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of Ontario



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Mardi
25 novembre 2025

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 November 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 novembre 2025

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Good morning, everyone. Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUY ONTARIO ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À ENCOURAGER À ACHETER ONTARIEN

Mr. Crawford moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to enact the Buy Ontario Act (Public Sector Procurement), 2025, to repeal the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, 2022, to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the installation of certain signs and to amend section 10.1 of the Legislation Act, 2006 with respect to certain provisions of the Protecting Condominium Owners Act, 2015 / Projet de loi 72, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2025 visant à encourager à acheter ontarien (approvisionnement du secteur public), à abroger la Loi de 2022 sur l'initiative favorisant l'essor des entreprises ontariennes, à modifier le Code de la route à l'égard de certains panneaux et à modifier l'article 10.1 de la Loi de 2006 sur la législation en ce qui concerne certaines dispositions de la Loi de 2015 sur la protection des propriétaires de condominiums.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the minister.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd also like to state that I will be sharing time with the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Minister of Energy and Mines.

As I reflect on why I ran for office back in 2018, it was really out of a passion to serve my community, my province and my country. I think this act really exemplifies why I ran for public office, and that is to protect the province of Ontario.

It's a pleasure to rise today for the second reading debate about our transformative initiative that promises to reshape and fortify the economic landscape of our province and our country: our government's proposed Buy Ontario Act.

Speaker, through you to Premier Ford, I offer my sincere gratitude for his leadership on this vital piece of legislation, and to my cabinet colleagues for presenting such compelling arguments in favour. And likewise to my colleagues the Honourable Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and the

Honourable Rob Flack, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, not to mention the wide variety of private sector stakeholders who have spoken in support of this game-changing new legislation, I offer you my sincerest gratitude.

I know I can speak for every member of this House when I say how proud I am of the people of Ontario and how they've responded to one of the greatest challenges we have ever faced as a country and a province. We have stood united with resolve, with strength and with pride, and this period of history will be remembered as one of the toughest battles yet.

But the best news is that Ontario has everything we need to face these challenges and come out stronger: a strong economy with a wide variety of industries, abundant natural resources and hard-working, skilled people. And now Ontario is once again building on its existing suite of policies, legislation and other initiatives so that we can further shore up defences, our economy and our resolve to emerge victorious from the most serious threat we have faced since the pandemic.

As part of today's second reading, again, I'll be joined by the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, and the Honourable Todd McCarthy, Acting Minister of Infrastructure, to outline aspects of the proposed act that are relevant to their ministries' areas of oversight.

Speaker, Bill 72, the Buy Ontario Act, would squarely put Ontario public sector procurement behind the millions of businesses and workers who are struggling in the light of US government tariffs. These people need to know that their government is supporting them in these trying times. But this legislation would accomplish so much more than that. The Buy Ontario Act is multi-faceted, touching not just a multitude of areas of our economy, but also touching the lives of virtually every person, family and business in our great province.

This new legislation and associated measures would apply to public sector organizations that are identified in regulation and policy. This may include municipalities. It would also apply to contractors that are helping to deliver the province's more-than-\$220-billion plan to build using Ontario goods and services first, with respect to infrastructure. These measures would deliver on the government's commitment to protect Ontario by ensuring, in the face of US tariffs and economic uncertainty, Ontario tax dollars are going to support Ontario workers and using Ontario-made products such as steel, lumber, cars, trucks and many, many more.

Ontario workers' and business owners' livelihoods are under attack from President Trump's tariffs, and they're

counting on us to step up. Every year, the province spends more than \$30 billion procuring goods and services to help the people of Ontario. We're making sure that every single procurement dollar, where possible, can be spent in Ontario, so we can protect our workers and build a more competitive and self-reliant and resilient economy.

The government of Ontario recognizes the concern of many people, communities and businesses resulting from the tariffs imposed by the US and is committed to using every tool at its disposal to protect our province. We're working in conjunction with our partners at the federal level and with many industry advisers to address the impacts of tariffs swiftly, comprehensively and decisively.

Canada and the US have the world's most fulsome and dynamic trading relationship, one that supports millions of jobs and the economic well-being of both countries. We are each other's largest trading partners, with US\$2.5 billion worth of goods and services crossing the border every single day; 2.3 million Canadian jobs are tied to US exports and 1.4 million US jobs are tied to exports to Canada. It's because of the enormity of this trade volume that these unfair tariffs are hurting families, businesses and consumers on both sides of the border so deeply and betraying the historic bonds between our two great countries.

While there are no winners in a trade war, Canadian countermeasures in every province must focus on protecting and defending Canada's interests, consumers and workers. We, as a government, owe the people of Ontario, who elected us to serve and to protect them.

In municipalities across our great province, government and business leaders are joining the counteroffensive to protect their communities against job losses and shuttered storefronts. In King township, for example, the local chamber of commerce and the mayor's office are teaming up to reinforce the buy-local message throughout their neighbourhoods. People are responding like never before to support local entrepreneurs and small businesses. It was moments like these, in part, that inspired our government to introduce Buy Ontario, Buy Canada Day, which we first kicked off this past June.

0910

It's not just Ontario that is tackling this challenge head-on. British Columbia, one of the country's other large economies, has also found it necessary to address the newly imposed US tariffs in ways that are similar to Ontario. Under new measures, its government, health authorities and certain crown corporations must comply with procurement prescriptions outlined in BC's Economic Stabilization (Tariff Response) Act, which is also encouraging municipalities to adopt parallel procurement policies. Like Ontario, it has removed US alcohol products from its provincially run liquor stores—this is only one example.

Several other Canadian provinces have followed suit with countermeasures of their own, prompted by the leadership of our federal government and encouraged by the successes we here in Ontario are witnessing with our own innovations to supply chain and procurement policies.

The Buy Ontario Act would, if passed and once in force, enable Ontario to make sure all public sector organ-

izations buy from Ontario businesses first and Canadian businesses second in public sector procurements. This proposed new act is a strategic commitment to protect Ontario's economy, safeguard jobs and ensure that public dollars work harder for the people, businesses and communities in this great province of Ontario. We all know that procurement is about more than just purchasing goods and services. It's a cornerstone of public trust, economic development and responsible governance.

Speaker, we don't have to look very far to find real-world examples of companies—in fact, entire industries—that are feeling the effects of the tariff war currently being waged on Canada by the US. Just last week, I had the honour of visiting Etobicoke Ironworks—they're a scaffolding and structural steel company in North York—where I was proud to publicly announce our introduction of the Buy Ontario Act, 2025. Based in Toronto and boasting a 70-year legacy in manufacturing, Etobicoke Ironworks is a terrific example of a company that has proudly shaped the Toronto-area business landscape. It's also an example of just the kind of homegrown business we'll support so that they can help grow Ontario's economy in the face of current trade challenges.

Etobicoke Ironworks was also the perfect backdrop for my announcement of the Buy Ontario Act because raw materials sectors such as the steel and aluminum industries have been especially hard hit by unjust American tariffs, alongside the automobile sector. I ask you this: What would be the repercussions of allowing not just one large company—one that's been supporting major commercial, industrial and institutional projects across the GTA since 1955—but thousands of other big and small businesses to endure the senseless US financial penalties without a firm helping hand from our government?

This past spring and summer, I was also pleased to tour a number of Ontario's local businesses and institutions that are pulling together to drive our economy full steam ahead. From coffee to lumber to tools and so much more, these manufacturers and businesses, with the help of the proposed Buy Ontario Act, are well poised to take on responsibility for more public sector procurement opportunities. During this tour, I heard loud and clear from all these hard-working owners of homegrown local companies how hard things have become to compete, not just for consumer businesses but for highly prized business opportunities to do business with our Ontario public sector and the public sector at large.

Likewise, my visit to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters forum in June offered some critical insights on the current business environment its members are experiencing.

Dennis Darby, the president and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, has said that his organization heartily welcomes our government's introduction of the Buy Ontario Act. Further, Mr. Darby states, "Through CME's Ontario Made program, we have long championed the critical importance of local procurement, and this forward-thinking legislation demonstrates the government's commitment to turning principles into action. By prioritizing Ontario-made goods and services in public

procurement, this legislation strengthens local supply chains and safeguards manufacturing jobs.” Mr. Darby continues: “Ensuring Ontario tax dollars support Ontario workers and businesses will help manufacturers remain competitive, invest in innovation, and drive growth across the province.”

That says it all right there, Speaker.

When we introduced the procurement restriction policy in April of this year, it began having an immediate effect, designed to level the playing field for Ontario and Canadian-based businesses who were bidding on Ontario public sector procurement contracts. With our very own crown agency, Supply Ontario, at the helm, we’ve been able to achieve remarkable success in whole-of-government contract spending that protects and bolsters our economy.

First, it ensures continued economic development, making it easier to do business with our government, including supporting local job creation and growth across all sectors. It’s also building supply chain resilience, getting the goods and services we need, when they’re needed, even during unexpected events. And last, but certainly not least, it’s delivering value for our residents and communities, ensuring that Ontario gets the best value for taxpayer dollars through data-informed decision-making and by leveraging the full-scale buying power of the province.

As stated earlier, Ontario’s public sector purchases more than \$30 billion in goods and services each year. These goods and services are absolutely essential in helping us continue to provide quality services to the public in a timely manner.

Through the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative, or BOBI, and the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, or BOBIA, both introduced by our government in 2022, the province has been leveraging this spend to help grow local Ontario businesses, including the technology and manufacturing sectors. The Buy Ontario Act would expand and replace BOBIA because we need much stronger tools, like the ones we’re proposing, to respond to the threats we’re facing today. Because economic crises manifest in real-world consequences: job losses, shrinking GDP and weakened consumer confidence.

During these times, nations often face external shocks. Volatile currency markets, disrupted imports, and the rising costs of foreign goods and services are among the results. When global supply chains falter, reliance on external sources of goods, raw materials and services becomes a serious vulnerability. Ontario and Canada can simply not afford to be vulnerable in today’s trading climate.

Price is a big factor when any organization seeks out goods and services. For government, value for money is especially important. But in the face of today’s trade challenges, value is also about keeping public sector contract money in Ontario and Canada. Procuring goods and services produced by local suppliers means more work for Ontario manufacturers, more Ontario products and more Ontario success stories. That’s a big win for everyone in the province.

With the support of this House, the Buy Ontario Act would, if passed, serve as an important pillar in our government’s plan to protect Ontario, anchoring the prov-

ince’s long-term economic prosperity by ensuring that domestic companies have more opportunities to grow, expand and create good-paying jobs for our workers. Speaker, I’m sure that we can all agree that these aims are of vital importance now more than ever.

Since the present American federal administration took office and imposed unfair and unjust tariffs on imported Canadian products and materials, Ontario and Canada have responded swiftly and decisively with a number of measures to counteract their impact on our economies. Just this past spring, I participated in the introduction of Bill 2, the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025, a critical piece of legislation designed to protect Ontario jobs and businesses in the context of ongoing trade pressures due to US trade policies. Now enshrined into law, Bill 2 makes Ontario’s economy more competitive and open to trade and investment by removing trade barriers with other provinces and territories, including through mutual recognition, with reciprocating jurisdictions, of goods and services.

0920

Bill 2 also formally recognizes Buy Ontario, Buy Canada Day, a province-wide call to action encouraging all individuals, families and businesses to support locally made, grown and owned products. This annual initiative was celebrated for the first time on Friday, June 27, 2025, and will be held on the last Friday of June every year, affirming our shared commitment to strengthening Ontario’s communities, local jobs and building a resilient economy.

Also in April 2025, I spoke in support of the government’s Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025, introduced by the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines. With the implementation of Bill 5, we took another bold step towards an economy that is more competitive, more resilient and self-reliant. It’s also helping establish Ontario as the most competitive place in the world to invest and ensure the long-term prosperity and security of our economy.

The Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement’s focus in Bill 5 was our one-window permitting program for businesses, the reduction of red tape and the support of domestic procurement.

Both acts, which received royal assent in June 2025, are key pillars in a much bigger plan to secure our supply chain, self-resilience, retain and create domestic jobs, protect and grow our communities, and encourage investment and local entrepreneurship.

Our aim is simple and critical: Make Ontario’s public sector, governments, hospitals, schools and more buy from Ontario businesses first and Canadian businesses second. This supports local jobs and helps our economy grow, and it means more jobs, stronger communities and the smarter use of public dollars. This new bill will keep more money in the province of Ontario, supporting job creation and retention by setting clear rules so everyone knows what’s expected when bidding on government contracts.

Over the past seven years, our government has worked tirelessly to bolster Ontario’s economy, support local business and ensure public funds benefit our communities.

We've always advocated on behalf of Ontario businesses and consumers.

As already stated, in 2022, the government introduced the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative, or BOBI, with the goal of enhancing Ontario's businesses' access to procurement opportunities, creating jobs, strengthening supply chain resiliency and supporting economic recovery.

BOBI then gave rise to the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, or BOBIA, which received royal assent in March 2022. This landmark legislation was introduced to strengthen Ontario supply chain resilience, support local businesses and create jobs in our communities. It recognizes that Ontario businesses often face higher costs because they comply with our province's strict environment, labour and safety standards. Under BOBIA, these businesses have enjoyed a much better chance to be able to procure public sector contracts.

It's also achieved a number of benefits for Ontario. It levelled the playing field for Ontario businesses against international competitors, who may not follow the same standards we have here in Ontario. It has helped keep jobs and investment in Ontario, driving economic growth and innovation. And it has enhanced supply chain innovation, making us better prepared for future challenges.

Speaker, and fellow members, under my ministry, we took BOBIA and operationalized it with a clear commitment to action. And we are maximizing this initiative to ensure goods and assets bought by our government are made within Ontario or Canada wherever possible. Because every dollar that goes into the pockets of our province's local, homegrown business owners gets injected into our economy and makes it stronger.

But now that our province and our country are under siege from our trading partner to the south, and business owners and consumers are feeling the economic pinch more than ever, we need stronger laws that will combat these unjust tariffs. That's exactly why our government is replacing BOBIA with the Buy Ontario Act. Speaker, we must ensure that Ontario's procurement policies are dynamic, and that they evolve to meet the changing economic challenges, technological advancements and public expectations. We cannot simply wait around and see what the White House will impose next. We must take proactive, bold action to preserve not only our economy but our way of life, and to ensure that we do what's right for future generations of Ontarians.

No matter what is thrown in our direction, from global economic pressures to financial penalties enacted by hostile trade partners, Ontario and Canada will not only survive but thrive thanks to the legislation we're debating today, should it pass and receive royal assent. By prioritizing fairness, value and local economic development, we can ensure that procurement remains a powerful tool for building a stronger and more resilient Ontario. It's imperative, now more than ever, that we unite, leverage our collective strengths and fight for our province and our country with everything we've got.

The Buy Ontario Act is more than just a piece of legislation. It's a promise—a promise to protect Ontario jobs, empower local businesses and build a province that thrives

in the face of global challenges. It also is a promise to the people, the communities and the businesses of Ontario, the very same people who elected us to a historic third majority, to do what's best for the province of Ontario.

Make no mistake, the time is now to continue strengthening our supply chain resiliency. We are at a pivotal time in our history, a time when global uncertainty challenges the very foundations of our economy. Economic crises, whether triggered by recession, supply chain disruptions or geopolitical tensions, demand that we do everything in our power to ensure our resiliency—and resiliency begins at home.

As I hope I've demonstrated, one of the most powerful tools we have here in Ontario and Canada to safeguard our economy and ensure stability for the long run is through domestic procurement. By leveraging procurement strategically, Ontario is not only buying goods and services, it's securing a stronger future for all Ontarians.

I would ask all House members, no matter what their political stripe, to dig deep and do what's right for Ontario. It's an honour to serve as Ontario's Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement as we stand poised to unite in our efforts to protect Ontario consumers and businesses.

Speaker, I think we can all agree that economic crises don't just test our resolve, they also reveal our strengths. Domestic procurement is more than a policy; it's a principle—a principle that says that when the world is uncertain, we stand together, we invest in ourselves and we emerge stronger. I know that doing business isn't easy. As a former business and investment leader, I've seen markets rise and fall, but I can state with confidence that the economic threats we face today are unlike anything we've ever seen since the Great Depression or World War II.

When Washington imposed sweeping tariffs on Canadian goods—steel, aluminium, automobiles, even agricultural products—it wasn't just an attack on trade. It was an attack on Ontario workers, families and businesses. Those tariffs threatened to shutter factories, raise prices and put thousands of jobs at risk. They could have made us bend. They could have made us break. But Ontario does not break: We build, we innovate and we fight for what's right.

In that spirit, I have every confidence that we have the right tools and resources in place to not only stand up to this attack, but to emerge stronger than ever for having fought the battle. We have Supply Ontario, our very own agency devoted to ensuring the province's procurement policies and legislation are leveraged to the furthest extent possible to protect our businesses, workers and communities. We have the procurement restriction policy, strategically designed to support businesses and workers here at home from those who seek to undermine us. And since the spring, we also have the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act and the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act.

0930

Of course, we've also implemented the Buy Ontario, Buy Canada Day on the last Friday of every June to encourage residents to purchase locally made products and services. This has been wildly successful, encouraging

businesses and the public in Ontario to support local businesses and profile the various programs available to support purchasing products made in Ontario or elsewhere in Canada. A recent Angus Reid survey found that 78% of Canadians are committed to buying more Canadian products overall. Ontario and Canadian residents are stepping up. Ontario wine sales have surged 60% since American wine and alcohol was removed from the shelves at the LCBO.

As part of Buy Ontario, Buy Canada Day, we are promoting Ontario businesses and shining a light on these options to create momentum that will spur long-term, close-to-home buying habits. As a result, the people of Ontario have shown their love for this country and province. The White House's unfair, unjustified and illegal tariffs have been met with a wave of patriotism like we have never seen before, with many consumers and businesses boycotting American products in favour of our own local Ontario- and Canadian-made products.

“Made in Canada”—we all see those words on the store shelves, part of a growing movement encouraging us to buy Canadian and support the local economy. This does not just apply only to store-bought products; there has also been a steady and dramatic decrease in travel to non-Canadian destinations too, and a marked decline in visits to the US. That’s a great way to support our local economies as well: travelling within Ontario and within Canada to keep those tourism dollars right here in our own province and country. Turning beliefs into action more and more, we continue to choose Canada and Ontario every single day, more and more and more.

As a government, we continue to explore ways to help consumers make everyday decisions to buy goods and services made or originating right here at home. By doing so, we are already helping to build a stronger and more resilient environment for local businesses. Our government’s job is to listen, act and deliver.

Make no mistake about it: Our work to combat these trade attacks is not a one-and-done endeavour; it’s part of a much larger, ongoing effort that involves many people and stakeholders keeping their eye on the future. We cannot slow down, Speaker. Now more than ever, we need to take bold action to protect the workers, families and businesses in this province. It’s time to protect Ontario’s economy for the long term. Our government must stay right there with Ontario’s businesses and workers every single step of the way.

Let the current challenges stand as a call to action for all of us. I know that Ontario and Canada will rise above whatever obstacles are in our path, now and well into the future. By working together with key partners in the broader public sector, the federal government, other provinces, industry and other stakeholders, we can build a truly united, prosperous nation.

The proposed Buy Ontario Act would play a critical role in accomplishing this goal. That’s why I strongly encourage you to support Bill 72, because with your support, we can bring this home for all Ontarians. We believe in local, homegrown leadership, and we believe

that when government, business and communities stand together, there’s no limit to what we can achieve.

Speaker, I want take a moment to highlight the direct, tangible impact that the Buy Ontario Act will have in my own riding of Oakville, a community that stands as a microcosm of Ontario’s economy. Oakville’s economy is built on a foundation of advanced manufacturing, health and life sciences, technology and digital media, and professional services. These sectors are not only vital to Oakville’s prosperity; they are also precisely the kind of industry that public institutions rely on every single day.

The Buy Ontario Act is designed that when our hospitals, schools, municipalities and provincial agencies spend public sector dollars, Oakville businesses are at the front of the line to benefit. Oakville’s advanced manufacturing sector is a powerhouse, employing over 9,000 workers. Under the Buy Ontario Act, manufacturers in Oakville and across Ontario who supply Ontario-made goods will see a stronger preference for their bids in public sector procurement. This means more opportunities for local companies to win contracts for fleet vehicles, transit equipment, infrastructure components, logistics services—helping to ensure local jobs stay right here in our community no matter what the threat.

Take Mancor Industries, for example, a precision metal components manufacturer founded in 1963 and headquartered in Oakville. Under the Buy Ontario Act, companies like Mancor Industries which manufacture Ontario-made goods and maintain a strong, local presence will be well positioned to receive preference in public sector procurement, helping to secure contracts for fabricated metal products, engineered components and other goods essential to provincial infrastructure and services.

Oakville is home to a vibrant health and life sciences ecosystem, anchored by the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital and surrounded by pharmaceutical, biotech and medical device companies. The Buy Ontario Act’s preference rules means that local suppliers of medical devices, pharmaceuticals, lab services and hospital logistics will have a fairer shot at competing for hospital and health care sector purchases.

When our hospitals and health workers are required to look first to Ontario suppliers, all of our local health innovators win. For example, Hospital Logistics is an Oakville-based health care logistics provider serving hospitals and health facilities across the province. With the Buy Ontario Act’s local emphasis on supporting Ontario businesses, Hospital Logistics could see increased opportunities to provide logistics and supply chain solutions to hospitals, clinics and long-term-care facilities, ensuring that the public health dollars spent in this province come right here from the province of Ontario.

By prioritizing Canadian-based companies like Mancor Industries and Hospital Logistics, the Buy Ontario Act will help reinforce our reputation for an advanced manufacturing and health care innovation hub while supporting local jobs and growth in our community.

Similarly, Oakville’s pharmaceutical and biotech firms—many of which are developing cutting-edge treatments and

technologies—will be better positioned to serve hospitals and clinics across the province, provided they meet clinical and cost requirements. This not only strengthens our health care sector but also encourages continued investment in research, development and high-skilled jobs.

Oakville's ICT and digital media sector is thriving, with firms providing software, cyber security, digital transformation and content services to ministries, agencies and school boards. The Buy Ontario Act's service preference provisions mean that Ontario's tech industry will gain an advantage over non-Ontario vendors in RFP evaluations. This is especially important as public institutions rely increasingly on digital solutions. Local companies specializing in managed IT services, digital platforms and cyber security solutions—such as those profiled with Invest Oakville—will be able to compete more effectively for contracts with the town of Oakville, the region of Halton, our local school boards, Sheridan College and other regional agencies. By prioritizing Ontario-provided services, the act helps to ensure our local talent and creative industries are recognized and rewarded for their contributions.

Speaker, the Buy Ontario Act is not just a policy, it's the catalyst for economic growth and resilience in this province. I'm proud to support this legislation, knowing that it will deliver real benefits to the businesses, the workers and the people of Ontario. I once again urge all members of the House to support Bill 72. I will continue working to build a stronger, more self-reliant Ontario.

I'm now happy to turn the floor over to my fellow cabinet ministers who will share in the reading of the Buy Ontario Act, starting with the Honourable Todd McCarthy, Acting Minister of Infrastructure. Thank you for your time today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Acting Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I am honoured to join the debate in the House this morning, both as Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and Acting Minister of Infrastructure. I want to add to what the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement has stated in this House with respect to our proposed Buy Ontario Act, Bill 72.

0940

My focus will be on our government's historic capital plan and infrastructure investments that will shape Ontario's future. This is about maximizing every tax dollar, turning investments into opportunities for businesses and workers across our province. We are at a critical moment. Ontario is ready to build, and we will build with Ontario-made strength.

In my short time covering the crucial infrastructure portfolio for Minister Kinga Surma, I have definitely come to appreciate the range and the scope of our ambitious infrastructure agenda and the positive ways that our projects touch so many aspects of our lives: transportation, schools, housing, health care and so much more. Our investments are not just building infrastructure; they are building prosperity for everyone.

And so today I am pleased to share how the proposed Buy Ontario Act would accelerate our plan to build and protect Ontario. Let me start with the context for the Buy Ontario Act. The long-standing partnership with our American friends has been derailed—derailed but not broken. We will continue reinforcing that we are stronger together, that we are each other's best customers and that when we share innovation and expertise across supply chains, we all win: more jobs, better competitiveness and more opportunities for American and Canadian workers.

For decades, Canada-US co-operation has delivered growth and raised the standard of living for all. I have faith that the spirit of partnership will endure, regardless of the economic headwinds that lie ahead. But the reality is that the cause of this conflict is indeed the unwarranted and unjustified US tariffs. They are hurting our workers, they are punishing our companies and they are hurting our most critical economic sectors.

The people of Ontario gave our government a historic third majority mandate to protect Ontario. One powerful tool that we have is public sector purchasing power. That is the essence of what I wish to speak about today, Mr. Speaker: the opportunity that we have to work strategically with our public sector and industry partners, so that every dollar invested by the government is put to the best possible use.

I can tell you that our partners in the private sector most definitely understand the opportunity before us. These partners include Dennis Darby, the president and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, who recently stated, "CME welcomes the government's introduction of the Buy Ontario Act. Through CME's Ontario Made program, we have long championed the critical importance of local procurement, and this forward-thinking legislation demonstrates the Ontario government's commitment to turning this principle into action. By prioritizing Ontario-made goods" over foreign goods and services "in public procurement, this legislation strengthens local supply chains and safeguards manufacturing jobs. Ensuring Ontario tax dollars support Ontario workers and businesses will help manufacturers remain competitive, invest in innovation, and drive growth across the province."

Mr. Speaker, I submit that Mr. Darby is absolutely right. Our government's capital plan of more than \$220 billion is a landmark investment after years of stagnation under the previous Liberal government. This is what our historic plan is delivering: over 50 new and upgraded hospitals; 41 new and expanded schools, just this fall alone; new and expanded highways, roads and bridges; and 800,000 new homes can be built through our strategic investments in water, roads and bridges, not to mention the largest and most ambitious transit expansion in Canadian history.

We are also working closely with other provinces and the federal government to advance nation-building projects. This includes the east-west energy corridor. This will unlock new markets while providing energy security for our province and our nation.

Each one of our projects supports supply chains and skilled workers, from electricians to carpenters, HVAC

technicians, plumbers, drywallers, concrete finishers and everyone in between. In fact, there are 579,000 people employed in Ontario's construction sector. Our infrastructure investments are a backstop for the sector, providing certainty for the industry and protecting jobs across local communities. Buy Ontario means that we are creating new opportunities for those workers to participate in critical public sector work.

LIUNA has responded to our Buy Ontario legislation with this recent statement: "LIUNA stands in support of the proposed Buy Ontario Act, legislation that puts Ontario workers, Ontario business, and Ontario-made materials at the forefront of the province's growing infrastructure and energy build-out."

LIUNA goes on with this statement: "With the historic \$220B+ infrastructure investment planned over the next decade, this act ensures that Ontario dollars fuel local economic growth, strengthen domestic supply chains, and support the proud, skilled, unionized workforce that drives our province forward."

"From steel and concrete to advanced manufacturing and construction, choosing Ontario-Canadian built, means supporting good local jobs, stable industries and a more competitive future."

Mr. Speaker, let us take a closer look at some specific projects to fully understand how Ontario's infrastructure investments are creating local jobs. The QEW/Credit River Improvement Project in Mississauga: 250 workers daily on-site. On November 14, I was pleased to join Premier Ford and Minister Sylvia Jones to celebrate the grand opening of the newly completed West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby; 270 workers are on-site daily at that Grimsby site. The Weeneebayko Area Health Authority Redevelopment Project in Moosonee and Moose Factory is expected to support close to 400 workers on-site. And the Peter Gilgan Mississauga Hospital and Shah Family Hospital for Women and Children: More than 3,000 workers are expected on-site daily.

It is the men and women who work hard every day in our construction sector who deliver the infrastructure that keeps our province moving, and protecting Ontario means defending our workers from the economic attack on our province and our country by supporting the work they do.

Nadia Todorova, executive director at the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, or the RCCAO, said this in response to this proposed legislation:

"Ontario's construction workforce depends on strong local supply chains and procurement practices that recognize the value of skilled labour across our communities."

"By prioritizing Ontario-made goods and services, the province is helping ensure that public investments translate directly into local jobs to help confront economic instability caused by our trading partners."

"RCCAO welcomes this legislation" accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, beyond those direct construction jobs, there is also an extensive supply chain, a myriad of companies found in every corner of our province providing the countless components that together make a new hospital or a new transit station possible. From the structural steel sup-

pliers to the concrete companies, the heavy equipment companies to the internal trim suppliers, the HVAC suppliers to the signage providers, and everything in between, that is what this is about.

Let me share a little more about one such company. Last Thursday, I joined the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement to announce the proposed Buy Ontario Act at the Etobicoke Ironworks in Toronto. It is an impressive company with a long history, and its members provided us with a warm welcome. The Etobicoke Ironworks has been in business 70 years, manufacturing structural steel and operating as a scaffolding supplier for major construction projects across the GTA. And if we continue to create the right conditions and protect Ontario businesses from unwarranted US tariffs, then there is no doubt that EIW will continue to celebrate and be in business and thrive for at least another 70 years. **0950**

Let us remember that Ontario is Canada's workshop. We have thousands of innovative and ambitious companies just like EIW helping us to get things built right here at home and around the world. So buy Ontario means an opportunity to work with the market to increase our capacity to deliver at home and abroad, and to strengthen our economic power on the world stage.

John MacKay, chair of the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, also welcomes the Buy Ontario Act, noting that it "reflects what our industry has practiced for decades: supplying essential, close-to-market materials that keep public dollars and jobs in Ontario."

The good news about the timing of Bill 72 as a proposed act is that the existing construction supply chain in Ontario is robust. In fact, most concrete, non-structural steel, aggregate and drywall is already sourced locally, so that is a great start. Virtually all labour is domestically sourced, which creates good jobs for Ontario and Canadian workers, and almost every product is purchased from a Canadian supplier, with much of the content manufactured in Canada.

But there are gaps. For example, electrical components, HVAC, structural steel and some types of glass are heavily imported. Other materials, including plastics, tiles and ceramics, are manufactured domestically, but a significant portion is imported. Why do these gaps exist? The reality is that in some niche areas, Canada doesn't manufacture these products, or, if we do make these goods domestically, it is not at the volume required to keep pace with the needs of our construction industry.

We are not suggesting that our government can wave a magic wand and suddenly achieve a 100% end-to-end supply chain, but the trade challenges Canada and Ontario face have served as a catalyst. They have galvanized our collective resolve like never before, so now more than ever we need to be self-reliant. We need and want to bolster our manufacturing base so that we can create what we need domestically and support our companies in diversifying our exports and selling across the world.

Building this robust supply chain is critical to reducing our reliance on foreign markets as well as reducing our

vulnerability to tariffs, trade disruptions and geopolitical shocks. And that is what our proposed Buy Ontario Act is all about. We can be strategic. We can fine-tune our procurement approach for capital projects to prioritize first Ontario and then Canadian goods and services, and we want to do this in a way that still maintains value for money for Ontario taxpayers and that keeps us moving forward efficiently to build infrastructure. Infrastructure Ontario, building on its strong connections with the construction sector, will engage with stakeholders such as steel manufacturing associations and trade associations to understand present and forecasted manufacturing capacity and the origin of materials.

Should the bill pass, we look forward to rolling out these measures to ministries, agencies and the broader public sector. Through these measures, we will ensure that contractors and subcontractors that are helping to deliver public projects would also use Ontario goods and services first, as much as possible, because it makes sound business sense and because everyone who works at Ontario companies shares the pride we feel when we see these labels: “made in Ontario” and “made in Canada.”

Ontario’s more-than-\$220-billion capital plan is the largest infrastructure investment in Canadian history, as I have stated. With our government’s proposed Buy Ontario Act, we are putting in place a framework to work effectively across a broader public sector so that every dollar we invest represents an opportunity to achieve—to achieve more—in terms of our ability to build in Ontario and across Canada and delivers maximum benefit for the people and for families.

We will support Ontario workers and businesses today and for the future. Our province is ready to seize this opportunity by increasing our capacity to make things, build, and to deliver today, we are investing in our own future, supporting the hundreds of thousands of workers and ensuring that made in Ontario and made in Canada will remain proclamations of excellence, not just at home but around the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It’s an honour to rise in support of Bill 72. I want to extend gratitude to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, Mr. Riddell, and to everyone involved in this enterprise of standing up for Canada.

The mission of this bill is to buy Canadian, built by Canadians. It is a continuous commitment to stand with Ontario workers as we are under assault from President Trump and other geopolitical adversaries. The backdrop of this legislation is well timed to give a fighting chance for Canadian business in Ontario’s supply chain to succeed and, frankly, to compete in the supply chain.

I believe this bill is at the heart of Premier Ford’s vision of creating jobs, of strengthening the competitiveness of our business, of giving opportunity to Ontario businesses, small and large, to be a part of our procurement vision. I believe when 40% of our manufacturing goods are ex-

posed by US tariffs, it is this type of common-sense policy that moves the yardstick forward. It builds upon previous legislative iterations that have come before this House, which our government has spearheaded with one mission, which is to really elevate the jobs and the opportunity for Canada.

You will note the first bill this Legislature was seized with was a bill entitled the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. It was designed to eradicate the interprovincial barriers that impeded the movement of goods and products and people across the nation. We needed to be more of a unified east-west federation, more oriented to supporting each other than to helping or prioritizing exports to foreign markets. That was an important bill, which we supported.

Then this Legislature brought forth Bill 40, a bill that I introduced, the Protect Ontario by Securing Affordable Energy for Generations Act, which fulfills the spirit of this legislative piece today. It’s about buying more Canadian. It’s about ensuring that as we spend billions of dollars, we really give prioritization to the supply chain—to businesses, to workers, to families and communities—and I believe this is how we do it.

Bill 72 really builds upon this concept by giving legislated preference to the Canadian industry, business and worker. And I’m proud that in the Ontario energy supply chain, in our sector, we are leading by example. Bruce Power’s Life-Extension Program—\$13 billion—is a case study, of which 98% stays within the province and country. We’re talking about 22,000 direct jobs that are benefiting from this arrangement. They’re going to be delivering about 90% of its supply chain staying within the province of Ontario alone. Canadian at our core is the commitment of Bruce Power and they’re living it out with funds staying within the province.

At Hydro One, 93% of their \$2.9-billion annual spend stays in this country and province. It has exceeded its directive of 5% of sourceable spending to Indigenous-owned businesses as well.

At Ontario Power Generation, 90-plus per cent of our investment, when we refurbish our nuclear reactors, made-in-Canada tech, uranium—the whole gamut, the whole supply chain—is really indigenous to this country: 90-plus per cent goes to Canadian suppliers, Ontario businesses. It’s a reminder that the \$3 billion we expend annually helps to keep 2,000 suppliers busy, active with purchase orders and guarantees.

Just for the refurbishment of Darlington, there are 200 Ontario-based businesses alone involved in the parts and services to help deliver this refurbishment on time and on budget. It really demonstrates an opportunity for our province to lead—lead in Canada, lead in the world and, most particularly, ensure that Bill 72 keeps investment in the province, where we know it is so desperately needed.

Because in the recognition of the US tariffs and the attacks on our industry, it is up to us in government to send a signal to our supply chain, to our workers and to our manufacturers that we will, by intention, use every lever

possible to buy more Canadian and to give opportunity to the workforce.

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When I think about the importance of diversifying our exports away from the US when 80% of our trade is dependent on one source, the fact is that the Premier and various other ministers of government have been working to diversify exports outside of the US into the Asia-Pacific, into European markets, into the Middle East, into the gulf and certainly into South America. My point is that there is massive, tremendous economic opportunity. The world wants our resources, our ethical resources, our manufactured goods, our quality steel and materials. It just begs the question: If it's not Ontario, our government or this Legislature who will buy more Canadian, then who else will? The workforce of Ontario is depending on us to be intentional and to be proud of the products we make here at home.

Minister Crawford has brought forth a bill that helps to deliver a meaningful dose of investment in the supply chain, a bill by its intention to support the very Canadian businesses we represent today. When we recognize that so much of our supply chain is feeling economic contraction and pain, this is the most defensible investment in the economic prospects of our nation. It is a commitment to the national identity of Canada by saying to the workforce and the skilled worker unions and the businesses and the investors that, yes, here in Ontario, you have a government on your side prepared to buy more made in this country. At its core, it is about ensuring that Canadians succeed in this moment, and I am proud.

The first bill we introduced was to unlock the barriers east and west. A successive bill was to strengthen the purchasing of Canadian materials in our energy buildup. Now there's this bill, Bill 72, designed even further incrementally to advance the cause of purchasing, buying and supporting Canadian business. That is the economic nationalism I believe Canadians expect of their government, to be proud of our country and to intentionally buy from within. I'm proud of this legislation, and I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that with so much at stake, there's an opportunity for us to do more at home. As I mentioned, we have legislation before this House, Bill 40, another statute, another plan of investment to supercharge economic opportunity, employment and, frankly, supply chain advancements for Ontario business.

When you are looking at quantums of 90%, 93%, 97% purchasing from within, I think it is fair to say we are doing good, but we can be great. That good-to-great principle is at the core of this bill. It's a challenge function to every agency, board and commission, from school boards all the way to energy businesses, that they can and they ought to be doing more purchasing from within. It sends the right signal. I think it gives hope to the supply chain that there's more investment to come following the passage of this bill.

I hope all members of this Legislature will stand with this government as we double down on buying Canadian, on ensuring the stamp, that maple leaf, a symbol of free-

dom and democracy and ethical products made at home, is sent to every region of the world. That is what we can do as a Legislature. It's what we ought to do as a Parliament. I urge all members opposite to join this minister and government in passing this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's interesting that we're debating this bill today, I've got to say.

My question is to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement. I read the bill, and it looks like this government is looking at giving itself the power to pass some significant legislation. However, I'm concerned on this side of the House that there's a lot of bark but no bite. Are you actually going to do what you say you're going to do?

So my question is this: Can you commit that no foreign company will get a P3 contract in Ontario to build a hospital or a school if there is a qualified Canadian company also bidding on the job? Yes or no?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite, and thank you for taking an interest in this important bill. I think this bill is going to set the stage for procurement. You'll see other provinces across the country actually following our lead in supporting Canadian and Ontario businesses.

The idea of this legislation is that any company will be welcome to bid on any contract. However, what has not been done before is to put a preference and a weighting on Ontario and Canadian businesses. I think that's absolutely critical, that we support our local businesses where we can—100%, we will support them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Ajax.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: My understanding is, under the current definition in the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative, any company with 250 full-time employees in Ontario qualifies as an Ontario business. The reason why I mention this is, when I speak to folks in the education technology space that have started companies created here in Ontario, they're concerned about their ability to compete with much larger international, multinational-type corporations.

I think this bill is a good step, but what is the government then doing in order to support and grow an Ontario ecosystem so they can actually compete on fair footing with very large international companies?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the question. I think your point is taken. In terms of where we can, we want to support local Ontario companies, whether it's technology companies or service companies. We want to prioritize them. We want to put a larger weighting on that.

Having said that, as a province, as a country, we also want to encourage foreign investment. I think we all can agree that we need foreign investment. We want to be a leader in not only domestic procurement, domestic investment, but attracting global investment. That's how a province, a country thrives and prospers into the future.

So we do want to encourage foreign companies to invest right here in Ontario, but we want to see job creation.

We don't want a company that comes to Ontario, has two people working here, and they have a little building with the Canadian flag on it, and they have no business, really, in Canada outside of that.

We want to focus on going deeper into the products that are being manufactured. Are they Canadian-made? Is the supply chain benefiting our local economy? That will be absolutely critical.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement. People in my riding want to know that when the public sector buys something, we're supporting local workers and local businesses—in my case, Whitby. With this new bill that gives preference to Ontario suppliers, can you please explain how it will strengthen local supply chains while still keeping the process fair and competitive?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the great member from Whitby for that very good question. We're in total agreement. We need to ensure value for money. Let me be clear: This bill is not "buy Canadian at any cost." If you're triple the price and you're trying to take advantage of the government procurement policies, that's not going to work.

We're going to be looking at value, price, timeline. But what I want to emphasize is, we are going to be placing an emphasis on how you are benefiting the local economy, how you are benefiting the supply chain right here in our province. Are you investing dollars into employment in local communities? Are you investing in capital goods and infrastructure right here in a local community? Is that going to benefit our friends and neighbours in our communities? That is going to be a key component to our procurement directive going forward.

So it's not one or the other. It's all the above, with a focus on supporting local businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to go back to the question of who is eligible to apply for these contracts and how you define Ontarian or Canadian. In the current rules, if a foreign company has 250 employees in Ontario, then it can claim that it is a local company and not a foreign company. Are you closing this loophole in this new bill?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Yes, again, as I mentioned to the member from Ajax with his question—he essentially asked a very similar question. Our focus is supporting Ontario and Canadian businesses. So let me be very clear about that: We want to put procurement dollars back into our communities. If a company is headquartered in Toronto or Ottawa, it doesn't matter—anywhere in the province. If it's a foreign business but has a major economic impact on our communities and is supporting our local communities, creating jobs, investing here, we welcome that as well.

We have a sign, when you cross the border into Ontario from New York or Quebec, that says, "Open for business." We want to encourage foreign investment. Does the NDP

not stand with it? Do you not want foreign business to invest here in our province? That's what is going to help drive our economic growth.

We want to encourage investment here, but we want to support Ontario and Canadian businesses first.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. I have a question for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement—it's a mouthful.

I think we can all get behind buying Ontario products, shopping locally and buying Canadian products any time, but especially because of the tariffs from the President down south.

Your Bill 72 has three schedules. Schedule 2, the Highway Traffic Act—I just wonder how this schedule got in this bill when it's the Buy Ontario Act, but your schedule 2 directs that the minister may direct a municipality to install signs for community safety zones. Why not just leave the speed cameras where they were effective?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member for that question.

We are filling in to be able to ensure that we have signs in our local communities and municipalities, to ensure we have traffic-calming measures in place with the removal. We passed legislation, as I'm sure you're well aware, in the last week or two that is banning the speed cameras. So we're going to ensure that we have traffic-calming measures such as signs in the municipalities to be able to support our local communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

As we all know, energy is the number one ingredient in everything that we make and everything we do. My question is about energy sovereignty. We never want this country or this province to be dependent on anybody for energy because, as I said, energy is the number one ingredient in everything we make, whether it's an automobile, whether it's a tomato grown in Leamington or whether it is any other product in the province of Ontario. There are countries who are literally at war with one another and still purchasing energy from each other because they are so energy dependent. That is a position we never want to be in.

So, my question to the Minister of Energy is this: What is this government and what is the minister doing to make sure that Ontario and Canada always remain sovereign with respect to energy?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Essex.

Well, energy sovereignty starts by doubling down on the greatest indigenous technology to this country, which is our Candu reactors. Eighteen of 19—

Hon. Greg Rickford: We can do it.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We can do it, to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs. We can and we should, and 18 of 19 are operating in the province.

Members obviously speak about renewables. And I'll tell you, when we're talking about sovereignty or domestication, 80% of solar and 60% of windmills are built in China. So if the mission of this government and this bill is to domesticate and build more in the country, then we will actually double down on those technologies, like hydroelectricity or nuclear, that is made here at home. In fact, it is exported around the world, and I believe this is important.

Another issue of consequence to the nation, as a taxpayer of Canada, is the sovereignty of our pipelines and the fact that we have an energy supply that goes through the US, like line 9, which is fundamental. One hundred per cent of aviation fuels, 50% of our petroleum is coming through a line that goes through the US state of Michigan, where the Democratic governor, like the Republican President, has committed to closing these pipelines.

It's in the national interest to build—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you. It is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

WEARING OF SCARVES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Point of order: I recognize the associate minister for women's economic and social development.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for members to wear purple scarves in the House today for Wrapped in Courage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The minister is seeking unanimous consent. Do I have unanimous consent from the House? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WEST WHITBY FIRE HALL

Mr. Lorne Coe: One of Whitby's fastest-growing areas will soon be getting enhanced fire service after I and the Solicitor General of Ontario, the Honourable Michael Kerzner, as well as town officials broke ground on a new fire station in west Whitby, scheduled to be opened in 2027. The new fire hall will create 20 new firefighter positions and is expected to generate several construction-related jobs.

With west Whitby's rapid growth, it's vital that community safety initiatives take place. That's why I was proud to advocate on behalf of the town of Whitby to secure this new critical parcel of land for the new fire hall from the Minister of Transportation. Thank you, Minister Sarkaria and ministry officials, for your leadership and commitment towards hard-working families in Whitby.

Speaker, the new west Whitby fire hall will not only enhance emergency response but will strengthen community safety for years to come. This is yet another example of what is accomplished when the Ontario gov-

ernment and towns and cities collaborate to accomplish a shared goal.

REMOTE CARE MONITORING PROGRAM

Ms. Jessica Bell: My member's statement is about an individual called Margaret Gauthier. She's 70 years old, a Toronto renter and she lives alone.

Margaret was referred to the remote monitoring program a year and a half ago. That means she has a button she can press if she falls or needs help, so a health care professional can quickly come to her. Margaret said to us, "I always take it to the shower with me, because I've had a few close calls. It's scary."

In September, Margaret took a fall and the remote alert button was on a table next to her chair. She had sciatica in her right leg, so she couldn't get back up. When she pressed the button, she kept getting a "no connection" message. That's how Margaret found out that she was one of 18,000 people who had been cut from the remote monitoring program, cut off because funding to the program, which was operated by the Toronto Grace hospital, has been cut by a third by the Ministry of Health. Now Margaret pays \$30 a month for the for-profit service, and her device is malfunctioning.

Margaret wants to live safely in her home. She doesn't want to go to a hospital. She doesn't want to go to a long-term-care home, because both are far more expensive options for her and for our health care system. But Margaret needs support to stay.

I wrote to the minister last week calling on her to return funding to the remote monitoring program, so seniors can live at home and stay safe for as long as possible. I'm waiting for a response, and 18,000 seniors are waiting for a response as well.

ARCHPRIEST DATEV MIKAELIAN

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, along with my colleague the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, I rise to honour the 40th anniversary of the priestly ordination of Archpriest Reverend Father Datev Mikaelian of St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church in Don Valley North.

Father Datev began his vocation in Aleppo, Syria, where he entered the priesthood with a heartfelt prayer from the Psalms: "In you, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed." Those words have guided him through a lifetime of ministry.

Due to the Armenian genocide, a priest of the Armenian tradition is not only a spiritual leader but also a guardian of Armenian identity, history, language and culture wherever communities have rebuilt their lives around the world. Father Datev has embraced that responsibility with both honour and devotion.

Over the years, Father Datev has become a pillar of spiritual strength for Armenian Canadians. His ministry has been shaped by the message he chose for his very first sermon: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will

be also." That message reflects how he has lived and how he has served.

Remarks in Armenian.

Speaker, 40 years of priestly service represents dedication of the highest order. I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing Archpriest Reverend Father Datev Mikaelian for his unwavering commitment to his congregation, his community—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

PRIMARY CARE

Hon. Laurie Scott: I want to share wonderful news in Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock: how together with local health care partners and the Ministry of Health, we're welcoming new primary care health professionals and health professionals to our hospitals.

Haliburton Highlands Health Services welcomed eight new doctors—three of them emergency physicians—and 28 new nursing staff, as well as 30 other support staff. This fall, the Haliburton Highlands health recruiters were able to recruit two new family physicians and a nurse practitioner to their teams. I want to thank the recruiters up in Haliburton for the great job they've done.

1020

Also, this past summer with the Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Ontario Health Team, I had the pleasure of announcing, under the first phase of our intake, \$3.49 million of funding to connect nearly 7,000 more people to primary care. These expanded, interprofessional primary health teams in Coboconk, Woodville and Minden are up and going and have already attached close to 1,000 new patients.

Under the Kawartha North Family Health Team, I want to extend a warm welcome to the two new doctors that will be practising in communities of Bobcaygeon and Fenelon Falls this year. Thank you to the Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative and recruitment for attracting our health care professionals, and we welcome any new doctors and nurses to come to Haliburton.

INJURED WORKERS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The world of work has changed significantly, but Ontario's workers' compensation law has not kept up with the changing times. When the age of 65 cut-off for wage-loss compensation was first introduced, most people were expected to retire by that age, but this is no longer the case. Today, more Ontarians than ever are working past age 65—including quite a few, I might add, in this Legislature.

Yet if these workers are injured on the job, the law assumes their working life is already over. This assumption is not just outdated; it's unfair. It punishes older workers for their age and ignores the reality that many continue to fully contribute to the economy well beyond age 65.

Other provinces, including Alberta and BC, allow injured workers to continue to receive crucial benefits beyond age 65. There are options that Ontario can and must look to for guidance because it's time to bring the workers' safety insurance act into line with today's realities. Ending the age 65 cut-off isn't just an urgently needed law reform; it's a matter of fairness, dignity, justice and respect for every worker in this province.

POLICE

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Peel police has announced a huge accomplishment this year. In 2025, Peel police accomplished Project 300, their goal of recruiting 300 new police officers to Peel Regional Police. These are well-trained officers entering the workforce as front-line officers to serve and protect the community.

Speaker, our government is supporting law enforcement recruitment by continuing to invest in our police and police training. In September, we announced that we are opening a new police college in Cornwall. This will allow an additional 121 recruits. Additionally, we have eliminated the tuition fees for the basic constable training program, eliminating hurdles for people wanting to become police officers.

Speaker, by expanding the number of police officers, we are cracking down on crime and ensuring that our communities are safe. Last week, Peel police also began their annual RIDE campaign in partnership with Mothers Against Drunk Driving: Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere. This campaign focuses on the importance of safe driving, including never driving impaired by alcohol. Our government is taking a strong, principled stand against drunk drivers.

Thank you to Peel police for all their hard work keeping us safe on and off the road.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: So many parts of our health care system are in crisis: 2.5 million people without access to a family physician, a broken home care system, a mental health and addiction system overwhelmed. When parts of our health care system fail, people rely on our hospitals for their health care needs.

Did you know, Speaker, that hospitals are not allowed to have a deficit budget? Yet 72% of hospitals in northern Ontario are facing a deficit. The OHA says, just to maintain what we have in our hospitals, they need a 4% budget increase, but the Ford government gave them a 0.7% increase. Hospitals have no choice. They have to cut costs, which means cutting services and laying off staff. North Bay Regional Health Centre has issued layoff notices to 40 front-line health care workers: 13 RNs, three RPNs, one occupational therapist, the list goes on. A brand new billion-dollar hospital in the north is laying off staff. Let that sink in.

The member from Sudbury and I went to North Bay on November 12 to hear from the hospital workers. The mem-

ber from Sudbury even wore his yellow tie in case we saw the member from North Bay, but he didn't show up—whatever. What we heard was devastating: knowledgeable, caring front-line hospital workers being laid off, and they are worried about what will happen to their patients who need them, who depend on them. I'm worried, too.

We know how to fix our broken health care system, and privatization is not the solution.

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

Ms. Laura Smith: Speaker, co-operative housing actually plays a positive and pivotal role in my riding of Thornhill. Thornhill is home to Crown Heights co-operative, William Lyon Mackenzie housing co-operative, Thornhill Green and Eamon Park housing co-operative. And I'm proud to say that I've truly enjoyed spending time with these great communities and the people who live there.

Crown Heights is a vibrant place—just celebrated their 40th anniversary—and Eamon Park was actually the runner-up for the best vegetable garden award by the Co-operative Housing Federation. I've been to many of the street festivals and parties hosted by Crown Heights and Eamon Park. It is clear that they are a vibrant and close-knit community that takes pride in what they do.

Today, we're privileged to have the opportunity to learn more about co-operative housing and how we can support them. The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, which represents 550 not-for-profit housing co-ops in Ontario, is here at Queen's Park for their reception day, and members will have the opportunity to hear more from their leadership and development industry partners. Their support and representation of co-op housing in Thornhill and throughout Ontario plays an essential role in the overall success of these properties. As well, you can learn more about several proposed and newly developed housing co-ops from all across Ontario that represent \$1.14 billion in economic activity.

I encourage all members to attend and learn more about how we can support the co-op housing—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members' statements.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Jess Dixon: Speaker, this year, the 16 Days of Activism will also include the publication of the report on intimate partner violence and sexual violence in Ontario, which is an 18-month effort built from the voices, the experience, the expertise and the lived experience of survivors, front-line workers, educators, advocates, health care professionals, justice sector partners, researchers and community organizations across the province.

I want to express my gratitude to every single person who came forward to testify, who shared their expertise and who trusted us with their experiences. This report sits on decades of work done by those who came before, long before this ever had a name at Queen's Park, and I'm so

grateful for the work they've done and continue to do every day.

I also want to recognize Dr. Jennifer Kagan and Sonia Robinson, whose work with Keira's Law has continued to put a huge focus on intimate partner violence and especially making sure the public stays aware of how provincial and federal governments are responding to it.

I also want to thank a few specific people from behind the scenes: my assistant Bonita Dua, who handled all the constant scheduling and coordination that went into this; my close friend and project manager Stephanie Fillekes, who I don't know why she puts up with me but she does; and finally, over at the government House leader's office, three remarkable women, Beth Wenzel, Rav Gill and Kaleena Lee. Without your guidance, this would have been so much harder, so thank you all so much for everything that you've done.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today on the International Day for the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence to commit to working across gender identities and party lines to stand up against gender-based violence.

Wrapped in Courage Day is a time to honour the courage and resilience of survivors, to remember and honour the women killed by femicide and to thank staff and front-line workers at women's shelters, and also to welcome and thank the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses for the vital work you do to support women and children to escape violence. I especially want to thank Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis for the essential work that you do in my riding: last year alone, 1,286 clients served, 2,551 crisis line calls, 460 clients supported through their Transitional and Housing Support Program, and 107 clients supported in the Sexual Assault Centre with trauma counselling.

1030

I want to close by calling on all of us who identify as men to take responsibility for violence against women and children. We have an obligation as men to call it out and as legislators to take action to end gender-based violence.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, if I could have your attention: We have with us today the father of page captain Murphy Harris: Michael Harris, the member for Kitchener-Conestoga in the 40th and 41st Parliaments. Welcome back.

Also joining us today is the president of Mohawk College, Paul Armstrong. Welcome.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Introduction of visitors? I recognize—you know, before we get to that, I made a mistake. I'm going to recognize the government

House leader on a point of order, and I think you'll all be very upset.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I just want to advise the House that the night sitting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): So sorry.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to introduce the amazing Marlene Ham and all the other fantastic partners who are visiting us from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. Thank you all for all you do, and welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with you after question period.

Hon. Kevin Holland: Joining us today from the Faye Peterson House in Thunder Bay is Debbie Zweep. Welcome to the House.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, and the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Housing is in the Legislature for Wrapped in Courage. Their members include the Redwood Shelter; Birchway Niagara; Kingston Interval House; North York Women's Shelter; Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis; Timmins and Area Women in Crisis; Women's Shelter, Saakaate House; Yellow Brick House of York region; Faye Peterson House; Naomi's House; Barbra Schlifer; Red Door; Nellie's; Juliette's; YMCA; Women's Habitat of Etobicoke; Nisa Foundation; Luke's Place; Aura Freedom International; Nova Vita; the Interval House of Ottawa; Nelson House; and Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre.

We appreciate you. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to quickly introduce Sly Castaldi, the executive director of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, and welcome everyone from OAITH here to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'd like to welcome Kimberly Campeau from Kingston Interval House to Queen's Park today.

I also wanted to welcome Dorothy Noronha, who's a retired teacher who stuck her neck out and ran in the last provincial election. She's from Baltimore, Ontario.

Hon. Stan Cho: Watching from home, I want to say hi to Hayden Park, Young Ju Kwon, Caleb Park and Peyton Park. Enjoy the show.

Hon. Rob Flack: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park the Co-operative Housing Federation and their representatives: Sarah Jensen, Courtney Lockhart, Denise McGahan and Simone Swail. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this morning I'd like to welcome Marissa and Danielle from Aura Freedom Davenport. Thank you so much for your advocacy and the advocacy of so many others here against gender-based violence in our communities.

As well, please join me in welcoming the WSIB injured workers who are here today for their Rights Don't Retire

campaign, including Debora De Angelis with UFCW. Thanks for being here today, and welcome to your House.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'd like to welcome some wonderful people from the Water Environment Association of Ontario: Chandra Baker, Caroline Brunet, Mary Beth Holmes and Dean Iamarino. Thank you for keeping us safe and all of Ontario safe.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park delegates from the co-operative housing federation: Elana Harte, Simone Swail, Shelly Watts and Jessica Kunkle.

Shelly and Jessica are members from my riding. We're grateful to have you here. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Today, I would like to welcome the group from Armagh House, the first transitional home in the region of Peel.

Hon. George Pirie: I'd like to welcome Julie Nobert-DeMarchi from the Timmins and Area Women in Crisis and Mitch Dumas, the president of Northern College.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park today Ms. Meggen Janes, the executive director of the Canadian Brownfields Network, a network devoted to economic growth, revitalization of communities and sustainable land use.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: From Halton Women's Place, I'd like to welcome Laurie Hepburn and Sarah Byrne.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to wish a warm welcome to Niagara College staff and representatives to our chamber today; also, Sarah Burnett-Murray, Monica Brodeur, Angie Armstrong and Doug Sider; the Golden Horseshoe Co-operative Housing Federation; and the collective housing co-op from St. Catharines. Thank you for coming, and welcome to your House.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to welcome, from OAITH and from Hamilton, Erin Griver from Inasmuch House; the wonderful Daniela Giulietti and her team from YWCA; and Tessa Mcfadzean, director from Good Shepherd. Welcome, from the Hammer, here to the House.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I'm pleased to welcome Carla Neto, the executive director of Women's Habitat of Etobicoke and her dedicated team: Lina Almanzan, Alicia Whyte, Christine Boeck, Sheila Baroro, Leslie Burrow and Pancha Panzo. Welcome to your House.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'll add a few more seconds because we were slow on the mikes.

The member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: It gives me great pleasure to welcome members of the co-operative housing federation to our chamber this morning. Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'd like to wish a warm welcome to Michael Silvaggi, president of St. Clair College. Welcome to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): And I want to apologize to everyone who is here today. If your member did not introduce you, it's my fault. I'm a stickler for time, but we can come back at 3 o'clock and introduce our guests. You're still all very welcome.

I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the

House, the order for second reading of Bill 74, An Act to Amend the Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 with respect to the disclosure of information obtained from the sex offender registry, be immediately called; and

That the Speaker shall immediately put the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 74 without debate or amendment; and

That upon receiving second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order shall immediately be called; and

That the Speaker shall immediately put the question on the motion for third reading without debate or amendment; and

That the votes on second and third reading of the bill shall not be deferred; and

That if a recorded division is requested on the second or third reading votes on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Orléans is seeking unanimous consent that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, the order for second reading of Bill 74, An Act—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Dispense?

Interjection: Don't interrupt the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Dispense? Dispense.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier looked Ontarians in the face—Ontarians who called this government out for their bad laws that are hurting working people—and he told them to go find a job. People are absolutely desperate to be heard, to have a government and a Premier who give a hoot about making their lives more affordable, but the Premier and this government are just ignoring them. Instead of listening, the Premier told them to go get a job.

How can the Premier tell anyone to get a job when he has created such a jobs disaster in this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Labour.

1040

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, this Premier and government are focused on creating the conditions for investment and job creation. Since the last year of Liberal government, we saw about \$8 billion in foreign direct investment; fast forward to this year, over \$40 billion. The net result last month was a 55,000-job increase, which included jobs in health care, jobs in retail, jobs in construction.

I want to highlight in particular today, given the importance of today, Youth Without Shelter, one of the remarkable organizations supported by this government, making a real impact—case work, wraparound supports, helping

youth find meaningful employment, addressing precarious housing situations and supporting them with real pathways. Steve and the team have done an incredible job. I recently heard about Steph's story. Steph has now found meaningful employment, had the wraparound supports she needed and is on her way to a job.

That's what we're fighting for on this side of the House: creating meaningful employment opportunities for youth in every corner of Ontario's economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The Premier wants to be on American news so badly; well, congratulations, Premier, you are officially an international embarrassment. The New York Times took notice of the Premier sneering at hard-working Ontarians while making their lives absolutely impossible. While he is yelling at people, telling them to go get a job, Ontario is in the middle of a jobs disaster. The only jobs he is creating are for his lobbyists and his insiders, his favourite night club owner, his campaign manager, his donors.

With this many connections, it is hard to believe the Premier wasn't involved himself, so I want the Premier to explain his involvement in decisions regarding the Skills Development Fund.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, there is no government that is doing more to boost Ontario's economy than this Premier, this government, all the people who are here every single day. Do you know what? We've been working tirelessly to support Ontario. It starts with a strong balance sheet—our fiscal foundation is strong—so that we can invest in health care, we can invest in education, social services, that we can build infrastructure—\$201 billion in infrastructure. You know what that means? Good construction jobs for many Ontarians.

The fall economic statement—which the opposition will have a chance to support Ontario workers today—lays out the vision and the plan to continue to grow Ontario's economy. I look forward to the opposition supporting the fall economic statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Here's a fact: second highest unemployment rate in Canada. That's where we're at—the highest youth unemployment rate in Canada. One in four young people cannot find a job in this province. There is also growing evidence of preferential treatment and direct ties between the Premier and successful applicants to the Skills Development Fund—applicants who scored low but were hand-picked by the minister to jump ahead of everybody else.

While people in London and Oshawa and Hamilton and Brampton and Ingersoll and Sault Ste. Marie are losing their jobs, how can the government justify such a shameless scheme?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for the Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I'm glad that she's proud of all

those members who were yelling from the balconies, disrupting democracy and throwing things onto our members, risking the safety of our security guards. I'm glad you're proud of those people.

What I'm proud of is our record on jobs. We created a million more jobs in this economy since 2018, and we are growing job growth across the province. Take a look at our regional development programs for eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. We've put forward \$210 million to support 167 projects that created over 4,000 great jobs in ridings across the province.

We are growing employment in every sector of this province and every area, and we will continue to drive real growth for the people of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let me tell you: First of all, this is the people's House; this is not your House. You shut down democracy, and you will see the consequences.

After weeks and weeks of asking questions, it is really disappointing to hear responses like we've heard today from the Minister of Labour again and again and again. I have been paying attention to his responses, though—to what he's saying—and numerous times in this House, the Minister of Labour has said that he conducts monthly audits of Skills Development Fund recipients.

I would like the minister, if he could, please, to elaborate on what those audits include and how they are reported.

Hon. David Piccini: I'm sorry the leader doesn't like my responses, but this government and this Premier are focused on job creation—55,000 net new jobs, as we said.

How are we getting youth into employment? I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to visit one of our Level Up! career fairs. We saw a 49% increase in Oshawa. Tomorrow, we're going to see Mississauga, the largest Level Up! careers fair, giving youth hands-on experience for pathways into construction.

Do you know where we saw significant growth in the last month? In the utility sector—an 8% jobs increase. That's because this Premier, this Minister of Energy, have a plan to build new nuclear.

If they were at the helm speaker, we would see Pickering shutting down. We would see Darlington shutting down. Wesleyville, new nuke—forget about it. SMRs exported to the world—forget about it, Speaker.

These meaningful construction pathways are inspiring a next generation of youth, breaking down barriers. I hope to see her at our Level Up! careers fair.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister obviously doesn't want to answer the question. I was pretty specific: Did those audits that you claim you've been conducting include anything, and how were they being reported? Nothing—nothing. Actually, this is consistent with what the Auditor General has told us, which is that the reports are missing, right?

If you were doing audits, then you knew that this money was being used for executive salaries and being used by companies to pay them themselves. If you were actually doing audits and you knew and you didn't do anything, then that is actually worse.

Is it that you didn't know or that you didn't care?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): A reminder to ask your questions through the Speaker.

Hon. David Piccini: The funds go to directly training workers, and all organizations have to follow the terms of their agreement. The industry and our team have strict risk assessment processes, monthly expenditure monitoring, have the ability to freeze accounts etc.

We will continue to work to support meaningful projects that are breaking down barriers for youth. I spoke about youth without shelter. When the Leader of the Opposition attacks these projects, let's be clear who she's attacking. She's attacking union training—training like IBEW, breaking down barriers for youth through their pathway program. I've visited and seen the youth they're training to join our utility sector that, as I said, saw an 8% increase last year in employment; 55,000 jobs created under this Premier last month alone.

We create the conditions and we create meaningful pathways to enter rewarding careers in the trades. It's a shame the Leader of the Opposition doesn't support those union training pathways.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Leader of the Opposition for supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The only one dragging unions and working people in this province through the muck is this minister and this government. I am asking some pretty specific questions, and I guess now that the Premier is being benched, the minister doesn't have a lot of answers.

Why won't the Premier fight for Ontarians the way that he fights for this minister? By this point in the greenbelt scandal—which, by the way, is still being investigated by the RCMP—the former Minister of Housing had resigned. Another member had been kicked out of the caucus.

My question to the Premier is, how much more of this scandal has to unfold before the Minister of Labour resigns or he fires him?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Premier of Ontario.

Hon. Doug Ford: Madam Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition, I fight every single day for every single person. I don't care about their creed, colour or race, unlike you, inviting Fred Hahn, the anti-Semitic racist in here. You actually invited him. He was up in the gallery. You have to get an invitation. I know it wasn't the Liberals because they don't do stuff like that.

The shenanigans that happened yesterday, throwing stuff from the rafters, is absolutely disgusting. It's disgusting behaviour, but that is your base. You invited an anti-Semite. You know something? I support—no matter if it's Islamophobia against people like that, they need to leave; anti-Semitic comments like Fred Hahn. But he was invited by one person and that was you. You should be embarrassed. You should be embarrassed—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response?

1050

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. Order. I will start naming people.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Donald Trump north here.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Waterloo will come to order. The government House leader will come to order.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: What a difference a day makes. The Minister of Education, he's going to release the EQAO results, and today, I'm just hoping that he saw the light. Maybe the Premier will see the light today too. I guess the Skills Development Fund, well, that's just like this big, \$2.5-billion dark cloud hanging over his government. It's all about money to strip club owners, bars and nightclubs in downtown Toronto, dental brokerages, vet clinics, all sorts of things. Software companies—we don't know what they do. So I think Ontarians deserve to see the Premier's Skills Development Fund report card.

So will the Premier release the scores of the Skills Development Fund?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: When we're investing in training, let me talk about some of the scores and results: carpenters' programs, Speaker, breaking down barriers for a next generation of carpenters. That's how we're going to build the homes we need.

New apprenticeship registration: They exceeded it by 120%. That's a score, the Premier, this government and I can get behind, because it's breaking down barriers for youth to register in apprenticeships.

That from a leader of the interim third party who ravaged shop classes, who destroyed apprenticeship registration when they had the opportunity—this Premier is creating opportunities, building infrastructure, putting these men and women to work.

When he attacks this program, let's be clear who he's attacking: He's attacking hard-working men and women in unions in every corner of this province, who are breaking down barriers.

We've seen a historic increase in registration in apprenticeships, Speaker. We're going to keep breaking down barriers, and the data and results and the scores speak for themselves.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, we know a study showed that the lower-ranking proposals got the most money. So I'm not quite sure, Speaker, on what planet you do less and you get more, you score low and you get more. How does that work? It's really hard to understand how that works. There's got to be a second set of books. There's no other discernible reasoning. So if you donate, you endorse, you're

a friend, your score goes up. But I'm not asking about that book; I think that's all plain to see for all of us.

What I'd like to see, Premier, through you, Speaker, is: Let's see the scores. If you've got nothing to hide, Premier, you should be able to put them out.

Hon. David Piccini: It's not hard to understand, Speaker. When you advance government priorities of building the critical infrastructure we need and you're delivering incredible, world-class union training, you get support. The Ontario Construction Secretariat speaks to the strength of union-led training: higher completion rates, attaching meaningful employment opportunities, and we're seeing that in every corner of Ontario; a historic increase in the number of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 registering for apprenticeships; the almost doubling of the number of women registering for apprenticeships. That's because we're actually building.

On this side of the House, the Premier creates the opportunity, this government creates the opportunity for economic attraction, investment to create new manufacturing jobs, to build new infrastructure—hospitals, roads, bridges. Well, guess what, Speaker? You're going to have to have men and women to build it.

When he attacks this program, he attacks those union-training programs like LIUNA 183, breaking down barriers for youth that I met at the Bridgecon project just the other day. They're building a stronger Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: It's all plain for us to see. The Premier is just hanging the Minister of Labour out there to dry. He's using him as a shield, because he knows something is wrong. He knows. He knows that hard-working Ontarians are struggling to get by, but the people who are getting rewarded are lobbyists, donors, insiders, endorsers. The Premier knows that. It's plain for us to see. We don't need to see that report card; it's already out there.

I guess the real question is, when is the Premier going to stop hiding behind the Minister of Labour and stand up for the program that I'm sure his fingers are all over?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: It's pretty rich coming from a member that was personally involved in setting up \$25,000-a-plate dinners for the previous Premier. You were a part of it—\$25,000 a night just to be with the Premier. And he'd get four of his cronies together; they'd raise \$100,000. It's well documented, but I find it very rich.

I just left the firefighters' association, and I'm so proud that SDF funding went to the firefighters, creating training for 28,000 firefighters. I'm so glad that when I went to another event, the carpenters were showing me their facility with trainees that were building to have a career for the rest of their lives. I'm proud about supporting LIUNA, the largest construction trade union in the country. The electricians' union, the HVAC unions—that's who we support.

Do you know why they're ticked off? Because the unions don't support them anymore. They support the PC Party, because we care—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: The Premier gives me too much credit, Speaker.

Let's just get down to the nuts and bolts of it. My second question is for the President of the Treasury Board. We know that Keel Digital Solutions was the subject of an audit and then a forensic audit. During that time, Keel Digital Solutions—you may be aware, Premier—received money from this government, tens of millions of dollars. That should be a concern to all of these people in the room, even the ones heckling me in the back row there. People's money—no one's watching it.

Can the President of the Treasury Board tell us the month that the internal audit was completed and flagged for forensic audit? The month, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, we've got a phenomenal minister of the Treasury Board.

As you heard from the Minister of Colleges and Universities, within 24 hours—and as you heard from the Premier, we're going to keep fighting to create meaningful training opportunities in every corner of Ontario.

The member opposite, when he's attacking this fund, is attacking the unions that are delivering the world-class training, and he's upset because they've abandoned members of that party. When we saw members of that party at recent building trades, they were a fish out of water, Speaker, because they don't understand what they're doing. They don't understand that better completion rates are actually getting youth into the trades, and that's what the Ontario Construction Secretariat said. That's why we're making investments in training—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Mr. John Fraser: Maybe the Premier will give the President of Treasury Board permission to speak.

Here's how I understand it: All internal audits are a function of the Treasury Board. Forensic audits are a function of the Treasury Board. The whole audit process is under the Treasury Board. When you flag something for a forensic audit, here's what the process is: You let the Premier's office know, you let the finance minister's office know and you let the relevant ministries know that someone's under a forensic audit.

It's a big red flag, and it's really important because all agencies dealing with this organization should be concerned about the risk to the public purse. We're talking about tens of millions of dollars that was given to Keel Digital Solutions, who the minister is in conflict on because his friend was the lobbyist, Michael Rudderham, so I don't take his answers with any weight.

When did the Treasury Board inform the Premier's office, the minister's office and the finance minister's office about the forensic audit? What month?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Premier.

1100

Hon. Doug Ford: We're doing stuff that the Liberals and NDP have never done. We are actually auditing the money that is given—

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: Madam Speaker, I'll just wait for a second. We're doing audits that they never, ever did. We're the ones bringing in the Auditor General to find every single dollar of waste.

And do you know what else we're going to audit? All these great organizations that funnel money to ACORN, like CUPE and all the rest of them. We give money to agencies and they funnel it quietly to these left-wing radical groups, and they're not using it for what we thought they were going to use it for. But I promise the NDP, we will be auditing all these so-called charitable organizations that are funnelling money, so stay tuned on that one.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Fraser: The Premier is doing lots of stuff, and the stuff that he's doing isn't so good. It's not that I'm concerned with the public service; they know what to do. Cabinet Office and Treasury Board staff have been doing the right thing. They've been doing the right thing in the Ministry of Labour.

The Premier here is who I'm concerned about. I want to know: Did it not get flagged? Did the money continue to flow because of political interference? Was it the Minister of Labour, was it the Premier, was it the President of the Treasury Board who said, "Don't worry about it; they'll be okay"?

We know the minister was in conflict because he overrode the public servants to give the company his friend was lobbying for money. So I guess the question is, how did we get here? Is it incompetence? Is it looking the other way? Or is it deliberate?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: What's hard to understand is how over 15 years they transformed Ontario's economy into a service economy, one that drove out 300,000 manufacturing jobs that fled Ontario. The highest increases we saw under their leadership were tax increases and utility bill increases, punishing increases that had a real impact on everyday working-class Ontarians.

This Premier is creating opportunities. He recognizes that training takes place in more than just classrooms. It takes place in union training halls; it takes place on job sites in every corner of Ontario.

When that member attacks this fund, let's be clear on what he's attacking. His plan would strip away these very training delivery agent providers that we're supporting. He wouldn't fund them, wouldn't support them. And it's not surprising, because when they had the opportunity, we saw

shop classes pulled out of high schools; we saw a decrease in the number of apprenticeship registrations.

We're turning that around because we've got a plan to build, a plan to build a stronger Ontario: new nuclear, new hospitals, new schools, highways, roads and bridges. Perhaps, had they supported those highways, they would have more members in this place.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

MPP Alexa Gilmour: On this day meant to prevent violence against women, it is disappointing to hear a bully wrap himself in the courage scarf and threaten to audit in such a vindictive manner.

Ontario shelters are turning thousands away because the core funding has not kept pace with the need, the inflation or the rising rates of violence. The shelters are full, and thousands of children and families are being forced to stay in unsafe situations. The staff are burning out, and survivors are staying longer than ever because they have nowhere else to go.

Will the Premier stop pretending that this epidemic isn't happening and commit to permanent, sustainable core funding that meets the demands of the shelters and the transitional homes?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: We had a very important opportunity for all parties to come together and review a report. I have to say that I was deeply disappointed, and, actually, I found it quite disrespectful that the members opposite did choose to walk out of committee, to the point where they had people standing outside with cameras to watch them walk out.

Madam Speaker, we have continued and we will continue to listen to the people who are working every day on the front lines to keep women safe. That's why we invested \$26.7 million and announced over 300 shelter beds to 65 organizations across the province to make sure that women have a place to go when they need it.

Madam Speaker, I have to give a shout-out to Marlene Ham, who said, "Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses applauds this government for heeding our call to invest in more shelter spaces across Ontario."

We're listening, and we're going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Before we move on to supplementary, I just want to remind people again to take your phones off your desks. It affects the translators; it goes right into their ear, and it's very disturbing. I know it's not intentional, but it is a problem for our audio.

I recognize the member for Parkdale—High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: The official opposition takes its job very seriously, and all will be revealed in time as to why these members decided to remove themselves from that committee.

But Speaker, I want to point to the \$8.25 million for the shelter bed expansion this year. Listen, the Premier is going to spend \$9.1 million on his fantasy tunnel idea,

which tells me everything I need to know about this government's priorities.

Meanwhile, OAITH, YWCA and the Barbra Schlifer clinic have told us that without housing, women can't leave violence.

If this government won't commit to fully funding shelters, will the government commit to a real intimate partner violence housing strategy that includes second-stage and supportive housing and emergency units for women and children and their pets and ensure that survivors are not forced to go back to their abusers?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: It's been a journey working with many of the members in this House currently watching. They've been speaking to us and sharing with us the challenges they've been facing.

We take violence against women so seriously, and under our leadership of Premier Ford, when we released Ontario-STANDS, which is Ontario's strategy to end gender-based violence, we committed \$1.4 billion over four years to this strategy. This has been transformative to organizations, because they are seeing dollars flow to make sure that they are able to provide the services.

We're not going to stop there, because we know that violence against women is so deep-rooted in our society it is endemic in our society. That's why we are committing every day to listening and working with these organizations to keep women safe.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Speaker, Ontario has the lowest hospital funding per capita in the country, and our average hospital stays are the lowest of any other province. Yet the fall economic statement was silent on the billion-dollar deficits facing hospitals.

We now know that \$742 million—56% of the Skills Development Fund—went to applicants who did not earn those dollars on merit. Some of the lowest-ranked proposals in the entire province were funded. Meanwhile, 670 high-ranked applicants got nothing.

To the Premier: When our hospital system is in crisis, how does the government justify wasting \$742 million in taxpayer money on projects that don't even meet your own standards?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, let's talk about projects that are driving adoption and folks into meaningful careers in health care.

As I said, just last month, 56,000 jobs created—we led the nation in health care jobs. Why? Because we've got a plan—a plan to build hospitals, a plan to train more residents, a plan to break down barriers—54,000 PSWs supported through the Skills Development Fund, breaking down barriers to support a next generation of young men and women in our health care field.

You've got to have a plan to actually build hospitals, to actually expand capacity. In my own community, a previous liberal government didn't get it done for Campbellford.

We did. We delivered a net new hospital for Campbellford. But that's just one of so many across Ontario under construction under this Premier, Speaker. We have more hospitals under construction today than at any point in Ontario's history. It's going to take men and women to build those hospitals. It's going to take men and women to staff those hospitals. This Premier and this government have a plan, and we're delivering better—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Etobicoke—Lake-shore.

1110

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Speaker, we have a crisis in our emergency departments.

Today, there are dozens of organizations that are here urgently seeking action to end the crisis in gender-based violence and to get up stream to prevent it. Meanwhile, we are wasting almost \$1 billion to low-ranked projects with insider connections through the Skills Development Fund. It's just wrong.

Speaker, to the President of the Treasury Board: Will this government freeze all funding to low-ranked SDF applicants and commit these funds to these very serious crises?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, with the greatest of respect, we have a member opposite who is talking about the investments that they want to see in our hospital sector, and then immediately turns around and says, "But freeze all the funds." Where are you going with this?

Ontario has the best hospital systems in Canada. We lead in wait times for surgeries. We lead in attachments to patients and their family physicians. We lead in access to emergency department wait times.

To suggest in any way that we are not investing in our hospital and in our health care system suggests to me that the member opposite is not looking at the hospital and the budget investments that we've been able to make. Consistently, in the last three years, we have had hospital partners that have received 4% annualized funding to ensure that they can continue to provide exceptional services—services like SickKids right here in Toronto, leading the world in pediatric services; Toronto General Hospital consistently being named in the top hospitals in North America.

We are investing in our hospitals—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy and Mines. As electricity demand continues to grow, it has never been more important to keep more money in people's pockets. Families, seniors and small businesses across Ontario are all looking to our government for practical and affordable ways to reduce their monthly energy bills.

Unlike the previous Liberal government that stood by and watched as energy costs skyrocketed, our government

is taking action. Last week, I joined the minister and the parliamentary assistant to announce that our government is expanding energy-efficient programs to include new rebates on appliances to families. This was done at a local appliance store in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence.

Speaker, can the minister explain the critical role energy-efficiency programs play in supporting Ontario's long-term plan to maintain a clean, affordable and reliable electricity system for generations to come?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. David Smith: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for the hard work that she's doing in her riding. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, last week's expansion announcement is part of the largest energy-efficiency program in Canadian history—\$10.9 billion over the next 12 years, and we are now providing up to \$200 back into pockets of families for eligible energy-efficient appliances like fridges, washing machines and ranges. These programs, collectively, will reduce peak electricity demands by more than 3,000 megawatts by 2036. That's the equivalent of removing the electricity load of three million homes.

Speaker, by cutting waste on this scale, we avoid costly infrastructure, keep system costs down, but importantly, keep energy affordable.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for that response.

It's encouraging to witness our government continue to invest in practical measures that keep life affordable today, while securing a stronger energy future for generations to come.

Speaker, families in my riding want to do the right thing. They want to save money, reduce energy waste and make their homes more efficient and comfortable. But many homeowners also tell me that while they are eager to participate, the process can feel overwhelming, particularly for seniors and newcomers. They want more insight on where to start, what upgrades qualify, or how to navigate assessments, contractors and multiple programs.

Can the Minister of Energy and Mines explain what steps our government has taken to make participation simple, accessible and easy to understand for families across Ontario?

Mr. David Smith: The member is right. The success of any program depends on how easy it is for people to participate. When our government launched this initiative in January, we made sure families would have a single, streamlined portal to access every rebate in one place.

Since January 2025, tens of thousands of applicants have been receiving these benefits. Our energy efficiency programs have reduced energy consumption by 15%. With the expansion of these programs last week, we are already on the track of exceeding 2025 targets and taking the equivalent of more than 220,000 homes off the grid so far. Energy efficiency is a collective effort. This is about helping every family, no matter their income or where they live in Ontario.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. This Premier is a jobs disaster, and a new Abacus poll proves it, with three quarters of Ontarians expecting widespread job losses in the next five years. At the same time, 82% see a strong post-secondary education as critical to protect jobs and strengthen Ontario's economy—something this government obviously does not understand.

Why is this Premier standing by as college campuses close, hundreds of programs are cut, thousands of staff are laid off and local employers can't find the skilled workers they need?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I asked that member why she continues to vote against our budget—the \$1 billion we invested into our publicly assisted colleges and universities. That's \$1 billion you continue to vote against. You stand up and preach a good story, but you vote against it time and time again.

Our funding for our post-secondary system is the highest it's ever been in Ontario's history. The \$1 billion you voted down, that's on top of the \$1.3 billion she voted down last year as well. But we'll continue to make those strategic investments, whether it's in STEM, teaching, construction or nursing. We'll continue to have the conversations with our post-secondary sector.

Right now, we're going through a funding formula review. We're engaging with the sector, and I'm looking forward to speaking with Colleges Ontario later this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for supplementary.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The Abacus poll also found that 71% of Ontarians believe it is urgent to increase public funding for our colleges to protect jobs and Ontario's future. Ontario's per-student funding for colleges is the lowest in Canada, just 44% of the average of all other provinces. Why is this Premier ignoring the calls from Ontario's students, employers and local communities and refusing to provide the permanent increase in operating funding that our colleges and universities urgently need?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: If we're going to talk about polling, let's talk about the polling of your leader right now. I think Ontario has turned their back on the NDP, turned their back on your leader—she's the interim leader; let's just call her that.

Let's go to operating funding. We have a 12% increase in operating funding since 2023-24. Funding for this year is estimated to be \$5.8 billion, which is an increase from \$5 billion two years ago. It's the Ontario people that trust our government with public dollars. They don't trust the NDP, they don't trust the Liberals because they would put that on the backs of the students. When the Liberals were in power, tuition almost went up 50%. When the NDP were in power, it went up to almost 25%.

They are out of touch with the people of Ontario. We'll continue being there for the sector and we will continue speaking with the sector every day.

1120

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, in the entire history of our province, only about 2,000 members of provincial Parliament have served in this Legislature. Even fewer, only around 400, have served on executive council as ministers of the crown. This is a responsibility so great that ministers are styled for life with the title "Honourable." But it's not good enough to be called honourable; you have to act honourably. Is it honourable to deliver \$10 million to the owner of a strip club? Is it honourable to override the judgments of bureaucrats for buddies instead? Is it honourable that candidates with the lowest SDF scores averaged the highest payouts, while the most deserving candidates were excluded?

Can the Minister of Labour look into the eyes of Ontarians and tell them that he has lived up to their expectation to act honourably?

Hon. David Piccini: I think creating meaningful training opportunities is honourable in every corner of this province. This is a government that has presided over an increase in apprenticeship registration, this is a government that has introduced firsts for working-class Ontarians—the first to enshrine in law properly fitting protective equipment for workers in every corner of this province; the first to ensure defibrillators on job sites, when seconds save lives; the first to show up on weekends, evenings and on early mornings on shop floors and in union training halls to talk to front-line workers about how we can improve their lot.

It's not without challenges. We've been challenged to do better and we are with every Working for Workers legislation, an historic four pieces of legislation in just the two years I've been minister that are breaking down barriers, and a Premier who turned around the jobs disaster of that previous government to create the conditions for billions—55,000 jobs. In the US combined, just over 100,000; we've created the conditions for 55,000 jobs alone last month and we're going to keep working hard—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. Adil Shamji: That answer falls flat in the wake of daily stories illustrating the scale of his scandal and misconduct. When that Minister of Labour was appointed to his office, he was given immense power, authority and privilege. This was an opportunity to do good, but the Minister of Labour saw it as an opportunity to enrich himself and those around him.

When I became a physician, I took an oath and I made a promise: First, do no harm. The Minister of Labour took an oath too, but he has done very little apart from causing harm. There are 81,000 people who are homeless in Ontario, renters are staring down the barrel of evictions, a million people visited food banks last year and many families won't be able to put food on the table this holiday

season. With \$2.5 billion, he could have helped those people, but he helped his friends instead.

I ask the minister to remember his oath instead of his lines before answering this question. Does he think that he has lived up to the weight and responsibility of his office to help everyday Ontarians?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I don't think it's very honourable to say things in here that you wouldn't say outside of this place; I think it is very honourable to stand shoulder to shoulder with workers of Ontario.

Let's talk about some of those workers, because week after week, I haven't heard one story of one worker from that member or his party. Let's talk about Sarah with 1089: Red Seal training as a construction craft worker. Let's talk about Benjamin, Sheet Metal Workers Local 537—I challenge that member to find Local 537 on a map. Through the Skills Development Fund and Gateway to the Trades, he's now a member of Sheet Metal Workers 537, helping build the new hospital in Niagara—a new hospital. Or Dylan, IBEW Local 120: "The Indigenous training program at IBEW gave me the skills to be safe and productive on sites. With" the Skills Development Fund support "from the Ontario government, I had access to high-quality training"—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: In Ontario under this government, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region has seen a massive increase of people accessing the food bank to feed their families. This year was no different. There was a 21% increase in people regularly using the hamper program.

Meanwhile, this government gives millions of taxpayer dollars to wealthy people like Galen Weston, someone worth over \$20 billion—the same Galen Weston whose family company, Loblaw's, colluded to extract \$500 million from Ontario families by fixing the cost of bread. Imagine getting that wealthy from colluding to fix the cost of bread. We are subsidizing his hydro. This is what we spend our money on.

So, Speaker, through you to the Premier: How can you justify spending taxpayer dollars on billionaires like Galen Weston while families and women fleeing violence can't afford a roof and food?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, right across our government here, every member, we are lifting people up and making sure that every Ontarian has a chance to succeed and thrive through all the initiatives right across our government. That's the expectation of this Premier: to make sure that no Ontarian is left behind.

As the minister in this ministry, the number of people that have exited social assistance and are now earning bigger paycheques, better jobs for themselves and their family, is not an accident. It's a decision that we made to make sure that no one in this province is left behind. We

made sure we brought in measures to protect the most vulnerable in this province by introducing a LIFT tax credit that removes taxes for 1.7 million Ontarians across the province.

These are not accidental; they were never in place. They have been brought in place because of the leadership of this Premier, because of the hard work of every single member of this caucus and the majority middle, Madam Speaker. So we will not stop fighting for the people of this province until every single person has—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Speaker, back to the Premier: In my riding, the average rent for a bachelor apartment is \$1,400. For people on social assistance, this is impossible. Someone on ODSP gets \$599 a month for rent; on OW, they get \$390. Tell me a city in this province where you can pay rent for \$390 a month.

It is this government's choice to not provide enough for a roof and food, so we see more Ontarians homeless and more Ontarians starving every year. We need to increase the housing allowance for people on social assistance, but instead, we spend \$6.5 billion subsidizing hydro bills that have been shown to disproportionately benefit rich people.

Through you, Speaker, to the Premier: Can you explain why we don't use that money to support women fleeing violence, people with disabilities, seniors and kids to have a roof and food instead of subsidizing electricity bills for Ontario's rich and famous?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the honourable member for the important question.

In fact, if you look at the numbers of this ministry and across our government, investment has increased for the people of this province every single year, to the tune of billions, Madam Speaker.

She mentioned social assistance. We have brought in the largest increase for people on the Ontario Disability Support Program in decades, increasing that support by 20%. We raised the earned income threshold from \$200 to \$1,000 per month, where those on social assistance can take home bigger paycheques—those who can work.

We fought for the Canada Disability Benefit and made the decision to make sure we don't treat it as income so that Ontarians on social assistance can earn an extra \$200 through that initiative, Madam Speaker.

As I mentioned, the LIFT tax credit removes 1.7 million Ontarians—low-income Ontarians; low-income earners here in Ontario—off the payroll so they don't have to pay the Ontario income tax. The ODSP increase; the CARE tax credit provides child care expenses to 300,000 families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

I recognize the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Ric Bresée: My question is for the hard-working Associate Minister of Small Business.

Small businesses across my riding and across the entire province are the very foundation of our economy, employing millions of hard-working people in every region of the province. Ontario's small business owners work tirelessly to serve their customers and to support their local communities.

But, Speaker, many of these businesses are still recovering from a number of recent challenges and facing new pressures in today's fast-changing economy. Some of those pressures include the devastating US tariffs that have threatened our economy and are creating extreme uncertainty for our small businesses. Our government must continue to demonstrate leadership and protect workers and jobs from the impact of tariffs as we build a stronger, more resilient and more self-reliant economy.

1130

Speaker, can the associate minister please share what our government is doing to ensure that small businesses remain successful in these very challenging times?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I really want to thank my colleague for that important question. He is right: Times are challenging for small business owners.

That's why our government has stepped up for small businesses in their time of need and has delivered the relief they need to thrive. We've taken action to provide over \$11.9 billion in savings and supports to businesses in 2025 alone.

Our over \$10-million investment in the Digitalization Competence Centre has created over 3,000 jobs and resulted in an additional \$600 million in revenue and sales for Ontario's SMEs. Our new retail modernization project grant, announced just in September, directly supports retailers right across our province in adopting technology and reducing the cost of doing business. In our fall economic statement, we announced the development of Ontario's tax action plan with a focus on updating personal and corporate income taxes to provide relief for businesses and individuals.

Under the leadership of this Premier, our government will continue to protect small businesses and protect Ontario's economy, ensuring our province remains the best place to live, work, raise a family and—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresée: Thank you to the minister for outlining this important work that is being done to support small businesses during these challenging times.

In addition to providing supports for current business owners, it's equally important to create the pathways for new and emerging business owners to start and to scale up their businesses to create new jobs. In my own riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington, I've been truly inspired by the innovation of many young—and some not-so-young—first-time small business owners that I've met with. They've given me hope not just for the economy that

exists today but for the one that we are building into the future for tomorrow.

Can the associate minister again please share what steps our government is taking to create more opportunities for young and first-time business owners?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I want to thank the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for the question and for the phenomenal work he's doing supporting his small businesses. I agree that young entrepreneurs are the backbone of Ontario's future.

By investing in initiatives like Futurpreneur Canada, Starter Company Plus and Summer Company, we are giving the next generation of business leaders the resources and guidance they need to launch new businesses and succeed. That's why we've invested a total of \$9 million towards Futurpreneur, with \$2 million announced in the 2025 budget that will support 320 young entrepreneurs to launch new businesses, creating up to 1,200 new jobs. Starter Company Plus helps entrepreneurs 18 years and older start, expand or buy a small business by providing training, mentoring and grants up to \$5,000. And Summer Company helps students aged 15 to 29 start and run their own business over the summer months, offering up to \$3,000 in—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

INJURED WORKERS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians are working past age 65, including many in this Legislature. However, if workers are injured at work, their benefits from the WSIB are cut off simply because of their age. The Ontario Human Rights Commission states that age cut-off provisions are, in fact, contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Will your government commit to eliminating the age discrimination section of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Yes, we will. The work we've done with WSIB to protect the health and safety of workers is non-negotiable. We support workers at all ages and have supported them with income replacement. We're putting workers first to strengthen their protections through the WSIB. In fact, under this Premier and this government, we've expanded WSIB supports to workers of all different backgrounds.

Later tomorrow, I'll be speaking with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. Of course, we've expanded latency periods to support firefighters and their families in every corner of Ontario—as they run into danger as we run from it. And we'll continue to strive to expand those protections.

I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: There are representatives from many unions, from many injured worker support groups here today.

Can the minister tell us, please, exactly when will these legislative changes be made so that these workers can receive the benefits that they're entitled to?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I wouldn't presume the will of the Legislature as we head forward, but what I can point to is meaningful action.

We've introduced Working for Workers pieces of legislation multiple times a year. Every year, we enshrine those goalposts to support workers. In Working for Workers 3, we expanded presumptive coverage for firefighters, investigators, wildland firefighters to include primary-site thyroid and pancreatic cancers. Under Working for Workers 4, a statutory presumption was created for esophageal cancer. And the list goes on.

The point I'm making here is that every year we put in place progressive legislation, some of which members opposite have supported.

So, to answer the member, we'll continue to work to expand supports for injured workers across Ontario to reduce the lost injury time. In fact, we have the lowest lost injury time in modern history in Ontario, thanks to the work of this Premier and this government to support injured workers.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

MPP Tyler Watt: My question is for the Minister of Health—and before, I would like to start with a quote: "Front-line workers know that the minister has not done enough. The ministry failed to provide a facility that would keep our workers safe. Our front-line workers and our nurses are not being put first by this government."

Those aren't my words. Those are the words of the health minister when she was in opposition, in 2017. And now this government is shovelling out \$2.5 billion in money towards the Skills Development Fund, which, every single day, is turning into a greater and greater scam.

Meanwhile, patients are waiting over 12 hours for care in the emergency room, if it's even open. Hallway medicine is the norm. Nurses and health care workers are burnt out. Patients are not receiving the care they deserve, especially in the community.

So if front-line workers aren't being put first—her words—why is this government putting lobbyists and insiders ahead of patient care?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Well, if we're going to play the quote game: "RNAO commends the government's intention to accelerate the integration of IENs"—internationally trained nurses—"as one of the urgent actions required to address the nursing crisis." That is Dr. Doris Grinspun.

Another: "Supporting nurse education has a direct positive impact on quality of care and supports a high functioning health care team by increasing morale, improving teamwork, reducing scheduling gaps and building a reputation of excellence that drives recruitment and

retention." That is the VP of patient care and chief nursing executive at Orillia.

I guess by changing what the previous government was doing, we are actually making progress and ensuring that there are opportunities in the province of Ontario for nurses, for nurse practitioners, for RPNs, for PSWs, for physicians.

We can go on and on. The point is, when you invest in a health care system, you get best-of-class, which is exactly what we have in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Nepean.

MPP Tyler Watt: Another quote for you: "This government is prioritizing the interests of ... insiders over the best interests of Ontarians." Madam Speaker, do those words sound familiar? They should sound familiar, because that was an accusation the current health minister lobbed at the previous government.

As a nurse who has worked on the front lines in the hospital, I implore you to actually go and see what's going on, because what you're describing is not the reality, Minister.

What's shameful about this is that she's now part of a government that has \$2.5 billion to dole out to PC insiders and lobbyists but is starving our hospitals and community health system for cash.

Madam Speaker, forgive me for trying to make her see that our health care system is in crisis by giving her a taste of her own medicine.

When will she heed her own advice and start to properly fund our health care system? After all, isn't that in the best interests of Ontarians?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: When we opened the West Lincoln hospital earlier this month, I can assure you, there were a lot of very happy hospital staff. When we announced a groundbreaking for Niagara south hospital, there were an awful lot of health care workers who were cheering our \$60-billion investment in health care capital in the province of Ontario.

I actually like the fact that he's highlighting all the things that I was talking about that were wrong with our health care system when we were in opposition, and now we're getting it right in government.

SPECIAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a report entitled *Lost in Transition: Investigation into whether the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health are taking adequate steps to address the inappropriate hospitalization of adults with developmental disabilities*, from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

PLAN TO PROTECT ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2025 (NO. 2)LOI DE 2025 SUR LE PLAN
POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES) (NO 2)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 68, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, please take your seats.

On November 24, 2025, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved third reading of Bill 68, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Quinn, Nolan
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Racinsky, Joseph
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Bailey, Robert	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rickford, Greg
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hamid, Zee	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Hardeman, Ernie	Rosenberg, Bill
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sherif
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Ciriello, Monica	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Darouze, George	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Denault, Billy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dixon, Jess	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dowie, Andrew	Parsa, Michael	Vickers, Paul
Downey, Doug	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy
Dunlop, Jill	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Pinsonneault, Steve	
Flack, Rob	Pirie, George	

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gilmour, Alexa	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Gretzky, Lisa	Smyth, Stephanie
Bourguin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter

Cerjanec, Rob	McCrimmon, Karen	Tsao, Jonathan
Clancy, Aislinn	McKenney, Catherine	Vanthof, John
Fairclough, Lee	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Watt, Tyler
Fraser, John	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 73; the nays are 38.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): There being no further business, this House now stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

La Présidente (L'hon. Donna Skelly): Attention, s'il vous plaît. Nous avons aujourd'hui, dans la tribune de la Présidente, un groupe de Franco-Ontariens qui ont été sélectionnés par un comité multipartite de parlementaires pour recevoir l'Ordre de la Pléiade. Ces personnalités sont reconnues pour leurs contributions exceptionnelles envers la francophonie ontarienne.

Les lauréats sont les suivants : Lynn Brouillette, Luc Bussières, Johanne Lacombe, Lyne Michaud, Serge Miville, Aissa Nauthoo, et Michel Tremblay.

Veuillez vous joindre à moi pour souhaiter la bienvenue à nos invités et pour les féliciter de tout coeur pour cet accomplissement majeur. Félicitations.

MPP Jamie West: I want to introduce Kristine Morrissey, the president of Cambrian College, and Daniel Giroux, the president of Collège Boréal in Sudbury. They're both here.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: J'aimerais, moi aussi à mon tour, accueillir les sept récipiendaires de l'Ordre de la Pléiade. Donc, on les a nommés : Aissa Nauthoo, Michel Tremblay, Lynn Brouillette, Luc Bussières, Johanne Lacombe, Lyne Michaud et Serge Miville. Félicitations à chacun d'entre vous. J'ai bien hâte de célébrer avec vous ce soir.

Mme France Gélinas: C'est tellement un honneur d'avoir ces personnes ici avec nous. Moi aussi, je tiens à remercier Lynn Brouillette, Johanne Lacombe, Michel Tremblay, Aissa Nauthoo, Serge Miville, Lyne Michaud et Luc Bussières. Toutes mes félicitations et merci d'être ici avec nous. Ça nous fait un honneur que vous soyez parmi nous. Merci beaucoup.

Ms. Laura Smith: The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, also known as CIJA, is here today, with numerous guests, including Noah Shack, Rabbi Yael Splansky, and Adam Minsky.

CIJA is an advocacy leader for Jewish communities across Canada. And since October 7, 2023, CIJA has

doubled down on their work and has been on the front lines, listening to families and supporting students.

Thank you so much for CIJA's advocacy and for being here today.

Mr. Chris Glover: I wish to welcome to the House Jef Benoit. He's a resident of one of the—actually, I've got to say, of the greatest riding in Ontario, Spadina—Fort York.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I think you might be challenged on that.

Thunder Bay—Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to welcome all the groups that were here to promote the Rights Don't Retire campaign: Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic, UFCW, CUPE, Injured Workers Action for Justice, Chinese Injured Workers' Group, Unifor, bricklayers and allied craft-workers union, USW, ATU, OPSEU, united union of pipefitters and plumbers, and the Ontario Federation of Labour.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

KEEPING CRIMINALS BEHIND BARS ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À MAINTENIR LES CRIMINELS DERRIÈRE LES BARREAUX

Mr. Kerzner moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to enact the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 75, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur le Fonds Joe MacDonald de bourses d'études à l'intention des survivants d'agents de sécurité publique et modifiant diverses autres lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would the Solicitor General briefly explain the bill?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: With this legislation, we are taking action to hold offenders accountable, to support victims of crime, and to strengthen public safety. We're cracking down on dangerous driving and tightening bail requirements to protect communities.

Today, as we table the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, we honour the courage of Jordan Cristillo, who is with us today and whose family's tragic loss inspired Andrew's Law. Andrew Cristillo was his brother.

The actions we have taken in this legislation will help to hold dangerous drivers accountable.

BARRIE — ORO-MEDONTE — SPRINGWATER BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA MODIFICATION DES LIMITES TERRITORIALES ENTRE BARRIE, ORO-MEDONTE ET SPRINGWATER

Mr. Flack moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundaries between the City of Barrie, the Township of Oro-Medonte and the Township of Springwater / Projet de loi 76, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de Barrie, le canton d'Oro-Medonte et le canton de Springwater.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does the member wish to explain the bill?

Hon. Rob Flack: The Barrie – Oro-Medonte – Springwater Boundary Adjustment Act, 2025, provides a practical framework to realign the local municipality boundaries so growth can be planned and delivered more effectively. This legislation ensures a smooth transition of services, bylaws and planning processes, and gives municipalities the tools they need to better support expected growth. It is a measure to help the region manage growth responsibly and prepare for future housing, economic and infrastructure needs.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SPEAKING OUT ABOUT, AND REPORTING ON, WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA DÉNONCIATION ET LE SIGNALLEMENT DES VIOLENCES ET DU HARCÈLEMENT AU TRAVAIL

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers who speak out about workplace violence and harassment and to require hospitals and long-term care homes to publicly report on workplace violence and harassment / Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail pour protéger les travailleurs qui dénoncent les violences et le harcèlement au travail et obliger les hôpitaux et les foyers de soins de longue durée à rendre publics les incidents de violence et de harcèlement au travail.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does the member wish to explain the bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oui. Merci, madame. Comme vous savez, les incidences de violence dans tous les secteurs de la santé sont extrêmement élevées. À la conférence des infirmiers et infirmières il y a deux semaines, il y avait plus de 1 000 personnes. On leur a demandé : « Combien de vous ont fait face à la violence au travail? » et quasiment 1 000 personnes ont levé la main.

1510

Le projet de loi, c'est un pas pour que, si une personne rapporte une incidence de violence, les patrons ne puissent pas changer ses heures de travail, de dire, « Bon, bien, tu travailleras plus à l'urgence; on va te mettre dans un autre département » ou « On va te mettre le soir ou la nuit ». On veut vraiment protéger les personnes qui travaillent dans notre milieu de santé en leur donnant l'opportunité de rapporter les cas sans qu'il y ait aucun risque.

Et une deuxième étape : tous les hôpitaux et toutes les maisons de soins de longue durée vont devoir rapporter publiquement combien d'incidences de violence ils ont vécues, et ça sera à tous les mois.

COMMISSIONER FOR DEMOCRATIC
RIGHTS ACT, 2025
LOI DE 2025 SUR LE COMMISSAIRE
AUX DROITS DÉMOCRATIQUES

Mr. Glover moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act establishing a Commissioner for Democratic Rights / Projet de loi 78, Loi créant le poste de commissaire aux droits démocratiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does the member wish to explain the bill?

Mr. Chris Glover: The bill enacts the Commissioner for Democratic Rights Act, 2025. The act provides that there shall be a Commissioner for Democratic Rights who is an officer of the assembly. The assembly shall, by order, appoint the commissioner. An order appointing the commissioner shall be made only after the person to be appointed has been selected by unanimous agreement of a panel composed of one member of the assembly from each recognized party, chaired by the Speaker, who is a non-voting member. The commissioner shall hold office for a five-year term and may be reappointed for one further term. The commissioner may appoint a deputy commissioner.

The Commissioner for Democratic Rights shall monitor barriers to voting; review legislation, regulations and government actions with respect to their effects on democratic rights and processes; review and report on provincial interventions into local government structures, councils and elections and promote civic education, encourage democratic participation and support special

reports to the assembly regarding the state of democracy in Ontario. The commissioner may make recommendations for legislative or policy reforms to strengthen democratic processes and to ensure fair and equal access to voting for all Ontarians.

PETITIONS

SOINS DE LA VUE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M^{me} Lapensée d'Azilda dans mon comté pour ces pétitions qui s'appellent « Assurer une vision claire pour tous les aîné(e)s ».

Comme vous savez, la vision est une partie très fondamentale de notre qualité de vie. Une bonne vision est essentielle pour que les personnes aînées maintiennent leur indépendance, leur santé et leur sécurité.

Un nombre élevé de personnes aînées, en particulier celles à faible revenu, ne peuvent se permettre d'acheter des lunettes, qui sont essentielles à leur bien-être. La plupart des personnes de 65 ans et plus nécessitent des lunettes correctrices pour maintenir une bonne qualité de vie, prévenir les blessures et d'autres complications de la santé, et le système de santé de l'Ontario ne fournit actuellement aucun soutien financier pour aider les personnes aînées à faible revenu pour payer leurs lunettes.

Donc, les gens ont signé la pétition afin d'établir un programme de remboursement ou de rabais gouvernemental pour permettre aux personnes aînées à faible revenu d'acheter des lunettes de prescription.

Je suis bien d'accord avec cette pétition, je vais la signer et je demande à Jasper de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This is a petition to double social assistance rates. I think it's very important and apropos today, after the passing of Bill 60.

We know that the average bachelor goes for \$2,000 a month. Yet, people on ODSP who have significant disabilities and are only able to work minimally, if at all, can't possibly put a roof over their heads with the amount that they receive. So this is a request to double ODSP and OW.

I fully endorse this petition and will give it to Raj.

CONSENT EDUCATION

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm rising today to table a petition entitled "Establish Consent Awareness Week."

We know that sexual assault is one of the most under-reported and pervasive forms of violence in Canada. Today, as we're marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, I think it's incredibly important that we recognize and acknowledge that, and that only a small number of sexual assaults are actually reported to the police. And we know that there's a significant challenge right now in actually seeing those

cases through to prosecution, because of the very long delays in bringing cases to prosecution.

What we really want to be doing, in addition to providing women with justice when they have been assaulted, is ensuring that we are preventing sexual violence from taking place in the first place, and part of that process means that we are reminding people; we're teaching young people of the importance of consent.

If we were to establish Consent Awareness Week, that would be a week when we would specifically focus, every year, on raising awareness and teaching young people about the importance of respecting everyone's right to be respected and safe in all spaces.

So these petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly to adopt the Consent Awareness Week Act, 2025, and declare the third week of September Consent Awareness Week in Ontario.

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition. I will sign my name to it and send it to the table with page Luke.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled "Petition to Raise Social Assistance Rates." I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer for all her work on this and collecting petitions from, I think, across Ontario. These are from Dundas, Ancaster and Hamilton.

Basically, what they talk about is our social assistance rates—OW, ODSP, what used to be called welfare and disability in the old days. OW is about \$733 for an individual and ODSP is \$1,368, so you're looking at under \$1,000 or slightly over \$1,000. We know that it is a lot more expensive than that to afford rent, for example, let alone hydro, food and all the other necessities.

We have a system that is supposed to be there as a safety net to catch people who are unable to work, through disability or other circumstances, that, frankly, makes it difficult for people to make ends meet. This probably is why we're seeing a surge in food bank use, and the surge of people who are absolutely being homeless, which leads to increased addictions and other societal issues.

Back during COVID, the federal government recognized that a base amount for people through the CERB program—the basic income was about \$2,000. That was a few years ago.

We have people asked to live at \$733 or less than \$1,500—and many of these people have special dietary needs because of their disabilities.

They are petitioning the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.

I support this. This is one of those things where we pay now or we pay later, and we pay a lot more later if we don't get this right. I'll sign my signature and provide it to page Raj for the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mme France Gélinas: I have hundreds and hundreds of signatures on this petition from people in Oxford county. Basically, they want to keep our support system public.

It has been revealed that the cost of surgeries in private clinics and independent health facilities exceeds the price paid in our public hospitals.

The backlog of surgeries in British Columbia was not at all reduced by their introduction of private clinics for routine surgeries.

Ontario hospitals have the capacity in their current, underused surgical rooms for additional complex and routine surgeries.

1520

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: that all funding in Ontario of private clinics and independent health facilities cease immediately.

And further, they would like that adequate funds to perform medically necessary surgery be allocated exclusively to our public hospital system.

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Emelin to bring it to the Clerk.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled "Withdraw Bill 5—Maintain the Endangered Species Act, 2007."

We know there have been a lot of requests to withdraw Bill 5—certainly, from First Nations communities across the province.

This particular petition is about the removal of the Endangered Species Act through Bill 5 and the very serious concerns that people have about the narrowing of habitat definitions, removing mandatory recovery strategies, and weakening protections for at-risk species. We know that once a species is lost, the entire ecology of an area collapses and it's not going to be recoverable.

I thoroughly support this petition and will give it to Manaswini and put my signature on it.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm rising to present a petition entitled "Petition to Protect Our Children from Lead Exposure in Schools and Child Care Centres."

We know from the World Health Organization that there's no safe level of lead in the blood and that lead has lifelong impacts that can affect every part of the body—neurological; all of your organ systems—and it can exacerbate chronic conditions.

But nearly half of Ontario schools have failed the lead test in the last four years.

Based on the federal guidelines—the province of Ontario has a guideline which allows for twice the level of exposure to lead as the federal government, even though the science is the same for the federal government and the provincial government.

Our schools are already struggling with a repair backlog of more than \$16.8 billion just to address things like floods and crumbling ceilings and mould. They don't have the funding that they need to actually remediate lead, which means that our children are being exposed to lead on a regular basis in our schools and child care centres. No parent wants that for their children.

These petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly to adopt the federal guidelines for lead exposure, to immediately create a lead remediation plan for Ontario schools and child care centres with proper funding, and to eliminate the school repair backlog by providing the necessary resources to fix our schools.

I fully support this petition. I will add my name to it and send it to the table with page Tristan.

TUITION

MPP Jamie West: This petition is called "Fight the Fees." It's from the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario.

I notice mon ami le président de l'Université de Sudbury, Serge Miville, est ici aujourd'hui.

This is a petition about the high cost of tuition rates. We all know the importance of post-secondary education, and I'm sure that my friend would support the idea of bringing down these tuition rates by getting more funding from the provincial government.

Since 1980, tuition has increased by 215%, and the average domestic graduate tuition has increased by 247%.

We also know that in Ontario, our public support of colleges and universities is the lowest across the country; so low, in fact, that we bring the median rate down.

As a consequence of this, more and more colleges and universities are increasingly relying on international tuition rates to offset their books. I think it's great that we're attracting international students, but we can't use that as a way to fund our colleges and universities. This means that our kids are graduating with massive debts.

As well in here, they talk about the changes that the Ontario government made to the ability of the students to organize themselves and the challenge that they had in defeating this in the courts. This was brought back in another form under Bill 33, which I'm sure is going to be challenged and lost in the court again, costing our taxpayers a lot more money—and fighting this again and again in the courtroom.

Essentially, they want education to be free and accessible for everybody. They want a system of grants instead of loans so we're not graduating our students in massive amounts of debts, especially with the high cost of housing. It's completely unaffordable for people—and rent being through the roof. They want to legislate students' right to organize in the same way, I believe, that labour unions have the right to organize. Students should be able to stand up and be the voice for themselves without oversight from the Conservative government.

I wholly support this petition. I think it's doing nothing but good things. I'll affix my signature and provide it to page Raj for the table.

SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Mme France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Nathan Fragomeni et Patricia Leonard de Val Caron dans mon comté pour ces pétitions. La pétition s'appelle « Rendre l'autoroute 144 sécuritaire ».

L'autoroute 144 est une autoroute qui part de Sudbury et qui se rend jusqu'à Timmins. Elle est entièrement dans mon comté de Nickel Belt.

Les personnes qui voyagent sur l'autoroute 144 sont très préoccupées par la sécurité de l'autoroute et aimeraient éviter d'autres accidents et décès. Plusieurs collisions sur l'autoroute 144 entraînent la fermeture, souvent pour plusieurs heures, où le trafic commercial—il y a au moins huit mines qui utilisent l'autoroute 144 à toutes les heures, à tous les jours—24/7, tout le temps. Il n'y a pas de détour possible, donc les résidents du Nord veulent une autoroute sécuritaire, été comme hiver.

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative que l'Ontario organise une table ronde réunissant des représentants du ministère des Transports, de la police, des services d'ambulance, des opérateurs de dépanneuses, des entreprises de transport, des entreprises minières, même les chauffeurs d'autobus scolaires et d'autres usagers de l'autoroute pour trouver des solutions à cette autoroute qui est si dangereuse.

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et je demande à ma bonne amie Emelin d'aller l'apporter à la table des greffiers.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This is a bill that asks for the immediate withdrawal of Bill 33. This is really because of the loss of the democratic rights of democratically elected local people to actually work on behalf of their students.

What we have seen is that a government that has withdrawn over \$6 billion from the public education system created a crisis and then decided to punch down in order to resolve a problem that they created in the first place.

This bill really underscores the importance of maintaining local trustees who are democratically elected in each school area and keeping that so that local people have input over the education of their children.

I thoroughly support this and will give this to Manaswini and sign it.

FINANCEMENT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Mme France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Josée, Karine et Anique Viau de Hanmer dans mon comté pour ces pétitions qu'on appelle « Clinique des désordres neurologiques du mouvement à Sudbury ».

Savez-vous, monsieur le Président, que le Nord-Est a le taux le plus élevé des désordres neurologiques du

mouvement, que l'on parle de la maladie de Parkinson, de Huntington, de la dystonie, Tourette et bien d'autres? Les pourcentages sont beaucoup plus hauts dans le nord de l'Ontario.

La ville du Grand Sudbury est reconnue comme un centre pour les soins de santé dans le nord de l'Ontario. Les gens demandent de mettre en place immédiatement une clinique des désordres neurologiques du mouvement dans la région de Sudbury composée au minimum d'une neurologue spécialisée dans le traitement du mouvement, d'une physiothérapeute et d'une travailleuse sociale.

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et je demande à Tristan de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Suzanne Leblanc from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It's called "Let's Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant."

You know, Speaker, that people who live, like me, in northern Ontario don't have the same access to health care services—because some of them are not available, which means that we need to travel and pay for travel and accommodations to gain access.

By refusing to update the Northern Health Travel Grant, the government is putting a massive burden on northern Ontarians who are sick. Many of them will choose to forgo treatment rather than incur debts from paying for transportation and hotel rooms to access services in southern Ontario—not to mention that the price of gas is way higher in my riding than it is in southern Ontario.

1530

They would like the government to put together a committee made up of health care professionals from the north as well as recipients of the Northern Health Travel Grant to make recommendations as to what a reasonable fee is to pay for transportation, what a reasonable fee is to pay for accommodation—because where we have it set right now, it is impossible to find a hotel room in Toronto for the money that the government gives.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Tristan, who has been very patient, to bring it to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS SEVEN ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À ŒUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, SEPT

Mr. Piccini moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'emploi et au travail ainsi qu'à d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Back to the minister.

Hon. David Piccini: I'm pleased to rise today for the third reading of Bill 30, the Working for Workers Seven Act.

I just want to start off by thanking the incredible team that I have the privilege of working with every day: our chief of staff, our directors, our entire team over at the minister's office on the political side. I also want to thank my deputy minister and the entire team within the deputy minister's office, our ADMs, and everyone who works within the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, who have worked very hard on a series of successive Working for Workers bills. We've brought them before this House. We've had support in many respects from the entire place here, and it's in no small part because of their tireless work. I'm very grateful for all of them, and I just want to start by saying thank you.

Speaker, this legislation represents the next step in our government's unwavering commitment to a pro-worker agenda and a plan that puts workers first, protects their rights, and builds a stronger Ontario for everyone.

Our government has already introduced, as I said, six previous Working for Workers acts, each providing meaningful reforms to strengthen our workforce, protect vulnerable employees, and modernize our labour system.

I want to just pause there because that's important to note. At no point in modern history do I recall a labour ministry that puts that line in the sand every year and says, "We will advance priorities of various worker groups." And I want to thank them. These aren't necessarily groups that—perhaps some in the past, some more recently would be out, very vocal against the government, against various parties within this place. But they challenge us.

I firmly believe, when you sit down at the table, you can find consensus, and that's what we've been able to do through successive Working for Workers bills. And I'm grateful for that. I'm going to touch on it a bit later—some of the things Unifor, United Steelworkers, and others brought us in this bill.

We continue the momentum of those previous bills with Bill 30, legislation that addresses the challenges of our times, from global economic uncertainty to US tariffs to evolving labour market needs, all the while putting Ontario workers, businesses at the centre of every decision that we make.

This bill is built around three pillars: (1) protecting Ontario workers; (2) fighting worker abuse; and (3) supporting the skilled trades and continuing to build a strong, healthy and resilient workforce. Our proposals include 18 measures that, if passed, would deliver tangible benefits for workers across the province, from enhanced workplace safety and support for job seekers to stronger enforcement against bad actors, and skills development and apprenticeship. It's a comprehensive plan that would ensure Ontario workers are protected and supported and equipped, not just for today, but for tomorrow. I'm proud to speak to it today—a bill that supports the workforce in

helping us achieve our ambitious infrastructure plan for Ontario.

Speaker, protecting Ontario workers begins with keeping them safe on the job site. Construction sites, where physical exertion is high and risks of cardiac events are so high, are in most need of life-saving measures.

From 2018 to 2023, we saw, through inspections, reporting of 184 cardiac events, with over 15% occurring on construction projects. Tragically, without immediate intervention, these emergencies can cost lives.

As of January 1, construction projects with 20 or more workers and a duration of three months or longer will now be required to have a defibrillator on-site, along with a trained worker ready to respond. This is a first-in-Canada measure that I'm sure will be followed by many other provinces coming up. It's about more than compliance; it's about saving lives.

I recall the day we announced this with the Mikey Network. We were on a job site in Durham region, and I got to meet a worker who woke up after feeling pains in his chest—telling his foreman, “I've got to go to the hospital. I'll drive.” Well, that worker woke up on the side of the road with a defibrillator on his chest. His dad had passed of a heart attack, and he said it was his dad watching down on him, but as happenstance would have it, there was a paramedic driving past the job site at that very time. We know that that's not the reality of every job site, so he was very, very blessed to have that happen. He told his story and has since himself become trained on a defibrillator. This measure now will ensure that they're on large construction sites, where we know the risk is elevated.

But what's so special about this—which is no different than the work we did with naloxone kits on construction sites—is that we will train thousands of construction workers on how to properly operate a defibrillator. This is about more than just construction sites; these are moms and dads who will now know how to use them when they're at an arena.

Of course, I recall it was the Harper government that brought in defibrillators in arenas and community centres around Canada—I know, because I see them in my own community, when we're out at the community centres out in Keene or in Norwood.

It's the training that's going to be really beneficial here.

Under Bill 30, Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board would reimburse employers for purchasing a defibrillator, ensuring small businesses are supported, while putting life-saving equipment where it's needed most.

I had a conversation with another honourable member here earlier about how we can support workers and how we can work with WSIB, who have done a good job on managing the employer premiums with the sufficiency ratio. I think this is yet another measure that we can do to support workers, among other ideas that we can absolutely bring to the floor of this place that really make sure we're protecting workers—actually protecting them from getting injured, because it's about prevention. It's not about just

supporting injured workers; it's about preventing them from getting injured in the first place.

That's why this builds on other measures we've brought forward, like properly fitting personal protective equipment. Common sense isn't all that common in government, and we were the first province to enshrine that in law. And again, we're not stopping there—we've got more ideas in the spring, and I look forward to bringing them to this place.

In addition to workplace safety, our proposed legislation also protects workers affected from economic volatility. Ontario industries—particularly manufacturing, steel and auto—continue to face significant impacts from US tariffs in this trade war.

Bill 30 allows for extended temporary layoffs, with employee agreements and director approval, under the Employment Standards Act. This allows, in particular, non-unionized employees and employers to maintain the employment relationship instead of facing unnecessary terminations during extended layoffs. Why do I specify that? I think in collective agreements we see a lot of those protections enshrined.

I want to give a big shout-out to Unifor. The Premier and I sat down with a number of Unifor leaders just the other day, and they spoke to the challenges in our automotive sector. “You can't negotiate from your knees,” Unifor president Lana Payne said. You've got to negotiate from a position of strength.

When you are in challenging times, you want to know that your unions fought for important elements within that collective agreement. We know that there are workers who are protected during layoff periods, during shutdowns or retooling, and that's because of the good work they do in collective bargaining.

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But for non-unionized employees, it's about enshrining those protections, as well, and making sure that during temporary layoffs, we don't sever that employee-employer relationship. This allows the relationship to be maintained.

For those facing mass termination, a new three-day, unpaid job-seeking leave would ensure employees can start job searching, interview, access training, and connect with employment services during the notice period. We'd be the first province in Canada to offer this type of leave, demonstrating leadership in supporting workers through economic disruption.

Speaker, in addition to any supports already offered by a company, employers are now required to provide an information sheet prepared and published by my ministry to employees affected by a mass termination.

I think at some point all of us in this House have met with a constituent and, through dealing with their issue, realized how complex at times it can be to navigate government. If we are struggling in navigating it, I can't imagine what one of our constituents who's dealing with some sort of ordeal—because you don't just choose to roll in on your MPP's office. Some people do—I have coffees with some frequent flyers who come in just to say nice

things. But normally, you're not going to your MPP unless you have a problem.

This simple yet effective measure will make sure we're empowering workers with a suite of wraparound supports that they are entitled to. It's this government, under this Premier, that has fought to expand it—things like Better Jobs Ontario, which says to a mid-career professional, "We care about you, and you can upskill. We see you, we value you, and you can get access to training." We've expanded those supports now, for up to two years, through Better Jobs Ontario, and I know that's having an impact on everyday lives of Ontarians. And I look forward to further expanding that program to support the good people of Ontario.

Speaker, in addition to this, we are cracking down on bad actors. Bill 30 would strengthen protections for others looking for work. Job posting platforms would be required to implement clear reporting mechanisms for fraudulent listings, addressing a problem that has cost Ontario workers millions. I spoke with CTV's Pat Foran about this. Fraudulent job postings cost our economy over \$40 million—and we're creating enforcement to root out those bad actors and prevent these losses.

These legislative measures are complemented, in addition, by investments we're making in our POWER Centres, or Protect Ontario Workers Employment Response Centres. They're known as our POWER Centres. We were in Hamilton for that announcement with the Steelworkers. Why is that significant? As I said, I think Ontarians want to know that you're willing to reach across and work with folks of all different stripes. I know, within the leadership, are prominent members of the NDP's executive, and we've built, I think, a very respectful friendship, quite frankly. I value their advice, and I value the ideas that they bring our government. We may not always agree on everything. But Steelworkers from across Ontario are well represented. I think back to my grandfather who immigrated here, who was a proud Steelworker, a member of that union, and other members of my family.

These POWER Centres and the expanded supports were done working hand in hand with groups like United Steelworkers, like Unifor, just to name a few. The programs provided at these centres—and I've had a chance to visit some of the Unifor-run ones closer to home, like the one in Oshawa—provide agile, accessible supports for laid-off workers, including retraining, digital access, transportation, and child care funding. And we're expanding things like child care funding. I think we can all agree in this place that those types of supports matter. Transportation costs to get to and from this type of training—this is important too.

By proactively equipping workers to navigate these uncertain economic times, Bill 30 would ensure Ontario remains competitive while keeping families secure.

Speaker, this is a comprehensive approach—from life-saving workplace measures to economic and employment protections—demonstrating that under our government, workers are at the centre of every initiative.

Protecting workers also means holding bad actors accountable. The vast majority of employers respect the law and treat employees fairly, but a small minority attempt to cheat the system. Bill 30 will provide stronger enforcement tools to ensure justice is done swiftly and effectively.

Under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, our proposed legislation would strengthen Workplace Safety and Insurance Board enforcement by introducing new administrative penalties and higher fines to crack down on employers who misrepresent information, falsify records or evade premiums. This is a big one, and one which Jeff Lang and the team at WSIB have flagged with me as a chronic issue needing to be addressed, so we are. We're taking steps to address that.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, we're also creating the authority to require public infrastructure project owners, constructors and employers to treat Chief Prevention Officer-accredited health and safety management systems as equivalent in procurement processes. This is very niche, and people would be forgiven if they didn't necessarily understand the nuance there, but we have a Chief Prevention Officer in Ontario, Dr. Joel Moody, who does a phenomenal job and recognizes that health and safety management systems are needed and are robust. And those that are certified by the government of Ontario—by our Chief Prevention Officer—those recognized programs that say that an employer has taken the steps they need to operate a healthy and safe workplace—that any of those programs are treated equally.

And often the analogy I've used is you need a doctor, but you're saying you're only going to take a doctor from Queen's. Well, we have other accredited medical schools and so we should be accepting folks from them. I hear from small employers—I was just down in Welland, and I heard from one there—and in Sarnia as well—where they had a health and safety management system, had invested thousands for training for workers and now we're told that they couldn't bid on a project because it was another health and safety management system in the procurement system. These are little, nagging issues that are making it uncompetitive for Ontario employers, and we want Ontario employers to bid on infrastructure projects. So we've set a level playing field across all municipalities, worked with agencies like Metrolinx, IO and others who are doing a remarkable job, and we're making sure that we're levelling the playing field.

Speaker, moving on to immigration pathways: As someone who is here because of immigration, Bill 30 addresses this sector, and I look forward to introducing some new streams soon, but I want to speak to why we're able to do that. Bill 30 addresses a number of things—fraud in the employment and immigration sectors—and will bring changes to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program that include giving authority for the minister to create new immigration streams, allowing for proactive response to evolving labour market needs.

Speaker, at a time when we want to attract international investment, we've got to take steps. I've often told, in this place, the story of Enrico. He's an Italian immigrant who

came here, has Dacasto bakery and yet can't seem to find a stream that recognizes his talents and his close to \$100 million, if not more, in investment in this province, creating over 30, 35, 36 jobs.

We've got to have pathways. We've got to recognize international talent—something I've spoken to members of other parties in this place about: artists; the Japanese ambassador talked about sushi chefs with me; of course, Michelin chefs. You know, they contribute to our tourism and our hospitality sector. We've got to recognize excellence—excellence in research etc. So a new talent stream will be able to do that.

We're giving the ministry the ability, of course, to strengthen our process through the system, the ability to require in-person interviews—and all of these changes are designed to restore and add more integrity to our system, Speaker, to ensure that employers receive the skills, credible applicants and those whose skills they need.

Speaker, I just want to end my remarks talking about another element on training centres. This government has taken a number of historic firsts. We're the first to truly back union training in organized and sophisticated ways. We've made investments in union training that supported breaking down barriers for young union men and women.

I think fondly to the Hammer Heads Program, and I've referenced Marvin in this place, who's working for Alberici; he's a foreman. He went through the Hammer Heads Program, run by James St. John and the Central Ontario Building Trades. They get those folks through the training—predominantly young men and women from socio-economically disadvantaged communities—and they give them a path. When I visited their graduation and spoke to them, for many of these—I think to some of the young guys who run the program: Nana, Haider, Quoc and others. But a lot of those guys have come and told me they're the first in their family to take home a meaningful paycheque and to pay taxes. They own a home. They own their pickup truck or their vehicle and it's a sense of pride, purpose and dignity instilled.

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And then to get them into one of our many unions—Central Ontario, of course, is the largest affiliate local for building trades in Canada. They do amazing work, Speaker, and I'm grateful for James's leadership and for all of the business managers whom I've met, and training directors, and the great work that they do.

And we're investing in those training centres for the first time, Speaker. I think to Ottawa. Why are we making this investment? Why are we introducing measures to fast-track those training centres? Well, we're doing it because we saw, down in Windsor, permit delays taking over a year to get that training centre up and running at a time when we've got to get youth into apprenticeships. We have high youth unemployment. We've got to get them into meaningful careers. We can't afford to wait for our training centres—wait for a bloody sign permit, Speaker, that I've told you about before in this place.

So, with that Speaker, I'm proud to turn it over to those whose time I'm sharing today and I'm sharing my time

with PAs Firin and Sabawy. Thank you. I'm proud to speak to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise in the house and listen to the labour minister on Working for Workers 7.

I just want to talk really quickly about the Skills Development Fund scandal. I think it's fair, I think it's reasonable to raise it. But I want to be clear about our party. We believe that workers in the province of Ontario should absolutely get training. It doesn't matter whether you're in a skilled trade or if you're working in the tourist sector, no matter where you're working—the wine industry—you should get training. I want to be clear on that.

What I don't agree with is utilizing the Skills Development Fund to buy votes in the province of Ontario. That's what I believe has happened. But I want to be very clear: I support workers. Union, non-union, it doesn't matter what they are.

It's unfortunate the labour minister is leaving because I like to talk to him. I'd like him to listen to this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Order. Caution.

MPP Wayne Gates: Let's look at Bill 30. I think it's number 7; it's actually number 9, but we'll call it seven. They don't like a couple of the bills that they put forward, but they were labour bills.

Workers are worse off today than when they started this whole series of bills. When you read the bill, you see right away who it's designed to help, and it's not Ontario workers. This bill is supposed to be the government's big response to the economic crisis facing this province.

Workers across Ontario are scared—scared for their jobs, scared for their families. They're scared for their future, by the way. Layoffs are hitting every corner of this province: auto workers, we see that in Brampton; manufacturing workers; education workers; health care workers. You name it.

Speaker, I know you're interested in this: 800,000 Ontarians are out of work today in the province of Ontario. Youth unemployment is close to 20%. Young people can't find jobs.

People are calling my office and crying on the phone. "What do I do? What am I going to do in the next six months? I'm not going to have a job." And what does the government do? Well, they offer these workers who are losing their jobs three days of unpaid—unpaid—job-protected leave to go look for another job after you're laid off when there are no jobs out there. As we see, there are 800,000 people on unemployment not working. Give me a break. That's not a plan. That's not protection. That's not dignity. That is telling workers, "Good luck. You're on your own."

That's exactly the story—and this is one that I know my colleague may even raise as well, but I'm going to raise it again: deeming. Speaker, I know you've heard this story long before you became the Speaker. It's one of the cruellest, most destructive practices that the WSIB uses. Injured workers, who are workers who got hurt on the job and are being deemed capable of doing phantom jobs that

don't even exist, and then their benefits are cut based on what the phantom job may give them.

I talked to a sprinkler today, by the way, who was here today for your press conference. He was in construction making 30 bucks an hour. He got injured on the job, had to go on WSIB, and what they did is they deemed him. Even though he couldn't work, even though a phantom job wasn't around, they deemed that he could make \$18 an hour. And you know what they did? They cut his benefits by \$18 an hour.

What happened to that injured worker who ended up not working, not being able to afford his bills, not being able to pay his rent or his house? You know what happened? The family split up because of the argument. They ended up living in poverty. Who should live in poverty because he went to work one day, got injured on the job, and because of the system, because WSIB deemed him, he had to live in poverty, lose his family, lose his dignity? That's what goes on in the province of Ontario.

I've asked the labour minister, including today: Why haven't you included deeming in one of your seven bills, or one of your nine bills—whatever the number is? Because I asked him, why should anybody who is a worker in the province of Ontario who gets hurt on the job—no fault of their own—have to live in poverty, have to lose their family? I'm hoping, whether it's number 8, number 9, number 10, number 55—I don't know for how many he's going, but I'm hoping the next labour bill will have deeming in it.

I'm going to do a press conference on Tuesday on deeming again. I'm going to bring the same injured workers or other injured workers who have been hurt on the job. They're living in poverty. They have lost their family. I'm hoping that the next time I'm standing up here, I'm congratulating the labour minister for doing the right thing.

I'm hoping he's going to do the right thing when it comes to the press conference we had this morning. Injured workers who are cut off when they're 65—they should continue to collect WSIB. Now, he gave a commitment this morning, and when he does it, I'll be the first to go over there and shake his hand and say thanks. I'll do the same thing with the deeming bill. Workers should not live in poverty.

One that drives me nuts—and I know the people from Toronto probably see this all the time: gig workers in Toronto who deliver our food, maybe drive us around with, you know, Uber. I think it's called Uber. They're living in poverty too. They're not even making the minimum wage. And what has happened is the number of gig workers that are driving and delivering has gone up from 4,000, say, to 6,000 or 6,200. There are so many of them now, because there are so many on unemployment. They're not even making minimum wage.

In the province of Ontario, you think about a worker not making minimum wage—in the richest province, quite frankly, in the country. Some of you say, "Why aren't they making the minimum wage?" They don't get paid when there's idle time. And what that means is, they go to work

at 7:00 in the morning, let's say. If they don't get a delivery till 8:30, you know how much money they make from 7:00 to 8:30, Speaker? Help me out. I know you're interested in this. Nothing—they don't get paid anything. They get paid from the time they pick up the delivery until it's delivered, and then they go back off again till they get the next delivery.

Do you think that's right in the province of Ontario? It was the government here that said, under the workers—the bill that they should have done was going to help gig workers. And it has; it's made it worse.

Sick days—how do we not have sick days in the province of Ontario? We need 10 sick days. Experts—it doesn't matter whether you're a doctor, economist; every worker has been asking for 10 permanent sick days—not two, not temporary: permanent sick days. And what does Bill 30 deliver? Nothing. You still have to choose between going to work sick or losing the day's pay. And that's with contractors, gig workers, part-time, non-union workers on the rise. This is a recipe for disaster. This government won't touch it because their corporate buds don't want it.

The one that drives me nuts—I know my colleague our labour critic talks about this all the time: the anti-scab legislation. Why do we have anti-scab legislation? When you go to the bargaining table, we know in the province of Ontario, 98%—think about that: 98%. And to the House leader over there—I know he's listening, for sure—98% of all labour contracts, when you go to the bargaining table, are resolved without a strike. Why the hell are we sticking up for the 2% that want to cause you problems, that want to force workers out on strike, want to lock workers out? Why don't we say to those 2%, "Go to the bargaining table and negotiate a fair and just collective agreement for our workers in the province of Ontario. We're no longer going to protect you with anti-scab"? Why isn't that in the bill? Ninety-eight per cent—drives me nuts.

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Let me see what else I've got here. It's got to go quick, I know; I don't have a lot of time.

So what should be in the bill? I think that's a fair and reasonable question. How about end deeming? I just talked about deeming—drives me nuts. I don't think workers should live in poverty just because you get hurt on the job.

Bring in 10 paid sick days.

Pass real anti-scab legislation.

Properly classify gig workers as employees so they get all the rights that you get all the time.

Enforce labour laws, especially around stolen wages. You've heard my colleague talk about that. Millions of dollars have been stolen from workers.

Here's one that I think I know the House leader will like too: bring in card-check certification. This is a party that says they love unions, yet they don't want them to organize. They don't want them to join a union. How do you say you respect union workers, no matter what it is, and yet you say, "Oh, no, we can't bring in card check. There will be too many people joining a union; too many

trying to get fair wages, fair benefits and a collective agreement—can't do that?"

Restore WSIB to the worker-centred mandate that it was brought in for.

This is one that's really important for the north: Ensure wildland firefighters get the same presumptive coverage as municipal firefighters.

It's a pretty long list.

Because I have to sit down, I just want to say—because I don't know; my critic will tell me whether we're supporting it or not supporting it. I know we supported other labour bills. The reality is, if you're going to use these bills, bring them in where it means something: bring in anti-scab, bring in deeming, make sure we're taking care of injured workers—all the things that are not in this bill that should be brought in the bill.

Thank you for allowing me to say a few words. I'll pass it on to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: As always, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and represent the wonderful people of beautiful Beaches—East York. Of course, I always wish that I was speaking on better bills and better legislation overall, but here we are.

We're talking about the Working for Workers Seven Act, 2025, and as we know, we are cutting the debate short on this, which is kind of par for the course with this government, unfortunately.

I would just urge this government to consider what used to happen historically, and that was that we would sit more regularly. As with any job, you are expected to come out and work at your job, so it would be great if we came back in September instead of October 20, and we didn't have—it's great to be in the constituency, don't get me wrong, but we also have a job to do here. That's just my little reminder for you.

Some of the things in this bill I can agree with. Definitely the AED defibrillators on large construction sites—for sure, that should be a no-brainer that we have them anywhere and everywhere we can to save people's lives and protect Ontarians.

The mandatory fraud reporting tools on job posting platforms to better protect job seekers from scams—very good.

What else do we have where I can give you a bit of a compliment? Let's see—yes, job platforms offering a reporting mechanism and written policy for fraudulent job ads.

Employees notified of mass termination—50-plus people—are entitled to three unpaid days for job search. Gosh, it will take them a lot longer than that in this economy and this state we're in right now.

Return applications that no longer meet labour needs—and other things in this bill we can support.

What I would say is that I'm pretty shocked that this government did not support our opposition day motion, if you really care about getting people jobs. I know some of you are parents, grandparents; heck, some of you might be great-grandparents over there. You have relatives who

need jobs. You have constituents who are looking for jobs. You have schools in your ridings.

We know that the unemployment rate for youth is sky-high. As of September, youth unemployment in Ontario was at 17.8%, the highest in Canada. Usually, Ontario is a leader in many things, and we like to brag about that—centre of the universe, Ontario, the economic engine of Canada. This is not something to brag about. This is humiliating. This is deplorable. We should be doing every single thing in our power to clean this up. It behooves us to be leaders and to address this issue.

The average wait time for a young person to find a job has grown to three and a half months, the highest in 29 years. I've spoken to you about this, and you all know.

You all started working as teenagers, I'm sure. My first job was as a chambermaid at the Rainbow Motel in Collingwood, Ontario, at 13 years of age, for \$2.35 an hour. And I was darn happy to get that job. Every single summer, every single year, I had another job. Sometimes, when I was a cashier at Loblaws, we only could work 24 hours a week, so I got a couple of other jobs. I was a lifeguard, a Red Cross homemaker—many things. The jobs were plentiful, easy to get. This is completely the opposite for our youth nowadays. They are being robbed of opportunities.

The Premier, recently, with his comments about just getting out there and getting a job, needs to try it. He needs to try going out there, like youth are going today and trying everything they can.

In fact, the other day I introduced you to a wonderful grade 12 student from Monarch Park Collegiate Institute, Jane Maguire. She came here and sat in the chamber while we discussed the opposition day motion. She was very hopeful that we would actually do something about unemployment for youth. Actually, randomly, she came to see me in June, and she met with everyone in my office because we were all eager to meet this whippersnapper grade 12 student who had the chutzpah not only to do this research, which I'm going to talk to you about in a minute, but to contact her elected official, arrange a meeting and sit with us—myself and my staff—and go through her presentation. How brave is that? How proactive is that? It's incredible. As I said before, I don't know how many of us were doing that when we were in grade 12.

We know that it has been all over the news; it's a reality—the sky-high unemployment rates for youth. So what's the issue? Is it no work experience? Is it references? Is it small businesses not being able to take on the load of training a young person?

Jane Maguire went out and interviewed her peers at Monarch Park collegiate and her friends elsewhere. Some of them had never applied for a job, and one had even applied for over 400 jobs, if you can believe it. The question: "Do you want a job (if you don't have one?)" One of the quotes was, "I do want one, mainly for the extra income for my family. I mainly haven't been able to find work because many places are hiring or require bachelor's and other degrees. I'm also disabled so accessibility is an issue and I can't do 'any' job, which really bars me from

a lot of opportunities. It also contributes to potential employers' perception of my capabilities."

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That person is not alone. I actually feel like a bit of a headhunter these days with the amount of youth contacting me or parents contacting me. When a parent contacts me about their kid not having a job, I always say, "Get your child to contact me directly, and we'll have a conversation." We talk about ideas and things in the community. But it's really tough, as we know.

So what's the real issue? Many things. Other kids are saying, "Yes, I want one. I've applied to like 100-plus positions on Indeed, as well as walked into places with résumés and references and asked for applications or to speak about employment opportunities. It's always a no or zero answer. I never get callbacks or anything. Even people my parents know who are hiring don't want to hire teens." Adults are taking teens' jobs. It's a sad state of affairs right now. It's the old chicken and egg—"Well, we can't hire you because you don't have experience." How do you get experience if you don't get the job?

And these kids are keen to work. Here's another question Jane asks: "Is not being able to find a job causing you anxiety?" "Yes, because currently, everything is so expensive and my family specifically is struggling financially. My mom is trying to get a part-time job as well, on top of her full-time job. She works full-time at a hospital and my dad works full-time as well. I would rather I be the one to get a part-time job and contribute, but it isn't happening right now. It isn't possible to live off two incomes anymore."

That is why this opposition day motion from the Liberals, from us over here, was such a great idea. We called it the youth career fund, kind of similar to Canada Summer Jobs, but different, obviously—it's done provincially; it's just something to incentivize. It's actually a win-win, because it incentivizes the small businesses to consider hiring youth; that provides opportunities for youth to get the experience that we all got, which would help open doors to other jobs, would teach them responsibility, and would expose them to different types of work and help them learn new skills. It could maybe expose them to things so that they are thinking, "Maybe I don't want to do that," or maybe, "That's great. I'd never heard of that before. Why don't I try doing that?" Also, they can meet new friends of all ages, peers that they would work with—maybe their own age, or older people or younger people—who knows? It's just such an opportunity.

It's such a loss for these youth. Why, if we had a chance, are they being denied the opportunities we had? That's actually unfair.

Here was a chance for you to support our youth career fund and our opposition day motion. It's not the be-all and end-all. It wouldn't solve youth unemployment right now, but anything we can do to help—it's just one tool in the tool box, but for some reason, you couldn't do that, and I don't understand why. When Jane left here, I had to explain to her why you didn't support that, and I said I don't know why. I'm not in your heads.

But I'm hoping that you will take that idea of the youth career fund. This isn't a partisan issue. Just take it. Just take a good idea when it's out there and run with it, and put it in one of your bills. You take credit. Who cares, if that's what's important to you—to take credit?

Honestly, let's all work together and help youth get jobs. They're our future. We had that opportunity. We shouldn't be denying them that opportunity. Let's work together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresce): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Do you know what? There's a lot of good in this bill. I always like to acknowledge the things that are happening that we can recognize—a lot of the different ways they talk about people who receive layoffs. Getting AEDs is going to save lives. These are some really awesome things in here.

I'd say most of the bills that the government does are 90% awesome and then there's a little nugget in there—I call it the "party mix." This is how I describe it to my constituents. They're like, "What's it like inside?" It's not black or white; it's a party mix, and sometimes it's great party mix, and sometimes there's a little nugget in there that's not very digestible.

One of the areas where I think the government is taking up too much power—we see this happening down south, where the President does executive orders on everything. And I see this government passing legislation that gives cabinet powers to act with this kind of authority. It's not democratic, and it overrides a lot of history of good planning.

I was a city councillor, and there's a lot that goes on at the council level that's local. And I don't always think that the Minister of Labour, who is from Peterborough, knows what's happening in Etobicoke or what's happening in Kitchener or what's happening in Lanark county. That's where those city planners and those city councils really matter, because it creates local decision-making.

One thing I want to talk about today is Dutchie's. This is a company in my community, in the community of Kitchener South-Hespeler, the community of Cambridge, and now they're operating a new branch in Brant. They've had 80 complaints from workers who haven't been paid. They owe fines of over \$600,000, and they use things like numbered companies. So they close down Dutchie's grocery stores, and they open one in Brantford under a different number company with a different owner. I know that the government is trying to get to this. I see how they're saying, "Who are the people who own these numbered companies?"—trying to get to the fraud and root it out. But one thing we have to do is root out wage theft.

The people at Dutchie's came to my office. They are newcomers from Ukraine. Imagine, you flee your hometown that's being bombed, you come to Kitchener, and one of the few jobs you can find—you find yourself working at a grocery store. You're living off very small amounts of money, fleeing a war zone, and then your employer doesn't pay you. When your employer doesn't pay you, you can't pay your rent; you can't feed your family.

I hope if we're going to get tough on crime, we're also going to get tough on this robbery of workers. If we want to fight for workers, if we want to be there for workers, let's be there when they're being robbed.

Wage theft is really rampant. In fact, the labour ministry only collects 22% of stolen wages. A lot of claims don't even get processed. We haven't hired new enforcement officers in a very long time. I hope this government will get serious about tackling wage theft because I think the workers of Ontario—the most vulnerable, people who are becoming homeless, people who are seven days or 14 days late on their rent. Some of that's because they didn't get paid. So I hope if we're going to be tough on crime, we're not going to just punch down on tenants, but we'll also find fairness for folks who work hard and ought to be paid what they owed.

I was talking to the Workers' Action Centre today, and they let me know that there is a lot of tricky business when we're doing the hiring, like miscategorization of workers. For example, instead of hiring a PSW and giving them a certain wage, they classify them as self-employed, so then they don't have to pay benefits and they don't have to give them other employment rights that a regular employee would be due.

Don't get me wrong; I want businesses to survive. I want them to have a budget that works, to make sure they can keep working and they can keep employing people. But we do have to close some of these loopholes, so we aren't marginalizing people, like a PSW who doesn't get paid to drive from A to B; they just get paid while they're working—not classify them as self-employed, but employ them and give them benefits, maybe bring a union on so they can have fair wages and fair working conditions. So in Working for Workers 8, I hope we can see that. I hope we can see some fairness for the wage theft that's happening, and I hope we can find some fairness for people who are being misclassified as self-employed just to get out of paying those extra wages.

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The other thing I would like to talk about is some of the workplace conditions. I appreciate that we're going to add the AEDs. That's beautiful. We're going to help people who might be having a heart attack. One thing that we also should do too—climate change is happening, and we're seeing a lot of extreme heat. That actually causes the heart attack. I hope that we can try to come up with adaptive policies.

I see the Minister of Emergency Preparedness is here. One of the emergencies that's most deadly is extreme heat, correct? We saw over 600 people die in Vancouver from extreme heat, and we know that this affects people on the job. Did you know that a lot of our workplace requirements are for young, healthy men? A lot of our workers are not young, healthy men. They're older people, people in their 50s, people with health conditions. So I hope when we come forward, not only with Working for Workers 8, but with our emergency preparedness legislation, that we can write in something there—go across ministries and create adaptive policies to acknowledge extreme heat and

the impact it has on workers. We know what it feels like to be outside on asphalt in the heat. For teachers in heated classrooms as well—they have health conditions and can get sick. Can we create some way forward to ensure there's cooling in the workplace to adapt for this extreme heat that we're going to see more of? This is a way that we can use the information about weather and we can prepare for workers to be healthy and well.

And it helps productivity. In Cambridge—the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler is in the area—they built an industrial building, a net-zero building, and do you know the biggest benefit? Sure, you save all this money on energy, you save all this money on blah blah blah, affordability—I know; I can hear all your eyes rolling as we speak. But the benefit of this sealed-up building—I hope you can visit it. I visited this building on one of the hottest days of the year, and guess what? It wasn't overly heated. When we build properly, in a sealed-up way, we actually cool people down. When we add machines into buildings like that—we need that cool, because all those machines, all that manufacturing can actually cause really big harm in our manufacturing sector, and we know this affects the health of our workers. Productivity in this building, this net-zero industrial building, the first one in Ontario in the member for Cambridge's riding—it will improve productivity by 50% because of this cooling. We know that productivity goes down when people are too hot, so let's—I applaud the AED; let's also get some cooling mechanisms in there to make sure people don't die on the job from extreme heat.

I really hope that the minister will talk with the workers' action network. I met with them today, and I was blown away by the stories they shared of people who are really treated badly. I worked with a lot of immigrants over the years; I was a settlement worker for seven years. I know the member for York South—Weston—we know that it's folks who don't speak English as a first language who are most vulnerable to these egregious abuses from employers trying to take advantage of newcomers. Newcomers struggle a lot to pay the bills and find access. I know there are immigrants in all our communities—in Toronto, in Ottawa, in Thunder Bay—who are vulnerable because they have low literacy, English as a second language, they're newcomers, or they face disabilities. So it is the people here whose wages are getting stolen who have the least power.

Imagine you didn't get paid today. Imagine all of us—we should all give up our pay for one day in the spirit of stolen wages—give up our pay for one day. We are people of power who can speak up for that, but if we all gave up our pay for one day and put that forward to people who get their wages stolen and have no voice—I met a lady, and she was a newcomer. She said, "I have to tell you that this is what my employer is like: He steals from my wages all the time. He's not paying me for training. He doesn't pay for all my stuff, but you can't say anything." I'm like, "I can't do anything about it if I can't say anything about it." But she said, "No. I'm worried I'll lose my job and then I'll have nothing. I would rather have 30% of my wages

stolen than you speak up and I lose my job, and I have nothing.”

So even though her wages are being stolen, even though she felt compelled to come to me and tell me what this employer was doing—and you know what? Dutchie’s, they’ve been doing this for 10 years and they’re still doing it. They’re opening up a new branch in Brantford–Brant, and I hope that nobody from this government goes to cut that ribbon, because they owe hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars to people who are owed wages.

If we’re going to evict people because they haven’t paid their rent in seven days, we need to fight just as much to make sure that those folks get paid on time and on budget for the wages that they’re owed from their employer. It is unacceptable to do it any other way. We have to stand for every Ontarian.

Thank you to the workers’ action network and the Waterloo Region Community Legal Services, which really works with the lowest wage and most vulnerable people. I appreciate the work you do every day, and I hope that the Minister of Labour will reach out to these legal clinics, that they’ll reach out to the workers’ action network and really hear what’s going on from the perspective of vulnerable workers who earn very low wages, because we can prevent a lot of health care issues, we can prevent a lot of poverty and homelessness, and we can help put food in people’s bellies if they can get paid the wages they’re owed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresce): Further debate?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: It is a privilege to rise in the House today to support Bill 30, the Working for Workers Seven Act, 2025, alongside the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. I want to commend the minister for his ongoing leadership and steadfast commitment to Ontario’s workers. I also extend my appreciation to the Premier for consistently supporting legislation that puts workers first and strengthens our economy.

This government is proving once again that we are protecting Ontario by working for workers and building a province where opportunity is accessible and people are protected and empowered in the workplace. The minister has outlined the key measures we are proposing to protect Ontario workers, key themes of the proposed bill.

I would now like to highlight additional measures we are putting forward to fight worker abuse and to continue supporting the skilled trades. I will start with what we are proposing to fight worker abuse.

Speaker, one of the cornerstones of a strong and fair labour system is accountability. That’s why we are proposing measures to strengthen our workplace safety and insurance system by enhancing enforcement under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. These amendments would target the few bad-actor employers who suppress claims or who make false or misleading statements or representations to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, WSIB, about injured workers’ claims or evade paying premiums. They are a small segment of the province’s otherwise law-abiding business community, but they undermine the system and make it unfair for everyone else, including the hard-working Ontarians that rely on and

deserve WSIB support when ill or injured. The time of avoiding paying your fair share or falsifying records is over. This ends now.

This bill proposes new, stronger enforcement to crack down on bad actors and ensure claims are respected: a new offence for non-payment of premiums, enabling our courts to issue restitution orders to recover unpaid premiums so everyone is supporting a system that protects workers; we would increase maximum fines for corporations convicted of two or more counts of the same offence in the same proceeding from \$500,000 to \$750,000; new administrative penalties for failing to keep accurate payroll records and for making false or misleading statements about injured workers’ claims—fake, misleading statements only slow down our system and prevent workers from getting the help they need.

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These changes create new administrative penalties and offences for non-compliance, enabling the WSIB to send a clear message: Employers must play by the rules. We will not tolerate abuse, exploitation or fraud in Ontario’s workplaces. The majority of employers contribute their fair share to the system that protects us all, and we will ensure the few bad actors follow.

We are also taking concrete steps to help protect job seekers from fraud. In 2024, job fraud cost Canadians over \$47 million, nearly \$15 million of that is in Ontario alone. This is unacceptable. These scams don’t just steal money, they steal hope, time and opportunity—impacting youth and newcomers disproportionately. That’s why we are proposing a new requirement that job posting platforms must have a mechanism or procedure in place for users to report fraudulent, publicly advertised job postings to the platform and a written policy on how these platforms will address such fraudulent postings. The reporting mechanism or procedure will have to be displayed, and the policy will have to be posted clearly on the job posting platform. This measure will foster a safer environment for job seekers, restore a sense of trust for those entering the job market for the first time and help reduce identity theft and financial scams. Our proposal will help ensure job seekers are not left vulnerable. This is about protecting Ontario workers.

Additionally, we are launching a consultation on employer access to electronic monitoring data to protect employee privacy. As digital surveillance tools become more common in the workplace, we need to ensure employee privacy keeps pace with technology. This initiative will explore what type of data employers can access, whether new restrictions or definitions are needed and how we can better protect employee rights in a modern, tech-driven workplace.

We want to ensure that workers’ privacy is respected, that data is handled responsibly and that transparency is the norm, not the exception because in an ever-increasing digital world, Ontario workers deserve our protection. This work will guide the development of future policies and ensure Ontario remains a leader in upholding workplace dignity and fairness.

I would like to share the rest of the time with my colleague. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'm going to talk a little bit about instances of the government punching down because I feel that this is something that is happening a lot in this Legislature.

We've had, actually, nine bills about workers. The first one was Bill 124, which took away collective bargaining rights and repressed wages for health care workers, for teachers—for many, many people. And then there was Bill 28, which tried to use the "notwithstanding" clause to take away the rights of the least well-paid people in the education system.

We heard this morning the Premier threatening a vindictive investigation into an organization that, frankly, found a way to make their voices heard because the government has decided not to have public hearings. It's interesting that the government can abuse its power, frankly, by using time allocation and refusing to have public hearings and then threaten those who find a way to actually express what they could express at a public hearing were one to take place.

Also, speaking of punching down, we heard the labour minister—was it earlier this week? What day is it today? Wednesday. It must have been last week.

Interjection: It's Tuesday.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: It's only Tuesday, so it must have been last week.

We heard the labour minister talk about the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. We know that workers have been outside holding signs for almost two weeks now and that these workers have been waiting three months, six months, over a year to have their applications processed. They paid their \$1,500, and yet nothing is happening. Their work visas have run out. They can't feed themselves. They can't feed their families. They are stuck in limbo, very afraid.

Then the minister says that he's going to withdraw the entire program—2,681 applicants—because there's so much fraud in the system. So in one fell swoop, not only does he remove the program, but he attacks these workers and names them as guilty of fraud.

The Premier tried a different tack yesterday—I believe it was yesterday; maybe it was this morning. I think it was yesterday. Time blurs together here—by saying that he loves these workers, he knows they're doing important work, they're working with employers who really want them but that this is all the federal government's fault because the federal government cut the number of immigrants and visas.

We need to be absolutely clear. First of all, the federal government has restored most of those places, and they will be available in January. Secondly, I will say that the ministry failed to hire enough people to actually process those invitations. Those people deserve to have their applications examined one at a time and not simply thrown out. Third, every other province has asked the federal government for visa extensions, except for Ontario and

PEI. Why? In other words, the minister and the Premier could solve this problem immediately. They could do it tomorrow if they chose to.

Frankly, I don't know why anyone coming from another country would trust Canada, given what is happening to those workers whose lives have been shattered. You do everything right, you make your application, you pay your money and then you wait far longer than it was supposed to take, and then the government pulls the rug out from under you and says, "You're all fraudulent." That is a terrible thing to do to anyone.

I have some specific suggestions because in northwestern Ontario, a great deal of lobbying has taken place to have an allotment, a certain number of Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program applicants in our area. In fact, we had asked for as many as 3,000.

What they ask for is:

- (1) Hire sufficient staff and process those applications.
- (2) Get those work permits extended to take the pressure off.

(3) Establish rural and northern allocations.

(4) If the administrative capacity is not here in the Ministry of Labour, then consider providing the funding to create the administrative capacity in local communities, because nobody is denying that fraud does take place in this program, but at the local level, it's much easier to actually go, "Oh, yes. I see this company has borrowed this business' name. It's not actually a legitimate company, so we're going to weed them out." It's easier to do at the local level than from here in Toronto.

That is a suggestion coming from leaders in northwestern Ontario.

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And, I'll repeat, establish rural and northern allocations; release funding so that local communities can pay for the administrative capacity to process applications; and, certainly, do not end the program. We owe it to people—those people who have been working here now for several years—to treat them with respect and honesty.

I also had the opportunity on Saturday to visit a group of workers in Brampton—truck drivers. Now, people in this Legislature will know that I have lobbied very hard to make sure that all commercial truck drivers receive the training that they actually pay for. We know that in many cases that training is not happening. But what we also know is that not only those new workers, but workers in that industry who have been here for 10 years, 15 years, 20 years are all experiencing the same problem, and that is wage theft—\$80 million in stolen wages, that we know of.

We also know that these drivers—much like PSWs who are in home care, much like gig workers—are only paid for a certain amount of mileage when the truck is moving. So, if you're stuck in a snowstorm, you're not paid; if you're stuck at the border, you're not paid; loading and unloading the truck, you're not paid. You can start to appreciate why a driver would push themselves past their limit if that's the only time that they're being paid. So that is a very serious issue, and the fact that their wages are not

being paid in many, many cases, again, creates crises in peoples' lives.

I spoke to one person in particular—actually, he addressed the town hall. He's owed \$10,000 in wages. He applied through the—what would it be? I wrote down the labour code, but it would be whoever adjudicates conflicts in labour, and it took a year to have his application taken up. It's now been three years, and that money still hasn't been returned. What that tells me—and it's so ubiquitous in this industry and we also hear it in many other industries—is that the staff isn't there or the commitment isn't there within the Ministry of Labour to actually address these crimes against these workers. It shouldn't be happening.

And again, frankly, we're talking about racialized workers. We're talking about the workers who are standing out front every single day, saying, "We did everything right, why are you rejecting us?" And I see that with the truck drivers in Brampton, who are largely racialized workers, they are having their wages stolen and there's nobody who has their backs—certainly no one in government who has their backs. How is it that there's \$80 million in stolen wages, and there is nobody doing anything about it? That is a very serious issue.

The other thing that I learned from the drivers is that their wages keep going down. They're now down to about \$17, \$18 an hour. It used to be a well-paying job, but what is happening is that companies—now, we also know that these companies, whenever they get caught, they just shut down, and they open up another one under another number a week later. So I have read in Ontario Trucking Association journals that actually, as many as 80% of trucking companies have never had an inspection.

We also know the trucking schools—that there are over 700 sites of trade schools across Ontario, and the last time we checked there were only eight inspectors to look and see whether appropriate training was taking place at all of those sites—pretty thin enforcement. You can have lots of great laws, but when there's no enforcement it doesn't matter, and if people know that there's no enforcement, then the flagrant abuses continue.

So why are wages going down for truck drivers? Well, because there's nobody who has their backs and so companies compete against each other and keep pushing those wages down, so it becomes more and more difficult to actually support a family on those wages. That's assuming that they actually get the wages that they're entitled to.

Now, today we had the opportunity—in my question, I asked the Minister of Labour if he supported changing the law so that workers would still have WSIB coverage if they're working up to or beyond the age of 65. We know that many, many people are working beyond that age and either want to or need to work. I was happy to hear him say yes. So I'm very hopeful that he will consult with the many organizations that were here today and get that into the next Working for Workers bill.

That said, there are enormous problems with WSIB, and, unfortunately, sometimes I think—I'm going to call it punching down again. What we have seen are many,

many workers—first of all, we know that 79 out of every 100 WSIB claims that come to the WSIB appeals tribunal are overturned entirely or in part. What that means is that 79% of claims are being turned down the first time, and then once it gets to the appeal stage, they're actually being overturned in favour of the worker. But what has that worker been put through in the meantime? It's six months, a year, whatever, no income, and the suggestion that whatever happened to them wasn't valid, or, "You're just lying," "Whatever, you're malingering." And then when they finally get to the appeals process, they get that validation, but the mental health consequences are quite significant.

We also know that injured workers lose their families. We heard a story from one of my colleagues earlier about that. They lose their families. They lose their homes because they don't have the money anymore to pay for them. At the same time, we have workers—a colleague, a worker I know in Thunder Bay, who had a serious back injury had to fight the WSIB for 10 years before he finally got his payment. Well, he got back payment, but he lost everything he owned in the process. He lost his home, he lost his business investments, he lost all of his savings, and he wound up living on the street. No worker should have to go through that, and then living on ODSP, which, as we know, will not put a roof over anyone's head.

So when we see billions of dollars being sent to large corporations, largely, and a few smaller ones and know that workers are not receiving the support that they should be getting, and that they're really being tortured by constant denials that are overturned, sometimes with considerable legal help, then there's something really wrong in the priorities of the government. We see the Minister of Economic Development actually bragging about how many billions of dollars they're giving away.

Interjection.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Oh, I'm banging the desk. Okay, thank you. Whatever it is, yes. I'll try to keep my hands off the desk too, keep them behind my back maybe.

It's a problem when vast sums of money—and frankly we've seen that every time there's a big payout to corporations from the WSIB—well, most of the time—it's right before an election. So it seems to line up in a timely way to bring Conservative donation dollars into the party, so that's very disturbing. And then of course, recently, another couple of billion dollars have been passed over—and, I will say, taken directly from injured workers—and put into the pockets of employers. It's all so clear who this government represents.

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When the government does these Working for Workers bills, I have to ask myself—this is very performative, okay? We have this thing where we're all, "We support workers. We love workers," and yet, they were happy to take billions of dollars that are supposed to be dedicated to supporting workers at the most difficult time in their lives and giving it away to corporations.

I'm going to need my glasses to see this one thing. One of the members talked about the importance of players

abiding by the rules. We have something called the experience rating. Initially, the WSIB was designed to be a collective liability, and so everybody paid in and there was no incentive to hide any injuries that took place in your business. But with the experience rating, there's very much an incentive to repress those claims, because the fewer claims you have, the more money you get back. Quid pro quo: repress the claims; you get more money.

So when the minister says that injury claims are down, I say let's check the data. Let's find another way to check the data, because I want to know how many of those claims were actually repressed. Maybe they weren't; maybe they were—we don't know—but it's a risky claim for the minister to make without that data.

I can tell you that injured workers really struggle with that reality, to see money disappearing from a fund from premiums that are collected to support those workers. I think that that is a very clear demonstration of the government's priorities. That is not workers; it is funding their donors.

I think I'm getting close to the end of what I wanted to say. I think I have one more thing I'd like to touch on. An article came out this week talking about extreme heat at Grenville Castings, which was owned by Magna. I believe that the temperatures were over 60 degrees centigrade. The HR person who heard that people were getting sicker and sicker just said, "Go home. It's too hot outside. It's 60 degrees in front of this blast furnace. You need to go home"—that HR employee was subsequently fired and told that she was being extreme and so on. I cannot imagine working under those conditions.

But the other piece of it is that the Ministry of Labour sent in inspectors. They sent in a lot of people, and there were 125 charges brought forward about heat. Now, the minister then said, "We have robust protections." No, we do not have robust protections. And what was the fine? It was \$50,000, but the maximum fine was \$500,000. How many breaches of workplace safety—125—do you have to have before you deserve the maximum fine? So even though the fines have gone up, if the fines are never levied, then it's just paper. They're just numbers and they're meaningless.

I'm going to end my talk there. I know that my colleagues still have more to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Today I'm rising to speak to Bill 30, the Working for Workers Seven Act. Before anything else, I want to say this: When workers are worried about layoffs, when families are feeling the cost-of-living squeeze and when people are looking for stability and fairness, they're not looking for slogans. They are looking for honesty, accountability and a government they can trust to do the right thing.

Interjection.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you very much.

My job is to look beyond the title of the bill and ask a simple question: Does this legislation actually serve workers, or does it serve the government first? Bill 30 does have some good pieces. It also has some real problems, and we

think workers deserve to hear both. So let me start with what we genuinely welcome: As we heard from the minister earlier, first in Canada requiring automatic external defibrillators on large construction sites or sites of over 20 workers or more. This will save lives. That's not spin. That's not talking points. That is a simple reality. Families should not lose a loved one because life-saving equipment isn't available. Workers have been calling for this for years, and I'm really glad to see it in legislation.

We also support stronger protections against fake job postings. Anyone who has ever talked to a newcomer who spent weeks applying to a job that turned out to be a scam knows how devastating that that can be. People lose money, they lose hope and they lose trust in the system. Anything that cuts down on that exploitation is a good thing.

Job-seeking leave during mass layoffs is also sensible. When someone is laid off, their life is turned completely upside down. They need time to search for work. They need to meet with training providers or just to regroup and figure out what they want to do next with their life. This is a small step, but it really recognizes a real human need.

And yes, we also support expanding skilled trades training. We have a shortage, and we need more training centres, more mobile units, more opportunities. Workers want good jobs, and our economy absolutely depends on them.

But Speaker, while there are good measures in this bill, there are also parts that should worry anyone who cares about transparency and fair decision-making, because once again the government can't resist just slipping in more power to the hands of the ministers and cabinet, with fewer checks and that much less local input.

The first red flag is schedules 1 and 3. These changes allow cabinet to override municipal planning authority whenever the province deems a project to be related to training or skills development. Let's be real: If the government wants to define something as a training project, it will, and once that label is applied, local voices will be shut out.

This government has a long record of bulldozing municipal authority. We saw it with Bill 23. We saw it with the greenbelt, Bill 30. Now follows that same pattern—a friendly title on the front and more centralized control on the inside. Ontarians deserve a government that works with communities, not around them.

The second concern is the extension of layoffs to 78 weeks, nearly a year and a half. Imagine telling a worker, who has bills to pay, kids to raise, a life to plan, that they need to wait for 18 months to know whether they still have a job. That isn't compassion. That's limbo, and it's uncertainty that's dressed up as flexibility. Yes, the government says it is meant to help during tough economic times, but in practice it really can leave workers suspended for far longer than is fair. Nobody likes that kind of uncertainty in their life, or not knowing which end is up. People really, really want clarity. Everybody wants that. They deserve stability, not endless waiting.

Another issue is the expansion of administrative monetary penalties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Strong enforcement is really important, but when you give inspectors significant new powers, there must also be transparency, consistency and clear reporting. This government loves that headline of cracking down. It's really popular, isn't it? But accountability requires showing the public just how those decisions are made and whether the enforcement is fair.

The immigration changes may be the most troubling from an ethics standpoint. The minister gains sweeping power to create or shut down immigration streams with no oversight, demand in-person interviews and return applications with little transparency. This isn't how you build a fair and trusted immigration system, and it's not how you treat people who are making a life-changing decision to come to Ontario. They deserve a really clear and predictable, accountable process, not one built on unchecked ministerial decision.

Speaker, there is a pattern here. Every time the government introduces a bill with a friendly title, there is that second layer. This is a layer where the cabinet gets more control, a layer where oversight gets that much weaker and a layer where decisions move from public debate to behind-the-scenes regulation.

1700

“Working for workers” should not mean “working around everyone else.”

Ontario Liberals will support the measures that improve safety, protect job seekers and help workers through layoffs, but we won’t stop calling out on the pieces of this bill that weaken accountability and sideline communities.

Workers do deserve safe workplaces, fair processes and a government that respects transparency. They also deserve a government that does not use their needs as a cover for consolidating more power.

Bill 30 does get some things right, but it gets some things wrong. It’s our job to make sure that Ontarians see both those sides.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresce): Further debate?

MPP Mohamed Firin: I’m pleased to rise today in support of Bill 30, the Working for Workers Seven Act, legislation that strengthens Ontario’s future by strengthening its workers.

Today, I’ll focus on four pillars central to this bill and central to Ontario’s long-term economic success: supporting apprentices, expanding Trades and Tech Trucks, streamlining Skills Development Fund training centre approvals and making AEDs mandatory on major construction sites. These measures work together to create a province where more young people enter the trades, more communities have access to hands-on training, more training centres are built faster and workers go home safely at the end of the day.

This bill is about building the workforce that Ontario needs—not in 10 or 20 years, but right now. Ontario faces a generational challenge: One in three skilled trades workers are expected to retire within the decade. At the same time, we’re building the most ambitious infrastructure plan in

Ontario’s history—highways, hospitals, transit, housing and clean energy.

To meet this demand, we must grow our apprenticeship pipeline and remove barriers keeping young people from high-demand, well-paying careers.

Our objectives are clear:

—make the skilled trades a first choice for Ontario’s youth and not a last resort;

—build a workforce that reflects Ontario’s diversity and talent;

—bring more apprentices onto our nation building infrastructure projects; and

—ensure every young person sees the skilled trades as a direct path to a good career and a bigger paycheque.

These measures support thousands of young Ontarians exploring opportunities in the trades every year and help employers fill critical labour gaps.

Not every school has a shop class and not every community has a nearby training centre, but every student, no matter where they live, deserves the chance to explore a good-paying career in the skilled trades. That’s why our government is increasing the skilled-trades-tech-truck fleet, supported by a \$2.6-million investment. These trucks are mobile hubs equipped with industry grade tools, simulators, VR equipment, automotive stations and hands-on activities from heavy equipment to hairstyling. By expanding this fleet, the trucks aim to reach students in rural and northern communities, youth in summer camps and fairs, and communities without access to shop spaces.

These trucks spark curiosity, build confidence and introduce young people to opportunities they may have never considered. A student stepping into one of these mobile classrooms today may become the electrician who powers a hospital, the welder who builds a highway or the mechanic who keeps Ontario’s supply chain moving.

Bill 30 supports this expansion by strengthening the skilled trades system around it, creating a pipeline that moves students from exploration to apprenticeship to meaningful, well-paid work.

Speaker, demand for skilled trades training is exploding. Communities across Ontario are asking for more modern, purpose-built training centres to support apprentices and upskill workers. Currently, these training centres—funded through the Skills Development Fund capital stream—often face long, unpredictable approval timelines that slow construction. Bill 30 proposes streamlining permitting for SDF-funded training centres to reduce delays, eliminate unnecessary duplication and accelerate timelines for getting shovels in the ground. This means training centres can expand faster, workers can access skills sooner and employers can hire more apprentices much more quickly.

Ontario’s labour needs are simply too urgent to let bureaucracy slow down opportunities for workers.

Faster permitting means more welders, more millwrights, more heavy equipment operators, more electricians, more carpenters, more early childhood educators, and more health care workers trained right here in Ontario.

Our message is clear: When a community is ready to build training capacity, the government is ready to move just as fast.

Speaker, protecting workers begins with protecting lives and their well-being on the job site. Construction is physically demanding, often high-stress work. The numbers tell a sobering story: Between 2018 and 2023, 184 cardiac events were recorded during inspections, with over 15% happening on construction sites. Without immediate intervention, these events are often fatal.

Bill 30 proposes a clear and targeted safety measure: All construction projects with 20-plus workers and lasting three months or more will be mandated to have an AED on-site, and at least one trained responder must be available. This requirement will save lives, reduce emergency response time, and give workers peace of mind that their workplace is prepared for emergencies. To support contractors, this bill allows WSIB to reimburse eligible employers for purchasing an AED, reducing the financial burden while protecting workers. An AED is life-saving equipment, and with this bill, we put safety above everything else.

Speaker, apprentices, tech trucks, training centres, and AEDs are not separate initiatives; they are part of a modern, integrated workforce strategy. Apprentices need accessible training pathways. Tech trucks inspire the next generation to pursue the trades. Streamlining permitting ensures that infrastructure to train them gets built faster. AEDs ensure the job sites they step on are safer. Together, these pillars form the backbone of a labour strategy that builds a safer Ontario, builds a skilled pipeline to help build Ontario, and builds a more competitive Ontario.

In conclusion, Bill 30 is a targeted, pro-worker, pro-safety, pro-training package. It supports apprentices, expands access to trades exploration, accelerates construction of new training centres, and introduces life-saving workplace safety requirements. These measures ensure that the workers building Ontario's future—from housing to highways to hospitals—have the training they need, the opportunities they deserve, and the safety protections they can rely on.

I urge all members to support Bill 30 and stand with Ontario workers. Let us continue to build a province where every apprentice, every tradesperson, every worker can thrive, contribute and succeed. Let us keep working for workers and keep building up Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to focus for a few minutes on schedule 4 of the bill. Basically, it will mandate that any construction work site where there are more than 20 construction workers will have to have an automatic external defibrillator, better known as an AED.

I want to talk about AEDs because this is a topic we actually talked about in this House in 2020. Myself and the MPP Robin Martin tabled, on the same day—we tabled a bill asking for the government to let the 911 dispatchers know where the AEDs were located in the geographical areas that they serve. We all know that for every minute

you wait for an AED, 10% of the people who need it will die, so time is of the essence. We tabled a bill; it actually made it to third reading. It received royal assent in December 2020.

We are now November 25, 2025, and the spreadsheet—the website so that a dispatcher knows where AEDs are located—is still not up and running. How could that be?

When the government decided to spend \$1.4 billion to put booze into the grocery store—at the same time, the website is up and running. You can go on the website and find everywhere that sells booze, no problem. When it comes to telling people where the AEDs are located, they still haven't done it.

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We know that every single week somebody dies—not because there wasn't an AED, but because the people did not know where the automatic external defibrillator was located. The 911 dispatch is on the phone. They will help you do cardiovascular resuscitation. They will help you do CPR. They will help you, over the phone, the best they can. But we all know that for every minute that you wait for the AED to come with the EMS people, 10% of the people will die.

Why is it that this government—they recognize how important it is. They put it in a bill and say that every construction work site with 20 workers or more will have to have an AED. They will help pay for it. They will help train people to use AEDs. But do you know what? When you've found somebody dead, it's really, really difficult to remember, "Oh, yes, it's behind the door when you go to the shower, on the way down to"—no, nobody remembers that. You dial 911 and you say, "I need help right now." The operator will tell you, "Go down behind the door. The AED is right there"—just like the website they put for the booze. But five years later, it is not available, and many, many lives have been lost because of it.

There are lots of businesses that have AEDs or are willing to make them available. Let's move on with this. We've waited long enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to Working for Workers—7, I think. Normally, seven is a lucky number. But the Working for Workers acts just don't actually work for workers.

I do want to start out on a positive note, because my colleague from Nickel Belt—I remembered that—mentioned the bill on defibrillators, which I had, as well. I want to give some credit to the House leader while he's not here, so he won't hear it—oh, I withdraw. He doesn't need to be here. That was a total unforced error. It was not intentional. I wanted to say something nice about him: He actually decided to travel the bill, after it was asked of him, and to put the bill to committee, and we passed the bill. That was great. We all had the same bill. It doesn't matter who gets credit—whether Robin's name was on it or my name or the member from Nickel Belt's. It got done.

There was a long delay in getting the registrar, which we have now, and there's still a delay to actually establish

the registry, which is still really important. I encourage the government to do that, because that will affect the thing that they're trying to do in this bill here—because it's a good thing.

So I want to start by saying this piece in this bill is a good thing, and it's important that we do it.

But it's all downhill from here. It's about, actually, what's not in the bill and the acts that are amended here—like the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. They're going to go after people who are delinquent employers.

We've had these huge surpluses here in Ontario with WSIB. The insurance is for the employer and for the worker. In a sense, it has protected employers from lawsuits. That's one of the reasons why they did it back there at the turn of the 20th century. But all of these surpluses are going to the employer, and we're not changing the coverage that actually exists for the workers. We do this because it's the right thing to do, and it's what we would expect—that we would all be protected in our workplace; that if for some reason we were injured, we would be able to feed our family, house our family, do the things that families need to do for each other.

I'm going to go back—I've said this I don't know how many times. I've introduced a bill, which is WSIB coverage for workers in residential care facilities—and I've talked to four ministers about how important it is. The thing is, people doing similar work with similar risks in similar places aren't being covered, simply because their employer is not the province of Ontario and is not a schedule 1 employer. What that means is, PSWs who work in retirement homes or something that's not run by or paid for by the provincial government are not covered by WSIB. Developmental service workers—if you're working in a provincially paid facility, like a children's treatment centre, yes, but if you're working in a group home that's funded, that's a transfer payment agency, you're not covered. So all these workers who care for the people we care for most are doing the same work as others but not getting coverage. It's just not fair. We've got the money to do it. I don't think it's that big a cost. And the reason that it's important is, WSIB covers your income loss, not just the income from the one job you have—many of these workers have two jobs at least, maybe three jobs. I've heard words of assurance from every minister—including the current minister—and I take them at their word, but we just can't seem to get it done. I've introduced the bill six times, debated it twice. I've got a ballot date in March, and we're going to be debating it again, unless something changes. It's not right. It's not fair. Making that change would actually work for workers.

Today, for those of us who were able to go and see the injured workers who are here at Queen's Park—and I know a number of my colleagues were there to meet and listen to the stories about what they have to go through. When you turn age 65, what happens to you—basically, that often you're cut off and you don't have an income to support yourself. They don't pay your pension while you're on WSIB, and they don't pay your CPP. They give,

I think, 5%, which was 10% before, because it got cut in half by Mike Harris—not the one who's here, but his dad. So that's not really protecting people. You had to hear their stories, and I encouraged them to go and talk to all members about what their stories are, about how much difficulty they had supporting their families.

Here's the reality: I'm 66. I plan to keep working. Mandatory retirement ended, probably, well before I was even thinking about retiring—and I'm not even really thinking about it right now, so I don't know why I said that. I know you all want me to retire—or there's a few of you that do. It's not happening any time soon, unfortunately.

BC and Alberta account for this by changing their legislation and making it more permissive and recognizing the fact that some people have to keep working. Some people choose to keep working. Some, when they have to do it to support themselves and their families—and we know that retirement incomes are not enough across this country and there are not always great pension plans. So what I would like to see in this bill that really would have worked for workers is—let's look at that. Let's change that. Let's cover pensions better than we are right now at WSIB. Let's recognize the fact that you don't have to retire at 65 and you don't become a non-person or person who's not eligible anymore. Take a look at what they're doing in Alberta and BC—that works for workers. Those are the things that work for workers.

Using the surplus of WSIB and putting it all on one side—putting it all over here, instead of trying to have some balance, or at least some over here. Even if you're going to stick a lot of it there, stick some of it here.

That makes an important change in people's lives. That protects people.

WSIB, it's become a partisan thing here, but we all, at one point, were involved in WSIB and trying to make it better—every party. I think it was likely a Conservative government back at the turn of the century, in the 20th century, that instituted this, that brought it on. It's the right thing to do. I mean, there's all sorts of other jurisdictions around the world that do it. It just makes sense, right? It has to do with productivity; it has to do with the right thing to do so that people will not be impoverished if they get hurt at work through no fault of their own. That's what I would have liked to have seen in the bill.

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I was surprised that I saw some remarks with regard to the Skills Development Fund—I think it's schedule 6 in the Planning Act. I didn't think this government really wanted to talk that much about the Skills Development Fund or give me the opportunity to talk about it more than I already have, although it's pretty hard not to.

I don't know why they had to do this. Why did they have to change the Planning Act? Why wouldn't they just declare it a special economic zone, you know those places in Bill 5 that allow the government to do whatever it wants, wherever it wants, whenever it wants, right? It's just kind of, "We can suspend all the rules." I'm sure the Premier loves it because he likes to make it up as he goes along.

That's essentially what schedule 6 is: "Don't worry about the laws over here. Just go ahead and do that. It's all okay. And by the way, can you endorse me? Thank you." So here we go.

It does authorize the cabinet to restrict or override city powers related to training or skills development undertakings, and it allows for a regulation-based exemption for such projects from planning controls under the act. Maybe the special economic zones would not have worked as well, as specifically, and maybe this offers some more protections, but not a lot. The endorsement required is not written into the bill, but I think it's unspoken: If we do something for you, you do something for me. That's not the way it should work in here.

I'd like to talk about the Skills Development Fund for the last five minutes and 42 seconds. I know we talked about it a lot. I think I've asked nearly a hundred questions of the Premier—a hundred questions, so that's four weeks and a bit, not including late shows, of talking about skills development. And there's just so much stuff. I got a couple of answers today, but I think I'm at about 4% for getting a response. Nobody seems to be able to answer the question as to why a company that was under a forensic audit, that was later referred to the OPP, who are now investigating, continues to get tens of millions of dollars from the government.

I learned from being in government and having colleagues who worked in finance and at the Treasury Board that the audit function isn't with the ministry of training, colleges and universities. It's controlled by the Treasury Board, so the Treasury Board does the audit. They're responsible for the audits; it's all at the Treasury Board. And then the forensic audit is also the Treasury Board. You would think, or I know what the protocol is: Once you get through an audit, you go to a forensic audit; you go to a forensic audit, and you identify that there's a genuine, deep concern.

It's the Treasury Board's responsibility to alert cabinet office and the Premier's office, to alert the finance ministry and the finance minister and the relevant ministers involved that we have a problem and it's a big red flag: "Be very careful of your dealings with these people; put a pause on."

I've asked about six questions about that—not a hundred, but about six questions directly about that with the President of the Treasury Board available, but I haven't even gotten a response or even a glance, to be honest. It's just a simple question. What I want to know is, who knew what when, and what was the reason that Keel Digital Solutions got millions and millions and millions of dollars while it was under a forensic audit, continued to get it? Was it that somebody said, "Don't worry about that?" Was it a politician? I wouldn't like to think that it would be anybody that would do that, but there's no other discernible reason. It could be incompetence, it could be looking the other way, or it could be deliberate. I think that's a fair question, and I haven't got an answer.

The other thing that really puzzles me is—we have a great college system here in Ontario. It was actually started and built by Bill Davis, a Progressive Conservative. It's a great thing. It's great for our young people; it gives them skills and gives them opportunity.

We've got this \$2.5-billion Skills Development Fund that we're giving to owners of strip clubs, that we're giving to bars and restaurants in downtown Toronto, that we're giving to dental brokerages and vet clinics and law firms whose principal happens to be the chair of Metrolinx. But you know what? This government fired 10,000 workers in Ontario colleges and hundreds and hundreds of courses and whole campuses.

There are some members on the other side who know that and they're making some noise right now. They should be upset. Don't talk to me; talk to your minister and talk to the Premier.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Talk to the Premier, okay?

They're allowing the college system to wither, to let students down, to let families down, to fire workers, the whole time the Minister of Labour is shovelling money out the door, no strings attached, to donors, to insiders and to endorsers. That's what's happening and everybody else wants to sit by and let it happen: "It doesn't matter. I'm not worried about my college. Keep shovelling that money out the door. Keep shovelling that money out the door. Don't worry. Everything's going to be okay."

In summary, because I only have 42 seconds left—

Hon. Laurie Scott: Just say thank you.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to say thank you, but that wouldn't be funny. I only thank you for giving me so much material to work with. I can't believe it. Every day there's another story. I can't say thank you because I don't think that would be fair to the people of Ontario.

What would be really nice, what would be great is for the Minister of Labour and the Premier and the President of the Treasury Board to open the books and release the scoring on skills development. Because, you guys, you all know you've got nothing to hide, right? So why wouldn't you do it? You've got nothing to hide—I don't think so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: Very limited time on this—my colleagues really want to speak on the labour bill, and because it's time-allocated, we have a very short amount of time to talk about it.

The two things I did want to talk about, though, is, outside our doors right now in the front of Queen's Park—and they have been here for several days—are members from the Ontario immigration nomination program. They're standing out there in the cold, in the rain, with umbrellas on, because they have been working in this province as skilled workers for more than three years and just two weeks ago on Friday, they were told that they are going to be deported.

One of the workers I met there works for Bell Canada, and it resonated with me because years ago I used to work for Bell Canada. We did very similar jobs. It's a technical

job; it takes a lot of skill to figure it out and get the training for it and understand how the phone system works. He told me he was hired at Bell Canada the day his daughter was born. So for two and a half years, he's been working here in Canada for a Canadian company.

Suddenly, the Conservative government has told them, "We don't need you anymore," and they're cancelled. There are thousands of these workers who aren't able to come to Toronto and line up every single day, but they want to be heard. They want to work, and we need them to work here. We need skilled workers here.

I have 40 seconds left on the clock, and so what I want to say in the last 40 seconds is that today many of us are wearing purple—I think all of our colleagues are wearing purple. It's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses were here to advocate on behalf of the people that they service. One of the things that came up in the conversation was how their funding has been flatlined for so long. I told them I had an opportunity to speak in the House, and I'd bring up the need. If we want to help people escaping domestic violence, we need to provide funding for these agencies so that their staff aren't forced to leave because they are not sure if

they're going to have a job next year or the year after that or the year after that.

Bring up their funding. Make it stable. Make it match with the cost of inflation. Let's protect the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate? I don't think there's any time left.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 29, 2025, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Piccini has moved third reading of Bill 30, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Orders of the day?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6 o'clock. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Report continues in volume B.

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
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Glover, Chris (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
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Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Oxford	
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Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
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Lennox, Robin (NDP)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
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McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Durham	
	Kanata—Carleton	

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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	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. 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, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente 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	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
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 des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
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	