my riding, the riding of Essex. It used to be a flourishing manufacturing town. I'm talking about in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, when Meinhard was building his family and his career and built his home. When you grew up in the town of Amherstburg, in that time, you were guaranteed to walk out of high school and you could have a job the next morning. You could have a job the next morning because manufacturing was so powerful and manufacturing was so common. That's the way it was.

But then things gradually changed. They changed over time. They began to disappear. Jobs began to disappear. Manufacturing jobs began to disappear, and part of that was part of the global movement. We can't do anything about that now. I suppose if we could dial back the clock 50 years, we might have done things differently, or perhaps we might not have, but that was part of that era. I can't help but think that part of it was decisions made over the course of 15 years while the Liberal government, supported by the NDP, ran the province of Ontario and made conscientious decisions that affected the course and the progress of the manufacturing industry in the province of Ontario and, consequently, in the town of Amherstburg.

For example, over the course of that 15-year government, we saw a high school called Western high school, located in my hometown of Amherstburg, Ontario. It was a skilled trades high school. It taught high schoolers skilled trades. That high school was a fantastic high school. Every single person in that high school, you could ask them, “Do you like your high school?” They would say, “I love my high school.” People who graduated from that high school, if you asked them, “Did you learn something? Did it teach you something? Did it give you a good start in life?” They would say, “Yes, that high school gave me a great start in life.” It was a skilled trades high school.

Let me tell you who came out of that high school. Terry Jones came out of that high school. Who’s Terry Jones? You’ve heard me talk about Terry Jones before. Terry Jones from Amherstburg, Ontario, went to Western high school in Amherstburg, Ontario. He got a skill and he went on to form Jones Demolition. Jones Demolition had the best slogan in the business. That slogan was, “Demolition is Progress.” “Demolition is Progress” was the best slogan in the business.

After he started that business, he was a wild success. He expanded more. He went into construction. He took on partners—other partners who also had skills, who also graduated out of the skilled trades. Some of them were from the town of Amherstburg; some of them were not. Now they’ve built so many things in and around Essex county, I can’t even enumerate all of the things they built and in and around Essex county: apartment buildings, commercial buildings, industrial buildings—so many things, I couldn’t enumerate them; so much value added to the economy, I could not add it all up. It would be too complex. I’d have to hire KPMG to do it. This is the contribution that these skilled tradespeople gave to the town of Amherstburg, the county of Essex and to the greater province of Ontario.

When I pick up a quote from that NDP activist and former NDP MPP for Parkdale–High Park, who served in this chamber from 2006 to 2017—her name is Cheri DiNovo—and she describes the skilled trades as “uneducated,” man, , that makes my blood boil. Because you know what? The last thing we need in the world—it’s been viewed by 123,000 people—is some NDP activist going out there and describing the skilled trades as uneducated. They are educated. They’re not educated like you or you or maybe even you, but they have an education and it’s in the skilled trades. And that’s an education.

And man, oh man, when my plumbing doesn’t work, I sure wish I had that education and I didn’t have to call Munger Plumbing from Harrow, Ontario to come and fix my plumbing, because that bill was a big deal. And do you know why? Because Munger Plumbing earned it, because they have an education that I don’t have. They have a skill that I don’t have. They have a talent I don’t have. I don’t pay them for a fix that took 30 minutes. I don’t pay them for the 30 minutes. I pay them for the years they put in to learn how to do something in 30 minutes or less and fix it and get my house operating again. That’s what I pay them

for, just like you pay anybody else. You don’t pay them for the time that they sat there and wrote this or did that or fixed this. You pay them for the time that they put in to learn how to do it that fast. That’s what you pay them for.

As I stand here speaking and the very excellent member from Elgin–London–Middlesex passes by, it makes me think: Man, that guy has talent that he didn’t learn in school. Think of those talents. I know what those talents are. If you get a chance to buy that guy lunch, if you get a chance to buy the Associate Minister of Housing lunch and pick his brain for 20 minutes, you will learn more than I learned in two semesters of Canadian history at McGill University. You will learn more from a 20-minute conversation with that man.

Because let me tell you what I did during two semesters of Canadian history at McGill university back in the 1990s—

Mr. Trevor Jones: The 2000s.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Maybe it was the 2000s.

It was such a terrible course. I’m telling you, it was the worst course in Canadian history that could have ever been invented or imagined in Canadian history. Do you want to know how bad it was?

Ms. Catherine Fife: How bad was it?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Let me tell you how bad it was. It was so bad, I went to the first course and I decided right away I knew more than the prof. I stayed home for the rest of the year, read my textbooks, watched TV, went to the final exam and got a B+ in the course. That’s how bad it was—probably the best return on investment I’ve ever made in my life.

So that’s what I was getting at. That is to say, you don’t pay for somebody for doing a job for 30 minutes. You pay for somebody that took all that time, all that effort, all that education, all that studying to learn how to do the job in 30 minutes or less. And what is that person called? That person is called a skilled tradesman or a skilled tradesperson. That’s what we call that person.

I didn’t finish with the Minister of Housing over there. I didn’t finish with him, okay? I don’t even know what level of education he has. Do you know why I don’t know? It doesn’t matter. To me, it doesn’t matter. You would think it would matter, right? You would think it would matter to me, somebody who has—as some people have pointed out—more schooling than he paid for.

What I’m getting at is this: I don’t need to know what his education is. I see his results. I see them on a daily basis. I see what he produces. As I said, 20 minutes with him taught me more than an entire year of the Canadian history course at McGill University. And you know what? If we could all produce as much as that guy produces in the space of 20 minutes, I tell you, this chamber would be a lot more productive. Maybe the whole society would be a lot more productive. Let’s give him a round of applause, shall we?

There was one thing I wanted to mention about another member of this chamber. I’ve referred to the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore before, and as everybody knows, I told everybody that he had been a member of the Knights

of Malta, which is an ancient and august association of chivalric knights who do good deeds across the world. But what I had not learned at the time I gave that speech, and what I have learned subsequently, is that in addition to that—this is incredible, and we really need to learn more about each other in this chamber—he also is the honorary bearer of the cross of Hungary. Did you know that? He is a recipient of that cross. I invite every single member of this chamber to buy him lunch and ask him about that because we really need to celebrate each other more.

1750

But as I was saying—I want to get back to this. I want to get back to the Working for Workers bill and also to skilled trades. I had been talking about a high school called Western high school. And I had been talking about the disastrous series of extremely poor decisions made by the NDP-Liberal coalition over the course of 15 years prior to this government taking over the government of the province of Ontario, and that that disastrous NDP-Liberal coalition over the course of 15 years had closed Western Secondary School and eliminated the only skilled trades high school in all of Essex county. That's what the Liberal-NDP coalition did.

I've asked the question before in this House; I'll pose it again. I know we can't answer it right away, but how many years will it take us in the PC Party to undo all of the damage that was done over the course of 15 years? Well, we're starting to do that with this bill, which is the fifth Working for Workers bill, Bill 190. We're starting to do that. We're starting to undo the damage. We are starting to train the skilled workers that we need to build homes, because if you speak to any of the home builders in your riding, like I do on a regular basis, they will tell you that they need more skilled tradespeople, skilled workers.

I have yet to encounter a single home builder—and you know the home builders I'm talking about, right? They're the home builders that the NDP leader routinely demonizes on a regular basis every single question, every single question period, calling them greedy, calling them rapacious, calling them disastrous, calling them every negative name under the sun and failing to recognize that these same home builders are exactly the people who are building the homes that the NDP want people to live in.

Let me ask this rhetorical question: How do you expect to motivate people to build homes for others if you are routinely demonizing them from your bully pulpit in the front row of the NDP caucus? That is a rhetorical question. We know what the answer is. We know what has to happen. They have to turn off their attention like everybody else is doing to the NDP these days, just turning off their attention and voting for somebody else. They have to turn off their attention. They have to get back to doing their job and do what they've been trained to do, which is build homes, something the NDP have never done.

Here's what I think we should be doing. Rather than demonizing the very same home builders that we need to build homes in the province of Ontario, we should be

encouraging them, empowering them, telling them that they are great home builders, that they have the skills we want and we need, and we want them to train more people to be just like them: productive home builders, productive and contributing to their society, building for others, putting their skills to work, putting their methods to work and making the world a better place for themselves and their families and their communities and their friends and their relatives. That's what we should be doing.

I don't know how many times the Leader of the Opposition has stood in this chamber and utterly demonized every single home builder that she has ever mentioned. But then what we did in this caucus is that we simply took a quote from a very well-known NDP activist, Cheri DiNovo, who served in this chamber many years as an NDP MPP, and we were told, "Well, you know, maybe it's not fair to mention that." But the Leader of the Opposition has routinely stood up during question period and mentioned all sorts of names—names after names after names, names after names and more names, slandering people in the worst sort of way for building homes. She's done that, and we've all heard it. If those comments were made outside of this chamber, they would constitute slander. But she has the protection of the inside of this chamber, as we all do. It's a parliamentary chamber, and we have the right to say what we say. We're protected by parliamentary privilege, and that parliamentary privilege is going to go a long way for the Leader of the Opposition, because she said a lot of things about a lot of other people, none of which is going to harm her.

So that's why we continue bringing bills like this, and we won't stop. There's going to be a six and a seven, a Working for Workers 8, a Working for Workers 9 and a Working for Workers 10. And we're going to keep going, because we will never stop working for workers. And I know there's going to be an 11 and a 12, because we're going to be around long enough to bring a 12 and a 13 and a 14. I don't know if the members over there are going to be around, but I'll be around, and I have a suspicion that there's a lot of people over here in the PC caucus who are going to be around too. I'm going to be happy to be around to bring those, because we're going to continue working for workers. We're going to continue bringing bills such as this one, bills which train skilled people to continue their trade and contribute to the province of Ontario, bills which continue to enhance the working life of people in the province of Ontario, to make workplaces better places to work and learn and earn a living.

Finally, I want to end with this: I really wish Meinhard Schuetter were here today to hear this speech, because I think he would be flattered by the fact that I remembered his words. That guy with the big barrel chest and the heavy, heavy German accent who made a great life for himself here in Ontario, for himself and his family, he is a legacy of some of the greatest things that Ontario has to offer. What are those things? A place to work, a place to grow, a place to earn a living, raise your family, build a home and build a better life for yourself and your children. Those are all great reasons for us to vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member. I just want to caution on the use of language in regard to unparliamentary—I won't repeat the line, but I'll ask you to withdraw that in regard to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I apologize, and I withdraw the comment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you very much.

Questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocovic: To the member opposite: Let's go for chocolate milk after, you and me. I'll give you a hug. You seem pretty angry there.

I want to talk about the comments made by former NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo, who once remarked that clean drinking water was essential for human life. Does the member agree with NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Clean drinking water is absolutely essential for life, and I agree with anybody who would repeat those words. And I praise the skilled tradespeople who go to the water treatment facilities in this province day after day after day.

Some of those treatment facilities are not pleasant places to work. I had a friend once who remarked that on a cold winter day, getting lowered into a sewer in order to unplug the sewer so that the town can keep running is an essential and important job that is completed by skilled tradespeople.

I want to praise those people who do that job, and they deserve every penny they get every day of the week. They deserve their pensions and their benefits—fantastic workers who make cities run. The sewage and sanitary workers, the water engineers—all of those people deserve great praise for keeping our cities running. What a wonderful trade.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CAREGIVERS

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should implement an Ontario caregiver support benefit (OCSB) to provide direct financial supports to unpaid caregivers who play a vital role in our health care system and enhancing the quality of life for the people they care for.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

1800

I recognize the member from Windsor West.

Mr. Wayne Gates: From where?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. I haven't moved yet. Can I have those 12 seconds back, too, please, just to say?

Today, in the province of Ontario, we know that over 3.3 million Ontarians have self-reported as providing unpaid care for their family and friends.

Caregiving work touches our lives in so many ways. I can think, in my own life, my wife, Rita—Rita is an incredible woman. She spent her career in public education and became a principal, and then her dad got sick. Rita chose to retire a year early so that she could be there for her dad, to take care of him—that's what caregivers do—all the way up to the time he passed.

The work that caregivers do can be anything, from administration support, like booking medical appointments, filling out forms, speaking to health care professionals, to medical assistance, like helping their mom or their dad take their medication, to emotional support, like being there for their loved one, making them feel like they have respect and dignity and love from the people in their lives.

And that's what this motion is about. It's about treating our unpaid caregivers with respect and dignity, because there is often a real financial cost that comes with caregiving. Many caregivers have to dip into their savings or take a loan and in some cases quit their job or drop out of school to care for their moms, their dads, their aunts, their uncles, their grandparents and in some cases even their kids.

Caregivers spend on average 10 to 20 hours per week on care. That's a part-time job, and it should be compensated like one. That's what this motion is about: ensuring that we are there for our caregivers, with direct financial support.

We know, from the research done by several organizations, about the issues our caregivers are facing today in the province of Ontario. Nearly 300,000 caregivers have reported financial hardship because of their caregiving responsibility; 90% of those surveyed have modified their own spending and budgeting, and 77% have dipped into their savings to support their caregiving. Approximately 75% of caregivers struggle to work and caregiving; 30,000 caregivers have left their employment because of caregiving needs.

The COVID pandemic has worsened the financial pressure of caregiving. In 2018, 22% of Ontario caregivers reported experiencing financial hardship. By 2020, that number had risen to 45%.

Very few caregivers report receiving significant aid from the government, and these financial pressures can force families to choose institutional care despite the preference of wanting to stay at home. Think about that. We know our moms, our dads, our grandparents want to age in place at home and live with their families, in their communities and with dignity. Think of how a caregiver benefit could make that a reality for so many of our loved ones right across the province of Ontario.

And I want to be clear: This isn't Wayne Gates saying this. We have an excellent organization called the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, which has done so much important

research on how a two-phase implementation for this benefit would work. This isn't the only organization that has been here today at Queen's Park in support of this motion. We have representatives from Young Caregivers Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Alzheimer Society, Community Living Ontario, MS Canada, the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence—all here in support of this benefit.

Community Living Ontario said, "Providing caring support to loved ones must be recognized and valued by all of us, including all levels of government."

The Alzheimer Society of Ontario said, "Despite being" essential "to the ability of our health care and long-term-care systems to function, care partners in Ontario receive little or no government assistance. We can't afford not to care for care partners. The Alzheimer Society of Ontario fully supports calls for direct financial supports for care partners, and"—this is also important—"we call on elected officials of all parties to stand with Ontario's unpaid family care partners."

The Canadian Cancer Society management said, "As people live longer with and beyond cancer, their caregivers need easy-to-access support to help the two in five caregivers struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table in Ontario. Caring for caregivers is caring for patients and keeps people out of hallways and off of wait-lists."

In fact, those organizations all put together a letter—and I want the PCs to listen to this; I'll read it again. In fact, those organizations all put together a letter, signed and addressed to the Premier of Ontario, asking him to support this motion. We also had support from three parties for this motion. This morning, I was joined by my colleagues MPP Fraser and MPP Schreiner, who both decided that they would work across party lines to do the right thing and try to get this motion passed.

We also know about the issues facing our long-term care and home care right now. We have a massive wait-list for seniors waiting to get into long-term care, a wait-list that is more than 39,000. We know that many seniors end up in long-term care when they do not want to, when they would rather be aging in place at home. A direct benefit for caregivers would greatly reduce the burden on our long-term-care and retirement home systems and make it easier for workers at these homes.

We also know that caregiving has a disproportionate impact on women. We know women are 50% more likely to report as caregivers than men, and we know that women are 50% more likely to leave their employment versus their male counterparts. We know that women today in our society already face several obstacles and barriers to equality, and I know that everyone in this House, regardless of party, wants to see a world with true equality.

This motion to create a paid benefit for caregivers is a real way for us to promote equality in the workplace and at home. The reality is, direct financial support in the form of an Ontario caregiver support benefit is not only the right thing to do for our caregivers; it's smart policy. With direct

financial supports, caregivers can create major savings for the government of Ontario.

A program similar to the one in Nova Scotia could replace up to 7.8 of Ontario's long-term-care beds, each dollar representing a benefit that caregivers can replace by up to \$2.69 spent subsidizing long-term care. This benefit would immediately save close to \$500,000. We also know that PEI is introducing a similar grant, giving \$1,500 a month.

What is this? This is a win-win-win—easy. It's the right thing to do for our moms, our dads, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles and our kids, giving them a chance to age in place in their homes. It's the right thing to do for Ontarians living with a disability, who too often fall through the cracks of our social service programs. It's the right thing to do to advance the cause of gender equality in the province of Ontario. It's the right thing to do for our health care system, our long-term-care system, our retirement homes, our social services sector, who are all really struggling right now, and it's the right thing to do for our caregivers, who are there for us when we need them the most.

My suggestion is that we pass this motion and we're there for our caregivers today, tomorrow and in the future. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I'm pleased to rise today to discuss the motion brought forward by the member from Niagara Falls. It's so important to ensure our seniors have access to dignified care as they age, close to their loved ones and their community. Our seniors built our communities, the province and the country, and it's imperative we take care of them. They've done their job, and it's time that we do ours.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford and Minister Jones, our government continues to make record investments in health care and implement the Your Health plan, our bold and innovative plan to build a more connected and convenient health care system for all of Ontario. A key part of this plan is to continue to expand access to home and community care, which is critical to supporting patients, families and caregivers at every stage of life.

We know people and their families want better and faster access to home care services. Home care services help keep people healthy and at home where they want to be, supporting approximately 700,000 Ontario families annually. They help people who require short-term or long-term assistance to live safely and independently in the community or to return home from the hospital sooner while also helping to reduce avoidable hospital readmissions, emergency department visits and unnecessary long-term-care placements.

1810

Home care services are complemented by community care services, such as homemaking and other support services, and we are improving the way people connect to home and community care services by breaking down

long-standing barriers between home care and other parts of the health care system.

Speaker, there's no question that when it comes to home care, the status quo was not working, and our government has been clear that we will not accept this. I think every MPP here can say they have heard from their constituents about the challenges they've faced with home care.

Our government was elected on the promise to invest in health care in this province and we are doing just that. Last year, our government accelerated our investment of \$1 billion over three years to stabilize the home and community care workforce and to support the expansion of home care services. Speaker, the member opposite voted against this investment.

This year, in the 2024 budget, we are investing an additional \$2 billion over the next three years to boost this acceleration, to support earlier investments to increase compensation for personal support workers, nurses and other front-line care providers, and to stabilize expanded services to ensure this important work comes to fruition.

Madam Speaker, it is not too late for the member from Niagara Falls. You can demonstrate that you're above partisan politics and you can support a \$2-billion investment in home care by voting for our budget.

Our government is making record investments in our health care system, but we're not stopping there, Speaker. In addition to building capacity, our government is making important changes to improve and modernize home and community care by moving forward with the establishment of Ontario Health atHome to support the phased transition of home care to Ontario health teams. This transition is supported by legislation that was passed in late 2023, the Convenient Care at Home Act. This legislation is a tremendous step in modernizing the delivery of home care in Ontario, despite the members opposite voting against it.

Ontario health teams are bringing together different health care providers from across the country and community sectors, including primary care, hospitals, home and community care, long-term care, mental health and addictions, and more, to work as a collaborative team to better coordinate care, share responsibilities and better connect all parts of a patient's care journey, no matter where they live.

By taking on the delivery of home care, we are further developing Ontario health teams to fulfill their mandate to deliver integrated health care services, breaking down long-standing barriers between home care and other parts of the health care system, and improving the way people connect to home care services in their community. And as we transition home care to Ontario health teams, patients and caregivers will continue to access home and community care services in the same way and through the same contacts they have come to know and trust.

Through these changes, home care will be easier to find and to navigate. We have heard loud and clear that Ontarians want better and faster access to home care services, and we are delivering on that.

Speaker, as our government has moved forward with improving home care, we have listened carefully to and worked closely with service provider organizations, home and community care staff, patients, families, caregivers and other system partners. Our government is grateful for the dedication of the home care workforce across hundreds of partners and the value of the work they do every day, and we appreciate the input and advice provided by the Minister's Patient and Family Advisory Council, under the leadership of Betty-Lou Kristy, which is made up of patient, family and caregiver representatives. Our government believes that engaging with patients, families and caregivers, and listening to and learning from their experiences, is a key part of developing effective, patient-centred health care policies and practices.

I'd also like to highlight the work of the Ontario Caregiver Organization, which has become an integral part of the health care system, working with health care providers, system stakeholders, government and caregivers to better address areas of need and generate solutions to improve caregiver experiences and patient outcomes.

The Ontario Caregiver Organization provides direct services to family caregivers to ensure they have the support they need to be successful in their role, including through a suite of programs and resources such as training, education, peer support and a 24/7 Ontario caregiver helpline. They also work across multiple sectors including Ontario health teams, hospitals and long-term care to ensure that the caregiver's voice is included as an integral part of health care system planning. Our government supports the Ontario Caregiver Organization by investing almost \$3.9 million in annual base funding for their important work.

I would encourage the member opposite to make sure that their constituents are up to date on all of the different benefits that are available to them. In fact, Speaker, I can list a few of those benefits right here, right now, for example, the Ontario Seniors Care at Home Tax Credit, which is to help low- and moderate-income seniors with eligible medical expenses, including expenses that support aging at home such as hearing aids, hospital beds and attendant care. Just to list a few more of the benefits that are already available to caregivers: the Canada caregiver credit, the disability tax credit and the medical expenses tax credit. Again, I would encourage the members opposite to share these supports with their constituents so that they, too, are aware of all of the supports that are already available to them right here in Ontario.

Speaker, we all know that home care is a critical pillar of our health care system. No one wants to be in the hospital for longer than necessary, nor do they want to have to leave their home for long-term care needlessly. Remaining at home and in the community means better outcomes, whether that is mental health, social support or overall health and well-being.

Caregivers, who are often family members, friends and neighbours, play a significant role in supporting patients. We recognize and appreciate how caregivers provide vital support to many Ontarians and the considerable contribu-

tions they make in communities across the province of Ontario. Our government will continue to work together with our health and community partners to support caregivers and to make it easier for Ontarians to connect to care and support in their homes when they need it.

We will continue to make significant investments and take action to improve the care experience for patients, families and caregivers, because the only thing better than having care close to home is having care in your home.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to thank my colleague from Niagara Falls for this wonderful motion.

As a mother, I appreciated the mat leave that I had to spend with my kids when they were growing up, but I also know that that's not something that everybody has. There is a big financial consideration that has to be there when people are allowed to be there for their family member, if they can afford to be there for their family member and if that caregiving is valued. I believe, as a woman and as someone who is seeking equity for all, that we need to recognize caregiving and its value.

Why? There are so many people who are struggling day-to-day. As a social worker, I met many parents of those who are struggling with developmental disabilities that are burning the candle at both ends. They might be someone in the sandwich generation who is not only supporting young people in their home, their kids who stay at home because they don't have a home to move to, but also their aging parents.

But we know that most folks don't actually qualify for most of the benefits that are available. These are all tax-related and for some of them, you need a very low income—like less than \$24,604—to qualify. Massive amounts of people who are giving tens and tens of hours every week are not accessing this money or are able to access any money, leaving them stranded. I talked to a mother just last week who said, because of the needs of her child, she had to quit her job because she was going back and forth to appointments, and it's having a real financial toll on her and her kids and her family.

Not only is there financial stress, there's also the mental health stress of dealing with caregiving on a regular basis. There's isolation, depression and folks that think they just can't handle it. So by giving this financial benefit, not only are we helping the mental health and physical health of the caregiver, we're also helping our health care sector save a lot of money.

I know that we believe in home and community care and support services. I am glad that the government is looking into ways to expand that and ensure that there is caregiving across—but the people I talk to say that they can't rely on those PSWs: They get a new one every day. Relationships are lacking. It's not culturally appropriate.

Marilyn, one of my constituents, says, "Even when they come, if they come, my mother prefers to have me help her with her daily needs because she doesn't know who's coming and she doesn't have a relationship with them."

There is a lot of value by recognizing the contribution of the sandwich generation, who are left saying, "I have no friends, no time to meet anyone, I am alone with my son, and I can't do this alone anymore."

So I hope that we can look at the social determinants of health, the physical health, the mental health and financial well-being of people, because I think it does a lot for our overall institutions to recognize that, value that and see the benefit it has on all of society.

1820

These are folks that are providing medical care. They're doing the job of a PSW and a nurse, often, doing feeding tubes, doing bathing, doing a lot of this heavy lifting. They're taking people to appointments, doing financial work. This takes a lot of strain off our emergency rooms, off of our family doctors and the struggling health and community care access—I always forget the name, sorry—HCC. I think it's had three names in the last few years, so it's not all on me. But while we struggle to recruit PSWs, while we struggle to recruit enough nurses and have stability in the sector, where people have good pay and good wages so that they have that relationship, this recognition of caregivers in the home is essential.

For example, if we gave \$400 to a caregiver, we would have a benefit of access to long-term-care beds of 7.8%. This is a savings to our government of \$480 million, so it's a win-win. When we value the aging at home and the labour of caregiving, we also save, and we meet these labour shortages and bed shortages that are existing right now. It's valuing what's already existing and helping people, protecting them from burnout. Burnout is one of the massive risk factors for people ending up in more costly care. Too often, we see our emergency rooms facing crises. We're reactionary. When I went to a long-term care recently, they only get patients from ER. If we valued caregiving, we would not only save people from ending up in the emergency room in the first place, we would save them from ending up in long-term care. So there are massive benefits to our really stressed-out system.

I hope that we can follow the role models of Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Quebec and PEI, like you're saying. It's not groundbreaking. It's work that's already happening. It's showing its worth, and I hope that you'll consider approving this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

MPP Jill Andrew: The Conservative government must implement an Ontario caregiver support benefit to provide direct financial supports to unpaid caregivers who play such an essential role in the lives of the loved ones they are caring for. This is something that the Ontario NDP has long called for. These caregivers are a seminal part of our health care system, especially as we see health care being undermined by this government through chronic underfunding and understaffing of real-life human health professionals.

Outside of my mom's extraordinary health team of specialists spanning across several hospitals, her family doctor—she's lucky to have one—PSWs and community

programs, I am her primary caregiver. Even as an MPP, I struggle, and I'm routinely burnt-out, balancing both work and caregiver commitments.

You see, when you're a caregiver, you aren't solely caring for your loved one. You become a student again, cramming everything you can about your loved one's health conditions—every possible treatment, intervention, tool or program—into your brain. You become their five-way caregiver, researcher, administrator, advocate and banker, trying your best to keep all the balls in the air, and they never stay there.

As hard and flat-out expensive a sudden life shift as this has been for us—my partner, a gig-economy worker, and I—we've got no kids, Speaker. It is 10 times worse for caregivers, especially caregivers with kids: those who have no paid sick days, no affordable child care, or who care for multiple loved ones across intergenerational households—that one blew me away when I heard that from community—caregivers on ODS-poverty and OW, caregivers who are low- and moderate-income earners, who, like Chrissa, a single mom in my community, often find themselves stuck between a rock and a hard place, balancing rent against food.

Many caregivers are drowning in debt. They're tapping into their savings for their kids' schooling, taking unpaid time off work to commit to caregiving. Some caregivers don't even have health benefits of their own. I can tell you from personal experience—and Chrissa's—we often cancel our health appointments in order to take care of our loved ones, which, in the long term, can certainly place you in a health crisis, as the other member mentioned.

The majority of caregivers are women, and the majority of caregivers who end up having to leave their jobs to care for their loved ones are also women. Closing the gender wage gap is an economic priority, and this benefit gets Ontario one step closer. That should be a priority for this government. The Premier can make this priority happen today.

Implement an Ontario caregiver support benefit to help offset expenses unpaid caregivers shoulder. Love can move mountains, but it does not pay the bills.

I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls.

I want to thank the Ontario Caregiver Coalition for your comprehensive research on this policy solution with recommendations the government can adopt today.

To my neighbour the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, and to the countless organizations and caregivers who have advocated for this for many years, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I want to thank my colleague for bringing forward this motion regarding direct financial payment compensation to caregivers.

I'm going to start by talking about something that the government member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry said. He talked about this side of the House being partisan around this issue. The Conservative side is the only side that is playing politics with this. We had a

member of the Liberal Party and the leader of the Green Party standing together today saying that this is important and that we should all come together and recognize the impact that caregivers make, but also the impact that caregiving has on the individuals providing that care.

The government member stood up and talked about all the wonderful things they're doing, but we're not seeing that translate to caregivers in this province. In fact, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario said, "Despite being integral to the ability of our health and long-term-care systems to function, care partners in Ontario receive little or no government assistance." Less than 8% of caregivers qualify for support under these government programs.

Speaker, I think we just have to look back to the pandemic: We saw how important, how essential, these caregivers are—often, family members.

As my colleagues have pointed out, out of every 100 caregivers, 75 of them are women. And those stats are replicated and reflected when it comes to leaving the workforce to become a caregiver. For every 100 caregivers who have to leave the workforce, 75 of them are women.

I can tell you, as a caregiver—we talk about the sandwich generation, where you're taking care of kids and you're taking care of your parents. I have three generations—three.

We had Bhavini up here who shared her story this morning about being a caregiver for her father and having to leave her career. And then we listened to the government side stand up and talk about how wonderful they are. Hers was one of 3.3 million stories in this province.

We saw, during the pandemic, when this government locked essential family caregivers out of long-term care, out of group homes, out of hospitals, that those systems started to collapse. The people within those systems, whether they were patients or residents or people within group homes, were deeply and negatively impacted when their family caregivers were locked out. It showed there were not enough staff to provide the care. That was proof of why we need to honour and respect the work that these unpaid caregivers do and ensure that there is a direct payment to them to compensate them for the work that they do.

The last thing I want to say is, do better. Do better by the women in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: There are days like today that I know why I stand on this side of the House, days that I'm proud to be a New Democrat. I am proud to, literally, stand behind the member from Niagara Falls.

It is literally unconscionable to see a government member—and I don't know if he lost drawing straws to have to get up and say what he said, because I don't believe he meant a word of it.

1830

We wouldn't be in this situation if this government, the government before or any government was providing

enough care for caregivers. Because they go out there, losing their jobs at times, because they know the system is not doing enough for them. If the system was doing enough, my friend Steve wouldn't have to retire early at the city of Toronto to take care of his own father; Anna and her sister wouldn't have to quit their jobs, dip into their savings to be able to take care of their mother; people like Giselle, Carmela, Daniela—the list goes on and on. They call us every day, and they say the system isn't doing enough. They are giving their hearts, they are giving their time, they are giving their money and, in many ways, they're giving their futures to care for their loved ones.

We are not doing enough to help our caregivers. And for the government to say that we are—they know they are not.

It is going to be a hard pill to swallow to have to vote against this, to stand against millions caring for their loved ones every day. This is the wrong thing to do, and I urge the government members to stand up to leadership, go past the partisan politics and do this. This is essential. Other provinces in this country have taken the lead and are doing right by their caregivers, supporting them and helping them take care of their loved ones. Do the right thing: Support this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It is a very important issue that we are rising to speak today: motion number 94, a motion that actually speaks directly to responding to the needs of caregivers in Ontario, over 3.3 million of them, who are doing unpaid and oftentimes unrecognized work that is building and supporting the health care system.

We know that that work is difficult and trying. It's emotionally draining, and oftentimes it happens when you least expect it. But people are doing this in Ontario, and they deserve to be supported by this government and everyone in this House, because I know that this is a deeply personal issue, Speaker, for every member in this House.

I have shared my story, the story of my wife—who has actually been battling two cancers over the last 11 months—and how difficult that has been on our family. I wanted to say thank you to the House team who has provided me the support so I can go provide care for my wife. But we are also supported by a community of friends and chosen family that number 50—50 people have been coming in and out of our home, taking my wife to medical appointments, making sure that we can keep the ball in the air and oftentimes it is not happening in every single moment. It's making sure that food is in the fridge, making sure that we have the care that we need in order for me to be the primary parent to our five-year-old son. And this is on top of the fact that my father is living with prostate cancer—quite advanced—and he's been given some time, notified by the doctor how long he has to live.

Speaker, I know that my story is not unique, yet I know that this is a story that is shared by members across the aisle. Because I've heard you talk about the family

members in your family who are living with dementia. I've heard about the struggles that you have with your children who are living with autism and how difficult it is to make sure that your kids have the support that they need so that you can come to work. And we are very lucky—lucky and privileged, Speaker—in this House, because we have some flexibility. We have people who can step in and support us when they need to support us. I know how difficult it is because I know you're also running tired, just like I am, just like other members in our caucus have.

And so when we are able to share those stories, when we're looking at each other and we share our real human experiences, we have empathy and compassion for each other. Why can we not extend that same empathy, that same compassion to the 3.3 million Ontarians who have self-reported the fact that they are caregivers and their work is unpaid and unrecognized?

Speaker, this motion will go a long way in supporting those Ontarians, and we need to be able to let them know that this government is caring and deeply respectful of that work. I urge you all to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate? Further debate?

The member has two minutes for a response.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I am a little surprised at the one speaker that the Conservatives put up. You know, there's 3.3 million—million—caregivers in the province of Ontario. When I started my speech today, I talked about the fact that this shouldn't be about politics. It shouldn't be talk about your party or our party. This morning, I was honoured today—I've been here for 10 years—to stand with the Green Party and their leader. I was honoured to stand with John Fraser today. I was honoured that my colleagues that are here today on a Thursday night chose to be here and speak about it. Because you know what? Everybody is facing this. Everybody is a caregiver at some point in time in our lives, whether it's for our moms, our dads or our grandparents.

I've talked about this a number of times. How can you guys sit over there knowing that 3.3 million people—every organization that takes care of caregivers are in support of this motion, yet you go over there and you talk about budgets and you talk about stuff that doesn't matter.

I'll tell you what matters: real lives; the love and the care that we give to our moms and our dads; the fact that my wife decided, when she was a principal, to retire. She didn't want to retire, but you know what? She had that love for her dad. And every day she got up after she retired—she was at that home at 7:30 in the morning making sure he got dressed, making sure he was okay. And then she went home for a few hours, and she was back there at noon hour to have lunch with him, spend quality time with him. And then she went back at night as a caregiver.

Every one of you over there, it can happen to anybody. Just like that, your life can change. Your mom, your dad, your grandparent could get sick with cancer, prostate cancer, any kind of sickness, and then they're going to rely on you to take care of them as a caregiver.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Gates has moved private member's notice of motion number 94. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 a.m. Monday, May 13.

The House adjourned at 1837.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
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Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
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
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	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
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
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	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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 / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vaugcois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Vacant	Milton	