

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

No. 260

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

N<sup>o</sup> 260

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament

Monday  
10 May 2021

1<sup>re</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature

Lundi  
10 mai 2021

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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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; fax 416-325-7430  
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires  
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111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park  
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Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430  
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Monday 10 May 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 10 mai 2021

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'  
PUBLIC BUSINESS

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER  
REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT  
LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE  
DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Dave Smith moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 281, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 281, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes to make his presentation.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Christopher's Law—I'll give a little bit of background on it first—was first introduced and passed in 2000. The reasoning behind it was, we know that when a child is abducted, police agencies have about 24 hours to find the individual in order for them to be safe, and after 48 hours, the likelihood of finding that individual safe diminishes significantly. Christopher, the child the bill is named after, was one such individual who they did not find safe. He had been abducted by a convicted sex offender.

What Christopher's Law does is, it creates a registry of sexual offenders in Ontario and it allows police enforcement agencies to have access to it because, if a child is abducted and the police know of someone who is a registered sex offender in the neighbourhood or in the area, and they have the address and contact information for that individual, they have a starting place to look. It's not to suggest that in every case this will prevent something horrible from happening to one of these children; it's just another tool in the tool box.

We are 21 years since this law first came into effect and, at present, the only organizations that have access to it are law enforcement agencies. I firmly believe that in this case, an ounce of prevention is worth far more than a pound of cure. What I'm proposing in this bill is to open up the sex registry to make it more public.

I have had people who have reached out to me and said, "Will this not create vigilantism?" The purpose of this change is not to create vigilantism. It is not so that the average person can see that their next-door neighbour may or may not have been put on the registry. What this is for is to help with companion agencies so that others can have access to it.

Think about this for a moment: The children's aid society of Ontario is there to protect children. The only way that they have access to this registry is if there is an open and active joint investigation with the police.

I'm going to talk about a specific incident. I will change some of the facts so that you can't identify who it is, but in one case during COVID-19, a child needed to be placed with someone else because of some COVID-19 issues. The logical choice was a family member, because the CAS tries, wherever possible, to place someone with kin. A close family friend, who has a child the same age—these children are very good friends—stepped forward to CAS and volunteered to take the child temporarily because of this COVID-19 issue.

There was an investigation done by CAS to determine who would be the best to take the child. In the end, they decided to go with the close family friend because they lived in the same neighbourhood; there would be far less disruption. It turns out that the family member is a convicted pedophile and CAS did not have access to that information. But for the grace of God, a family friend stepped forward, knew that there was an issue—did not know exactly what the issue was but did not feel comfortable with that family member. Luckily, a crisis was averted as a result of it.

Had CAS had access to the Ontario Sex Offender Registry, they would never have considered this individual. We dodged a bullet. We have a child today who is safe because a family friend stepped up to do what was right, because they felt uncomfortable. They didn't know why, but they felt uncomfortable. We almost placed a vulnerable child with a convicted pedophile because we did not have something in place that would have prevented it. The only way that CAS would have had access to that information is if there was a joint investigation with the police. Then the police could have shared that information. That's a miss. That's where an ounce of prevention is worth far more than a pound of cure.

We have sexual assault centres that do fantastic work in this province, counselling and helping those who have been victims of sexual assault. They do not have access to this information. When someone comes into a sexual assault centre and discloses that they have been sexually

assaulted, if one of the workers there had access to the registry, they could determine if this is a pattern of behaviour from the perpetrator and help in their counselling to let that individual know they did nothing wrong—to help them that way. We currently do not give them these tools, and that is a miss.

When someone comes into the emergency room after being assaulted, hospital staff do not have access to this information. Frequently, what I have been told is that when someone comes in, they do not want to press charges. They do not want to go to the police. They make excuses for the individual who assaulted them. If they had access to that information, they could demonstrate that it's a pattern of behaviour and it is something that is not the victim's fault. You can demonstrate that at that moment and help them.

It's not about adding additional punishment; it's about preventing the next sexual assault from happening. Anything that we can do to prevent that is something that we should do. This is a tool in the tool box. It is a powerful tool because it demonstrates a pattern of behaviour.

**0910**

I have another individual who used to be in my riding, and three times now—three times—he has been charged with sexual assault of an individual under the age of 15. Twice he has been convicted. Twice the federal system has released him. He's on the Ontario Sex Offender Registry. If access were given to that, perhaps there wouldn't be a fourth victim of his—we know there are two that he has been convicted of; we know he's before the courts right now for a third. This individual is in his thirties. He will reoffend. He no longer lives in my community. My community knows of him. He has moved. His new community does not know that he is a predator. His new community is at risk, and we need to prevent that.

We need to make sure that no vulnerable person is put in the position where they can be attacked or abused. We need to make sure that those who have a repeat history of doing these heinous crimes have every opportunity of doing it taken away from them, because it's the right thing for us to do.

I've had people push back to me, as well, and say, "Christopher's Law, the Ontario registry, allowed for those who are found not guilty because of mental health reasons—they were put on the registry at one point." The Supreme Court of Canada has overturned that, and those individuals will be taken off the registry.

My concern is with those who are on the registry. If we know you are a convicted sexual predator, we should be doing everything possible to make sure you cannot take advantage of another human being. This is a tool in the tool box. At present, it is limited to just law enforcement agencies.

The Police Association of Ontario is supportive of these changes. They want the companion agencies to have access to it because it will prevent more sexual assault, more sexual abuse. They want to be able to share that information with those who are doing the work to help victims of crime, but they agree we need to make sure that

we're cautious with it as we move forward so that it doesn't create a situation of vigilantism.

I truly understand the thought process behind the vigilantism. I will freely admit that I am a father of two daughters, and I'm not sure how I would react if someone were to assault one of my daughters, but I'm sure I would not react in a positive way. So I understand that desire for vigilantism.

That's why we want this to go to committee. We want to get as much feedback as possible, to make sure that we're crafting it in the most appropriate way, to allow the best access, to prevent these heinous crimes from continuing, to stop the next person from creating another victim, to stop that cycle of abuse. And the sooner we can get it to committee to make sure that we have all of those things done correctly, the better it will be.

I truly hope that everyone in the House sees this as something that we should do and will get behind it and support it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House—and this morning, to debate Bill 281, the bill brought forward by the member from Peterborough-Kawartha. I listened intently to his remarks, and as a father, I appreciate his remarks—as a member of this House, as well.

Christopher's Law is over 20 years old. Our Sex Offender Registry is over 20 years old. It was the first registry of its type introduced in Canada. I think Ontarians should be proud of that. "Proud" perhaps isn't the right word. It would be better if we didn't need such legislation. It would be better, but the human race is the human race. The focus should be on protecting the vulnerable. That's why it was named Christopher's Law in the first place—to commemorate a tragic incident.

We look forward to this bill going to committee. We look forward to a sober committee process, where experts are brought forward to make sure that the goal the member has stated—to protect the vulnerable and also to protect against vigilantism—is accomplished. The way to do that is to bring this bill to committee, give ample time for those who we need to hear from to depute, have a healthy debate, and truly consult with the people who deal with these issues, sadly, on a regular basis. This is an issue that will be decided by us, those elected to represent, but it should be informed by people who have expertise—also those who have personal stories to share—on how we can best serve the young people of Ontario, protect them and all Ontarians in the best way possible.

I commend the member for bringing this bill forward. Private members' bills is a time when all of us try to bring forward bills that perhaps aren't—and some are—on the political radar of the day, but are issues that are incredibly important. The member brought forward several anecdotes of why he brought this bill forward. I commend him for that.

Once again, we look forward to this bill going to committee. We support Christopher's Law, and we support



this bill going forward. If Christopher's Law can be made to serve all the people of Ontario in a better fashion, we support that, as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I appreciate the opportunity to speak briefly to Bill 281, Christopher's Law amendment act, brought forward by my friend and colleague from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Bill 281 would require the Ministry of the Attorney General to make the information recorded on the Sex Offender Registry available to the public in accordance with the regulations. Bill 281 states that any disclosure of personal information made public would be deemed to be in compliance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

We've already heard that Christopher's Law came into effect back in 2000 and requires individuals who are convicted of sexual offences to register with the Ontario Sex Offender Registry and report to probation on a regular basis, including when they change their address. Currently, however, only police agencies have access to this registry.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all seen the data that there has been an increase of instances of sexual violence. Speaker, it is incumbent on everyone to raise awareness of these issues and highlight how our most vulnerable are often the target of predators. Studies have shown that within the first five years of release, 14% of sexual offenders had a new charge or conviction for a sexual offence. We must use every resource available to prevent the tragedy of sexual violence and sexual misconduct, particularly when vulnerable individuals are involved. This bill proposes more public access to the registry, specifically for organizations that work tirelessly to keep vulnerable sectors safe.

**0920**

Locally, in my riding of Brantford–Brant, we hear about these horrific acts. Published in the Brantford Expositor on November 4, 2020: "A 37-year-old man is facing child pornography charges after police say they executed a search warrant Nov. 3...."

"The man faces separate charges of accessing, possessing and distributing child pornography and two counts of failing to comply with an undertaking."

Speaker, another recent publication from the Brantford Expositor, on February 8, 2021: "A 40-year-old Brantford man is facing child pornography charges after police said they executed a search warrant Feb. 2...."

"Police said ... they seized several computers, electronic devices and a prohibited weapon in the culmination of a month-long probe by the Internet Child Exploitation unit, prompted by online conversations that resulted in the investigation of child luring."

And another Brantford Expositor publication, from March 15, 2021: "A vehicle stop by Brantford police ... led to an arrest and three electronic devices being seized related to child pornography."

"Police say they stopped a vehicle on Wayne Gretzky Parkway at about 2:40 a.m. and discovered the 25-year-old driver ... was bound by a condition not to possess electronic devices capable of storing images and videos."

"Police say they found a cellphone in the vehicle, which contained child porn."

"The driver was arrested for breaching his recognizance of bail and possession of child pornography."

"The next day, the Internet Child Exploitation unit of the Brantford Police Service executed two search warrants at two residences associated with the arrested man."

Again, it is incumbent on everyone to raise awareness of these issues and to highlight how our most vulnerable are often the targets of predators. We must use every resource available to prevent the tragedy of sexual violence and sexual misconduct, particularly when vulnerable individuals are involved. That's why I'm thankful that this bill has been brought forward. I look forward to supporting it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the member for Peterborough–Kawartha's private member's bill.

Sexual violence crosses all social boundaries. It affects people of every age, culture and background, and it has devastating and lasting impacts on the lives of survivors and their families.

Madam Speaker, anyone can be a victim of sexual assault, but women and girls are especially at high risk. Females are more than six times as likely as males to be victims of sexual assault, and children are particularly vulnerable: Approximately 67% of all victims of reported sexual assaults are under the age of 18, and more than half of these victims are under the age of 12.

Unfortunately, the sexual abuse of adults and children is not only widespread, it's vastly under-reported.

Back in 2000, the Ontario Legislature passed Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry). The goal of Christopher's Law is to:

- ensure the safety and security of all Ontarians;
- provide police forces with access to information about the whereabouts of sex offenders in order to assist in the important work of maintaining community safety;
- provide information and investigative tools that police forces need to prevent and solve crimes of a sexual nature.

The Ontario Sex Offender Registry is a database that provides 24-hour support for police services throughout the province. The registry is operated and maintained by the OPP on behalf of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Currently, the Sex Offender Registry is made available as a resource only to police services. Bill 281 would amend Christopher's Law to require the ministry to provide more public access to the information recorded on the Sex Offender Registry; specifically, for organizations that work tirelessly to keep vulnerable sectors safe, like children's aid societies and rape crisis centres.

Madam Speaker, it is estimated that in Canada, one in three women and one in eight men will experience sexual violence. Looking at data from the 2016 census, there were 101,260 victims of violent crime and criminal traffic offences causing death or bodily harm reported by the police in Ontario. Overall, 9% of police-reported victims were victims of sexual offences and nearly 87% of all victims were female. As a mother and grandmother, it is particularly concerning that 46% of all female victims of sexual offences were under the age of 17.

Madam Speaker, we know that most sexual offences are committed by people who are known to the victim—a close relative, friend, acquaintance or co-worker.

We also know that within the first five years of release, 14% of sex offenders had a new charge or conviction for a sexual offence.

Ontarians expect law enforcement to use every resource available to prevent the tragedy of sexual violence and misconduct, particularly when children are involved. That's why this bill is so important.

Madam Speaker, in 1597, Sir Francis Bacon, an English philosopher and statesman who served as Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England, who was best known for his promotion of the scientific method, said: "The better information one has, the more one will be able to control events."

If passed, Bill 281 will provide access to the Ontario Sex Offender Registry, for the first time, to organizations that work with those most at risk. This simple change could make a big difference. That's why I support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate?

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** I am pleased to rise in the House this morning to speak to Bill 281, An Act to amend Christopher's Law, a proposal to require the ministry to make information recorded on the Sex Offender Registry available to the public.

I want to begin by commending the member for Peterborough-Kawartha for introducing this amendment—an amendment which I believe will have a profound impact on preventing the sexual assault of children and adults by making criminal history more accessible to more people.

Madam Speaker, currently, the Sex Offender Registry is a resource only available to police services, and that is simply not good enough. As we have heard this morning, studies have shown that within the first five years of release, 14% of sexual offenders have had a new charge or conviction for a sexual offence, and yet unsuspecting victims may live near or work alongside a repeat sexual offender for years without ever being told of their criminal past. Could knowledge of the criminal history of a sexual offender prevent an assault? I believe it could, and I believe that Bill 281 will go a very long way in doing just that.

Before entering politics, I worked as a journalist for over 30 years. Much of that time was spent either in a courtroom or behind a desk reporting on the sexual assault of children, women and men. I have been out of the

newsroom for many years and yet, on any day of the week, I can pick up a newspaper or turn on a television set and tune in to a newscast and what I see is a disturbing trend that simply hasn't changed. In fact, it's probably worse today than it was when I was in the newsroom—and that, of course, is the number of cases of sexual assault by repeat offenders.

Bill 281 addresses that ugly reality. If passed, Bill 281 will amend Christopher's Law—which is the Sex Offender Registry passed 21 years ago, and it will allow the public to view the registry.

People who work with and care for children have a right to know if someone they are considering hiring has sexually assaulted a child. That knowledge could prevent the unimaginable. Could you imagine how many times a child predator has been given access to a child in foster care or was working as a volunteer, simply because he or she did not have their sexual history made public?

Organizations that support vulnerable adults should be permitted access to the Sex Offender Registry to ensure that a potential volunteer or employee has never been convicted of sexual assault. That critical information should not be withheld.

Madam Speaker, while Bill 281 will provide a valuable tool to increase awareness of, and hopefully prevent, sexual assault, it will do so within specific guidelines. This act would allow disclosure of such a criminal history, as long as:

(a) That information is in accordance with the regulations;

(b) Any disclosure of personal information is deemed to be in compliance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; and

(c) Limitations and restrictions will apply to the disclosure of information.

It is necessary that we raise awareness of these issues. We must use every resource, every tool available to prevent the tragedy of sexual violence and sexual misconduct, particularly when vulnerable individuals are involved.

Once again, I commend the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for bringing forward Bill 281, and I look forward to voting in support of such an important public safety measure.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate? Further debate? I return to the member for Peterborough-Kawartha.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I want to thank the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, the member from Brantford-Brant, the member from Burlington and the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook for their comments.

When I first proposed this and started talking about it with different individuals in my community, we had a number of people who came forward and suggested that the debt to society was paid once someone had come out of jail. I would argue that your debt to society is paid, if you're a sexual predator, once you're taken off the registry—and you're not taken off the registry ever, and you shouldn't be, because you've committed a heinous

crime. You have damaged someone else's life, if they were able to live, and you've taken away other lives. So you should be stuck on that registry for the rest of your life, and people should know the risk that you put forward.

It's not possible to look around and say this person will be a sexual predator or that person will be a sexual predator. You can't look at a single career and say people will navigate to that or migrate to it.

Since March of last year, in my riding, two school teachers—one retired elementary teacher and one current high school teacher—have been charged with sexual crimes against children. We have a radio personality who has been charged.

We have to get this bill through, to protect as many people as possible.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 281, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That's carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Pursuant to standing order 101(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House.

The member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Could I refer it to justice policy, please?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

Orders of the day. The member for Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** No further business.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:15.

*The House recessed from 0934 to 1015.*

#### REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Before I invite members to present their members' statements, I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report entitled 2021 Ministry of Health Spending Plan Review, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Speaker, I continue to hear from families whose loved ones in their eighties or nineties are

homebound and still have no answers from this government regarding when they can get vaccinated.

My constituent Mary Fitzpatrick has been caring for her father, Thomas, who is 97 years old. He is almost blind. He has diabetes, congestive heart failure, kidney disease. And he is unable to walk. This family spent weeks on the phone trying to get answers from the LHIN, TPH and the Ministry of Health, and just recently, Thomas finally got his vaccine.

Ontario's COVID-19 science advisory table suggested that there are 75,000 homebound Ontarians aged 65 and up, out of which 12,000 live in Scarborough. Many have been isolated from their families and caregivers for months and months. These people are suffering severely from physical and mental health deterioration. All of these individuals were eligible in phase 1 of the vaccination rollout, yet they're still waiting.

After months of calling on this government, we're finally entering a phase of stable supply and getting more needles into arms. Pop-ups in Scarborough have been administering close to 10,000 doses a week. We now finally have more vaccine supply, but the government's vaccine rollout plan is continuing to leave people behind.

Speaker, we need to ensure equitable access to vaccines for all vulnerable populations, and that means having a strategy for those homebound community members eagerly waiting to get vaccinated.

#### PIPELINES

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** It's a privilege to rise in the House today to speak once again about a very important subject for the people of Ontario: line 5.

In just a few short days, we will have arrived at the May 12 deadline to shut down line 5 imposed by the governor of Michigan. Line 5 is a critical piece of energy infrastructure that helps heat homes and businesses and that provides the light crude oil that refineries in Ontario, Quebec, Michigan and Ohio turn into more than 6,000 products—from medicines and vitamins, to eyeglasses, phones, computers, cars, bicycles, cleaning products and solar panels, line 5 helps make it possible.

Forcing the shutdown of line 5 will create an energy shortage that will lead to a spike in energy and fuel prices at a vulnerable time for the people of Ontario, Quebec and the Great Lakes regions—by disrupting the supply of crude oil to 10 regional refineries. The trucks and trains that will be added to the roads and railways to try to make up this difference will add to congestion and compete with agricultural and other products, while increasing safety risks and emissions.

In March, members of this Legislature voted in support of recognizing that natural resources like oil and gas are responsible for thousands of jobs in Ontario and that energy pipelines like line 5 are the safest way to move energy resources.

As the May 12 deadline quickly approaches, I urge each member of this Legislature, and all residents of Ontario, in fact, who are watching at home, to call on the government

of Canada to use every tool at its disposal to secure our energy security and keep line 5 open.

#### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:** The vaccine rollout in Ontario has been chaotic and horribly inequitable.

In Beaches–East York, there are hot spot postal codes that are still not on the provincial list, even though Toronto Public Health and Michael Garron Hospital know that they are hot spots and have been treating them that way since the beginning of the pandemic. The riding has some of the deepest pockets of poverty in the city—communities of essential workers who struggle to get vaccinated because the only way the hospital can deliver vaccines is via first-come, first-served pop-ups that depend on people lining up for hours.

Beaches–East Yorkers who don't live in hot spot areas are also frustrated and, at this point, enraged by the rollout and at the fact that the government paid General Hillier \$20,000 a month to leave us with this disaster.

#### 1020

Many people don't have the time or Internet savvy to spend hours following volunteer Twitter accounts to track the elusive vaccine. If you don't have a car so you can drop everything and drive across the city to some pop-up that happens to have extra slots, or if you don't know someone who knows someone who can get you hooked up, you're out of luck.

Getting a vaccine when the city of Toronto is still on fire with COVID-19 should not feel like hunting tickets to a sold-out concert. It shouldn't feel like The Hunger Games.

Lives depend upon the government getting this right. It's high time the Premier fixed it.

#### FIREFIGHTERS

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Last Wednesday, Ontario's fire marshal announced a groundbreaking partnership with Wounded Warriors Canada that will provide a clinically facilitated, digital mental health program, titled Core Trauma Concepts, to Ontario's fire services. Funding for this program was received through the government's mental health and addictions fund.

Speaker, Core Trauma Concepts introduces important trauma fundamentals by providing culturally appropriate education and training to enhance the resiliency of trauma-exposed organizations, such as Ontario's fire services.

Wounded Warriors Canada is situated in my riding, and I would like to thank them for their continued leadership in providing new and innovative mental health programming for our veterans, first responders and their families.

#### NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** This is National Nursing Week.

As we all know, nurses do incredible work under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. They are educated, skilled and compassionate people.

During the pandemic, they've gone above and beyond what is reasonable to expect from any person. They are burnt out, underappreciated. And many nurses are leaving a career they love but can't physically, emotionally or mentally carry out any more.

Speaker, I thought it was fitting that on National Nursing Week I share thoughts directly from Birgit Umaigba, who is an ICU nurse. Birgit wrote:

"As she took her last breath,

"I held her hand gently, stroked through her curly hair as tears rolled down my cheeks, and around my tightly fitted N95 mask. Her family couldn't be with her in that moment.

"I was her family, and her nurse....

"Nurses week reminds me of the many times we've had to play the role of family and nurse to a dying patient. The heartbreaking moment of holding an iPad, as we cried with families watching their loved ones die....

"... of how committed we are to our patients despite inequitable policies constantly working against us. We show up despite being exhausted, overworked and underpaid. Today, we mourn our patients and nurses who have lost their lives to COVID-19....

"We remember our fallen colleagues as we advocate for safer work-conditions, vaccination of nurses and all frontline workers, mental health support, and the elimination of #Bill124. There is no #NursesWeek without equitable policies for nurses....

"There is no nurses week without adequate, permanent, universal TEN paid sick days."

Speaker, the theme for nurses week is #WeAnswerTheCall. This nursing week, let's listen to nurses and answer their call.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios:** It has been 14 long months of flip-flop decisions and gaslighting from this government, led by Premier Ford. Every lockdown, every restriction, every decision with regard to COVID-19 has, apparently, been because the government was listening to the doctors, following the science and the advice of their science table.

Well, Speaker, two days ago, on May 8, it was reported that the Canadian Paediatric Society is calling on this government to "immediately reopen outdoor recreation spaces, saying the closure is having devastating effects on children and youth amid the COVID-19 pandemic." They cite a study led by SickKids which showed that 70% of Ontario children aged six to 18 years of age reported deterioration in their mental health.

I quote from the letter from the CPS: "Social isolation is by far the biggest predictor of poor mental health for children, and it is completely preventable."

Dr. Isaac Bogoch agrees that closing recreational activities does not make sense. He said, "The science is clear: Outdoor transmission is extremely rare."

Dr. David Fisman, a physician on the Premier's own science table, has said that you're taking away the safe options from people.

I don't know what science the Premier was following when he made the decision to close tennis courts, baseball diamonds, golf courses and soccer fields, but the Premier needs to reopen our outdoor recreation spaces and let our children get back to school.

### FIREFIGHTERS

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I rise in the House today to reflect on May 4, International Firefighters' Day. Worldwide, we took a moment to remember and acknowledge those who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty and the countless men and women working daily to protect us.

Today I wish to recognize the dedication of our firefighters, both career and volunteer, here in Ontario and in my riding of Brantford–Brant. These past 15 months have added an additional layer of stress to the work of these first responders, and I commend them for their dedication to our communities.

As a volunteer firefighter, I witnessed first-hand the bravery and commitment of my colleagues. Often, we see life at its worst, whether that be the destruction of property by the ravages of fire or the tragedy of an accident. To run into a burning building when everyone else is running out requires selflessness.

And here, we also need to take a moment to recognize the families and friends of our firefighters, who know the daily risks but surround them with their support and love.

The firefighter's creed so accurately sums up the values by which these men and women live: "I shall sell my life dearly to my enemy fire but give it freely to rescue those in peril. With God's help."

Let our appreciation for the work they do be expressed throughout the year.

### HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Jamie West:** The Ontario Newspaper Awards celebrate excellence in journalism among newspapers outside Toronto.

I'm proud to report that Sudbury Star reporter Mary Katherine Keown's December 11 article "Trafficked: An Examination of Human Trafficking in Greater Sudbury" has earned her an Ontario Newspaper Award for beat reporting.

I'm going to share a portion of this excellent article. "Human trafficking happens everywhere, including Greater Sudbury. It is more common than we think ... and it affects all stratospheres of society."

"On a slow night, Wendy"—it's not her real name—"says she would meet with at least five men.

"A lot of them had wedding rings on," she says. "I have met with lawyers, doctors, police officers; all sorts of higher-ups you wouldn't think would be into this underground world, but there are a lot of shocking people you

come across. And there are those at the lower end of the scale, but for the most part, it's professional men."

"Wendy was shuffled between cities; she says it is known as touring. She went from Sudbury to Timmins, then Barrie, Orangeville, Mississauga, Toronto, Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie."

"Wendy asked that her real name not be used." Of course, Mary Katherine complied. "It was a no-brainer. Once you hear what she endured, you, too, would understand why she wishes to remain anonymous."

As the MPP for Sudbury, I want to thank Sudbury Star reporter Mary Katherine Keown for putting a local spotlight on the province-wide scourge of human trafficking. I invite all members of this House to read the article.

I also challenge the Conservative government to ensure there's adequate funding for affordable housing, transitional housing, legal aid support and all programs that provide immediate and long-term support and aid to people being trafficked.

### SANDRA WINSPEAR

**Mr. Norman Miller:** I rise today to pay tribute to an amazing woman who has dedicated the last 25 years to ensuring palliative patients are as comfortable as possible and their families receive the support they need all right in Muskoka.

Sandra Winspear retired as executive director of Hospice Muskoka as of April 30. After watching her grandmother pass away in a ward room in hospital, Sandra devoted her life to redefining how we look at end-of-life care and became the driving force behind Hospice Muskoka. Working with the Andy Potts foundation and the community as a whole, Sandra oversaw the building and opening of Andy's House, a beautiful hospice in Port Carling. After years of fundraising and construction, Andy's House opened last year. The opening was one of the last public events I attended before the pandemic hit.

Sandra also started conversations about end-of-life care and about grieving. When she saw that our community didn't have a lot of supports for grieving families, she created a support group for people dealing with the death of a loved one.

Sandra didn't retire until she found the right person to take over her position. Hospice Muskoka is in great hands under the direction of Donna Kearney. Donna has been working at Hospice Muskoka since last August in the position of nurse practitioner and director of care.

On behalf of everyone whom Sandra has supported and all the residents of Parry Sound–Muskoka, I want to thank Sandra for all her work and wish her well in her retirement.

### MOTHER'S DAY

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Yesterday, on Mother's Day, I, like many Ontarians, celebrated Mother's Day in my community, including with my own mom, by dropping off a gift for her. Of course, for the second year in a row, because of this pandemic, Mother's Day looked a little bit

different. I know it's hard for many people not to be able to give their mom a hug, because it has been very hard for me too.

**1030**

My mom has been my biggest supporter and the heart of our family. She's the most incredible woman I know. As an immigrant, an entrepreneur and an educator for over 20 years, she gave everything she had to me, my younger sister, my younger brother, and her community, and every opportunity to me and my siblings. My mom still turns on the Legislative Assembly channel every day to watch me in the House, and I know because I often get text messages telling me to fix my hair or sit up straight. I am so incredibly lucky to have her cheering me on. Although I don't say it enough, I'm really proud of her.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of delivering carnations to mothers and grandmothers living in retirement homes in Willowdale. Although this year I could only drop them off at the door, I hope they brought a smile to the incredible women who quite literally raised our community.

This morning, I want to take a moment to thank my mom, Sandy, and all of the mothers in Ontario for everything that they do, to recognize their tireless work in keeping their families and communities safe, healthy and happy. We need more moms in this world, and on Mother's Day, and every day, we should be thankful for these amazing women. So, no matter how you celebrated yesterday—in your household or by Zoom—I hope you know how special you are.

And Mom, I can't wait to give you a big hug soon.

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

#### WEARING OF RIBBONS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader has informed me that he has a point of order that he wishes to raise.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Thank you, Speaker. I believe, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent for members to wear a purple ribbon in honour of World Lupus Day.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear a purple ribbon in honour of World Lupus Day. Agreed? Agreed.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

##### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, my first question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care—so perhaps somebody on the government side will be able to respond.

The long-term-care commission report, as we all know, has been public for some time. The report has some pretty interesting points in it, one of which is, "26 residents died due to dehydration prior to the arrival of the" Canadian Armed Forces team. "They died when all they need was

'water and a wipe down.'" That's from the submission that the Canadian Armed Forces report made to the commission.

The question that I have for the Minister of Long-Term Care is the same one I asked for over a week now and still have not had an answer to. The question is: When did the Minister of Long-Term Care learn that seniors in our long-term-care system were dying from neglect and dehydration?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Obviously, once we heard of this, the ministry reached out to the commission at the same time. The chief coroner has been engaged. We've ask for full documents with respect to all the deaths in long-term care. Of course, we will be acting on the recommendations of the chief coroner.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The Globe and Mail has a story today that says pretty clearly that those 26 deaths that occurred in a long-term-care centre in Downsview, called Downsview Long-Term Care Centre—but those deaths also occurred in other homes.

In fact, the CAF said this in their report: COVID-19 fatalities pale in comparison to deaths from other causes, like dehydration, neglect or starvation.

Cathy Parkes, who lost her father in Orchard Villa to COVID-19, said this: "If I had had my father living at home with me and I didn't feed him and I didn't give him water and I didn't give him medication or send him to the hospital, I would be criminally charged."

My question to the Minister of Long-Term Care is, when did she find out—when did she know—that seniors in long-term care in our province, here in Ontario, were dying of neglect and dehydration?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, as I just said, once the final report was issued by the commission, of course, the ministry did reach out to the commission at the same time.

The chief coroner has been engaged to look at all deaths in long-term care, as I'm sure all members would expect. Once that documentation has been received and thoroughly reviewed by both the coroner and by the ministry, we will be acting on recommendations that we receive.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** And the final supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The minister's notebook was obtained by the commission. One of the notes that was found therein was written by the minister on April 17, 2020. She wrote, "Military plan needed, get them in within 24-48 hours."

That was on April 17. It took 12 whole days for the Canadian Armed Forces to arrive at Hawthorne Place, and in fact, it wasn't until early June that they showed up at Orchard Villa.

So my question is, when did the Minister of Long-Term Care learn that Ontario seniors living in long-term care were dying of neglect and dehydration?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Obviously, we're very grateful for the work that the Canadian Armed Forces did in

assisting us. It's one of a whole series of measures that the government took during the first wave. As you know, it was a very challenging time.

We are, of course, engaged with the chief coroner. As members would expect, all deaths in long-term-care homes will be reviewed by the chief coroner. Once we see that additional documentation, we will be taking action.

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is for the Minister of Health.

Speaker, this morning the Financial Accountability Office issued a report that talks about the surgical backlog here in Ontario. In fact, the chief financial officer said this: It's a 419,200-surgery backlog that we have right now in this province—as well as 2.5 million people waiting for diagnostic procedures as of this September alone.

Speaker, this is pretty frightening. This is a matter of life and death. These are people who are waiting in pain, anxiety and worry about the procedures and the surgeries that have been postponed.

Where is the minister's plan to get rid of, to deal with, the surgical and procedural backlogs in our province?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to the leader of the official opposition for the question.

We are aware that there are a number of surgical procedures, diagnostic procedures and surgeries that have been delayed between the first and second waves, and now during this third wave. However, it should also be noted that since the beginning of this pandemic, there have been over 420,000 surgeries that have been performed.

There is an analysis that is done on anyone with a significant problem, be it cancer care or cardiac care. If they need surgery, if it's a life-and-death procedure, they will get that surgery. But for other procedures that can be delayed, unfortunately, they have to be. I know this isn't great news for people who have been waiting for a long time, but we simply need the space right now for COVID-19 patients.

But we do have a plan. We've had a plan since the beginning of this pandemic, which I would be pleased to outline in the supplemental, Speaker.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, 419,200 surgeries is a heck of a lot of surgeries, and 2.5 million diagnostic procedures is a heck of a lot of procedures. The FAO predicts that it's going to take at least three years—at least three years—to clear these backlogs, the surgery backlog particularly.

In British Columbia, 95% of the backlogged surgeries were cleared as of just this past March, March 2021.

The FAO found, unfortunately, that instead of spending the money necessary, with a real plan to reduce the backlog, this government has been cutting corners and has barely funded half of the necessary resources, the necessary money, to clear the backlog.

So my question to the minister is: Why is she failing to unveil a real plan to clear the backlogs and refusing to invest the necessary money?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Well, in fact, our government does have a plan, and we have committed the resources. The plan has already been indicated to you, as the official opposition, and to the people of Ontario.

**1040**

Last fall, we spent an extra \$200 million in order to reduce the surgical backlogs. This was increased with our budget this year; part of our \$1.8-billion investment was another \$300 million to reduce the backlog. That's \$500 million to engage in surgeries during evenings and on weekends to make sure that we can increase the volume of surgeries we're able to do.

We've also set out a surgical wait-list across a number of hospitals on a regional basis so that we can use every single operating room and so that there is a procedure whereby some surgeries could be transferred from one hospital to another, if they have the space. We also instituted a surgical smoothing program. All of these programs are working.

We have had to postpone them, but the good news is that our numbers in ICU are at 828 today. That's not a great number by normal standards, but it is going down, and as it goes down—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. The final supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The independent Financial Accountability Office has shown in their report this morning that this government is failing to invest the necessary funds by almost double. So if they doubled what they've invested, maybe we would get some of those surgeries cleared quicker.

But you know what that means: Lives will remain on the line here.

In fact, folks might remember a woman who was waiting for cancer surgery, and she said this to CityNews recently about how she feels with her surgery being delayed, "It's frustrating; it's terrifying."

The government has known for months this was happening. They tabled the budget that shorted the resources necessary to clear the backlogs in surgical procedures and diagnostic procedures.

When will the government make the commitment to double the amount they've invested and ensure that there is a public plan that shows how they're going to get this problem dealt with?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** In fact, last year, 88% of our hospitals achieved surgical targets using the plan we've already set out, which we will get back to as soon as we're able, but we have to put \$500 million into just expanding the hours for these surgeries to be done.

We've also invested the money to create over 3,400 new beds in hospitals and 285 more intensive-care beds.

We've also invested more into home and community care—several hundred million dollars—so that those people who don't need to be in hospital can then go home and have procedures and the help they need, whether it's nursing services or personal support workers.

So in addition to the \$500 million that I've already discussed, we've put hundreds of millions of dollars more—over \$5 billion—into our health care system since the beginning.

While it is very unfortunate—and I know people have been waiting a long time to have their surgeries done—this is something we are looking at on a daily basis, because we are also very anxious to make sure that we can get back to reducing that backlog and getting people back to their normal lives and work.

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Gurratan Singh:** My question is to the Premier.

When everyone should be doing everything they can to get vaccines to COVID-19 hot spots and to fight vaccine hesitancy, the Conservative government's confusing and mixed messages aren't helping anyone.

On Thursday, the Conservative associate minister for small businesses confused Ontarians by suggesting that the Pfizer vaccine—the same vaccine that Ontarians received over 4.5-million doses of—is not as effective as it could be, despite the fact that the Conservative associate minister represents Brampton, a city that is one of the worst hit by the COVID-19 crisis in this entire country, where folks know they're not receiving as many vaccines as they need to protect lives.

Why is the Conservative associate minister going out of his way to confuse people about the effectiveness of this vaccine when communities like Brampton need it?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I don't think the minister is doing anything of the sort. The minister from Brampton is highlighting the fact that we remain very troubled by the inexcusable reluctance of the federal government to act on our borders.

We have highlighted a number of issues with borders. We've seen the variants of concern, which continue to come through our borders—even this past weekend, significantly more. This is very troubling, and we need the federal government to live up to its responsibility to secure our international borders so that as we continue to hit hot spots, like Brampton, which has seen a significant increase in the amount of vaccinations that it has been getting—so that we can continue this good work. We need the federal government to simply step up and do what we have asked it to do, do what everybody is asking it to do: Close that border so that we can get these variants of concern under control.

And I ask the member opposite to join with us in this. This is certainly not a partisan issue. We should all be concerned with what we're seeing at our international borders. I hope that he will assist us.

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

**Mr. Gurratan Singh:** Back to the Premier: Ontarians are smart. They listen to the science. They respect the expert doctors who have told them to take any vaccine

available to them. They know that after this Premier and this minister for small businesses failed to bring in enough paid sick days, failed to protect lives and protect small businesses, that the number one thing they can do for themselves and their families to stay safe is to get vaccinated.

But instead of encouraging people to get vaccinated, the associate minister is confusing people.

The Pfizer vaccine isn't the failure; the failure is that the associate minister and the Conservative government did not get vaccines into hot spot communities like mine in Brampton.

Why is the minister confusing people when he could be protecting lives in Brampton by encouraging folks to get vaccinated and by ensuring that we're getting as many vaccines as possible at this critical time in Brampton?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, I think if there was any failure—it continues to be a failure of the federal government early on to provide us with vaccines that were needed so that we could do more in hot spots.

Despite the failing of the federal government to give us the appropriate vaccines in February, March and April, we have been able to redirect significant vaccinations into hot spots across this province. We have vaccinated over six million people in the province of Ontario.

If there is another failing—it's another failing of the federal government, which allowed these variants of concern to get into our borders in the first place. We have been calling on the federal government for months to close down the borders in advance of the UK variant making its way into the province of Ontario.

I would ask the honourable gentleman, if he wants to do the right thing for Brampton, if he wants to help us out in Peel, he can join with us in calling on the federal government to do the right thing, to close our international borders so that we can get control of this situation—because it's not just vaccines; it's about closing access to these variants of concern.

### BORDER SECURITY

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I want to pick up where the House leader just left off.

It's very clear that stricter border measures help stop the spread of COVID-19 before it even gets here.

We also know that every single case of COVID-19, of the variants, has started outside of this province. As the Solicitor General has said previously, there are as yet no COVID-19 variants that have originated from Ontario.

As we begin yet another week with flights coming into Ontario's airports with potentially more variants—my question to the Solicitor General: Can the Solicitor General remind this Legislature why stronger measures at our borders are essential to help stop the spread of COVID-19?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Thank you to the member from Willowdale for raising this, because it is critically important that we understand where the variants are coming from and how they get into Ontario.



In the last two weeks alone, we've had 43 domestic flights that have had at least one confirmed COVID-19 case on them. And do you know how we found out? Not because the federal government is testing at our airports—but because those individuals rightfully went, booked an appointment, got the test; the test came back positive. But how many people did they interact with before they got that positive result back?

We need to do a better job. We can do that with our federal partners, if they would step up and actually test domestic travellers as they come into Ontario.

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

**Mr. Stan Cho:** This is a frustrating issue for me and my constituents. Ontarians continue to make sacrifices to help defeat COVID-19 and try to return life back to normal. On Mother's Day yesterday, Willowdalers made incredible sacrifices and weren't able to celebrate with their families, and the variants are the biggest reason why we can't get back to normal life.

The Solicitor General and so many members of our caucus have been fiercely advocating for these stronger measures at our borders, which we know are going to help stop the spread of these variants in Ontario.

Back to the Solicitor General: Can she update this House on what the federal government's response to our many letters has been so far?

1050

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Yes, unfortunately, I can share what the federal government responded with. Regrettably, Minister LeBlanc refused to address any of the specific concerns that were raised in our letters. We called for a ban on all non-essential travel, mandatory PCR testing for interprovincial travellers, an end to the loophole at our land borders, and proper enforcement of hotel quarantining.

Speaker, we continue to be very clear, crystal clear, to the federal government. We're imploring them to take stricter measures at the border.

I encourage the Prime Minister to actually read the letters that we have sent and respond with the actions—our what they intend to do about it.

#### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government promised Ontarians the best sick days plan in North America, but what they have given us isn't even what people asked for, let alone anywhere near what the best program in Canada would look like.

The Yukon gives everyone 10 days of paid leave, no questions asked. Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia all have paid time off for vaccine appointments. PEI and Quebec have permanent paid sick leave programs, while ours expires in September, meaning the Conservatives will have taken away five paid sick days from Ontarians by the time their term is up—let alone providing the best sick leave.

My question is, how does this government ever expect to get this crisis in highly infectious places like Scarborough under control with a half-rate, bargain sick leave program?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** I thank the member opposite for that question.

Furthermore, I thank the member opposite and all members in this Legislature for supporting our government's solution to this: to bring forward a comprehensive plan of 23 paid sick days in the province of Ontario. We committed to doubling the federal program, from \$500 a week to \$1,000 a week, and bringing in three paid sick days under the Employment Standards Act.

Mr. Speaker, we are the first province in the country to bring in paid sick days during COVID-19.

We will continue to stand with workers every single day, and all the people of this province, until we defeat COVID-19.

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

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Speaker, while this government tries to deflect and distract the public and uses attack ads, really, and then blames the federal government or uses the federal government for their excuses, the feds actually wrote back and asked the province what they wanted to do, and they heard nothing from this government.

When is this government going to stop with the desperate deflection and start focusing on measures that would actually work, something that the experts have been calling for—like a paid sick days plan, or a support program for businesses and workers that helps these people instead of shutting down businesses? This government is dropping the ball on the vulnerable people of this province and our local businesses across this province. When will this government step up and act?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Mr. Speaker, we are the very first province in Canada to bring forward sick leave during COVID-19—a comprehensive package of 23 paid sick days to help workers and their families get through this pandemic. All members, including the member opposite, supported our legislation. And I'm proud to say that we passed this bill in record time, in about three hours. So I thank the members of the NDP and the independent Liberals for supporting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has asked us, "How can we help?" We've got two requests: one, double the four weeks of paid sick leave—from \$500 a week to \$1,000 a week—and secondly, secure our borders, secure our airports, stop the variants of concern from entering Ontario. If the federal government wants to be a partner, do those two things.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. John Fraser:** This morning's story in the Globe and Mail about deaths from dehydration in Ontario's long-term-care homes is deeply disturbing to all of us.

It has been almost 10 days since the commission released its report, and the government has failed to commit firmly to any of the recommendations in it.

I think it's clear to all of us that immediate and sustained action needs to happen.

So my question is simple, through you, Speaker: Will the Premier commit to implementing the 85th recommendation of the long-term-care commission's final report, requiring the government to table a report in the Legislature outlining the progress they've made to implement the remaining recommendations in the report one year from now and again three years from now? A simple answer: Yes or no?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate the question.

Obviously, we take the report very seriously. That's why I would expect that the honourable member would expect us to take a look at all of the recommendations and give them the attention they deserve.

I think what would have been helpful is if, over the 15 years of the previous Liberal government—that's four separate Liberal administrations—they had paid attention to long-term care, if they had built long-term care, if they had rebuilt some of those long-term-care homes that were so desperately in need of upgrading, if they had worked on a staffing strategy. Had the Liberals done that for the 15 years and four administrations that preceded ours, we would not have been in the unfortunate position of having to play defence for a full year.

But right now, we're on the offence in the province of the Ontario, with over six million vaccination doses into the people's arms. We're attacking COVID-19 directly in the hot spots. We're going into essential workplaces. The Minister of Labour has brought in a sick day regime.

We need the federal government to do its part to secure our borders, and we can put this behind us once and for all.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** Well, Speaker, it's the easiest recommendation in the report for the government to enact right now. I don't know why we couldn't get a yes or no.

Last week, when talking about long-term care, the Premier said, "It was a tragedy, but ... we're going to fix it.... This will never happen again."

However, one year ago, the Premier also said an investigation had been launched into the report of the Canadian military. We found out last week that investigation was never launched; nothing was ever turned over to police. Then we read in the Globe this morning that a spokesperson for the Ministry of Long-Term Care said that could be criminal, a year later.

Currently, there's no legislative requirement for this government to enact recommendation 85. This afternoon, I'll be putting forward legislation that will require the government to enact recommendation 85.

Another simple question: Will the government support that legislation? Yes or no?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As I said, we will do what's right by long-term care in this province, unlike the previous Liberal government which he was a member of.

There were four previous Liberal administrations in advance of ours over 15 years, and the record of that previous Liberal government put us on the defence for much of the first part of the first year of this pandemic. Whether it was ICU capacity, which they did nothing about; whether it was staffing strategy for our long-term-care homes; whether it was rebuilding long-term-care homes that were in desperate need of renovation and upgrading; whether it was adding more long-term-care beds—on every single account, the previous four Liberal governments over 15 years failed the people of the province of Ontario.

We moved quickly before the pandemic. Whether it was a staffing strategy; whether it was building thousands of additional long-term-care beds; whether it was increasing ICU capacity; whether it was increasing testing from 5,000 to 75,000 a day—we are on the offence to put this behind us once and for all.

We need the help of the federal government on our borders, but Canadians and Ontarians are—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. The next question?

## BORDER SECURITY

**Mr. Stan Cho:** From the beginning of this pandemic, our government has always put the health and safety of Ontarians as our number one priority, and that's what we continue to do.

The people of this province continue to do their part, yet they are unnecessarily put at higher risk because of the lack of border control, the higher risk coming into our country, into our province from these dangerous variants from travellers, both internationally and domestically.

We have all heard of the success around other places in the world, like New Zealand, and how they've managed to fare with COVID-19 by restricting travel.

My question is to the Solicitor General. It was very disappointing to hear that our letters had little good response from the federal government. What other steps is our government taking to urge Ottawa to finally get serious about protecting our borders?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Thank you again to the member from Willowdale. I know this is an important issue for your constituents in your community, but it is for all of Ontario.

Since December, Premier Ford has been urging the Prime Minister to take stronger actions at our border. That's why Ontario is the first jurisdiction to actually implement on-arrival COVID-19 testing for international travellers, leading the federal government to take the action on this front. We also took the unprecedented step of closing the Manitoba and Quebec borders, land and water, with the provinces.

**1100**

As the member will know, we have sent three separate letters to Minister Blair and the federal government asking

them to take action to protect Ontario's citizens. Unfortunately, the response we received from the federal government has said they still refuse and will be continuing to ignore taking action to limit international travel—completely unacceptable.

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

**Mr. Stan Cho:** It's truly frustrating to hear of the federal government's lack of action to protect our borders. My constituents are also extremely frustrated. To paraphrase one of my constituents the other day, these variants are not swimming into Ontario. We know these variants of concern are now the dominant form of the virus in our country. When it comes to international travel, border protection is a federal duty, and they have a responsibility to protect Willowdalers and all Ontarians.

Speaker, back to the minister: Can she please explain why strict measures at our borders are essential to protect Ontarians from these dangerous variants of concern?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** We've seen how limiting international travel has been used effectively—spread the COVID-19 variant. We all know the success of the Maritime bubble in limiting travel and, by doing so, limiting COVID-19 cases. No one argues. We all understand.

But let's take a look here in Canada. In Canada, the federal government allows international travel in four provinces: Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, BC. We all know there are a lot of factors at play with COVID-19 spread, but it is a factor in provinces that have the hardest battle with COVID-19 since this began—that the same provinces have the international travel. It's not a coincidence.

Even the restrictions on those travelling from hot spots like India mean—it only takes two mouse clicks for someone to route a flight through another country to arrive at Toronto Pearson.

The federal government needs to take this issue seriously to protect us from the variants.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Premier.

Nowhere has COVID-19 been more deadly than in our long-term-care homes. We saw it clearly in Niagara. Despite the Premier's promise to build an iron ring around long-term care in the first wave of COVID-19, more seniors died in the second wave than the first—mothers, fathers, grandparents, loved members of our community.

At Oakwood Park Lodge in Niagara Falls, nearly 100% of the staff and residents were infected. Forty people died.

The long-term-care commission confirmed what we all knew: This government failed long-term-care residents.

In Niagara, people died as the government refused to send in the military or the Red Cross to help the staff, which I asked for.

The report says it clearly: The Premier had no plan to protect these seniors or staff.

Speaker, will the Premier admit he failed long-term-care residents and staff and admit that Niagara was left without proper government support, and immediately implement the commission's recommendations?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As I've said on a number of occasions, we'll certainly be reviewing all of the very important recommendations that came through the commission report. I think honourable members on both sides of the House would expect nothing less.

But, as I have said on a number of occasions, we certainly were faced with some challenging situations when we inherited government after four previous Liberal administrations which had not done the work needed to invest in our long-term-care homes, whether it was a staffing strategy—we knew staff were leaving, but we didn't know why they were leaving. Was it pay or was it other issues? Our homes were in disrepair. They had made no progress on helping on that file. There were multi-year wait-lists in many homes because the Liberals simply did not invest in new homes.

We took action right away, in advance. We knew that more had to be done in long-term care. That's why we made investments almost immediately to upgrade our long-term-care homes, to build thousands of new homes.

We are making progress on the file, and I think members would expect nothing less.

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** We saw how much more deadly the second wave of COVID-19 was in Niagara, despite this government having time to prepare and their promise to protect seniors and staff in long-term-care facilities.

The long-term-care commission's report showed us that 26 seniors died of neglect, desperately needing water and a wipe-down. Think of that: They died because they couldn't get water—water.

The Premier promised an investigation into these deaths; now he says he won't launch one. Like the iron ring he promised, his investigation was a myth. He wouldn't commit to implementing the recommendations in the report either.

Enough of blaming others. Thousands of seniors have died under this government's watch. This Premier and his government failed the residents of Ontario.

Will the Premier fully and immediately implement all of the recommendations in the commission's report? Will he ensure that homes are properly staffed and that no other senior dies in the richest province in Canada because they couldn't get water?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I think the honourable member will agree that significant progress has been made.

He's absolutely correct that this province was left in a very challenging situation after four previous Liberal administrations and the lack of investment that we saw in them.

That is why this government has committed to four hours of care. It's a multi-billion dollar investment. I suspect individuals don't care how much it costs; they just want to ensure that it gets done.

That's why, in addition to that, we're going to be hiring 27,000 additional PSWs. We heard from the PSWs themselves, in advance of the last election, that they

wanted an organization to allow them to advocate for themselves. That is before the House right now.

We are building thousands of new homes across the province.

We've increased infection prevention and control measures.

The move to Ontario health teams is another significant, significant milestone and breakthrough in how we can ensure that our homes stay safe.

The member is right: Work had to have been done over the last 15 years of the previous four Liberal administrations. But we're getting it done.

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** My question is for the Premier.

One of the undeniable impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is that women have been disproportionately affected. Everyone has experienced major, isolating changes in their lives, but women—working with the elderly, holding the front line in businesses deemed essential, caring for babies, working at their own jobs from home and home-schooling their children—have often carried a double load, so much so that thousands of women have actually left the labour force in order to manage the demands of their families.

This is the reality, and the economic downturn brought on by COVID-19 has been called the she-cession by some economists. It's the reason, if we are successfully to recover as a society, we need to recognize that we must foster a she-covery. The most important thing we can do is make sure that women can re-enter the workforce when they're ready to do so and have someone to look after their children.

Speaker, the federal government has offered to invest in child care across the country to enhance and build on the services already available in provinces and territories.

Will the Premier work with the federal government to ensure that every family in Ontario who needs affordable child care for their children will find it in their own community?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for that question. Obviously, it's one that we hold near and dear to our heart, as well.

Ontario is committed to building an affordable child care system that is flexible and responsive to the varying needs of families. I can tell you that from every round table I have heard—I always heard from women about the issues and barriers that child care faces. It is very important to us.

We hope that the federal government will significantly step up their funding to advance affordability while agreeing that parents need a flexible system that responds to their preferences on how to raise their children. As we know, a one-size approach does not fit all. We look forward to reviewing the details of the plan.

As we have done before, our government is again providing direct relief to families to help offset additional costs incurred as a result of the pandemic. Payments to parents through the Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit began on April 26 to help working parents of students age zero through grade 12 with direct financial supports during the pandemic.

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

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I appreciate the minister's answer.

Between 2008 and 2018, our government built 200,000 child care spaces, and the number of children in licensed child care in Ontario doubled in that period.

Ontario Liberals have put forward a plan that would partner with the federal government to build on that progress and provide licensed, affordable child care across Ontario.

Licensed child care can be flexible, to the minister's point. It can be home-based, and with the support of the federal government, it can be affordable for every family.

I suspect that there's an ideological antipathy toward child care in this government. We saw that on display during the last election, when the leader demonstrated that he knew nothing about how child care operated in Ontario.

**1110**

But the need to address this issue is more acute than it has ever been. COVID-19 demands that we recognize that labour market participation by women will not recover without a new commitment to child care.

I ask again whether this government will put aside that ideological opposition and develop a process to work with the federal government to make sure that child care is available to every family who wants it and needs it in Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** And to respond, the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Just building off my colleague—indeed, we will work with the federal government.

We all aspire to make child care accessible, affordable and flexible for working parents in the province.

However, as we reflect and look back, it must be noted that Ontario, under the former Liberal government, had the second-most expensive child care in the nation. It's not a program we seek to emulate.

We have chosen to directly support parents with the child care tax credit. We topped it up in the most recent budget by an additional 20%—a one-time support—given the unique challenges facing parents, especially women; given their difficulty re-entering the labour market as a consequence of the disruption of the pandemic.

We have increased supports in the child care system. There is over \$2 billion being expended every single year, with a plan to build 30,000 spaces within our schools. Last year, 16,000 spaces were created within the child care market.

We know there's more to do. It's why, in our budget, we increased supports.

We're going to continue, in collaboration with the federal government, to work with them to make child care more accessible for Ontarians.

### BORDER SECURITY

**Mr. Stan Cho:** We know that stricter border measures stop the spread of COVID-19. That's a fact backed up by science and data, and our respected allies around the world have implemented them with great success.

While our government continues to urgently request real action to secure our borders, based on the Solicitor General's previous two answers, it's clearly not a priority for the Prime Minister.

What's even more disappointing—frankly, astonishing—is to see that the Liberal Party leader Steven Del Duca and his party are more interested in defending their federal cousins than taking time to stand up for Ontarians.

My question is for the Solicitor General: Can the minister tell this House if Mr. Del Duca's claims that this government's policy on securing our borders is somehow xenophobic or an attack on Ontarians?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I appreciate the interest and the back-and-forth, because this is an important issue for all of us to appreciate and understand.

We know from aviation statistics that the vast majority of air travellers to Ontario are, in fact, domestic travellers.

During March 2021, our hardest-hit month so far in Ontario, more than 21,000 travellers passed through the Ottawa airport alone, which we know only accepts domestic travellers. To give you an idea of how many people that is: It would be the equivalent of the city of Brockville passing through the airport in just one month. Speaker, do you know how many of those travellers were required by the federal government to get tested? Zero; none.

It's shameful that anyone, let alone the leader of a party, would make this about race.

Perhaps Mr. Del Duca should spend less time standing up for his federal cousins and spend some time standing up for Ontarians.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** And the supplementary.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I appreciate that response from the minister, because I agree this has nothing to do with race.

And it's unfortunate to hear the Liberal members heckle during the question about this very important issue, Speaker.

I think all Ontarians have made incredible sacrifices. And Ontarians also know that after over a year of the pandemic, there should be some sorts of safeguards put in place.

Why won't Mr. Del Duca join us in asking his federal cousins to protect the borders here in Ontario? It's a simple request.

Speaker, back to the minister: Is there a reason to be concerned about travellers even from within our country?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** That would be an emphatic yes, Speaker.

Ontarians are frustrated. They're doing their part, and they're following public health advice. Meanwhile, Mr. Del Duca's federal cousins refuse to act even after three official requests for action.

Premier Ford has repeatedly asked the federal government to step up and do the right thing. We need to ensure that our borders are secure.

Did you know that a population larger than the entire city of Kitchener passed throughout Pearson airport in February alone? The vast majority were not even required to take a PCR test.

Does Mr. Del Duca's party think that most travellers should not be tested? Or will he and the members opposite join us in calling on the federal government to implement PCR testing for all air travellers? Or will they continue spending their time standing up for their federal cousins instead of doing what's right for the people of Ontario?

### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. Jamie West:** My question is for the Premier.

On Friday, April 30, the Minister of Colleges and Universities released a statement that said "the government's priority is to maintain a northern and bilingual midwifery program." That got a lot of traction in the news and on social media. Many people reached out to my office to say that Laurentian University's midwifery program had been saved. However, shortly afterwards, a ministry spokesperson clarified that the province was not saying it would be able to preserve Laurentian's midwifery program but that it would be "making efforts." Then they provided zero information on how that that would happen. That was a cruel joke to play on northern Ontario.

Would the Premier commit today to ensuring that a tricultural, bilingual midwifery program in northern Ontario will exist this fall?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Northumberland-Peterborough South and parliamentary assistant.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Yes, we remain committed to these programs in the north. That's why, as the Premier and minister have said, we've worked with impacted students, the 10% affected by the CCAA proceeding, to ensure pathways to graduation; worked closely with institutions to ensure that midwifery programming remains in the north, bilingual remains in the north—for students to graduate and practise their practice within the north. We will continue to do that.

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

**Mr. Jamie West:** Back to the Premier: For nearly two decades, Laurentian University's physics department graduated 15 radiation therapists each and every single year. These are the students who go on to operate the machines used in radiation therapy for cancer patients.

However, because the Premier failed to protect Laurentian University from the CCAA process, the medical physicists who provided training in radiation therapy have lost their jobs. This means that the four-year

program to train radiation therapists in northern Ontario no longer exists.

According to the CBC, the Ministry of Health referred questions about this to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. And then the Ministry of Colleges and Universities referred it back to the Ministry of Health.

Speaker, midwifery and radiation therapy for cancer patients are two programs essential to health care in northern Ontario. Will the Premier do the right thing and commit to saving these programs in northern Ontario?

**Mr. David Piccini:** Our government has been clear from day one: Our colleges, our universities are autonomous institutions governed by their own boards of directors. When one asked to go before a judicial proceeding, a CCAA—we respect that. We respect the independence of that process.

We've ensured that students have a pathway to graduation. We've ensured that we have midwifery programming in the north, thanks to additional investments from this government. We've expanded French programming in the north, thanks to investments from this government. We've seen it with NOSM. We've seen it with Hearst.

What's deeply concerning from the member opposite: He wants politicians to interfere in what courses autonomous universities offer. He wants politicians to interfere in legal court proceedings. It's chilling, really. That's why that party opposite has only had one opportunity to govern. If he wants to interview for minister of thought control, that's up to him.

But this government is going to respect the independent proceedings, and we're going to support our students in the north.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** The Premier and his party have launched attacks against the federal government that are xenophobic and outrageous. They're claiming it's the federal government's failure at the border that is the cause of all of our COVID-19 problems. The Premier has said he wants to see fewer people enter Ontario, but he won't tell us who.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Just a second.

I need to be able to hear the question.

The member for Orléans has the floor.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has told us that he wants to see fewer people enter Ontario, but he won't tell us who. Does he want to stop truck drivers from delivering essential goods? Does he want to stop doctors and nurses from crossing the border to work at hospitals? Does he want to stop the 30,000 international students who were accepted into our publicly funded universities?

Today, the government claims that they're talking about restrictions on domestic travel, and they've closed the borders with Ontario and Quebec.

And since they're doing such a good job at domestic travel restrictions, perhaps the minister can tell us how many people travelled from Gatineau into Ottawa this morning?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Solicitor General.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I'm shocked, Speaker. I can't believe the member opposite has not been listening to the back-and-forth about what we have been doing and what we will continue to do.

To be clear: We want to stop the variants of concern coming into Ontario. That is what is going to protect us. That is what is going to give us the time to vaccinate enough people to protect our citizens.

**1120**

If the member understood that the vast majority of positive cases right now are actually variants that originate from somewhere outside of Ontario, perhaps he could work with us and our federal partners to do the right thing and close the borders, test people and get them hotels—the land and water loopholes solved. That would be a productive use of your time.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Just to be clear: The minister doesn't know how many people travelled from Gatineau to Ottawa this morning, despite the fact that there is an interprovincial restriction.

The province is in lockdown, with thousands of new COVID-19 cases every day; over 800 Ontarians in critical care. Schools and outdoor recreation remain closed, and the lack of centralized booking has led to a scramble to find and receive vaccinations. But instead of focusing on solving these issues, instead of spending their time getting vaccines into arms or advertising about vaccine hesitancy, the government is focusing their attention on blaming others.

They're not advertising about stopping the spread of the virus. They're not advertising to combat vaccine hesitancy. They're not advertising about the ways in which they're helping Ontarians. They're advertising and fundraising with the all-too-familiar refrain of blaming others. "It's those people from over there. If only fewer of them were coming in, all of our problems would be solved."

When will the government put the focus on helping Ontarians and stop trying to animate their base with dog-whistle politics?

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Solicitor General.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** So many issues.

First of all, I am going to reinforce that the vast majority of positive cases of COVID-19 are, in fact, the variants of concern, which by extension means that those variants came from other countries. Right now, that happens to be a variant that started in the UK, but we all know and are watching what's happening with our BC and Alberta

counterparts, where they are seeing variants coming from other countries. We need to stop that.

We can do all the vaccinations that we can, based on the supply, and we will continue to do that. We've expanded the pharmacy model. We've expanded the primary care model. We have 34 public health units doing excellent work across Ontario, making sure that, to date, over six million people—that's almost half of the province—have received the vaccine.

While that rollout will continue—and we're very proud of the work they are doing—we also need to focus on making sure that no more variants come into Ontario.

#### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Mr. Faisal Hassan:** My question is to the Premier.

The third wave has been devastating to York South–Weston, a community of essential workers and marginalized populations. As a high-risk hot spot, we need to be made a priority for vaccinations; so far, we have few mobile pop-ups and no permanent facility or location. Now, this week, our residents are forced to travel outside of the community for any hope of getting their vaccine.

Our residents are looking for the government to provide the health care they need right here, right now, in the community. Workers need adequate paid sick days as well as paid time off to get the vaccinations they are waiting for.

When is this government going to act with urgency when it comes to stopping COVID-19 transmission in our community?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to get up and talk about what we're doing for workers in this province.

In fact, we were the very first province in Canada since COVID-19 hit this country to bring in a comprehensive 23 days of paid sick leave for workers, a culmination of the federal government's program and ours.

I'm extremely proud of our worker income protection benefit. It does not require a sick note from doctors, and it ensures that workers can stay home if they're feeling unwell, if they are getting a COVID-19 test and waiting for COVID-19 results, if a worker has to go and get vaccinated, or if a worker has to stay home and recover from a vaccination.

But we go even further: If there are workers out there being impacted by mental health issues related to COVID-19, they can stay home and be paid for that. If you're a mom or a dad who has to stay home because your child has COVID-19 symptoms, stay home and get paid.

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

**Mr. Faisal Hassan:** Again, my question is to the Premier.

High-risk hot spots, like York South–Weston, that are home to so many essential workers need to not be treated like an afterthought by this government.

I have been approached by essential businesses that would like to get their essential workers vaccinated right at their workplace but cannot afford to cover the cost of arranging for that.

Why is this government not making it easier for workplaces to vaccinate their employees on the spot? And why is this government not working with these essential businesses to help vaccinate workers and mitigate COVID-19 transmission?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Solicitor General.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I'm really glad that the member opposite raised this.

It's very exciting: One of the other pathways for individuals to get vaccinated is mobile mini vaccination sites that are moving into some of the areas and smaller businesses that do not have the facility or the bandwidth to put on their own vaccination clinics. So in fact, we have ramped up, with the help of the Red Cross, to actually have teams go to those smaller business. I hope that the member opposite would share the names of those businesses with us so that we can reach out, connect and make sure that is available to them and their employees.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios:** My question is for the Premier.

Recently, the Premier stated that he believes if the borders were safe, everything would be fine right now. But back in March of last year, when there were fewer than 200 cases of COVID-19 in Ontario, the Premier encouraged families to travel for March break and stated that he wanted the borders to remain open.

If it's true that border measures might have helped stop the spread of COVID-19, it's logical that it would have only helped way back when there were only a few cases of COVID-19 in Ontario and none of the variants had arrived.

So then why did the Premier not call for these measures 14 months ago, when things could have been prevented?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The response, the Solicitor General.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The member opposite raises an important piece of information, and that is, the more that we learn about COVID-19—how it spreads, why it spreads, where it's spreading from—the more we can protect people. It is absolutely critical, as we understand more about COVID-19, that we continue to learn, that we continue to pivot and we continue to put additional enforcement in.

I would remind the member that it was actually Premier Ford and our government who started testing international visitors at the beginning of this year.

We all remember that long-term-care home in Barrie that was devastated because one person who was carrying the variant from the UK infected and then, unfortunately, devastated a long-term-care home.

When we learn that information, we have to be able to react quickly to ensure that others are protected. That's what we've done, by asking for additional border restrictions and imposing more border restrictions on Manitoba and Quebec.

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

**Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios:** Speaker, the Premier had 14 months to ask the federal government to do something on border controls, but the Premier blew it. He was too busy praising instead.

Last August, the Premier stated, "You wonder why I'm always up here praising him? Because he did an incredible job as Prime Minister." The Prime Minister responded with, "It's always great to be here with friends, particularly you, Premier Ford." Then, the Premier called the Liberal finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, "amazing." She previously called the Premier her therapist.

If the Premier had such a glowing friendship with Prime Minister Trudeau and such influence over Finance Minister Freeland, why didn't the Premier take the opportunity to ask for the border measures he wanted 14 months ago, back when no variants had arrived in Canada and COVID-19 cases were close to zero by comparison—in other words, back when it may have made a difference?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Oh, Speaker. When COVID-19 came in last year, it came in from another country. Right? The variants came in from another country.

We looked at what the Maritime bubble did. It was a very successful model. They protected their borders. We've done that.

We proactively, when the federal government wasn't testing international visitors, stepped up and we did that.

To their credit, the federal government, after a number of weeks, did actually take over PCR testing of international visitors. All we are asking for is that we do the same for the domestic visitors—because we have those essential people coming into Ontario; we have citizens returning to Ontario. All we want to do is protect them to make sure that we don't have more spread and a fourth wave.

#### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Mr. Kevin Yarde:** My question is to the Premier.

Last week, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance highlighting some concerns on the state of our auto insurance system in Ontario and in Brampton North. I wrote how in Ontario we pay some of the highest auto insurance rates in the country—twice as much as our neighbours in Quebec pay, on average.

I also informed the minister that my constituents of Brampton North pay the highest auto insurance premiums in the province, with an average of \$3,301 per year, more than twice the provincial average of \$1,616.

We also know there have been fewer drivers and fewer accidents on the road during this pandemic. Insurance companies have raked in record profits, but the drivers of Ontario have not seen any meaningful rebates.

As the official opposition has recommended, will this government implement a 50% decrease on auto insurance payments during this pandemic and allow payment deferrals for those who have lost their jobs in these times of economic uncertainty?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The parliamentary assistant and member for Willowdale.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I appreciate the member from Brampton North raising this very important issue.

As the member will understand from the foundational briefing provided to him through the Ministry of Finance, this is a very complex issue, because we have an auto insurance system that is overly complicated and full of conflict—created, actually, by the NDP. That means we have to tackle this problem in a fundamental way, going after the root problems, increasing competition, getting rid of the conflict in the system, and attracting new entrants into the market by allowing for the use of technology, such as user-based insurance, UBI.

I'm proud to say that Travelers Insurance recently has announced a new product which will bring down rates for the great drivers of Brampton.

Our message to the ratepayers of Brampton and across this province is very clear: The NDP created this mess. We're going to fix it.

#### DEFERRED VOTES

##### INHERENT RIGHT TO SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT, 2021

##### LOI DE 2021 SUR LE DROIT INHÉRENT À DE L'EAU POTABLE SAIN

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

Bill 286, An Act to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 to require specified actions with respect to safe drinking water for Ontarians living and working on reserves / Projet de loi 286, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l'eau potable pour exiger des mesures spécifiées à l'égard de la salubrité de l'eau potable des Ontariens et Ontariennes qui vivent et travaillent dans des réserves.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 286, An Act to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 to require specified actions with respect to safe drinking water for Ontarians living and working on reserves.

The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I'll ask the Clerks to please prepare the lobbies.

*The division bells rang from 1134 to 1204.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 286, An Act to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 to require specified actions with respect to safe drinking water for Ontarians living and working on reserves, has taken place.



**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 45; the nays are 0.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I declare the motion carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 101(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless—I recognize the member for Kiiwetinoong.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** To the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Agreed? Agreed. The bill is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1205 to 1300.*

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

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

**The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 112, An Act to proclaim Lupus Awareness Day / Projet de loi 112, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation au lupus.

**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 GENERAL GOVERNMENT

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

**The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 163, An Act to proclaim Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) / Projet de loi 163, Loi proclamant la Journée des terroirs de l'Ontario (Journée des terroirs du Canada en Ontario).

**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 GENERAL GOVERNMENT

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

**The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 230, An Act to proclaim Front-line and Essential Service Worker Week / Projet de loi 230, Loi proclamant la Semaine de reconnaissance du personnel des services de première ligne et des services essentiels.

**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 BILLS

### DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION AGAINST ANTI-ASIAN RACISM ACT, 2021

#### LOI DE 2021 SUR LA JOURNÉE DU SOUVENIR ET D'ACTION CONTRE LE RACISME ANTI-ASIATIQUE

Ms. Karpoche moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 289, An Act to proclaim May 10 as the Day of Remembrance and Action Against Anti-Asian Racism / Projet de loi 289, Loi proclamant le 10 mai comme Journée du souvenir et d'action contre le racisme anti-asiatique.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member for Parkdale–High Park care to briefly explain her bill?

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** Thank you, Speaker. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen the troubling rise in anti-Asian racism around the world, including here in Canada. A recent report documented over 1,150 incidents of anti-Asian racism across Canada, with 40% of these attacks happening in Ontario.

Discrimination, harassment and hate crimes targeting Asian people is not new, but it has reached new heights during this pandemic. The government of Ontario can help address the rising tide of anti-Asian racism, fight systemic discrimination and ensure that people in Asian communities across the province are respected, safe and supported. It starts with recognition and commitment by the government to act, and this bill seeks to take that step by declaring May 10 a provincial day of action to address anti-Asian racism.

LONG-TERM CARE COMMISSION'S  
RECOMMENDATIONS REPORTING  
ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021  
SUR LA COMMUNICATION  
DES RECOMMANDATIONS  
DE LA COMMISSION D'ENQUÊTE  
SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS  
DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 290, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to require reporting on the implementation of the recommendations of Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission / Projet de loi 290, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les foyers de soins de longue durée pour exiger la communication de renseignements sur la mise en oeuvre des recommandations de la Commission ontarienne d'enquête sur la COVID-19 dans les foyers de soins de longue durée.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There being a division required—is it deferred?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The bells will now ring for 30 minutes so as to allow the members to vote. I'll ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

*The division bells rang from 1306 to 1336.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The vote on first reading of Bill 290, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to require reporting on the implementation of the recommendations of Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission, has taken place.

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 30; the nays are 0.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I declare the motion carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The bill amends the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, by mirroring recommendation 85 in the long-term-care commission's report requiring that the minister report back to this Legislature one year from the submission of the report, April 30, and three years as well, and that those reports be posted by the government on the government website.

Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa South on a point of order.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, the order for second reading of Bill 290, the Long-

Term Care Commission's Recommendations Reporting Act, 2021, be immediately called; and

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

That the bill should be ordered for third reading, which order shall immediately be called.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Agreed? I heard a no.

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I understand the member for Parkdale—High Park has a point of order.

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I seek unanimous consent to bring forward a motion without notice to immediately pass Bill 289, An Act to proclaim May 10 as the Day of Remembrance and Action Against Anti-Asian Racism.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Agreed? I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

POLICE WEEK

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House today in recognition of Police Week, taking place this year from May 9 to 15. Police Week is a national campaign, organized in Ontario by the province in collaboration with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, that focuses on raising awareness and recognition of the important work that our policing partners do across the province in keeping communities safe.

1340

This being the second Police Week recognized in the midst of COVID-19, it truly does underscore the fact that the pandemic has taken an enormous toll on all of us. It has put a severe strain on almost every aspect of our lives and imposed on our society a challenge unlike any other in generations. Alongside the thousands of other front-line workers, we are so fortunate to count on our police, who have continued to work relentlessly to serve and protect Ontarians while facing new challenges caused by COVID-19. Our police have been instrumental in supporting the enforcement of the public health measures that our government has put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19 while also responding to the myriad of other community safety issues, new or long-standing.

Speaker, just as I emphasized during last year's Police Week, I want to reiterate that criminal activity has not stopped because of the pandemic. Organized crime has found ways to continue to operate and thrive on the vulnerability of those most at risk as a result of the pandemic. So too has human trafficking, a vicious and violent crime that targets the vulnerable. While COVID-19 has forced us to put our normal lives on hold, traffickers have found ways to expand their efforts and exploit those at greatest risk, the average age being only 13 years old, who are

isolated from supports and more engaged with social media than ever before.

To address this issue and support our policing partners, our government introduced new anti-human trafficking legislation earlier this year. If passed, the Combating Human Trafficking Act would build upon the province's \$307-million anti-human trafficking strategy and open new avenues in Ontario's relentless fight against human trafficking. It would help ensure our police partners are equipped to crack down on offenders and support victims and survivors with every tool at our disposal. It would also offer our police and their justice sector and community partners a stronger legislative framework in which to conduct their work.

There have also been incredibly concerning reports of an increase in hate-motivated crime, especially anti-Asian hate crimes. To combat hate-motivated crime and to provide support to our victims, our government announced an investment of more than \$2.6 million over two years through the Safer and Vital Communities Grant. This investment will help community-based organizations and their policing partners implement local projects that tackle discrimination and foster greater inclusiveness here in Ontario.

Further, we have invested over \$3 million to date into the hate crime and extremism investigation team, a network of 14 municipal police services as well as the OPP that provides specialized investigative support to police services in Ontario on matters involving hate propaganda, the promotion of genocide, hate crimes and criminal extremism.

And as an ongoing effort to deter criminal activities and improve public safety, our government has announced an investment of \$6 million over three years to help expand surveillance systems throughout Ontario through the new Ontario CCTV grant. This investment will further support our police in their efforts to combat aggressive driving, which has been linked to gun and gang violence and organized crime. It also brings the total investment to combat gun and gang violence to \$112 million, with the support of the federal government, through the Ontario Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy.

Our front-line police have worked so hard to maintain public safety during this pandemic. Often their work is silent, preventive and unseen. Sometimes it requires police officers to put themselves in harm's way, and occasionally it requires them to make difficult life-or-death decisions in the blink of an eye.

Along with other first responders, police officers are among the professionals who are the most likely to be exposed to occupational stress. That is why, in our recent budget, we have continued to invest in the mental health and well-being of our front-line heroes with a \$12.5-million commitment to enhance the mental health services available to Ontario Provincial Police personnel and their families over three years.

But keeping our communities safe should not and does not rest on the shoulders of our police services alone. Individuals too hold a key piece of that puzzle. This is

embodied in this year's theme, "Working Together to Keep Our Communities Safe." Our society is at its best when we work together and collaborate. It certainly takes an entire community to ensure everyone is safe from harm. We should never forget that.

Police Week is a fitting reminder to honour these men and women on the front lines. Ontarians are truly thankful for their service and partnership to help maintain public safety.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Response to the ministry? The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to stand in the House. Today I give the response from the official opposition in recognition of Police Week.

The theme this year is "Working Together to Keep Our Communities Safe." This is the second year that Police Week has been recognized while we are in a COVID pandemic. Police are always the first people on many scenes. They're the people that you turn to when there is danger in your midst. Now that we're in a state of emergency, they are often the people left to interpret what the new rules mean. On top of the stress that they already face having to make life-and-death decisions on a regular basis, now, often, they have to deal with rules that none of us are quite sure of. They're left to deal with it on the ground, and that is incredibly stressful.

Personally, I know from the calls we get in the office regarding the changes in the regulations how stressful it is on us, but we're not on the ground facing the situation right there. We all know how people right now are very—we're all tired. I'd say many of us are more aggressive. I can't fathom how hard that must be to deal with in the situations that our police officers have to deal with every day.

I listened intently to the minister. We disagree on many issues, but crime hasn't stopped and our police officers need to continue to deal with criminal activities. In some cases, because our society has changed because of the emergency orders, that criminal activity has become more active, more heinous and more dangerous.

The police force itself is a human construct, so they also have to deal with human issues. They have to deal with COVID within their forces. They're also being stretched by this pandemic. They are not immune. They are responders that we turn to every day. They do things that most of us wouldn't be able to do, but they are human. The force is a human construct, and humans make mistakes. We all make mistakes and we are all more prone to do it now because of COVID-19.

The official opposition would like to salute police officers and their support staff for the great things they do. Hopefully we can all work together to make sure that everyone is kept safe by their efforts and by ours.

In the spirit of that, I would like to tell a human story about a police officer. This happened before the pandemic. Police officers serve to keep us safe but they serve at their best when they're part of the community, when people feel that they're part of the community.

**1350**

Recently, one of our communities transferred from a municipal force to the OPP. That was the first time I got

to meet the OPP commissioner, Commissioner Carrique. It was at a regional awards ceremony, and one of the people getting an award was a five-year-old boy, because he'd stayed on 911 for half an hour while his mother was unconscious on the floor. So he got a truck from the OPP. But you could tell the little boy wanted more than a truck, but at an OPP ceremony it's very official, and he watched that and Commissioner Carrique recognized that. Commissioner Carrique took off his hat and put it on the little boy and saluted him. That—that—showed me what true policing is. And on all our behalf, thank you.

## PETITIONS

### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Mr. Jamie West:** This petition is titled, "Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

"Whereas the government only covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada; and

"Whereas optometrists must absorb the other 45% for the over four million services delivered annually under OHIP; and

"Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

"Whereas the government's continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

"To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and provide it to the Clerk.

### ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J'aimerais remercier M. Mario McLean qui m'a fait parvenir ces pétitions, mais il y a des pétitions qui viennent de partout en Ontario.

« Pour une université de la langue française dans le nord-est de l'Ontario.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Alors que l'Université Laurentienne a annoncé, le 12 avril 2021, son plan de restructuration, qui incluait la fermeture de 69 programmes (dont 28 programmes francophones), la dissolution de la Fédération laurentienne, et la mise à pied de plus de 100 professeur(e)s, et que ces annonces ont un effet

dévastateur aux niveaux social, économique, et humain pour la communauté francophone du Moyen-Nord;

« Alors que la communauté » francophone « exige des institutions postsecondaires de langue française depuis les années 1960, et que les manifestations du 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2018 ont montré l'engagement et la volonté d'avoir des institutions postsecondaires gérées par, pour, et avec la communauté francophone;

« Alors que le 12 mars 2021, l'Université de Sudbury et l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario ont annoncé le souhait que l'Université de Sudbury devienne une université de langue française et laïque; »

Ils demandent à « l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario ... qu'elle entreprenne les actions suivantes :

« —assurer dans les plus brefs délais le rapatriement à l'Université de Sudbury de tous les programmes et les cours offerts en français, et le transfert de toutes les ressources matérielles, physiques, humaines et financières ... en lien avec l'offre de services en français et la programmation francophone de l'Université Laurentienne, disponibles ... du 9 avril 2021;

« —mettre en place un moratoire d'un an, renouvelable, sur tous les programmes francophones de l'Université Laurentienne et de ses universités fédérées offerts en date du 9 avril 2021, afin d'assurer qu'ils puissent être offerts dans leur intégralité d'ici la fin de la transition des ressources et programmes francophones vers l'Université de Sudbury;

« —établir une commission de mise en oeuvre qui sera chargée d'assurer le transfert des programmes vers l'Université de Sudbury et d'appuyer cette dernière dans son développement... »; et

« —s'assurer, par tous les moyens, que les étudiant(e)s actuel(le)s des programmes francophones touchés par la restructuration de l'Université Laurentienne puissent obtenir un diplôme dans le programme au sein duquel ils/elles étaient inscrit(e)s en date du 9 avril 2021, sans cours ou coûts supplémentaires à ceux déjà prévus initialement. »

J'appuie cette pétition, madame la Présidente. Je vais la signer et je l'envoie aux greffiers.

### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'd like to thank Grand River Eye Care for delivering this petition to Queen's Park. It reads as follows:

"Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

"Whereas the government only covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada; and

"Whereas optometrists must absorb the other 45% for the over four million services delivered annually under OHIP; and

"Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

We support this petition, and I’m hoping my friend from Brantford–Brant can help us with this.

#### LANGUE ET CULTURE FRANÇAISES

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Il me fait plaisir de lire la pétition qui a été envoyée par Andréanne Gougeon de Hawkesbury.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors que l’Ontario reconnaît les droits linguistiques des Franco-Ontariens;

« Alors que la bataille aux épingles à chapeau du 7 janvier 1916 est un chapitre essentiel dans l’histoire de la francophonie ontarienne;

« Alors que la bataille aux épingles à chapeau est un symbole durable de la lutte pour les droits linguistiques des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario pour qu’elle s’assure que le 7 janvier de chaque année soit proclamé le Jour de la bataille aux épingles à chapeau. »

Ça me fait plaisir de signer la pétition et d’envoyer la pétition à la table des greffiers.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Joanne Philipow from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Ban Retirement Home PPE Charges....

“Whereas Ontario’s retirement homes are largely privately owned corporations; and

“Whereas these businesses have a responsibility to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to their employees; and

“Whereas many retirement homes are adding PPE charges to the residents’ monthly bill, but the PPE is not for the residents but for the employees of the retirement home; and

“Whereas residents of some Sudbury retirement homes have effectively organized letter-writing campaigns and actions to have the PPE charges to residents cancelled and recognized as a retirement home’s cost of doing business;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Treat our province’s seniors with respect and ban any additional COVID-related fees, including PPE, to retirement home residents.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank the good people of Wellington–Halton Hills for this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists must absorb the other 45% for the over four million services delivered annually under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Mr. Jamie West:** This petition is entitled: “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada; and

**1400**

“Whereas optometrists must absorb the other 45% for the over four million services delivered annually under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to the Clerk.

#### DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ces pétitions me proviennent de Plantagenet—plusieurs, plusieurs pages. Je vous remercie.

« Accents en français sur les cartes de santé de l'Ontario... »

« Alors qu'il est important d'avoir le nom exact des personnes sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement » de l'Ontario, telle « la carte santé... »;

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l'épellation de leur nom;

« Alors que ... le ministère de la Santé » a « confirmé que le système informatique de l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents; »

Ils demandent à « l'Assemblée législative ... qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario. »

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

#### CONSIDERATION OF BILL 112

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to be able to move third reading of Bill 112, An Act to proclaim Lupus Awareness Day, on behalf of the member for Markham–Unionville; and

That when the order for third reading is called, the question shall be put without debate or amendment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent of the House to be able to move third reading of Bill 112, an Act to proclaim Lupus Awareness Day, on behalf of the member for Markham–Unionville; and

That when the order for third reading is called, the question shall be put without debate or amendment.

Agreed? Agreed.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### LUPUS AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2021

##### LOI DE 2021 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION AU LUPUS

Mr. Calandra, on behalf of Mr. Pang, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to proclaim Lupus Awareness Day / Projet de loi 112, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation au lupus.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That is carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

##### BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SKILLED TRADES ACT, 2021

##### LOI DE 2021 OUVRANT DES PERSPECTIVES DANS LES MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS

Mr. McNaughton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 288, An Act to enact the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021 / Projet de loi 288, Loi édictant la Loi de 2021 ouvrant des perspectives dans les métiers spécialisés.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Back to the minister.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Speaker, I am immensely proud and pleased to rise today to speak for the second reading of Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021. Today, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Burlington, my hard-working parliamentary assistant at the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

This legislation, if passed, would create the long-awaited and much-anticipated generational change that our skilled trades system has needed for decades. My mission—in fact, our government's mission—is to help more people find meaningful careers in the skilled trades.

Not every single young person needs to go to university to become successful and make an honest living. Jobs in the trades are well-paying and often you get to travel and can even be your own boss. Tradespeople build our hospitals, broadband, bridges and roads, natural gas infrastructure and, of course, our homes. They manufacture our cars and keep them running. They cut down trees and treat the ones that are sick. They grow our food and prepare it too. They are critical now and will be critical to Ontario's future.

But many of our skilled tradespeople will soon be retiring. Right now, nearly one in three journeypersons in Ontario is 55 years or old and the average age of an apprentice is 30. Before the pandemic, more than 200,000 jobs went unfilled every single day, many of these jobs in the skilled trades, costing Ontario's economy more than \$24 billion.

We are on the verge of a looming crisis. Our economy cannot grow if we don't have the skilled workforce to support it. Just in construction alone, we need 100,000 more skilled workers over the next 10 years. Fact: The member for Essex and the opposition critic for job creation and economic recovery is on the record saying, "There's not a shortage of workers." However, unlike him, our government is not willing to turn a blind eye. We must step up and confront the challenges in front of us.

Prior to the pandemic, nearly half of all Canadian employers said that they could not find workers with the skills needed for the jobs out there and that the skilled trades were the hardest positions to fill. Further to that, our government has embarked on an ambitious infrastructure plan, including a record investment of more than \$144 billion dollars; plans like:

—GO Transit expansion, to bring all-day, two-way service to every corner of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area; or

—the largest single subway expansion project in Canada's history, which will reach transit-starved communities in Toronto, Mississauga and Richmond Hill; or

—broadband and natural gas expansion projects, like the ones taking place in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, that will bring affordable heating and Internet connectivity to families in rural Ontario.

These are all good, meaningful jobs to tradespeople.

The costs of our ambitious infrastructure projects could escalate substantially if they don't have the workers they need, so it is especially urgent that we make sure we are attracting more people to the skilled trades.

As recently as the fourth quarter of 2020, close to one in 10 job vacancies in Ontario were in manufacturing. To that point, I am proud to say that because of the leadership of our Premier, Ford Motor Company of Canada, along with our government and the federal government, invested a total of \$1.8 billion dollars to make Ford the first auto giant in Canada to build battery electric vehicles. I also want to thank Unifor's Jerry Dias, their workers and their team for their leadership in growing auto manufacturing here in Ontario.

Ford will retool its assembly complex in Oakville beginning in 2024, in addition to a new engine program at its Windsor plant. As the Premier has said, we are securing thousands of good-paying jobs in Oakville and across the province, like the auto parts sector and service providers.

In October of last year, Unifor and Fiat Chrysler also reached a tentative \$1.5-billion deal to bring 2,000 jobs to the Windsor plant, along with electric vehicle capability. FCA has indicated their commitment to adding three products to its plants, including a recall of over 100 workers at an Etobicoke casting plant. The work is scheduled to start in 2023 and the expectation is that more than 2,000 jobs will be sustained in Windsor, including more than 1,500 new ones.

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Just a few days ago it was reported that General Motors will restart production in Oshawa, as truck production is expected to begin in the fourth quarter of this year ahead of the initial January 2022 schedule. General Motors will hire nearly 1,700 people to staff the two production shifts, including 1,500 production line workers who will see an hourly wage of \$23 per hour; 110 electricians, who will start at \$43 an hour; and 60 millwrights starting at \$43 per hour. The good news is, every one of these jobs will see pensions and benefits. All of this means we need to attract young people to the trades, modernize the system and engage businesses.

Speaker, for far too long the skilled trades have been neglected. The Liberal government set up an apprenticeship system that was doomed to fail from the start and the New Democrats, now the official opposition, barely gave the skilled trades the attention that they deserve. In the three years since the beginning of this session, members of the official opposition only said the words “skilled

trades” about 24 times, and most of these times they barely acknowledged the importance of the trades or the economic consequences of not having a strong system in place. The independent Liberals have acknowledged the skilled trades in this chamber even less.

In contrast, members of our government have been championing the skilled trades since before they were sitting on this side of the House. And I'm not just speaking about my record or the record of our cabinet colleagues; government members from across Ontario have regularly taken the opportunity to speak about the importance of the skilled trades and the good jobs these provide to hard-working Ontario families.

In fact, my colleague the member for Kitchener–Conestoga just said last month, “For too long, young people who have natural talent on the shop floor have been pushed into university lecture halls. The stigma that comes with careers in the trades is not something that is going to go away overnight, but it is something our government is committed to fighting against. These are good-paying jobs and exciting career paths that are in demand right now in our province, and we should be promoting these opportunities and not dissuading anyone from exploring them.”

Another example is the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park, who said, “Sharpening Ontario's competitive edge will spur growth in the skilled trades and professional workforces, getting shovels in the ground and getting people back to work faster.

“Our government continues to move forward boldly to achieve our ambitious goals as we build healthier, safer and more prosperous communities.”

As an example, I'll quote my good friend the member for Brantford–Brant, who has said our government is “also seeking to upgrade and modernize Ontario's skilled trades system to encourage participation and provide easier access to trades through a skilled trades strategy. These investments will help job seekers gain access to good jobs and any necessary training or supports. They will also allow employers to actively participate in training and mentorship for apprentices.”

Speaker, going back to the previous government's record, the only thing that the Liberal government tried to do after establishing the ill-equipped Ontario College of Trades was to appoint person after person to conduct reviews and studies. Industries have been raising the alarm bells and it's only fallen on deaf ears of the members opposite.

After the Liberals introduced the Ontario College of Trades, or OCOT for short, the number of new people signing up as apprentices dropped by over 17,000, or 40%. Let me repeat that: Since the introduction of OCOT, the number of people signing up as apprentices dropped by more than 17,000. Since 2014 and until we formed government, the number of certificates of apprenticeship and certificates of qualification also decreased every year. But the year after the 2018 election, new apprentice registrations increased by 5.5%. Our closure of OCOT is keeping a long-standing promise going back more than a decade ago, when the organization was first stood up.

Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge at least one of the bold leaders from years prior who advocated for the dismantling of OCOT, like the former member for Simcoe North and father to the Associate Minister of Women's Issues, Garfield Dunlop.

Over and over again, I've heard from young people: "I know how to become a doctor or a lawyer or a banker, but I have no idea how to become a carpenter, a welder or a millwright." Apprentices have told us repeatedly that the system is confusing and difficult to navigate. One reason for this is the overlap between OCOT and my ministry. My staff showed me an apprentice's journey map, and quite frankly, I thought I was looking at the Tokyo subway map.

For example, apprentices register with the ministry. They get a logbook from OCOT; schedule classroom training; book and write exams with the ministry, but pay fees to OCOT; then advise the ministry of their progression and completion, but get exam results from OCOT. It's truly no wonder apprentices and tradespeople find this Ping-Pong back and forth confusing. This needs to end, and it will.

Speaker, the growth of Ontario's economy demands a skilled trades and apprenticeship system that is nimble, agile and responsive to the needs of industry, especially as technology changes the way that things are done. That's why, after becoming the Minister of Labour and inheriting the training and skills development portfolio, I took the time to listen and build relationships with people across labour, businesses and associations.

To guide us through this important work, our government established a new skilled trades strategy built upon three principles: (1) breaking the stigma and attracting more youth to the trades, (2) simplifying the apprenticeship system, and (3) encouraging employer participation in apprenticeships. Together, this includes a historic investment of \$1 billion over four years.

Our government has been steadfast in our support for the trades before and throughout this pandemic. To this end, my ministry has been investing in programs to support apprenticeships and build our workforce. Apprenticeships are a great way to train new talented workers effectively for the jobs of tomorrow. It is a practical way for young people to learn the skills and practices associated with a career path while getting paid. It's truly a win-win situation.

Apprenticeships open the door to life-changing careers. This is why we're investing \$17 million every year in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, which gives high school students opportunities to learn about work in the trades while completing their Ontario secondary school diploma. For those out of school, we're also investing \$21 million in Ontario's Pre-apprenticeship Training Program, giving women and underprivileged and under-represented groups and people exposure to a variety of good jobs in the trades. The last round, in fact, included over 1,800 placements, which is up 14% since we took office.

Speaker, we know that those entering the skilled trades often face financial barriers like the cost of tools. Our new

non-repayable tools grant provides between \$400 and \$1,000 to apprentices to help with these costs.

Another common barrier is the cost of living while completing the in-class portions of training where apprentices are not on the job site, and are therefore not being paid by their sponsor. To fix this gap, we also established two new grant programs to cover basic living expenses for apprentices.

A fundamental part of our training system is the colleges and union training centres that provide in-class training. To increase support for them, we increased their per diems by over \$30 million for an ongoing budget of over \$111 million every single year. The last time there was an increase to the per diem was more than five years ago.

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Training centres not only face operating pressures, they also need funding to purchase new equipment for students. It is crucial that our next generation of tradespeople get trained on the same machinery they will actually see on the job site. By providing these classrooms with predictable funding, they can purchase state-of-the-art equipment that truly helps our next generation of apprentices be the best that they can be. Our training providers have also faced the challenges of this global pandemic head-on. To keep our instructors and apprentices safe, we have invested more than \$5 million in relief funding for PPE and smaller class sizes.

Speaker, I have spoken about our support for apprentices and for training providers. Lastly, I would like to speak about the backbone of our apprenticeship system, the employers. When it comes to encouraging their participation in apprenticeships, I am pleased to share with members again that we launched a new, \$23-million annual Achievement Incentive Program. Unlike previous programs, this one is focused on outcomes. Employers are rewarded financially when apprentices reach milestones and when they complete their training. This makes the time and effort to train an apprentice not only gratifying but good for the bottom line, too.

Another common barrier for small and medium-sized businesses is that they cannot teach an apprentice all the skills they need to master their trade. To solve this challenge, I was joined by the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues over the winter in launching a \$20-million group sponsorship grant to encourage employers to come together to provide a full range of training and on-the-job mentorship for apprentices. We are also working with industry and labour on a new skilled trades initiative for major infrastructure projects. I'll have more to share on this in the coming weeks.

Speaker, right across the training system, from apprentices to training providers to employers, our government is there to support them and give them the tools they need to succeed. I've said it earlier, but I will say it again: We're investing a historic \$1 billion over the next four years to support the skilled trades.

Before speaking more about our solutions to the challenges the current trades system faces, I want to share



some details about the great work that our government is doing to enhance training outside of the skilled trades. We have introduced many new training programs for job seekers to learn in-demand skills rapidly so they can gain employment. The way we work has clearly changed and we need to help people adjust. Rapid technological changes in the workplace plus AI changes are changing all of our workplaces. Entire occupations are being impacted. Many workers are being displaced because of this. At the same time, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on certain sectors such as tourism and hospitality. We are here to help workers upskill or reskill, to train for new occupations and adapt to recent technological advances in the workplace.

Recently, I was proud to launch an important new, \$115-million initiative called the Skills Development Fund. The fund was specifically designed to address the challenges brought on by COVID-19 and help reduce obstacles to hiring and training. We wanted to generate innovative solutions to help people get back to work and ensure businesses can find the qualified people they need to recover from COVID-19. I'm proud to say that we received more than 500 innovative ideas and proposals for support from employers, industry associations, training institutions, municipalities, and more.

More than a month ago, we started notifying the organizations that would receive funding for their projects. For example, we are investing nearly \$600,000 in a new certificate program to help prepare 150 people in Hamilton for well-paying jobs in the construction sector. These jobs include environmental engineers, surveyors, civil engineers and general managers.

Speaker, if I can come back to the second pillar of our skilled trades strategy simplifying the system, as our legislation today is instrumental to achieving this objective. A key component of simplifying the system was the establishment of a skilled trades panel to advise on the successor framework to OCOT and co-delivery of services in the second upcoming phase on matters of training and classification.

The panel is led by the chair, Mike Sherrard. He is the former chair of the national labour and employment law section of the Canadian Bar Association and the labour and employment law section of the Ontario Bar Association. He previously served as chair and board member of the Yves Landry Foundation, established by leaders in Canada's manufacturing and business sectors in 1998 to advance technological education and skills training to resolve the skilled labour and technical professional shortages facing Canadian industry. He is also the secretary-treasurer of Support Ontario Youth, or SOY.

I also want to take this opportunity to recognize the four other panellists, leading industry representatives in their very own right. Jason Ottey is the director of government relations and communications for Labourers' International Union of North America, or LIUNA, Local 183. Prior to joining Local 183, he was the director of research and policy for the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, or RESCON, where he represented the interests

of single and multi-family residential builders across the GTA.

Shaun Scott: He joined Linamar in 1995 and is currently the director of organizational development, where he provides oversight for staff and operations. He is also a former board member of Skills Canada and Skills Ontario.

Melanie Winter's career in HR spans almost two decades. In her most recent role as regional human resources director for Cascades for western and central Canada, she had the opportunity to lead change at a corporate level with the implementation of new payroll systems and integration of new acquisitions.

Melissa Young is the executive director of the National Electrical Trade Council. As regional coordinator for the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project, she supported the Council of Atlantic Premiers in aligning the rules, processes and standards for apprenticeship in the four Atlantic provinces. She served on the board of directors of the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and was former chair of the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship's communication and promotion committee. She has represented the New Brunswick Building and Construction Trades Council as past chair of the New Brunswick Construction Safety Association and past vice-chair of the New Brunswick Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Board.

Speaker, in September, I tasked this panel to advise us on how we can move forward. This received broad support, including from organizations like the Ontario Skilled Trades Alliance, an umbrella association that represents organizations like RESCON, the home builders, OGCA, the Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, LIUNA, the IBEW, the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Merit Ontario, CLAC, the OEL and more. This is support from associations and unions literally representing hundreds of thousands of skilled trades workers in this province.

This panel held dozens of meetings and reviewed nearly 70 written submissions to hear out the concerns of tradespeople, apprentices, unions, businesses large and small and training providers. What they told us in their final report is that we need a simpler, customer-focused system. Simplifying our skilled trades training and apprenticeship system will not only address the looming skills shortage but it will enable more people who have been left unemployed due to the pandemic to enter the skilled trades and connect with meaningful, rewarding jobs.

The decade-long co-delivery of training and certification for the skilled trades has not been successful. While the overwhelming majority acknowledged challenges with OCOT, there was no desire to return to the system that existed prior to the college, where government was responsible for the design, delivery and implementation of skilled trades and apprenticeship programs, policies and services. The layers of bureaucracy resulted in a system that was not agile or responsive to the 21st century

demands. Instead, the panel recommended that we replace OCOT with a new crown agency called Skilled Trades Ontario. The agency, accountable to the minister, would be an entirely different service delivery model than OCOT.

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Some highlights of the new agency include a digital system, instead of paper logbooks and wet signatures; a clear path from the start to the finish, not bouncing back and forth between two bodies; and an approach centred around the worker. This is how we're going to spread opportunity more widely and fairly. This is how we're going to give more people the hand-up that they desperately need.

Specifically, there are three key differences of the proposed new framework under Bill 288:

(1) Instead of an unwieldy 21-member board of governors, Skilled Trades Ontario's 11-member, competency-based board of directors and CEO will be appointed by government. Industry's input will instead come through advisory committees.

(2) We are depoliticizing the agency by separating compliance and enforcement from research, updating curriculum and trade standards, and certification.

(3) We are ending the fragmentation of the apprenticeship system by ensuring all client-facing services are housed under one roof instead of the Ping-Pong experience. This ensures a smaller government approach for the province's new training authority.

The agency would have a strong mandate to ensure that training reflects changes in the economy or technology, be industry-informed, and act as a one-window point of access. This will make the system simpler and easier to navigate.

I want to thank the panel. We wouldn't be at this point without their hard work. Their report is available at [ontario.ca/trades](http://ontario.ca/trades).

Speaker, the new Skilled Trades Ontario would be a one-stop shop for skilled trades and apprenticeship training and certification. It would handle all the daily client services—no more going back and forth between OCOT and the ministry. Apprentices would be able to register, take exams, pay fees and get certifications all in one place.

Moreover, while OCOT currently sends applications and most information through mail, the new agency would have a digital portal. With this portal, clients would be able to register, log their hours, schedule their in-class learning and schedule exams from a home computer, laptop or smartphone. They could also access information about financial supports and verify their status all online. In short, apprentices would be able to get information and do their transactions digitally, which is far simpler and much quicker.

At the same time, Speaker, if this legislation is passed, my ministry would take on responsibility for enforcement of the skilled trades and apprenticeships. Right now, this is handled by OCOT inspectors. We would be moving this

function over to the ministry so that compliance and enforcement are done by our occupational health and safety inspectorate. This would avoid duplication of inspections, streamline worksite visits and cut red tape. The ministry inspectors have showed exceptional leadership during the pandemic and their expertise would continue to help the skilled trades.

By moving these functions to the ministry, we would also be able to combine compliance and enforcement inspections with other regulatory inspections. This means there would be fewer disruptions to employers. In short, the new Skilled Trades Ontario agency and ministry inspectors would simplify the skilled trades system to benefit both apprentices, journeypersons and employers.

Speaker, some may ask, "Can't the problems within the College of Trades be fixed?" And I would say to that that the issues have accumulated over the years and they've truly eroded the public's trust and confidence in OCOT's authority as the lead for professionalizing the skilled trades. The new approach would endeavour to rebuild public confidence by streamlining service improvements, making it easier to navigate the system and reduce red tape.

Bill 288 is moving forward quickly, but if it's passed, there would be no disruption for services to apprentices and businesses in the transition to Skilled Trades Ontario.

Speaker, we're taking action. We're making changes. This is the right move. And you don't need to just take my word for it. If I may, I would like to share a few statements that expressed resounding support for our plan. Stephen Hamilton, Chair of the Ontario Skilled Trades Alliance, said, "We welcome a new agency that takes a fresh approach and genuine interest in advancing Ontario's skilled trades and apprenticeship system. We are hopeful that Skilled Trades Ontario will stay focused on its mandate to promote the trades and encourage employers to play a greater role in mentoring aspiring tradespeople from the start to finish of their apprenticeship. That's the way to close the skills gap, lead economic recovery and keep Ontario competitive."

Joe Mancinelli, LIUNA International vice-president and regional manager of central and eastern Canada, said, "Minister McNaughton continues to exemplify collaborative and strategic leadership in eliminating red tape for apprenticeship training and enhance prosperous opportunities in the skilled trades. The establishment of Skilled Trades Ontario ... will demonstrate a responsive apprenticeship model for the future.... The Labourers' International Union of North America ... is proud to continue its advocacy, in partnership with industry and government, to remove barriers and empower Ontario's future workforce who remain the centre of building and strengthening communities across the province."

James Barry, the executive secretary treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, said, "IBEW applauds Minister McNaughton's leadership by changing course with new legislation to stand up Skilled Trades Ontario. This marks a significant change from the previous legislative approach that would have seen skill

sets erode electrical safety. IBEW is pleased to work with government through the legislative process to ensure that any necessary amendments enhance the protection, growth and safety of Ontario's electrical industry."

Patrick Dillon, business manager and secretary treasurer for the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, said they welcome our "legislative direction to protect the construction trades classification system."

Jerry Dias, the national president of Unifor, Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing 315,000 workers in every major area of the economy, said in a press release, "Since the provincial government first announced its intention to replace the Ontario College of Trades, Unifor has been deeply engaged in this process.... I look forward to continuing to work together as we move to the next phase and implement these changes for the next generation of skilled tradespeople that our province will rely on."

Naureen Rizvi, Unifor's Ontario regional director, said, "Ontario will need 100,000 new skilled tradespeople in the next decade alone, so now is the time to update our training, and make the process more accessible to young workers and to workers interested in re-training and learning a trade."

The Unifor press release goes on to say this: "The union further supports the new crown agency's intention to support apprentices and tradespeople with digital, integrated access to apprentice registration, issuance of certificates and renewals, and equivalency assessments."

I would also like to acknowledge James St. John, the business manager of the Central Ontario Building Trades unions and director of the incredible Hammer Heads program. The Central Ontario Building Trades is the largest of the regional building trades, as it represents 25 different trade affiliates and tens of thousands of skilled women and men in the construction industry.

I would also like to thank Bobby Gougeon, business manager for Sheet Metal Workers' International Association Local 285 union, Lee Caprio, business manager for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 353 union, and many others for their insight and counsel and for advocating for the restoration of whole trades and the public register.

I am proud of our work with unions, with labour leaders, with hundreds of thousands of workers and industry leaders and associations as well to get this right. Speaker, the trust and endorsement that the government and I have earned are not things that any of us take lightly. I am humbled to be able to work with industry and labour leaders to grow Ontario, strengthen our skilled trades system and protect what matters most. I believe that if this bill passes, we will create long-awaited, long-lasting generational change for years to come. Skilled workers would have an easier time getting started in these life-changing jobs.

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Speaker, I call these jobs life-changing because that's exactly how Nattisha, a licensed ironworker I spoke with,

described her experience. Nattisha was a single mom of two young girls, on welfare. Since learning a trade, she's now making \$44.08 an hour, with a pension and benefits. She is so proud of her work. This is the Ontario dream.

From Hudson Bay to the Great Lakes, from electricians wiring hospitals to the plumbers making sure we've got water to wash our hands, journeypersons are already building and providing services that will help get Ontario back, better than ever. We're getting them what they need to get the job done. We're taking action. We're making changes. This is the right move.

I will conclude by calling for all in this House to support the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021. Join with the government, join with labour, join with workers and industry leaders from across the province to help get more people into the skilled trades and get our projects built on time and on budget. We need to act now to energize our economy and to ensure we have enough skilled workers going forward, so we will do whatever we can to support skilled trades workers and employers as we move forward from this pandemic.

I will now yield my time to my parliamentary assistant.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I recognize the member for Burlington.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021. I want to thank the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, but more importantly, my son, Mac, wants to thank him. I've said this numerous times: I have four girls and one son. My girls all went to university, and my son said to me, "Mom, it's a hard no. I don't want to go to university; I want to go to college." He threw me in the back of his car with a steeped tea, took me up to Georgian College and he enrolled himself. But he had tons of other friends who didn't do that because they didn't have the opportunity, because they found it cumbersome navigating it, and it was, to say the least, confusing. So I'm very grateful.

My son told me to say this today to the minister: As of today—he's 25 years old. He started his business when he was 23 and he has a successful business called Mac Barging up north. He tells me today to make sure—he applauds you again for all that you've done, Minister. Thank you very, very much.

I'm proud of the work our ministry has done and continues to do to simplify and improve the skilled trades system under the umbrella of our skilled trades strategy. As the minister said earlier, the current skilled trades and apprenticeship system and the current College of Trades is hard to navigate and discourages people from pursuing well-paying, in-demand and life-changing careers in skilled trades.

We all know that the Ontario College of Trades has been plagued by challenges since its launch in 2013. It created an unnecessary bureaucracy and financial burden on journeypersons and apprentices. Many of its functions overlap with the Ministry of Labour, making the system complex and creating unnecessary confusion and duplication. This resulted in higher apprentice dropout rates and

negative economic consequences as employers struggled to find qualified workers.

Shortly after the June 2018 election, my friend and colleague the member from Simcoe North said that Ontario's broken apprenticeship system makes it too difficult to get involved. Of those going into the system, only 50% are coming out on the other side. The member for Simcoe North comes from a family that operates a multi-generational plumbing business, and of course, we all have fond memories of her dad, Garfield Dunlop, who served in this place for many, many years.

For those of us with kids working in the trades, we understand first-hand the barriers they've had to overcome to establish their careers in the trades. We are taking bold action today to rectify this by proposing this new legislation. It's a major step and an important step, but it's also a continuation of the broader work we started before COVID-19 hit.

In 2020, we introduced our skilled trades strategy. The strategy was designed to help break the stigma around skilled trades, simplify the system and encourage employers to sponsor and hire apprentices. It is the backbone of the legislation we are talking about today. This year alone, we have invested a total of \$288.2 million in actions that align with our skilled trades strategy.

The first pillar of our strategy is breaking the stigma around the skilled trades. We are committed to changing the narrative and dispelling the misconceptions that exist around the trades. We need to help young people and their parents recognize through good information and programs in schools that careers in the skilled trades can be exciting, fulfilling and well-paying.

I have to say for myself, I felt exactly the same way. I only had one son and I really had to swallow that and make sure that it was his best interest, not mine, that he move through the career he wanted to do.

In the same way we talk about careers available in science and technology, like medicine and engineering, we need to talk about the great careers available in the skilled trades, like mobile crane operators, arborists and electricians. Right now, many young people are not finding out about these careers. They are not being presented to them in schools as viable options, yet the reality is that the skilled trades offer exciting and challenging careers that often require advanced math and problem-solving skills and expose people to the latest technologies.

When it comes to opportunity, earning potential and a chance to start your own business—like my son—the skilled trades come out on top.

That's why we're investing in initiatives to increase positive awareness of the skilled trades with young people, such as providing \$17 million to the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, which gives high school students opportunities to learn about work in the trades while completing their Ontario secondary school diploma, and investing \$21 million in Ontario's Pre-apprenticeship Training Program, giving hard-working people exposure to a variety of good jobs in the skilled trades. The program is free for participants and includes a work placement.

We need to reach children and their parents at a younger age to introduce them to careers in the skilled trades. We believe that becoming an ironworker or a tool-and-die maker should be as obvious as becoming a firefighter or a lawyer. This information needs to be easily found and accessible. That's why we've provided an additional \$3.5-million boost to Skills Ontario funding so they can better promote trades to kindergarten to grade 12. We're exposing students in grade 1 to the honour and pride that journeypersons feel every day when they roll up their sleeves and build our future. We also appointed three young advisers, who have been engaging youth, education partners and training providers, employers and government to understand how to increase the participation of youth in the trades.

Apprenticeship training requires real-world experience with the expertise of people already working in the field. Our pre-apprenticeship, OYAP and Skills Ontario programs prepare youth really well.

Through programs and initiatives like these, students gain exposure to the skilled trades and amazing opportunities to land good, stable jobs. Employers also get a chance to build their workforce and address local skill shortages.

It is also important to make sure apprentices are supported as they do their training so they can better focus on learning. That's why we are simplifying the system—the second pillar of the strategy. This includes offering access to additional supports for new apprentices. These funds are easy and simple to apply for. For example, the new non-repayable tools grant provides \$400 to \$1,000 to apprentices to help with the cost of buying trade-specific tools and equipment; and we are investing \$12 million in the Apprentice Development Benefit to support those attending in-class training with basic living costs, including a boost of \$4 million this year and next year. We need to make sure apprenticeship training is accessible to all.

Additionally, we have invested \$24 million, a \$10-million increase from last year, through the Apprenticeship Capital Grant. This grant will help colleges, universities and other apprentice training providers upgrade their equipment and facilities, to ensure apprentices are learning and using state-of-the-art infrastructure during their in-class training. Examples include new virtual-reality training equipment and simulators, new tools or upgraded accessibility supports, all of which help apprentices acquire the skills they need on the job.

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Madam Speaker, we are also encouraging more employer participation in apprenticeships. This is our third pillar. Their participation is essential, because it's the experienced, talented journeyperson of today who helps train the next generation of tradespeople by passing on their knowledge and their wisdom. The more businesses we have that are participating, the more apprenticeships there are. We are supporting businesses participating by investing \$20 million in 2021-22 for the new Group Sponsorship Grant. This grant is encouraging small to medium-sized employers to come together to provide a full scope of training and on-the-job mentorship for apprentices.

We've recently launched the Achievement Incentive Program, with a \$23-million investment this year to provide over 11,000 employers in the construction, industrial service and other sectors up to \$4,000 in funding per apprentice as they reach key training milestones. For example, a hair salon, restaurant, child care centre or auto body shop could receive a \$1,000 payment once their apprentice reaches a new in-class training level or receives the highest level of trade certification.

We are working with industry on workforce planning for major infrastructure projects, to ensure that Ontario is playing a leadership role in efforts to increase apprenticeships. Together, these changes will ensure that skilled trades in Ontario grow and meet future demands by connecting employers with the talent that they need. They will ensure that these opportunities for good jobs don't go to waste.

Madam Speaker, as the minister mentioned earlier, the road to replacing the Ontario College of Trades and improving the apprenticeship system began in September 2020, when we appointed the Skilled Trades Panel to advise us on the steps forward. As part of its phase 1 consultation in the fall of 2020, the Skilled Trades Panel held two dozen meetings with tradespeople, apprentices, unions, businesses and training delivery agents, and reviewed nearly 70 written submissions. The panel submitted its first report in December 2020, recommending that we replace the College of Trades with a new crown agency. This agency would offer an entirely different service delivery model.

To ensure the success of this new agency, we've heard from trades stakeholders about the benefits of an industry-informed governance model and the need to ensure client services are not compromised. We've heard from stakeholders how important input from employers and employees, both union and non-union apprentices, journeypersons and trainers is in the development of this new model.

Last week, we recognized the first-ever Occupational Safety and Health Day in Ontario, and I was proud to participate in a virtual event last Tuesday with various stakeholders who are committed to improving workplace safety across this great province. Many of the people who participated in this inaugural safety and health event represented the skilled trades across all sectors, and many of these folks have shared with me the importance of compliance and enforcement in helping to protect trades training and certification in compulsory trades. They told me that as we move to this new agency, the province should use existing inspectorates like occupational health and safety to enforce any new skilled-trades legislation.

Speaker, I want to take a moment to share some of what we're hearing from major stakeholders about the proposed new Skilled Trades Ontario agency. Jerry Dias, the national president of Unifor, said, "Since the provincial government first announced its intention to replace the Ontario College of Trades, Unifor has been deeply engaged in this process. I look forward to continuing to work together as we move to the next phase and implement

these changes for the next generation of skilled tradespeople that our province will rely on."

Unifor also told us that they support the intentions of this new agency to support apprentices and tradespeople with digital integrated access to apprenticeship registration of certificates and renewals of equivalency assessments.

We also heard from Patrick Dillon, the business manager and secretary-treasurer of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. Pat has said, "The Building Trades Council welcomes Minister McNaughton's legislative direction to protect the construction trades classification system and his goal to ensure that compulsory construction trade work is only performed by certified journeypersons and apprentices, and that non-compulsory trades remain fulsome."

"This is a positive move away from the government's previous legislative approach ... and today's announcement turns the page in a positive direction."

He went on to say, "The building trades will work diligently with the government to provide important input during the process to ensure that the final legislative results are worthy of full support from the council which would be in the best interest of construction tradespeople and consumers in the province of Ontario."

Linda Franklin, the president and CEO of Colleges Ontario, shared on social media, "Colleges thank the ON govt for today's news about Skilled Trades Ontario and would be pleased to serve on the board. Colleges deliver 85% of the in-class training for apprenticeships and are committed to improving the system."

The new Skilled Trades Ontario agency will have a strong mandate to help ensure Ontario's skilled trades and apprenticeship system is responsive to changes in the economy and in the training and skills required by workers. It will be a one-stop shop for skilled trades and apprenticeship training and certification. It will handle all daily client services. Gone are the days of going back and forth between the College of Trades and the ministry; Skilled Trades Ontario will be industry-informed to make sure that the system works for its clients and that ongoing service improvements are supported by industry and stakeholder inputs. It will bring together services previously delivered in silos under one unified digital platform. Moving forward, apprentices would be able to register, take exams, pay fees and get certifications all in one shop. Simply put, Skilled Trades Ontario will make it easier for journeypersons and employers.

Madam Speaker, Bill 288, Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, is another important part of our skilled trades strategy: a strategy that supports students, workers and businesses not only during the challenging times, but in the years to come. If passed, this legislation will help make the province's skilled trades and apprenticeship system more efficient and accessible, and easier to navigate. A simpler and more efficient system will help build stronger families and stronger communities. It will help to attract young people and underrepresented groups, including women, members of racialized groups, new

immigrants, people with disabilities and veterans to the skilled trades. The more diverse our workforce, the more resilient and innovative it will be, Madam Speaker. This is the strong and effective system we need to help train the next generation of workers for exciting and well-paying jobs.

Our strategy will also help protect our economy and make sure that Ontario continues to be one of the best places in North America to live, work and raise a family. Again, I want to thank the minister so much from the bottom of my heart, as a mother, because my son gets up every day with a smile and he is grateful for the opportunity that you've offered since you've been that minister in our government. Thank you very, very much.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Jamie West:** Earlier, the minister mentioned the 1,700 jobs that were saved at the GM plant in Oshawa. As you might recall, Speaker, in 2018, the GM plant announced they were closing. I remember Jennifer French, the member for Oshawa, fighting to save these jobs. I remember going to Oshawa to stand with those workers on the line. I don't remember any of the Conservatives being there, and that's probably because the Premier at the time said, "The ship has already left the dock." His plan for saving these jobs was to ask the Prime Minister to add an extra five weeks of EI. I just wonder if the minister would like to congratulate the member for Oshawa for fighting for these jobs?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Look, I want to thank everybody who has been fighting for auto jobs in this province. In fact, I actually remember being at that Oshawa plant during that time. We ensured that our ministry was there to help those workers, if need be, get upskilled, get retraining, get all the government supports possible to help them through that very difficult time.

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As I said—and I make no bones about it—I thank Unifor; I thank General Motors and Ford and Fiat Chrysler and the government of Ontario and the federal government for working together. That's how we are going to achieve success and more prosperity in Ontario: by labour, government and industry working together. Those labour leaders, businesses and governments know that I'll work with them, sit down any time to help spread opportunity more widely and fairly.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I enjoyed the remarks from both the parliamentary assistant and the minister. My riding is very directly affected by skilled trades. We have over 5,500 skilled trade individuals there, in the heart of the manufacturing and petrochemical refining capacity in Ontario and probably all of Canada—other than Alberta, maybe.

But anyway, we have a number of those 5,500 skilled tradespeople. Over one third of them are 55 years of age and up, eligible for retirement in the next five to 10 years, so this bill would have a great impact on my riding and on the development of that industry. I'd like the minister to

speak a little bit more about how it will affect the riding of Sarnia–Lambton and the training of new apprentices.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** I want to thank my good friend from Sarnia–Lambton. There are not very many people in the House who know the member's background. He doesn't know I'm going to say this: This member here was a union member, an operating engineer. That's how he started his career down in Sarnia. He worked hard with the tools. Then he also transitioned into management at industry. So there is no one in this Legislature who understands the importance of the skilled trades—and working together, unions, government and industry—more than the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

In closing, the member is absolutely right: There is a looming crisis here. When one in three journeypersons today is over the age of 55, we have to get going. We have to get more people into the trades.

I'll tell you, this member from Sarnia–Lambton is the champion in Ontario for line 5. That project alone will attract more people into the trades.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** The minister started off his comments by saying that the member from Essex has said that there's no shortage of workers. There isn't any shortage of workers who are talented, who want to work, who need to work. We have those workers here in this province of Ontario. But there is a shortage of training opportunities, of affordable educational opportunities and of landing an employer or apprenticeship opportunity. That is where those things break down.

I have to say, education is the key component. Mike Harris ripped out the shops from our schools back in the mid-1990s. We need that infrastructure back because those kids need that experiential learning opportunity. It needs to happen, and it needs to happen early.

Your Minister of Education is taking everything online. How do you square this disconnect between where the Minister of Education is taking education in the province of Ontario and where you, as the Minister of Skilled Trades, and we as a province need young learners to get to on that apprenticeship training?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** It's really interesting how things have changed in the province of Ontario. I work every single day with labour leaders—the largest unions in the entire country—to build a new skilled trades system here in the province and we have members opposite complaining about that.

Madam Speaker, we are investing \$1 billion over the next four years. This includes major investments into union training centres. This includes record investments into our colleges to increase that per diem fee or that grant that they get to ensure that we have the most up-to-date, modern facilities to train our apprentices.

The member opposite can defend the Ontario College of Trades, or OCOT; I know her party supported OCOT. This system led to 17,000 fewer apprentices in the system. It's an injustice that those young people aren't going to get those opportunities. We're going to fix it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Contrary to what the member from Waterloo stated, there is a real shortage of skilled workers across Ontario. When I was fortunate enough to sit on the subcommittee on economic affairs and we travelled across Ontario, the number one issue that was raised—and I remember travelling with members from the official opposition and they were really shocked the number of times that stakeholders, regardless of the sector and regardless of the region in Ontario, raised the reality, the fact that they didn't have enough skilled workers in Ontario.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Labour how the proposal, this bill that you are proposing today, addresses the genuine and real shortage of skilled workers in Ontario.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Well, the member, who is a strong champion for skilled trades in the Hamilton area, is absolutely right. When one in three journeypersons are over the age of 55, there's a crisis here. When the average age of an apprentice in Ontario is 30, that's problematic. It means that many young people are going to university first. They go to university, they graduate from university, they pile up thousands and thousands of dollars of debt, then they decide that they want to go into the skilled trades.

Our plan is all about ensuring that kids as early as grade 1 have their eyes opened to the skilled trades and the meaningful opportunities that are available to them. We want kids in high school to be doing their level one apprenticeship training in high school. We are sending in, in September, recruiters to compete head on with university recruiters, to help young people discover the pathways into the trades and let them know that there are more than 140 different skilled trades to choose from.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Ma question est pour le ministre. J'ai entendu votre allocution, puis vous disiez que, le gouvernement, vous êtes des champions pour les gars, les hommes de métier. Deux ans et demi et plus à se traîner les pieds puis pas un pas d'encadrement. Je pense que c'est un manque de jugement de votre part pour de nouveaux apprentis, que ça fait deux ans et plus qu'ils attendent pour l'encadrement. Je pense que c'est un pas—mais ceci n'est pas ma question, monsieur le Ministre.

Vous avez parlé d'inspecteurs. J'aimerais vous entendre : c'est quoi la différence avec les inspecteurs qu'on a, comme ceux-là du ministère du Travail, et les nouveaux inspecteurs? C'est quoi qui va être leur mandat, puis c'est quoi qu'ils vont renforcer? C'est quoi votre vision des inspecteurs dans l'industrie pour les apprentissages?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Merci beaucoup pour la question. It's true; we've taken time to get this right, and I never apologize for taking time to get something right. We have spent months and months and months meeting with different people: the largest labour leaders in the country, the hundreds and hundreds of workers that I met with, the contractors, the association leaders in different industries.

Today, we have one in three journeypersons over the age of 55. The average age of an apprentice is 30. Obviously things have to change. We're introducing this

legislation, and by the end of the year, Skilled Trades Ontario will be on its feet and ensuring that there's no, as I said, Ping-Pong going on between my ministry and this new skilled trades agency. One of the biggest fixes in this will be the enforcement, which will be done through the Ministry of Labour.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** We don't have time for another question and answer. Further debate?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's always a pleasure to rise in the House and speak to Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021. But I want to start, quite frankly, because I don't get a lot of opportunity to rise in the House—it's nurses' week this week—

*Applause.*

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Yes. Their motto is, "We answer the call," and they certainly have answered the call during COVID-19 and this third wave. They're working 12-hour shifts. They're getting no vacations. Obviously, they're opposed to Bill 124 when it comes to compensation. They need full-time jobs, paid sick days. They have incredible mental health issues. I thought, in fairness to both sides—well, I guess there's only two sides right now. I'm going to read something from a nurse: "We show up despite being exhausted, overworked and underpaid. Today, we mourn our patients and nurses who have lost their lives to COVID-19."

**1510**

"We remember our fallen colleagues as we advocate for safer work conditions, vaccination of nurses and all front-line workers, mental health support and the elimination of #Bill124. There is no #NursesWeek without equitable policies for nurses," and they certainly need their second shot.

I'll finish by closing: "There is no nurses week without adequate, permanent, universal 10 paid sick days."

I just want to give a big shout-out to all the nurses that are working, trying to save our lives under unbelievable conditions.

When you talk, Minister, about young people, there are young nurses in these workplaces. They're working alongside skilled trades as well, by the way, because the skilled trades keep our hospitals running, our long-term cares running, our retirement homes. But these young nurses are seeing something they never thought they'd ever see in their lifetime, and that's death in the workplace, and not just the odd one: Sometimes they're seeing two and three when they go into a shift.

So I want to say to all of those young nurses, from the bottom of our heart, thank you for everything you're doing as we celebrate nurses' week. So thank you very much for allowing me to do that before I get into the bill.

Before I get into the bill, I want to look at the—I'm glad the minister's here. We did talk already today, which I appreciate. But he made a statement just a few minutes ago to my colleague, and he said that we had to take our time to get the bill right, because it went on for two years. By the way, I agree with that. You always say, "We want to work together. We want to agree on stuff. We want to

make sure the bills are the best they can be.” But you know what? I found out about this bill on Thursday afternoon at around 4, and I have an hour lead today. This afternoon, the minister talked about a number of unions, trade unions, that supported what they’re trying to do, supported the bill. Do you know how hard it is to get a hold of all those unions in one day, and to try to get a hold of them on a weekend? In fairness, to myself—because I want to put a good presentation together—how do I get a hold of those union leaders on Mother’s Day weekend, when they’re celebrating their mothers? I’m going to call them on Mother’s Day to ask them about a bill?

So when you say you want to take your time, in fairness, Minister, you probably should have given the opportunity for me to get to these labour leaders and talk to them so that when I put a presentation together I can quote them as well and what they’re saying, how they feel about the bill. I think that’s fair, I think that’s reasonable, and I think it should have been done in this case. Maybe in the future—I’m sure, now that I’m the skilled trades critic—if there are other bills coming forward, maybe you’ll consider that next time so I can put a presentation on that I think is fair and reasonable. It’s a pretty big bill, right? It’s tough to go through, and there are lots of sections that talk about—1(a) and then you’ve got to go to 2(b). It’s tough to do in a very short period of time. So, please, in the future—not just to the labour minister, but to my colleagues on the other side—in fairness to all the critics, give them a little more time to make sure that they can do this. I’m going to do the best I can, as I always do.

I’d like to thank you for allowing me to rise today and discuss Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act. Like many in the province, we’ve been waiting for a while to see the shift in direction this government would decide to take on the regulations, certification and process for skilled trades in our province. In fact, we’ve been waiting for this for about two years since your government tore down what was known as the College of Trades, which was established in 2009.

It’s an incredibly important industry to our economy. From commercial construction to manufacturing to residential development, skilled trades workers are the reason we get to live in the world and the province that we live in. It’s their quality of work. They build the houses we raise our families in, the community centres, the hockey arenas that we go to—when we can. Right now, it’s tough to go to the hockey arena. They build our hospitals, our schools. Trades are important. When I turn on the light in my house to when I drive my car, I know it’s because of the hard work our skilled trades workers do on a daily basis.

Speaker, for years, those of us in the opposition and in the labour movement have stood shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters in the skilled trades and broader labour movement as we witnessed increasing attacks on their profession. I have stood in this House many times and spoken about the importance of our skilled trades workers and apprentices and the need to make sure their work is safe. As we’ve seen in the construction trades, we’ve had

a number of fatalities over the last three or four months—a couple of young people; a young man with a young child. We’ve got to make sure that whatever we do here, their work is safe.

I’ve spoken about the incredible opportunity it provides to young people when they have a chance to safely work in the trades. Many, many times I’ve risen in this House to try to push forward infrastructure projects that can put people to work locally right across the province of Ontario—probably more important right now during COVID. As we come out of COVID, we’ve got to put people to work, including apprentices.

Speaker, take a look at the hospital we’ve been promised in Niagara. If that had started today, we could easily put 1,000 workers to work—think about that—in an area, quite frankly, that was hit very, very hard, with 40,000 people losing jobs in tourism. If the government could just commit to what has been promised, we could put people to work today. During this recession, do you have any idea how much economic activity would be generated if 1,000 trades families had stable incomes? If the resources and supplies are also bought locally—and I’ve raised that many, many times in this House over the last number of years. I think it’s so important to buy local. I’ve said it and I’ll continue to say it: Put local people to work and they spend locally, help local businesses. That’s how the economy works.

That’s why I’ve kept raising our hospital in Niagara. If the resources and supplies are also bought locally—this is why trades are so vital to this province. For years, it put food on the tables of families, money back into small and medium-sized businesses—and big business—that need this badly right now. The end result is a hospital we also need. This is what a government of the people should be doing. It makes no sense why it hasn’t started already.

Even before my election to this House, I had great respect for the skilled trades workers in our province. Before I was elected—and I know you gave a little history on one of our other colleagues across the road there from Sarnia—

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** A great member.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I never said he wasn’t.

I had the privilege of sitting as my union local president for nearly 12 years. It was then known as CAW, but now known as Unifor Local 199. I represented an amalgamated local, where we had 25 other units, including dealerships. A lot of times when you think of trades, you don’t think of the dealerships or the mechanics who work on your car in the dealerships, the auto body shops—I bargained all their collective agreements—or manufacturing, places like Iafate, a small manufacturer in Thorold.

I had the opportunity to bargain 150 collective agreements. You know what we always hear about unions? We hear about all the strikes they have. I bargained 150 collective agreements; we had one three-day strike. That’s all. That’s why it is important to belong to a union.

Before that, I served as a committee person for 20 years in our General Motors plant. I worked steady midnights for 20 years—maybe not the smartest thing I ever did in



my life, but I did it. I worked 20 years of steady midnights. But it did give me the opportunity to coach my kids' baseball and some of the stuff that I love, so that's why I worked steady midnights.

During those years, I represented hundreds of skilled trade workers in our plants, in our bargaining unit in General Motors. I got to know trades workers there on a personal level. I socialized with some of our tradespeople in the plant. I played hockey with them, played some baseball with them—a little bit of slo-pitch. It's really not baseball, but slo-pitch. I had the opportunity to learn about the issues they faced and the importance of ensuring that the quality of their work and their training was always upheld.

My good friend Gary Martin, who was a VP with me when I was president, represented the skilled trades for years as a shop committee man. He went to bargaining a number of times. When you talk about skilled trades and some of the trades that maybe listen to my presentation—I'm sure most of them are listening to my presentation. Work ownership: The trades know what work ownership is. As a matter of fact, in the General Motors unit, the skilled trades took a strike. General Motors took a strike over work ownership. The trades would know what I'm talking about.

**1520**

Then they talk about danger on the job. There are pipefitters, machine repair, millwrights, tool and die, welders: They're all in the plant. I had the opportunity to represent them and learn about their issues, learn how important it is to make sure that their health and safety are taken care of, make sure they're getting the proper training, make sure the supervisor is doing his job and they're going to a job where they know what they're doing.

To begin discussing the legislation, I think we need to start by looking at how the changes to the system really began, to fully understand and appreciate how we ended up here today with the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act before us.

In 2013, we saw the opening of a system created in 2009 that was called the Ontario College of Trades with a skilled trades panel, referred to as a co-delivering system. The college, along with the province, oversaw the regulation and enforcement of skilled trades and apprenticeships in the province. We know that this system was not perfect, but it was created in an attempt to address some of the shortcomings of the previous system, which was fully situated within the ministry. That's important to understand: It was the ministry that used to control it before the College of Trades.

The college allowed for increased voices from those working directly in the trades on decisions that affected them: assistance with enforcement, compliance, ratio reviews and an avenue for determining if some voluntary trades are better suited and regulated in a compulsory category.

There were also some positive changes made that included the increased voice and decision-making power for those at work within the trades—the people best suited

to make the decisions that guide and protect their trades and apprenticeships. Those were the best voices then and they should be the voices calling the shots today. Unfortunately, some of the positive aspects of the college were opposed. They were opposed by employers, by developers and, in particular, by members of this government.

When some of these government members were part of the official opposition, they were very opposed to regulations and rules that protected our workers and apprenticeships. That's important: They protected our workers and our apprenticeships. Those members regularly aligned their views with corporations and employer-based interests that were always at the expense of our skilled trade workers. This is important, because so many of the changes to the college have really focused the future of skilled trades and regulation in the minister's office.

I think if so many of the decisions are going to be coming from the minister's office, we need to look at what kinds of things the minister believes.

As we all know, history is important. It allows us to better understand the decisions that are being made today, and it helps guide us to understand the possible decisions of the future. That's an important line, "decisions of the future." It allows us to consider the kinds of people who will be making those decisions and who are working on the front lines. So before I get into the sections of this legislation, I think we need a quick refresher of this government's history with workers, particularly with skilled trade workers.

There are many parts of the bill that ensure any future regulations of the college—who gets to sit on the board, which trades do that—are now going to be made in the minister's office behind closed doors. That's got to concern all of us. The problem we have is that if this remains the case, we may end up with a minister overseeing the trades who doesn't understand the work they do.

The minister himself didn't seem to have a high view of skilled trades unions while in opposition, when you guys were over on this side. I remember that because I was over here, too, just down a little ways. On several occasions, he insisted during question period that the current executive secretary treasurer of the IBEW Construction Council of Ontario was illegally donating money to a political party.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Stop, please. I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I apologize to the honourable member across the way for interrupting him—just to inform the House that there will be no night sitting this evening.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I think if there were any time that members would be happy to be interrupted during debate, it would be to be told that there will be no night sittings.

Back to the member for Niagara Falls.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I'm actually thrilled. It's the first time I've agreed with him, so it's great—no night sittings.

The problem we have if this remains the case is that we may end up with ministers overseeing the trades who don't understand the work they do. The minister himself didn't seem—I think I read to that point, and I apologize. I lost my spot.

I won't quote them directly, but this minister has dozens of comments he made on record attacking these workers' representatives and accusing them of horrible things. It's good that he saw the light, but the record is the record. There is definitely a pattern of behaviour when it comes to the current Minister of Labour and this government in how they view the labour movement in the province of Ontario. That includes your approach in defending the issues that negatively affect skilled trades workers.

Of course, it wasn't just this government that had beaten up and let down the skilled trades; we know the previous Liberal government did as well. It was the former Premier who dramatically reduced the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit, in 2015, which made it harder to take on apprentices. The member from Sarnia would remember that. He was here. In 2016, it was the same Premier who cut the youth jobs strategy, once again making it even harder for young people to find jobs. It didn't make any sense then; it wouldn't make any sense now.

Of course, we know what happened next. The current government took over and kept on slashing and cutting everywhere they could as jobs left the province. As far as I know, they still have yet to accept the costed plan we put forward in 2018 to invest in creating new opportunities in skilled trades. They have yet to join us in focusing on a strategy to get more women involved in the trades. Above all, they actively oppose our efforts to help people join a union. I'm going to repeat that: They actively oppose efforts to help people join a union.

One of the reasons why I'm so proud that I'm a member of the NDP is that all our workers are unionized in our offices. I'm very proud of that, because we know that when workers join a union they are safer at work. I'm going to repeat that for my colleagues across the aisle: We know that when workers join a union they are safer at work—the stats show it everywhere—have a stronger voice and, in most cases, make higher wages and better benefits. The minister did talk a little bit today about the pensions that the skilled trades workers get at General Motors and Ford and Chrysler and some of the small parts manufacturers as well that have skilled trades in them.

Despite the benefits of the trades and these policies, the Conservatives continue to show whose side they're really on. There's no better example of this than their approach to ratio reviews. This government opposed safe and appropriate apprenticeship-to-journeyman ratios when they were in opposition, and once they were in power they made the unsafe approach law in the province of Ontario.

Back in 2019 what did this government do? What did the government that is changing this policy with this bill decide to do? They rolled back ratios and put apprentices at risk on job sites. Their approach was applauded by the companies. They wanted to pay as little as possible for good work. It was great for the employers who could hire

more apprentices for their job sites at lower wages. With the new one-to-one ratio, employers like G.J. Burtch, owner of G.J. Burtch Construction Enterprises Ltd., even bragged about it, saying, "I can hire three journeymen and three apprentices!"

Imagine: Builders are actually excited to have less safe procedures in their workplaces. They are okay with ensuring houses are built for families to live in that don't have apprentices with enough supervision.

Our skilled trades workers don't feel the same way. Several skilled trades workers' representatives and leaders spoke about this ill-advised move on behalf of the government. They told them why this was dangerous, why it led to young people not getting the skills they need, why this is a mistake. We want our young apprentices to get trained so they're safe on the job.

The government brought forward the Modernizing the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Act in May 2019, a piece of legislation that was seriously concerning and could have been devastating to our compulsory trades in the province. When this legislation came forward, labour stood up. They stood up to this government and worked to stop the legislation from fundamentally altering our skilled trades system in the province of Ontario.

That action—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The government House leader on a point of order.

1530

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Sorry, Madam Speaker. I truly do apologize to the member opposite. He's giving a fabulous speech, and I should have done this before: Pursuant to standing order 30(d.3), the House will adjourn at 6 p.m. tonight.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Back to the member for Niagara Falls.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Are you done now? Am I okay?

They stood up to this government and worked to stop this legislation fundamentally altering our skilled trades system in the province of Ontario. The action prompted a reversal by this government and the appointment of the Skilled Trades Panel—which the minister talked about, and the different groups that were involved with that—which created recommendations for this legislation and, ultimately, the new system for skilled trades. That's what brought us here today.

We go through this legislation and talk to good things, about the areas of concerns. We need to applaud the work of our labour movement, in particular our skilled trades unions. They stepped up, they worked hard and they showed this government the damage that they could have created if only for the recommendations of their business friends. It was the front-line workers of the province who are making sure that workers are heard, and they should be the ones who are consulted.

Speaker, this is an example of collective action, of power in numbers. There are many concerns with the bill, but I think our brothers and sisters deserve to be recognized for their work. We know from our conversations

with some of the stakeholders that the bill is an important change in direction. Speaker, I'm going to say that again: We know from our conversations with some stakeholders that the bill is an important change in direction.

But there are some real concerns that need to be addressed. Some aspects of their concerns have been heard because of their efforts, and we are proud to support that, but so many pieces of the bill need clarification, and there need to be changes. I hope this government will take seriously the amendments we put forward to create a strong bill that truly represents and protects skilled trades workers in Ontario.

Speaker, I'd like to start by talking about some of the positives in this bill. One of the biggest positives is a focus we see on the streamlining and organizational approach to deliver information to our apprentices. I base that on promotion and research of skilled trades and apprenticeships in the bill, which will be led by a new agency, Skilled Trades Ontario. From this section, I really hope to see a continued desire to create a centralized, easy-to-navigate registration process which includes clarity for apprenticeships and financial incentives. We have to ensure that our young people are being attracted to and also trained and retained in our skilled trades industry. It is a must for the future success of the industry.

I've said this many times in the House: We need young people in our skilled trades. We need women in our skilled trades, the racialized, First Nations. You talked about how there's a skilled trades shortage; it could be as many as 100,000 people, and we've got to make sure we do everything we can to make it seamless for them. How do we do that, beyond what this legislation prescribes? Well, we start, I think, by dramatically increasing how attractive it is to enter a career in skilled trades. We can do that by ensuring that young people are trained, introduced to the trades at a young age. We can do that by ensuring that their pay is prompt and enough to live in the community they're building.

Speaker, we don't need to reinvent the wheel here. This is something we've done before. I'll tell a story, because I like telling stories, and I know the government likes to listen to my stories. That's why they all turn around and look at me when I tell stories.

When I was in high school and public school, we had shop. When I was in grade 7 and 8 at Queen Mary school—and I'm aging myself, because the school is no longer there, unfortunately—I did shop there. I did woodworking. I still have the clock that I made in woodworking class. It still works.

This is one that I did as well: I did home ec. My wife probably doesn't understand why I'm not a good cook, but I did take the class.

And then I went to St. Catharines Collegiate, a great school in St. Catharines. It has been there forever. I took a four-year course. I'm not a lawyer. I'm going to admit out here I'm not a lawyer. I know you have lawyers on your side and doctors and stuff. Well, that's not who I am. I went to grade 12 in a four-year tech course. I took welding. I loved welding, actually. Welding was good, except the

smoke was awful. I took—what was the other one? I took autobody. I've got a great story for autobody, but I can't say it here because my teacher Mr. Herman might be mad at me still for what I did.

But I took the shops. It was so important, because what happened is, when I finished grade 12, I put an application in to General Motors. Probably they wish now that they'd never hired me, but they did. I put 40 years of my life into that plant, mostly as a union rep, obviously the last 12 years as the president of the local union. The reason why I think I got hired is because I took a four-year tech course and they knew that if I went into General Motors—one of the things that General Motors had at that time, because at that time we had 8,000 employees, was a really good apprenticeship program. You could get into apprenticeship, if that's what you wanted to do, or you'd go work on the line or whatever you wanted to do. I ended up in a machining line. When I went into the machining line, I didn't have to worry about lockouts and safety protocol. I had learned all that in grade 7, in grade 8, in grade 9 and up to grade 12. I think that's why it's important. Although I know it was your government that took them out of the schools, we should be going back to that.

As a matter of fact, I think we should even have trade schools. As we close schools—and we're going to close schools, because we're going to put everybody online, by the looks of it, or at least that's the hope of your government. If you're going to close more schools, let's make them trade schools so young people can get into these schools and take the trades. I think that's one thing that we could do rather than give the school to a developer to make housing so they can get rich—well, richer than they already are, in most cases.

Anyway, that's my story. I thought I'd tell you exactly why I think it's important to make sure that we get back into our schools. If you want young people involved with apprenticeship programs, get them into schools, get them started young, because they'll like it. They'll like doing stuff with their hands. Not everybody is going to be a lawyer. Not everybody is going to be a doctor. Not everybody is going to be an overpaid politician. Trust me; we're going to get young people to do what they should be doing, and that's the skilled trades. That's where the growth is going to be. That's where the good-paying jobs are going to be. Let's find a way to do it.

Unfortunately, a lot of the students today do not have the same opportunity. Because of that, I think it pushes our young people towards different career paths that don't pay as well, or even worse, makes them leave the province to find work. We want our young people to stay here, to grow up and stay in our communities, close to Mom and Dad.

Speaker, this is why we oppose the Premier's constant cuts to education. When he cuts high school classes and programs, he cuts back on skilled trades and shop classes—which I just said. It exposes less kids to programs and makes them less likely to pursue careers in these fields. If we want kids to go into the skilled trades, especially young women, racialized communities and First Nations, we need to ensure they have the opportunity to experience the trades and pursue them. It's that simple.

The construction trades are putting \$40 million themselves into education—\$40 million. Where's the government? Why is that funding not in this bill? It's not in the bill. It should be. They put out the numbers, but it's not in the bill.

We know for a fact that this province will need 100,000 new skilled tradespeople in the next decade alone. We simply cannot meet that demand without making the process more accessible and updating our training.

We can't just draw from young people. We must also give older workers a chance to retrain. I'm going to tell you why. I'll give you another story as soon as I get to it. How's that? I'll leave you guys on the edge of your seats.

Speaker, I've seen that Skilled Trades Ontario is tasked with doing research on trades. I hope they have the opportunity to look into getting skilled trades introduced back into our schools—I just said that. I hope they have the direct access to the minister of colleges and training, to work closely together. If these organizations exist in separate offices, they won't talk; nothing will change.

**1540**

We need to speak with the Minister of Education to identify young people early who want to get into the skilled trades and give them the tools to follow up. And it goes for workers who are older as well. We have a well of untapped potential in older workers who would enter the skilled trades, if supported. Speaker, this is what I'm going to talk about, because it really affects my riding.

I represent the great riding of Niagara Falls: Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Crystal Beach, Ridgeway, Stevensville. COVID has devastated our local tourism industry, like other places around the province of Ontario—but 40,000 when COVID hit. We still have two casinos that haven't worked in 14 months, 15 months, with over 4,000 employees. With the spin-off jobs, it's close to 20,000 because the casinos aren't operating.

Where was this government to offer programs to retrain those workers? Why is it so hard for older workers to go back and get into this now? There are policies we can put in place to support workers as they realize they can have a better life in the trades. So I'm asking your government to consider taking a look at places like Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Fort Erie and some of the other tourist areas, even Ottawa and up north. Up north got hit really hard last year when the Americans couldn't come; you all remember that. Take a look at them. Take a look at those workers who are 30, 32, 35, 38 years old. They could get into the trades, and they'd have a good life; we all know that. And I believe they would be happy to enter the trades. I have had many in the tourism industry tell me that they would love to, but they just don't have the time or, more importantly, they don't have the money. That's where the supports come in from the government.

So we have all these workers ready to go, but the government needs to invest in them—no different than education. It can be done. It can help meet our trades needs, and that should be done now. Speaker—we've got a new Speaker there—I believe we are still facing the same problem with ratios as before. I know this is a wish of the

employers and they want to lower labour costs on job sites, but it has serious negative effects on the quality of the training they receive and the health and safety of the job site.

This government spends a lot of time talking about how they want to increase the number of apprentices in the province. That is a really important goal, but that cannot be a goal if the result is unsafe workplaces or if it's simply used as a vehicle for lower costs of labour. We can't be sending a handful of our apprentices into workplaces without the ability to learn or the supervisor required to keep them safe. Speaker, that can result in apprentices not receiving employment when they finish their apprenticeship, and it's not the right method to address the skilled trades shortage.

So we're happy to see the desire to use this new agency to help attract young people, but we must ensure we avoid those problems. And it should not come as a surprise to this government. Skilled trades leaders have been yelling for this at the top of their lungs for years. They see the rise in injuries in this province from 2015, and it can't be acceptable. It's a known issue. No worker should ever have to go to work and not know if they're going to come home at the end of the day. On this issue, we say it's time to listen.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to discuss some areas of concern we have with the legislation. When you review the Skilled Trades Panel recommendations, you see concerns that they had with the co-delivery model. However, this legislation still seems to hold onto some of the pre-College of Trades co-delivery approach.

Speaker, section 2 of this legislation outlines the core responsibility of the minister. I'll read that again. I want people to understand that: Section 2 of this legislation outlines the core responsibility of the minister. Some of those core functions include classifying of compulsory trades; scope of practice of the trade; ratios; administration of certifying exams; and registering training agreements.

Many of these functions previously sat with the college, which included a voice from the trades. I think we should be slightly concerned with this shift of ministerial power, where the decisions are not being made by those from the trades; rather, from the minister. I think this is important. Instead of decisions being made by those from the front lines of the trades, they're being made by government employees behind closed doors in a minister's office. That's concerning to me.

Somebody may ask me why. Again, a little off subject, but I'll say it anyway, and if the Speaker jumps up, she jumps up. We had that same problem with Tarion. You remember when I was a transportation critic, for those that have been here? Again, I'm used to the member from Sarnia, because he's been here, and there are others—from Burlington, I think was here as well, the first time when I was the critic. Tarion had the same problem. They had a board that had 11 developers and one building owner. And for years, building owners right across the province of Ontario, when they had problems with their houses, they weren't taken care of. We had nothing but trouble with

Tarion. That's a problem that I see might happen here. That's why I'm raising it today. I'm hoping some of my skilled tradespeople are listening as well.

The panel's recommendation noted concerns that stakeholders had prior to the creation of the College of Trades, and that included not having a significant enough voice in decisions that profoundly affect them. Again, that goes back to the board. What's the makeup of the board? Is it going to be 10 skilled trades? Is it going to be unions? Who's going to sit on that board? That's a big concern: to control the board.

We have concerns that the shift in power could result in the minister making decisions that are not based on the best advice of those from the trades. I think you all understand what I'm saying there. After all, how many days has the minister worked in a skilled trades profession on a site? How can he know what is best for these workers better than they can? The minister doesn't know better than any skilled trade, no matter what trade it is, whether it's a building trade, whether it's—how can he know what is required to learn and be safe?

These decisions should be made by the representatives from the skilled trades, not political party appointees. I think you all understand that. That's why I went over it very slowly. It makes no sense, those decisions not being made by trades workers, because this bill would look a lot different if you didn't involve the trades and you didn't involve the unions, and that's what I'm saying you should do here as well.

Speaker, I think we need to look at some of these new ministerial functions in more detail, because this is really a concern with the bill that must be addressed. First, when you look at the practice of compulsory trades in both sections 6 and 7 of the bill, they both contain concerning language of exemption for some. Sections 6(c) and 7(c) both state:

“No individual shall engage in the practice of a compulsory trade unless ...

“(c) a regulation exempts the individual from the prohibition”—I screwed that word up; I apologize.

Speaker, why has this been included? This is important. I want you guys to listen to this. Why has that been included? Why are you giving the minister the power to create a regulation to exempt someone from those sections and potentially allowing some to practice in the business of a compulsory trade? Why would that be there? Why would we allow that to happen? I am hoping that the minister can address this language and provide some details on why he feels it should be there.

**1550**

Secondly, we see ratio powers in the hands of the minister, an issue we already discussed today. The minister is part of a party that is wrong on this issue and does not put the needs of skilled trade apprentices first. While we can't argue that his government has not changed their initial approach—which they have, and I compliment you for that—they are very clear on how they view ratios in this province. They continue to side with businesses, and it's concerning to know that those who make those decisions

on ratios may not be the most knowledgeable and involved in the trades.

I also have a question on transparency and the decision-making process of the minister. Not only do we see power shifting back into the hands of the minister, but we don't know the level of public transparency we will see in those decisions. In fact, in so many places, the can is just kicked down the road to say the minister will regulate the problem later.

We know there are those who would like to see further deregulation of the skilled trades, and we also know they actively lobby this government. Will they be advising the government on decision-making when it comes to compulsory trades exemptions or ratio reviews? Why is the minister afraid to put directly in writing, in black and white, exactly what he will and won't be doing when it comes to skilled trades?

I'm going to quickly tell you another little story on why it's so important. This is a very, very important line, and I'll tell you why. If you take a look at the bill, in most of the bill, it says “the minister may.” He may do this; he may do that. I gave you an example that—I bargained 150 collective agreements. That's a weasel word; that's what we called them very clearly. “May” is a weasel word. We need to put in here strong language that says he will do this. That's what has to be in the bill. Hopefully, as we go forward, as we watch, he will change a lot of the “mays” to “wills.” Following that, it's just weak language and, quite frankly—I call them weasel words.

I understand, by the way, in collective bargaining or any kind of bargaining, the hardest word to get from an employer is “will.” He'll give you “may” all day long; try to get “will” from him. This minister has to put “will” in that language so that it's protecting those trades. It's very, very important.

Why is the minister afraid to put in writing, in black and white, exactly what he will and won't be doing when it comes to the skilled trades? How can leaving these decisions behind closed doors, without the experts in the room, benefit these workers?

Mr. Speaker, a smaller but also important area is the process set in place by the Ontario College of Trades for voluntary trades to get to compulsory designation. Prior to the creation of the Ontario College of Trades, there was no formal process for voluntary trades to transition into compulsory. The college was successful in their process of deeming sprinkler fitters as a compulsory trade in the province. I'm proud to say my son-in-law is a sprinkler fitter, Trevor Bidal. I thought I'd mention his name so I can get him in Hansard, cut it out and send it to him. But he's a sprinkler fitter. This is an important step for a trade that was complex and provided life-saving technology to buildings.

You have trade organizations out there that are trying to navigate this on their own and have been for years. They want standard—standardization—fuck—and safety measures in their trades. This bill does nothing to address that long-standing problem and leaves these trades with as little information as before—I hope that wasn't picked up

by Hansard. Again, I simply cannot believe the minister was unaware of this, so why is it missing from the bill?

The bill outlines classifying trades as compulsory trades as a function of the minister, so will it be up to the minister to provide a process for voluntary trades to become compulsory? If he does that, why? Will there be a formal process for this type of voluntary-to-compulsory review or will it go back to the similar process prior to the college?

These are all important questions I hope the minister can clarify in this Legislature—and if the minister can't clarify, I hope he will amend the bill to provide a clear and transparent process.

Speaker, another issue that we feel is important to address on this legislation is the new enforcement and compliance process for the trades. The legislation outlines that compliance and enforcement will come back under the ministry, similar to the pre-College of Trades. The initial concern is, does the minister have the resources to appropriately enforce the regulations in this industry? We know there was concern prior to the creation of the college about the level of enforcement. Frankly, we're seeing these issues right now with the Ministry of Labour. Some of the ability to investigate is lost due to resources, and when investigations do occur, we get next to no information about them, and the public never knows. Will this be the same? Will it frustrate health and safety advocates the same way it does with the Ministry of Labour right now?

Right now, during the era of COVID-19, this government and this ministry has failed when it comes to workplace inspections. We saw what happened at warehouses and factories: massive outbreaks of COVID-19, even after multiple inspections.

Amazon saw 900 workers get COVID-19 after the Ministry of Labour inspected them 12 different times. Reports were telling this government, "Look at what Amazon is doing. They're trying to get people to work 30 days in a row. They're pressuring people to come in sick." The government didn't even look at Amazon until almost a year into the crisis.

Are those the kinds of inspections that Skilled Trades Ontario will be doing? We should know that. We should get guarantees that that's not what's going to happen.

How can we have full confidence in this government to properly enforce labour regulations with their very bad track record at this point?

The structure for this enforcement is also interesting. Section 25 notes that the minister may establish a compliance and enforcement committee. Did anybody pick up what the keyword there was? Anybody on that side listening, yell it out. I'll read it out and help you out. Section 25 notes, "The minister may"—he may not—"establish a compliance and enforcement committee...." Who will form this committee? This is a sincere question, and I hope we can have a fulsome debate or discussion on it, because workers need an answer. When you look at it, this committee will have a lot of power, so we need to be told who will make up this committee. Will it be actual workers, or will it be government appointees again?

This committee will have the power to—listen to this:

- order the person to comply with the provision, registered training agreement or compliance order;
- order the person to do or refrain from doing anything specified in the order in order to become compliant;
- specify dates by which a person is required to do or refrain from doing the things specified;
- order the person to do anything else prescribed.

That's the best one. Anybody who has ever done a collective agreement—and I think all my colleagues here, we have this in some of our agreements. "Order the person to do anything else prescribed"—it's an interesting line, isn't it? That's interesting to me. That committee will have the power.

With these powers, it's important we discuss the process for the committee's structure and how it will be formed. We know that enforcement and compliance are essential to ensuring the integrity of the trades, so making sure we get this right is very important.

This leads to another area of concern: the decision-making process on issues of enforcement and compliance. The legislation gives those powers to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to make enforcement decisions on numerous sections of the act. This is particularly of concern for some areas like the practice and work of compulsory trades, along with apprentice-to-journeyperson ratios. The legislation seems to suggest that all of these areas outlined in sections 6, 7 and 8 of the act can challenge at the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

Speaker, I want to be clear. If a trade is compulsory, then a trade is compulsory. Do we all understand that? I don't have to read that again? Although, my notes say, "Say it twice." Why are we allowing employers to run to lawyers at the Ontario Labour Relations Board and make a case for using non-certified workers? Why does the government feel the need to open the door on this? What goal are they trying to achieve by doing this? Ultimately, this seems like a concerning aspect of the legislation and hopefully we'll be able to have further debate at committee. I know there are a number of stakeholders that are concerned with this approach, in particular the oversight in what is a compulsory trade, and what the government does here will have a major impact, so let's get it right.

**1600**

For all the faults that the Ontario College of Trades had, it was a vehicle for trades to have their voice in regulating their industry. Right now, this Legislature and particularly this move to the Ontario Labour Relations Board seems to strip skilled trades of that voice and gives more power to employers to find avenues for cheaper and potentially unskilled labour on their sites.

Speaker, the new organization that is being put together, Skilled Trades Ontario, will be the only avenue that skilled trades have for input on regulation and guidance of their industry. Right now, the legislation states that Skilled Trades Ontario will be led by an 11-member board. I suppose the first and most obvious question will be: by who? Who's going to make up this 11-member board? And how transparent will the selection process be?

And why is that not described in this bill? It doesn't tell us how it's going to work.

Right now this government has a horrible track record on appointments to agencies. I see one of my colleagues who sits on government agencies is here today. I sit on the government agencies committee, and every Tuesday morning we go through the same situation: another partisan appointment to a government board of an individual that has little to no experience regarding the organization they are being appointed to. They're usually, in most cases, either a past individual that ran for an MPP's position or donated heavily to the Conservative Party. That's the way it is. It's every Tuesday. Tomorrow's no different. Actually, I think one person that's coming tomorrow actually was an MPP and ran against me twice. He's there tomorrow. He's obviously a former PC. I hope that this isn't the case for the 11-member board that will lead this new organization, Skilled Trades Ontario. Honestly, this can't be the case.

I already mentioned about the Tarion example. We've got to make sure that's not the case. We've got to make sure, just like you did for two years, you talk to the stakeholders and make sure that they're making up, I'm hoping, the majority of the people on the board, because they're the ones that know what's going on in the skilled trades. They're the ones that know what we need to do with apprentices. They're the ones that know what type of training we need at their centres. All that should be done by skilled trades.

This board will make decisions that directly impact the lives and livelihoods of the workers building our houses, our hospitals, our schools. If this board is just Conservative appointments, it will be useless. It needs to be professionals and experts who represent the voices of skilled trades. The trades deserve better than to be led by a partisan board with people with no experience in the industry; or worse, to be led by a board full of employers and developers whose primary goal is to rid the province of compulsory trades, tear up regulations and find the cheapest labour possible. Again—I'm going back to it, but I'm almost done—we saw how disastrous this was with Tarion, when the government allowed it to be run by developers. It stopped functioning as a protection for homeowners. We saw that. It was awful. This cannot be allowed to happen with the trades. So I hope we can have some more detailed discussion of how that board will be comprised.

This bill is also very vague on exactly how the minister will collect fees related to skilled trades and how these fees will be held and what they'll be used for. I know that many unions which were part of the college tried to raise this issue and only heard silence. Perhaps the minister can clarify today what happens to the fees that were held by the College of Trades before it was effectively dissolved. Where did the fees go? What happened to these fees? What is the framework over the new fees? Most of the skilled trades understand there need to be fees, but they don't want to just throw money into a black hole. Where is the money going, who will oversee it, and what are they going

to do with it? This government claims to care about fiscal responsibility, so they could start with that.

Speaker, there's also one major piece of this bill that is missing, that could be included and would be in order. If you go into changing the regulation of workers, then you need to immediately look at what's happening with our PSWs. Part of this crisis we're in today, the heartbreaking stories we're hearing coming from long-term care, is because of the way this government treats PSWs. We want our seniors to have the best care. That means we need more PSWs. That means that we need increased training and education to draw people into the industry, the same way we need for the trades. It means attracting young people into the profession—women, racialized, First Nations—and providing the training they need.

Like trades, it also means ensuring that every person who gets a job in this field knows that they're getting a good job. With PSWs, that means paying them decent wages, full-time jobs, benefits. Why would this government oppose that? Those workers are doing the heavy lifting to ensure that our seniors can live their twilight years in peace, comfort and love.

We supported a permanent \$5-an-hour increase for PSWs. If it's in a bill before this House, why is it not in this bill? Does this government care that little about our PSWs or the loved ones they care for? Did they learn nothing from the crisis we are emerging from? PSWs need support, and that support could be added to this bill. The government's failure to do that shows exactly what their priorities are.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately, we can see we have many questions on this legislation. Unfortunately, this government continues with the approach of pushing legislation with little to no time for scrutiny. This is a very complex bill. It was tabled on Friday, today is Monday, and we'll be debating it all week. A weekend in the middle of a pandemic: That's how long we were given to review this legislation. The minister should know how busy our offices are, how many people are calling us day and night. Trades leaders are trying to work hard to make sure their teams are safe in workplaces.

I want to say this, and I want you guys to listen. I know all of you aren't listening, but that's kind of what happens in here; I understand that. But I want you to listen to this, because I think this is really, really important, and it doesn't matter what side you're on in politics—nothing. It really is a disservice to the legislative process in our province. Stakeholders, workers, elected officials deserve to be able to fully digest the legislation, and this is a very tight timeline. Usually there's only one reason that government tries to rush legislation past people, and it's usually not good.

I'm hoping this government allows for a thorough debate in committee on this and grants significant time for amendments and debate. This legislation has been long overdue. The trades have been waiting to see how this government would change course and create a system that properly regulates the industry. We're happy to see they have made the right decision to move away from the skill

set approach and listen to skilled trades workers, but there are still serious issues we have right now with this approach. At the end of the day, we have to thank our brothers and sisters in the skilled trades labour movement for what we have today. They worked hard to steer this government—who opposed, quite frankly, supporting workers—away from the pro-business agenda that was here two years ago. That is a seriously tall task, and today we see they have made some progress, but it's not over yet.

Mr. Speaker, the most important thing this government can do now is to slow down, listen and make sure that every stakeholder, every skilled trades representative, has time to review, ask their questions and get their input in. This cannot just be a bill to please the supporters of the Conservative Party. It's far too important. This government has a chance to get this right, and doing that means not doing things quickly and behind closed doors. Lives depend on this. Our communities depend on this, so let's work together and make this the best possible bill. We're willing, and we're hoping you are, too.

1610

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I wanted to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his presentation. He once said in this Legislature that young people need to be given the support and encouragement to go out to become apprentices. At its very core, this legislation and the framework attached to it accomplishes that. Can the member stand in his place this afternoon and agree and support legislation that enables young men and young women to enter this crucial industry?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** You're absolutely right, member, that I have stood in this House for the eight years, I think, I've been here and talked about the importance of skilled trades right across the province of Ontario. I have three daughters, all young. Their husbands—I already mentioned Trevor Bidal; he's in the skilled trades. He got into it very young.

We have to do better. There are 100,000 jobs out there that need to be placed. Young people, women, racialized, First Nations—we have to make sure they have that opportunity, but we also have to make sure of what I said in my speech: We have to get into our schools, grade 7, grade 8, into high school. Not everybody is going to be a doctor. Not everybody is going to be a lawyer. But there are a lot of young people who are really good with their hands, and we've got to create that opportunity.

I will always support the opportunity for skilled trades. We want to make sure the bill is done correctly, that it supports the skilled trades and that it's not done behind closed doors as well. Thank you for the question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his excellent presentation and always standing resolutely behind workers. It's refreshing to hear, because we hear so little of that from this government.

To the member, through you Speaker: The concerns that the member has raised about the composition of the

board and that there are no descriptions of how they will be appointed to that board should raise some serious red flags with everyone, either from the government or within the opposition.

But also, I'd like to put the question to the member: Why is this government taking away decision-making powers from the experts, from the skilled-trades people?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** That's a very good question. It's one of the things I don't understand about the bill, because they actually worked with unions; I give them credit for that. I know they already mentioned Unifor. I know they worked with the building trades, LIUNA. They work with a lot of unions. I'm sure, during the course of that dialogue. They would have told the minister that the last thing they want is an unelected board, that they have no idea who's going to make that board up. Is it going to come from skilled trades?

What we don't want to do—and I said this in the presentation, again—is get into a Tarion situation, where they have a 12-member board, 11 of them are developers and there's one homeowner, and the developers did whatever they wanted through that entire process. What we don't want to see here is a bunch of decisions being made behind closed doors with no skilled trades representatives, whether it be on apprenticeships or whatever.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and speak to my friend from Niagara Falls. I look forward to seeing him in agencies tomorrow morning.

Madam Speaker, one of the most interesting things about being in the House here is learning the methods of communication of different members in the House and to actually listen to what they say, when they say and what they actually mean. It's interesting, because what I heard today from the member from Niagara Falls was about as rousing a support for this legislation as could possibly be given by an opposition member, other than a few points that he'd like to see dealt with in committee. I was wondering if he's willing to say here in the House today that he will support this legislation on second reading so that we can deal with some of the amendments and some of those issues that he brought forward in the committee process.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Well, I'm looking forward to tomorrow morning for maybe not the same reason as you, but I am looking forward to tomorrow morning at government agencies.

What I will say to you is that I think it's fair and I think it's reasonable that any time that we're in the House and we're listening to the minister talk or myself talk or any of my colleagues over here—I like to listen to the entire debate. I'd like to hear what some of the reasons that I raised today—maybe they'll come out during the debate, and then I'll make an educated decision on whether I'm going to recommend to the rest of my members to support the bill.

So to give you an answer today, I don't think it's fair, I don't think it's reasonable and quite frankly I don't think you should even ask it, because I would think that you'd



want me to listen to the entire debate to make sure that I understand it fully. Because in fairness to me, I got the bill on Thursday. And to be able to do an hour after I couldn't talk to anybody on the weekend—I want to hear more about these things. But I do appreciate the question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It was interesting to hear the member talk about his personal experience and his apprentice journey, actually, in the province of Ontario. He touched on the importance of education because this is still the missing part of this legislation. As I mentioned, previous PC Premiers and cabinet ministers removed the infrastructure from our education system—our shops, our automotive facilities—and this is going to require a significant amount of investment. We have yet to hear from the government if they're willing to make that investment. And if so, what are they going to do with the Minister of Education who wants to put the entire educational experience online? There's a huge disconnect on that side of the House—

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** —and you're a little sensitive to it, because I know people are talking to you about it in your ridings. So I want to give the member an opportunity to talk about the importance of experiential learning, something that some of you should actually take up.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I appreciate the member's question. You're absolutely right, and I said this. Yes, it was under Premier Harris at the time when they took the shops out of the schools. Not only that, at that time, they closed I think it was 26 schools, as well.

What we need to do, if you're serious about having skilled trades and replacing 100,000 skilled trade jobs with young people, is you've got to get back into the education system. You've got to make sure the shops are being offered in grade 7 and grade 8, and back in our high schools. I also said during my speech that I believe that if you're going to close schools, rather than close them and put them into development, keep them open and make them trade schools. I think that would be something that would work really, really well in the province of Ontario, and I hope the minister is listening.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** I just want to reiterate that that's one thing we are doing. The minister has said that in his speech—kindergarten to grade 12, to make sure kids are understanding the next phase. I know my son brought that up numerous times.

But you also said about concerned labour unions—well, just to name a few, Stephen Hamilton, Joe Mancinelli, Patrick Dillon, James St. John, James Barry, Mathew Wilson, Mike Gallardo and Joe Vaccaro have all given us quotes.

In the transition to Skilled Trades Ontario, there will be no—no—disruption to services for apprentices and businesses. We all benefit from a one-stop shop that makes the training journey as simple as it can be. My question to you is, do you agree we need a one-stop shop, or not?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** A number of questions there—I guess I want to answer the first part. I had that piece of paper here somewhere, but I've got so much paper here, as I'm trying to keep up.

On the quotes from the union leaders: That's my problem with the bill, quite frankly. You—your government, not necessarily you, but I know you're a part of it—you guys decided to do a press conference at 3 o'clock on a Thursday afternoon, not giving me any opportunity to talk to the same people that you just listed, so I could find out more about the bill. That's a problem to me and it should be a problem to you.

So I'm saying to your government: Why would you do that? If you spend two years to get a bill right and yet you spend 72 hours over the course of a Mother's Day weekend to say what's going on here—it made no sense to me. I'm sorry. It was a big mistake on your part.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** We don't really have—okay. The member for Essex, but you've got to make it quick to get a question answered.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Thanks to the member for Niagara Falls. You mentioned the safety concerns around the one-to-one ratio. Have you thought or given any consideration around what that does, what a one-to-one ratio does to veteran workers, those older workers who are experienced, when they need pensionable hours and they're not getting hired out of those halls to add to their pensionable hours? They're going to be working longer and harder to get to their final retirement day. Have you given any thought to that?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The member for Niagara Falls, with 20 seconds.

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**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I know you're a great trade union member. You belong to LIUNA and you've spent a lot of your years as a skilled tradesperson, so you know the trades well. My concern with the one-on-one, quite frankly, is the training and the safety. How safe is it going to be for young people to go into the trades? As we saw, I think it was in London—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** —where a 19-year-old ended up getting killed on the job—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. That took three tries. It shouldn't take me three tries.

Further debate?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I'm really proud to stand up today on the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, and I'm thankful that this government is continuing to take action on this front. From day one in our election platform, we promised to speed up skilled trades, to bring dignity back into the skilled trades. Whether it's our young people, whether it's in our construction sector, whether it's in our mining sector, our transit sector, we're really building up Ontario for success. This bill really complements all the efforts our government has taken to date.

For example, we needed an ambitious transit strategy in this province, not only to get fewer cars on the road and to combat climate change, but also to get people moving to work so they can spend more time with their families and less time in transit. But that involves having many transit options, and to have those options, we need the skilled trades that are going to be needed to build our subways, to electrify our GO train stations, to build our GO train stations. Of course, we've got an ambitious goal on that as well.

We talk about building broadband infrastructure. Again, this government has laid the foundation to get us reconnected from coast to coast in our nation and in the province of Ontario, working with our federal counterparts. But we are going to need skilled trade workers to get us connected, and we recognize that starts at a young age, which is why we laid the foundations at our elementary school levels, our high school levels.

Again, today we're talking about reforming the apprenticeship process through the OCOT system and making sure that we follow through on that campaign promise to eliminate the stale, aged, complicated and burdensome OCOT process that had existed, and to finally free up Ontarians and free up the next generation of skilled trade workers so they can have that opportunity that so many people come to Ontario for. As an immigrant myself, I'm the prime example of equal opportunity in this province, because if you work hard and you play by the rules and you get into the trade or the skill that you're most passionate about, you can succeed in this province—you can.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you. And there are so many examples of ambitious new Canadians that have come to Canada, no matter what country they're coming from, and they come here because they want to help build up a better Canada or build up a better province. They come in and they say, "Okay, I have these skills from my previous country. How can I apply them to Ontario?" Before, that also used to be a burdensome system. We recognized this as a province, which is why our Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development has also modernized the Provincial Nominee Program. We recognize that not only do we need to skill up our current population in this province, but we need to think ahead—as well as those individuals who may be coming from other countries for that opportunity that we have in Ontario, but they need that little extra step to get their credentials certified and also recognize that they may already have those skill sets that will match so well in this province.

Again, we thought ahead, Speaker, because this is a forward-looking government. We want to build up success in our province. We recognize 15 years of complications in this province. I'm not going to overly dwell on the past. I would rather think towards the future and our young people and what we need. That's just so important. Our young people: What do they need? They're going to need

future houses, but how are we going to get affordable housing if we can't build houses in the first place? What do we need to build houses? We need skilled trades. So again, we're building up success for the future of this province.

We know just from last month alone—for those who follow statistics in this Legislature, you can follow housing starts, and housing starts will tell you exactly how many homes are being built. Housing starts in March 2021 are up to 8,660, which is up 60% from February 2021, the highest since August 2020. And that's just that sector. If you look at residential building and the permanent value that it has added to the Ontario economy, it is in the millions, Speaker. That shows again that we're going to need for young people of the future—not only are they going to need housing, they're going to need jobs, and there are so many open vacancies and jobs that are going to be available in the skilled trades sector.

We need to make these changes now. This OCOT change really complements what we're trying to accomplish, and it's not the first time we've talked about it. When we introduced our first budget in this Legislature as a government, we talked about skilled trades. I know the opposition voted against it; they regret it. But again, in our other budget, we also put it in a budget—and we kept investing over and over again, every single budget opportunity we had. Whether it's investing in our schools, whether it's elementary schools, whether it's the OYAP program, whether it's helping employers and giving them money—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Order.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** And I hear the opposition. They're upset that they voted against the budget. It's okay because there are things you can vote in favour of, and I will acknowledge they did vote in favour of a motion that Minister Dunlop had introduced in this Legislature. They did vote in favour with that motion. I get they're upset, but let me just go over the details of how we're helping the sectors and why this OCOT change that we're proposing today is so important.

First, as I said, we invested in the OYAP program, the youth apprenticeship program, \$17 million to make sure that we advance those young people in their careers. We also put \$6 million in Skills Ontario to make sure we invest in our elementary schools and secondary schools as well. And not just that, Speaker; we put in \$42 million in our Specialist High Skills Major program.

There's so much more, and that's just at the education level. I know members of the opposition talked about how important education is. It's highly important, which is why that's how we started. Today, we're talking about the OCOT process, kind of the tail end of what we need to do to build up success in this province, but first we really need to get at the core of it, which is our next generation, the young people, and so we did tackle that.

Next, we have to think about how we simplify the system for employers. We talked about—it's great; people get the skills at an early age, they get the ambition, they

get the drive, they want to go into the trades, but then they get into the system and it's very complicated for them. The employer doesn't want to pay into the system or opt into the system because it's complicated for them. Maybe there are some financial burdens.

So we thought about that and, of course, it took many people in this Legislature, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, the member from Burlington, our minister and, of course, kudos to the skilled trades panel that also helped us come up with some of these things.

But I, too, in my own riding, had heard time and time again from employers that needed that extra hand up in terms of getting apprenticeships and getting their skilled trades program off the ground. That's why we put together a participation program with employers, a \$20-million program, where people can pool in on an apprenticeship system and help mentor and train those apprenticeships—very, very important.

In addition to that, we had the new Achievement Incentive grant to encourage small to medium-sized employers to, of course, opt into these programs—again, tackling the employer side of it.

Those are just a few to highlight. There's many more, but I only have so much time, Speaker. I'd love to tackle them all, and maybe I will at the end.

In addition to that, we think about, if someone has gone through the apprenticeship program, we've covered the employer part; now we've got this journey person this apprenticeship, and there's some costs that they incur as well.

We decided—it was actually an initiative created by the PC government when it was last in government, and that was the tools grant. It was a great program created by a PC government, and we decided to build on that program. Not only did we modernize it to be able to apply for the tools program online—because a lot of things are going virtual. Of course, with skilled trades, you are going to need the experiential learning, and we've done investments on experiential learning as well. But to help them with the cost of tools—again, that was something we put in our budget.

This is always top of mind in our government. It's not just the bill we're speaking about today, but it's a series of events, because we all want to have great opportunities in our province, to make it the best province in this nation, so that people who want to get into the trades, whether they be a young person, a new immigrant or a female—we need way more females in the skilled trades. As we know, in construction, they only make up about 4% of the profession. Of course, we've got our minister for women and children who's doing excellent work to encourage more women to go into the skilled trades. This, of course, builds on that.

But why was this necessary? Again, this government is really driven by making things easier for the tax—easier for the people. We got elected to restore trust in government because there were 15 years of just no trust in the government at all, and part of this OCOT change that we're talking about today is again to restore that trust and confidence in the government.

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When we talk about how we're doing a one-stop shop, we're really going from a shop class to a one-stop shop, because we recognize that that is very important for people. If you make it simple for people, more people will do it and more people will opt into skilled trades. So this is going to be a very important initiative.

But this isn't the first time we talked about it. When we first talked about reforming skilled trades, coming with different panels, there was an interesting op-ed done by Stephen Hamilton, who is a big supporter of the changes we're talking about today. He recognized, time and time again, the issues that were happening with the failed Ontario College of Trades, also known as OCOT, system. He said, "OCOT was a failed experiment that had morphed into a self-serving and unwieldy bureaucracy, whose claim to fame was fining barbershops, enflaming labour-relations conflicts and creating more red tape." That's from Stephen Hamilton.

If we think about barbershops and what they're going through right now—of course, they can benefit from our small business incentive that we put out, but a lot of them are hurting because of COVID. This is extra red tape that they just couldn't deal with. Now, coming out of COVID, it's a hand-up for so many of those industries who don't have to deal with this red tape. It's something that Stephen Hamilton had recognized at the very beginning.

But he also talked about how there were several legislative amendments that were done to change the OCOT system, and they just weren't enough. They were not genuine, because the whole problem was the OCOT system. Government after government tried to enter change—you know, "Oh, we'll make an amendment here, make it better," and other governments and other parties voted with them, like the members of the opposition, who voted for these tiny amendments. But at the end of the day, they did nothing to change the system. Finally, today, we're doing something substantial to overhaul the system, make it better for those who are in the skilled trades now who recognize the problems, but also make it better for the future.

When I spoke to local constituents about the changes we're proposing today, many of them applauded these changes. They've been talking to me about them for the last few years. They're really grateful about some of the group sponsorships we're putting together in terms of advantages for businesses to work together on the apprenticeship programs. But they kept going back to, "What else are you going to be doing for skilled trades?"

Someone I talked about before, Jerome Horowitz from Brotech Precision CNC Inc.—he's the president. Let me tell you, Brotech Precision is one of the companies that actually gets to make small precision components for the Bruce nuclear refurbishment. It's a really amazing opportunity for them. I've walked through their operations—obviously, when it was safe to do so—and they employ people from all walks of life: young, older, women, men. It's really exciting. Premier Ford joined me for that tour as well.

Jerome and his team have been working with the county of Simcoe on a plan to get more people into the skilled trades. Something that he said about this particular bill is:

“This is a welcome move. The need to simplify the program has been known for a little while and I have appreciated that the Ontario government has been paying attention to this issue over the last year. Brotech, and many other manufacturers supporting high tech industries, have difficulty recruiting skilled” mechanics. “We therefore rely heavily on hiring and training apprentices. If the program would be easier to navigate, higher profile, and more attractive to young people, we might have more candidates to join our growing company.”

He continues to say, “We see a coming boom in Ontario manufacturing as global supply chains are weakened by the pandemic. Now is exactly the time to support Ontario manufacturing and help the economy thrive again.”

Speaker, Jerome Horowitz recognizes that this is an important step towards the future economic recovery of this province.

Of course, our finance minister, who tabled the last budget, talked about how we aren’t—yes, this government creates efficiencies, but we’re not going to get through this economic slump we’re in by cuts and increased taxes, something that maybe other governments want to do. Rather, this government is going to grow the economy, and this is an example of it.

Another gentleman I often talk to—his family came from Germany, and they started a company here. You might think I’m talking about Napoleon, which is also a company started by a German family in Barrie, but this is SBS Drivetec. The managing director, Fabian Burger, had this to say about this particular bill: “This new program is certainly welcome. It is important to invest in apprenticeships to ensure that we have people with hands-on skills and technical experience coming into our labour force. Hands-on experience is something that the manufacturing industry, including SBS Drivetec, struggles to find in candidates. Revamping and streamlining the apprenticeship program is one important way of changing this.”

Again, he recognizes there’s a series of things we need to do, like we did with the schools, like we’re doing through working with employers, and now, reforming the OCOT process.

When we talk about employers, we also have to think about our local chambers of commerce. I talk to my local chamber very often. We’re constantly on the phone or emailing back and forth—Paul Markle, executive director of the Barrie Chamber of Commerce. We’ve done various round tables with them on the skilled trades issue. He also supports this move by our government. He said, “Skilled trades workers are aging and getting close to retirement. The importance of the skilled trades industry in Ontario cannot be overlooked and action must be taken to get people into this key industry. With a potential shortage of qualified people, it is also important to bring everyone we can into the skilled trades, including immigrants, young people, and women. This is a great way to accomplish this.”

Lastly, I also want to mention Steve Loftus from Innovative Automation. This company is always—it’s in their name, “innovative”—going above and beyond. They stepped up to the plate when it came to COVID-19, but they also told me early on about the challenges they have through the apprenticeship program and the challenges they have with what happened to skilled trades professions and the reforms that are going to be needed to really allow for success in various industries. Steve Loftus had this to say about this particular legislation: “This change generates an opportunity to raise the perceived value, streamline the process and generate the interest in the skilled trades. The trades are a viable option for a valuable career and not a second choice, as it is a true bridge to an excellent quality of life and with opportunities on to a future business ownership and operation” role. Again, someone who’s really a big community advocate in the city of Barrie and all of Simcoe county is very, very supportive of this.

Something he talked about in terms of first and second careers—I want to touch upon that, in the remaining time I have left—and I remember talking to Linda Franklin, from our colleges system, about this years ago. She talked about how so many people who end up spending all this money on a university degree end up applying to the college system, and then they’re frustrated that they’ve wasted all this money, and now they’re in the college system—I think she said it was over 50% or something—and then they get into a really meaningful career through the college system and through the apprenticeship program. I’ve always remembered that.

I know that in my neck of the woods, in the riding of our Attorney General, Georgian College really prides itself—and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour talked about her son going to Georgian College. They really pride themselves on trying to make sure they have a lot of nimble programs. Their college system is really great that way, and of course we’re constantly modifying it, as well—working with the colleges system to make it more nimble with the employers, again, something that complements all the changes we’ve done. You can’t just look at this bill in itself, like I know the members of the opposition are doing. There’s so much more around it that we’ve done. But this is an important part of that system that we’re trying to change and build back better, as many people are constantly quoting in the media—about how we build up our province and what we’re going to need. Of course, Georgian College is thrilled it plays a role in it. Georgian College doesn’t just offer programs for people who want to take them now—for example, they have their mechanical technician program. They have state-of-the-art facilities. They also received two consecutive Canadian champion CNC mechanics at Skills Canada awards for it—it’s a bit of a mouthful. They also invested in the new generation of people in skilled trades by hosting the FIRST Robotics Competition—where high schools come together with different STEM skills, they build these robots, they use their different skilled trades skills to literally put together these robots, and they compete against each other. It’s

really exciting. There are high schools from the United States that come. It's something that I attended. It shows you how communities are really working together to benefit from this.

Speaker, I just want to end on this note, and that is that we need to—the importance of this piece of legislation, in order to streamline the system, really get rid of that OCOT, old-school model once and for all, because in Ontario we cannot wait. We've got transportation needs. We've got new hospitals we've got to build. We've got to build broadband. We have an expanding mining sector that's going to help us create electric vehicles here in Ontario. We're investing in a hydrogen strategy; we're going to need people for that as well. The condo market: We talked about affordable housing; well, it means we need to build some density in certain areas. You can't do that without crane operators. You can't do that without elevator constructors. You can't do that without mechanics or without glaziers—again, investments that we're making, Speaker.

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So I'm so proud to support this bill. I hope everyone supports this. Our next generation needs it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I'd like to thank the member opposite for her 20-minute intro to the bill. This bill will legislate and create an 11-member board that will lead the new Skilled Trades Ontario. This risks more partisan appointments from the government, with the record of Conservative appointments of individuals with no experience in the industry—or, worse, a board full of employers, like the disaster this Conservative government created with Tarion when the government allowed it to be run by developers and only one homeowner, and it stopped protecting homeowners.

Will this government commit to being fair and only appointing qualified members? That includes half workers and worker representatives. Can you admit today that that will be put into this legislation?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I wish the member opposite had voted against the incrementalism by the previous government to try to reform the OCOT system that wasn't successful.

When it comes to us reforming the OCOT system, making it more streamlined and fair, you have seen that this legislation is based off of the recommendations by the Skilled Trades Panel's first report. So what the member is saying is that she doesn't believe in what the Skilled Trades Panel's first report is saying. Part of their report is obviously recommending this committee that we're going to be appointing, so I have full confidence that it will do its work, and we'll follow the recommendations of the report.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Norman Miller:** Thank you to the member from Barrie–Innisfil for a very enthusiastic and interesting speech. It was great to hear about all those businesses like Napoleon in Barrie that are doing so well and, as a result, need more skilled workers.

I know it's the goal of the government to get more skilled workers the skills they need to get the job, so can you talk about how this bill and the proposed changes in it will attract more people to the skilled trades?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you for that question. I think, to summarize, it really offers them a one-stop shop. In this day and age, we've got an app to simplify so much of our life. When it comes to interacting with government, people constantly say it's too burdensome, and so they've sort of given up, and that's why a big theme of this government's initiatives, whether it's this bill or others, is to restore that trust that has been broken between the people and the government.

This is another example of how we are restoring that trust between the people and their government, so they can rely on a simplified, easy process. It's something that is so much easier to find in the private sector, but is so missing from government. Governments and the private sector can learn from one another to make it a better process and make it a better province, so that when people like Honda, who are looking for 500 employees in the next three years, are looking for more employees to hire, they know they can rely on a one-stop shop, a simplified process for their employees.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My son is 22. He's about 8,673 hours into his electrical apprenticeship. He is going to trade school right now for his last component, with those first- and second-career folks who you had referenced. Those folks have struggled greatly to have an employer take them on as an apprentice.

The Auditor General, in the 2016 report, cited that financial incentives and tax credits were not overly effective because employers are reluctant to take on apprentices because of the risk that is associated with those apprentices, especially if those workers are older, in those second—and even sometimes third—careers.

I'm very proud of my son. The stigma still exists around skilled trades, but what does this bill do for those second and third careers to actually get the employers on board, so that they can become journeymen and reach their potential?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** That's an excellent question. You know, when we first came into government, we inherited a very out-of-date apprenticeship program. Our ratios were completely outdated, from any other province, and it was a shame. And so one of the first things that we did was to improve that 1-to-1 ratio. Of course, that was the first step.

We recognize that the Auditor General did the report, and so that was obviously one of the significant factors, but it's not to say that we didn't also listen to the employers, who also needed those group sponsorship opportunities, which was also in one of the budgets we introduced, to give them that opportunity to pool together and help. That eases the burden on the employer but it also creates better opportunities for those apprentices, because they'll have more places they can go to get that experience and those hours they need to complete their journey. In

addition, we also have monies in the budget to help them with any costs associated for that journey person, if they need to travel somewhere else in order to complete those hours.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Colleagues, in the perfect world, supply meets demand—in the perfect world. Of course, what is the situation we find ourselves in here? We have a demand for our tradespeople, whether it's a carpenter, a bricklayer, a steamfitter, a boilermaker. They aren't there to be had. We don't have the supply, but the demand is out there. Obviously our system is not working. Our system of apprenticeships is broken. It's not efficient, it's not effective, and it's not putting people into the jobs we want and need.

We have a dramatically engaged young group of people who can change the face of this nation. We just need to get them to work. Our system isn't working. It can work and it will work.

To the member: How confident is she that we can bring our young people back into the trades?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** The member raised an excellent point, and it was reinforced by a report by BuildForce Canada, their highlight for 2021, where they talked about how in the 10-year workforce outlook for Ontario, over 92,000 people are retiring in that sector, while only 84,000 and some change are entering, which leaves us with a shortage of 23,000 in that particular outlook.

He gets it very well, and that's why, from day one, this government took the actions it needed to not only invest in young people, invest in our newcomers, invest in women; make sure that we change the ratio models, make sure that we create access to employers, make it easier on journey persons in apprenticeship programs. Now, of course, the final part of that—there will of course be more to come, but this particular final part of this bill, which is the OCOT process—is to make it a one-stop shop and simplify things once and for all.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** My question is: One of the best pathways to get into an apprenticeship is through a trade union, to become a card-carrying member. Those trade unions offer in-house training at some of the most high-tech training centres in Ontario. We're talking about advanced manufacturing and processing skills training, safety training—it runs the gamut. It's incredible, first class, but many people can't join a union.

One of the first bills I tabled as a private member was to expand card-based certification across the province for all workers and all businesses in Ontario. I wonder if the member would agree that card certification, so that those members can get access to that invaluable, first-class training, is something that should be incorporated into this bill. Does she support card-based certification?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** The member talked about unions, and I have a LIUNA office really close to my office, actually, where they do a lot of training and do a lot of great work. They were big supporters of the line 5 project that the member from Sarnia introduced and the importance of getting that off the ground, of course.

But not only are they supportive of this bill; we also have individuals like OSCA who are supportive. IBEW are supportive. The Ontario Hairstylists Association, of course, is supportive, but many other unions are also supportive of this particular piece of legislation, because, as you know, our minister who worked on this piece of legislation has been in touch with unions from day one, whether it's COVID supports that are needed or whether it's rebuilding a better skilled trades program.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** We have time for one quick question and answer.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** To the member from Barrie—Innisfil: first of all, great comments this afternoon—very informative. We heard earlier from a couple of the members opposite that they are concerned about the makeup of the board of this new Skilled Trades Ontario. My question to you is: Have you ever heard anyone from the opposite side ever raise concerns about the appointments to the skilled trades board, the College of Trades, a board that was—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. To the member for Barrie—Innisfil for a very quick reply.

1650

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** The short answer is no. Steve Hamilton, who supports these changes, also talked about how the problems with the OCOT system was the composition of the board, and it was run by Toronto-centric people rather than all of Ontario. So finally, we're going to have a system that includes all of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It gives me great pleasure to rise today and add the voices of the great folks of London North Centre. As we take a look at this province transitioning out of COVID-19, London is uniquely poised to help this province recover from the pandemic. It has a great basis in automation, robotics, agri-foods, state-of-the-art technology and medical research, the digital creative sector. Really, there is so much prime, shovel-ready, industrial land situated on the 401 corridor within two hours of different border crossings. There's a talented workforce in so many R&D institutions; a strong, robust ecosystem; and it's the heart of southwestern Ontario. So I look forward to more attention from this province and this government towards London and the investments that can be made therein.

When I first took a look at Bill 288, when I first read the title, I must admit, Speaker, I got a little excited, because I saw the word “building.” I had hoped that that would be followed with “building affordable housing,” something that governments, past and present, have really dropped the ball upon.

As we take a look at this bill, it is very much so a concern that this government is taking the College of Trades and replacing it with their own hand-picked bureaucracy. When you take a look that there are no limits on the board chair and that the board will appoint the CEO and will appoint the staff, it speaks to a lot of control that this government is now placing overtop of their new layers of bureaucracy.

Further, we hear lip service to this government respecting those in the trades and yet, it seems to be taking away the voices of those within the trades: “The registrar shall establish an apprenticeship program for each trade, which may include on-the-job training standards, in-class curriculum standards, examinations and other requirements.” The trades are the experts. Should they not be the ones establishing how this program is outlined? Why is the registrar given so much power? Why are people in suits given so much power over the trades?

A further comment is when we take a look at the removal or the way in which this government got rid of the College of Trades, what happened to the money? Where did the money go? What happened to all the fees that had been collected? Money was sitting in a bank account before the College of Trades was dissolved, and yet nobody knows where it has gone.

The concerns that are raised with this bill are that much of it is left to regulation. We have, yet again, this government saying, “Don’t worry, trust us. We’ll look after it in the future.” It’s almost as though they’re afraid to show their hand. They’re afraid to be forthright. They’re afraid to be genuine. They’re afraid to put forward legislation that really has everything spelled out. It seems a little slapdash and a little bit rushed.

I, for one, support the further expansion of trade education within elementary and secondary schools. I think back to my days when I was in grade 7 and grade 8 and we had the opportunity to learn with our hands. There are so many kids who don’t necessarily learn well in a classroom. They don’t learn under the traditional models of either through their eyes or through their ears. They learn well by doing. They learn by making. Wood shop gave us so many opportunities to do that. You had the opportunity to think, to problem-solve through a project and to create. I still remember my teacher Mr. Clark. His initial project when we first entered the program in grade 7 was to build a non-kill mousetrap. At the time, it just seemed like another project, I thought. That guy was actually brilliant, and I’ll tell you why: If a kid had come up with a brilliant invention for a no-kill mousetrap, that guy would have made a fortune. However, I don’t know that any of my classmates or I were successful in that assignment.

As we take a look at Bill 288, I would also like to see some recommendations that have come from the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario. We talk about building, and we’re talking about the trades, but we also need to think about the assets that Ontario currently has. Conservation needs to be a part of Ontario’s recovery out of COVID-19 and into the future. You see, conservation triggers a tremendous amount of economic growth. It actually creates more jobs than new buildings do. It also has an impact on communities. Communities have their identity in their heritage buildings. They have their personality. It gives a sense of place, it gives a sense of space and it gives a sense of heritage that can’t be created in a new building.

By taking a look at the heritage properties we currently have, it would allow us to create more affordable housing, which is something that is desperately needed in this

province right now. If we take a look at conservation, it also will help to re-invigorate tourism once people are able to travel throughout the province, once this pandemic is a thing of the past. It does something sort of unnameable in that it contributes to people’s well-being, their sense of mental health, their sense of belonging, their sense of identity within their hometown.

But not only that, it is also good for environmental stewardship. If you look at the cost between a new build versus a restoration build, new construction is about 50% labour and 50% materials, whereas restoration is 25% materials and 75% labour, so you’re putting that money back into people’s pockets. You’re putting that money back into the economy, where people can spend it within their communities, and to revitalize their communities as well. In fact, in the US, a study was done, and they figured that every dollar that is spent in main street rejuvenation will realize \$27, from that \$1 investment.

I think back to, as we talk about saving Main Street—I’m so thankful that this government listened to the official opposition and adopted some principles of our Save Main Street plan to finally help small businesses who are struggling throughout this pandemic. I know that we recommended it in April 2020, and it came about in—the government finally got their act together in January of 2021. I know that there were so many people within my riding who were struggling and desperately needed this government to finally stand up, so I’m very thankful for that.

Now, if we also look at Ontario’s other industries, such as film and TV, they contribute \$2.2 billion to Ontario’s economy. By re-invigorating the conservation efforts within this province, it will actually add yet more money to the province and more spending.

I’d also like to think back to affordable housing, of which the trades are a very necessary part. Recently, within my riding, over the winter a very unique partnership was formed, Speaker. It was called the Winter Interim Solution to Homelessness. It was a group of about 18 organizations who banded together to help folks who were denied housing. I don’t like to use the word “homeless” because, quite frankly, they have been denied housing. They’ve been denied housing by governments past and present, who have chosen not to create affordable housing, have chosen not to build affordable housing. They have abdicated their responsibility to make sure people are adequately housed, because without a house, it’s almost as though people cease to exist within our society.

They had donated trailers. They created a home-like atmosphere—nothing fancy, nothing elaborate, but it made sure that these folks were safe and warm and had a place to start to rebuild their lives. It was such a fantastic arrangement, and I must commend Sarah Campbell, the executive director of London’s Ark Aid Street Mission, for really coordinating this and being such a leader.

**1700**

But when we look at restoration and we look at the trades—take a look at all the buildings the province has that sit empty, that sit unused, and yet there are people on

the street who are struggling to stay warm, who are struggling to be safe, who are struggling with mental health needs, with substance abuse issues. And there are, further, so many families in this province who, after the closure of psychiatric institutions, after the closure of institutional models of care, were promised by past governments that there would be spaces created within the community to look after them. I'm thinking, Speaker, of adults with developmental disabilities who are still at home with their parents who are 60, 70, even 80, still working tirelessly, looking after their children, and they should not have to. Their health is being compromised. Their adult children need that sense of independence, albeit small, because it would be supportive housing, which they require. But they know what has happened to them is unfair and it's not right and it's unjust. A promise was made to them and a promise, quite frankly, was broken. It's a disgrace.

Back in 2019, I assembled a number of different community leaders and we wrote letters appealing to this government, asking for emergency funding for homelessness. Those letters were answered with legislation that allowed people to build additional apartments in their houses—granny flats. That's not a proactive way to address homelessness, not whatsoever. We see a government that is pandering to developers, removing development charges that were administered to municipalities, keeping them from being able to create libraries, public parks, different community amenities that make a community whole, that make a community a great place to live, all with the promise that private industry is somehow going to look after this homelessness crisis. And they won't, unless there's solid legislation to do so.

We also take a look at the environmental considerations of conservation of buildings. You know, in developed countries, 35% to 40% of the total waste that is generated comes from demolition, comes from pulling down perfectly good buildings and creating something that is less exceptional in their place. They found in Scandinavia that 97% of construction waste can be recycled, and yet it's not. Ontario is not leading when it comes to this. Think of the hundreds of schools that the past Liberal government closed. Those were purpose-built; they were solidly built; they were made according to specifications that are rarely seen within housing. Those could have easily been transformed into affordable housing, but they weren't. I think of the school in my community of Lorne Avenue, which was an amazing community school. The parents and the community fought hard for it to remain open. Unfortunately, it's no longer there.

If we look at the buildings themselves and in restoration: New vinyl windows can last 15 to 25 years, whereas if you take a heritage window and it's restored properly, with storm windows as well, it can last up to 200 years. These are windows also that are already there. They will have a comparable R-value. So I'd really like to see this government not only talk about the trades; I'd like them to talk about what investments they're going to make within the educational system to ensure that kids are getting an adequate education within the trades. We see a government that is quite fond of cutting education funding every

chance they get. They provide funding when they are up against a wall because of COVID-19, but as soon as it looked like we were transitioning out of the pandemic they started those cuts back up again. We're nowhere near done this pandemic, and yet the cuts are already starting.

We saw in the past governments that went and pulled shops out of schools. They pulled a tremendous amount of money out of schools, and where did it go? It is a real complete and utter disgrace.

For this government, I'd like to also recommend that they not only look at trades, but they look at the importance of housing and how the trades can create that housing, because we've seen different legislation from this government where they've gotten rid of vacancy de-control; they've undermined rent control. We've seen that they've paused evictions while under a state of emergency, but what happens when that state of emergency ends?

This government as well is simply taking one bureaucracy and replacing it with another. It reminds me of what happened with Tarion, because when this government was in opposition, you heard chapter and verse about how Tarion needed to be overhauled, how it needed to be fixed, how it was a broken system, and now that they're in government, surprise, Tarion is still here.

We heard, back in the day, the member from Sarnia-Lambton and the member from Huron-Bruce talk about the broken system, and now that they're in government—they said there was going to be a study, they referred to a study, but they won't produce that study; it doesn't exist.

Canadians for Properly Built Homes had to do an FOI request and ask for staff notes in order to figure out what happened in these consultations that they won't tell anyone about. They managed to find that this consultation that this government calls a "consultation" involved 27 people, and the majority of the responses that they received, according to their own staff notes, were that it should be a multi-provider system and they should get rid of the monopoly known as Tarion. And what did they do? They didn't pay attention to those recommendations. They said, "Well, we've studied it and we've decided to keep Tarion." It makes utterly no sense. There were a very small number of consumers involved on this panel, which is not surprising because they don't really want to hear the voice of real people, but two of those people were actually affiliated with Tarion, so those consumers were already somewhat impacted. There were people who—the building industry itself said, "No, we're agnostic. We're happy with it going either way." There was little to no evidence that the best option was to keep with this current Tarion system, and yet they did.

There are so many concerns with the change to the Home Construction Regulatory Authority as well because a lot of people from Tarion just magically went over to this new system. We will see in time what will happen with that, but quite frankly, it also speaks to a complete waste of time from this government because the review of Tarion, the so-called review—I don't know if we should call it a review, maybe a dog-and-pony show—was something they embarked on after Justice Cunningham



had already spent a year studying it. So they reduplicated efforts in order to try to get the results they wanted to get, and even when they didn't get the results they wanted to get, they still continued with Tarion, regardless of the information that was provided. It's frightening.

The NDP, in committee during clause-by-clause, offered many alternatives to this government and yet not a single modification proposed by us was implemented. That's why it's concerning, when we take a look at this Bill 288 and we talk about how there are no term limits for the board chair, that the board will appoint the CEO and appoint staff—I think about the head of the EQAO, which started off as a very minimal amount of money, but when this government took power became a very lucrative position. I guess it pays to be friends with this government because, well, you never know what boards you're going to end up on. I could just ask the member for Niagara Falls; he sees it every Tuesday morning.

1710

In closing, I trust that this won't simply be money that is spent on posters or forcing schools to pay for signs talking about what the government is doing, but that this government actually invests in education, invests in school infrastructure, invests in education so that kids can enter the trades. But also I hope that this government will finally stand up, do the right thing and invest in affordable housing so that people are safe and people have a place to call home and people have a place to build their future, because it's on you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I'd like to quote the member from Toronto–Danforth who said, “We need skilled trades; we absolutely need skilled trades.” Our government acknowledges this need and the opposition acknowledges this need. It's been very encouraging this afternoon to hear the speech from the member from Niagara Falls giving cautious support to this legislation. And it's also very encouraging to me to hear the member from London North Centre. He had nothing bad to say about this legislation; he talked about a lot of other things. So to me, I hear unqualified support for this legislation.

I was wondering if the member could tell the House how he actually feels about Bill 288 without talking about any other legislation or what we're doing, because it sounds like he is very supportive.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member for Brantford–Brant for his question. I must clarify for him, because he must not have been listening: There are some concerns within this, and that would be that you're replacing one bureaucracy with another that is not clearly defined. You have not set out the term limits on the board chair, the responsibilities of the board chair. But I'm also not certain with this new bureaucracy, this “old wine in new bottles” that you're creating, that it's going to be any better than the Ontario College of Trades.

What I would have liked to have seen from this government would have been support for the member from Sudbury and his bill to increase PSW wages. That would have been something that would have been

responsive and necessary at this time to make sure the people who are on the front lines in long-term care are actually given the respect that they deserve. Instead, they just want to fine them and regulate them.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's always a pleasure to rise after my colleague does an incredible speech like that. What I really enjoyed was the fact that he talked about affordable housing right now, as housing has gone through the roof. Quite frankly, I don't know how young people are going to be able to buy a house. He talked about Tarion, which is very similar to this bill, by the way: a board running an organization.

Also equally concerning to me on what's not in the bill—and maybe you could help me with this—is that the bill does not fix the underground economy and workplaces employing individuals who don't register as apprentices. What we've seen in a workplace is that one of the young 19-year-olds who ended up falling to his death wasn't registered as an apprentice. So maybe you can discuss your opinion on that.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his comments. You're right; I've dealt with constituents who have been part of the underground economy because they have no other place to find a job. They have had difficulty in finding that journey-person who will take them on as an apprentice, so in order to make ends meet, they've been working on job sites without full protection, without workplace health and safety measures, and that's truly frightening. That's something that nobody should have to do. When there's an injury, they're also afraid to report it because they know that if they do so, they would be costing themselves a job.

But we see with this government that they are content to create this board, this bureaucracy, and not pay attention to the tradespeople, not listen to their expertise, not let them be in the driver's seat to tell them what needs to be done to reform this board. Instead, they're just simply appointing their own friends and insiders.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I heard so much about this board today. I know Pat Dillon pretty well; I worked with him 40 years ago in Sarnia. I know Mr. Mancinelli. There are others here—I won't quote the rest of them—I don't know as well. These gentlemen have supported this legislation. They've supported the minister and the work. If all you guys can find to comment on and to criticize is this board that hasn't even been established yet, I don't know what the heck—I'll tell you, I try to sit here and listen and not blow up, but I find it very frustrating. I'll tell you that.

Oh, I need a question; sorry. What do you say to the likes of Mr. Mancinelli, head of LIUNA, and Mr. Pat Dillon, a long-time trades leader—what do you say to their support? Are you criticizing their support of this bill? Because if you are, say so.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** Thank you to the member for Sarnia–Lambton for his comments. It's good to hear that he knows people. It's good that he had time to consult with people when they dropped this legislation just before

Mother's Day weekend. And you expect people to get in contact with all of these union folks and all of these leaders?

I will say also that, clearly, people that this member knows would also be the people at Tarion—the group that he studied and recommended that it be abolished, and yet he somehow created a report that has vanished and is now supporting them, rather than going to a multi-provider model as was referenced by his own study.

So it's great to hear that the member knows people. It's great to hear he has friends and insiders.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I find it quite humorous that the members across the way are questioning why we're talking about Tarion, when Tarion is an example of a board that allowed developers to run amok by this government and no longer protects the homeowners.

It is vital to have workers be a part of this new board that will be created. We need workers on it.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** There will be.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Well, you haven't put it in this bill that I've read over these 72 hours. The member from London North Centre: Can you expand on why that experience is so—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I apologize for interrupting the member for St. Catharines. I can't hear her over the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. I'm listening intently to what the member is asking. She's asking a question to the previous member who had the floor. I don't need you shouting so loud that I can't hear myself think.

Back to the member for St. Catharines.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'll continue back, a little bit, on the question. Can you expand on why that experience on that board is so important when we are talking about skilled labour here in Ontario?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member from St. Catharines for her excellent question because representation is important. When we take a look at these boards, which are often governed by people in suits, we need to make sure that there are voices of people who actually have a legitimate perspective on what is going on on the ground. That's why there needs to be consumer advocates also involved with Tarion, and yet, we know that it has been run by developers for years.

I frequently come back to the story of Dan Browne-Emery, who because he was rejected and ignored by Tarion, ended up having standing water in his basement and mould the size of pizzas. He died recently as a result of cancer that was likely brought on by the neglect that was happening as a result of Tarion not stepping up, not performing its duties. What a shame. Tarion wouldn't even take a report from his oncologist.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Speaker, through you: What's clear with this legislation—and I spoke a little bit about it when

I asked my question to the member from Niagara Falls—is that the industry overwhelmingly supports this legislation.

So my question, through you, Speaker, is, why the member opposes a widely anticipated overhaul of an inefficient system.

1720

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** Well, pardon me for being a little bit circumspect, but we need to make sure that there are not vagaries left within this legislation. It would be the responsibility of this government to show what they're going to do, to not leave things to regulation, to indicate how this board is going to be comprised, to also make sure that there's a fulsome consultation with people involved in the trades. But quite frankly, just like every other piece of legislation we see breeze in and breeze out of here, this government is waiting to do things until the doors are closed, until the insiders are talking, and quite frankly, that's something we have to be concerned about.

Democracy is important in this province. We need to make sure that you are not only presenting a full picture of what you're going to do but also present a full picture of what you're going to do to Ontario. That's your job. I can't do it for you, but I wish you would.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** I'm happy to speak on behalf of the second reading of Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act.

First, I want to recognize and thank my colleague and good friend the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, Mr. McNaughton, for his leadership in building and supporting a strong and talented skilled trades sector in Ontario. I know he mentioned my father earlier. Those of you who know my father know he's very energetic and passionate. He constantly tells me how proud he is of Minister McNaughton, myself and this government for all the work that we're doing in the skilled trades portfolio. I know he was very passionate about the formation of OCOT, so I can tell you he's just as excited, and celebrating with us about the formation and establishment of Skilled Trades Ontario. A little update: He was a certified plumber, became a politician and he's back as a plumber again, so he's a proud tradesperson.

I'd also like to highlight the member for Burlington and the parliamentary assistant to the minister for her incredible work in advocating for skilled trades. In December of last year, I had the opportunity to announce investments in the skilled trades with the parliamentary assistant, the minister and the member from Flam- borough—Glanbrook, who is also a parliamentary assistant but for the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. It was the first time that I could count that there were three strong women at an apprenticeship announcement to talk about the trades. It sends a strong signal that our government takes the trades seriously and wants to get more women into the trades as well.

As the minister said the other day, tradespeople build our hospitals, our highways and homes. They fix our cars

and keep our lights on. They are critical today, and they are critical to our future. We all know that Ontario faces a looming skilled trades shortage. Easing and simplifying the pathway into the trades for young people and reforming the stigma of working in the sector will go a long way to meeting this shortage.

Bill 288 will do all of that and more. If passed, this new act would simplify the system and make it easier and faster for people to get trained. It would provide an approach centred around the apprentice and a clear path to apprenticeship certification. Bill 288 would create a simpler customer-focused system so that more people can get what they need to move more quickly into jobs and support our economy. That would mean more young people, more under-represented Ontarians and more women working in the skilled trades.

Speaker, advancing the economic empowerment of women is a priority of our government and a personal passion of mine. Whenever I have the opportunity to speak to the importance of getting more women into the workforce, I mention that the skilled trades need to be an option. More of our youth, especially our young women, need to see the skilled trades as a rewarding career path.

We know women have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic due to their over-representation in the worst-affected sectors and in low-income and part-time jobs. The biggest job losses have occurred on the low-paid end of the employment spectrum, particularly in industries where work is classified as non-essential and also cannot be performed from home. RBC Economics reported recently that employment among women in Canada who earned less than \$800 a week had fallen almost 30%. For men in the same wage bracket, the drop was 24%. In the last year, 12 times as many mothers as fathers left their jobs to care for toddlers or school-age children.

All of this is important because a consensus is developing that women are and will continue to be central to Ontario's economic recovery. The Minister of Finance has made that very clear in our budget from this past year.

We know that women have tremendous skills to offer employers. Women's human capital contributes to increasing Ontario's competitiveness and economic growth. Also, research shows that working women contribute almost half of their families' employment income—47% in 2015.

When a large share of women aren't participating in paid employment or only work part-time, it's not a women's issue; it's an economic issue.

The skilled trades can offer a healthy and steady paycheck, rewarding work and a way out of low-paying jobs, helping women to support their families and build wealth. That's why we're working hard to help women build careers in this dynamic sector. Right now, women make up just about 7% of all skilled trades workers in Ontario. We can do much better than that.

I learned early in life to value non-traditional careers for women. My grandparents had a plumbing and heating supply business, and hanging out there gave me the

opportunity to see first-hand into the male-dominated world of the skilled trades. I remember spending weekends with my dad and my grandfather, going on service calls, sometimes climbing under cottages to pass the pipes through or going out to test the water troughs on the farms. So I can tell you, there are times I constantly kick myself that I didn't get into the skilled trades.

Just a few months ago, I had the opportunity to speak with Shelley, who owns a plumbing company in Cambridge with her husband. We spoke about how we can encourage more young people, including young women, to get into the rewarding careers found in the skilled trades.

Shelley is just one of the many women I've spoken to about their experiences in their chosen field. Other women include Jamie McMillan from Kickass Careers; Jennifer Green from Skills Ontario; Karen Renkema from the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada; Negin Mahmoudi from Ontario Power Generation; Victoria Radford, who owns her own hair salon here in town; and Jennifer Khan from EllisDon construction. Each woman has told me how rewarding their careers have been for them. Whether it is being a journeyman ironworker/boilermaker, a millwright, a hairdresser, or any one of the 140-plus skilled trade options in Ontario, they have enjoyed the work they do, the independence it gives them, and the lifelong skills they have learned.

That is why it is so exciting that Bill 288 will complement a lot of ongoing work that is already attracting more women to great jobs and careers in the skilled trades.

One of the challenges we face is how to make the skilled trades more attractive to girls and young women as their education progresses. So what we're doing at the provincial level is using the primary and secondary school systems to broaden girls' career interests at critical points in their education journey. It means getting the conversation going about the skilled trades as a viable pathway for girls earlier in the secondary school curriculum. And I can tell you, you can't convince a 17-year-old girl she wants to be an electrician, but you can if you start early.

We're also building general public awareness about the opportunities available to women in the trades.

One of my favourite initiatives our government has created was the Find a Career You Wouldn't Trade marketing campaign to highlight good-quality, well-paying and flexible careers in the trades. In the commercials created for the campaign, the arborist and tower crane operator are both women who speak very highly of their professions. These are just two of the many opportunities available in the skilled trades.

Showing women in these roles is also crucial to help break the negative stigma that unfortunately does surround the skilled trades.

Of all students in Canada who go to post-secondary institutions, only 30% of full-time students enrolled in secondary schools go to college, and 10% in apprenticeships, where 60% of those same students go to universities. And to be clear, there are many exciting and

rewarding professions for those who do go to university. But with 40% of new jobs created in the next decade specifically being in the skilled trades, there needs to be a shift in perspective.

1730

Once we have individuals interested in the skilled trades, we need to make it easier for them to find opportunities. Again, this is something that I've been passionate about and advocating for from the beginning. In 2018, after being a newly elected MPP and drawing the first ballot position for private members' business, I brought forward a motion asking the government to "identify and execute all the required actions to create an environment and training process that will expedite the creation of sufficient skilled tradespeople to make skilled labour a competitive advantage for Ontario and meet the requirements of a growing and vibrant economy in Ontario." That motion was passed unanimously, and as I can tell here today, we all agree we need more skilled trades workers in Ontario.

Speaker, as the minister mentioned and has stated many times, Ontario is facing a skilled trades shortage. We need to do everything we can to bring more young people into these careers.

I'd like to share a quote with you from our Simcoe county warden, George Cornell, regarding our subject bill: "The county recognizes that skilled tradespeople are an essential part of our current and future workforce and we continue to work with our partners to increase opportunities that will allow us to grow our economy, including working with Georgian College, showcasing careers through the Made in Simcoe County Campaign, and partnering on the Annual Skilled Trades Expo to name a few," said Warden George Cornell. "Talent attraction and retention initiatives are a key priority for the county and our local governments in assisting regional industry. The county and our economic development office welcome the Ontario government's efforts to promote a more efficient and accessible system, and we will continue to support their efforts to encourage more workers into this vital industry."

He's just another one of the many supporters out there who are acknowledging the good work this government is doing and what this bill will do bringing forward.

This bill complements much of the work we have been doing since our government took office. We are investing \$12.7 million to support the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program to help students in grades 11 and 12 gain experience in the skilled trades while getting credits for school.

Additionally, as part of our plan to put our skilled tradespeople first, our government is investing \$18.3 million in pre-apprenticeship programs to help prepare Ontarians who are traditionally under-represented, including women, for careers in the skilled trades. Through the Women's Economic Security Program, my ministry funds seven skilled trades projects that provide low-income women with employment and pre-apprenticeship training programs in carpentry, welding, industrial mechanic/millwright and fashion technology. That is some of

what we are doing to make the skilled trades more attractive for women.

Speaker, people won't enter a building if they can't find the front door. With the hopeful passing of Bill 288 by this House and the creation of a new crown agency, Skilled Trades Ontario, the front door to the skilled trades will be visible and open to our young people. The pathway will be clear, the future will be bright and Ontario will be stronger.

Speaker, I'd like to go back and make some comments on what I have heard here today about increasing the number of young people entering skilled trades. It was mentioned by some of the opposition today that we need to get skilled trades back into the classroom, and I completely agree. I gave the example of a 17-year-old. We need to start earlier. I can tell you that the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development are doing just that and will be looking at starting as early as kindergarten right through to grade 12.

Back in August, I was with the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the Minister of Education and the parliamentary assistant to make an announcement where we had appointed the new youth advisers. One of those is Jennifer Green, and for those who had an opportunity to meet her, she's an absolutely incredible woman. She's an industrial mechanic millwright and also a mother. I've had many valuable conversations with her about daycare and the importance of that for women working in the skilled trades.

We've also appointed Adam Melnick, who is a heat and frost insulator, and Andrew Pariser, who is vice-president of RESCON—so people with exceptional history in the skilled trades who are there as youth advisers, helping to make those decisions moving forward.

I must compliment the work that Skills Ontario has been doing across this province. I was there on their virtual event last year for young women—I think there were almost 1,000 people who came on that call—who had the opportunity to listen to a panel of women in the trades. Those young women were asking exceptional questions about getting into trades and hearing first-hand from these women about their experience, talking about mentorship, but all of the great opportunities for careers in the skilled trades. So I really value the work that Skills Ontario is doing, and I know their virtual competition is coming up again soon. If you follow them on their social media accounts, you can see that they have been doing some fabulous work with their trades at home during the pandemic and really bringing family members together—because that's a very important piece of the puzzle as well, working with parents to ensure that they recognize the value of skilled trades. They are influencers in their children's lives, so we need to make sure that they recognize that there are great opportunities for young people in the trades, good-paying jobs that are safe.

In closing, I just wanted to also include that when we had that announcement that day, we announced an increase to the OAAP program. We also announced an increase to Skills Ontario that day, as well as \$26 million in pre-apprenticeship training programs. This government

is making huge investments in the skilled trades sector and doing what we can to ensure that we're filling that gap, because all those 100,000 jobs that are sitting vacant, those have an attached paycheque. We need to ensure that we're getting young people and people from second and third careers into those jobs as well.

Thank you for the time today, and I'd be happy to take questions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Questions?

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** To the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, I listened intently to your speech this afternoon. I found it very informative. I recall the day that you came to Hamilton with the Premier. We met a number of women who had chosen the skilled trades as their profession. I asked each and every one of them, "Why did you get into this line of work?" And I could relate because, as a single mother, I understood where they were coming from: They wanted the financial independence. They wanted that security. They believed that high-paying jobs gave them an opportunity to provide for their children and to provide a good future for themselves as well.

I would like you to speak to how this proposed bill will encourage even more women to enter the skilled trades and how that can impact their lives.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for that question, and yes, that was a great visit I had in your riding that day. I remember we were down at the shipyards and speaking with the young woman engineer—absolutely amazing, the work that she was doing—a young, bright woman in the trades. We visited with LIUNA that day as well, seeing the work that they're doing with women in trades.

I think looking at this bill and the new crown agency—the minister has explained that the apprenticeship system is like looking at the Tokyo subway underground. I remember seeing that chart in the office when I was first elected. If you made it past step one—only 50% of people typically made it past step one, it was such a complicated system. So I believe that this bill, having a one-stop shop, is going to make it much easier for young people, for teachers and guidance counsellors to better understand, and for their parents to understand.

As we say, we know how to become a doctor or a lawyer or a teacher, but nobody knows how to become an electrician, a plumber or a millwright. The one-stop shop will make it much easier and encourage women and young people.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's always a pleasure to ask a question on this bill. You did mention about your dad, who I knew quite well here, so hopefully he's doing well. But you also just shocked me when you said that he's back on the tools. You can let him know that I'm shocked that he actually went back on the tools, seeing I watched him around here; he didn't strike me as a guy who would go back and get on the tools.

But it brings up an interesting point, because in my riding of Niagara Falls, I have a lot of people who have

lost their jobs in tourism. A lot of those workers are older—you can tell your dad I said this too—like your dad. Do you think it would be a good idea that we continue to look at, even though you're a little older, to get into the trades—not just young people and women and racialized, but older people too?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for that question. I know I've listened intently to your story today. You are a storyteller. Through my father, I have heard some interesting stories about you as well. He speaks very highly of you and always enjoys your Christmas cards as well, so I'll pass that on.

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I totally agree with you. This is not a bill that is looking specifically at young people. There are people who have lost their jobs, so second-career workers are really important, I think, when I look at women post-pandemic who have lost their jobs. And again, in low-paying sectors, these are jobs that are sitting vacant that have a paycheque associated with them. They're good-paying jobs and they're jobs that have other opportunities as well. I think people need to remember that the trades aren't just about being behind a tool; there are many opportunities within the skilled trades sector. We need to make sure that our young people and people looking for a second career know all the possibilities within the trades.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mr. Norman Miller:** It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to have a question.

I, too, had the pleasure of sitting with the member's father, Garfield, for many years. He was very proud of being a plumber, and I think that's a great perspective to bring to the Legislature. We certainly have plenty of lawyers, but being a plumber and the experience he brought was very valuable. Garfield was a huge advocate for trying to get more people into the skilled trades, as you have been.

I'm just wondering what you're hearing about the demand for skilled workers in your riding, and the other—if I can throw in two questions. You mentioned the importance of starting early, in secondary schools, to get young women involved. If you can touch on that as well, please.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for that question. We've heard lots of fun stories about my father here today. I'm really proud of the work that he did on this file and proud to continue moving forward to recognize how valuable trade workers are in our economy. It's amazing hearing here today from those people who are trade workers and those people who have family members who are as well. I know we're all so very proud.

In my area, I can tell you, from prior to my election, I've been hearing from many companies the demand for skilled trades; and then being elected and hearing now across Ontario—it's not just something in my own riding; it's across Ontario. We're looking at 100,000 jobs that are sitting empty that have a paycheque associated with them. When you have people who need jobs and we have jobs, we need to make that connection. The opportunities that this bill is providing—the funding that has come out of the

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to match that, to get people into those important jobs of tomorrow.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you to the member opposite from Simcoe North. I just want to ask you a question. The former Premier dramatically reduced the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit and kept the youth jobs strategy. We need young people in our trades, as you said during your intro. That means giving young people an opportunity to get involved in the trades at a young age. With the previous Premier's cuts in the sector and this Premier's cuts to education, how do we get more young people involved in trades beyond what this legislation prescribes? And that would be including women in PSW positions. They were devastated, as you said in your speaking notes today. How can we make sure that young people will be involved in trades?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for that question. I'm going to disagree with you: There have been no cuts to education. But we do need more young people in the trades. We've talked about young people today, we've talked about people in Second Career, but I completely agree with you: What can we be doing to increase the number of young people?

We don't want the trades to be a plan B or something else you do if you're not doing well in school. They should be an opportunity for anybody. If you're valedictorian, if you're a 99% student in your class, why wouldn't you look at the trades? Why do you have to go to university? So encouraging people right away, early on, starting in kindergarten, using their hands and having the opportunities as they progress through school and not waiting until they're maybe in grade 11 or 12 to then do it—because I think, for young women especially, if they haven't had that opportunity at an early age, they're going to be very intimidated walking into a classroom later on in high school with young men who have maybe had the opportunity. The more we can be doing early on for young people and for women will help.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Question?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** I just want to say a couple of things. I got in in 2011, and your father was in front of me when I first arrived. I want to just reiterate, because a few people have brought up Garfield today, and I know he's watching here today, because it was very important to him, making sure that—skilled trades hadn't been at the table for many, many years, and we needed to have them back at the table, or even at the table, period.

As I've said numerous times about my son—and I agree with what you're saying—just because he didn't know where to go or what to do, but he was his mother's child of course he sat down and looked through it, but as we said, many, many people did not.

My question to you is, because you've been a huge advocate yourself—you're a chip off the old block—what do you think your dad would say about this bill?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for that question. I can tell you that he is absolutely thrilled, every

step of the way, when we've made investments into skilled trades and we're continuing the conversation about what we can do to get more people into them. As I mentioned, he's back as a plumber at another business in our area. Unfortunately, my family's plumbing business had to close down this past summer as a result of health-related issues with my uncle. But my dad is working for a company called Fred Hook. The owner, Bill Hook, who is my dad's age, is a great businessman in the area. I know my dad is super excited about the work that we're doing.

I remember when the member from Burlington and I were on a panel last year at the jobs talk kickoff. Your story about your son is absolutely incredible, and you've been an amazing advocate for the trades.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It is a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 288, Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades.

I will say, for the most part, the government seems to be very inconvenienced by this debate, because they assume that we should just be saying, "Okay, it's better than what those guys did," but we are doing our due diligence on a piece of legislation which is so important to the economy of the province of Ontario. We are going to continue to do that work, because that's why we come to work, as the official opposition in the province of Ontario.

I did say in one of the supplementaries that my 22-year-old son is very close to completing his electrical apprenticeship. We have watched how difficult it is for a young person to go through a pre-apprenticeship program, which the member from Simcoe North mentioned, and then not complete that pre-apprenticeship program because they got an apprenticeship. This is something that the legislation is going to have to address—that there are these two-year pre-apprenticeship programs across the province and they are very costly for a lot of families.

A lot of families do want their children to actually go into the trades. They see the value. There has been a shift. It isn't all about directing young people into the university system—because that university system is so very expensive, and people have also recognized where the jobs are. It has been very slow, I will admit, in the education system. I was the president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. We were fighting 15, 17 years ago to try to shift that understanding around the guidance counselors—to give options to young people which actually made a lot of sense for their skills.

In his opening comments, the minister said, "This will give people a hand up." I think that on this side of the House, we actually see the skilled trades as people finding their potential. When people do find their potential, they make our communities stronger, the economy benefits from it and our infrastructure benefits from those skills. So I think we do see skilled trades a little bit differently in this. We want the people of this province to find their potential, and we want the skilled trades pipeline, if you will, to be streamlined and to be made with fewer barriers. So that access piece is still very much alive.

When the minister cited my colleague from Essex, who said that there is no shortage of workers, I corrected him and said there's no shortage of talented workers, there's no shortage of workers who need to find jobs, and there's no shortage of workers who want to actually reach their potential. There are very real barriers, though, to the apprenticeship pipeline. Because we've had one of our children go through this sort of process—as the member from Burlington has mentioned, it's not an easy process, and so we support the direction of reducing barriers for apprenticeships.

1750

We especially would love to see more Indigenous folks and women find their way into various trades, and this bill is sort of lacking in that, Madam Speaker, and so we'll do our due diligence to try to make it a stronger bill, to make it a more inclusive bill. The fact that women and Indigenous folks are not mentioned predominantly in any way, shape or form definitely signals that it was not constructed with an intersectional or a gendered lens. Given where we are right now in Ontario with our economy and with the evidence and the research that we know around the shecession and the she-covey, we will obviously be trying to make this legislation more inclusive of women and Indigenous folks, because there's a lot of talent out there. We need to tap into that talent and we need to support that talent to reach their potential.

I will also say, I don't want to leave out Garfield. He actually sat there, and I sat over there, and over the years he was a huge supporter of experiential learning. Everyone learns differently; it has to be acknowledged. This is what we were fighting for in the education system. Exposing students to experiences—hands-on, in the classroom, in the field, outside of those four walls of a classroom—is so very important for the learning journey, and so we still have some very legitimate concerns with the direction that the government is moving in with favouring this online educational experience. There's a place for online learning, but it should not be the majority of the experience. It's very hard to learn how to wire a house online—it really is—or to dig a ditch, which electricians actually do a fair amount of, or crawling in attics, which they also do, or under houses in crawl spaces.

And so on that piece, I do want to say—you know, I try to find something positive to say; sometimes it's really hard, but I do try—that the PPE component is so very important. I mean, we have advocates on this side of the House who fought hard and long for worker safety, be it working at heights or having the appropriate amount of PPE. This bill pretends to include the cost of that protective personal equipment for skilled trades. This is so needed. I mean, there's a reason why we stop and mourn every single year. We mourn for the dead who have lost their lives in workplaces, but we also fight for the living, and ensuring that they have the appropriate equipment to ensure that their safety is first and foremost in a workplace is a huge part of the apprenticeship journey.

But that apprenticeship piece is not clear. The Auditor General, in her 2016 report, found that the Liberal propon-

ents of tax credits and bonuses for completing apprenticeships were not doing the job. There was something really missing in that equation, and this still remains the problem that Bill 288 will face. If we want to see people have on-the-job experiences, there must be a solution to ensuring that employers are willing to take that chance on an apprentice.

For my son, Aidan, he had a less successful apprenticeship placement and then a really successful one, and the difference was that he reached his potential in the second place, I believe. That company is a mom-and-pop electrical company in Waterloo. They're called Wired. It's a husband and a wife—that's it—and they have built a very small team by taking on apprenticeships.

But another company that I know very well would love to take on an apprentice, because the work is there. I mean, everybody is redoing their bathrooms, redoing their kitchens, fixing their basements, redoing their backyards, because they can't go anywhere. The backlog in that work is very real, but this small company says the administrative burden of taking on an apprentice is just too much for a company that's really just lurching from one job to another job. So I would urge the government to be very mindful of that as well.

To very quickly go back to Garfield, I share the surprise of my colleague from Niagara that the former member from Simcoe North has gone back to plumbing. The only thing that I can think of is that there are some similar factors to plumbing and to being here in this place, and I'll leave that up to your own imagination. He would appreciate that kind of humour because, as I can tell you, we had some good laughs over the years.

This is probably going to carry over to tomorrow morning, but we will be talking about how cabinet will be selecting board members. You have to understand that there's just not a lot of trust out there with this government, watching what has happened at government agencies, watching how decisions have been made throughout this pandemic, who has been driving those decisions, what evidence has been used or not used in the making of those decisions. So we on this side of the House are understandably raising questions about what that process will look like.

I will say that France Daviault from the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum said, “The current job pool is not sustainable without concrete efforts to bring in populations that are currently severely underrepresented: namely women, Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities.” You have before you an opportunity to truly get skilled trades right in the province of Ontario. We are going to push you as a government to get to that place because that is our job. There is an opportunity, because of where we are in this pandemic, to truly maximize and be inclusive in the educational journey of apprentices.

We believe very strongly that that is a calling and that the education piece is key. If you don't have the infrastructure in the schools to give those students that hands-on experience—because Mike Harris, in all the wisdom that he didn't have, ripped those things out of schools. Let's create some more jobs by reinstalling the shops and

the mechanical areas in our schools. Why not put in HVAC systems too and make the air cleaner so that kids can actually go to school? There are opportunities here. There are opportunities here to not only create good jobs and strengthen the economy, but also to build for the future and what our economy actually needs on a go-forward basis. I look forward to working with our colleagues and our critics to inform this piece of legislation.

I also want to give a quick shout-out to Don Gosen, of Gosen Electric, who served on the College of Trades transition board. That was not a very easy thing to do, because you had to rebuild trust. For very good reasons, there was a lack of trust. If you talk to the hairdressers across the province—I would love for the minister to meet with them, because they are a female-dominated trade that is trying to organize so that they can be heard by this government. Those are skilled apprentices who we all want to see very soon, I would say, Madam Speaker.

I'm just looking at the time—I've still got some time. In my last minute here, I will just leave you with a thought around skilled trades.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Say something nice about Bob.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I could say something about Bob Bailey, but I've already talked about one other PC way too much.

But I do say this: We are obviously going to try to make this piece of legislation more inclusive. We would like to see an intersectional gendered lens on this legislation, because women and Indigenous folks in the province of Ontario obviously should have a chance to reach their potential—not a hand-up, reaching their potential. It would be lovely as well if this board that's established actually represents who is working in the skilled trades in the province of Ontario. With that, thank you. I'll continue tomorrow.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you. The member from Waterloo will have an opportunity to finish her remarks the next time the bill is called.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*









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<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Rod (PC)	Ajax	
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
<b>Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)</b>	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	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 Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)</b>	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
<b>Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)</b>	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
<b>Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

**Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna Skelly  
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett  
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto  
Randy Hillier, Jane McKenna  
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa  
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly  
Peter Tabuns  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /  
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts  
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho  
Catherine Fife, Mitzie Hunter  
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa  
David Piccini, Jeremy Roberts  
Amarjot Sandhu, Dave Smith  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité  
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner  
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey  
Guy Bourgouin, Stephen Crawford  
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover  
Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy  
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner  
Daisy Wai  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité  
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian  
Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson  
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe  
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin  
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls  
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard  
Marit Stiles  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de  
la justice**

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Parm Gill, Daryl Kramp  
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison  
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh  
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Kevin Yarde  
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**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité  
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi  
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell  
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff  
Kaleed Rasheed, Donna Skelly  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent  
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Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas  
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett  
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais  
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto  
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth  
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak  
Michael Parsa  
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**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité  
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser  
Will Bouma, John Fraser  
Logan Kanapathi, Vincent Ke  
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller  
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts  
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai  
Jamie West  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de  
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche  
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian  
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee  
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden  
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth  
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche  
Natalia Kusendova  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /  
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations  
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic  
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson  
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth  
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin  
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park  
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh  
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell