

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 89A

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 89A

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Monday
25 September 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Lundi
25 septembre 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

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House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 September 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 septembre 2023

The House met at 1015.

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

Prières / Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to acknowledge that we are meeting on lands traditionally inhabited by Indigenous peoples. We pay our respects to the many Indigenous nations who have gathered here and who continue to gather here, including the Mississaugas of the Credit. Meegwetch.

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, I ask everyone to remain standing and join in the singing of the Canadian national anthem, followed by the royal anthem.

Singing of the national anthem / Chant de l'hymne national.

Singing of the royal anthem / Chant de l'hymne royal.

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

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR KITCHENER CENTRE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, during the adjournment, a vacancy occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Laura Mae Lindo as the member for the electoral district of Kitchener Centre, effective July 13, 2023. Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment the following documents were tabled:

—a report entitled Economic and Budget Outlook, Spring 2023, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario;

—a report entitled What Gets Measured Gets Managed: Ministries' Performance Measurement, Program Evaluation and Annual Reporting, from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario;

—the 2022-23 annual report from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario;

—the annual report of the review of expense claims covering the period April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, pursuant to the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario;

—the 2022-23 annual report from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario;

—a report entitled Expenditure Monitor 2022-23: Q4, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario;

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—a Special Report on Changes to the Greenbelt, from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario;

—a report concerning the Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario;

—a report entitled Lessons for the Long Term: Investigation into the Ministry of Long-Term Care's Oversight of Long-Term Care Homes through Inspection and Enforcement during the COVID-19 pandemic, from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario; and

—the final report concerning the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario.

TABLE CLERKS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to advise the House of some changes at the Table. I'm pleased to announce that, effective July 4, 2023, Valerie Quioc Lim has been appointed Deputy Clerk and executive director of the legislative services division.

Additionally, effective September 5, 2023, Meghan Stenson has assumed the role of Clerk of Procedural Services.

Please join me in congratulating Valerie and Meghan in their new roles and responsibilities.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Speaker, and welcome back to the Legislature. Over the summer, I had the opportunity to announce a plethora of investments that our government is making in my riding of Perth-Wellington:

—\$200,000 for local seniors programming;

—\$300,000 for palliative care;

—\$6.6 million for local hospital capital funding;

—\$3.4 million for local ERs and hospital bed capacity;

—\$188,000 for local events and festivals; and

—\$400,000 for our local police services.

This is all great news, but there is more. Since 2018, our government has secured \$25 billion in auto and EV investments and \$3 billion in life science investments. There have been 700,000 new jobs created, including 40,000

jobs in the manufacturing sector. In the skilled trades, apprenticeships are up 24%. Our students are entering the health care sector in droves. Over 4,300 students have registered in the Learn and Stay program.

Our government continues to make historic investments in health care. We are increasing land ambulance funding by 6% for our municipalities, to \$811 million in total. We are investing an additional \$51 million in the Dedicated Offload Nurses Program.

Our government will continue to focus on building a strong Ontario. When will the opposition get on board?

GREENBELT

Ms. Doly Begum: Good morning, everyone. I rise today to celebrate a momentous victory for the people of Ontario. Over the past weekend, my office organized a community call to action for the greenbelt, which turned into a beautiful celebration. This journey has been marked by grassroots organizing, passionate protests, petitioning, persistent questioning and thorough investigation. It has demonstrated the power of citizen engagement and an unwavering commitment to protect something so precious to us Ontarians.

I'm immensely proud of the tireless efforts of the countless individuals across the province who courageously stood up against the corruption that threatened our cherished greenbelt. This victory is a testament to the collective will of Ontarians who refused to back down.

It is also crucial to emphasize that the greenbelt land swap was never about solving the housing crisis. Instead, it exposed a lack of genuine commitment to addressing the pressing issues faced by Ontarians.

I want to extend my gratitude to the leader of Ontario's New Democrats, Marit Stiles, for her leadership and unwavering dedication to the cause and for calling for an independent investigation that uncovered the dishonesty and mockery perpetuated by Premier Ford's government.

I also commend the talented journalists who played—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnett): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary comments.

Ms. Doly Begum: I withdraw.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I also want to commend the talented journalists who played a vital role in this fight.

ONTARIO CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION GRANT

Mr. Lorne Coe: The government has provided the Durham Regional Police Service with \$200,000 to expand its video surveillance program to better protect communities like Whitby and other parts of the region from gun and gang violence.

The funding, through the Ontario Closed Circuit Television Grant program, can be used to replace outdated equipment, expand or enhance current technology, and install new or additional CCTV surveillance cameras in areas where gun and gang violence, illegal drug activity and human trafficking are prevalent.

Speaker, the Durham force is one of 24 police services across the province receiving funding, with more than \$2.8 million being allocated. Durham police service chief Peter Moreira had this to say about the grant, "We value the continued support and investments in the CCTV program. We have already seen the benefit of these cameras as both a deterrent and a crucial investigative tool in solving crime and addressing gun and gang violence."

Together with the Durham Regional Police Service, our government stands resolute in our fight against gun and gang violence, illegal drug activity and human trafficking, ensuring a safer and more secure future for all residents in the region of Durham.

FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Burch: Over the summer, I had the opportunity to visit and speak with many of the hard-working farmers across Niagara. They grow a wide variety of strawberries, grapes, cherries, peaches, apples, and much more.

However, they conveyed to me their deep concern for the future of this province's food security as Ontario loses 319 acres of farmland per day. From MZOs to planned highway expansions and greenbelt flip-flops, farmers' confidence in this government having their backs and protecting their land has been shattered. The farmers' right to farm is being put at risk.

Over 861,000 jobs in this province are dependant on the agri-food sector, which currently contributes over \$47 billion to Ontario's GDP. Just last week at the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo, farmers made clear that once this fertile land is paved over, developed and destroyed, it is lost forever. This would have catastrophic impacts for Ontarians as we would have to rely more on costly imports and supply chains.

It's my hope that this government will recognize the important role local farmers play in Ontario's food security and support the greenbelt restoration act.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'm grateful to advocate for the many hard-working men and women in Niagara West, who make things and make things happen. I'm proud to support risk-takers and visionaries; the entrepreneurs who see opportunity and seize it, creating good jobs for so many in the communities of Niagara West.

Speaker, I wish to share with the House two special success stories in the manufacturing and food processing sectors from my riding, both out of the town of Smithville in West Lincoln. In August, I was joined by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry in Smithville to congratulate the Vrugteveen family and leadership team at Niagara Pallet on a successful grant through the Forest Sector Investment and Innovation Program. Our government is investing \$1.8 million to help Niagara Pallet expand its production facility and install pallet-making equipment. This will increase the company's sales by 46% and create 30 new jobs.

Two weeks ago, I announced provincial funding through the Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund for Highland Ridge in Smithville. The growing meat-processing company is receiving up to \$1.7 million to increase processing capacity. This project will include construction of an 18,000-square-foot facility and installation of meat-processing equipment, including slicers, scales, metal detectors, smoke-house, grinders and mixers. Through the hard work of the de Jonge family and the Highland Ridge team, this new site will create over 20 new jobs for Niagara.

We are focused on restoring one of Ontario's historic strengths: our manufacturing sector. With investments like these, more good paying jobs in Niagara West are on the way.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Guy Bourgouin: Aujourd'hui est la journée franco-ontarienne, journée où nous hissons notre drapeau et où j'encourage tous mes collègues à s'adresser en français dans leur rôle législatif, comme je le ferai exclusivement toute la journée.

Je suis plus qu'heureux de faire reconnaître la fierté francophone à Queen's Park. Il faut aussi prendre cette occasion pour rappeler que nos droits acquis doivent être protégés par nos institutions provinciales.

Dans le contexte où nous avons une pénurie de main-d'œuvre qualifiée francophone dans notre système d'éducation; où plusieurs conseils scolaires servant des élèves francophones sont dans une situation financière précaire, augmentant les risques d'assimilation de la minorité francophone à la majorité anglophone; où le gouvernement retire le financement et refuse de financer un projet applaudi à travers le Canada, comme est celui de l'Université de Sudbury; où les services de santé en français sont de plus en plus rares, demandant des délais d'attente plus longs pour des soins et souvent un déplacement hors ville pour être soigné; où les coupures en santé font augmenter la demande pour des médecins de famille, qui est à son sommet, et que les petites communautés francophones du Nord se battent pour les mêmes ressources que les villes du sud de l'Ontario, chaque coupure et chaque décision de ne pas financer un projet qui apporte grand pour les francophones ontariens, c'est mettre en péril les droits acquis des communautés francophones de l'Ontario.

1030

Aujourd'hui et tous les jours, protégeons le droit constitutionnel de la minorité francophone de l'Ontario à avoir des services en français—

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the tireless and relentless work of two mothers who live in rural Carleton.

Cheri Nixon of Osgoode and Jennifer Bugden of Munster are among the many parents in rural Ottawa who have had the lives of their families—and their communities—turned

upside down because the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority was unable to secure school bus contracts for thousands of students living in suburban and rural Ottawa. Now, many families are facing difficult circumstances. They have a commute into the city of at least an hour for work, but they are left with no way to get their children to school.

I am proud of Cheri Nixon and Jennifer Bugden for wanting to do something about the problem. They organized Facebook groups, started petitions and spoke with class, dignity and passion at my community barbecue on Saturday, September 9. They have stepped up to become valuable leaders in the community, joining me in the fight to get this situation resolved. They met with Minister Lecce in a Zoom call to make him fully aware of what families in rural Ottawa are facing.

In addition, Jennifer has been engaging with the community to reopen Munster Elementary School, which was shut down by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board in 2015. The school's closure put a village full of children on school buses while a beautiful and well-maintained building has sat empty, with the exception of some weekly community events that take place on some evenings.

Mr. Speaker, every riding and every community needs people like Cheri Nixon and Jennifer Bugden. The heart and soul they have transcended the villages they live in. What they have both accomplished in a short time sets an example of dedication, determination and selflessness. Right now, they are inspiring everyone, including their—

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

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Stephen Blais: Abuse of power, the breach of public trust, the exchange of favours for personal or political gain: You may rightly be attributing these sentiments to the government's ongoing greenbelt corruption scandal, but, Mr. Speaker, this may be just the tip of the iceberg.

Ten days ago, I wrote the Auditor General of Ontario to investigate this government's unilateral decision to expand the city of Ottawa's urban boundary in 2022. Following a comprehensive review by the city, they added 1,200 hectares in 2020. This was done after extensive consultation and analysis with the public, with stakeholders and with experts.

A key factor in the city's analysis was the protection and preservation of high-quality farmland as dictated by the provincial policy statement. However, in November 2022, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing used his ministerial powers to override the city's process and add an additional 654 hectares to the boundary. One area of concern in particular, Mr. Speaker, was an expansion of 37 hectares in Orléans, land that was zoned agricultural resource by the city and protected from development.

According to media reporting, in August 2021, when the property was still designated as ag resource, it was purchased for \$12.7 million by the Verdi Alliance companies, a group of companies insinuated in the Integrity Commissioner's most recent report. Meanwhile, this group

donated over \$12,000 to the provincial Conservative Party in 2021 and 2022. Mysteriously, a year later, these—

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

BAIL REFORM

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It's great to be back in the Legislature. I hope everybody has had a wonderful summer. I know for myself it was full of meaningful community events and a chance for me to connect with my constituents and hear from them on what matters most to them. Over the last few months, I met with many people in Brampton East, and residents have had great conversations on various topics. However, the one that stood out was mostly in regard to the rising crime rates and the need for greater bail reform.

Speaker, in April of this year, our government announced a \$112-million investment towards the development of violent-crime bail teams, which included funding to upgrade technology, provide prosecutors with additional resources for complex bail hearings and bolster support for the OPP repeat offender parole enforcement squad.

Despite our government's great work thus far, we collectively need to do more. As parliamentarians are back in session across the country, I urge our federal members to make the necessary changes and push forward with meaningful bail reform. It's important that all governments work together to make Ontario a safe place for all residents to live, work and play.

Speaker, our government and our premier will always work hard to keep Ontarians safe, healthy and prosperous. I look forward to our government's continued efforts to urge the federal government to collaboratively achieve strong and meaningful bail reform.

ARALYN SMITH

NATALIE DODD

ELLA SHELTON

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to congratulate three exceptional athletes who made big news in Oxford over the summer.

First, I would like to congratulate two students at Woodstock Collegiate, Aralyn Smith and Natalie Dodd, who were both on Team Canada at the 16th World Dragon Boat Racing Championships. Aralyn is from Embro and has competed in world championships since she was 12. Natalie is from a farm just outside of Hickson and has been interested in dragon boating since she was nine. They both did an amazing job, coming home with three gold and five silver medals. Team Canada also won the world championship, winning 52 gold medals, the most medals overall.

I would also like to congratulate Folden's native Ella Shelton as well, who will be leaving Oxford for the Big Apple after being drafted on the New York team of the new Professional Women's Hockey League. Previously, Ella played in the NCAA for Clarkson University, was

part of two Canadian world championship teams and won a gold medal in the 2022 Winter Olympics. Ella was New York's first pick in the draft, and she was drafted fourth overall.

Congratulations again to these three amazing athletes. Your hard work and perseverance has paid off. You are an inspiration to the young girls in Oxford who dream to compete in professional sports one day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to inform the House that we have a former member in the House, Kathryn McGarry, who was the member for Cambridge in the 41st provincial Parliament. Welcome back, Kathryn.

And I'm pleased to inform the House that we have with us in the Speaker's Gallery today a delegation from the House committee on international trade of the Arizona House of Representatives.

Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome the members of the U of T NDP, including Chaitri Shah, Francesca Policarpio, Jake Barton, Avreet Jagdev, Amareena Saleh, Marie Kinderman, Asima Kidwai, Tuneesha Roy, James Sinton and Samuel Sarjeant.

I would also like to welcome to the House Patrick Porzuczek from the reopen-the-Minden-ER group.

I also want to wish the very best to my new legislative assistant, Ayesha Khan, who is also in the House.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome the LINC ESL class from the Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services to Queen's Park. Thank you for making the trip from Scarborough North. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to introduce some students from the University of Toronto: Luca Rampersad, Makayla Kelly, Emma Hartviksen, Jack Baker, Kati Gunnell, Joshua Bakradze, Kate Martens and Sara Yoneci. Welcome to your House.

M. Ted Hsu: J'ai plusieurs introductions ce matin.

I want to acknowledge some of my constituency office staff who are here visiting today. Tanya Da Silva and Alastair Munro are here from my office in Kingston and the Islands. I want to thank them very much for their work and welcome them to Queen's Park.

1040

I also want to introduce everybody to my lovely wife, Tara Sharkey—they're all in the public gallery. She has walked every step of the way in my political journey, sometimes carried me through difficult times, and she has been a great partner—and lastly, at the risk of embarrassing my daughter Vera-Claire, who's starting a two-week stint as a legislative page here in this chamber.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux représentants de l'Assemblée francophone de l'Ontario à l'Assemblée législative : M. Fabien Hébert et M. Peter Hominuk.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's my pleasure to welcome to the people's House Patty Coates, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. Thank you so much for being here with us today, sister.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Welcome back, everyone.

I'd like to introduce Patrick Macklem, who's the professor emeritus of constitutional law from the University of Toronto. He's in the west members' gallery.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: It's my sincere privilege to welcome the great mayor of the city of Windsor, Drew Dilkens, who's in the members' gallery today.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a great privilege to introduce to the House members of our constituency team in Ottawa Centre. We have with us Erica Braunovan, Ethan Smith-Johnson and Sharon Lee. I would not have been able to make it here this week on my bicycle without those fine folks.

Also tuning in: John Purkis from Ottawa.

Thank you a million times, colleagues, for everything you do.

Hon. David Piccini: It's a great pleasure to introduce three constituents of mine who are in the gallery today: Mayor John Logel from Alnwick/Haldimand and constituents Jim Corcoran and Jake O'Connor, who have also made the trip down from Grafton.

Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je dois reconnaître aussi le président de l'AFO. Il vient de chez nous. C'est un gars de Hearst. Je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue à toi, Fabien, et à toute ton équipe à Queen's Park, et à toutes les organisations francophones qui sont ici aujourd'hui pour la journée franco-ontarienne. Bienvenue à votre maison.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to welcome two of my friends and colleagues from the city of Ottawa who are joining me here today: Rudi Asseer, who is the chair of the Dare to be Vulnerable Project, dealing with storytelling for mental health among leaders in our city; and, of course, Dr. Aroldo Dargel, who is a bipolar specialist with the Ottawa Hospital, specifically at the General hospital. I want to say thank you to them for joining me. It is customary for us to get up and down and up and down to try and get somebody recognized around this place, so don't take anything by it.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome back to the House, once again, Michau van Speyk from the Ontario Autism Coalition as well as the busloads of folks coming in from Hamilton for the rally on the front lawn today for the Ontario Health Coalition. I am welcoming them to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Nous avons beaucoup de francophones aujourd'hui, mais je veux simplement souligner la présence de Melinda Chartrand, conseillère scolaire au conseil MonAvenir, et Isabelle Girard de l'ACÉPO. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'd like to introduce my new EA, Matt D'Amico, who just joined us. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to welcome to the House a constituent, Fraser Passmore, and his partner, Luca. Thanks for being here and welcome to your House.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'd like to introduce to the legislature my new EA, Joseph Scheidl, and my LA, Michael Zwiép, here today. They're going to be doing hard work on behalf of the people of Ontario in our office.

I also wish to thank Jared Yausie, who is off to the Alberta Legislature, for his service on behalf of the people of Niagara West.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to give a warm welcome to my constituent Patrick Macklem, who is in the House. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Harris: We couldn't kick off the legislative session without a hello to Barbara Stevens, who loves to watch question period every day. Hi, Barbara.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the introduction of guests today.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR SCARBOROUGH–GUILDWOOD

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR KANATA–CARLETON

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Elector Officer and laid upon the table certificates of the by-elections of the electoral districts of Scarborough–Guildwood and Kanata–Carleton.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): I have a letter dated August 10, 2023, addressed to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Dear Mr. Day:

“A writ of election dated the 28th day of June, 2023, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Ontario, and was addressed to Darryl A. D'Sousa, returning officer for the electoral district of Scarborough–Guildwood, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Scarborough–Guildwood in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Mitzie Hunter who, since her election as representative of the said electoral district of Scarborough–Guildwood, has resigned.

“This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Scarborough–Guildwood on the 27th day of July, 2023, Andrea Hazell has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the ninth day of August, 2023, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“Yours sincerely,

“Greg Essensa

“Chief Electoral Officer

“Toronto, August 10, 2023.”

Applause.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): I have a second letter, also dated August 10, 2023, also addressed to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, that reads as follows:

“Dear Mr. Day,

“A writ of election dated the 28th day of June, 2023, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Ontario, and was addressed to Richard Derouin, returning officer for the electoral district of Kanata–Carleton, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Kanata–Carleton in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Merrilee Fullerton who, since her election as representative of the said electoral district of Kanata–Carleton, has resigned.

“This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Kanata–Carleton on the 27th day of July, 2023, Karen McCrimmon has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the ninth day of August, 2023, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“Yours sincerely,

“Greg Essensa

“Chief Electoral Officer

“Toronto, August 10, 2023.”

MPP Hazell was escorted into the House by Mr. Fraser and Mme Collard.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Andrea Hazell, member for the electoral district of Scarborough–Guildwood, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims her right to take a seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let the honourable member to take her seat.

MPP McCrimmon was escorted into the House by Mr. Fraser and Mme Collard.

Applause.

1050

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Karen McCrimmon, member for the electoral district of Kanata–Carleton, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take her seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let the honourable member take her seat.

Applause.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I need to update the House on the participation of independent members. Since the House last met in June, the number of members sitting as independents has increased from 11 to 14. It follows that I need to address the matter of the participation of independent members. Our practices must be adjusted accordingly to provide them with a reasonable and equitable opportunity to participate in our daily proceedings and in debate.

During question period, I will recognize the three additional independent members to ask questions during

each eight-day period, allowing us to accommodate all 14 independent members into the rotation. This means that one independent member will be recognized to ask a question each day, with a second independent member recognized every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Each independent member recognized during question period will continue to have the opportunity to ask one question and one supplementary question.

Further, as a result of the two recent by-elections in the electoral districts of Scarborough–Guildwood and Kanata–Carleton, there are now eight independent members who sit as part of the Liberal group.

Mr. John Fraser: Nine.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Nine. I will allow these nine members a combined 28 minutes during debates on second and third reading of government bills and on substantive government motions, divided into two 14-minute speaking allotments. This time may be shared among the Liberal independent members, but it may not be banked.

Finally, with regard to members’ statements, there will continue to be one statement allotted to an independent member every sessional day. However, each individual member will now be entitled to participate once per 14-day period instead of once per 11-day period.

I thank the House for its attention.

I understand the member for Ottawa–Vanier has a point of order.

Mme Lucille Collard: I do, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I do seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 40(e), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond during statements by the ministry and responses today, which is about Franco-Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Collard is seeking unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 40(e), that five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond during statements by the ministry and responses today. Agreed? I heard a no.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Welcome back, Speaker, and colleagues.

This summer, people across the province of Ontario were feeling the strain of the rising affordability crisis, a cost-of-living crisis, a housing affordability crisis, and meanwhile, they’ve watched their government lurch from scandal to scandal, crisis to crisis. Now we’ve seen the resignation of three cabinet ministers and two senior staffers so far.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier: How can people trust this Premier to work for them when he has spent the last five years putting his friends and insiders first?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I just want to welcome our friends from Arizona: Welcome; I look forward to speaking with you. And my friends from Arizona, you think politics are tough in the United States? Watch us over the next session.

Anyways, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I'll answer the reason why people should trust us: When we came to office, it was like walking into a bankrupt company. There were 300,000 jobs lost, down to our friends, down to the US, and now there are 700,000 more people working today than there were five years ago. We're building \$184 billion of infrastructure. We're focusing on \$70 billion of building roads and bridges and highways. We're focusing on making sure we have the largest transit system in North America. We're building 50 new sites and hospitals or additions to hospitals, spending over \$50 billion—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You want to talk about the past? Not even at the height of the Liberals' gas plant scandal has a government been in such disarray.

The government said they were going to clean things up. That's what this Premier ran on, and now he's embroiled in a scandal that has seen ethics laws broken. Three cabinet ministers have resigned in disgrace or ran for the exits. Staff in the Conservatives' inner circles are leaving under a cloud of suspicion, and they're lawyering up, Speaker. The Premier has said the buck stops with him, so let's hear from him.

Will the Premier finally come clean and explain his personal involvement in the greenbelt scandal?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, thank you to the opposition again. You know, I was very clear in my message on Thursday to the people of Ontario. That's what you call leadership: admitting if there was a mistake, moving forward and making sure we go on with our agenda. That is not going to deter us from building 1.5 million homes.

My friends from Arizona probably don't realize that Ontario is leading North America in economic development and trade and growth. We're the fastest-growing region right now in North America. We have over 800,000 people coming to Ontario every single year, and they're coming to Ontario because that's where the prosperity is. That's where the jobs are. That's where economic development is. That's where the quality of life is. You want a great life, you come to Ontario. But I can assure the people out there—the new Canadians that are coming here, the young people that need to afford a home—that we're going to build homes. We're going to build affordable, attainable—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, things are worse today for people in this province than they were five years ago—absolutely. And this Premier won't share his phone records; emails have been deleted in the midst of this scandal.

People out there thought something was wrong, and now we have two independent officers of the Legislature who have confirmed it. The Conservatives rigged the system to benefit their friends. I mean, it's so bad that it's being turned over to the RCMP.

Speaker, my question to the Premier is, has he spoken to the RCMP about the circumstances of the greenbelt carve-out?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, Mr. Speaker, is it better now than it was five years ago? It's not a little better; it's not 10% better; it's a thousand times better on all fronts. It's a thousand times better for the 30,000 homes we're building in long-term care, when the opposition built 600 in 15 years, so 30,000—600. Again, Mr. Speaker, we're building the transit: We're building 413, the Bradford Bypass; we're building Highway 7 and Highway 3 to get goods from point A to point B and people home a lot quicker. Mr. Speaker, as you see us report some of the health reports that I'm going to see, actually, the backlog of surgeries is going down. We're pouring money into the new nurses that are coming here. There's 30,000 nurses in our colleges and universities. We saw 15,000 nurses come on board already—67,000 since we've been in office—8,000 new doctors. Mr. Speaker, I could spend another half an hour telling you why the province is a thousand times better now than it was—

Interjections.

1100

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. The next question: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Maybe if the Premier had spent more time listening to people this summer—people who have seen their emergency rooms closed; kids who can't get treatment with the autism program; people who were fighting forest fires all across this province—maybe he would have learned something and he wouldn't have spent his summer divvying upping the spoils to his friends.

This afternoon, I'm going to be tabling the Greenbelt Restoration Act, the official opposition NDP's bill to restore and protect all of the lands this government removed from the greenbelt—a solution that the Premier finally agrees is the right thing to do. We must restore integrity to government, Premier. We're going to be calling for unanimous consent of this House, so, to the Premier: Ontarians will be watching. Will he pass our legislation to restore and protect lands in the greenbelt?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: To be very clear, Mr. Speaker: No, we will not be supporting the member's legislation.

Obviously, we've not seen the legislation, so we would never provide unanimous consent to something that we have not seen. But, to be very clear, we will be voting against that legislation today.

I will be bringing forward legislation very soon which will not only return the lands but ensure that an additional 7,000 acres of land are put into the greenbelt. And we will go one step further, Mr. Speaker: We will codify in legislation the boundaries of the greenbelt so that it is protected through legislation and not through regulation. So, no, we will not be supporting the member's legislative piece today because we're going to go further and we're going to do what has never been done in this province before: We will protect the greenbelt once and for all.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, why would anyone trust this government to fix a disaster of their own making? There are still so many questions—so many questions—that this Premier and this government refuse to answer in this \$8.3-billion scandal.

So, back to the Premier: How did these speculators know to give your office the details about the parcels of land to remove from the greenbelt before it was announced to the public? Who tipped them off?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: The reality is that both the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner have reported on that, Mr. Speaker. But what the reality is, is that the NDP and the Liberals continue to double down on policies that have put Ontario into a housing crisis.

We have been working for five years to untangle the mess that was the opposition's policies on housing. In fact, Mr. Speaker, in the member's own riding, where average income is about \$55,000 a year, the average house price is about \$1.1 million. It would take somebody \$80,000 in mortgage payments just to afford that home, and what does the member opposite do? She continues to support policies that would take all of the people in her riding out of the ability to own a home. We are going to double down on policies that help build houses for people across the province of Ontario. Make no mistake: We'll get the job done.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. The final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, not only did it take two scathing reports and unprecedented resignations to force this Premier to do the right thing, not only did he allow the housing crisis to get worse—yes, worse—while this scandal expanded, but he's put our province in a position where we could be on the hook for billions.

Speaker, back to the Premier: How much is this government's greenbelt disaster going to cost Ontario's taxpayers?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nothing—nothing. We will be presenting a bill later on this week which will ensure that the people of the province of Ontario are focused on what matters to them: building houses for the people of the province of Ontario.

She talks about us adding on to the housing crisis? It's unbelievable to me. We have seen, because of the policies of this government, housing starts at the highest level in over 30 years—and it's not just single-family homes; it is purpose-built rentals that, under their policies, came to a halt for over 30 years. This is a party that, with the Liberals, doubled down on increasing taxes for the people of the province of Ontario year after year after year. They think that increasing taxes somehow encourages an economy to grow.

We have shown that by reducing taxes, cutting red tape and investing in priorities of people, 700,000 jobs come back and the economy booms. And now we're going to get it done in housing as well.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: The same favoured insiders who received preferential treatment in the greenbelt decision are also benefiting from shady backroom deals for MZOs, urban boundary expansions and Highway 413.

Will this government stop paving over protected farmland to enrich its friends?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let's unpack that, if we can. MZOs were requested by municipal partners for the most part—our municipal partners asked us. Where we didn't get requests from municipal partners is when I was the Minister of Long-Term Care—we now have a great Minister of Long-Term Care. When I was the Minister of Long-Term Care, we actually had municipalities—Port Hope, for instance—that actually refused to give us long-term-care homes. So I went to the minister and said, "Give me an MZO because I want to close down 30-, 40-, 50-year-old long-term-care homes that aren't sprinklered and build brand new ones." I won't apologize for doing that. I'll continue to do it, whether it's for long-term-care homes, whether it's for the Minister of Colleges and Universities, who wants to build dormitories for students. I'm going to double down, and I'm going to make sure that we build that housing, not only for seniors, not only for young families, but for students in his area and in all parts of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the minister that the city of Hamilton did not request that you meddle with our urban plan.

I have been ringing the alarm about this government's backroom deals for urban sprawl in Hamilton for months

now. The Integrity Commissioner's report revealed that the same developers who successfully influenced the Ford government to remove their land from the greenbelt also benefited from a provincial order to expand the city's urban boundary.

My question, Mr. Speaker: Did this government give preferential treatment to developers, with shady MZOs and undemocratic changes to our official plan?

Hon. Paul Calandra: And there you have it, Mr. Speaker, don't you? It's not about the greenbelt, colleagues. It has never been about the greenbelt for them. It's about stopping people from having the same benefits that generations of Ontarians have always had. They don't want to build on the greenbelt. They don't even want to build in their own areas. In fact, after the decision was made to restore the lands to the greenbelt, some of those members called me to say that they had already done their job in their area and that they didn't want to see intensification, they didn't want to see towers.

Well, let me tell you this: We are going to build all across the province, because young Ontarians deserve to have that first home; the seniors who want to downsize deserve to have a place that they can downsize to, they deserve to have long-term-care homes; our students deserve to have dormitories. That is what is important.

So to all of those people who are in their parents' basement right now and want to have a home: We have your back. They continue to do the same thing, and we won't allow it to happen.

We'll get the job done for them each and every day.

1110

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Companies from around the globe are looking to Ontario for their future, and our government must be a champion that will support our industry leaders and innovators. It is essential that we continue to attract new investments that will ensure Ontario's economy will grow and thrive. This summer, the minister led an international trade and investment mission to South Korea and Japan to strengthen economic partnerships, foster pre-existing relationships and forge new alliances.

Speaker, at a time of economic and geopolitical unrest, can the minister please explain how his leadership in spearheading this investment trade mission is helping to strengthen Ontario's overall economic environment?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Our recent sales mission to Asia focused on strengthening relationships with our partners and attracting new investments in key sectors, including electric vehicles, life sciences and tech.

While in South Korea, we joined LSK Investment to announce their new \$100-million life sciences fund for Ontario companies. This new fund will support early-stage life sciences companies with a focus on developing new therapeutics. LSK also announced their plans to open the first overseas office worldwide—and their first North

American office—here in Toronto. This investment will strengthen Ontario's growing life sciences sector. With Ontario's talented workforce, the best R&D facilities and 65,000 annual STEM grads, more overseas companies are coming.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: When we think of Japan and South Korea, we think of their innovative technology and sophisticated and renowned automotive industry. With our government's many efforts to rebuild our now-thriving automotive sector after the Liberals chased away thousands of auto manufacturing jobs to south of the border, it's no surprise that we have a lot in common with these two nations.

The minister mentioned that he met with companies in an array of sectors. Speaker, can the minister please expand on other companies he met with while on his trade and investment mission and shed light on any news that we can expect following it?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Mr. Speaker, in Japan, we met with companies across the automotive and the tech sectors. We thanked Honda and Toyota for their long-standing and continued investments here in Ontario and LG Energy for their \$5-billion investment in Windsor, which will create thousands of well-paying jobs. When we talk about the over \$26 billion in auto and EV investments we've attracted in the last three years, we are confident, Speaker, that this is only the start. On the tech side, we were thrilled to meet with Japanese telecom giant KDDI. They are investing \$1.35 billion here in downtown Toronto in three data centres.

Speaker, companies around the world continue to choose Ontario for their future because our government has reduced the cost of doing business by \$8 billion every single year.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Premier, this morning on our first day back, people from across Ontario woke up early to get on buses to come to Queen's Park. The good people of North Bay, Renfrew, Cornwall, Barrie, Bracebridge, Midland, Orangeville, Parry Sound, Chatham, Peterborough, Durham—the list goes on—are joining thousands of people on the front lawn. They are speaking with one voice.

Does the Premier know why thousands of people are on our front lawn?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is a pleasure to be able to rise and talk about some of the incredible investments we've been able to do since 2018. There is no doubt that we were left with a system that Kathleen Wynne, in an exit interview, said, "if we had only, as the Liberal Party, not frozen the health care budget; if we had only not cut those residency positions for physicians." Imagine where we would be, Speaker. We would have an additional 100 physicians being able to practise in Ontario.

But we have not let that deter us. We have a plan and it is working. There are so many pieces of it. I'm looking forward to talking about some of the innovation that we have able to do working with, for example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, to make sure that individuals who want to practise in the province of Ontario can do that without additional barriers.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let me tell you why there are thousands of people on the front lawn of Queen's Park: It is because they want to tell this government to stop the privatization of our health care system. It's that simple.

It doesn't matter what you call those private clinics. The Auditor General already did the work: 97% are for-profit. They are there to make money for their investors. They poach valuable health care workers from our public system, the system that this government turned on its head with Bill 124.

Are the Premier and Minister of Health ready to listen to the people who made the journey to come to Queen's Park to represent millions of Ontarians, and reverse the privatization of surgical suites as well as all hospital services?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I'm incredibly proud of our Premier and our government caucus, who have been able to—publicly funded health care services expand—whether it is in the largest expansion of primary care health teams that we have seen since we've started health care teams in the province of Ontario, whether it is through absolutely integrated and surgical diagnostic centres.

When we brought forward those expansions of cataract surgeries in January—we now have 14,000 people who can read to their grandchildren, who can go back to work, who can volunteer in their community, because those surgeries were done in community, publicly funded, using their OHIP card.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Will Bouma: My next question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development. Speaker, for far too long, northern Ontario was neglected and disrespected by the previous Liberal government. They failed to recognize northern Ontario's economic potential. They disparaged these important communities by calling it a "no man's land." Supported by the NDP, previous governments cut vital resources and programs while adding high taxes and burdensome regulations that made life more difficult. That is why it is essential that our government continues to demonstrate leadership and show respect by building lasting partnerships with the north.

In order for Ontario to be a decisive, confident international leader, we must ensure that every region of our province is thriving economically.

Speaker, can the minister please explain to this House what our government is doing to ensure that northern Ontario businesses and communities can prosper?

Hon. Greg Rickford: We had an extraordinary opportunity to go visit towns and cities across northern Ontario, to invest in their economies and invest in their local infrastructure. We started out in Sudbury, with the YES Theatre. The Blind River Beavers were celebrating a new roof and dropping the puck against the Elliot Lake Vikings. We weren't there just to fix the roof; we were there to raise the roof, Mr. Speaker. They went on to win that game.

Making improvements to the Legion in Spanish—and then we swung through Little Current—no pun intended—and announced a brand new two-lane swing bridge, and then off to Echo Bay for a new roof in their arena.

What do they have in common, Mr. Speaker? There was so much enthusiasm about these local infrastructure projects. I had to tell them that their member of provincial Parliament voted against the projects, but they wouldn't let that rain on their parade. They're excited about northern Ontario towns, cities and First Nations communities and what our government is doing to invest in them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: As our government continues to rebuild Ontario, it is important that we remain committed to providing long-term investments that will ensure all communities can thrive. Under the leadership of our government, programs that support Indigenous economic development and northern businesses are leading to economic success in those communities.

Even the Liberal Party, during one of their leadership debates, acknowledged that northern Ontario's economy is booming because of the actions taken by our government—thank you.

While these are positive developments, we know that during this time of global economic uncertainty, many northern and Indigenous businesses continue to face unforeseen challenges. That is why our government must ensure that we are making meaningful investments that will help create jobs and support opportunities to modernize business practices.

1120

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to ensure that Indigenous entrepreneurs can participate in Ontario's growing economy?

Hon. Greg Rickford: It's equally imperative that we make targeted investments in First Nations communities across northern Ontario. In the fiscal year 2022-23, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund invested \$17 million in more than 61 First Nations projects, leveraging \$30.9 million and creating or sustaining more than 110 jobs.

What does this look like on the ground, Mr. Speaker? The Biigtigong Nishnaabeg outdoor arena and upgrades to their community centre to improve their training capacity, the Matawa Wellness and Training Centre, the Mattagami First Nation Fishing tournaments and improvements to their waterfront development, and the list goes on.

What's changed about a new-look Northern Ontario Heritage Fund is that we've gone from just under 1% in the previous government to up to 19% of those investments annually into First Nations communities in northern Ontario. We're changing the game, Mr. Speaker, investing in their businesses and investing in their communities for a greater sense of prosperity across northern Ontario.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Chandra Pasma: School bus cancellations have thrown thousands of Ottawa families into chaos this September, because the Minister of Education cut \$6 million in transportation funding to Ottawa school boards. When the boards rightfully complained, the minister offered just \$1.8 million in a one-time transfer, but only if the boards agreed to use key messages praising the government.

Why does the minister think it's okay to demand praise while Ottawa parents scramble every day to get their kids to school?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, when our government increased funding for student transportation by \$111 million, what did the NDP and Liberals do? They voted against the investment.

When our government increased funding to Ottawa school boards, \$75 million this school year, what did the member opposite do when given the chance to support her own community? She voted against it.

Interjection.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Indeed. There's some pattern of consistency in the NDP and Liberals.

What did we do, Speaker? We increased funding across the board. We increased funding specifically to accommodate the increase in inflationary costs with respect to commodities. In addition, we increased drivers' pay by 17%. In addition, we gave \$1.8 million to Ottawa specifically, and the French school boards in Ottawa were able to deliver transportation, but not the English.

Why doesn't the member opposite stop politicizing an issue that disrupts parents' lives, get on board, hold the school board to account and demand better for the people of Ottawa?

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Cutting \$6 million permanently while offering \$1.8 million once isn't an increase, Speaker; that's a cut. For parents, this is a nightmare situation: getting to work late, leaving early, scrambling every single day to get our kids to school.

The minister created this problem with his funding cut. What is he going to do to fix it?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, funding is up to the highest levels ever recorded in the province's history for student transportation: \$111 million more. Literally three out of four cancellations in Ontario are happening in the English Ottawa school board area, and it begs the question: What about that board is so specifically underwhelming relative to the rest of the province? The French

school boards in your community are delivering transportation, but not the English, which therefore concludes that the commonality here is the board and the consortium not doing their job.

Instead of justifying the inaction of the board and consortium, stand up for constituents and demand better for Ottawa students.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Carleton, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education, come to order.

Start the clock.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Last week, the Premier's \$8.3-billion gravy train derailed, and Speaker, what a mess: three cabinet ministers lost in a month, and the Premier's office is right in the thick of it. Amin Massoudi and Jae Truesdell were both on that infamous Vegas trip with that developer friend of the Premier's. And then the Premier's ex-executive assistant, Nico Fidani-Diker, was working with Mr. X to crack open the greenbelt, and that same Mr. X, an unregistered lobbyist, was passing brown envelopes. And of course, we have the Premier's hand-picked chief of staff for the minister of housing, Ryan Amato, the one who the Premier wants us to believe was the lone wolf in this whole thing.

Speaker, it's clear to all of us here and all Ontarians that all roads lead to the Premier's office in this scandal. Why won't the Premier apologize to Ontarians for trying to pull an \$8.3-billion fast one on them?

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, I just find it pretty rich coming from the Liberals, who had scandal after scandal for 15 years; cost the taxpayers billions of dollars; changed the greenbelt not once, not twice, not three times, but 17 times for your buddies, building mega-mansions.

Mr. Speaker, when we took office, as I said earlier, we inherited a bankrupt province from the Liberals and the NDP supporting them. We have turned things around. My friends from Arizona—we're the number-one trading partner to 19 states, number-two to nine other states. We're an economic powerhouse in North America. We do \$460 billion a year with the United States. We would be the third-largest trading partner in the world to the US. We have an incredible relationship, shipping car parts back and forth up to seven or eight times.

But do you know something, Mr. Speaker? Last month, the numbers came out: We created more jobs in Ontario than all 50 states combined. That's what we're doing for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order. The House will come to order.

Start the clock. The supplementary question.

Mr. John Fraser: No one believes the Premier's stories anymore, and the greenbelt is just the tip of the iceberg. It's just the piece that we can see more clearly now. There are a lot more gray trains on the rails right now in Ontario. There are the municipal boundaries in Ottawa and Hamilton. And how about Highway 413, or those questionable MZOs that are out there that they're trying to hide between stuff that's for long-term care homes? And God knows what else the Premier is doing in health care; we can't see that yet.

So what is this really all about? It's about how the Premier thinks he can do business in this province. It's all about what his priorities are, and it's very clear his priorities are rich, well-connected insiders and putting them ahead of all Ontarians.

So I'm going to ask once more: Why won't the Premier just apologize and admit that he was wrong? And let's actually put this to committee, so we can have some witnesses in about what happened in this greenbelt scandal.

Hon. Doug Ford: I find it very rich. Let's go back to the days of the Liberals when they would have a dinner party and you're only allowed to go to your place or the minister's place if you paid the minister \$20,000. Let's remind people of that.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to move the province forward. We're going to create the 1.5 million homes. We're going to make sure that we create economic development and job creation so that we're leading North America. We're going to focus on the \$184 billion of infrastructure that the Liberals and the NDP failed to do. They didn't build the 413. They talked about Highway 7; they did absolutely nothing. They talked about Highway 3 and did absolutely nothing. We're building the Bradford Bypass.

And guess what? As the hospitals were crumbling, we're putting \$50 billion into building 50 new hospitals or additions to hospitals, and that's the tip of the iceberg. But thank you for the question.

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LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Dave Smith: First, I'd like to congratulate my good friend the member from Willowdale on becoming the Minister of Long-Term Care—and now I'm going to grill him with a question.

In June, I was privileged to have the Minister of Long-Term Care come to my community of Peterborough to announce the construction of 416 new long-term-care beds at the Marianhill Nursing Home and Extendicare in Peterborough. These critical investments by our government are positive and are welcomed by the people of both Peterborough and Pembroke, but there's still more that needs to

be done to increase capacity in long-term care to help support Ontario's seniors. That's why it's so important that our government continues with our plan to invest in the infrastructure that's needed to care for our seniors.

Speaker, can the Minister of Long-Term Care please explain how our government is increasing the number of long-term-care homes across Ontario?

Hon. Stan Cho: Let's start with what a shift this is, under the leadership of this Premier and this wonderful former Minister of Long-Term Care, building record homes in this province.

Let's just take Peterborough, Pembroke and surrounding areas as one example: 416 new, safe, modern long-term-care beds. This is the tip of the iceberg, though, Speaker, because our government is supporting another six projects in Renfrew county and four more in Peterborough county. That's a total of 1,400 new and upgraded long-term-care beds. What a stark contrast, just in that area alone, compared to what the Liberals did for the better part of a decade, a net 611 new beds.

In fact, I have a bigger update for this House, Speaker. Since taking office, under the leadership of this Premier, since 2018, 18,000 beds have been completed or are under construction. That is fantastic news for our seniors. They took care of us; we're going to take care of them.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for that. All seniors in Ontario deserve to be treated with dignity and to receive the quality of care that they need. That's why it's so important that our government continues to prioritize the needs of seniors and continues to build more new long-term-care homes.

However, rising interest rates and construction costs are making it more expensive to finance crucial infrastructure projects. With pressing needs in communities across our province, it's positive that our government introduced an additional top-up to the construction funding subsidy to support the costs of developing or redeveloping long-term-care homes.

Speaker, can the minister please provide an update on the benefits of this funding strategy in supporting solutions that will meet the needs of our seniors in Ontario?

Hon. Stan Cho: A very relevant issue that the member brings up: Construction costs around the world are up. That of course includes in the long-term-care sector.

The program he's speaking of is the construction funding subsidy, or the CFS. Some 67 projects have been approved under the CFS. This will add over 11,000 new and upgraded long-term-care beds across the province, despite the challenges they're having with the construction issues.

This is one of the largest long-term capital development projects in this province's history, in this country's history, part of a larger plan to build 30,000 new long-term-care beds and improve 28,000 additional, for nearly 60,000 in added capacity. Compare that to the track record of the last government.

But more importantly, we need to make sure these beds are actually staffed: \$4.9 billion to establish four hours of daily care per resident in our great province.

Speaker, I'll say it again: Our seniors took care of us. It is our responsibility to take care of them.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

M. Guy Bourgouin: Le 30 juin dernier à 17 h, avant le jour du Canada, comme pour passer inaperçu, la ministre des Collèges et Universités refuse officiellement le financement d'une université par, pour et avec les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes : l'Université de Sudbury.

Le gouvernement dit qu'il se base sur plusieurs rapports, dont le rapport final du PEQAB, pour justifier le refus du financement. Pourtant, lors d'une demande d'accès à l'information de mon bureau, nous nous sommes vu refuser l'accès au même document qui devrait justifier la réponse du gouvernement.

Alors, pourquoi ne pas autoriser le partage du rapport du PEQAB pour que la communauté comprenne la décision du ministère? Madame la Ministre, qu'avez-vous à cacher? Est-ce encore une autre situation comme la ceinture de verdure?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. Students, their families and the taxpayers of Ontario deserve to know that when their hard-earned dollars are invested in Ontario's post-secondary system, that investment pays off.

Our decision to not fund the Université de Sudbury's proposal to become a stand-alone French-language university was one that was not made lightly. The university's proposal did not reflect current demand and enrolment trends or the existing capacity of post-secondary institutions to offer French-language programs in the Greater Sudbury area and across Ontario.

I must remind the member that we have 10 francophone and bilingual institutions across Ontario, and students have the choice to make. I would remind you: Collège Boréal, collège La Cité, University of Ottawa, Laurentian University, Université de Hearst, Dominican University, Glendon College, Université de l'Ontario français. We have options for students across Ontario. As the minister, it is my duty to respect the taxpayers' dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Le gouvernement conservateur prend ses décisions en secret, sans consulter et surtout sans tenir compte de la réalité des Ontariens du Nord. La réalité, c'est que les Franco-Ontariens du Nord veulent une université par, pour et avec les francophones à Sudbury, pas à quatre heures de Sudbury.

Ma question est pour le premier ministre : quand est-ce que le gouvernement conservateur va financer l'Université de Sudbury?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. We know that the francophone community plays a vital role in the province's overall social, cultural and economic development. But I must remind the member, it was this government—the first in Ontario's history—that created two stand-alone francophone universities, governed for francophones by francophones: Université de l'Ontario français and University of Hearst.

We are also taking meaningful action to address the shortage of French-language teachers in Ontario. In fact, just last month, I was with the Minister of Education and the Treasury Board president and Minister of Francophone Affairs, where we announced an additional—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay, come to order.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: We announced an additional 110 French-language teacher education spaces for the 2023-24 academic year. We've also announced stand-alone nursing at—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay must come to order. The minister can conclude her answer.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We also announced a stand-alone nursing programs for Collège Boréal to offer nursing not only in Sudbury but also in Toronto, as well as La Cité to offer nursing spaces. We do value francophone education, and we are giving choices to students across the province.

HOUSING

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Associate Minister of Housing. For too many Ontarians, including young people, newcomers and seniors right here in Ottawa, finding the right home is still a major challenge. While our government is taking meaningful measures to address housing supply through new legislation, the scale of this problem calls for continued action and leadership. More resources are needed to build upon the work already under way and to bring forward more measures to address this serious issue. Finding solutions means working in partnership with all levels of government in order to produce results.

So Speaker, through you, can the associate minister please explain how our government is getting more homes built?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you for the question from the great member of Carleton, a great friend indeed. The member is absolutely right. We're in a housing supply crisis that we've never seen in this province ever, ever. That is why, on the first day of my job, I was joined by Mayor Vrbancovic and MP Chagger where we provided more residents of Kitchener an affordable place to call home at the historic St. Paul's church.

Speaker, we are providing over \$1.4 million to support the construction of 21 affordable housing units that will give seniors in their community a safe and affordable place

to call home. Projects like St. Paul's are exactly what we need to improve the housing crunch in Kitchener and, indeed, across this province. We all know there is much more work to be done. This government will keep cutting red tape, and we will keep working with all partners to get the job done. And yes, Speaker, we will succeed as we act, as we achieve and remain accountable to the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, thank you to the associate minister. Mr. Speaker, I agree; everyone in Ontario should be able to find a housing solution that meets their needs.

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While it is encouraging to hear about the progress our government is making to advance housing construction, there is still more work that needs to be done, not just in Ottawa but across the province.

The commitment by municipalities and the federal government to work collaboratively with our government in developing strategies that will provide real and long-term housing solutions is important and essential. In order to meet our goal of significantly increasing our housing supply, decisive action need to be taken.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Can the associate minister please explain how our government is supporting municipalities across our province, including the great city of Ottawa, so they can deliver on their housing commitments?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you again to the member opposite. By providing funding to municipalities, local leaders have the freedom to choose projects that will work best for their own communities. It puts the decision-making in the hands of those who know their neighbourhoods best. We are investing another \$42 million through the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit to support municipalities across the province by providing urgent assistance to the rapidly growing number of asylum claimants.

This housing crisis requires all hands on deck. We are getting it done for seniors; we are getting it done for students, for newcomers and first-time homebuyers. We are getting shovels in the ground and building the homes all Ontarians deserve. We remain committed to building at least 1.5 million homes by 2031. That is our duty. That is our mandate. It's results that count, and we will get the job done.

STUDENT SAFETY

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Early in September, the Premier claimed that teachers and school boards are indoctrinating children. The Premier's words do matter. My constituent Rebecca reached out to me after the protest last week: "I am the parent of a trans child. I was called garbage, a pedophile and an indoctrinator when I joined the counter-protest. One chant recited, 'Trans kids are not kids.'" This constituent broke down and cried.

Speaker, the Premier must correct the record. It is the government's own curriculum that the schools are actually teaching. Will he apologize and correct the record that Ontario schools are not indoctrinating our youth?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We believe every single student in Ontario, irrespective of their differences in their faith or heritage, sexual orientation or gender, place of birth, colour of skin—it does not matter. Every child should feel affirmed, respected and safe. We absolutely agree with that conviction.

Now, we also believe as Progressive Conservatives that parents have a foundational role to play in the life of their kids. Those concepts must co-exist. We believe parents are at the centre of Ontario's publicly funded school system. With respect, we don't claim to know better than the NDP. We actually believe and trust parents to love and support their kids. We will stand up for them and ensure every child is safe in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Jill Andrew: My question is to the Premier. Trans, queer and gender-non-conforming students are terrified right now, following comments made by this Conservative Premier. In his attempt to distract from the corruption of his government, this Premier offered space for baseless—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

MPP Jill Andrew: I apologize. A teacher in my community—

Interjections.

MPP Jill Andrew: I said it. Open your ears. I said it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member withdrew.

Conclude your question.

MPP Jill Andrew: A teacher in my community who sees first-hand the dangerous impacts of this rising hate came to me "greatly troubled by the Ministry of Education ... for creating unsafe conditions for those who are marginalized."

As much as we hope it is, students' homes are not always safe and supportive places for trans youth. The Premier has signalled that he would go as far as outing vulnerable trans kids. My question is to the Premier himself, not the Minister of Education: Speak directly to trans students today—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The response, Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We will always uphold the human rights of all children in the province of Ontario—every child.

We also believe, as Progressive Conservatives, as Canadians, that parents have a fundamental role in the life of their children. They are the centre of Ontario's publicly funded school system. We just passed a bill, Bill 98, the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, that literally strengthens and enshrines the voices of parents. The NDP and Liberals actually voted against that principle. How can

you explain to your constituents that parents should not have more involvement in the lives of their children?

We will stand up for parents, we will, yes, stand up for human rights and we will ensure kids and schools get back to basics—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul’s will come to order.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. The next question.

WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Natalie Pierre: My question is for the Associate Minister of Women’s Social and Economic Opportunity. Our government must build a province where all women and girls are empowered to succeed. We know that Ontario and our economy benefit by supporting more women in the workforce, especially in leading-edge industry, including occupations in the skilled trades. Unfortunately, the number of women employed in the skilled trades sector is well below their male counterparts. With more than 100,000 unfilled skilled trades jobs, it’s critical that we attract more women to pursue good-paying jobs in these sectors.

Speaker, can the associate minister please explain how our government is helping women across Ontario develop their skills so that they can enter these in-demand careers?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Thank you to the member from Burlington.

Mr. Speaker, this past summer, I had the privilege of meeting with hundreds of women who are entering the workforce thanks to the programs and investments made by our government in supporting training and skills development. This includes promoting a wide range of fields and careers to women and girls, especially in sectors where the need is greatest, like STEM and the skilled trades. That’s why our government is investing \$1.3 million to prepare women from under-represented groups for in-demand careers such as the trucking industry. Only 2% of Ontario’s truck drivers are women, which is why this program will reimburse up to \$4,500 for child care and other living expenses for women who enter.

We are making workplaces safer for women, and we’re building a province where everyone can thrive once again.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Last week was designated as Gender Equality Week, an important opportunity to celebrate the significant achievements of women in our province while still also recognizing that barriers to gender equality still exist. We know Ontario is facing the largest labour shortage in a generation and every day tens of thousands of jobs are going unfilled in Ontario, costing our province billions in productivity. We also know that women are part of the solution and that there is still more work that needs to be done to get more women into those

jobs. Our government must continue to recognize that women play a vital role in building a stronger Ontario.

Speaker, can the associate minister please elaborate on how our government is removing barriers and creating more economic opportunities for women and girls?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: The member from Burlington is right: Under the leadership of our government and the Premier, we are taking a whole-of-government approach to increasing women’s participation in the workforce to support their economic security and prosperity.

I’m so proud to share that we are already seeing positive impacts from our investments. Last year, labour force participation rates for Ontario mothers reached the highest levels on record since 1976, and the labour participation rate for mothers with children under the age of five increased by 2.4 percentage points.

Colleagues, our government is on the right track. Last year, Ontario achieved an historic increase in skilled trades apprenticeship registrations, including a 28% increase in registrations for women alone.

Mr. Speaker, it’s never been clearer that when women succeed, Ontario succeeds, and we’re getting it done for the people of Ontario.

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ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier. Good morning, colleagues.

Speaker, I just had occasion to ride my bicycle from Ottawa to Toronto, as a measure to try to find out at a community level what people are talking about with road safety. What I heard concerned me, in places like Ottawa, Kingston, Brighton, Oshawa, Scarborough and right here in the great city of Toronto.

I talked to a paramedic who, while he was responding to a call, had his paramedic bus hit and one of his colleagues injured as they were trying to save someone’s life. I talked to the family of a young girl, Serene Summers in Ottawa, whose life will be forever changed due to a brain injury from someone who hit her and left the scene. And what I’m hearing from road workers, from seniors like Peggy Hawthorn from the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, is that you can alter someone’s life—you can even take someone’s life—but there are no meaningful consequences in the province of Ontario.

People on all sides of this House have worked on this for 10 years, and we still don’t have justice for people and families. So my question to the Minister of Transportation and to the Premier is: Is this a priority for your government, and are you prepared to work with me on it?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The government takes road safety and the safety of all users on the road very safely. Ontario has some of the safest streets in North America, and we’re working hard to keep it this way.

I look forward to engaging with the member opposite on continuing to build safer roads across the province. The

former Minister of Transportation introduced a very important piece of legislation in this House known as the MOMS Act, which included harsher penalties for those not obeying safety on our roads, and we'll continue to work towards our collective goals, as that member mentioned, to keep our roads safe.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: As we begin this hopeful collaboration, I'm going to agree to disagree with my friend over there. Sitting next to me here is the member from St. Catharines. Her mom was struck outside an elementary school, knocked 15 feet in the air—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Twenty-five.

Mr. Joel Harden: —25 feet in the air. That woman's life is forever changed, and the maximum penalty in a situation like this, Minister and members of the government, is \$500. There is no immediate provision for licence suspension for someone who drives like this.

What we're proposing in Bill 40 is an immediate one-year licence suspension, an immediate focus not on vilifying the person who causes an accident, but helping people be better drivers, helping people be better cyclists, helping people be better operators of whatever device they use in our communities—restorative justice, Speaker.

We've been working on it for 10 years. It's an opportunity for us to do something unique in this place: work together. My question to the minister: Are you prepared to have this dialogue with us? Look into Bill 40. Let's get this thing passed. Let's work on it together.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We have introduced measures in this House that are going to deter bad behaviours on the road. As I mentioned previously, the former Minister of Transportation introduced longer driver's licence suspensions, and also longer vehicle impoundment periods for drivers who were engaging in reckless acts, whether that would be stunt driving, street racing or aggressive driving.

We take road safety very seriously, and I look forward to working with all members of this House and speaking to and hearing from their experiences about how we can continue to make these roads safer, because Ontario does have some of the safest roads in all of North America, and we will do everything we can to uphold that safety on our roads.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. It's a reality that every year, more than one million people in Ontario experience mental health and addictions challenges.

In 2020, our government introduced the Roadmap to Wellness initiative, a strategy that builds and strengthens access to quality mental health care and addictions services in our province. This initiative was created with the goal of improving mental health care for everyone across Ontario.

Our government must remain committed to building an Ontario where everyone is fully supported in their journey towards mental wellness. Speaker, can the associate minister please provide an update on the progress that our government has made to improve the delivery of critical mental health services?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member for that very important question and for the opportunity to talk about how we're rebuilding and modernizing Ontario's mental health care and addictions system. The Roadmap to Wellness, our plan to build Ontario's mental health and addictions system, will improve mental health services for communities across Ontario and support patients and families living with mental health and addictions challenges. Investments through the roadmap and Addictions Recovery Fund are allowing us to build a recovery-oriented continuum of care that's focused on giving people their lives back, and that's extremely important.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, we've opened 22 youth wellness hubs, provided over \$40 million to create mobile crisis response teams and expanded care for rural communities by creating new mobile mental health clinics. I'm proud to say that by the end of 2023 those investments will have supported the creation of over 500 new addiction treatment beds across the—

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the associate minister, especially for the residential detox and residential treatment that is coming to Peterborough this fall because of the work that he has done.

Speaker, the opioid crisis is creating serious impacts on rural, remote and northern communities across our province. In northern Ontario, the population has unfortunately experienced higher rates of overdose than any other region in Ontario. With transportation being a significant barrier to accessing mental health and addictions services, many Ontarians who live in the north are looking to connect with care that's closer to their homes. Our government must do all that we can to address the ongoing challenges in accessing service in northern communities.

Speaker, can the associate minister please share what our government is doing to ensure that all Ontarians have access to high-quality mental health and addictions care?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Once again, thank you to the member for that question. Over 50% of the new beds and treatment spaces created by the Addictions Recovery Fund are going to the north, to Indigenous and rural communities.

This summer, I had the privilege of visiting Sioux Lookout for the opening of a new 37-bed treatment facility funded by a \$4-million investment by our government. These new beds will allow local residents as well as members of the numerous Indigenous communities in north-west Ontario access to life-saving treatment and addictions services closer to their homes and to their loved ones.

Speaker, our goal is to ensure that everyone in Ontario has the support needed to live a happy and healthy life free

from the pain of addiction. We're going to continue making investments that are evidence-based, culturally appropriate and recovery-oriented, because we believe in ensuring that people with addictions get the support and the care they need where and when they need it, no matter where they are in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for question period. This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ms. Donna Skelly: I beg leave to present a report on Chapter 2: Court Operations (Volume 3: 2019 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario) from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Skelly presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Donna Skelly: As Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I am pleased to table the committee's report today on Chapter 2: Court Operations, from volume 3 of the 2019 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee and substitute members who participated in the public hearings and report-writing process. The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of the Attorney General. The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided by the Office of the Attorney General, the Clerk of the Committee and legislative research.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I beg leave to present the First Report on Regulations 2023, from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. French presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would like to thank all of the members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for their work on this report. Also, I would

like to thank the research officer and Clerk of the Committee for their assistance.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking Act, 2017 with respect to certain debts incurred in relation to human trafficking / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur et la Loi de 2017 sur la prévention de la traite de personnes et les recours en la matière à l'égard de certaines dettes contractées dans un contexte de traite de personnes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Remembrance Week Act, 2016 / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2016 sur la semaine du Souvenir.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR

Mr. Aris Babikian: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Interior and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Mr. Babikian from the Standing Committee on the Interior presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 31, An Act to provide for an award for exceptional cadets / Projet de loi 31, Loi prévoyant la remise d'un prix aux cadets exceptionnels.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

MPP Jill Andrew: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 81, An Act to proclaim Croatian Heritage Day / Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine croate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR

Mr. Aris Babikian: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Interior and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 93, An Act to enact Joshua's Law (Lifejackets for Life), 2023 / Loi édictant la Loi Joshua de 2023 sur le port obligatoire du gilet de sauvetage par les enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

MPP Jill Andrew: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 78, An Act to proclaim Group of Seven Day / Loi proclamant le Jour du Groupe des Sept.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Matthew Rae: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 99, An Act to provide for safety measures respecting movable soccer goals / Loi prévoyant des mesures de sécurité pour les buts de soccer mobiles.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

TRANSPORTATION FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 POUR UN RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT ORIENTÉ VERS L'AVENIR

Miss Surma moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to enact the GO Transit Station Funding Act, 2023 and to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 131, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur le financement des stations du réseau GO et modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Yes, I will. The intention of the bill, the Transportation for the Future Act, 2023, would help unlock transit-oriented communities along our GO rail system and then, of course, make transit a more convenient service for transit riders and residents in the GTA.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AN ACT TO REVERSE CHANGES TO THE GREENBELT

Ms. Stiles moved first reading of the following bill:

An Act to reverse changes to the greenbelt.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1310 to 1315.

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

Ms. Stiles has moved that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to reverse changes to the greenbelt and that it now be read for the first time.

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

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hazell, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Hsu, Ted	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Jama, Sarah	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Collard, Lucille	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Holland, Kevin	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bressee, Ric	Jones, Sylvia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Byers, Rick	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Calandra, Paul	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Dixon, Jess	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Mulrone, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Michael D.	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Piccini, David	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Pierre, Natalie	Yakabuski, John
Gill, Parm	Pirie, George	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 33; the nays are 65.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the most lost.

First reading negatived.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Monsieur le Président, je suis honorée de me présenter devant la Chambre aujourd'hui pour souligner le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Cette journée symbolique nous donne l'occasion de célébrer la richesse et la diversité de nos communautés franco-ontariennes, et de reconnaître leur résilience, leur créativité et leur savoir-faire.

1320

Chaque 25 septembre, nous soulignons les nombreuses contributions sociales, économiques et culturelles que les 650 000 francophones de l'Ontario apportent à leurs communautés, enrichissant ainsi la province dans son ensemble.

Notre gouvernement considère les francophones, et la communauté francophile aussi, comme un atout inestimable pour notre province. C'est pourquoi nous continuons à mettre en oeuvre notre stratégie pour les services en français et notre Stratégie de développement économique francophone. Ces deux stratégies travaillent ensemble pour renforcer la communauté francophone de l'Ontario grâce à un éventail d'initiatives de développement culturel et économique.

Je suis également heureuse de signaler une étape importante que nous avons franchie cette année avec l'entrée en vigueur, en avril 2023, du règlement sur l'offre active de services en français. Ce règlement prescrit neuf mesures précises que les fournisseurs de services financés par la province doivent prendre pour offrir de façon proactive des services en français. Ainsi, les francophones et les francophiles des régions désignées peuvent recevoir les services dont ils ont besoin dans la langue officielle de leur choix, dès le premier contact avec un fournisseur de services les proposant au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario.

Je tiens aussi à souligner que cette année scolaire marque le 25^e anniversaire des 12 conseils scolaires de langue française de notre province. En effet, c'est en 1998 que les francophones ont obtenu le contrôle de leurs propres conseils scolaires, garantissant ainsi que ces institutions seraient gouvernées par et pour les francophones.

Monsieur le Président, il s'agissait là d'une étape importante pour l'éducation en langue française. Nos conseils scolaires de langue française, le Consortium Centre Jules-Léger et de nombreux autres partenaires jouent un rôle inestimable en aidant les élèves francophones à grandir, à apprendre et à s'épanouir. Ils contribuent également à former la future main-d'oeuvre francophone et bilingue dont l'Ontario a besoin.

Notre gouvernement s'est engagé à veiller à ce que la francophonie ontarienne dispose des outils dont elle a besoin pour réussir. Cela comprend l'accès à l'éducation en

langue française de haute qualité que méritent les francophones. Nos communautés francophones, dans toute leur diversité, permettront à l'Ontario de continuer à prospérer pendant de nombreuses années.

Merci beaucoup et bonne journée des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes à toutes et à tous.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

M^{me} Marit Stiles: Merci. Good afternoon, Speaker. Bonjour, tout le monde. Aujourd'hui, à l'occasion de la journée franco-ontarienne, nous célébrons les contributions des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes dans cette province et dans tous les secteurs.

La semaine dernière, j'ai voyagé à Hearst, à Kapuskasing, à Sudbury, à Timmins, et j'ai parlé avec différents organismes—santé, éducation, syndicat—et j'ai rencontré beaucoup de personnes qui m'ont dit qu'il y a une crise maintenant dans les services pour les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes.

C'est pourquoi il est si important d'avoir des chefs élus qui connaissent les aspects socioculturels uniques de la communauté francophone. Je suis très fière du travail au sein de notre équipe envers l'importance des matières francophones, et j'applaudis notre député provincial Guy Bourgouin, porte-parole du NPD pour les affaires francophones, qui s'assure toujours que les voix des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes restent au centre des discussions.

As leader of the official opposition, I can tell you that I'm as disappointed as you that this government's decision has been to cancel funding for a full French university in the north. In my travels to the north, which I just mentioned in French, I included a visit to the University of Sudbury, and I heard that need loud and clear.

À tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, ma promesse et mon assurance sont les suivantes : quand nous formerons le gouvernement en 2026, le NPD de l'Ontario créera une université francophone autonome à Sudbury qui répondra aux besoins de votre communauté.

Merci. Meegwetch. Thank you, everybody.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il me fait toujours un plaisir de me lever en Chambre et surtout de parler ma langue natale en cette journée des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes.

Vous avez entendu ma chef, qu'elle est venue faire une tournée dans ma région, à la grandeur du nord de l'Ontario, et que la réalité que vous entendez dans le sud de l'Ontario n'est pas la même. On a un gouvernement qui est déconnecté du Nord. On est comme l'enfant pauvre de l'Ontario, puis on se fait traiter comme l'enfant pauvre, en passant—puis encore plus quand tu es francophone.

On n'a rien qu'à penser aux coupures actuelles en santé et en éducation : moins de soins de santé en français, et ils se déplacent plus loin. C'est une réalité que vivent les francophones. Pour avoir les services en français, on est obligé de se déplacer. Les francophones ont besoin de plus de services, mais ça tombe dans l'oreille d'un sourd quand ça vient à ce gouvernement.

On voit aussi que, dans ce qu'on vit, ça veut dire que le droit acquis d'avoir un service égal à celui de la majorité

anglophone n'est pas respecté. On a des droits constitutionnels en éducation. On voit que nos écoles n'ont pas le financement nécessaire. On est obligé de se contenter des écoles qui ne sont même pas bonnes pour les anglophones? Mais à cause d'une pénurie d'écoles, on les prend, nous. On les prend, monsieur le Ministre—et je suis content que tu me regardes, puis j'espère que tu écoutes. Honnêtement, j'espère que tu écoutes parce que le message est autant pour toi.

Mais on se contente des écoles que les anglophones ne veulent plus avoir parce qu'on en a besoin. Oui, il y a eu des investissements. Il faut le reconnaître. Je n'ai pas peur de dire qu'ils ont investi puis qu'il y a de nouvelles écoles; c'est bien, mais on en a besoin de plus. On en a besoin de plus, puis la communauté en demande plus, parce qu'on est le conseil qui grossit le plus. Les francophones, ce sont les conseils qui grossissent le plus. On a besoin de plus de professeurs. On a une pénurie d'enseignants.

Ma fille et ma femme travaillent dans le domaine. Elles sont des aides-enseignantes. On a des jeunes—de cinq à huit fois, ils changent de professeur dans un an; ils changent d'aide-enseignant. C'est pareil comme si c'était une porte tournante qui vire. Comment vas-tu avoir une qualité d'éducation en français quand c'est une porte tournante? Comment justifies-tu ça? Comment peux-tu dire à ce jeune-là qu'il y a une stabilité dans son éducation quand on manque le droit constitutionnel auquel il a droit?

Va-t-il falloir que les conseils vous actionnent, comme le reste des Premières Nations l'ont fait? On va être mis à ce point-là de dire au gouvernement : « Vous ne remplissez pas votre obligation constitutionnelle envers notre communauté. » On est rendu là. Il y a des conseils qui le considèrent sérieusement : demander au gouvernement de se réveiller puis de répondre à notre besoin.

Je veux parler de l'Université de Sudbury. C'est un besoin de notre communauté. L'AFO est ici aujourd'hui. Une de leurs priorités, c'est l'Université de Sudbury. Ils l'ont dit aux ministres. Ils l'ont dit à la ministre des Collèges et Universités. Je me demande honnêtement si la ministre sait c'est quoi, un collège puis une université. Je me le demande sérieusement; il y a une différence entre les deux.

Mais de dire qu'on n'a pas les étudiants, que c'est un manque, que ce n'était pas justifié—l'université a répondu à tous les besoins que le gouvernement a demandé de cette université. Le recteur a donné le financement qui démontre que c'était viable. Le montant d'étudiants qui viennent, l'avenir pour le besoin : ils ont tous les rapports. Bien, justement, vers 17 h, avant la fête du Canada, ils nous ont fait ça comme une bombe. Ils nous ont monté un beau bateau, je peux vous dire, moi. Ils ont monté un bateau à cette université-là; tout ce temps, ils travaillaient avec l'Université Laurentienne.

1330

Puis la communauté a été très claire: la communauté n'a plus confiance en l'Université Laurentienne. On veut notre université pour, par et avec—pas d'autre chose. Pourquoi? On le mérite; on veut notre réseau—puis, une affaire que vous allez apprendre : les francophones n'en démordent pas. S'il y a de quoi que vous avez appris, ou

que vous auriez dû apprendre, de Montfort, et aussi du jeudi noir—vous allez le vivre encore. Merci.

MOTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the Integrity Commissioner's report dated August 30, 2023, and that the question be put on the motion without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the Integrity Commissioner's report dated August 30, 2023, and that the question be put on the motion without debate or amendment. Agreed? I heard a no.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr. Trevor Jones: Speaker, I move that when the House and committees adjourn on Thursday, September 28, 2023, they stand adjourned until 9 a.m. on Tuesday, October 3, 2023.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Jones has moved that when the House and committees adjourn on Thursday, September 28, 2023, they stand adjourned until 9 a.m. on Tuesday, October 3, 2023.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait tellement plaisir de présenter ces pétitions, signées par des milliers de nord-ontariens et nord-ontariennes, qui disent :

« Alors que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s du Nord ont travaillé pendant un siècle pour la création d'une institution d'enseignement supérieur francophone pour, par et avec les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s à travers l'Université de Sudbury; et

« Alors que 65,9 % des Franco-Ontarien(ne)s croient que la province devrait financer l'Université de Sudbury pour la mise en place de sa programmation d'enseignement universitaire en français; et

« Alors que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s travaillent toujours pour leur droit d'obtenir la même qualité d'enseignement dans la langue minoritaire française que dans la langue majoritaire anglaise tel que garanti par la Charte; et

« Alors que des études ont démontré qu'à terme, l'Université de Sudbury générerait 89,3 millions de dollars pour la région; et

« Alors qu'il y a 8 500 Franco-Ontarien(ne)s âgés entre 10 et 19 ans qui auraient l'option d'intégrer un établissement d'études supérieures en français près de chez eux dans les 10 prochaines années;

Ils et elles pétitionnent l'Assemblée législative « de garantir le financement de 10 millions de dollars par année tel que demandé par l'Université de Sudbury pour assurer l'avenir de l'Université de Sudbury, une université pour, par et avec les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s, et ce dès maintenant. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je l'envoie à la table des greffiers.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition was spearheaded by Jennifer Bugden in Munster, along with a number of other parents. It's called "Petition in Support of Reopening Munster Elementary School." It has over 700 signatures so far, Madam Speaker. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) made the decision to close Munster Elementary School in 2015 due to low enrolment, and a significant factor causing low enrolment was the OCDSB's failure to offer early French immersion programs; and

"Whereas the closure of Munster Elementary School in 2015 has had a detrimental impact on the education and overall well-being of children in Munster Hamlet, Ottawa, and many community members have witnessed the hardships that Munster Hamlet's children face on a daily basis due to the closure of Munster Elementary School, including but not limited to enduring long bus rides averaging 45 minutes each way; and

"Whereas reopening Munster Elementary School would significantly reduce travel time for Munster Hamlet's children, allowing them to spend more time on their studies, extracurricular activities, and quality time with their friends and families; and

"Whereas the reopening of Munster Elementary School would foster a stronger sense of community among parents, students, educators and community organizations and would provide opportunities for local engagement and collaboration in shaping the educational experience of Munster Hamlet's children; and

"Whereas by reopening Munster Elementary School, Munster Hamlet's children would receive the individual attention they need to thrive academically in a local setting; and

"Whereas a thriving local school has positive economic implications for the entire community, attracting families looking to settle in an area with strong educational infrastructure and contributing to increased property values; and

"Whereas the OCDSB has no interest in reopening Munster Elementary School and is preventing public use

by the community for other local events, in order to make the case that the facility is unused and must be sold to a private entity to be used for non-educational purposes;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Education direct the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to either provide a plan to reopen Munster Elementary School or, if the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board refuses to reopen Munster Elementary School, to make use of section 194 of the Education Act, R.S.O 1990, to allow other school boards,” for example, French and Catholic, “to purchase the property so that they can reopen the empty school in Munster Hamlet, Ottawa.”

I proudly affix my signature to this petition and will be giving it to page James, who, by the way, is from Carleton.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

M. Guy Bourgouin: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario »—et, je devrais dire : « Pétition pour appuyer l'Université de Sudbury », excusez.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Alors que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s du Nord ont travaillé pendant un siècle pour la création d'une institution d'enseignement supérieur francophone pour, par et avec les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s à travers l'Université de Sudbury; et

« Alors que 65,9 % des Franco-Ontarien(ne)s croient que la province devrait financer l'Université de Sudbury pour la mise en place de sa programmation d'enseignement universitaire en français; et

« Alors que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s travaillent toujours pour leur droit d'obtenir la même qualité d'enseignement dans la langue minoritaire française que dans la langue majoritaire anglaise tel que garanti par la Charte; et

« Alors que des études ont démontré qu'à terme, l'Université de Sudbury générerait 89,3 millions de dollars pour la région; et

« Alors qu'il y a 8 500 Franco-Ontarien(ne)s âgés entre 10 et 19 ans qui auraient l'option d'intégrer un établissement d'études supérieures en français près de chez eux dans les 10 prochaines années;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario : de garantir le financement de 10 millions de dollars par année tel que demandé par l'Université de Sudbury pour assurer l'avenir de l'Université de Sudbury, une université pour, par et avec les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s, et ce dès maintenant. »

Je supporte cette pétition. Ça me fait plaisir de la signer et de la remettre au page Minuka pour l'amener à la table des greffiers.

1340

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is “Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the use of replacement workers undermines workers’ collective power, unnecessarily prolongs labour disputes, and removes the essential power that the withdrawal of labour is supposed to give workers to help end a dispute, that is, the ability to apply economic pressure;

“Whereas the use of scab labour contributes to higher-conflict picket lines, jeopardizes workplace safety, destabilizes normalized labour relations between workers and their employers and removes the employer incentive to negotiate and settle fair contracts; and

“Whereas strong and fair anti-scab legislation will help lead to shorter labour disputes, safer workplaces, and less hostile picket lines;

“Whereas similar legislation has been introduced in British Columbia and Quebec with no increases to the number of strike or lockout days;

“Whereas Ontario had anti-scab legislation under an NDP government, that was unfortunately ripped away from workers by the Harris Conservatives;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To prohibit employers from using replacement labour for the duration of any legal strike or lockout, except for very limited use to undertake essential maintenance work to protect the safety and integrity of the workplace;

“To prohibit employers from using both external and internal replacement workers;

“To include significant financial penalties for employers who defy the anti-scab legislation; and

“To support Ontario’s workers and pass anti-scab labour legislation, like the Ontario NDP Bill 90, the Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023.”

I absolutely agree with this and am signing it and thinking of every ACTRA member in Toronto—St. Paul’s.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Lorne Coe: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics are fundamental for student achievement; and too many school boards are jeopardizing student achievement by straying away from teaching the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics; and parents are being bullied and denied representation at school board meetings, and trustees are being bullied by other trustees;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario authorize the Minister of Education to set provincial priorities in education in the area of student achievement, and autho-

alize the Minister of Education to issue policies and guidelines setting out the training to be completed by board members, directors of education, supervisory officers and superintendents, and require boards to adopt codes of conduct that apply to members of the board.”

Speaker, I agree with the content of this particular petition. I'm going to affix my signature and date to it and provide it to page Ella.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

MPP Jamie West: Cette pétition s'appelle « Appuyer l'Université de Sudbury.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Alors que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s du Nord ont travaillé pendant un siècle pour la création d'une institution d'enseignement supérieur francophone pour, par et avec les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s à travers l'Université de Sudbury; et

« Alors que 65,9 % des Franco-Ontarien(ne)s croient que la province devrait financer l'Université de Sudbury pour la mise en place de sa programmation d'enseignement universitaire en français; et

« Alors que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s travaillent toujours pour leur droit d'obtenir la même qualité d'enseignement dans la langue minoritaire française que dans la langue majoritaire anglaise tel que garanti par la Charte; et

« Alors que des études ont démontré qu'à terme, l'Université de Sudbury générerait 89,3 millions de dollars pour la région; et

« Alors qu'il y a 8 500 Franco-Ontarien(ne)s âgés entre 10 et 19 ans qui auraient l'option d'intégrer un établissement d'études supérieures en français près de chez eux dans les 10 prochaines années;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario : de garantir le financement de 10 millions de dollars par année tel que demandé par l'Université de Sudbury pour assurer l'avenir de l'Université de Sudbury, une université pour, par et avec les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s, et ce dès maintenant. »

Moi, j'aime bien cette pétition. J'y affixe mon nom et la donne à la table avec la page Sophia.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is called “Bring Back Rent Control.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the” Conservative “government cancelled rent control on units built after November 2018;

“Whereas the cost to rent a home has never been higher;

“Whereas people are being forced to leave their communities because decent, affordable homes are increasingly out of reach;

“Whereas the rent control for all units act, 2022, will ensure tenants are not gouged on rent each year;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect tenants from predatory rent increases and pass the NDP rent control for all units act today to ensure renters can live in safe and affordable homes.”

I couldn't agree more with this, especially as tenants in St. Paul's are hit by apartments with no rent controls.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Enact Anti-Scab Labour Law.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978,” as well as “in British Columbia since 1993, and in Ontario under the NDP government,” which “was repealed by the Harris conservative government;

“Whereas anti-scab legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of scab labour during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short” term and the “long term, as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To pass the anti-scab labour bill to ban the use of replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I support this petition wholeheartedly. I have been on a picket line while scabs crossed the picket line. I will affix my signature and provide it to Minuka for the tabling.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a very apropos petition to present today, entitled “Health Care is Not for Sale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians get health care based on their needs, not their ability to pay;

“Whereas the Ford government wants to privatize our health care system;

“Whereas privatization will bleed nurses, doctors and PSWs out of our public hospitals and will download costs to patients;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to privatize Ontario's health care system, and fix the crisis in health care by:

“—repealing Bill 124 to help recruit, retain, return and respect health care workers with better pay and better working conditions;

“—licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses and other health care professionals already in Ontario; and

“—funding and fully utilizing public operating rooms.”

I fully support this petition, affix my signature, and will send it to the table with page Sofia.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. Piccini moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the minister.

1350

Hon. David Piccini: I'm happy to rise to address third reading of Bill 79, the Working for Workers Act, 2023. Before I begin, I would like to let you know, Speaker, that I will divide my time with parliamentary assistants the member for Mississauga–Malton and the member for Scarborough Centre.

I would like to start by saying that this is the first day on the job as minister in this portfolio. I would like to first just start by thanking the incredible team at MECP, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Both on the department side and on the ministry side, they've done a phenomenal job. It's been an honour working with each and every one of them. I'll miss them greatly. But Speaker, I'm very excited to start in this new role, and I'd like to especially thank everybody at the department and on staff who have been working very hard on Bill 79.

I'd also like to say a special thank you to my predecessor, former minister Monte McNaughton. I think it goes without saying he's been a remarkable champion for workers in the province of Ontario—someone who understands that to build the highways, roads and bridges we need, to build the homes that we need, the skyscrapers downtown that are going to house thousands of new people looking for the dream of home or apartment ownership, it's going to require workers and a robust labour force. It's going to require working with the federal government to increase immigration targets, all of which he has done. I would like to say a special thank you. I wish you all the best, Monte, in your exciting next chapter. And also a profound thank you to Premier Ford for entrusting this important file to me.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is taking unprecedented action to move and improve the lives of workers and make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family. I'm glad to have this opportunity to tell you about this exciting bill, helping workers find better jobs and bigger paycheques and addressing the historic labour shortages many businesses in our province

face. You don't need to look very far. In my own community, go into Jebco, go to Mirmil, go to any of the employers—Horizon Plastics, Sabic, Protoplast—they're all looking for workers. This is something we see across Ontario; this isn't unique to me. We had the mayor of Windsor down—historic investments thanks to this government, this Premier. We're going to need workers, Speaker.

And isn't it a nice thing to see, from under the previous Liberal government, where jobs were fleeing and where businesses were shutting down and people were getting pink slips, to today. The signs that I see—more than even signs that I had up during the election: "Help wanted," "Help wanted," "Help wanted" everywhere, because Ontario is booming again and because we're building things in this great province.

We're protecting vulnerable workers, Speaker, standing up for those who protect us and bringing new transparency when workers start a new job or have the unfortunate experience of being part of mass terminations. With Bill 79, our third Working for Workers bill, we're building on the strong success of our previous acts that this House passed in 2021 and 2022.

This is an important piece that hits home for me, as the grandson of a man in the fisheries in Newfoundland and someone who came to this country from Italy to build and to work for a union at Stelco. This hits close to home. I'll speak a little more about the latter on my dad's side—proud Hamiltonians who worked in a steel factory at Stelco. My dad worked in a steel factory at Stelco to help pay his way. He went to university—the first on that side of the family—and became an architect. I think to my aunt, I think to so many who have been working through union shops—Christmas parties, the important role that that played in my upbringing and in so many. And it's not unique to just there; then we have the other side of that side of the family that worked at Dofasco, a non-union shop as well.

What do both have in common? Men and women getting up each day, working hard on the front lines. In this case, it was for steel, but it's not just ubiquitous to steel; it's regardless. I think to my own community: men and women who are working in the forestry sector, who are working in injection moulding, who are working on the front lines at Mirmil, for example, to build the custom woodwork that we see at Harvard or at the new Miami Dolphins stadium, done right in my own community. I'm very proud of that, and I'm proud because we're making things again in this province. I'm proud that we're a leader in electric vehicles. And behind all of that are stories of men and women who are working hard on the front lines to provide for their families.

I had a great conversation this morning when I visited one of the LIUNA local sites, 183. I spoke to Jack Oliveira. He said, "Dave, I just want to leave behind a better place than I inherited." I think that was what my grandfathers said. That's what my parents have said to me. Jack's wise words are what so many of us aspire to do—leave behind a better place. I think everybody in this place has the same

goals: leave behind a better place than what we inherited. And that's what we're trying to do, at this ministry, for workers of this great province.

We followed this act and measures that we've taken in the past, with Working for Workers acts that predate the one that I'm speaking to today—amendments to make Ontario the first province in Canada to have requirements regarding a minimum wage and other foundational rights for digital platform workers who provide ride-sharing, delivery or courier services. This was monumental in the service sector. And no, I'm not referring to solely the service industry that the former Premier wanted to drive Ontario to become—they were, of course, famous for saying that as they drove manufacturing jobs out of this province. But we recognize that there is a digital-disruption reality that we're seeing today, and it's this government, this Premier and this ministry that said we're going to protect those workers—rights like minimum wage, the right to regular pay periods, the right to keep tips, and the right to resolve worker-related disputes right here in Ontario. These changes will go a long way to levelling the playing field and helping workers who rely—to get around or bring food to our doors.

Building on our mission to help people from other countries start their careers and build new lives, as my family did here, we took steps to make it easier for people from other provinces to do the same. Now skilled workers from other Canadian provinces and territories who apply to work in a regulated profession or trade must receive a registration decision within 30 business days from those bodies. This is an important part of how we're taking a customer service approach for workers who want to come to our province and help build Ontario.

We also took action to reduce overdose deaths by requiring employers to provide life-saving naloxone kits in workplaces where there's a risk of overdose. This was a first in North America. The ministry launched a temporary program to provide free training for up to two workers and one free nasal spray naloxone kit per workplace. Our ministry and I, as minister, make this clear: We want these life-saving tools in every Ontario workplace.

We enhanced worker health and safety by increasing maximum fines to the highest level in Canada for directors and officers of companies who fail to provide a safe working environment for their employees.

And as more people work from their kitchen, living room or bedroom, Ontario became the first province to protect workers' privacy by requiring employers to disclose electronic monitoring of their employees happening on their laptops, phones or other company equipment. Workers deserve to know if, how and why their employers are monitoring them through their devices—which brings me to Working for Workers Act, 2023.

Speaker, our proposed Working for Workers Act, 2023, is offering first-in-Canada action. We're presenting a way forward to attract, keep and prepare people to thrive in the future of work and power economic growth for all Ontario. We are working—government, business and labour—to make that happen. We have listened to the working people

of this province and set a course for real progress. It's an effort that will require all hands on deck as we aim to tackle the historic labour shortages that threatened to hold back our economy—and we cannot let it hold back our economy. We have too much happening right now—the \$30 billion just in the automotive sector alone. We can't hold back the progress that we've made. We have to get shovels in the ground. We have to ensure that these industries that are thriving in Ontario have the workforce, the backbone, to ensure that it gets done.

Our government has an ambitious plan to build the homes, schools, hospitals, transit and other infrastructure families and businesses need. But every day, Madam Speaker, we know there are 300,000 jobs going unfilled in the province of Ontario. That one job that gave a shot to my grandpa; that one job that ensured he was able to provide for my father to go to university; for me, that one job, for example, that my mom got in the education sector—these are jobs that we have to ensure are filled. That's 300,000 paycheques not being collected. That's 300,000 lost opportunities—the likes of which was the story of my family and so many in this place, regardless of political stripe. Those are lost opportunities that this Premier, this government will not sit on the sidelines and allow to happen.

1400

That's why we're working so hard to ensure we're the most competitive place in which to start a business, to grow the manufacturing sector, to start a meaningful career in the skilled trades.

You saw that we had a delegation from Arizona here. It's this Premier who understands that we're not competing against Prince Edward Island—with the greatest of respect to our friends in PEI—but we're competing on a world stage. We're competing against states south of the border, we're competing against Mexico, we're competing against Europe to attract talent, to build things, to ensure that we're a leader in electric vehicles, that we're not just giving rebates to the most affluent to buy EVs mined using critical minerals from a forgotten land, mined using practices that are questionable at best, but that we're willing to have the struggle, the discussion to ensure equity in the north for First Nation partners, to ensure that we're mining those minerals in a responsible manner right here, that we're using clean steel, for example, at Dofasco. I spoke to Ron over the weekend about the incredible work and—if you check today in the news, they talk about the first contract that GM, using clean steel to support our EV—the incredible might that is Ontario today. All of these exciting things require a workforce.

Speaker, Ontario's ability to select economic immigrants has been proportionally smaller than any other province. The Premier says, and we all know, that we have hundreds of thousands of people who choose Ontario, and I'm sick and tired—for the first time ever in my life, I've seen stories of immigrants who are going back home to the country they came from because the opportunity, the ability to own a home here is too out of sight. That is absolutely shameful. We have jobs that need to go to filled, and

we call on the federal government to recognize that Ontario is not at par with all other provinces. We recognize that the majority of new Canadians choose this great province, and we deserve the respect and the treatment, as a result, from the federal government.

When Ontario can nominate skilled immigrants for permanent residents who best meet the needs of our communities, everybody wins. If you talk to Mayor Chow, she'll tell you that. If you talk to Mayor Cleveland and Mayor Logel, who is in my community—they'll all tell you the same thing.

That's why, when the Premier worked for months with our federal counterparts to land a better deal for Ontario when it comes to immigration—and I'm proud to say we got that done. It's this Premier, this government that got that done; this government that recognizes Ontario is a leader in this federation and we deserve that sort of deal.

The feds answered our calls to double our annual allocation for the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program to 18,000 by 2025—and a big shout-out to the team at labour, immigration, training and skills development for working so hard to land that deal, because it has taken months. Speaker, 10 days later that same team announced an additional \$25-million investment to the program, and I'm so excited to hear that. This funding is necessary to speed up processing and ensure those coming to Ontario can start working in their professions quicker than ever before. This will help ensure we have the talented newcomers and innovative entrepreneurs Ontario needs to grow and prosper. The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program allows our province to nominate individuals for permanent residency who have the skills and experience to contribute to Ontario's economy and industry, like in the skilled trades and health care.

I was down at a LIUNA site this morning—one of their high-rises—and I spoke, and I heard the stories of men and women who have been with their work permits, having to reapply over and over and over again, who can't get permanent residency because of these sorts of barriers.

Well, this Premier says that just sitting back and pointing a finger to the federal government isn't enough. We've got to roll up our sleeves and fix the bloody problem, and we're going to do that. And I thank Jason for that conversation, and I thank the team at 183. This is so, so important to our economic competitiveness. But it doesn't just stop there. It starts with building more friendly training sites, more friendly job sites. And that's what we've done as a government.

Another group of workers we're stepping up for is construction workers and women in the skilled trades. There are more than 600,000 of these everyday heroes who build our province, but in the next decade we'll need at least 100,000 new workers in construction due to retirements and job growth. As I've said, we need to get those boots on the ground as quickly as possible to deliver the infrastructure projects Ontario businesses and families need—and that includes that promise to build 1.5 million homes by 2031. Yet the conditions our construction workers face are a world away from white collar workers.

They work outdoors, often far away from the many things we take for granted in our workplaces. This sounds glib, but what was one of the first things I saw when I got to the new ministry this morning? "Where's the washroom?" I know people can roll their eyes and laugh, but in all seriousness, that was one of the first things I looked for. On job sites today, those are far too far away. I see members looking at each other, in the opposition. But literally for that woman in the skilled trades, sometimes it's 180 yards away, and that's not good enough. We recognize that, and I would call on them to join us in recognizing that that's not good enough for a woman in construction today. It sounds bizarre, but that is an injustice, and we've got to fix it.

That's why our government recently launched the first inspection blitz targeting these dirty washrooms, ensuring that there are washrooms there for women, ensuring that they're lit, ensuring that they're clean. That's so important, to ensure that people have access to the simple necessities far too many of us take for granted, to ensure that we get the homes built, the buildings built that we need. Since then, our health and safety inspectors have visited over 3,200 job sites and found over 490 violations, but we're working together to ensure that that's down to zero. Furthermore, we doubled the number of washrooms, as I said, on job sites and required larger sites to have at least one women-only washroom.

All too often, we've heard from women that these are one of the reasons they don't want to work in the trades. Nobody should have to leave their workplace to find a decent washroom, and it's just as simple as that. It's more than the right thing to do; it's necessary to keep our workers safe.

Careers in the construction sector, we know, offer six-figure salaries with pensions and benefits, and it's an injustice that as little as 5% of them are filled by women. That's why we're working as government to ensure we increase opportunities for racialized Ontarians, opportunities for Indigenous Ontarians, opportunities for women in the skilled trades. It's an exciting challenge. But as I visit many partners like Hiawatha First Nation in the community that I have the honour of representing, and working in partnership with Hiawatha—when we see the fastest-growing youth population, this presents not only a challenge, but an opportunity for Ontario, and the Premier understands that and our government understands that.

Moving to remote workers and transparency: We know that the world of work has changed. Technology and Internet mean employment is no longer always dominated just by geography. With the click of a button or the opening of a computer, we can connect often to job sites that are hundreds of kilometres away. In the fourth quarter of 2022, 2.2 million workers here in Ontario were working at least partially from home, including 1.4 million full-time Ontarians. While these remote workers didn't have a desk in the office, their contributions to their employers and our economy are no less valuable. Speaker, our government is working for these workers by bringing forward updates to employment laws that respond to the evolving

workplace and changing economy. Under our proposed changes, employees who work remotely would be eligible for the same advance notice as in-office employees in any godforsaken termination. This would ensure that remote employees receive the same eight-week minimum notice of termination or pay in lieu, preventing companies from taking advantage of them and loopholes in the way work has evolved. Thankfully, our economy is booming, and we hope we never see these types of things, but we know from time to time it does happen.

The future of work is here, and our government will continue to lead the country in ensuring workers have the protections they need to find better jobs, earn bigger paycheques in the 21st-century economy.

1410

And we're not stopping there. Our legislation would also require employers to provide basic employment information before a new worker starts their first shift. Standardization holds both the employers and employees accountable. This would detail things like pay, work location and hours of work, things every worker should know before they start a new job, to prevent bad actors from taking advantage of workers, because when we rebalance the scales for workers, everyone wins.

Speaker, I'll now move on to the heroes, the men and women in uniform, military reservists. Our government will always stand up for the brave men and women in uniform. When our heroes are overseas or in training, being the heroes that they are, they shouldn't have to worry. Thousands of people in Ontario are active reservists in the Canadian Armed Forces. I think to Kennedy, who used to work in the environment office with me and so many more like him and many more friends I have in Northumberland-Peterborough South. They put their full-time careers on hold to join important military missions at home and abroad. They step up to provide support during search-and-rescue operations, natural disasters, ice storms, wildfires, conflicts and other major events, and we see more of them with climate change. So it's so important that we support them.

We know it isn't easy for military reservists to pack up and leave on a mission, especially if they're starting a new job. We also know it isn't always easy for them to immediately return to their job afterward, particularly if they are injured or experience trauma in that mission. That is why we're proposing a reduction in the length of time workers need to be employed before on-the-job protection kicks in—reservists leave to go serve their countries abroad—down from three months to two months. It's this government that brought it from six months to three, now three to two. In cases where there's an emergency at home, we're proposing there be no length of employment required, which we believe is common sense when responding to emergencies here on Ontario soil, on Canadian soil.

This year, we've seen wildfires from coast to coast. We're grateful for the bravery and hard work of everyone battling to save lives, homes and communities. But it's more urgent than ever to ensure that when the Canadian

Armed Forces need to support these efforts, reservists are able help those efforts immediately, and their jobs are protected; they have a job to go back home to. It's this government, this Premier that's saying yes to that.

Speaker, I will now move on to fines for holding passports. This is something that's foreign to me, and I'm sure to many: Imagine holding an employee's passport. A key emphasis of our proposed legislation is protecting the most vulnerable workers. As we know, Ontario relies on newcomers to help the labour shortages in our province. Yet despite prohibitions in the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, some businesses continue to take foreign nationals' passports and work permits. Not every work environment is as loving and as welcoming as many of the farms—I'm from rural Ontario, so I think of Wilmot Orchards. It's Joseph who puts on the barbecue. He's from Barbados and is a member of the family. He's a Rotarian and he's proudly a member of our community. I think to Algoma Orchards. I think to so many communities that rely on temporary foreign workers and on foreign nationals who come and are members of our community, who are working, quite literally, to put food on our table.

But we're a big province, and we know that there are bad actors out there and we know that we need to protect the most vulnerable, those who get off a plane and are on the front lines of our workforce, which is why our government is strengthening protections for foreign workers to hold those would abuse them accountable, so they can quickly find our officers knocking at their door, God forbid they do this. With this legislation, we are proposing the highest maximum fines in Canada—I repeat, the highest maximum fines in Canada—for employers and recruiters who are convicted of taking or retaining a foreign national's passport or work permit. If our proposed amendments are passed, people convicted would be liable for a fine of up to \$500,000 for each passport taken and up to 12 months in prison. Corporations would be liable for a fine of up to \$1 million.

What we're saying here is that if you have the bravery to come into Ontario to fill one of the many jobs we need, we've got your back. You're going to be protected. We're going to ensure that the full force of the law falls on anyone who thinks it's acceptable to withhold passports. We're getting serious about that, Speaker, and I'm proud that it's this government that's standing up for the most vulnerable, this government that's protecting them, that's saying, "If you have the courage," as my grandfather did, "to go across an ocean to go to a foreign country—perhaps it's a language that isn't a language of your own—we've got your back, you're going to be protected and we welcome you, because we need you. We need you in this great province of Ontario." Anyone who preys on vulnerable members in our community has no place in this society, no place in our Ontario.

Last spring the government raised fines for individuals to a maximum of \$500,000 and to a maximum, as I said, of \$1.5 million for directors and officers of a corporation. The idea that injuries at workplaces are a cost of doing business is over. That's ensuring that our workplace health

and safety legislation in Canada is among the strongest. So not only on the passport side but also on the workplace safety side as well are we increasing those fines. We will hold lawbreakers accountable. Bad actors will not get away with taking a lax approach to workplace safety. It's part of our commitment to build a stronger Ontario.

Speaker, I will also, before I turn things over to my incredible colleagues working on the front lines here, touch on extending cancer coverage for firefighters. I've got firefighters who live around the corner from me in Port Hope, incredible volunteer firefighters, incredible firefighters who get up each and every day to keep our communities safe. I want to thank them for the work that they do. We're helping them in this legislation. These brave men and women are there for us in our times of greatest need. As many often say, as we run from the flames, they run into them. They put their lives on the line to save others. They run into those burning buildings while we run from them. We know that we are forever thankful as a province for their courage. In return, we've got to be there for them. That's why in this piece of legislation we're going to have their backs.

What many might not know is that firefighters die of cancer at a rate of up to four times higher than those in our general population. Every year, 25 to 30 firefighters die of cancer in Ontario. We owe it to firefighters and their families to ensure that they have fast access to benefits for work-related illnesses. That is why we have changed the regulation to make it easier for firefighters, fire investigators and their families to get access to Workplace Safety and Insurance Board compensation. These changes expand presumptive occupational cancer coverage for firefighters and fire investigators to include thyroid and pancreatic cancer. Anyone—and I've had this in my own family—who has had to deal with these types of cancers know how devastating that is. We're saying to firefighters, who are quite literally heroes, "We've got your back."

By presuming these cancers are work-related, firefighters and fire investigators can now get streamlined access to benefits and other critical supports they need and deserve while they focus on one thing and one thing only: their health. These measures were retroactive to January 1, 1960, helping to ensure that those who have these cancers or have had them in the past can get help. I just want to pause there, Speaker: Retroactive to 1960—it's a big move.

This applies to all firefighters, those who are full- or part-time, and volunteers, as well as firefighters employed by First Nations, band councils and fire investigators. I think of the innovative partnership I've seen between Hiawatha and Otonabee-South Monaghan in my own community. We owe it to these firefighters and their families. Once again, it is the right thing to do.

Speaker, I look and I see I only have a minute; I've never suffered from a lack of things to say as a politician. This is a good piece of legislation that my colleagues will elaborate on, because I still have more I wanted to talk about, but I'll close on grade 11 apprentice pathway and just the broader theme of youth, of ending the stigma.

When you've got a job in the skilled trades, you've got a job for life.

I think of the many remarkable young boys and girls when I'm visiting schools. You know what? I'll just pause and say "new schools," thanks to this Minister of Education; schools that aren't being shut down, like they were in rural Ontario by the previous Liberal government. So when I go to these high schools, like Norwood high school, slated on the docket for shutdown by the previous Liberal government—and I'm proud to say that Norwood, which is increasing its population and responding to the Premier's call to build more homes, has got a high school. The population is booming.

I sometimes get a hard time from my mom; she wants to know when the grandkids are on their way, because we see so many families walking. I see young boys and girls, and it's so inspiring. Whether you're new Canadians, whether you've lived in our community your whole life, I see families in our community, and they deserve to have a place close to home in which to be educated.

1420

We're saying to these young boys and girls that when you've got a job in the trades, you've got a job for life. You're going to make things in this province. You're going to build the roads and highways we need, the schools, the hospitals, the long-term-care homes that we need, and we're working with these municipalities.

I'm truly proud of the work that we're doing expanding the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. Stay tuned; we've got more to come, where we're going board by board with the incredible Minister of Education to talk about those increases that we're doing as a government: innovative pathways into the skilled trades; working with labour leaders like the labour leaders I was with this morning, listening to them, saying, "How do we get more men and women?"

I was 60 floors up, looking at the Toronto skyline, literally standing on the floors of soon-to-be apartments for working Ontarians, standing with the men and women. They were about to pour the concrete. It's exciting, and I saw the sense of fulfillment that many of these workers had in building things a few years later. The biggest frustration, they said, was the permitting process. But I saw—it was just breathtaking: building floor by floor, talking to the workers about what they're doing.

I'm grateful. I'm grateful for what they do, and I'm saying to them that you've got a government that's listening. You've got a government that understands that not everybody needs to go to university. It's great if you do—we need people there as well—but we recognize that we haven't done enough in the skilled trades, and we're going to do more. Stay tuned for Working for Workers 4, and so much more that this great ministry is going to do.

I'm not even a full day in in the Legislature in this new role, but I'm excited. I'm excited to work with our next generation. I'm excited to work with the many incredible men and women who are at this ministry. I'm excited to work with the new incredible political team there, to

ensure that we're responsive to the ever-changing labour needs of this great province, our home, Ontario.

With that, I'll turn it over to my colleague, Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Today I'm proud to rise in support for the third reading of Bill 79, the Working for Workers Act, 2023. Madam Speaker, before I start my remarks, I always like to start by thanking God for giving me an opportunity to serve and giving me the health so that I can come and deliver these remarks.

Thanks to the members of the Indigenous community for taking care of this land for thousands of years and allowing us to meet here. Thank you to all the immigrants who came before me and all of us, and thank you for the hard work building our beautiful country.

Thanks to the residents of Mississauga–Malton for giving me an opportunity to serve. I'm here to be your voice.

Finally, before I start my remarks, Madam Speaker, thanks to my immediate family, my extended family and my staff. Thank you for your continuous support and your sacrifice. This is a hard job, but your support and sacrifice always make me serve Ontarians. Thank you, Leo, for helping me out.

Madam Speaker, we're talking about Bill 79, and I was listening to the new Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development's passionate remarks. I was looking at the clock and I was thinking he probably could go and finish the full hour, and that probably would not be enough for what we're doing working for workers. This is no secret: We've reached so far. Thanks to our former minister, Monte McNaughton, for all his amazing work. I used to call him the champion for workers. Thank you, Minister, for all your work. You will be dearly missed.

I truly believe that, if passed, Bill 79 will improve the employment experience for workers, strengthen workplace protections and make our labour force more competitive. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, Working for Workers legislation has already helped millions of workers in our province.

While at the same time I'm proud of these accomplishments, there is still a lot more that needs to be done. That is why, in April, we announced further changes that would add to our success by helping to make Ontario the best place to live, work, raise a family and thrive. Talking about some of the things which we're doing through this bill, Madam Speaker, is we're increasing corporate fines under OHSA, another way our government is standing up for workers and providing an ongoing commitment to the health and safety of the workers in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, what we're doing through this, if passed, is amending the Occupational Health and Safety Act to increase the maximum fine for corporations for committing an offence under the act from \$1.5 million to \$2 million. This would give Ontarians the highest maximum corporate fines under workplace health and safety

legislation in Canada. We're making sure that we are helping our workers to make sure they're able to serve the Ontarians. For an example, I'll give you a quote from the former executive director of the London Abused Women's Centre, Megan Walker:

"The Working for Workers Act, 2023 provides a strong message to those who exploit migrant workers that they will be held accountable for their actions. Combined with the new powers given to ministry officers to levy penalties of \$100,000 to \$200,000 for each passport or work permit a business or person withholds, the act provides police with stronger tools to take action. The government is giving migrant workers back their human rights, to have control over their own documents including their passports."

As a human rights advocate, Madam Speaker, I stand in solidarity with this. Simply put, workplace injuries and deaths should not be a cost of doing business.

Another great example, Madam Speaker, is to address the labour shortage. It is important to ensure internationally trained individuals like me, when we come here to Canada, can register in their regulated professions. That is why we have to make sure that everyone choosing Ontario to build a better life can get to work faster by making additional changes to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act. We need to remove even more barriers that internationally trained professionals face when seeking registration in regulated professions.

I do remember when I came to Canada—and in fact, one of my colleagues, MPP Sheref Sabawy, talked about it in the past as well. When you come to Canada with your family, you have a choice: Either you work towards your professional licence or you feed your family. Most often, we, as immigrants, tend to feed our family because that's our first priority. While we're feeding our family, getting licensing is the second priority. By doing this, what we're doing is actually losing as a community.

Think about the situation: You have a degree, you have the knowledge, but since you don't have the licence, you cannot fulfill the jobs out there which are going vacant. You cannot deliver the results which are required, and you actually work at the lower salary. In other words, you have less money for your family and you're producing less for your nation and you're giving less taxes that can be used to serve the country.

That is why we are making sure that where regulated professions offer alternatives to Canadian work experience requirements, these alternatives do not create new barriers for our newcomers. We're proposing further changes to ensure that the applications for different licensing and registration are clear. This work builds on past changes, including prohibiting Canadian experience requirements and removing other barriers that foreign-trained professionals face when seeking registration in our regulated professions. Ontario was the first province in Canada to prohibit regulated professionals from requiring Canadian experience as a qualification for registration,

except if an exemption is granted by the minister for the purpose of health and safety.

1430

There are many other things, Madam Speaker, in this bill. But, looking at the time, I would say that I'm calling for all in this House to support the Working for Workers Act, 2023. We must build a stronger Ontario that works for everyone. We must take action now to plan for the future and lead by example. I'm confident in the measures we are outlining, the positions we are taking as Ontario to be the frontrunner in charting the way forward as the workplace and the way we work continue to change. Madam Speaker, by giving workers a better deal, we're not only protecting them, we're also attracting more workers to Ontario while ensuring that our economy remains stronger in the years to come.

I wish to all our colleagues: Let's come together, support this bill and let's join our hands to build a better Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. David Smith: Today, before I give my remarks to this healthy bill that is before us, I want to welcome each and every member back to the Legislature. It's a place that we call home away from home, and it's nice to see all the faces back in the building, back in the assembly and doing great work for the nation of Ontario.

I would like to start by thanking my Mississauga colleague MPP Deepak Anand for—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Please refer to members by their riding or ministerial portfolio. Thank you.

Mr. David Smith: Sorry?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Members should refer to other members by their riding names.

Mr. David Smith: Yes, sorry. MPP Deepak Anand.

Interjection.

Mr. David Smith: Mississauga–Malton. Sorry.

Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today for the third reading of Bill 79, the Working for Workers Act, 2023. First, I want to congratulate member David Piccini. Am I saying that right?

Interjection: Minister.

Mr. David Smith: Minister—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Please have a seat.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I just want to remind the House that when you refer to another member, you have to use the riding name or ministerial portfolio. Please do not use the real names of the members. Thank you.

Mr. David Smith: Let me start over again. First, I want to congratulate the new Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and member for Northumberland–Peterborough South on his new role. I want to thank the former minister, Monte McNaughton, member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—

Interjection.

Mr. David Smith: Okay—for all that he has done in his important role.

It has been a meaningful experience to work with my colleagues to further support and protect workers and their families. As we all know, and as the minister has said before, we need to take our economy working for the future; we need to support all Ontario workers, because an economy that doesn't work for workers doesn't work at all. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the Premier for his tremendous leadership and support for this bill and our last two Working for Workers acts. These acts are helping millions of people already, and we will continue moving Ontario forward with this next piece of legislation, if passed.

Speaker, this you've heard from the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development about how this bill builds on the success of its predecessor. We have heard how it will help us build a stronger Ontario and leave no one behind. And you've heard from the member for Mississauga–Malton, parliamentary assistant, about the many actions we are taking to improve the employee experience, protect vulnerable workers and remove barriers for newcomers.

I'd like to talk now about more ways—through this legislation and changes to regulations—we are going to further protect workers, honour the dignity of our everyday heroes and support the skilled trades to build Ontario.

First, I will speak on employer transparency. For one, Working for Workers, 2023, if passed, would allow us to make further changes to require employers to provide basic employment information when new workers start their first shift. This written information would outline things like pay, work location and hours of work—things every worker should know before they start a new job. It is only fair that people fully understand their work requirements and compensation before they start. Workers shouldn't be subject to surprises of this nature after they start their new employment. This will help balance the scales between new hires and their employers. And it will help attract workers to our province and keep them here. When we work for workers, everyone wins.

Second, I will address the grade 11 apprenticeship pathway. We are also going the extra mile to support our skilled trades. There are roughly 1.2 million people working in skilled trades-related occupations in Ontario. But at the same time, about one in three workers in Ontario with an apprenticeship or trades certificate as their highest credential is 55 years of age or older. And the average age of an apprentice in Ontario is 29. In construction alone, we will need over 70,000 skilled workers by 2027 to fill positions as workers retire, all while we prepare to build Ontario at an unprecedented speed. We plan to build at least 1.5 million new homes. We need to reach that goal to help workers and families find a place to live, with a mortgage or rental payment they can afford.

Our ambitious infrastructure plans also include subways, highways, child care centres and long-term care for seniors. To build all of this, we need skilled tradespeople.

We need more well-qualified, skilled labour. We need more young people, especially—people with their whole career ahead of them.

The skilled trades are full of exciting careers where workers can earn a six-figure salary, work towards a defined pension and have a job for life they can be proud of. And it is an excellent time to find meaningful work.

That is why, as Premier Ford announced in March, we are developing an accelerated apprenticeship pathway that will help students enter the skilled trades faster. Those who receive their certificate of apprenticeship through the program could also receive their Ontario secondary school diploma as mature students. Helping young people to accelerate their careers while maintaining eligibility for a high school degree opens up more opportunities. And at a time when we continue to face historic labour shortages, it permits more students to enter the trades faster than ever before, to help build a healthier Ontario.

1440

We will also start consultations this fall on more ways to make it easier for young people to enter a career in the skilled trades. This includes exploring the potential of lowering academic entry requirements for the trades that currently require a grade 12 education. We will be talking to employers, unions, education stakeholders, trainers, parents and others to make sure our solution builds Ontario in a way that leaves no one behind. We are taking action to address the labour shortage and unlock Ontario's full economic potential.

Now, regarding clean and safe washrooms, women's washrooms and PPE, I would like to share that another way we are attracting the next generation of skilled trade workers to build our province is by improving work site conditions in construction and making sure these fulfilling jobs are open to everyone.

Across Ontario, there were 600,000 people working in construction in 2022. Every one of these workers is a hero. Rain, shine, summer or winter, they get up early, put on their gear and travel to job sites to build the homes, roads, schools and hospitals our families need. Yet, Madam Speaker, the conditions these heroes face can be rough, especially the state of washrooms on so many work sites.

In February, our ministry launched the first inspection blitz in provincial history targeting unclean washrooms. Since then, health and safety inspectors have visited over 3,200 job sites and found over 490 violations. The common issues they find on sites are no toilets being provided, facilities that lack privacy, and failure to meet basic cleanliness and hygiene standards. That is why we have taken action to increase the number of washrooms on job sites and introduce tough washroom standards. These rules would require toilets to be completely enclosed and would require washrooms to be adequately lit and have hand sanitizers where running water is not possible. All of our construction workers, both those entering the industry today and those who have been putting in an honest shift for decades, deserve the basic dignity of access to a clean and safe washroom.

Furthermore, we are requiring larger construction sites to have at least one woman's-only washroom. Many of my colleagues tell me they hear far too often from women that this is the main reason why they have not gotten into the skilled trades. We need to change that, and it will happen if this bill passes. Nobody should have to leave their workplace to search for a washroom. Work sites need to meet the basic needs of all their workers. To attract more women to the trades we need to do better, and we are taking action to do just that.

In addition to improving washrooms, we are making it clear that protective equipment and clothing provided to, worn or used by workers in construction must be a proper fit. It is not only the right thing to do; it's necessary to keep our workers safe. For women in construction, having access to properly fitting gear isn't always a guarantee. In fact, women often wear protective equipment manufactured for men, and that should stop now. Everyone should have protective clothing, boots and safety harnesses that fit properly. Women belong on our job sites, and they should see themselves reflected in the protective equipment and clothing that they wear. This isn't just about safety; it's about sending the message that these jobs are open to everyone.

Our government is proud of the steps we have taken thus far, and we have seen the results. In the past years, the percentage of new entrants to the skilled trades who are women is up by nearly 30%. But we are not satisfied yet. We are going to continue pursuing measures that will encourage women to join the skilled trades and make sure the doors to these in-demand careers are open to everyone.

I want to take a moment to talk about another group of everyday heroes, our firefighters. Firefighters risk their lives to enter smoke-filled buildings, to rescue people, battling out-of-control blazes and responding to other emergencies. Their work touches the lives of so many people and communities across Ontario. Their work touches the lives of so many people and communities across this great nation. They're there for us in our greatest need, and we need to be there for them.

Firefighters die of cancer at a rate of up to four times higher than the general population. Between 25 and 35 firefighters pass away every year in Ontario. We owe it to them and their families to ensure that they have easy access to compensation for these work-related illnesses. That is why we made it easier for firefighters, fire investigators and their survivors to access Workplace Safety and Insurance Board compensation. We expanded presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters, including primary-site thyroid and pancreatic cancer.

By presuming thyroid and pancreatic cancer are work-related, firefighters and fire investigators can now get easier access to benefits and the support they need to recover. These measures apply to full-time, part-time and volunteer firefighters, firefighters employed by First Nations band councils and fire investigators. These measures are retroactive to January 1, 1960, helping to ensure that firefighters who have these cancers now, or who have had them in the past, can get the help they need

and deserve. We owe it to firefighters and their families. It is the right thing to do.

Madam Speaker, I conclude by calling for everyone in the House to support the Working for Workers Act, 2023. The measures outlined in Bill 79 will position Ontario as a frontrunner in charting the way forward. As workplaces and the way we work continue to evolve, we are balancing the scale between new hires and employers. We are providing remote work protection. We are supporting military reservists, protecting our most vulnerable workers and removing barriers for people who want to work in this province, and new regulatory changes will help us continue to build Ontario by growing the skilled trades and protecting the dignity of everyone who is a hero in these professions, like preparing young people to start rewarding careers in the trades, making sure we have clean washrooms on construction sites and everyone has gear that fits, and taking care of people who risk their lives for us.

By protecting and supporting our workers—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much.

Question?

1450

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Welcome, Minister, to your new role, and I want to thank you for sharing your family's history and background with Stelco.

On July 15, 1946, the USW 1005 went on strike and faced union-busting tactics such as the use of scab workers. Right-wing politicians tried every tool that they had to bust up the union. At one time, an army of hundreds of scab workers armed with rubber hoses, axe handles and bricks attacked the workers at Stelco. In the end, the union prevailed against the right-wing politicians and the scab army.

My question: Will you support NDP legislation to block the union-busting tactic of allowing scab workers?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member for that question—it is my first day on the job, and I appreciate that important work—and for acknowledging my family's history.

You know, I don't even like the terms "right-wing" or "left-wing" politicians. This Premier has said he doesn't see Ontarians through that light; he sees Ontarians as people who need to be valued, and that's exactly what this legislation is doing for workers. It's supporting breaking down barriers for access to the skilled trades. This legislation is supporting newcomers who seek better opportunity, better access to a job in their field. It's supporting our heroes: firefighters, reservists and so many more.

I would always welcome a sit-down with that member, and I'm really proud of the work that this ministry has done on this piece of legislation to smash barriers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to stand in my place today.

Speaker, indulge me: On September 25, 1963, the Progressive Conservatives were elected to another majority government of the leader of Premier John Robarts. As

part of that 27th Parliament, there was a young man, a 40-year-old man and father of 13, from the little village of Barry's Bay, who was also elected and, in keeping with the theme of these speeches today, was the first person of Polish descent ever elected to this Legislature. That man happened to be my father, Paul Joseph Yakabuski, and today is the 60th anniversary of his election. I am so proud of the work that he did before me and how he served his people and he served us as our father. I know that none of the things that I've been able to do here—or even being able to get here—could have been accomplished without the work of my father before me. So, on the 25th of September, 2023, happy 60th anniversary, Dad. Thank you.

Hon. David Piccini: I know from going up to a wedding in Renfrew how well-respected this member is. And I'd love to say it was just because of his work as a Yakabuski, but we all know—and from my time at environment, conservation and parks—it's also his father. We all look up to our dads in different ways. I look up to mine—I told the story—as an architect, the first to go through university.

I just want to say thank you for your father's service. Obviously, his father did a fine job, because MPP Yakabuski is a fine role model for all of us in this place.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

MPP Jill Andrew: I'm glad to stand on behalf of the residents and community members of Toronto–St. Paul's, my home riding, to talk about the government's Working for Workers Act.

There are many ACTRA workers in my community. There are TVO workers in my community. There are health care workers, PSWs and nurses in my community. And none of them feel like this government is working for workers. Today, we had thousands of health care professionals and allies at Queen's Park fighting a government that wants to privatize health care.

So my question to this Conservative government is, how is the Working for Workers Act helping public sector workers? How is it helping TVO workers? How is it helping ACTRA workers? How is it helping migrant farmers who are being bullied by bad employers? And does the Working for Workers Act include a repeal of Bill 124—because that would really be working for workers.

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Speaker, when we speak in absolutes, as that member does all the time, as if that member is some ubiquitous voice for every unionized worker in the province—the reality is that unionized workers vote for different parties; they come from all walks of life. And it's this government that has listened to them. It's this government that has said to women, "What do you need to succeed in a workplace?" We've listened. It's this—

Interjection.

Hon. David Piccini: Perhaps if you listened you might learn something, instead of heckling—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Through the Chair.

Hon. David Piccini: —as that member always does.
Interjection.

Hon. David Piccini: The member is not interested in finding any common ground. I understand what that member is interested in, and it's unfortunate. When we try to find common ground, we listen to workers like my grandfather and others, who come from foreign countries, who are abused with respect to the passport piece that we put in this legislation—workplace health and safety. We're going to stand up for them—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much.

Questions? The member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The minister spoke about firefighters. Firefighters are heroes of our community, aren't they? But they're also workers—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Order. Order in the House. The minister for labour, immigration and training.

Mr. Lorne Coe: So, Speaker, speaking about firefighters and them being heroes in our community, but also workers—and what our government has done is expanded the presumptive coverage for firefighters. This has been a long-standing request from firefighters across Ontario, including the firefighters who will be present at the memorial service on Sunday. But we've done more. We've listened carefully, and we expanded that list. I'd like the minister to expand a little bit more about what those impacts are and why we did that and why this legislation allows it.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member for that important question.

We know that when there is a fire, there are firefighters to save our lives. Madam Speaker, that is why, in Working for Workers Act 3, we want to make sure that we are standing for those firefighters who are standing for us all the time. That is why we are expanding the list of presumptive cancers to thyroid and pancreatic cancers—firefighting and fire investigations also quickly access Workplace Safety and Insurance Board benefits and services. Our government is making it faster and easier for those heroes and their families to access the compensation and support they deserve. Claims related to thyroid and pancreatic cancer would be retroactive to January 1, 1960. That's how we're helping our firefighters.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick question.

MPP Jamie West: The number of working people who are accessing food banks on a regular basis has continued to climb since 2018, when the Conservative government was elected. I know that's the fault of the Liberal government, but it continues to climb every year. In fact, in Toronto, food bank clients with full-time employment have doubled in the past year—in 2022—to 33%.

How is this working for workers if full-time workers are going to food banks?

Hon. David Piccini: I thank the member for that important question. I think the member recognizes, as we

all do, that global realities like the war in Ukraine, COVID, disruptions to supply chains all have their impact.

I think what we've said in this legislation here, that we're protecting workers by protecting their lot when it comes to their experience on the job site—as I went to in my remarks—ensuring that those who seek to abuse the most vulnerable workers are brought to justice and that they have no place in this province of Ontario. It's improving pathways.

1500

When my grandfather came over, he was able to provide for his family and gradually progress to the point where then they started a shoe store etc. I think what we're trying to do here is recognize that there are many who seek a brighter future in the province of Ontario. If we ensure that they're protected when they first land, with respect to the passport piece that I talked about, if their health and well-being are protected, as I alluded to in my speech, and if we remove barriers to credentialing, as we're doing as well in this piece of legislation, we improve their experience and enable them to get a leg up.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you very much, Speaker, and welcome back, colleagues, to our first day following the summer session.

I want to recognize the new Minister of Labour. I recognize it's his first day officially in the House. I enjoyed his debate. I was listening fulsomely earlier. I love in these afternoon debates that we have the opportunity to get to know each other on a different level. We get that opportunity to hear about each other's family and background. He shared a little about his father and his grandfather.

My dad actually was here at Queen's Park today. I didn't introduce him at introductions because he was outside protesting. Bill Moore, my stepdad, a member of my Unifor Local 598, he worked at Falconbridge for 31 years and he's been nearly 30 years as a pensioner standing up for worker rights.

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree because I've been standing up for worker rights for a little over two decades now, first as a steelworker. I was very proud as a steelworker to speak on behalf of workers and represent them as a steward. My passion was always health and safety. Afterward it was my pleasure to be nominated and then elected as MPP for Sudbury and re-elected again. I spent the last five years speaking on behalf of the people of my city and was thrilled to be the labour critic, because labour gets overlooked a lot. Labour is supposed to be a balance between employers and employees. The Minister of Labour is supposed to ensure that balance, but traditionally, we don't see that. We really don't see that.

Not to go too far into the weeds, I just want to recognize my dad being here, because how often does your dad get to come and visit you at work?

I'll be honest with you, Speaker, the first time I came here, when I was elected—I was here once as a steelworker. I sat over here and I was escorted out of the

building. When I returned, when I was walking here as an MPP, it was very interesting because it was the first time I ever came to Queen's Park by myself, the first time I ever came to Queen's Park walking on the sidewalk and not marching with others, and it was the first time there wasn't a barricade preventing me from coming through the door. A lot can change in 10 years.

Just because today is Franco-Ontarian Day, I just want to say a few words in French.

Aujourd'hui, c'est la journée franco-ontarienne, et moi, je suis très fier de la communauté de Sudbury—et je suis très fier de cette Chambre et de tous mes collègues. Le drapeau franco-ontarien a été créé à Sudbury. C'est très important pour ma communauté. Maintenant, ce drapeau est un symbole de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, et ça, c'est très important. Merci beaucoup à tous mes collègues—conservateurs, libéraux, vert et du parti néo-démocratique—pour ce drapeau ici dans notre Chambre.

This bill was tabled last March and it was rushed into debate. It was tabled just before March break and there were several press conferences about it. Today, actually, in the debate you'll hear a few things that were brought up that really aren't in this bill. It's easy to check because if you pull up the bill and you do control-F, you can search by keywords.

As much as they talk about firefighters—and I really do understand how important it is to have presumptive legislation for people suffering from occupational diseases and cancers—it's not in this bill. It's a great talking point. It's a great headline. I'm assuming the regulation was changed, but it is not in this bill. It just doesn't exist. You see that in the debate. We saw it in March, and we saw it again this time, where there's not much to this bill. It's not that it's a bad bill; it's just low-hanging fruit.

This time of year, in my community—well, probably all communities—is when the apples start to spoil and fall on the ground. As bears are getting ready for hibernation, it's not uncommon in my neighbourhood to see a bear come out from the bush and, if you have an apple tree, probably tear down some of the branches for the ones that haven't fallen. That really is my image when I think of low-hanging fruit. Those apples that fell on the ground will help a bear get fat, but they're not really ideal. They're not what workers are screaming for. I'll get into it further on.

The idea of having washrooms for women: Absolutely, it's a great idea, but just having a washroom and having that be your bare standard—no pun intended—just a washroom by itself? That's not enough.

I worked construction for 10 years. It is freaking cold. If you think it is a delight to sit on a plastic seat in the middle of nowhere as you're putting up the building—because the building is what breaks the wind—and take off all of your equipment inside this little tiny room where you can barely fit your knees, so you can sit down on a freezing cold seat—if you think that's working for workers, you've lost your way.

I speculate—and I don't begrudge anybody; we welcome different backgrounds and we share different

information—it's because you're not talking to workers enough, or if you are, you're not listening enough. There are whole systems that you can bring in for washrooms that are heated and plumbed. You can have hot showers. If we want to set a standard, if you want to say you're working for workers and you want to attract people to the trades, then get them off a board with a hole in it, with a pot that holds human waste, and get them into flushable toilets, because that's how we attract people to trades.

There's nothing romantic about it. I'm a blue-collar guy. I'm a knuckle-dragger. I did that work, and I'm proud to be part of a union that does that sort of work with miners and labourers coming out of construction. We love it. We like to get dirty. It's fun. But honestly, if you can improve it a little bit, a couple of gruff guys will growl a little bit, but I'll tell you: If you improve their work life, they'll fight you if you try to get rid of it.

When I was a furnace operator, we had to lift boxes of clay, about 20 pounds each, and one year on our health and safety committee, we got a hydraulic lift for it. I remember Rudy—Rudy looked like Clint Eastwood. Back when you could smoke in the workplace, I never saw Rudy without a cigarette in his mouth. Once we had an SO₂ leak, and it was all white, and every once in a while I would see his cigarette glow through the white.

Rudy had a voice kind of like this when he talked, a super-growly voice, and I remember when he saw these platforms, Rudy said, "What's next? Rainbow-coloured clay?" About a month later, Rudy's hydraulic lift broke, and I thought we were going to have a work refusal, because lifting 20 pounds of clay every day, every few shifts, every time you do a trip gets hard on the back. You see the insight of it, and so we need to make these changes.

If we want to work for workers, I'm right beside you. I'm 100% aligned. This is my life's passion. I love working for workers, but that's not what this bill is doing. It's more of a headline. It's the low-hanging fruit of the bill. I want to make sure that we get to better parts of the bill, things that really should be in there.

I mentioned, for example, the firefighter cancer coverage. I believe it's in regulations—I can't remember, through the summer—but it's not in this bill. All through the headlines, they talked about it, as if it was coming in the bill: "We're going to debate this bill. We're going to make sure that the NDP doesn't vote against this." First, we wouldn't vote against it. Second, it's not in the bill.

I remember in debate, people asking questions from the Conservative side: "Will you support firefighters? Why won't you support them?" It's not in the bill. It's like asking if I support mowing my neighbour's lawn or something. It's just not here, so it doesn't make sense to talk about things like that. I think it's great to say, "We're very proud that we did this." I'm very proud that my colleague from London West tabled paid sick days several times. I'm very proud of it. I think it's an excellent bill, one that should be in here and should be passed.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That's what working for workers is.

MPP Jamie West: Right? That is working for workers.

What I'm saying is that we need to ensure that we put forward good legislation. If you're going to have a press conference, don't pretend it's in the bill; just say, "Hey, we're changing the regulations."

1510

The clean washrooms, the washrooms for women—I talked a little about this earlier—I think it's great, but the bar can be raised and the bar should be raised when it comes to washrooms. Think of the washrooms we have here at Queen's Park. That's the sort of washroom that people want in their workplace. I know you can't get it everywhere; I understand that. But saying, "Porta-potties is the best we can do"—it is not the best we can do.

You can write legislation saying that you're going to have a trailer that's going to have running water, that's going to have soap and water, that's going to have warm water, that's going to have a place for people to wash their hands before they eat food. You can put all this in legislation and then say, "Unless it's impractical or unable to provide." You can do things like that, but bring the bar up to where it is. If you really believe—and I do believe that my colleagues think this—that the trades are an important job and we're in a crisis for filling trades, then make it attractive for people.

I know that, traditionally, we think of women as being more delicate and softer, and they shouldn't have to wander down to Tim Hortons farther away and stuff, but I'm going to tell you, guys would like a decent washroom too. We have all been there. Every single one of you here has been to a public facility that is not very clean, right? Where you're a little bit happy that you don't have to sit, that you can sort of stand back. So let's bring the hygiene standard up for everybody and attract more people to it.

The other thing about this, when I think about washrooms in workplaces and construction sites, is that the regulation is great; put it forward and say, "You have to have washrooms. They have to be on-site and maintained and cleaned." But I drive back and forth from Sudbury to Toronto for work on a regular basis and not all of the gas stations are open 24 hours. They have these little road stops, these pull-off areas for people who are driving a truck, and they have porta-potties in there. Some of these are okay, but some are not great at all. Some of them are really, really disgusting, and those are MTO ones. Those are ones that the government has their thumb on. If we can't maintain the ones that the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario is responsible for, how are we going to ensure that we enforce construction sites all across this province with the number of inspectors that we have?

That gets back to why I'm saying that it's a headline bill. It sounds great for someone who doesn't work in the area. It sounds great for somebody who isn't involved with construction sites. But for someone who's on a construction site, it's just hot air. It's a "believe it when I see it" sort of thing.

Farther north, you get past Sault Ste. Marie and those washrooms on the side of the road are closed in winter. They don't even have washrooms. Those are also provincially owned.

Another thing that was brought up—and I heard it today again—was about the young worker apprentices and how this is a great part of this bill. But, Speaker, this is not in the bill. There's nothing about the young worker apprentices in this bill. It might be coming in the next one, but it's not in this bill. And so when we get to questions and comments later on and someone says, "Will you support firefighter coverage or young worker apprentices?", just make sure it's in the bill. Do a quick scan.

That's the sort of thing where I'm thinking to myself that perhaps it's not so much that the Conservative government is working for workers, Speaker. Maybe that's not the priority. I think the priority is to have headlines so that other people think that they are. A lot of people, if they've never had to deal with WSIB—Workplace Safety and Insurance Board or workers' comp—believe that it works and that the issues only happen in rare cases, but the reality is, WSIB is a pretty unforgiving animal, and it doesn't work for most people. For a lot of people who have a long-term injury, they end up on ODSP. They end up in poverty. But if you talk about it like it works, then people might believe that.

We've brought forward amendments for this bill. After it passed second reading, we brought forward amendments, and I just want to talk about some of the amendments that were there because it doesn't really—all of these were voted down by the way, and so I think discussing them sheds a light onto what working for workers really means.

The first amendment that we had brought forward was about expanding the definition of a foreign national. We heard a lot about this. My hat is off to the former Minister of Labour for trying to do something about this. I'm not trying to discourage this. There was a big story in the paper about an employer who had basically held the international workers' passports hostage, and they had deplorable working conditions. The former minister was trying to do something about it. We wanted to expand the current definition of "foreign national" so that they'd have more employment protection for more people who are working like this. That was voted down. What's ironic, though, was the example that the minister was talking about that spurred this provincial legislation—unless we expand the definition of "foreign national," it won't actually help those workers in that story. That was voted down by the committee.

Our next amendment was—I mentioned earlier my colleague from London West and her Stay Home If You Are Sick Act, a paid sick days act. We brought that forward as an amendment. We said, "If you want to work for workers, here's how we can do it." The reality is, if you want to help people in a workplace—if you're sick, it's nice to be able to stay home. Each and every one of us here has the ability to stay home, as elected officials. I'm not putting down anybody, because we have really busy schedules and we're always out there doing a lot of stuff. But if we're sick, we can stay home. We have that flexibility; a lot of workers don't, and a lot of those workers who don't are in precarious workplaces. They're

gig workers, they're minimum wage workers, and they cannot afford to have a day off, especially with the price of rent—especially with the price of rent right here in Toronto, but across the province. Rents and mortgages are so high that I don't understand how someone who is sick and who doesn't have paid sick days can afford to take the day off or can stay home with a child who is sick. I grew up in a family like that. I grew up below the poverty line. I remember going to school and the school sending me home because I was too sick. My mom sent me because she could not afford to have a day off. I don't even know how I got there—walking to school. That's the reality for a lot of people. We talk about workers, but let's not put blinders on—let's remember that workers include the kids too. Whatever situation the family is in, the kids are in that situation. If the parents are stressed financially, if the parents are worried about making ends meet, if the parents are worried about being evicted, those kids know. They may not know all of it, but they know there's stress in the workplace. So you're not just taking care of workers; you're taking care of the children of the province as well. Further amendments that went into it were also about basically matching the wording of the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act.

During earlier debate, they talked about leave for Canadian armed services reserves—we thought this was such a good idea, that it should be paid leave. You can work this out so that if there is income, it's supplemented so they don't fall down. So if you're involved in your position as a reservist, it guarantees you a certain amount of pay—then you just don't lose money for being a reserve. We thought it was such a good idea. Why don't we ensure that the brave men and women who serve our country don't lose pay for being in the reserves? That was voted down. We felt like it was a good “working for workers” provision; the Conservative government felt otherwise. Included in there, we also thought that—and I didn't realize this until I spoke with the researcher. The Employment Standards Act: If you have an employee who's in the reserves—when they go off to the reserves, then you don't have to contribute to their benefits plan while they're gone. We didn't think that was fair. These are people who go above and beyond to serve the country, and we thought that they should get their benefits. We thought it was important. If we're going to stand here—and we will about a month from now. We're going to stand and we're going to talk about Remembrance Day and the importance of people who have served. My colleagues across the aisle—I've heard many great stories about family members. One of my colleagues—I can't remember his riding, but I know he's very close to his Legion. We believe this—all of us here. I know sometimes this is an “us and them” philosophy, but I believe everyone here understands the importance of our military and the people who volunteer for that. But we felt like they should have their benefits continue while they're gone, and the Conservative government voted against that.

The next amendment is helping employers transition to the paid leave. We don't want an undue burden for the

employers. We understand that it's difficult for an employer to make ends meet, as well, especially in tough times like this. So if we're going to tell employers, as government, “You should pay these people while they're gone. They're not making wages, they're not working in your workplace, but you should pay them”—well, how do we transition to that and ensure that employer is successful? We wanted to ensure the employer was successful so the employee can be successful, so that their kids could be successful. It's a really great situation, but that, too, was voted down by the Conservative government.

1520

We tried to bring in anti-scab legislation. I'm going to talk about anti-scab later on—anti-replacement worker? I don't know what you're comfortable with. Where I'm from, we say “scab.”

The reality is, these extend and lengthen lockouts and labour disputes and strikes. It divides community. It is not good for anybody. It's not good for the people who cross the line. It's not good for the people outside the line. It's not good for the management, the people who have to deal with these relationships afterward. It doesn't exist in Quebec. For the longest time, it used to not exist in Ontario. If you want to work for workers, it's a great way to do it. The Conservative government voted no on that amendment.

We wanted to lower the diesel particulate matter to 0.02. There are miners all across the province who have had “Make 20 the Limit”—I'll get into DPM later on, but it's 0.02 particulates. Now, to his credit, the former Minister of Labour, did reduce it to 120, but it's still 100 more than what's considered safe for the scientific community. So we thought, why don't we bring this forward? Why don't we bring this forward so there's a plan to get to where it is? That was voted down as well.

We spoke very adamantly about OW and ODSP, about giving away personal information of people on OW and ODSP. We read an entire letter. My colleague—I know everyone by their first name; I'm trying to do their riding—from Scarborough Southwest and I each read the letter that came from the privacy commissioner strongly urging the government not to do this. I thought this made sense as an amendment. Sometimes when you're in a position of leadership, it's hard to make a decision, but if you have someone who's an expert in the matter and they're urging you, you can delay at least. You can say, “Well, yeah, let's pass this amendment and re-look into what we're doing.” But that, too, the Conservative government voted against.

We also thought that we would finally introduce the member from Nickel Belt's bill—I'm a co-sponsor of this one—the Respecting Workers in Health Care and in Related Fields Act. We're in a crisis when it comes to health care. You may have heard from the noise outside that there was a huge health care rally. It was a big one. It filled the entire lawn. There were a lot of people there. That's tough to do on a Monday morning. But look, health care workers are out there in spades, so if you think you're

doing a good job for health care workers, the Conservative government really isn't.

The member for Nickel Belt and I co-sponsored a bill that would create a wage floor and it would provide pensions and guarantees and benefits and for people. It really is how we solve it any time there's an issue when it comes to filling labour: Basically, you pay people decently, you give them some benefits, you have a pension, you make it a career instead of a gig job that people want to quit, and you attract people and you keep them. That, too, was voted down.

The last one that was voted down: My colleague from Niagara, a strong labour person as well, had brought forward a deeming bill. Now, I know it's more complex; the title was fancier than that. But really, for most people who understand this, it's about deeming. It has to do with WSIB. What happens is, you're injured in the workplace and you're losing money. You're not able to return to work. So what the WSIB is able to do is deem you able to do a job, and they can remove you from WSIB. You're physically not able to do certain jobs, but if they come up with, for example, that you can be a parking lot attendant and they believe that's a job you're deemed able to do—and that's great if you can. But Speaker, the number of parking lot attendant jobs has really dwindled. I don't know if you've noticed, but most of them are automated. So if you're deemed able to do a job, it doesn't matter if that job actually exists, it doesn't matter if they're hiring in that job, it doesn't matter if you're able to get the job, you're removed from the WSIB. This is a thing that punishes workers—workers who are working in the workplace and injured, unable to continue the work, and then the Conservative government right now but whoever is in power at the time, the WSIB is under their mandate. The Minister of Labour has responsibility to the WSIB.

So what happens in that situation is that you have a worker who's injured, who feels like there's a safety net for them when they're injured so that they can get better. And then the pressure—first of all, you don't make as much money as you did, so you feel that pressure, and then you feel the pressure that you're going to be removed from WSIB: psychological, mental and also financial pressure, knowing you're not even going to be able to make ends meet. And then you have basically the government of Ontario telling you, "Well, you can get a phantom job." It doesn't exist, but you could get one. The only way that works, Speaker, is if you can pay your bills with phantom paycheques, but you can't. So what you do, actually, instead of working for workers, is you're punishing workers. So this deeming bill—the member from Niagara Falls tabled it in the last session as well. He tabled it again this session. You could pass this and actually be working for workers, and I'm talking about a lot of workers who have been poorly affected by this bill.

I already spoke about this—sorry, I'm going through my notes. I'm all over the place when I'm talking.

I mentioned this bill was a bill about the low-hanging fruit. Again, I'll say it's not that it's a bad bill, Speaker; it's just that you could be more ambitious. There's a lot of

work to be done. One thing I think that my colleagues from the Conservative Party and I would agree on is that the Liberals did a very poor job when it came to taking care of workers. I was president of my labour council in Sudbury when the Liberal government was in power. Just before the election, they did a huge survey about what they should do to address workplace issues and what labour laws were important. Basically, about a year before the election, they had a package that was presentable and they sat on it, and basically licked their finger and checked which way the wind was blowing. When they thought they would lose the election, they passed a few things out at the last minute, but they were not a working-for-workers party. It's an interesting thing, because the Liberal government always wants people to believe that they are who they are in their ads. But the reality, I believe, is that when they run, when they campaign, they campaign to the left. They campaign like the New Democrats, right? But when they come into power, they're more like Conservatives. You look at the greenbelt, more recently, and privatizing the greenbelt, or I know it's a hot-button issue, so let's go with the 407, selling off the 407, something we all owned. That's something New Democrats would never do. That's not in our DNA. We don't believe in privatizing stuff. We think that making a couple of your friends wealthy isn't in the public interest, so we would never have done that.

What happened is, the Liberals sold off Hydro One to private interests, and hydro now is more expensive than ever. The 407: The number of people who just don't take the 407 because the cost of the 407 is—well, I haven't been able to confirm this; I do know it's the highest in North America, but I'm willing to bet it is the highest in the world—the highest in the world for tolls. And you know where all that money goes? Not in our pockets, not for the people of Ontario who paid to build the place. That money for the 407 goes to private developers who are incredibly wealthy. They're so wealthy, I don't think they have to take the 407. They could helicopter into town. They don't have to deal with travelling on the ground.

I was just talking about your deeming bill and how important it was. This really is a bill that doesn't address things. The point of not addressing and the low-hanging fruit in March was pretty apparent, but if you went through the last summer, if you saw how bad people are suffering through the summertime, you would see that this is definitely not reflecting the needs of workers in Ontario. We have workers working full-time who can't afford rent and food—unbelievable. And I'm talking about well-paid workers.

Last summer, I was on the campaign trail. I met an engineer. An engineer pays pretty well. She wanted to save for a house, her and her partner, both with good-paying jobs. She said, "I don't even know if I can afford my rent." Something has gone wrong here. I know the Conservative government loves to blame the federal government, but I'm not buying it. There's some accountability that you have here as well. When it comes to it, when people are working full time—the next generation of kids, my son and younger, they don't even think they're going to own a

house. The only way they're going to own a house is when they inherit it. When they think of having a place of their own, "their own" means them and several of their friends. When I was my son's age, when I was going to school, I worked on the weekend and caught an odd shift and I had my own apartment. The price of housing and apartment rentals in Sudbury was about \$100 difference, and you basically chose based on where you wanted to go. Now, there were some really beautiful apartments that were a lot more, but I'm talking an average apartment that you wouldn't be embarrassed to bring your mom to. You basically picked where you wanted to go. Do you want to be near the school? Do you want to be near the lake? Do you want to be downtown where the bars are? Where do you want to live? Fifty to a hundred bucks' difference—that was it. Now it's like an investment. I look at some of the rental ads and I feel like I'm looking at a De Beers anniversary engagement ring. How can your rent be two months' salary? It doesn't make any sense to me. There is nothing being done to tackle this. I know the pretence was that the greenbelt was going to do it, but look, no one's buying it. We're all friends here. We can say it openly.

1530

I talked about paid sick days earlier. This is a really good bill. I know sometimes you're hesitant to support a bill that comes from another party, but the reality is that this has been in place in a lot of places for a long time already. New York is one of those areas where it's been in place. There's good data about it. I encourage my colleagues from the Conservative Party to look into it, because all of the boogymen around paid sick days and the abuse and all that stuff, in all of the data they have from New York, haven't happened. It just hasn't happened. What has happened, for the most part, is people don't come to work sick.

Let's say that I came here sick and then I gave it to everybody, and you go home and you give it to your friends. I'm not talking about COVID; I'm talking about that cold. We have all been in a situation where someone shows up for work, and they have that raspy voice, and they're like, "Sorry, I've got a bad cold," and you think to yourself, "Great. Now I have a bad cold." If you have paid sick days, then people don't come to work sick. They don't come with that phlegmy, gross-sounding voice that we've all suffered through and then give it to everyone else at work and have the productivity go down or have people have to miss days because they get sick. It's a bill that we need to support.

Anti-scab legislation: I want to talk about this because it feels loaded sometimes for people. I know some people are more comfortable with "anti replacement worker." I'm old school. A "replacement worker"—I used to be the worker safety rep at the Copper Cliff Smelter. Jody Leveille is my replacement worker. Jody does that job now. If I've moved on to another job or if I were to retire, then someone replaces me. When we talk about anti-scab, we're talking about somebody who is on strike, in a legal position to be on strike or is legally locked out by their employer.

The only strength you have as a worker is to withdraw your labour. More and more companies are multinationals with super deep pockets, so the impact that you can have from withdrawing your labour becomes more difficult. If you work for a worldwide company, one where the CEO might not be able to even point to where you're located, let alone know that Rudy's has the best hamburgers in town, your ability to influence them through market share becomes pretty depleted. And it becomes extra depleted when the local government has said that, "Well, if you want to, you can hire and bring in replacement workers as much as you want."

That's just in terms of balance, because the Ministry of Labour, you have to remember, is about labour—the workers—and employers too. It's about both and finding balance to them.

I once got yelled at because I called the minister the "minister of employers" because I felt like he was blind to the need of workers. But it's because of precedent in the past.

I talked earlier, Speaker, about sitting over here at Queen's Park when I was a steelworker. I was on strike at that time. I was on strike for a year. The member from Nickel Belt brought forward anti-scab legislation, and it was debated. One of the reasons we got kicked out was because we were incredibly frustrated, because we saw the Liberal government—basically what they did, Speaker, is they got up and they counted how many Conservatives were there, and then they decided to run to the back. I didn't know these were lobbies behind us. I actually thought of them as little mouse holes they went to hide in because they were too embarrassed. My MPP was one of the members who ran in the back because he didn't want me to know he voted against it. He just didn't show up for the vote. I was sitting here. My colleagues, my brothers and sisters from the steelworkers, were in the galleries. We were trying to get this to go forward.

The data is there. The information is there. But the Conservatives voted against it. The Liberals used them so they could say, "It wasn't us." The Liberals came into power guaranteeing they would bring back anti-scab legislation. Mike Harris cut it. New Democrats brought it in; I'm proud to be a New Democrat and that we brought forward anti-scab legislation. Mike Harris cut it. He got rid of it. The Liberal Party promised—broke their promise—that they were going to bring it back. I guess you only had 15 years; how are you going to do it?

It was tabled every single term. You can only table once each term, but it was tabled every single time and was brought forward for debate. I watched as it was voted down. That's heartbreaking when you're on a picket line.

When you're on a picket line and you're looking at your kids—I have three kids. My daughter was young. My daughter was just starting kindergarten back then. When you're looking at your kids and they're unable to go to hockey or dance, when they're not able to participate in certain things, when you're worried about what's going to be in their lunch, when every week you're having spaghetti for dinner—and you know that there's a government

here that is allowing people to go across and extend the length of your labour dispute—to do your job, to use your locker.

In my workplace, Speaker, they gave my locker to somebody. They didn't even remove the pictures from my locker; they just gave it up to someone else to use. So, every day, this guy came in to do my job and looked at pictures of my kids while taking food out of their mouths. That's disgusting.

You want to talk about working for workers for real? Anti-scab legislation—I'm going to give you the opportunity to vote for this year. This is the right thing to do. It's the time to do it. You want to tell people you're working for workers? You want to say you're friends of the union? Put your money where your mouth is. Because I'm not shy to say that I'm supportive of it—at all. And none of my colleagues on this side are.

In fact, when we tabled an anti-scab bill last year, we had too many people co-signing. We had to rewrite the original draft because we had too many people on the list. My colleague from Niagara Falls agreed to remove his name so we would be able to have the people who had actual strikes and lockouts in the area that were using scabs to be on that bill.

My colleague from Toronto—St. Paul's talked about ACTRA earlier today, with repetitions about the importance of anti-scab legislation. ACTRA's commercial workers have been locked out for more than 500 days. I think today is 517 days that they've been locked out. You know how much help they've had from the Conservative government?

Interjections: None.

MPP Jamie West: As the old mayor of Toronto would say, "Nobody!" Zero. They had no help at all. I asked in this House right here, right here in this chair in the corner office, I asked the Premier how comfortable he was that government ads from the province of Ontario were using these union-busting ad agencies that were using scab workers. Of course, he didn't answer, because he rarely answers. It was deflected away.

During estimates, I asked the Minister of Labour, "Why do you support scab work?" His thing was, "They appear to be in negotiation. I don't want to get involved." I reminded the Minister of Labour that, if you're sitting on the fence, your backside's going to face somebody.

The reality though, Speaker, is that if you don't want to get involved, then don't use scab labour. There are a lot of ad agencies you can go to. I'm not saying not to advertise. I'm just saying, in the middle of a labour dispute, if you don't want to show favouritism to the worker side and you don't want to show favouritism to the employer side, then pull out completely. But don't think you're fooling the workers of Ontario if you are hiring and giving money to employers who use scab labour. If you think anyone believes you're working for workers, you're out to lunch. You've lost the thread.

Bill 124: I've got to be honest, Speaker, I can't believe we're still talking about Bill 124. This bill is a train wreck. When people look back at the last half decade of this government and they see Bill 124, they're going to roll

their eyes. I can't believe that any Conservative MPP can go anywhere and talk about workers without someone yelling out "Bill 124" to you.

Bill 124, just if anyone is watching or reading this later on, caps public sector workers at 1%. We are in a level of financial crisis like you've never seen before. I can't remember if it's 6.5% or 7% just last year alone, but typically the cost of living is 2% to 3% every year. So if you cap somebody at 1%, basically what you're doing is, you're giving them a haircut. You're telling them you're not taking home as much money as you did last time. Your spending power is going to go down.

We went through COVID, we went through a health care crisis, and the people on the front lines who were deemed essential workers—in health care, in long-term care—all these public sector workers were told, "You are not worth any money." I want to be clear about this: When you tell someone that they are worth less, you are telling them they're worthless. That's what you're telling the workers.

1540

Bill 124 capped it. I was sitting on this side over here somewhere, but I remember talking about Bill 124 and what it stated, and I said, "You're going to lose. I'm not a labour lawyer, but, come on, this bill is unconstitutional. You're going to lose." I should have put money on it. I should have bet with the minister on it, because in November 2022, Justice Markus Koehnen of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that Bill 124 breached the charter and was therefore void.

You have an unconstitutional law that we told you was unconstitutional—and honestly, Speaker, you know as well as I do that the Conservative government has great lawyers. They're going to be busy now with the greenbelt. They have great lawyers. They knew it was unconstitutional. They have lawyers on their bench who could have told them it was unconstitutional. If a guy from the smelter can tell you it's unconstitutional, I'm sure a guy who actually went to law school could tell you. So you have an unconstitutional bill, you table it anyway, and you go through it anyway. You fight and you pay the court costs to fight it. Then the justice for the Ontario Superior Court says, "You breached the charter. It's void." And do you go, "Oh, my God, I'm sorry about that," and repeal it? No. Oh, no. You double down. I think the theory is—I believe the reason the Conservatives do this, Speaker, is because it's not their money, right?

I talk about Zapp Brannigan—which seems inappropriate for a guy my age. In *Futurama*, Zapp Brannigan is like a caricature of Kirk from *Star Trek*. One of the phrases he says is, "I'll send wave after wave of men to their death to fight my pointless battle." I think of that when it comes to lawyer fees for the Conservative government. They fight everything. They lose everything, but they don't care. It's not their money; it's taxpayer money. Blow as much as you want—because they will float a bill called Working for Workers and people will think they're helping them out, and maybe people won't notice that they're just blowing taxpayer money left and right on all these ridiculous ideas.

Look, you lost the first time. If anyone wants to put bets—I'm going to say you're going to lose the second one—I'm taking it. I'll take any bet that you got on this. You're going to lose the second one. I have read a lot of arbitrator decisions. They're not the same as this level, but look, there's no wiggle room in this. It's not just that the Conservatives lost, Speaker, it's that their own witnesses helped them to lose. Their own witnesses proved what they were saying was the opposite of what they were saying. I cannot imagine they're going to do well in this, but still, they're appealing the decision.

This has gotten so bad that police officers are now talking to MPPs about Bill 124 and how it affects attracting people to the force, because the wages are capped. We know that our police officers are hard-working. We recognize that. One of our colleagues served as a police officer. When you have a job that a lot of kids sort of play as kids—I think we all played that we were police officers or firefighters; it's one of the first jobs you understand as a kid. If you can't attract people to come into that field because of Bill 124, maybe it's time to listen and figure out how it's damaging workplaces and jobs.

Bill 124—I mentioned it before—is a wage-restraint law and it capped wage increases to 1%. That was the max you can get. There were a lot of workplaces that tried to bargain below the 1% so people had to fight to get the 1%, which is unbelievable. There were also other workplaces that really didn't need this. They weren't going to be affected by it, but they were lumped in there.

When this was tabled in 2019, you could tell this was important. They were elected in 2018. In early 2019, one of the first things the Conservative government said was, "Let's punish workers. What's the best way we can do that? Well, let's freeze their wages at 1%." The President of the Treasury Board, when it was tabled, said, "We want to shrink the province's budget deficits." What he didn't say, but what I read into it, was, "Let's shrink it on the backs of workers." He said that Bill 124 would demonstrate respect for taxpayer dollars, ignoring all the people who were affected by it.

The outcome of this, though, is that with taxpayer dollars, you've blown a ton of money fighting this, and you're blowing a ton of money appealing it. And just like with the Liberal government with Bill 115, you're going to blow a ton of money on having to pay people out. You are wasting taxpayer dollars by doing this—not respecting them. You're insulting the workers who are affected, and you're insulting the workers who aren't directly affected, because they're going to have to pick up the tab and pay for your blunder, the Conservative mistake.

Do you know what's happening because of Bill 124? Through the summer—when we were here just before we rose last time, I remember that one day Jessie who works in my office had to go home early because the smoke was so bad. I said, "You don't have to stay here." The smoke was that bad. We have an air purifier now to try to help with it. There were so many forest fires that when I was meeting with my colleagues who were state-elected officials, they were asking me why they got so much of our smoke from Canada. I've never seen fires like this—so many fires this summer. It was a hot summer. We said

it was a hot labour summer. It was also a hot, burning summer. In Ontario, we were 50 fire crews short. In the summer that we had, when every time you turned on the news there was a fire somewhere, we were 50 crews short. Part of that was because the Conservative government had cut 67% of funding for wildfire management programs—67%; that's more than half. I'm not great with math, but I know that without nearly 70% of your funding, you're probably not going to do as good of a job. There was a myth for a long time about doing more with less. Come on, man. There's no more fat to cut; we've gone through the muscle, we're into the bone, and we're going to start ripping out the marrow soon. You cannot cut 67% of funding for wildfire management programs and think that you're going to do a decent job. God bless the workers out there bending over backwards to do this work.

This is what I was told when I met with OPSEU: "The wage-suppressing Bill 124 has negatively impacted many government departments and I am well aware of the high turnover that does persist in Ontario's aviation, forest fire and emergency services because of low pay and precarious work, which has made the crisis even worse. Ultimately, this means there are not enough experienced fire rangers to lead crews."

That is not working for workers or respecting workers. That makes things unsafe in a workplace that really is about a hazard and addressing a hazard, that provides safety for all of us.

Near here, USW Local 1998, the Steelworkers union—they're the staff-appointed union at the University of Toronto—recently voted 95.4% in favour of going on strike, if necessary. I want to spell that out, because I remember the power workers talked about a final vote offer, and the Premier got up and said, "I'll force them back to work." This is a strike vote, so just cool your jets a little bit. This gives the mandate, saying that the workers are frustrated and fed up, and that if they can't reach a deal, they're going to go on strike; they'll have a vote to go on strike. The reason they're saying this and the reason they're giving their elected negotiating committee the right to call for this job action with such a strong mandate, up to and including a strike, is because the university is telling them, "Oh, Bill 124—we can't give more than 1%." The University of Toronto is a university with deep pockets. I walk home sometimes through their campus. You can get pretty tired walking through that campus. It's a big place. They have a lot of money. They're doing okay. They know they can't argue about that funding, the money that they have. What they can argue about, though, is, "Oh, the Conservative government can't let us do it." This is what it means for workers.

I don't see the Conservative government in the corner for workers. I see them in the corner for big business, time and time again. We saw this during COVID. Remember, during COVID, all the small businesses had to close down, but Walmart and Galen Weston's Loblaws got to stay open? That didn't help workers. That didn't even help small business owners. It always comes that way. Whenever we ask questions about labour disputes—"I can't get involved". But the minute the Premier hears the

whiff that there might be a final offer vote, he says, “I’ll legislate them back to work”—like that; he can’t wait.

There was an interesting development with ONA when it comes to Bill 124. ONA told me that ONA members are leaving their jobs because vacancies were not being filled, creating unmanageable workloads leading to burnout and exhaustion driving employees from the workplace—ONA, nurses. Just out front of these windows, you’ll see a whole bunch of hospitals. Lots of hospitals across the province are just desperate for nurses and health care workers—walking out the door.

1550

One of the members opposite talked about tradespeople retiring—the average age is somewhere around 50—and that they’re walking out the doors. It isn’t just the workers. It’s not a numbers game; it’s a skills game, as well. If I was to be a new nurse, I want to be paired with a nurse who has been around for a long time, who can tell me and teach me what they’ve done.

It’s the same as in the trades. The reason you have an apprenticeship system in the trades is so that, as you’re learning, someone who has been there for a long time can help you improve, show you the things that you need to know, and take the stuff out of the book and show it works practically.

ONA, the Ontario Nurses’ Association, are basically quitting their jobs because of Bill 124—being burnt out. In the arbitrator’s decision on this, they gave them raises on top of the 3.5%; 3.5% this year, 3% next year, roughly about 11% of the two years for the average nurse.

Arbitrators are overruling your decisions to appeal this, because it’s wishy-washy now, because it’s unconstitutional. Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer said the cost to the province will be approximately \$900 million, just for ONA alone. There are a lot of workers in the public sector. When you talk about respecting taxpayers’ dollars, you’re not. You’re not. You’re going to be paying them \$900 million just for this union alone, and that is if they don’t lose the appeal, because it increases by an additional \$2.7 billion if you lose the appeal, which I’m willing to bet you will.

I don’t understand why you tabled it in the first place. I don’t understand why you fought it. I don’t understand why you continue to fight Bill 124, because you keep costing the taxpayers of Ontario more and more money. You keep insulting the public sector workers. These workers that you talk about are the heart and soul? These are public sector workers as well. You turn a blind eye to them.

In estimates, I asked the Minister of Labour, “Treasury Board said that Bill 124 would demonstrate respect for taxpayers’ dollars, so would you agree that you can better respect the taxpayers’ dollars if you could have saved all these lawyer fees and associated court costs?” He didn’t really know how to answer. I think he didn’t know how to answer, because it’s kind of true, right?

Something we could be doing and that should be in this bill is that we should be figuring out how to raise the minimum wage. Now, in my notes, I wrote down that the Conservative government often talks about the number of unfulfilled jobs. The new Minister of Labour said, I think

in the third or fourth sentence, that we have got to fill these jobs. We have to pay people enough that they can buy food and put food on their table, put clothes on their kids’ backs, and pay their rent. I was at the Metro picket line on Bloor Street—I was with a bunch of them, but I went to the one on Bloor Street and workers there talked about not being able to buy the food at Metro. Imagine working at a grocery store and not being able to shop at the grocery store where you work. I hear this from tradespeople too.

I know the Conservative government loves to talk about the trades and the jobs are there. They’re great jobs. I was an electrician’s apprentice. I worked in construction. They’re good jobs and they pay well. They are good jobs, but more and more, these workers with these good-paying jobs that the minister likes to talk about aren’t able to buy the houses that they’re building.

I built some places that I couldn’t afford either. That happens, but the reality for a lot of people who are in the trades right now is that they can’t afford a house. There are no more starter houses. There are no more affordable houses.

More and more, we’re saying, “Come and get involved in trades, because you can work all day, long hours, and you’ll never be able to afford a house.” How is that message going to attract somebody? It’s not. It’s not going to. We need to address this.

Now, let’s just talk about the elephant in the room. We have minimum wage. I know it’s a delicate balance. If you’re an employer paying minimum wage, you’re trying to balance the books and all that stuff, but there are a large majority of people or workplaces who pay minimum wage that can—don’t tell me for a second that Walmart can’t afford to pay more than minimum wage. Don’t tell me for a second that McDonald’s can’t afford to pay more than minimum wage. Don’t argue with me that it’s going to raise prices. It’s going to raise prices because they can. We see this every day at the grocery store. Every day in the grocery store, we see this. They raise them because they can. My son who likes one particular brand of popcorn: Why is it at one store, the large chain, \$4 more than the smaller store? Because they can.

You’re telling me Galen Weston can’t get a better price than a local mom-and-pop place? Come on. We’re getting gouged. We know it. The people of Ontario know it. They go to the grocery store and they see the price go up. They see that milk is \$3 more than it used to be. What’s going on? We’re being gouged.

It’s the same as gas prices. I was talking about this on the drive down. The price of gas in Sudbury is a lot higher than it is here. I’m always told there’s this myth that the reason gas is a little pricier is because of the shipping. Look, if you go to North Bay, it’s about an hour and a half from where I live. It’s always 10 cents cheaper, and they always say it’s the shipping cost. Well, if it’s the shipping cost, then how come beer isn’t more? Because it’s an hour and a half for beer. How come it’s not more for a can of juice or a bottle of pop? How come it’s not more for milk? All of these are liquids that are being shipped. It’s because we’re getting gouged, and we know it. Because they can.

But going back to minimum wage and the cost: The elephant in the room is that people who are working full

time can't pay their bills. That really is something that has to be addressed. And more and more people are going to food banks. I mentioned this earlier with my first question to the Minister of Labour; it had to do with the number of people accessing food banks. We can't have working people accessing food banks. The previous Minister of Labour, in estimates just a couple of weeks ago—I said that I know this started with the Liberal government. It's not fair to the Conservative government to say, "Hey, you're elected, it's 2018, and now there's a record number of people going to food banks who are working full time—more than ever before." It's a problem they inherited. But let's keep this in reality. They've been in power for five years, half a decade. That number should start to trend down, and it's not; it's getting worse, as my colleague said. It's getting worse.

I think if you want to show leadership in government, let's put food banks out of business. Let's tell them, "We have a plan, and you're not going to be needed in the next five years or 10 years. We're going to continue to reduce this. You might have to worry about food going bad on your shelves, because we don't think more and more people should be going to food banks—more and more seniors and retirees, more and more working people, more and more children. We think this is the wrong direction, and we want to turn around the other way." That's something that could be in this bill, but it's not. I believe the Conservative government is pretty happy with people going to food banks. It doesn't bother them. It bothers me.

The thing, too, with food banks, Speaker, is that it's cyclical, because if you're going to a food bank, you don't have extra money to donate to a food bank. And as more and more people go, less and less people can donate. At one point, people are going to show up and those cupboards are going to be bare, and we're going to have kids go hungry. We're going to have adults too, but I feel like a lot of times people are okay with adults going hungry. But kids are going hungry.

Feed Ontario had shared recently, "Ontario's food banks were visited more than 4,353,000 times throughout the year, an increase of 42% over the last three years," and "There has been a 47% increase in people with employment accessing food banks since 2018." That's a lot of people going—47%. And I'll remind you that that was since 2018, and the government was elected in 2018. Obviously, they can't fix the Liberal mistake right in the beginning, but five years later, this number shouldn't continue to climb. It should be going down. That's what they should be celebrating. It's substantial. Daily Bread locally here in Toronto, their stat I had from 2022 was, "The proportion of food bank clients with full-time employment has doubled in the past year"—2022—"to 33%." That's 33% of people going to that food bank, just that one Daily Bread Food Bank; it has doubled.

Here's the other thing about food banks. I only have two minutes left, but I want to talk about this because it is important. People on Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program, people who are on support from the government of Ontario—some are unable to work. Look, you have people on OW and ODSP who have to go to food banks. I spelled this out a couple of other

times. If you're a single individual on OW—Ontario Works, the old welfare system, if people are watching at home and don't know the latest information—you get \$733 a month. I don't know how anybody can afford rent. Inflation has risen in 2018—since the last stat—by 16.68%. If you're on disability, you get a little more than \$733; you get \$1,229 per month to survive, which is \$900 below the poverty line. I looked up the numbers just to make sure. The government of Ontario website says that Ontario recipients receive up to \$733 a month for basic needs and shelter, so that's everything to make ends meet. A single person on ODSP with no dependents will receive a maximum of \$1,308 per month. So they're about the same; there's about a \$50 difference between the two stats, Daily Bread's and the local numbers. We'll use the higher numbers, though.

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My riding, if you want to get a one-bedroom apartment, if you want some sort of dignity and to live by yourself, you're looking at about a grand. In the former Minister of Labour's riding, it was \$1,200 to \$1,400, but a grand is easier for math. So you have a thousand bucks just to cover your rent. On OW, you make \$733. That means that every month, you've got to come up with \$267—every single month: \$267.

How do you find a job, how do you move forward in life when you don't have enough money for food, when you've got to find more than \$250 just to have a roof over your head and not get evicted? How do you focus on anything else besides basic survival with these terrible rates? It's disgraceful. It has nothing to do with working for workers.

My clock is up. Sorry, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome back my colleagues after our summer. I'd also like to congratulate our new Minister of Labour. He's obviously a quick study and I appreciate his comments this morning.

My question to the member opposite—and I thank him for his comments as well. In my riding, I have Base Borden. Base Borden has been proudly training our armed forces, the men and women of our armed forces, since 1916. This past August, I was at Peacekeepers Park, in Angus, and heard retired Major-General Lewis MacKenzie speak about our proud history of peacekeeping: 59 UN peacekeeping missions going back to 1949, and over 160,000 Canadians who have committed to keeping peace in the world.

My question to the member opposite is, we know that reservists play a key role in that, and this legislation guarantees them the same types of health benefits when they come home, including mental health. I'd like to know if he supports that.

MPP Jamie West: I appreciate the member opposite talking about these members. We talked about this in the bill, the importance of having supports for these members so they don't lose pay when they're gone, so they don't

lose their benefits when they're gone. That's what I'm talking about. I said several times in the bill and previously in second reading of the bill that this is a headline bill. This isn't really about helping people. It's the bare minimum you can do to help somebody.

What I'm saying is that I also believe that reservists are an important part of our society, and the work they do is very valuable. I have friends in the reserves. I think what they do is honourable, and I'm very proud of people like John. But the reality is, I think we can do better than what they're offering here, and we should be doing better.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This weekend, I was at an event. It was called Seize the Day, with Epilepsy Southwestern Ontario. It was a run and a walk to raise money for people who had epilepsy. One of the participants recognized a nurse when they were in the ER room. They were complimenting the nurse on how well they were looked after. This government rewards nurses on the front lines with passing Bill 124.

Speaker, I've been hearing throughout the province that they need to repeal Bill 124. I send out newsletters like many of the other members here, and I'm still getting replies back. "Yes, I support MPP Teresa Armstrong in her call to invest in Ontario's health care system," because they want to take the money that this government is spending on court fees and want it to be invested in health care. My statement says to them, "Would you rather spend the money on an appeal—a ruling on Bill 124—or could this be invested in health care to expand access, reduce long wait times and hiring more staff?"

Why is this government digging their heels in to continually fight in court and not respect workers and repeal Bill 124?

MPP Jamie West: Great question. It's one we've been asking on this side—New Democrats have been asking—basically since we were elected: Why do you hate workers? Why do you have Bill 124? Why do you know that nurses are exiting in mass numbers? Why is it that our public sector nurses aren't treated fairly but for private nursing agencies, there's a bottomless pit of money for them? You can't pay a public sector nurse, one who has been taking care of us for 20, 30 years, you can't give them a decent wage? But for someone in the private sector, you can open your wallet and dump the cash on the floor? It's shameful. It's shameful. And I hope that, at election time, these nurses and health care workers recognize the New Democrats have been here from day one speaking on their behalf and telling this government to get rid of Bill 124. Bill 124 has got to go out the door, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: To the member opposite, thank you very much for your speech. Something we've noticed is that, with so many immigrants coming into our province—and we know that we do need more people coming in to fulfill the jobs that are going unfulfilled. I'm sure you can agree that, when it comes to

credentialing, it is important that workers' credentials are recognized here in Ontario because we know this is a critical way of ensuring that when people come here, they can get to work now and in their specific field, as well. Our proposal includes several measures that will help clarify existing legislation and help people start to work in their appropriate field.

My question to you is, do you agree that this is a move in the right direction and it will help address our province's labour shortage in these critical sectors?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I wanted to say, as well, I appreciate your speech at the flagpole at the Franco-Ontarian flag raising.

This is about people's credentials being recognized. I have to tell you that there is no stronger advocate in this room whom I've ever spoken with than the member from Scarborough Southwest. We have regular meetings as part of the labour file and looking at this. It's shameful—I believe my colleagues feel the same way—that people come over here with credentials—and I'm talking about doctorates or tradespeople—and aren't able to find work or able to do the work that they're so successful in. And we need to build a faster pathway for them to get the credentials they need to fill those jobs.

On something like this, I'm aligned on it 100%. I know that we need people to come here and be new Canadians. I'm thrilled with everyone who chooses Sudbury as their home. And I want them to be as successful as they can be, as quickly as they can be.

I want to thank again the member for Scarborough Southwest for all of her advocacy and passion on this file.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you so much to my colleague from Sudbury for the very thoughtful remarks on this bill. I always learn so much when our labour critic speaks.

I especially appreciated the fact that the member from Sudbury shared so many facts right now about workers' demand for food banks. It's something that we're seeing in Ottawa West–Nepean, where the local food bank had to add Saturday hours because people who are at work full-time Monday to Friday need to access the food bank on Saturdays.

One of the things that's driving this, of course, and one of the most vulnerable categories of workers, are people who are working, but they're seeing their wages withheld in part or in full by their employers, who are not paying the wages that they're owed. We've seen the number of inspections taking place by this government drop precipitously. They're not enforcing orders when orders are made. In fact, only one third of workers are actually getting wages that are being withheld by their employers.

Does the member not agree that a government that was actually interested in working for workers would actually crack down hard on wage theft?

MPP Jamie West: This is a really important thing. I didn't get to it—if you could see my desk, I have my pages all over the place. I forget the dollar value, but there is a

multi-million-dollar value of wages withheld from workers that was brought forward to the Conservative government. I remember asking the question right here in question period about doing something about this. In estimates, I asked the Minister of Labour why nothing had been done for more than a year and a half and he kind of shrugged his shoulders.

Look, the reality is, a lot of these workers whose wages are being stolen from them by their employer are not well-paid to begin with. Every dollar is very, very important and goes much further to them. Why a Conservative government would say they're working for workers but won't help address wage theft from employers makes no sense to me at all. And I 100% agree with the member from Ottawa West–Nepean that we should be focusing on this. Workers work hard and they deserve every single dollar that's coming to them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The member from Mississauga–Malton spoke eloquently about regulated professions and recognizing qualifications that come from outside Canada, and this bill propose to do exactly that. It states, “A regulated profession may accept Canadian experience in satisfaction of a qualification for registration only if it also accepts alternatives.”

Does the member support that, and will he vote for it?

1610

MPP Jamie West: I mentioned earlier in a response about the need for us to recognize the qualifications people have when they come here from other countries, and that if there are certain things we have to adjust so that we hit the right threshold, there should be a way to fast-track them. So, 100%, I think that's an important issue as well.

The problem, though, Speaker, is that in these bills—and we hear it all the time, and I've got to tell you, it's frustrating. People in my community tell me all the time. You put forward a bill with a poison pill in it, and maybe not this one specifically, but time and time again, there's a bill and part of the bill is pretty good and part of it has stuff that no one would be able to support. Then what the Conservative government loves to do, Speaker, is point at the good part of the bill and say, “This is what the member voted against.” Let's not do that anymore. Let's not play games. Let's have bills that actually help people. Let's pull out the poison pills from them. It doesn't make sense; it's a nonsense thing. Honestly, if you think somebody, at the door, believes that I don't support long-term care or whatever your nugget is—come on, let's just get back to reality.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Interjections.

Mr. Graham McGregor: All right. That's what I'm talking about. Thank you, guys.

And thank you, Madam Speaker, for the time here. It's an honour to speak to this legislation, the Working for Workers 3 legislation, a three-peat, as I might call it in my WhatsApp group chats.

Before I begin, I just want to welcome colleagues on both sides back to the session. Man, what a privilege it is

to serve in this House with all of you. I've given a lot of speeches over the summer at a lot of events but there's a different energy when you are speaking in this place. Thank you to my constituents again for sending me here to be their voice.

Getting back to business and talking about the business that our government does so well, which is working for workers: The proposed amendments—

Interjections.

Mr. Graham McGregor: We've got some good clap lines in this speech. Don't worry, guys. We'll be all right.

The proposed amendments in this bill will help position Ontario as the most competitive jurisdiction in North America. To be honest, Speaker, with the rate at which people are choosing to come to Ontario increasing every month, I'm sure we're not going to be looking at being the most competitive in North America for very long—we're tackling the world and we're tackling the global stage in a major way.

In Brampton, where I'm from, nearly 58% of the total population is involved in the labour force. In 2021, Brampton residents represented 10.6% of the GTA labour force and 4.8%, almost 5%, of the entire labour force across Ontario. That's almost 2% of the Canadian labour force, all within the city of Brampton. I'd say that Brampton is a small city with a big heart, but frankly, the once forgotten city is actually the ninth largest in the entire country, and we are growing; we're growing rapidly, Madam Speaker. The 2021 census count had a total population of 656,480 in Brampton, which is an increase of 10.6%, or 62,842 people, from the 2016 census. You compare that 10% growth to the national average of 5.2%, or you compare that to the provincial average of 5.8%. My city of Brampton, our population, our workforce is growing at double the speed of anywhere else in the country.

Speaker, in the same time as the population grew by 10.6%, the labour force grew by 11%. Not only are we punching above our weight in terms of population growth, but a disproportionate amount of the newcomers in Brampton are actually participating in the workforce. When we talk about working for workers, there's not a better place to share that message and a place where that message is better received than the city of Brampton. And all to say that Brampton is not small. Brampton is a big, growing place, a booming place, despite the fact that we had been ignored by the previous Liberal government for 15 years. But our government is getting it done for Brampton. We're getting it done for every single worker inside of its borders and out. Speaker, this bill, particularly, that we're debating today enhances the employment experience, builds a more competitive labour market and it protects vulnerable workers.

Brampton is home to a significant percentage of the province's workforce, but we also have the fifth-largest new-Canadian population in Canada and the third-biggest newcomer population in Ontario. There are over 250 different cultural origins and 171 different spoken languages reported in Brampton in the 2021 census. Over half of our population was born in another country. That's something that fills me with pride. Brampton is home to

hard-working, good people who came to this country in search of a better life.

Over the summer, I had the pleasure of meeting directly with so many of these Brampton North residents who told me about their story. Sometimes, their story coming to our country to live the Canadian dream was one of desperation. Other times, it was a story of opportunity. But one thing each and every story had in common was trust. They had trust in Canada, trust in Ontario, that they would find a home where they can live a life that they dreamed of.

Speaker, I can't tell you how many people we met over the last summer who took the leap of faith to leave their place of birth and bring their dream, fuelled by hope, to our beautiful city. We're very lucky that they chose to do so. Being a Brampton boy, born and raised, I couldn't even imagine leaving my life behind and moving somewhere else and picking up and bringing my family along with me and starting over again in another country.

Thanks to the work of the Minister of Labour and our former Minister of Labour and our Premier and our government, the PC caucus, we're ensuring that new Canadians receive opportunities that put them in a position to succeed in this province. Frankly, as we've heard, and we'll hear more in the session, with the economic development we're going as a province, there's plenty of opportunity for new Canadians to succeed.

Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about Ontario's labour shortage, which our government has been fighting hard to reduce while managing the unprecedented housing crisis. We have a labour shortage of about 400,000 jobs that are unfilled right now that are waiting for the workers to come and fill. In order to continue to welcome new Canadians and young Canadians to fill those roles, we also have to make sure they have a place where they can afford to live, which is why we're building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

Despite thousands of jobs going unfilled every day, only one in four newcomers are working in the field they trained for, which is a total injustice. It boggles my mind. One of the troubles we have at Queen's Park is we look at big statistics. We hear "400,000 unfilled jobs." That's a massive number, and you think, "How could that be when—on the anecdotal, on-the-ground level—I had lunch at Montana's three weeks ago, I saw three separate newcomers coming in with résumés, trying to get service positions?"

How can we have 400,000 unfilled jobs, but we don't have enough jobs for the people that we do have in Brampton? Addressing that disconnect is something that our government is taking charge on. It's something that we're leading on. Quite frankly, colleagues, it's something that we have to get right.

We've started the work and we're leading the country by recognizing foreign credentials. We banned Canadian work experience requirements, we've streamlined language testing and we've mandated processing times. Last year, our government invested an additional \$15.1 million over the next three years to improve and expand our Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. We've increased how many people we're nominating since 2021 by 100%; we've doubled it from 9,000 to 18,000 in 2025. All of

these actions have one goal: to get people working in the fields that they are trained for faster so they can earn bigger paycheques for themselves, have the life they dreamed of when they've left their home and, frankly, benefit existing Ontarians by growing our economy and increasing our wealth creation as a province.

I think some of the most important aspects of our Working for Workers plan are the strides being taken to advance credential recognition. Our government is proud that Ontario is a destination for many newcomers who have come here for a better life. Frankly, newcomers create businesses in our communities. They fill much needed roles in our society. They spark our entrepreneurial spirit. According to statistics, about a third of our labour force came to Ontario from another country. Brampton, particularly my community, has benefited tremendously from this.

1620

Speaker, in 2016, only one quarter of internationally trained immigrants in regulated professions were working in jobs that matched their level of qualification. With that number of 400,000 jobs that are unfilled across the province, that's costing our economy billions in lost output, not to mention the dreams that are being cost by newcomers working in a field different than the one that they trained for. We are working to create a clear path for them to fully apply their skills and introduced proposed changes that would, if passed, help remove barriers for newcomers to get licensed and find jobs that match their qualifications and skills.

Reducing newcomer unemployment and helping them find good jobs could increase Ontario's GDP by \$12 billion to \$20 billion in each of the next five years. These changes would build on the work the province is already doing to help highly skilled internationally trained immigrants find work in their field of expertise. Our government previously announced that we're investing \$68 million to help internationally trained immigrants access programs designed to bridge their experience with the needs of employers in their community. This would impact 23 trades and 14 professions, such as lawyers, engineers, architects, plumbers, electricians, accountants, hairstylists, teachers and early childhood educators, which include a number of professions that not only would help us combat the labour shortage, but are good-paying jobs that will help support their families and support our province as we are continuing to grow and continuing to get it done.

It's not only about the newcomers that we have yet to get, Speaker; the immigrants that are working currently, we have their backs too. For example, we've put forward legislation that would include strengthening protections for vulnerable workers by establishing the highest maximum fines in Canada for employers and recruiters who are convicted of taking possession of or retaining a foreign national's passport or work permit.

Imagine you've come to Canada with the dream of a better life, and your employer is weaponizing your paperwork and your documentation to drive an outcome. We have established the highest fines for these wrongful

employers. It's an unfortunate practice that has been going on for far too long, and our government is taking a stand to protect these vulnerable people. With this, individuals convicted of taking possession or retaining passports or work permits under EPFNA would be liable to either a fine of \$500,000 or 12 months of imprisonment, or both, and corporations convicted of the same offence would be liable to a fine of up to \$1 million.

To protect all workers, Ontario is also proposing to increase the maximum fine for corporations convicted of an offence under the Occupational Health and Safety Act from \$1.5 million to \$2 million, which would give Ontario the highest maximum corporate fine under workplace health and safety legislation in Canada. This expands on the groundbreaking action our government has already committed to under Working for Workers 1 and Working for Workers 2 in 2021 and 2022, which are already helping millions of people.

Speaker, I would also like to touch on our government's mission to get more people into the trades. Speaking of the 400,000 unfilled jobs that we have, that's almost 100,000 unfilled jobs in the construction sector over the next 10 years alone, which are exciting careers, in demand, with good pay and good benefits. This is part of the reason why our government is investing a historic \$1.5 billion over four years into the skilled trades. For years, the skilled trades were neglected. One in three journeypersons are over the age of 55 and retiring soon, and the average apprentice is about 29 years old.

Last year, we launched Skilled Trades Ontario, a new crown agency that will promote the trades; develop the latest training and curriculum standards; provide a streamlined one-window approach for services such as registration, credentials and exams; and deliver programs.

Our government is dedicated to work with labour and businesses to break the stigma around the trades, simplify the path to becoming a journeyperson and encourage employers to take on apprentices. We're empowering the everyday person to shift toward a job that will reward and empower them like they would not believe, and encouraging the next generation to get involved sooner.

We're implementing a new high school graduation requirement to help better prepare students across our province for the jobs of tomorrow. Starting with students entering grade 9 in September 2024, only a year away, all students will now be required to earn a grade 9 or 10 technological education credit as part of their Ontario secondary school diploma, which will help expose them to a course that could help guide them to a future career in a highly skilled workforce, which can lead to better outcomes, better jobs and bigger paycheques for our young people.

Speaker, with more than 100,000 unfilled skilled trades jobs right now, it's critical that Ontario attracts more young people to pursue a fulfilling, good-paying career in the trades. It's okay to not be a lawyer or a doctor—or a politician.

As well, very soon, students in grade 11 can transition to a full-time skilled trades apprenticeship program and earn their high school diploma. This change means that students can enter the skilled trades faster than ever before.

Additionally, our government is undertaking consultations starting this fall with employers, unions, educators, trainers, parents and others on how make it easier for young people to get into the trades. With the generational gap that we have, with the infrastructure shortage we have, and with the work that we need to get done, this is work that our government needs to get right. We need to get it right as a province. The consultations will explore the potential of altering academic entry requirements for certain skilled trades in Ontario to allow students to enter the trades sooner.

Since 2020, Ontario has invested nearly \$1 billion to make it easier to learn a trade, breaking the stigma, attracting youth, simplifying the system and encouraging employer participation.

Speaker, our government also recognizes the evolution of the workplace for many Ontarians. We are working for workers by proposing updates to employment laws that would respond to more workers being remote, and a changing economy. Under the proposed changes, employees who work solely from home would be eligible for the same enhanced notice as in-office employees in mass termination situations, which would ensure that remote employees receive the same eight-week minimum notice of termination or pay in lieu, which protects workers and prevents companies from taking advantage of people.

The COVID-19 pandemic initiated the largest shift to remote work in history. In the fourth quarter of 2022, about 2.2 million people worked from home, with about 1.4 million doing so on an exclusive basis and about 800,000 doing so on a hybrid basis. I want to assure all of those workers who are working from home, who have shifted, that our government has your back.

We also have the backs of our men and women in uniform, the way that they've had our backs all along, and we're introducing new job protection for injured military reservists. Of the 40,000 Canadian soldiers deployed in Afghanistan, nearly one in seven developed a mental disorder attributed to the mission. That's based on stats that we know were reported. We know the stigma around mental health; never mind what's under-reported. Frankly, that number is probably bigger than one in seven. These brave men and women put their lives on hold to protect our freedom. They deserve the peace of mind that their job will not only be protected when they're away but also that they have the time that they need to recover.

Our government is working for workers by introducing new legislation that would guarantee military reservists can return to their civilian jobs after deployment, even if they need additional time off to recover from physical or mental injuries.

In addition, Ontario would be the first province in Canada to provide job protection to reservists who respond and deploy to domestic emergencies immediately after starting a new job. Our proposed change would make reservists eligible for job-protected leave when deploying abroad or upgrading their military skills after just two months, as opposed to the current three.

Speaker, one of the last points I want to touch on is what our government is doing for another group of heroes in Ontario. Of course, I'm talking about first responders, our brave firefighters. One of the stats that was shocking to me to learn about, and I know we've spoken about it in the House, is firefighters die of cancer at a rate up to four times higher than the general population. On average, 50 to 60 firefighters die of cancer yearly in Canada, and half of those are from Ontario. I think everyone here today has a personal story when it comes to cancer. Our brave firefighters run into danger, putting their own lives at risk. It is about time they receive the support that they deserve.

That's why our government is making it faster and easier for these heroes and their families to access compensation and support they are entitled to. Proposed changes would presume thyroid and pancreatic cancers to be work-related and streamline the assessment of workplace injury claims. I also want to highlight, Speaker, that these changes made to claims related to thyroid and pancreatic cancers would be retroactive to January 1, 1960. Firefighters have a proud history of putting their necks on the line for Ontarians and they deserve a government that's willing to put the government's neck on the line for them.

1630

Speaker, this bill is building on our government's tireless efforts to protect the most vulnerable and increase opportunities for success while combatting our urgent labour shortage and housing crisis. And we are seeing results. More and more people are being connected to the support they need; it is changing their lives. Their commitment and dedication, however, when all is said and done, is truly what matters, and that is what defines the work that we are doing—workers coming together to build our province to the next level.

Ontario is growing every day. We are developing our infrastructure, our employment opportunities every day. We have exciting projects like the Bradford Bypass, like Highway 413, like the Ontario Line, like the 50 hospitals that are currently either being built or being renovated across Ontario, like the 1.5 million homes that we're building over the next 10 years. There is no shortage of opportunity in Ontario. We want to assure all workers that while they have our back and have the people's back by doing the important work, their government has their back too. And I believe that's what this bill is doing. As we grow every day in strength and size, it's our labour force serving as the backbone of this province, and our government has every worker's back.

This is a very, very good bill which is going to improve the lives of workers across Ontario, not only this year but for decades to come. I certainly will be intending to vote for it myself, and I hope all my colleagues do as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I listened to my friend from Brampton North intently. I have a question for him, given the intent about Working for Workers. There's another bill before this House that would seem to suggest the government's commitment to this may be a little fickle. I'm

thinking about transit workers, the people who were there to move us around in the middle of the pandemic, who put themselves at risk, who are facing situations of violence on our transit system all the time—and we've talked about that in this place. Schedule 1 of Bill 131 before this House allows the TTC here in the great city of Toronto to enter into agreements with other regional transit authorities where the collective agreement signed with employees in those transit systems would not apply.

Can the member from Brampton North clarify if he believes in the value of collective bargaining agreements, if he believes that those collective bargaining agreements negotiated in good faith with employers in transit should remain in force in any transit arrangement this government comes up with?

Mr. Graham McGregor: I want to thank my colleague for the question and also commend him on riding a bike here from Ottawa. It's remarkable. I don't think I would ever have the courage to do it, or the physical endurance or the mental endurance and all kinds of things. That's on the Hansard now, so that's there forever. I don't think that's a position I'm going to flip-flop on. I commend my colleague on that.

I do want to take the chance to highlight—in Brampton, we have some of the best transit workers you could ask for. While municipalities across Ontario saw ridership go down during the pandemic, we were actually the first city to bounce back, and now we're at 120% of our old ridership, because of the front-line workers who work in my city.

So we're always going to stand up for transit workers. They deserve to feel safe in their community, and our government will continue—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to thank my colleague from Brampton North for his presentation. My riding is not unlike his, in many aspects. I have a lot of new people moving into the riding, and in some of those cases they come to the riding with qualifications that are not necessarily Canadian-based. Part of this legislation that we're debating today—well, under the old rules, they don't have the Canadian qualifications so they couldn't work in the skill that they're qualified for. Under this proposed legislation, we're proposing changes to those rules to recognize qualifications that were obtained outside of Canada. I'd like the member from Brampton North to talk about what the effect of this legislation is in his riding—because, again, not unlike mine, it's very multicultural.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks to the member. Similar to Whitby, we're seeing a boom in population. As I said, over half of our workforce in Brampton came from somewhere else. We're a community with 250 different cultural origins. We have 171 languages spoken in our city, and it's frustrating when you speak to a realtor who was a lawyer back home. Or recently, a friend of mine and constituent working as a paralegal, who was a lawyer back home, is going through the hurdles here to become a lawyer here in Canada. By removing the Canadian work

experience requirement on engineers, architects, plumbers, electricians, accountants—I mean, the best thing we can do for people is to let them work in the profession that they're trained to do, and that's what our government is doing and I'm proud to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member talked about our first responders and our firefighters and presumptive legislation, but I want to be perfectly clear: That is not in this bill. You can talk about it, but it's not in the bill.

My cousin was Captain Craig Bowman. We tabled a bill here called the Captain Craig Bowman law that would ensure that first responders were protected. He was denied. He died from esophageal cancer. He was denied because he was a firefighter for 23 years, not 25 years. Our bill would amend that law to make sure that more firefighters and their families would get the support that they needed, and I think it's really disrespectful for you to talk about this when it is clear this is not in the bill.

My question to the member is, will you support our private members' bill, the Captain Craig Bowman Act?

Mr. Graham McGregor: To my colleague: I mean, it's a little ironic to come at me for not speaking about what's in the bill and then ask me about a bill that isn't being debated right now on the floor of the House.

What I can say is, we've got a—

Interjections.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I mean, you did it, though. That's kind of what you did, right? You can scoff all you want, but you just did it, which is fine. It's my time to talk now, so that's good.

Look, we've got to stand up for our first responders. We've got to stand up for workers and that's exactly what we are doing. I really hope that this member will come out in support of—I haven't seen the member's supportive statement about the changes we made about thyroid and pancreatic cancers, retroactive back to 1960. I haven't heard the member say whether or not the member believes that's a good idea, but I hope the member will stand with the PC caucus in banging that drum and making sure that we're standing up and giving the firefighters the respect that they deserve. So I hope the member will stand up for them in her community as well and do that as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank my colleague for his comments. I was particularly interested in the comments about the trades programs and the fact that the average age for people entering the trades is 29 because, in fact, my oldest son, Dylan, has just gone back to Georgian College for precision machining. So he's one of the many that have gone into the trades now and will have, I think, a long and fruitful career.

What I'd like my colleague to speak to is the benefits of these programs, not only for the youth and those going into the trades, but also for our province and our economy.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks to my colleague and yes, I mean, the average age of apprenticeship being 29 is

shocking. I just turned 30 in May, so I'm looking at 29-year-olds like, you know, as not so far away.

Our government put forward a really ambitious agenda about building highways, building transit, right? We see the historic investment of the Highway 413 in my community. That's going to be revolutionary for residents in my community, not only the residents that drive to work and drive home every day, but for our truck drivers who—talking about front-line workers, our truck drivers are heroes just the same. You think about the 50 hospitals: The Premier says that it doesn't matter what corner of Ontario you're in, you're either getting a new hospital or you're getting a renovation on your existing hospital. Well, all of these things that we're building are going to need workers to do that.

And I think I got heckled by the Windsor member. I think she's mad she voted against the hospital in her riding, in her part of the world, but she also voted against the Brampton one, in my part of the world, too, so I guess there's nothing new there. But look, we need more people in the trades. Our government's investing to do that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Question?

1640

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yesterday, I attended a beautiful ceremony in my riding in St. Catharines, and it was the Lincoln and Welland Regiment ceremony. It was the changing of command. I first want to thank Lieutenant-Colonel Christopher Canavan, CD, for his dedication to the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. He handed over the changing of the guards to Lieutenant-Colonel Philip Dyson, CD.

One of the most notable things that these lieutenant-colonels said yesterday to the young reservists was, "Listen, congratulations and thank you for putting your name forward to this country. You will be going to a tour across seas. You will be away from your family for six months." Do you really think that your platitudes in this bill address the broader challenges—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Response?

Mr. Graham McGregor: I appreciate my colleague's question, and I think it speaks to a frustration that we all have: When you think of heroes that have put their neck on the line for the country, it's hard to do enough. But what we are doing in this bill, and what I think for reservists that take time to serve our country—I do think that they should have a job protected for them while they're away, and this bill helps to do that. I do think it should help when they have mental health impacts; they should be able to get the treatment that they need and have a job protected. This bill does that. Whether the member votes for it or not, hopefully the PC caucus passes it because it's a good thing for them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Before we resume debate, I'd like to recognize that we have a former member of the House, Bill Walker, representing Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound in the 40th, 41st and 42nd Parliaments. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's a privilege for me to stand up today. I actually watched some of the debate on TV. I listened to the debate. I want to say that I'm really glad that the new minister is here so he can listen to this debate.

But I found it interesting that today, our first day back in this House after four months, this is the bill that we're talking about. We're not talking about the greenbelt. We're not talking about the scandals. We're not talking about the lies. We're talking about a bill, Working for Workers.

What I don't understand is that some of the things they've talked about over the last little while—the minister talked about it, his three or four other speakers talked about it, my colleagues talked about it, some of my own members have talked about it—but they talk about firefighters as if in some way on this side of the House we don't care about firefighters. Somehow, you're trying to make that. Now, that's a lie. We know that's a lie. But I've got to tell you, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, that's okay. That was okay. I think that was—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I'm just going to consult with the Clerk.

I will ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I withdraw.

So let's be clear—and I'm going to tell you a story because I think it's important, because it happens in every community from coast to coast to coast when it comes to our firefighters. Unfortunately, for me and my family, it happened to my wife. She was driving down Lundy's Lane in Niagara Falls coming home from school. She was a vice-principal. A drunk driver came out of the Sundowner and hit her head on. The first responders were there. The firefighters were there. EMS was there. And if they didn't go to that call, guess what? My wife would have been dead.

So I don't like it when you stand up and tell me, "Oh, we're putting this into a bill about firefighters, because you don't care about firefighters." Some of my best friends are firefighters. I attended two events this weekend, one honouring two of our colleagues that passed away this year, and I'll be here next Sunday for the celebration to talk about it. But Saturday night, I was there for volunteers; we have volunteer firefighters in Niagara. But I'm going to tell you, when you talk about firefighters, you stand up and you say, "It's in the bill." I can't call you a liar because I'll get called out, but the reality is, it's not in the bill. It's not in the bill.

The other part of the bill that you guys talked about, for those watching at home and listening—like I said, I'm glad the minister is here, because you talked about women's washrooms. I think it's a good thing. I think the washrooms should be good for women; they should be good for men; they should be good for everyone. I don't think that's a bad idea. I think we should take a look at it and make sure they're clean and how that's going to be done in every workplace.

But then, not one mention—not by the three who talked after the minister, not by the colleague in the corner who talked—not one mention about Bill 124. By the way, who does it attack?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Workers.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, it attacks workers, but mostly who?

Interjections: Women.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Women: health care workers, our nurses, our PSWs. Think about that. But after saying that about Bill 124, Madam Speaker, and I know you're interested in this, it's not in the bill. You stand up for 10 minutes and you talk about washrooms for women in the skilled trades, and we all know we need more trades. But you know what? Not only do we need more trades; we need more nurses; we need more doctors; we need all kinds of different sectors. You guys are only concentrating on one sector, but we need them everywhere. But it's not in the bill.

To the new labour minister, if you really care about firefighters and you really care about women having proper facilities when they get into the trades, what should you do? Maybe my colleagues can help me. What would you think would be a fair and reasonable thing to do?

Interjections: Put it in the bill.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Put it in the bill. I think that makes sense. But I didn't hear anybody over there say, "Put it in the bill." Maybe Bill will say it, up in the gallery. Maybe he'll say, "Put it in the bill." But I'm telling you, don't stand up here making it sound like it's in the bill, because it's not.

Madam Speaker, I don't mean to pick on you at all. I'm just looking at you because I don't want to get in trouble. I want to make sure I'm doing this right. But here's the reality: Today, we're doing a bill, Working for Workers. Everybody agree with that? Everybody on that side agree with that? Guess what we had at lunch today. What did we have at lunch today? About 5,000 workers, from every part of the province. They came from Windsor; they came from the north; they came from Niagara.

Actually, my group from Niagara, do you know why they're here? A lot of them were senior citizens. It's because your government has decided to shut down our urgent care centre, so instead of operating 24 hours a day, guess what they're operating now? Ten. You talk about Ontario growing. Well, Fort Erie is growing. It's going to have over 40,000 residents. They got on a little yellow bus. You know those yellow buses for schools? We've all rode in those. Guess what they don't have? Washrooms. They were seniors. They had to make a couple of stops on the way. But they came.

You know who else was there? Unfortunately, the minister is not here right now, but I've got to say this. Guess who was there? Unifor was there. I talked to their president; I talked to Lana. SEIU was there. They were there in their purple shirts, some in tears. You know who else was there? CUPE. Some of you did an incredible job and have done an incredible job. Nobody ever goes after the health coalition on their facts or their figures. They are

so good. The health coalition organized the rally. You know who else was there? Anybody here on my side know?

Miss Monique Taylor: OPSEU.

Mr. Wayne Gates: OPSEU was there. ONA was there. Guess who else was there? I'm talking to the Conservatives, who really—I'll be honest, Speaker, they're not listening, but I'm talking to them.

Interjection: And they weren't there.

Mr. Wayne Gates: And they weren't there. I'll get to that. The OFL was there. Now, if you're working for workers, what organization do you think that you would have some consultation—whether it's Working for Workers 1, Workers for Workers 2, Working for Workers 3, 106, Working for Workers 107, it doesn't matter. Who should you talk to? I would think you'd meet with the OFL. At no time during any of these bills did they meet with the OFL, not once. Do you know how many members they represent? And this is for the new minister, too; maybe he doesn't know: 1.2 million workers in the province of Ontario, including, by the way, skilled trades.

1650

So when I went to the rally—I was fortunate enough to be a labour guy myself for the last 40 years—I ran into a lot of my old friends, whether with Unifor or some in the OFL. Some of them, I got some really nice pictures to put in my scrapbook when I'm not doing this job any longer. Then I listened to our leader, Marit Stiles, get up and do a great speech. Then, because I know the health coalition wants to be fair to everybody, guess who else spoke? The leader of the Green Party got up and spoke. Now, he didn't have a lot of members with him, because they don't have a lot of members in the Green Party, but he went up and did a good job. Then the Liberals went up and spoke. I think they were five or six. Their van was all there, for sure. So they got up and spoke.

Madam Speaker, and I'm looking at you directly for this reason: Do you know who didn't speak on the day that they're bringing Bill 79, the Working for Workers Act? Guess who didn't speak: the new minister. He didn't go and speak. Premier Ford didn't go and speak. When you have 5,000 workers and all they want to hear from their government is, "We're not going to privatize health care. We've learned our lesson with the greenbelt. We made a mistake"—although I think it was calculated. They knew exactly what it was. It wasn't a mistake. But we know that when workers, families and communities stand together, we can get the government to back down.

You would think that they're so proud of their bill—where is it? Oh, here it is. I'll hold this up. They're so proud of their bill, on the first day back in this House, where we haven't sat for over four months—they don't come and speak to workers. They didn't speak to the OFL. They didn't speak to Unifor. Think about that today.

So why do you bring Bill 79 here today and try to say to the province of Ontario, "We're for workers"? The only party for workers in the province of Ontario is the NDP. It always has been and it always will be. We will not hide, and we'll be out on that front lawn every time there's an injustice.

And what were they talking about today? Because again, working for workers—they were talking about sick days, how they need sick days. One of the first bills they attacked as a government was that they got rid of the three days of sick days. Do you guys remember that, when they attacked us?

Anti-scab: This summer, workers have said, "Enough is enough," including to their own leadership, when they turned down some tendered agreements, saying, "We need a bigger piece of the pie. We need to make sure that if corporations are making a lot of money—sometimes billions and trillions of dollars—we need a share in that enormous wealth." Do you know why they need it? Does anybody know? They need affordability. They need to buy their groceries. They need it to pay their rent, especially in the new builds; right? Because—Madam Speaker, I think you're from an area where you know this—the new builds, there's no rent control on them. They can put those rents wherever they want, and what we're seeing here in Toronto is \$3,100, \$3,200, \$3,300. So workers deserve to get some of that pie.

I want to say clearly to every single worker in the province of Ontario—union, non-union—that an injury to one worker is an injury to all. I'm saying that to my colleagues in the skilled trades. I'm saying that to my health care workers, to our teachers. I'm saying it to every single worker—EMS, firefighters, police officers—that the only way we win is if we stick together. And don't get fooled by Bill 79 that they actually care about workers.

I'm going to do this because I think I'm a pretty honest guy—I know that's unusual in some places sometimes in here, but I'm going to be honest about this, because the new minister, I'm pleased that he's here. But he was in charge, before he became the labour minister, of the environment—think about that—in one of the biggest scams that we've ever had in the province of Ontario, trying to develop on the greenbelt.

And they talk. They talk about immigration. They talk about allowing new Canadians to do the jobs that they're trained to do here in this country. They talk about young people. You can't stand up and say that when every single one of you over there supported every single bill to develop on the greenbelt. Because who were you hurting? We know in the province of Ontario today, because we have migrant workers—they're workers too. We know in the province today, right here in Ontario, mostly around Toronto, we're losing 329 acres of prime farmland every single day. And who is that going to hurt? It's going to hurt our kids and our grandkids. Because if we're a province or a country that can't feed itself, you're going to be in trouble.

You would think—to my colleagues who are listening here; I don't think they're listening to me anyway. You would have thought that after COVID-19 we would have learned a valuable lesson: We can't rely on other countries to provide for us.

And where did we see that? We saw that with our PPE. You all remember that? You talk about the military in the bill and doing a little bit for the military; we should do all we can for the military. But remember during COVID what the military had to do, including some of the

reservists? They had to go into long-term-care facilities and see the suffering that was going on in those facilities. Some of them had to do it—because they didn't have PPE. Remember that?

Some people died—right here, my friends; we take it for granted every single day—from dehydration, a simple thing like giving them a glass of water. But they couldn't give them the water. You know why? They didn't have any staff, because you brought in Bill 124. You care about workers, yet you attacked workers, and workers left. PSWs left. These places didn't have any staff.

Most of those, quite frankly—I'd say 80% of the seniors—that died in long-term-care facilities died in private homes. We know that, because what do they care about? Anytime you're going to take care of a senior, what should it be about? Should it be about profit, or should it be about care? I'm thinking if it's me, because I'm getting older—it was my birthday yesterday; I got a year older yesterday. Although I did have good news: The Jays won; so did the Bills. That was good for the day. But what do we need to do? We need to make sure our seniors are taken care of, and the military had to go in and expose what was going on.

But to get back to my original point: It was because we were relying on China and some in the States; even the States wouldn't give us some PPE. We had to start doing it ourselves. The same thing is happening in our farmland. But I'll get back to the minister. I think it's important.

Minister, I'm going to look you straight across as I try to look at both of you, because you're right across from me. Minister, you voted for Bill 124, one of the worst bills that I've ever seen. How much time do I get? Three and fifty—almost four minutes. Bill 124 attacked workers, mostly health care workers; some other jobs as well, but it was mostly in the health care sector where they felt it the worst. It capped their wages at 1%—and that included benefits. So the total compensation package at the bargaining table: 1%. If you wanted to improve your benefits, it came out of the 1%.

The “notwithstanding” clause, the next bill, where workers from coast to coast to coast, including from the west to the east, said, “This is the worst attack against workers that I've ever seen in my lifetime,” and what happened? The labour movement came together, and they said, “You are not going to do the ‘notwithstanding’ clause in the province of Ontario.” What happened? I know the unions met with Premier Ford. I know they met with—can I say Monte now, because he's not here? They met with Monte and they said, “You guys have got to come to your senses. You have to back down on that bill.” So you know what happened? The labour movement came together, including the trades—auto workers, steelworkers, health care workers—and the government backed down on the “notwithstanding” clause.

Do you know what else they backed down on just last week? The greenbelt. But make no mistake about it: You're not done with the greenbelt. There's a lot more to uncover in that greenbelt—the corruption that went on; find out what the developers knew ahead of time.

1700

I will be honest with you; I've never gone with a developer to Vegas. Just in case—I never met one in Vegas. I want to get that off the table.

And then, Bill 60—and I'll get back to the rally today, because that's what the rally was about today. The rally today was about standing up for workers from one part of the province to the other. And Bill 60—what does it want to do? It wants to privatize our health care system. Think about that: privatize our health care system—because what does health care become? And some of my colleagues will shake their head at me, but it's true. What does it become? It becomes that somebody is going to make money on the backs of somebody being sick—and the colleagues over there are shaking their head at me; I can't say who they are.

I'm going to tell the story about Joel—I guess I can't say his name, but he's from Ottawa, and he'll tell you that at his hospital, doctors rented out their emergency rooms and their operating rooms on the weekends, started their own corporation, utilized their own nurses on the weekends, utilized the publicly funded janitor services to clean the operating rooms. And guess what happened? That corporation is now making money on the weekends. So when you stand there and shake your head—that's a true story; I don't make that up. It's in the paper; you can google it. That's exactly what has happened in Ottawa, and that's exactly what's happening in other communities right across this province.

That's why 5,000 people who could have been anywhere today—some of them rode on that bus today for six or seven hours, coming from the north, coming from as far away as Windsor—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —Minden, where they got a big fight back with their hospital. And why did they do that? Because the greatest Canadian of all time, Tommy Douglas, got us a publicly funded, publicly delivered health care system. And we're going to fight until this government backs down on privatizing our health care system, just like they did on the greenbelt, just like they did on the “notwithstanding” clause.

I've only got six seconds left. I just want to say, thanks for your time—and also to the Speaker, who probably let me get away with the odd thing, so I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Thank you.

Report continues in volume B.

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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

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

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

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