

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

---

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

F-67

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

F-67

**Standing Committee on  
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Working for Workers Five  
Act, 2024

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Tuesday 8 October 2024

**Comité permanent  
des finances  
et des affaires économiques**

Loi de 2024 visant à oeuvrer  
pour les travailleurs, cinq

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

Mardi 8 octobre 2024

---

Chair: Ernie Hardeman  
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Président : Ernie Hardeman  
Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

### **Hansard on the Internet**

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

### **Index inquiries**

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

### **Le Journal des débats sur Internet**

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

### **Renseignements sur l'index**

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

---

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



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

# CONTENTS

Tuesday 8 October 2024

Working for Workers Five Act, 2024, Bill 190, Mr. Piccini / Loi de 2024 visant à oeuvrer pour les travailleurs, cinq, projet de loi 190, M. Piccini .....	F-2031
Statement by the minister and responses.....	F-2031
Hon. David Piccini	
International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 95; Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic; OpenCircle.....	F-2040
Mr. David Gardner	
Mr. John Bartolomeo	
Ms. Line Porfon	
Waterloo Region Community Legal Services; OPSEU; Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group .....	F-2050
Ms. Joanna Mullen	
Mr. Noah A. Freedman	
Mr. Steve Mantis	
Ontario Medical Association; Toronto and Area Road Builders Association; EllisDon ...	F-2059
Dr. Dominik Nowak	
Ms. Raly Chakarova	
Mr. Stephen Chaplin	
Newcomer Women's Services Toronto; 4S Consulting Services Inc.; The Oaks Revitalization Association .....	F-2068
Ms. Sara Asalya	
Ms. Sobi Rangunathan	
Mr. Joe Williams	
Mr. Mark Tenaglia	
Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario; Carpenters' Regional Council .....	F-2077
Mr. Carmine Tiano	
Mr. Finn Johnson	
Mr. Adam Gillis	
Ms. Rokhaya Gueye	



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

Tuesday 8 October 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES  
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES**

Mardi 8 octobre 2024

*The committee met at 0900 in room 151.*

**WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE  
ACT, 2024**

**LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER  
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ**

Consideration of the following bill:

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

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** I call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to order. We are meeting today to begin public hearings on Bill 190, an Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters.

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER  
AND RESPONSES**

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** I will now call on the Honourable Minister David Piccini, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, as the sponsor of the bill.

Minister, you will have up to 20 minutes for your opening statement, followed by 40 minutes of questions from the members of the committee.

Minister, welcome this morning. The floor is now yours.

**Hon. David Piccini:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you to members of committee for having me here today. It's an honour to speak to you about Bill 190, the Working for Workers Five Act. As I've always said, it's like Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter, a trilogy: It just keeps getting better.

Premier Ford and I agree that when we put workers first, we can bring the Ontario dream within reach of more people and ensure our province remains the best place to live, work and raise a family.

In this bill, colleagues, we're working to support women at work, open pathways into the skilled trades, remove barriers to employment, protect front-line heroes and workers and improve fairness for workers. By strengthening worker supports and protections, we can spread opportunity and good-paying jobs, and we can tackle the labour shortage and promote economic growth.

I want to start today by talking about steps we're taking to protect front-line heroes and workers. I'm proud to be part of a government that's serving those who serve us. These are the heroes who put themselves on the line every day, who risk their lives running into fires as we run from them. And of course, I'm talking about firefighters. They deserve a government that values their service and their sacrifice.

In the months that I've been Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, I've been listening to firefighters' concerns. I've heard from municipal firefighters, wildland firefighters and fire investigators, including concerns about getting the support they need and deserve if they fall ill from diseases that firefighters are at a higher risk of, of course, because of the dangerous work they do to keep us safe. I'm of course talking about occupational exposures. So as part of this bill, I'm introducing legislative changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to include wildland firefighters and fire investigators, proposing to ensure wildland firefighters and investigators have the same presumptive coverage that municipal firefighters have for occupational cancers, heart injuries and PTSD in Workplace Safety and Insurance Board presumptive coverage. We're completing this with a regulatory change to the firefighters regulation that includes wildland firefighters and fire investigators and presumptive WSIB coverage for occupational cancers and heart injuries, and we're lowering the service time required for firefighters to receive compensation for skin cancer from 15 to 10 years, the lowest rate in the country.

Colleagues, I just want to pause there for a moment to say, Premier Ford and this government continue to lead Canada when it comes to latency periods, reducing them when it comes to occupational exposures.

I want to give out a local shout-out just to someone whom I have great respect for, Ric Ash, who is a volunteer firefighter with the Hamilton township firefighter department. I first met Ric at the fish ladder in Cobourg, by the mill, and know how respected Ric is among the firefighter community. He's been leading a courageous battle against primary-site skin cancer. It's with Ric and his family in mind that I make this change, so, thank you, Ric, for your service.

Mr. Chair, I want to also talk about other types of heroes in our province, tradesmen and women who go to work each and every day to build a stronger Ontario, to build the sort of Ontario we want: better subways, more hospitals,

more schools. This includes, of course, the 1.5 million homes by 2031 that Premier Ford has set as a target, as well as the highways, subways I've mentioned, schools, hospitals. I've had the privilege of working closely with these industries and witnessing first-hand the incredible contribution that skilled tradespeople make to our province. They are indeed the backbone of our economy. They're the carpenters who build our homes, the electricians who keep our lights on, the plumbers who ensure our water runs, the labourers doing formwork and tunnel work, welders, mechanics, technicians etc. They are our unsung heroes who help grow and keep our society growing and prosperous, and they are in high demand.

It's not secret we're facing a labour shortage. We know we have, on one hand, the silver tsunami—those retiring, one in three journeypersons—and a continued need for more tradespeople as we make historic infrastructure commitments in the province as we see interest rates go down and as our economy strengthens with more residential construction. We must attract, train and retain people in the skilled trades, and that's why our Working for Workers package includes measures that would make it easier for people to enter careers in the skilled trades, especially youth and second-career workers.

One of the measures we're doing is a change to the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, or BOSTA, to increase access to apprenticeship training for people who have prior experience but who cannot meet the academic entry requirements to register as an apprentice. Think the same analogy as you hop in an Uber or a cab, and the cab driver is a doctor or an engineer; this is no different than our need to tackle those same men and women. So while we're working with our Fairness Commissioner, working with our regulatory bodies to streamline those pathways, as I've said in other Working for Workers bills, we're also introducing measures to create alternative criteria based on things like work experience for these second-chance workers to register as an apprentice.

This would create a new pathway for people to start a second career in the skilled trades. These are the people with the experience to get the job done who are willing to help build Ontario to the best it can be, and they deserve that opportunity. That's why we're proposing to do this here—again, leaving no one behind. This would create a new pathway into apprenticeship training for many people.

But that's not all. Of course, working with my colleague parliamentary assistant Patrice Barnes, MPP for Ajax, who has been laser-focused on youth and been a strong advocate for youth, our Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program—

*Interruption.*

**Hon. David Piccini:** Sounds like we need Halls here for folks, Chair.

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program provides high school students with valuable opportunities to gain hands-on experience in the trades, and it can set them up for a path to success.

The PA and I were at Judith Nyman for this announcement, and we're proposing to add a new accelerated stream to this popular program. It's called Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training, or FAST for short. It will enable grade 11 and 12 high school students to participate in more apprenticeship learning through co-operative education credits while completing high school. So if you're that young boy or girl that wants to be out in Oakville, for example, doing some of the geothermal work on their new build, this is an incredible program for you.

When I went to school in university, I was able to get an advanced placement course that counted towards my university degree, yet we haven't given that same opportunity to young men and women in the skilled trades. We've denied them that opportunity. But this focused apprenticeship in the skilled trades is doing that: enabling work that they do in apprenticeships and work that they do through the OYA program to gain those hours worked to count towards the level one and, ultimately, their certificate of qualification.

Graduates would receive a new seal on their Ontario secondary school diploma to signal their successful completion of the program and to distinguish them from their dedication to learning in the skilled trades. This is part of the Premier's 2023 commitment to expand options for students entering the skilled trades.

We're making it easier for people in Ontario to find apprenticeship opportunities. We're launching a new online job-matching portal for potential apprentices, journeypersons and employers. Think of it as like a Tinder for apprentices to find an employer—employers who want apprentices, apprentices who want to find employers. It's hard for someone in rural Ontario—if you're sitting at home in Roseneath and you want to match with an employer, a sponsor, for example, Stadtko plumbing in Cobourg, this helps bridge that gap, leveraging the technology that's out there.

We're filling that gap with a new platform that will help streamline the process for potential apprentices to find interested sponsors, register and begin their training. The opportunities are limitless in Ontario, and in fact, just this last year, we saw over 26,000 new registrations for apprentices.

We're also removing barriers for employment. It's not just tradespeople we need in this province—it's an important plan to fuel economic growth, but more changes in this bill, if passed, would help fill thousands of jobs in Ontario going unfilled and close the labour gap.

**0910**

I'm proposing that regulated professions be required to have a policy to accept alternatives where applicants cannot obtain standard registration-related documents for reasons beyond their control, such as war, conflict or natural disasters. I hinted to this earlier when I talked about the doctor, engineer or nurse driving Uber or a cab. We have to take steps. Respectfully, if regulatory bodies alone were going to solve this problem, it would have been done. That's why we, as government, have to act and are working with them to ensure, through our Fairness Com-

missioner Irwin Glasberg, that they have a plan and policy in place. In fact, I intend to take that further, giving the chair the ability to modify those plans. I'm proposing that regulated professions must have a plan to enable multiple registration steps to happen simultaneously to help make the registration process less time-consuming and let newcomers begin work in their fields.

These proposed changes, of course, will be to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, or FARPACTA. Importantly, they will help newcomers transition to work in their field of training faster.

To complement this proposal, I'm also proposing a regulatory change under the Ontario Immigration Act to expand occupations eligible for the in-demand skills stream of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. Furthermore, we'll take additional steps to improve internal review efficiency for the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program by allowing for the delegation of internal review functions to ministry officials, an internal change to make it faster. We're a model in Ontario when it comes to other provinces, and they look to our Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program as an example.

We're going to reduce administrative burden for employers that are trusted or experienced partners of this government. In fact, we've already launched consultations over the summer on our trusted employers model.

These changes will mean better efficiency when welcoming newcomers to our province and would further respond to the needs of businesses, better open Ontario to more people willing and eager to help us build a stronger Ontario, and for those temporary residents who are here, to give a pathway to find a meaningful career, to earn a better job with a bigger paycheque.

We're also proposing changes to ensure fairness for workers to the Employment Standards Act to increase transparency for job seekers in two major ways. First, we're requiring employers to disclose on publicly advertised job postings whether a vacancy currently exists, and we're consulting on that over the summer, and then by proposing a change to the Employment Standards Act that would require employers to respond to interviewees for publicly advertised job postings. People deserve to know whether they get a job or if they'll be called back for another interview. This is elevating that discourse.

We're supporting women at work and making our Working for Workers Five Act support those women through taking additional steps. I just want to pause there to say that recent research in 2022 showed that women are more likely to be subjugated to workplace harassment, including online harassment, than other workers, and people who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, like gender, race or disability, are more likely to be harassed. This includes, of course, online harassment. That's why, as a part of this bill, we're proposing to modernize the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include virtual harassment. We're acting to reflect the realities of modern work in our legislation and better protecting workers no matter where they perform their

work. Addressing virtual harassment is an incredibly important change for our workers, especially women.

I want to talk about some other important changes our ministry is taking to support women in the trades, particularly in construction. To help address this, we're introducing a change in the construction regulations to require constructors to provide menstrual products on many construction sites, which will come into effect January 1.

We're also ensuring that we're building on the changes we've made to ensure personal protective equipment on job sites—properly fitting PPE that fits—for women.

To bring better washrooms to all workers—the same expectations you see on Bay Street we're bringing to Main Street—we're proposing new requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Act for washrooms provided to workers. To ensure that it is a regular practice, constructors and employers will be required to maintain an up-to-date cleaning log for each washroom, to be prescribed by regulation in the future.

To better protect workers, increase fairness and reduce unnecessary burdens on health care providers, we're proposing a change to the Employment Standards Act to prohibit employers from also requiring sick notes for the three unpaid sick days employees are entitled to take under the act.

I just want to pause there, Speaker, again building on the Occupational Health and Safety Act changes. These law changes to bring the same expectations for washrooms from Bay Street to Main Street are the first in Canada—to put that in the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We know surveys show that that is an incredible barrier, especially for women entering the skilled trades, so we're making that change. We're the first in Canada, and I suspect you'll see other provinces follow suit.

We're also putting patients over paperwork by reducing burdens on doctors and ensuring they're spending more time caring for patients.

We're getting tough on bad actors by sending a very clear message that employers who break the rules and exploit or endanger workers will face consequences. That's why we are proposing changes to the Employment Standards Act that would, if passed, double the maximum fine for individuals convicted of violating the act, from \$50,000 to \$100,000. This would make Ontario's maximum fine for individuals the highest in the country and send a message to unscrupulous employers that they have no place here. We're also increasing the penalty that an employment standards officer can issue for certain repeat offenders, which is a change from \$1,000 per penalty to \$5,000—increasing that fivefold. We're also adding a multiplier effect for multiple employees affected.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're working to create a competitive economy. We're the only government that can honestly look Ontarians in the eye and say we haven't raised taxes. We know opposition parties would impose punishing taxes that would make life more unaffordable for everyday Ontarians.

As we create that economic opportunity—a renaissance in the automotive sector; building the batteries in the auto-

motive plants; working with our Unifor partners to ensure workers are retooled; and working to ensure that we're making the automobiles of tomorrow, backed by a Critical Minerals Strategy that's unlocking the potential in the north—we are seeing countless opportunities to connect that opportunity in the north with the south. It was the previous Liberal government that famously called northern Ontario “no man’s land.” We recognize that there are so many men and women in the north that offer remarkable potential.

I recognize, as someone who lives in the south, that I am less successful if my fellow Ontarians are not successful in the north, and that if we can unlock that potential, I will be more successful where I live, in Northumberland county. And so, working with our labour partners in the north, we're ensuring that as we create that incredible economic opportunity—and of course we don't create it; we create the conditions for that—our workers are protected.

We're working with building trades unions to ensure that we have their backs on the job site, both union and non-union, employers and employer associations, men and women in the skilled trades, and it builds on previous Working for Workers. This is the first time in modern history that I can remember in Ontario that multiple times a year we bring forward legislation to protect workers. So as we are laser-focused on growing this economy, we're protecting workers in the process.

It's been an absolute honour to work with our various sector partners, to work with our heroes on the front lines, to remove barriers facing women. I'm a numbers person. As the Premier often says—I'm like him—these stats don't lie. We've seen an increase in registration in women in apprenticeships. This is significant. We've seen an increase in Indigenous representation through registration in apprenticeships for the first time ever. Previous governments, both NDP and Liberals, had the opportunity to invest in union-led training halls. They didn't. We are, working with employers, working with those partners to make investments.

I was just off the phone with one of our partners in the north—they're training 60% of Indigenous youth there. It's been remarkable: a renaissance in training, an opportunity by and for partners in the north.

Under Premier Ford, we're going to keep working, keep treating this as an iterative process as we improve working conditions for men and women across Ontario. I know you'll hear from a number of people today who will speak to the importance of these steps.

For those who have constructive criticism, again, we have multiple Working for Workers bills, and I think we've shown in the past as well a willingness—especially, for example, when it comes to wildland firefighters—to reach across the aisle, to work with the opposition to make reflective changes in the bill process. It's an open-door policy, regardless of where you sit in the Legislature. Under Premier Ford, we'll work with you if you're laser-focused on improving the lot of workers in Ontario.

I want to thank the committee for having me today. I'm happy to answer any questions.

**0920**

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much, Minister, for the presentation.

We now will start the rounds of questioning, and we will start with the official opposition. I will notify, everyone has 20 minutes, 10 minutes for the independents.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Oh, seven and a half. There will be, in each round, seven and half minutes for questions for the official opposition, there will be five minutes for the independent and there will be seven and a half minutes for the government. At the one-minute mark, I will say “one minute” and at the end of that minute I will say “thank you.”

So, with that, we will start the first round of questions with the official opposition. MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, as well. As I wrote the notes—I'm going to ask you questions about them—you started off talking about the wildland firefighters. I think it was good that that was brought in from the previous legislation. I know that with the previous bill there were concerns that we were recognizing the urban firefighters and missing the wildland firefighters, so compliments on pulling that forward. I think working with the opposition really helped with that.

I know that one of the wildland firefighters will be in here later to talk about ways we can tweak that to make it more effective, but the question I have, in terms of moving forward and having good ideas and sharing good ideas is, I know one of the concerns they have is about respirators, that they don't have the same quality of respirators. I don't know if anything has changed since the last time I spoke with them, but last year, they were basically wearing handkerchiefs over their mouths. Instead of focusing on WSIB after it has affected them, has there been any discussion about including better respirators as part of their PPE, moving forward?

**Hon. David Piccini:** Thank you, MPP West. I will just start and directly answer that question, but start by just saying, I appreciate you flagging working together. And it's not just on the wildland piece. We know from work with MPP Holland, who worked collaboratively with counterparts in the north and then, more recently, in previous Working for Workers bills, working with colleagues like MPP Burch and others to ensure esophageal cancer was reflected—I think it's just good partnership to put those who serve us first.

When it comes to equipment to fight fires, and I'll just take a step back because that's a great example that you raise, but there's more. In Cobourg, for example, I was recently there—ensuring that the diesel doesn't sit in the bay and having the hose that connects to the truck, and as it pulls out it pops off and the firefighters respond to a call.

So we've been working with WSIB to ensure, looking at ways to support that—of course, my colleague MPP Kerzner has announced grants to support firefighters in



making those sorts of investments in small forces. So, in short, the answer to your question is yes. We are working on that actively right now and looking forward to continuing to hear from those first responders on their experiences to just ensure that they're properly supported.

I'm glad you mentioned prevention because it's not just about the latency periods; it's about going upfront on prevention and making sure not only are we funding research—of course, WSIB does a great job there—but that we're investing in the tools and equipment.

**MPP Jamie West:** I appreciate that. I think we're on the same page that most people who are on WSIB would rather not have the injury at all.

In terms of the tradespeople, one of the things I've been curious about with the new FAST program or the apprentice program—and I know that we're moving towards having the trades graduation diploma. Will that allow students who decide it's not for them—I was an electrician at one point; it wasn't for me. Just one day, I was at work—my journeyman, he loved his job; I was just coming to work and so I moved on.

Will that diploma allow students to apply to colleges and universities or will they be pigeonholed towards just a trades career? Not “just” a trades career, but you know what I mean. I want them to have the opportunity to enter any field.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I appreciate the question. I wouldn't call it “just” a trades career. We're tackling the stigma to show equality of opportunity for youth in terms of the wide variety of careers that are afforded to them. But this is an additional stamp on their diploma. That keeps doors open, but what I'm saying is, I think that the added hours toward your level 1, you're also getting exposure on the job. I think that also may identify that earlier, that says to a young boy or girl in grade 11 or 12, “Maybe those hours that I've been working show me that I'm more interested in human resources, or I might like to run a company.” We're obviously hopeful and trying to create pathways for those in the trades to plan for succession planning to take over a company, but also recognize that it may not be for everyone.

I think with the significant job shortages, and the stigmas associated that are still there, we have to take every step to challenge and break down those stigmas. I know my colleague MPP Hamid spoke at estimates about that and about the importance of tackling the stigmas, as did MPP Barnes and a number of others. I don't think it's an either/or; it's an and. And there are multiple opportunities for rewarding careers at university, college or at union trade halls.

**MPP Jamie West:** My concern with it, moving forward, if the legislation changes, is that—I spent a lot of time in my career in blue-collar fields, in construction and mining. There comes a point where people want to move forward—not everybody, but some people want to be the lead hand, they want to become a foreman, they want to become a project manager. I want to make sure we're not capping those opportunities with a degree.

Something I had noted during the debate is that we're having a lot fewer proactive inspections. In 2018-19, there were 2,345 proactive inspections, and last year, 2022-23, there were 788. Do agree that we need more inspectors, more enforcement out there?

**Hon. David Piccini:** I do think we need more inspectors, which is why we're hiring more. Over the summer, we've brought on over 50 new inspectors, and continuing to work to bring on more inspectors.

I think we have to acknowledge that this government has taken meaningful steps on the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Employment Standards Act that also create new pieces of legislation, new regulations for those inspectors to enforce.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Hon. David Piccini:** We're working on that aggressively and supporting our inspectors to make sure they have the tools they need to enforce.

**MPP Jamie West:** The concern I'm having is that in meetings I've had, say, with the carpenters' union and different trades, they have talked about the number of workplace helpers, people who think they are apprentices but they're not apprentices, or aren't getting the opportunities to sign off on things. If we don't have people in the workplace who are inspecting to ensure people are registered as apprentices and having the opportunity to move forward, you end up with a system where people interested—you talked about the stigma—in getting into the trades exit because they're so frustrated with their workplace experience. That's where they need the government's role to help with that enforcement, so that they stay in there.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I would just add recent numbers on OHS, for example; proactive visits have increased this year over last. So brand new data from October 2023 to August 31, 2024: We had 26,299 proactive—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time. Maybe we can put the rest of the answer in the next question.

We'll go to the independent. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Good morning, everyone. It's great to be back. I'm happy to see everyone here today. Thank you for the presentation.

My first question: I think I'm going to try to stay around occupational health and safety. I am still hearing from many job sites, especially female workers, about lack of inspection in the washrooms. Even if this is part of the bill, how do we hold those job site supervisors, the unions to account? Because there is still that major concern for women. Even sanitary napkins are also an issue. I know in this bill it's mentioned, but I'm just trying to find out: Are there stiffer regulations, stiffer penalties? What's the oversight you have on that?

**Hon. David Piccini:** Thank you, MPP Hazell, for the question. First, I think it's important to note that the measures included in this bill are still being discussed, so have not passed and received royal assent to become law in Ontario. But I think how you enforce that is through Occupational Health and Safety Act proactive visits.

As I was saying to MPP West, those proactive field visits are up: 26,299, to be precise, over 26,106. We've also seen, under the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, a tripling of proactive field visits, from 1,334 to 3,031, through December 2022 to September 2023 and then October 2023 to August 2024. We've also quadrupled the number of orders issued as well.

**0930**

You asked how it's enforced; ultimately, it's an order. Hopefully, you don't have to get there. Hopefully, through education and awareness—and I think, respectfully, that's where we all can play a role as we're going out in our communities, whether as a part of government or not. I think we can all go and say, "Did you know that at the Ontario Legislature, we've passed recent legislation that brings the same expectations, from Bay Street to Main Street, for washrooms?", and we all have an important role to play.

In short, through proactive field visits, through enforcement—worst case, MPP Hazell, you have to issue a stop-work order. Obviously, we don't want to get there. We don't want to get there because we want to keep shovels in the ground. We want to keep construction ongoing, and we want to, in fact, speed that up.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Yes, and the reason why I wanted to mention that, to make sure that we have a discussion on that, is because you just mentioned that there is an increase in women who are applying to get into trades. I've been following that very closely, because I love to support women and I want to make sure that they get their fair share of working in the trades industry.

I want to spin on a different topic. I'm noticing that a lot of construction companies are approaching high schools and encouraging the kids on another pathway to education in trades. My worry is—and, of course, this is what I'm hearing, again—the students are going to go into trades, they're going to get their licence, and they are going to get ready for work, but right now, as it is, there are students out there that went through the system, went through the training, and still can't find jobs. So I'm just wondering, what are you hearing from those sectors that actually receive funding from the government to develop students in the skilled trades industry? Are you hearing any feedback on lack of opportunity for the new licensing?

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I would say that there's a strong recognition and support, in particular among building trades unions, for the investments the government has made to support—I was recently in Scarborough with A Woman's Work, with Natasha Ferguson, who is doing remarkable work helping significantly vulnerable populations get the skill sets to enter the workforce. Now, we're matching; that employer matching piece is important. She told me that already six have been matched in the latest cohort, which is important.

Obviously, we're not immune to the broader global challenges, and that's why we have to work—and respectfully, I would say we normalized, in the past, 10-plus years to get shovels in the ground. We cannot accept that as the

new norm. We have to get shovels in the ground faster. I joined Premier Ford in calling on those reductions in interest rates so that we could see shovels getting in the ground and projects more economically viable—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

We're going to go to the government. MPP Barnes.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you, Minister, for your presentation. It's been very enlightening and encouraging to see the amount of work that our government has been doing around Working for Workers. You were talking about this being your fifth bill, so can you really lean into some of the things that have really been beefed up and implemented, on top of what you've done before? What are some of the key points in this bill that you're particularly proud of?

**Hon. David Piccini:** I'll start with just picking up what MPP Hazell was asking about women. I know both of you are passionate about that, and I would say that it starts with common-sense changes. Unfortunately, common sense isn't all that common, and I think that when you have the opportunity—for example, when I've been out to meet with my colleagues around Canada and we hear from a technician working on power lines that they're wearing PPE and gloves that are two sizes doubly as big as their hand, or women telling me that they have to work twice as hard just to be respected on the job site, not to mention coveralls that go down to your knees, which are of course a tripping hazard, etc. So by ensuring properly fitting PPE in the construction reg, by making sure we're bringing that same expectation on Bay Street to Main Street, by small changes like ensuring we have women's washrooms—I think you see all sorts of platitude stuff at the federal level, but we're making common-sense, practical changes.

Statistically, those numbers don't lie. We've seen a doubling of women's registration in apprenticeships since we formed government in 2018. We've seen thousands more women join the ranks of the workforce.

And why is that important? I remember, when I ran as a candidate, we were fighting Liberal cuts and closures to schools. I joined Bernadette Vanderhorst in Norwood. She was a councillor at the time. Liberals wanted to close that high school. Today, that high school—you've seen a threefold increase because we have tackled the barriers.

Liberals normalized in Ontario a 10-year construction timeline. If you want studies, that's your party. If you want action and you want to see this sort of meaningful change, I think Premier Ford has shown that we have a way. Reducing those barriers, statistically we've seen an increase in women into apprenticeships.

We're getting shovels and actually boring tunneling on a record amount of kilometres for subway. And those workers—for example, LIUNA 183 workers—are taking home six-figure salaries. But not only that, I'm proud of the fact that we've brought on second chance for Oaks Revitalization. You'll hear today from Mark Tenaglia and Joe Williams, and I hope people will ask them about the support Premier Ford's government has given them to support people in second chances like the gentleman from

Lindsay penitentiary who is now a proud member of 183, or Lindsey, who I mentioned. When I was in Oakville at the Mattamy Homes health and safety day, she came up to me. If I could look someone in the eye and say the facial expression shows me their purpose and where they're going to end up in life, Lindsey was a prime example of someone I know is going to succeed. She's had challenges in the past. Thanks to Oaks and that program that we've supported, she now is a health and safety ambassador on her Mattamy Homes.

At its core, I think we all want that in Ontario. But you have to have the policies, which is why I'm connecting what we're doing to what Premier Ford is doing: a low-tax environment; actually let's get to yes. The status quo of a province that was mired in study, mired in a burdensome taxation regime that was crippling growth—we're tackling that. And then we're backing up workers on the back end to make sure we have more women, more men, more under-represented groups in the skilled trades.

So I'm really proud of these common-sense changes we've made that are first of their kind in Canada, and we're seeing other provinces follow Premier Ford's lead.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** MPP Anand.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Chair, through you: Minister, welcome. When I was at AMO and met many of the municipalities, one of the challenges they talked about was that they have jobs but they don't have people. On the contrast, if you come to Malton, we have a lot of people—11% of the people who come out of the GTA come to Malton, every year a new 11% of residents. Something which we say: We have a lot of people looking for jobs.

As you know, for jobs, we need people, and for people, they need jobs. The trouble is a skill mismatch. For example, if somebody has an education in plumbing but there is more requirement for a welder, there's a mismatch. So how can we fit that? There are jobs that require a particular skill, but the right candidate with said skill does not exist. So what action are you taking to fix this skills mismatch? Something which we talked about: There is a lot of requirement for roofers, for an example, but the people do not have that skill. So what exactly are we doing in this case?

**Hon. David Piccini:** Thank you, MPP Anand. I think “jobs without people, people without jobs” is a good analogy. That is the challenge we're facing.

At 4 o'clock today, you're going to hear from Sara Asalya from the Newcomer Women's Services Toronto—I believe that's in MPP Wong-Tam's riding—and she's been an important partner of this government in terms of steps we've taken. She's very supportive of the steps we've taken on parallel processing, on registration document flexibility. She deals with a particularly vulnerable clientele who are coming from areas of the world where you don't have that if you're leaving a war-torn area.

0940

Certainly, you could take two steps. The federal government, they control the levers on immigration—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Hon. David Piccini:**—but when somebody is here, we want to make sure we leverage their full potential. Working with Sara and the team, working with partners like YMCA GTA, Pace Law and others, we're ensuring document flexibility, which is in legislation, parallel processing, a change we've made in legislation here.

The trusted employer model that we're consulting on right now, expanding occupations eligible in the in-demand skills stream: These are some of the things we're doing to ensure that we're tackling those underemployed. We want to be a productive economy. We're seeing already a decline in productivity, and so we have to take steps to tackle that. That is a big threat that this country faces. We have to look to south of the border. We can't allow for that divide to increase. We have to tackle—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes that answer.

We'll now go to the official opposition. MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** I was going to let you finish off your OHS data, but I know MPP Hazell allowed you to get through that.

Related to one of the things that MPP Hazell said, though: I am hearing, as well, people having a difficult time finding work. I was recently at a graduation for Northern Welding Academy in Nickel Belt, and one of the things they said there is they have a really great welding program. They have primarily newcomers going through there to get involved with welding, but the issue they're facing is the employers want experience, and these are new grads who don't have the experience. Is that something that your ministry is looking at so these people don't get frustrated and choose another career?

**Hon. David Piccini:** Yes, it is. That's why we made steps in grades 11 and 12 to allow younger men and women to gain that experience and for it to count towards their level 1. That's why in this bill we've taken steps to look at those with experience so that regardless of your age we can better recognize life experience that you've gained in the trades.

I do think that we're not immune to some of the global challenges that we're seeing. And I recognize that, across Canada, people are having, without question, a tough time. There's a national discussion about that and about taking steps to ensure we're supporting and reflective of those concerns—that's why I connected it to steps we've taken to reduce the tax burden—but also, in doing so, creating those conditions so that we can unlock those projects that are maybe half a basis point away from having competitive enough financing to actually get the shovel in the ground.

**MPP Jamie West:** Yes, but I'm not sure if you're answering the question. What I'm saying is people who are—we've a difficult time in the past—you criticized the Liberals, and I think that makes sense—of getting people into the trades, having an attractive job for them. What I'm seeing is people coming into these fields and going, say, to a college or to a trade school, not a unionized shop, but graduating and having a hard time when they're knocking on doors. The employers want three to five years' experience, and they don't have the experience. I think we

need the pathways so that these apprentices—or people can become apprentices for the skills they have acquired, or they're going to leave that field and work in restaurants or work somewhere else. It's the same as any time you're applying for a job: If no one's answering when you're knocking on the doors, you switch paths.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I think that's why we are looking at that apprenticeship job-matching portal, and making sure people sign a registered training agreement, because, MPP West, that is the way we bring people along to get that skills training. If you're working or languishing—you talked about sweeping a broom etc.—we have to empower both employers and workers alike to know the value of a registered training agreement to work your way through both on-the-job experience and important in-class training. I was just at UA, who you will hear from today as well, and saw the important work that pipefitters, steam fitters are doing—

**MPP Jamie West:** I'm just going to cut you off—

**Hon. David Piccini:** —for that training so that people are job-ready, as you said.

**MPP Jamie West:** I want to ask about the washrooms, because you've said several times and in debate as well, to bring the quality washrooms, the same as Bay Street as to Main Street. But frankly, we're talking about porta-potties. I worked in construction for a long time; it's nice to have a clean porta-potty, but I'd much rather have a regular washroom.

Is future legislation—because I think that if I was the minister, I would want future legislation to be washroom trailers that are heated, that have flush toilets whenever possible. There are situations where you can't have it, but there a lot of projects downtown, for example—multi-year projects building skyscrapers—where you could have a heated washroom, and I think that would attract more women to the trades and more people to the trades.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I think it's always good to be in a position where we're looking forward to next steps, and I appreciate that we're only in a position to do that because of transformative moves Premier Ford and this government have taken to empower workers with those same expectations. I think it really bears repeating: We're the first in Canada to put these standards in our Occupational Health and Safety Act.

We are already seeing with many large projects, as you rightly allude to, already having that, with running water and heating for washrooms. We're working in the north, where it's more remote, on camp standards and things like that to take progressive steps.

In short, yes, I'm always open to constructive suggestions to make workers' realities better on their job site.

**MPP Jamie West:** But in those cases, it's the employer choosing to do it. There is no legislation requiring them to do it unless there's a reason they cannot. What I'm saying is that if we want to attract people to the trades—I think that if anyone here, as MPPs, found out that we'd have porta-potties outside, we may not be as excited to be MPPs. It's just the reality of it. It's basically a bucket with a hole in the top of it. There's nothing fancy or glamorous

about it. Imagining or pretending in talking statements that a porta-potty is going to attract people to the field—no matter how clean it is, it's probably not going to the same way that a washroom will.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I would just say, anybody who has been on most job sites around Ontario knows that's just not the reality on many. We've seen steps—and by backing it up in legislation and having the schedules, we're talking about more than that. We're talking about ensuring that we have these standards on job sites—again, the first in Canada to do so.

So I think, working with employers, working with unions, we're being responsive to the concerns that they flagged, working together to set these standards, and it's making these job sites more appealing.

**MPP Jamie West:** I'm going to move on to—you talked about the increased penalties for offenders. I think the penalty for individuals is rising from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**MPP Jamie West:** However, the highest fine in 2022 was \$31,250, which is almost \$20,000 less than the max.

My thought on this is that maybe this is a paper tiger, that if we're not using the max fines, having this as a talking point—when the Conservative government is out talking to people about standing up for workers, they say, "We've raised the max fine," but they leave out the part that we've never really charged anyone the max fine. And so you have the bill called Working for Workers, but you're not actually using that max fine.

Can you give me examples of when the max fine has been used? What are the examples where we really held people to account and used the max fine—that they became a repeat offender, and that became the driver where we're going to double to fine to \$100,000 to really, really tell someone we're serious?

**Hon. David Piccini:** Just a quick point of clarification that, when we get prosecution and ultimate fine amounts, there's an important role of the judiciary—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

We will now go on to the independents. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I've got two questions that I want to get out for my minutes. I'm referring to schedule 4 under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It says, "The definitions of 'workplace harassment' and 'workplace sexual harassment' are updated to include certain virtual activities."

One, can you let me know what that is, and two, as a woman, as an elected official, am I included in that? If not, are you working towards protecting women like me at Queen's Park? To be direct.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I'm glad we talked about us here at Queen's Park, because I think we want to have a constructive environment where we can disagree on policy but it doesn't have to get personal. We all want the same better objective. You and I may differ on how we get there, but I fundamentally believe we're here for the same reasons.

I would say, genuinely, my concern is first and foremost fixated on everyday Ontarians and making sure that they're protected on the job site. And I think a recognition through the pandemic that we're seeing—just look at Zoom. I didn't even know what it was before the pandemic, and now Zoom and Teams meetings are quite frequent. You have the chat functions on the side, and I think, as well, the chat functions on Zoom—you see sometimes those are disabled etc. So recognizing virtual harassment and recognizing that is an important first step as we work with both employers and workers alike to make sure that that's taken into account—we're seeing an increased presence of working virtually, so that has to be now taken into account on virtual harassment.

0950

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Thank you for that explanation.

Are you working on anything legislative-wise to protect women in this legislation?

**Hon. David Piccini:** Yes, it would include virtual sexual harassment under OHSA, as you pointed out. Recognizing that women and other groups are more prone to this, we're taking these steps to include this. As I mentioned to your colleagues earlier, coupled with that, it requires enforcement. So it's both education; it's promotion. We don't ever want to see that. But also, when there are cases, having the enforcement in place—so we're bringing on new enforcement officers, we're educating them on the changes that we've made to the act so that they can enforce it to protect women on the job site.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Okay. I want to quickly move on to my second question.

Can you give me the time?

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Two point one.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Awesome.

In your presentation you mentioned working with regulators to speed up licensing requirements. We now have 2.5 million Ontarians without a doctor. Can you help me to understand what that working process looks like, and is there a way to speed up the process so our situation in Ontario, health-wise, does not continue to be depleted? You mentioned doctors, nurses, PSWs. Can you elaborate on that, please?

**Hon. David Piccini:** Absolutely. I'm happy to. First of all, I would ask a question back on whether that number includes temporary residents or not because we've seen a significant increase in Ontario. I think there's so much you have to touch on:

We have three new medical schools to get the talent pipeline.

Nursing, the ability to graduate through colleges: again, another pathway important for communities like mine, underserved in rural Ontario. Through, for example, Loyalist College—now an ability for degree-granting.

Registration document flexibility so that you have that flexibility when regulated professions have a policy specifying timelines; accepting alternatives where standard registration-related documents can't be obtained: We're requiring that. Those are tangible steps.

Policies would have to be submitted for the first time to the Fairness Commissioner for review and potential regulation approval.

Parallel processing: again, making sure their registration steps are happening concurrently—it's crazy that we have to do it, but we do, because various regulatory bodies do not have that in place today—again giving the Fairness Commissioner the ability to potentially tweak that in regulation if we're not satisfied with their plan.

The trusted employer model, as well, I think is an important piece in this legislation.

But I think all of these are part of the steps we're taking, working with regulatory bodies to reduce the timeline so that we can have people who are trained to work in the medical field—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

We'll now go to MPP Smith.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Thank you, Chair; I appreciate that.

Minister, we're in neighbouring ridings, so I'm sure you've had conversations with some of the same people that I have. I have two construction companies that are female-owned and led. Tania-Joy Bartlett has one company, and Ashley Flynn has the other. Tania has talked extensively to me about some of the challenges that there are for women in skilled trades. She's got an interesting company because she actively promotes cross-certification for all of her employees, so most of them actually have Red Seals in multiple trades.

One of the things she consistently has brought up with me, and why she owns her own company, is that when she first started in the construction industry, travelling to the job site was a real challenge because she was the only woman. When you are carpooling with guys, there was a lot of conversations that perhaps shouldn't have been had in front of women. She said that she felt very, very uncomfortable with it. It was one of those cases where that was the impetus for her to get behind creating her own construction company so that it was something that was much more inclusive and wasn't putting women in a position where they wanted to leave the trade because they felt harassed just in general conversation.

She also said that when they were travelling to other communities to work, the guys would typically not just carpool, but they would share a hotel room. It became an inequality in terms of dollars because if there were four of them sharing a hotel room, all four of them got the per diem for the hotel room, but they would only use one per diem effectively to rent the room. As the only female, she didn't have that extra thing.

So, I'm hoping you could explain some specific actions that the ministry has done then that you think are going to make some of the biggest impacts in promoting gender equality in the workplace.

**Hon. David Piccini:** Thanks, MPP Smith. We've touched on a number of the steps, common-sense changes that we've made. I think you talked on a few things that we're actively working on into the future when it comes to supporting apprentices, recognizing that a lot of these

significant projects we're seeing through both the conditions that this government has created but also mega-projects, infrastructure projects that we're building like the Gordie Howe bridge—again, we had workers from Toronto travelling for that.

You and I, in our community—I've got concrete pump operators that drive in at 4 a.m. every day to get into Scarborough. So, there is a recognition of the significant travel.

But we've already taken important steps. I'll give you one example. Forgive me; I know we're all in government here, but leave it to government to run a program on tool loans that costs more to administer than the actual loans we give out. Of course, I was referring to the previous Liberal government's loan program. We said if we're going to have a loss and we want to get more young men and women into the trades, we're going to convert that to a grant program and, of course, get money in the hands of those who need it most.

I'll give you an example of a young carpenter, who is a woman, who has benefited from that with Local 27, whom the Premier and I met when recently up there. She's also benefited from additional supports with child care. She's benefited from supports through our Skills Development Fund and today took her daughter to her job site and saw that sense of pride in her daughter's eyes over what her mother has accomplished. I again saw her at the Labour Day parade here in Toronto.

So we're taking these significant steps. But when it comes to travel and the basic living allowance, per diems etc. there's obviously more we can do. We're creating both awareness among those going through the system on those supports that are available through the government of Ontario but always recognizing that we can expand and build on that.

One of the important pieces is ensuring workers are safe. So PPE is an important piece to make sure they're safe on the job site. Again, we're mandating that in regulation and legislation, which is an important step. We're elevating the expectations you see in washrooms on Bay Street to Main Street. These are some of the common changes.

Statistically it's showing that our changes and steps we've taken are working, because we're seeing more young women register into apprenticeships. But look, we know there's more to do, which is why we are taking steps on harassment, working with Minister Williams, who has been a remarkable champion, particularly for women and realities—of their workplace realities. We've had recent round tables with Minister Williams on additional steps to support women on the job site.

I think it's, again, an iterative process, but it's more than just saying that; we've demonstrated with action through successive Working for Workers bills that we're always taking a portion of those bills dedicated to under-represented groups, dedicated to tackling some of the systemic barriers. Statistically, our changes—it's showing that it is working in registration and apprenticeships.

I think, by that constant willingness, through multiple Working for Workers, we're going to create better working conditions.

**1000**

Look, I think if there was one silver bullet we would all take it, which is why we're open to this discourse and this dialogue to tackle those various systemic challenges. We've taken a very open approach to that, and we are going to continue doing it.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

Mr. Hamid.

**MPP Zee Hamid:** I don't know if a minute is enough, but I'll try.

Thank you, Minister, for all your answers but also for your leadership on this very, very important file. There are a lot of aspects to it. You had mentioned earlier the stigma still attached to skilled trades and I have to acknowledge that you've done a great deal of work to remove the stigma.

You mentioned my son, as well. He's applied to a program called construction engineering technician, so the Hamid family is doing its part.

That leads me to my question. I was reading an article the other day—I can't remember where, but it was talking about how 80,000 construction workers in Ontario are nearing retirement. You've mentioned yourself the grey tsunami that's coming, where a generation of construction workers are retiring, skilled trades workers are retiring, and we don't have enough young people to replace them. That's going to have a devastating impact on our infrastructure projects, on our roads and highways and transit and homes and hospitals and everything else.

You've mentioned a lot of things that the government is doing to encourage more young people to come in and to help them, but I was wondering if you could put it all together and help us understand what the government is doing to replace all the retiring construction workers and skilled trades workers.

**Hon. David Piccini:** We won't have enough time to touch on everything, but we've talked about the—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That was a question well asked, but at that point, that concludes the time for the presentation.

Minister, we want to thank you for making the presentation this morning and not only answering it so adequately but also making us enjoy the comments. Thank you very much.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HEAT  
AND FROST INSULATORS AND ALLIED  
WORKERS LOCAL 95

WORKERS' HEALTH AND SAFETY  
LEGAL CLINIC  
OPENCIRCLE

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** We now will go into the panels. The first one—we will ask them to come forward—is the International Association of Heat and

Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 95. The second one is OpenCircle and the third is Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic.

As we're waiting for the approach to the table, the instructions: First of all, as we start the process, please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments should go through the Chair.

As a reminder, each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation. After we have heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from the members of the committee. This time for questions will be divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent member.

We've called the panel forward. As you have heard, you will have seven minutes for your presentation. At six minutes, I will say, "Thank you very much," and we'll go on to the next. We then will start with the rounds of questions.

With that, thank you very much for being here. The first presenter will be the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 95.

Just before we start, if there's anyone going to speak who is not at the table, we'll ask everyone to make sure that they introduce themselves before they start speaking, for Hansard.

With that, we will now turn the floor over to David Gardner.

**Mr. David Gardner:** Good morning, everyone, and members of the committee. My name is David Gardner. I'm the business manager of the Ontario Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 95. We represent more than 2,500 skilled trades workers across Ontario, with a TDA status to train our apprentices in-house. Our trade specializes in the installation, maintenance and repair of mechanical insulation systems across various sectors of industry, particularly commercial, industrial and institutional. We don't do the stuff in the walls, just to clarify. We also specialize in firestopping and asbestos abatement.

I stand before you today in support of the Working for Workers Five bill, one that we consider to be a transformative piece of legislation that aligns with the needs and objectives of both our trade and the broader skilled trades industry.

I'd like to touch on the health and safety standards. One of the most relevant sections of this bill to our trade is the incorporation of asbestos-related data, and to the ministry's forthcoming occupational exposure registry to prevent future asbestos-related illnesses. As specialized experts in asbestos abatement, we recognize the importance of the building of a database to ensure asbestos exposure is dealt with in the safest way possible for everyone involved. Health and safety are paramount in our industry, and the bill's provision to incorporate asbestos-related data into the occupational exposure registries,

along with facilitating virtual health and safety meetings, represents a forward-thinking approach to worker safety.

**Open pathways into the skilled trades:** This bill opens critical pathways for the next generation of skilled trade workers. The Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training, FAST, initiative encourages youth in grades 11 and 12 to earn co-operative education credits, fostering interest and awareness of various careers in the skilled trades. Additionally, the new online job-matching portal is an invaluable tool, connecting aspiring tradespeople with potential employers, increasing opportunities for apprentices to build careers in our industry.

**Removing barriers to employment:** This will also address a significant challenge we face, barriers to employment, by reducing red tape and streamlining the registration process for internationally trained workers. We can facilitate a smoother integration of skilled workers into our workplace. Additionally, accommodating applicants who cannot obtain standard documents due to uncontrollable circumstances like war and natural disaster reflects Ontario's commitment to fairness, inclusivity and diversity.

**Increasing retention and addressing labour shortages:** As we know, Ontario has been dealing with significant labour shortages, and this bill is a vital step in addressing that issue. By making it easier for people to enter the industry and ensuring they receive wraparound supports like mentorship, we can improve retention rates and maintain a robust workforce.

Local 95 recognizes the significance of a comprehensive mentorship program and the value it brings. We believe in it so much that we are implementing our own internal mentorship program next year.

**Supporting women in the trades:** Another credible item of this bill is the commitment to support women in the trades. By requiring menstrual products on our job sites and ensuring clean, sanitary washrooms, we are addressing direct concerns for tradeswomen on job sites. They will help foster a more inclusive workplace and encourage more women to pursue a career in the trades. Additionally, modernizing a definition of "harassment" that includes virtual harassment ensures that all workers feel safe and respected in all forms of communication.

In conclusion, the Working for Workers Five Act is not just beneficial to our trade but also essential for the future of the skilled trades industry. It enhances health and safety standards in Ontario, breaks down stigmas, removes barriers to entry, addresses our labour shortages and promotes inclusivity for women in the trades.

On behalf of Local 95 and the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers and thousands of skilled tradespeople we represent, we are pleased to see real change being made to support challenges we face in our industry.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

Our number two presenter is OpenCircle. I believe it's virtual, and I'm not sure they're on yet. So with the

committee's indulgence, we will go to number three, and hopefully number two will arrive in time for the end.

We'll now go to the Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic.

**Mr. John Bartolomeo:** Thank you. Good morning. My name is John Bartolomeo. I am a lawyer/co-director at the Worker's Health and Safety Legal Clinic. The clinic is a speciality community legal aid clinic, funded by Legal Aid Ontario, that assists non-unionized, low-income workers across the province of Ontario who have been reprised against for raising health and safety issues. As well, we assist workers with their compensation claims and return-to-work issues. My comments are specifically with respects to schedules 4 and 6.

With respect to schedule 4, the amendments proposed to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, I can say on behalf of the clinic that we support the proposed amendments and are happy to see them, especially as someone who represents workers who face issues on the virtual side. These changes are of benefit to injured workers and assist with the protection of their rights under the act, and I'm happy to see that.

That said, there's always room for more. Part of my submissions address, if not in this act but potentially the next Working for Workers, an examination of the extent of protections for workplace harassment. I've provided some submissions which still stand roughly as good law in terms of where there is what I would say is a gap between the treatment and the protections for workplace violence versus that of workplace harassment. Something I would love to see is the application of the general duty clause in the Occupational Health and Safety Act applying just as much to workplace harassment. I acknowledge this in my submissions: Workplace harassment is a wide-ranging notion, and I think there's value in studying how we can ameliorate concerns about harassment and expand protections for workers.

#### 1010

The other issue in schedule 4 I wanted to touch on was electronic posting. Again, this is another positive, but I liken it to a relay race where the employer is obliged to provide information. Think of it like a relay race: The baton is being put out there, but the amendments as proposed don't necessarily guarantee that the next runner is going to take that baton. I would recommend and suggest, if not in this act, the next one, to see some guarantee that it's taken up by the worker. Too often a worker wants to exercise a right or refer to a policy, but if they've been terminated and they lose access to the company intranet or their company emails, that information that would make my life easier disappears from their care and control. So while we support and encourage the posting of information, the transmission of information, it's still important to know that the worker has it in their care and control and can rely on it and not necessarily have to ask someone they may or may not want to talk to about it to see what is available to them.

Aside from those suggestions, again, I'm very supportive of the changes found in schedule 4.

I do want to also use my time to touch on schedule 6, the amendments as proposed to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Again, I'm very supportive of any changes that improve access to benefits or ease the appeals process or claims process for workers. But as always, there's room for more. I think I reference it in my submissions; there's a call to end deeming under the act. That's one very laudable goal, but there are other issues that can also be addressed.

I referenced in my submissions, back in 2012, the Funding Fairness review by Professor Harry Arthurs. One of the concerns was the indexation for partially disabled workers. At the time, Professor Arthurs said the unfunded liability is just too high; we can't handle it now. Well, the unfunded liability has gone, and with respect, I think this is a good time to address that indexation issue.

As well, there was an operational review, I believe in 2020, commonly known as the Speer-Dykeman report—at least among people like myself—and one of the recommendations there was coverage for developmental support workers and personal support workers. In fact, the ministry held a consultation on that topic in 2021. Unfortunately, we're still waiting for legislation to include these workers under the workers' compensation scheme. There's another opportunity to increase and expand coverage for workers across the province.

Another example arising from that report would be increased audits of workplaces. The ability to audit workplaces, the ability to use either the WSIB's employees or, indeed, funding the Ministry of Labour's inspectorate to conduct regular and consistent audits of all employers across the province of Ontario I think is a noble and appropriate goal. My colleague always likes to say, "If we can get every restaurant in the city of Toronto checked out, why can't we make it a goal to check out every employer in this province?" Again, that is a goal I think that we should be working towards, to educate, inform and protect both employers and workers in the province.

To summarize, I'm happy to see the amendments as proposed. But if you're looking for what the next task is, please read my submissions and consider them either now or in the future. Thank you for the opportunity.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much for the presentation.

I do believe that OpenCircle is with us virtually, so the floor is yours.

**Ms. Line Porfon:** Thank you very much. Apologies for the technology if I was a few minutes late.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members. My name is Line Porfon. I'm the CEO of OpenCircle, and I'm here speaking on behalf of the members we represent in Ontario. By way of background, OpenCircle is a Canadian not-for-profit association that supports businesses in the construction industry across Canada, with a membership in Ontario of more than 100 companies. I first appeared before this committee in April 2023 to speak to Bill 79, the first Working for Workers Act, and I'm honoured to be here today to speak to Bill 190 and share the perspective of OpenCircle's Ontario members.



With a growing number of workers reaching retirement age and with fewer young people entering the skilled trades, Ontario faces a significant labour shortage in this sector. This situation presents a considerable challenge to the province's economic growth and infrastructure development. The current shortfall in talent will lead to project delays, increased cost for businesses and greater reliance on overtime for existing workers. Additionally, the lack of skilled tradespeople could slow the progress of crucial infrastructure projects, thus further affecting housing affordability and economic expansion.

The labour shortage underscores the need for initiatives such as Ontario's Working for Workers Five Act, which aims to attract a new generation of workers to the skilled trades, offering better support and inclusivity. Making a career in the skilled trades more appealing goes hand in hand with the government's efforts to improve working conditions, ensure safety and build a culture of respect and inclusion. The changes proposed through Bill 190 will work to strengthen Ontario's economy by ensuring that skilled trades are seen as a viable, rewarding career option, and OpenCircle has been working towards this right across Canada and supporting that.

Today, I wanted to specifically speak to the pathways into the skilled trades. While we hear often from those who are eager to enter the trades, they encounter barriers that make it challenging to begin their journey; for instance, the complexity of certification processes, a lack of clear information on how to access training, and prohibitive costs for education or to begin their apprenticeships. We applaud the government's efforts to address some of those barriers to the sector through Bill 190 in response to the industry's needs.

Apprenticeships are the most common pathway into the skilled trades, combining on-the-job training with classroom learning. Prior to Bill 190, a potential apprentice struggled navigating a complex system that varied from trade to trade. This led to barriers like unclear training requirements, mismatched information and lengthy delays in certification. By simplifying the process and creating a regulatory body that centralizes all aspects of trades training and certification, it becomes easier for apprentices to get the right information, register for their apprenticeships and complete their certification without unnecessary red tape.

Secondly, pre-apprenticeship programs are another crucial pathway to the skilled trades, particularly for individuals who might not have the required technical skills. Further investment in pre-apprenticeship programs improves access to the trades, but also provides first-hand experience and essential support, increasing the likelihood of long-term success.

Ontario's colleges and training institutions play a significant role in supporting pathways to the trades, and Bill 190 enhances the alignment between these institutions and industry needs. Clearer standards and a more streamlined certification process help technical trade schools better equip students with the skills employers are looking for, which is vital for our members. This bill will make it

easier for students to transition directly from academic programs to apprenticeships, further strengthening the connection between formal education and on-the-job training.

I also wanted to specifically speak to the effort to create a more inclusive and protected work environment, particularly for women. OpenCircle strongly believes that the sector offers a rewarding career for all who wish to be part of it, regardless of gender. The reality, however, is that it has been difficult for women to enter and thrive in the sector. The composition of women in these fields is approximately 11%. This must change.

A couple of years ago, I was in a meeting in Ottawa with all of the heads of the different polytechnicals and training institutes in Canada, talking about how we've moved the needle in Canada by 1% in 10 years related to women in the trades. It's not enough for the industry.

Specifically to the bill: While providing menstrual products and a clean, private environment may seem like a minor change for some, it is an important signal that workplaces are evolving to meet the needs of all workers. The perceptions are there, and we need to change those perceptions in order to be more inclusive.

This bill goes beyond just practical considerations. It emphasizes safe and fair working conditions. Expanding the definition of workplace harassment and sexual harassment to include virtual environments is a crucial step. This provision acknowledges the reality that harassment can occur in any setting, whether in the office or at a construction site or remotely via digital communication. By doing this, Ontario is signalling its commitment to creating safer workspaces for women, no matter where they work.

We are committed to making sure women succeed in their construction careers and inspire future generations of young girls to join our sector. We encourage government, in terms of the public policy, to continue to encourage more Ontarians to explore careers in the trades and help them become part of the solution in terms of longevity of the sector.

#### 1020

On behalf of the open shop sector of the construction industry, we would like to commend the government of Ontario's efforts to even the playing field with those who have long been in the trades. Bill 190 demonstrates that Ontario is serious about fostering a workforce where all workers feel safe, respected and supported. These are important steps, but it also lays the groundwork for a more vibrant skilled trades workforce.

However, we believe that collaboration with industry is key to successful growth in our sector and supporting candidates from entry-level trades through long-term career development.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Line Porfon:** At OpenCircle, we are committed to providing exceptional and innovative solutions to our member companies and their employers, and we would like to extend this commitment to the members of this committee and the government of Ontario, particularly as

we navigate workforce dynamics, introduce initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion, and ensure the long-term prosperity of this [inaudible].

Thank you very much for your time today.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now start the first round of questioning with the independent, MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** To the three presenters, thank you for presenting this morning.

I'm going to start my question off with John from Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic. You mentioned electronic posting, and I was listening to your detailed explanation and concerns about that. While we have electronic posting, we do know that workers—some of them don't even have electronic devices at home to even access those postings or they do not even understand the technology.

How do you improve the equality of that type of work in your organization?

**Mr. John Bartolomeo:** Thank you for the question. There's always a sense of ease: "Well, we can just do it electronically." I have two phones with me; I can do quite a bit. I wouldn't write a factum on these phones. I think we overestimate how easy electronics are.

I am not that old, but I always am fond of good old paper, because you take paper home, you put it in a corner, and it doesn't disappear like an email or an email address—or you've locked yourself out of something.

We have to consider what the safest way is to transmit this information or provide it. If that's on a USB key, on paper, what have you, I think we need to make sure a worker has it and they've got it somewhere.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I know you mentioned a lot of different priorities with Bill 190. What would you say are your top two concerns coming here and presenting to us today? Can you narrow that down for us?

**Mr. John Bartolomeo:** If it was my wish list, it would always be to end deeming and make the general employer duty cover all forms of workplace harassment, which is a bit of a pipe dream, I acknowledge.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Well, thank you for putting that on the record.

I'm going to move forward and ask my next round of questions to David. Can you talk to me about your current funding model?

**Mr. David Gardner:** Which? We have multiple sources. For my trade school or the union?

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Yes.

**Mr. David Gardner:** Trade school?

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** For your trade school, because I'm going to come up with another question.

**Mr. David Gardner:** Yes, trade school is multi-funded. Our employer and our union members contribute 11 cents an hour into a fund. Also, we have TDA status, and we get paid, just like the colleges, per seat for every student who comes in, whether you're union or non-union. It's an open TDA across Ontario.

Then we have another set of funds—it's not really for the students, it's for an upgrader program through the SDF.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** The reason I'm asking that is because we know you get funding; we know you're doing important work. I'm just testing your sustainability. If those funds ever decreased, what would your sustainability be to make sure that important work that you're doing is still getting done?

**Mr. David Gardner:** If the government took away our TDA funding as an organization, we would pony up—let's backdate it: Back in 2010, we started taking money for our TDA. Prior to that—1977 is when our trust started for our trade school—we funded it ourselves.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. David Gardner:** Even if the government took away our funding, we'd increase it on our side to continue it, because we believe in the value of apprenticeships, properly trained apprentices.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** That's good to know. That's why I'm asking. We do know we have a deficit in the trade industry right now.

My next question is, how do you balance that training with your under-represented people?

**Mr. David Gardner:** I treat everybody the same. Apprentices are apprentices; journeypersons are journeypersons. We don't care what colour, creed, religion—it doesn't matter. You're an apprentice and that's what you are to us. We treat all the same.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** It's good that you are putting that on the record, because out here in the world that we've looked at, in my constituency—I'm from Scarborough—Guildwood—we're seeing a lot of discrepancies in the industry with evening out the playing field. But thank you—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

We now go to MPP Hogarth.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you to all three of you for being here today and sharing your comments on Working for Workers Five.

We were the government, under Doug Ford, that was elected to fix some of the problems of the past. One of the things that we all knew was coming down the pipe back years and years was that we were going to have a skilled trades shortage in our province. We still have that problem. So the work that former Minister McNaughton has done and current Minister Piccini has done through all these bills is starting to make a difference, and we're seeing that.

John, you had mentioned some comments—we're not over. We're continuing to fix the problems of the past, so continue to elect a Doug Ford government and you're going to get those problems fixed.

Actually, I would like to chat a little bit with—is it Ms. Porfono?

**Ms. Line Porfon:** Porfon.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Porfon—thank you very much. The reason I liked what you were talking about is about

the women in the skilled trades. We hear often that women that are in the minimum wage market are part of the economy. When people tell me that, I always keep saying, “Well, you know what? There’s training and there’s other jobs out there.”

You touched on some important parts of getting women in the skilled trades. Last year, Minister Williams came to my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and we held a round table with women to try to find out why they are not staying in the skilled trades. A lot of it came with driving, child care; washroom facilities were something that was brought up in that town hall. So some of these issues that were brought up around that table were put into this legislation about PPE that fits—simple solutions like that. Clean washrooms—who doesn’t want a clean washroom? It’s also the commentary on the work site, which we certainly always need to address, and that’s not limited to the construction industry or the skilled trades industry. It’s really prevalent across the board, which, I think, we’re trying to get a little better at.

I’m wondering, from your perspective—as we’ve said, we still have more work to do. You mentioned your company, OpenCircle, is about innovative solutions. How can we be part of the solution to get more women into the skilled trades? Is there something else that we’re missing that can help move that metre stick forward a little further to help these women get some great jobs?

I know Dave—my colleague here, MPP Smith—mentioned some women in his area who decided to buy their own company. Not everyone is able to do that. But any thoughts or innovative solutions that will help our government move forward to get more women in this career? Because we certainly need them.

**Ms. Line Porfon:** We certainly do. Thank you very much for the question.

The reality of it is, culture is a big issue, and that’s not just in skilled trades. When it comes to women in the workforce in many different areas, innovative solutions—really, we’re looking at a generational change, to be honest. There are no quick fixes here. But the biggest thing, in my opinion, is around mentorship and coaching and having champions. The reality of it is that they often need to be men. So it’s not a question of having those women leaders that are pushing for them or supporting them and mentoring and coaching them; it’s men speaking up for women in the industry and giving them that safe place for them to work. Because women often go in and then they leave for whatever reason.

I can give you an example on a site—I can’t remember which province it was; it was one of the northern areas—of a young lady. They had a great washroom for her and that’s where she would go to hide because she was afraid of her colleagues. So you’ve got incremental system changes that we can do but you also have big system changes that need to happen as well, and it’s going to take time.

For me, that is something that industry and government could actually partner on together, just around, how do we start creating—whether it’s incentives, whether it’s tax incentives—because not everything has to be a grant or a

dollar being provided for something. But there really is: How do we incent the change in the culture overall?

**1030**

The OH&S rules are positive, employment standard rules are positive because you have those mechanisms. But then there’s also a reality on the ground. I gave you the example with that young lady; she’s probably going to leave. She’s probably not going to make an OH&S complaint. She’s probably not going to go to her supervisor. She’s probably just going to say, “I don’t need this. I’m going to go, and nobody’s going to know why.” That would be something that would be, in my experience—I’ve been in this industry 10 years now, and that would be a recommendation.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you very much for that comment.

Just over to John a little bit: What do you like about this bill? What do you think changes—oh, was it John? Who was the first person? Sorry, David. You have about 30,000 members in your—no?

**Mr. David Gardner:** No, 2,500 people in the province.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Okay, 2,500. What do they find most important that will help them stay in the careers or maybe gain more people in the career of the skilled trades—

**Mr. David Gardner:** Skilled trades?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** —that you see in this bill?

**Mr. David Gardner:** In this bill? Well, it gives them an opportunity to provide for their family. It gives them a great pension, great benefits and great resources. Most unions or TDAs train their apprentices to succeed. When we see that lull or one of them struggling, as a journey-person, that’s what my job is: to mentor them. We pick them up, we find out what the issue is and we move them forward. But most people come into the trades for the wage and to better their family.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Okay. Thank you. MPP Triantafilopoulos: 1.3.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you to all three presenters for being with us today. I noted that in your preliminary comments you all had very positive comments to make about supporting this latest iteration of the bill, and that we’re on the right track. No doubt that more can be done, and clearly this government is going to be moving forward in other areas as well.

I wonder if I could actually ask John specifically around the workplace harassment—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** You mentioned there was a gap between workplace violence and workplace harassment. We have talked here about the work in this legislation around the virtual workplace harassment. Could you just expand a little bit more in that respect?

**Mr. John Bartolomeo:** Thank you. There are certain what we call general provisions where employers have a duty, supervisors have a duty, and the requirements to fulfill those duties for workplace harassment are covered specifically in the part that deals with workplace harass-

ment and workplace violence. It doesn't specifically refer to those responsibilities with respect to workplace harassment, and that's where I see the legislative change necessary, so that you aren't just protected for asking for the process; you are protected for complaining about harassment.

With respect to the hybrid changes, again, that's welcome because of section 3 in the act, which precludes application to private residences. So this clears—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time there.

We go to MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** I'll try to follow the order that we had. So, David, I'm really interested with the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers. I've talked to high school students—I'm sure my colleagues as well—about career paths. One of the things I say often is, if you've got a blank piece of paper and you try to write down all of the jobs, you probably can't fill both sides of that page. I think, when it comes to skilled trades, there are even fewer than most people—electrician, carpenter, plumber, and then they run out, unless their background is in that field. So how do your apprentices normally hear about you and get involved with your organization?

**Mr. David Gardner:** Well, usually it's relations. As you commented on the other trades: Yes, they're the compulsory trades. We're non-compulsory. There are more non-compulsory than compulsory. So everybody goes to what everybody knows: electrician, pipefitter.

We are a small, niche trade. We do belong to Helmets to Hardhats, the COBT Hammer Heads programs. We belong to a lot of programs all across Ontario that funnel apprentices towards us. We don't have a shortage of applicants, that's for sure.

**MPP Jamie West:** My next question was going to be about that, because I wasn't sure. It's good to hear.

You talked about removing barriers to employment, and I understand for people who are fleeing countries that are at war and those documents, but are there other examples that we should be focusing on as the Legislative Assembly that would help people have their credentials coming here?

**Mr. David Gardner:** English or French: We've noticed a lot of newcomers to Canada don't speak English very well—or French, because we're a bilingual country. The way our system is taught it's all in English or French, and we can even get it translated to Spanish from our sister Locals down in the States. That is probably one of the barriers there. We're having a hard time trying to instruct. We do the best we can. We have translation on Google, but that is really hard to do when you're trying to translate something that doesn't translate well through Google, right? That is one of the struggles that we are seeing right now.

**MPP Jamie West:** Okay. I appreciate that. That's good.

Ms. Porfon—I mispronounced that, I'm sure.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I know.

**MPP Jamie West:** Christine, I should have taken notes. Sorry.

One of the things you said, about 11% of women in these fields and that increasing by 1% over 10 years—it's something, clearly, we need to do. I just wanted to take the opportunity with the network that you have and the feedback that you have: What else could we be doing?

**Ms. Line Porfon:** As I'd mentioned to the last questioner, this is a generational shift. I've been talking to different provincial governments across the country. It's not necessarily what the provinces want to hear, that it's going to take a sustained effort regardless of who is in power or what province it is.

Our issue really is that we don't promote it from a very young age. So when it comes to the excellence that we want in our jurisdiction across Canada—and we are one of the least productive jurisdictions in the world for construction—it really has to start there, at the very beginning, in elementary. Provincial jurisdiction is the education system. That would be my biggest recommendation: go hard in the education system and understand that it's going to take some time for us to actually do this.

The legislation that's before you is excellent. There are good steps; there are good starts. We really want to get that perception there, but it has to start in the schools, and it has to be, similar to the model that they have in many countries in Europe, that it's an honourable career to have. That's where it has to start.

**MPP Jamie West:** I had that experience in high school, actually, where I wanted to take auto shop, because my friend just loved auto shop. So I signed up for it, and my mom and I had a meeting with the vice-principal and the guidance counsellor. They said, "You have good grades. You don't need this." After I graduated from college and university, I became an apprentice. We could have saved a lot of money and moved around that path. So I think that makes sense.

It is a weird thing. I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but I've noticed as my kids get older that—there's an age where you can't get them to go across a construction site, and then you move forward, and somewhere in their high school years that's not cool anymore. We really do have to change that perception and stuff. I've heard different tradespeople saying the best way to do that is to have the kids go back to their guidance counsellor with a paycheque.

My experience: I went to college and university, and my journeyman was two years younger than me. He was picking me up in a truck while I was paying off my student loans. I think that's something that we've really got to point out to people, especially in that generational—if your family is not involved with the trades, they don't understand specifically. If they come up through the same system that we have, where it was a lesser-than field, we need to educate the parents as much as we need to educate the children.

**Ms. Line Porfon:** I agree.

**MPP Jamie West:** I appreciate that, yes.

In terms of the lack of skilled trade workers, the minister earlier was talking about the grey tsunami. We're facing this, and at any minute—I forget the percentage now, but there's enough people who could just walk out the door. They have their years in, they can finish, they could retire, and because it's a rewarding career and often with pensions, it's easy for them.

What would you like to see in the future in terms of attracting people? Is it as simple as educating students, or is there more that we should be doing?

**Ms. Line Porfon:** It's absolutely the immigration system, as well, just in terms of who we are bringing in for what types of jobs. The work that the provincial government is already doing around having a quality of standards across the country is also very helpful, because as we have members in different provinces, there are different levels of skill that you get depending on where your training is, and that's helpful as well.

So I think it's multi-pronged. There are so many different ways to approach this, and it's going to take an effort of all of them: the education system starting earlier, the perception on it, safe workplaces, bringing immigrants in or homegrown, and just really promoting that.

1040

And I agree with you 100% around the dollars. I have a board of directors here of pretty senior people in the construction industry, and they make more money than any professional that I know. They're good careers and they walk out with no debt. So really, giving that perception to people around, "Hey, you can have a great career. It is a hard job, though"—that's part of it. And I think a lot of the youth that we have that might be interested in it as well think, "Well, what am I going to do when I'm 40 and my body is burned out?" It really is showing that complete picture, the pathway of how you make this a good career. It's not just about pounding nails in minus-40-degree weather until you're 60 years old.

**MPP Jamie West:** Right. I probably only have four seconds—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

We'll now go to the independent. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I'm not going to say the last name. Are you okay if I say "line," the first name?

**Ms. Line Porfon:** It's Line.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I wanted to be safe. Okay.

Really, thank you for your presentation. I've learned a good bit from your detailed presentation, as well, but I want to stick with the women's opportunities. Because I've been going to retreats, conferences, town halls, training sessions, all for skilled trades, and of course, the women who are attending these sessions are very minute. For an example, I might go to a workshop with maybe 50 people that are attending and we might see three women.

What I am seeing at the events that I attend—because I want to learn more about it, and especially supporting women—is that they always put a woman, one woman that is very successful, and I see these women all across the trade industry giving examples of their work, making it

rosy and making it exciting. Thank you for sharing that story and really telling the challenges that we have as women behind the scenes.

And so how are you balancing that in your organization?

**Ms. Line Porfon:** Well, having me as the CEO is a pretty good step towards that, because I would say that there was a lot of courage on the part of the board of directors when they appointed me as CEO a couple of years ago. I've been with the organization 10 years, and that alone is a message to the industry that we're serious about diversity. You've got me heading an organization in which 90%—more than 90% in certain areas—are men. And I'm not talking about OpenCircle; I'm talking about the industry. We represent 50,000 people across the country, so we have a lot of people that we serve.

When I look at the balance of it, it really is around promoting it as a good career, but we also don't want to come across as an organization where it's the be-all, it's the ultimate goal. We want diversity, we want inclusion, but we want it to be a cultural thing, not checking boxes. That's one thing I've learned in my career, that you can't make it about checking boxes, because that's the worst you can do. You can't put it on your website. It has to be meaningful, what you're doing.

So whether it's the training that we do that's inclusive, whether it's representation—we've got different boards here in the organization—we look at having a mixture and promoting that, but it is so hard to find women. It is so difficult to find women in positions of authority in order to even get board members who are women.

So when we look at our programming, we make it as inclusive and as welcoming as we possibly can. We participate in things like CAWIC, which is an association for women in construction. I was a board member with the Alberta Women Entrepreneurs. Certainly, it's near and dear to my heart; my master's project was on gender issues in the public service. So I feel it myself, just around how important it is for women to play a part in it.

So, really, that's my quick summary answer. It is really about a balance and making sure that we're being very welcoming and giving opportunities, whatever programming or opportunities we have in our industry.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I want to ask a follow-up question. Are we all failing at this? Because it sounds daunting. Like, we're looking at improvements in five to 10 years. What can we do as a community, as politicians?

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** We need this to happen.

**Ms. Line Porfon:** We do, and I sit at a lot of stakeholder round tables with different political groups and advocacy groups. It's coming together, having industry—all types of industry—coming together and talking with government, and really providing that insight and saying what the real story is, not getting it filtered by anybody that doesn't know what the culture is really like in our different industries.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Thank you for putting that out there. I cannot stress enough about everybody working

together in this, because I believe when women lead and when women enter the workforce, the family are better off financially. No disrespect to men sitting at this table, but women are very strong leaders.

Thank you for coming in and thank you for shedding the light on the challenges that are out there with women getting into the skilled trades so then I can better address that issue in my riding.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** We'll now go to the government. MPP Triantafilopoulos.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** I'd like to pose some questions to Line, if I may. You've spoken specifically about the issue around culture and generational change. Now, when you speak about culture, you also mentioned that some of the coaches or the leaders in the sector inevitably have to be men because there may not be enough women in those roles. So how do we encourage more of the men in the sector to be coaches, to be champions, to be able to encourage more women not only to enter the fields, but also, how do you retain them?

**Ms. Line Porfon:** Very good question. They need the time and space to do it. Nobody is going to be able to mentor and coach if they're busy trying to get a project done and that's their sole focus. So it really is around providing that upper support at the higher echelons of big companies, the ownership of companies. I'm not exactly sure how you incent that because people are incentivized by different things. Some are incentivized by honour, some by money, some by longevity and sustainability of the industry. We've always looked at acquiring the people at our governance for our organization, and we've been in existence since 1986. But people that have a passion for it and really want to give back to the industry that's given to them—it really is seeking out those leaders and giving them the time and the space to do it, because it takes a lot of energy.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** When you speak about the time and space, do you suggest that if there is a larger employer they have the capacity to do it versus smaller employers, or are you not distinguishing?

**Ms. Line Porfon:** I'm not distinguishing, really. When I look at our organization of 65% membership of 10 and under people within those particular companies, we also have some of the largest companies in Canada. PCL is a member, Stuart Olson, a whole crew of them. I do find that some of them already do it. So the more progressive, the companies that are more sustainability and future-forward-looking do tend to have some programs, but it still becomes—they need a pool of people to also do it for, right? So it's both; it's a top-down and a bottom-up exercise. So I would say there's capacity, because there's a lot of people that have passion for this industry.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you.

Also, I'd like to ask Mr. Gardner—you talked about supporting a lot of the changes in the bill and that actually it's transformative. Could you speak about some of the more important changes that you think are of the greatest benefit to your members?

**Mr. David Gardner:** Well, everything about the bill is pretty well great.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you for that.

**Mr. David Gardner:** Health and safety, harassment, addressing those concerns—I like to tell everybody, look, I've been in construction for 36 years. It hasn't changed. It hasn't changed since the 1960s. That's the way it is. It is changing, and as we get more diverse people into the trades, you start to see that change happen. I'm starting to see it happen right now. When you start putting in clean washrooms, harassment, you start talking about those things, they start to change. But construction is an old rough boy college. And it shouldn't be that way, in no way shape or form. But as you start bringing in more younger generations that think a little bit differently, progressively it does change, and with the government supporting that change, it makes it a lot easier for organizations like us to enforce it.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** MPP Smith.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I'd like to do some follow-up questions with you, Mr. Gardner, as well, on this. With the training that your school does, I believe it's a little over 100 apprentices that come through your system on a yearly basis on it.

**Mr. David Gardner:** Actually, we have four classes right now, and we're doing 12 per class, so just over 200. We have 400 in the system.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** So what we've heard anecdotally is that the average age of an apprentice in Ontario right now is between 28 and 29 years old. We have talked extensively about—how the minister referred to it is the silver tsunami. We've also heard it called the grey tsunami, that the average age of a journeyman is approaching 60 now.

**1050**

It seems to me that we have a real challenge, then, and my colleague from Sudbury mentioned this as well: I'm of that age where, when I went through high school, any kind of a job that got your hands dirty was considered a lesser job. There was a very strong focus on individuals going to colleges and universities and not in the skilled trades, and we're seeing the negative effect of that, with the average age of someone in the trade being as old as they are: very close to retirement. The average age of somebody who is entering the trade is close to 30. We've done a very poor job, historically, then, of attracting youth.

Because you run a school, because you are at the front lines that way, what should we be doing to encourage and entice our youth to take this up as a career? Because once you have an apprenticeship, once you have a skilled trade, it's not a job, it's a career for the rest of your life.

**Mr. David Gardner:** That is correct. Where the government has failed—I'm not pointing any fingers—is that we took the trades out of the schools. We took out home ec, we took out workshops. That's how you filter right from the beginning, because right then, you know, "I want to do this with my hands. I want to work with my hands." And you can figure out, "Well, this is not for me. I want to

go to university or college and become a doctor or a lawyer or an accountant,” whatever is preferred. If you put that back in the schools, again, when they’re in grades 6, 7, 8 and 9, you know right then. We took that out for whatever reason; I’m not going to point fingers. But that is where we should start. Bring it back into the schools and teach the basics. You’ll figure out really soon what you want to do with your life: “I like working with my hands,” and then you know the trades is the way to go.

People still do look down on tradespeople. They don’t realize that—it’s just one of those cultural things that needs to change. Union and non-union, they pay very well. You can support your family.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Line, I want to throw that over to you as well and I want to throw a little commentary in on it. My son is 27. He graduated from university and has struggled to get a full-time job as a teacher—he just got hired, actually, as a teacher full-time, so that’s good. But he’s compared it to three of his friends: One of them is a plumber, one of them is a carpenter and one of them is an electrician. All three of them have their own homes, all three of them are now married, all three of them have their first child on the way and all three of them own trucks without car loans. He has said repeatedly that perhaps he took the wrong path by going to university.

How do you think we should be convincing some of these younger individuals to get into the trades? Specifically women in them, because there’s such an opportunity for them as well.

**Ms. Line Porfon:** The quick answer is to start earlier. High school is too late.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** High school is too late. That’s a great comment. Thank you. I appreciate that.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. We now go to the official opposition. MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you, Chair. I’m going to go to John for the next one.

John, you explained a little bit earlier about expanding harassment to the same protections as workplace violence. What’s missing between the two? Is it section 50 that we’re looking at?

**Mr. John Bartolomeo:** I quoted a decision, which colloquially is known as the Aim decision. In that decision—I can read from my submissions. There are obligations with respect to workplace violence in the act that are not seen to the same obligations for workplace harassment, at least with respect to how broadly the term is defined. And that’s with respect to what an employer is expected to do to prevent workplace violence, but as well, the employer’s duties with respect to workplace violence are covered by section 25, which we call the duty section. There’s a general duty to “take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances...” That’s known as 25(2)(h), and that’s with respect to workplace violence. But similar language doesn’t cover workplace harassment. There is no general duty to protect with the inclusion for workplace harassment. I think what the labour board at the time said was that there are obligations put on employers with

respect to workplace violence; at the same time, the workplace harassment provisions omit those obligations.

What I’m suggesting is, we need to ameliorate so that the language and protection for workers for workplace violence is exactly the same as it is for workplace harassment.

**MPP Jamie West:** That seems like an easy fix that can go in there. I wasn’t even aware of that, so I appreciate you expanding on that.

For the electronic posting, I’m aligned with you on that. I have some concerns with electronic posting because I think there are people who have gaps in terms of their ability to use a computer or phone. One of the first—I don’t know if it was a labour bill, but one of the first bills that came out when I was elected in 2018 was removing the requirement to have paper copies posted in the workplaces of the workers’ rights. I think that’s a step backwards, right?

I like the idea of recommending a requirement of confirmation that the workers received the information. The part I’m concerned about is that sensation when you go to your workplace and you have that drinking from the fire hose, and some of the stuff that they tell you on the first day just gets buried in the back of your head, so I think it would be nice to have the employer demonstrate that the access is easy, that’s there’s a health and safety website they can click on or there’s a—besides just having seen it and signed off on something, because, depending on your workplace, it could be overwhelming on your first day, right? You’re trying to memorize everyone’s names, you’re trying to remember where the bathroom is, you’re trying to get through your initial training.

Does something like that make sense to you?

**Mr. John Bartolomeo:** It is. Invariably it’s, “I never got that training,” and the employer’s response is a page from four years ago with the person’s signature and date on it saying, “Yes, you did.”

I think one of the easier ways to address the problem, if we’re sticking to electronic, is after-employment access. My concern has always been that you’ve been cut off from the company’s intranet, you no longer have access to your emails. An employer should be able to provide that information, or at least it should be accessible, after employment.

I appreciate that some people don’t have access to computers and that sort of thing. I can’t fix that, but public library access to a computer with the ability to go online somewhere where the information still exists and is still available so I can say, “I did that according to the policy,” and, “Here you go, John. Here’s a copy.” That’s where the gap is.

**MPP Jamie West:** Right. I had a career in health and safety and I didn’t recognize the gap between harassment and the violence part of it, so I think that if people who are safety nerds like myself are missing that part of it, expecting somebody whose focus is different than that to memorize all these things, especially in a situation where you’re worried about harassment, for example, and you’re not sure how to report it or what the steps are, having “I

told you so” as a backup doesn’t really create a workplace that’s going to help people deter from harassment or violence.

You also talked about—in schedule 6, you’d mentioned the end to deeming. I know that’s something that New Democrats bring back on a regular basis. My colleague MPP Gates was just texting me about it. I really think this is something we need to focus on. Not to expand on it, but, basically, what happens is the WSIB is able to say there’s an imaginary job that you could do and change your compensation based on it. I often say that the only way that works is if you could you pay your bills with imaginary money on it, so I appreciate you advocating for that.

You talked about the funding fairness for partially disabled workers. I think it would be important to expand on this for my colleagues and for everyone to better understand what had happened in the past in terms of saying, “Hey, the unfunded liability, we can’t afford this.” A couple of years ago, the Conservative government decided to give rebates to drain the unfunded liability again so we can’t afford to help workers.

**Mr. John Bartolomeo:** The short answer is that benefits are indexed, but the indexing factor is short in terms of what it’s supposed to be. An earlier version mentioned the Friedland formula, and there’s a modified Friedland formula. Eventually, this failure to keep equal to what the adjustment should be has created a large gap in the disparity for partially disabled workers. Professor Arthurs was asked, “How do we fix that?” His acknowledgement was that with the size of the unfunded liability, we couldn’t afford it. But now we can, and I think it’s a good time to address that issue.

**MPP Jamie West:** I appreciate that. You talked about coverage for DSWs and PSWs, and I was really surprised that they didn’t have coverage—before your presentation, when I first learned about this, because these are jobs that are typically very physical. You think of helping people get in and out of bed and that sort of—it’s a physical job.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**MPP Jamie West:** I know there was operational review in 2020. Do you have any insight to why these workers weren’t covered?

**Mr. John Bartolomeo:** I’m afraid I could only—I can’t guess to that. Some are, depending on the nature of their employment, but in terms of guaranteed mandatory coverage, that’s still to be done.

1100

**MPP Jamie West:** I think that’s something we could really close the gap on, because these are important workers. We all agree how essential PSWs are and DSWs are, and because of the physicality of their job, we really should be looking out for their best interests to ensure that if they’re injured, they’re not falling behind or on a pathway to poverty. I think that’s really important.

I have a few more questions, but I think I only have 20 seconds or 30 seconds. So thank you, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That does conclude the time for this panel. We want to thank all the panellists very much for the time you took

to prepare and the time you spent here with us to help explain your position on this bill. I’m sure it will be a great help as we move forward with getting this bill into the action plan.

WATERLOO REGION COMMUNITY  
LEGAL SERVICES  
OPSEU

THUNDER BAY AND DISTRICT INJURED  
WORKERS SUPPORT GROUP

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** With that, our next presenters are Waterloo Region Community Legal Services, OPSEU and the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group. As they’re coming forward, I want to remind all the presenters that we’ll have seven minutes for your presentation. After we’ve heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee.

With that, we ask each presenter to start by introducing themselves for Hansard to make sure that we can attribute the comments to the right person. At the six-minute mark of the presentation, I will say “one minute.” Don’t stop. The punchline is yet to come, but we don’t give you any more time than that one minute.

With that, we’ll turn it over to and start the first one with Waterloo Region Community Legal Services.

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Good morning. My name is Joanna Mullen. I am an employment lawyer with Waterloo Region Community Legal Services. We are a community legal clinic that serves all of Waterloo region. Community legal clinics are funded by Legal Aid Ontario to provide free legal advice, information and representation to low-income Ontarians.

My submissions today are actually very specific. I will be focused on section 132 of the Employment Standards Act and the proposed amendments in Bill 190 to increase the fine from \$50,000 for an individual who is found to have violated the act up to \$100,000. In brief, I will say that we are in support of this change and think that it’s a positive step in terms of taking violations of the ESA more seriously. But I would like to share with you a story about a group of workers that we serve in Waterloo region and how, unfortunately, Bill 132 has not gone far enough to protect them from a particularly non-compliant and exploitative employer.

Over the last five years, we have been seeing waves of workers come to us about one with particular employer, a grocery store in the region called Dutchie’s Fresh Market. It’s been widely publicized, and I’ll talk about that a little bit further on. What the recurring theme has been is that newcomers and young workers start working for this employer. Maybe they get paid for their first round of pay, but shortly after, they stop being paid altogether. As you may know, we call this wage theft. Wage theft can take many forms. Sometimes it’s something as small as not providing vacation pay or not providing public holiday



pay, but certainly, the more devastating version of wage theft is when workers work and receive no pay at all, and that has been what is happening to these workers at Dutchie's Fresh Market.

Over the past five years, we have helped workers file claims with the Ministry of Labour, and in every case, the Ministry of Labour has found that they are owed wages. After 30 days, when the order for payment is not paid, a director's order can be issued against the owner, Mr. Michael Renkema. That order also goes unpaid. It then gets kicked over to collections with the Ministry of Finance, and to date, out of all of the clients that we have served, only a small group of them have received any pay at all for their unpaid orders. Their orders are outstanding from four years ago, and they only very recently received a very nominal amount that does not represent at all the full wages owing.

So over time, as we have been increasingly frustrated, we've been encouraging workers to go public with their story. We were very happy in mid-March of this year when a group of four workers did go public and bravely spoke to CTV News Kitchener about the fact that their wages were stolen from them. All four workers were newcomers to Canada. This was their first job that they ever had in the country, and they came to us from Ukraine. And so it was very disheartening for them to have this experience. They're trying to make ends meet. They're trying to get on their feet, establish themselves in a new country after they have fled the horrors of war only to be treated this way and then to realize our system is not protecting them.

Because what they didn't know when they went public is that as far back as the fall of 2023, the Ministry of Labour, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, had charged Dutchie's Fresh Market under section 132 of the act and had charged Mr. Michael Renkema under section 132 of the act. The charges relate to 15 counts against the company for failing to pay orders to pay and eight counts against Mr. Michael Renkema for failing to comply with director's orders to pay.

Despite this great step that was taken by the ministry—which we commend and think should be done more often because we know that 90% of employers never face any penalties even if they're found to have violated the act—it hasn't been enough. So even though this employer was charged, he still continued to steal wages. And even now, in 2024, we continue to have workers come to us saying, "I haven't been paid," because his business is still operating as the criminal charges go through the process.

And so, as a part of these workers coming forward, CTV News Kitchener has picked up the story. They did their own research into this and found that the Ministry of Labour has outstanding \$188,000 in unpaid orders and that the Ministry of Finance was reported at that time to be attempting to collect \$469,000 in unpaid wages, which is a staggering, staggering amount, because for every dollar, that represents a person or a family who hasn't been able to pay rent, who hasn't been able to pay for groceries because they have worked for an employer that simply refuses to pay. And in the CTV News statement—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** —when asked, Mr. Renkema, why he hasn't paid them, he simply said, "I don't have money."

So again, while we think this increase in the fine is a great first step, it isn't enough. What we are hoping to see from the ministry is an increase of powers for employment standards officers to try to stop these employers from continuing to exploit workers.

We commend the recent creation of the scheme by which temporary help agencies and recruiters are required to be licensed and pay a security of \$25,000 in order to operate business. We would like to see something similar for employers by which they would also have to be licensed and pay in, which would ensure that workers do get their unpaid wages paid fast and are actually paid in full.

In the alternative, what we would like to see is for the ministry to have enhanced powers—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time, and hopefully we can get the rest of it in during the questions.

We will now go to OPSEU.

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Noah A. Freedman. I am an OPSEU Local vice-president as well as a wildfire crew leader and incident commander for the government of Ontario. Today, I'm going to be speaking with you about presumptive coverage for wildland firefighters and fire investigators as it's laid out in Bill 190.

The purpose of my presentation today is to highlight the inequities of presumptive legislation as it pertains to wildland firefighters. Something I'd like you to keep at the back of your mind for this presentation is, if you look at the individual on the screen right there, just like every wildland firefighter who has come before, we do not have respirators, and that plays an incredibly important role in this legislation, specifically with regard to intensity of exposure.

**1110**

The position of the union is that Bill 190, as it stands, will do nothing to recognize the sacrifice of wildland firefighters and investigators who work less than 20 fire seasons. The WSIB has laid out the present policy and framework, updated on July 18, and if you look at the fine print of the policy and the focus of this presentation, "For greater clarity ... the corresponding periods of employment will count towards the required employment duration..." Now, what this is referring to is the chart on minimum number of years of employment as a firefighter to qualify for any of the presumptive cancers. This system specifically harms wildland firefighters, and I'll explain why that is, but you'll notice that the minimum number of years is 10 years, which qualifies you for just 38% of presumed cancers under this legislation.

Now, the problem is that wildland firefighters work during the fire season. If we equate it to six months, WSIB would only credit this firefighter for 0.5 years of service per season, no matter the intensity and duration of expos-

ure to toxins, which, as you can imagine, are quite significant.

To put this in real terms, in 2023, if the average Ontario wildland firefighter spent 100 days camping and working on the fire line, we are looking at approximately 2,400 hours in smoke and soot exposure during one fire season, which, again, only equates to 0.5 years' work. So even after working as a wildland firefighter for 20 fire seasons, WSIB would still only provide a firefighter with presumed coverage for 38% of the 21 cancers legislated, no matter what, regardless of intensity and duration of exposure to toxins.

I would also like to add that according to the World Health Organization, dermal exposure to soot causes cancer, something that wildland firefighters deal with regularly, because we are actively sticking our hands in the ground to figure out whether or not that fire is still hot, and we do not have dermal protection.

I would also like to add that Ontario's wildland firefighters wear the same two protective uniforms for upwards of 19 days in a row without laundering, and we are also usually never provided a shower, so we're also not cleaning the soot and toxins out of our skin.

We're going to be looking at a report that was commissioned by this government in the Ministry of Labour in 2019, which sought to use scientific evidence to update the WSIB's policy in how it deals with work-related cancers. I will refer you back to this chart on the minimum number of years of service. These numbers are called discrete ranges. This report specifically talks about discrete ranges and says that these time ranges for exposure in latency, based on nice round numbers, are useful, but it should be recognized that these ranges will not apply to all individuals, as you can understand. The question I would also like to ask is, who are these discrete, useful numbers useful to?

The report goes on further to say that they found that there was a shorter latency period than previously assumed, especially for high intensity of exposure. This study is a powerful illustration of how assuming a default latent period disregards the effect of time and intensity of exposure on the latent period of variability. Now, what they're referring to right there is that if we are simply focused on a general, arbitrary number to determine whether or not I qualify or my colleagues qualify for presumptive coverage of cancer, it is completely disregarding how much time we are exposed and to what quantity we are exposed.

I will also add that one of the four mandates of the review was that Ontario workers and employers gain increased confidence that compensation laws and decisions take into account up-to-date science and best practices related to work-related cancers. Thus, the union and the wildland firefighters it represents are not seeking preferred treatment; we simply want fair, common-sense legislation which recognizes the sacrifice wildland firefighters make with science-based presumptive coverage.

If the WSIB does not take into account the intensity or duration of exposure, Bill 190 will do nothing to recognize the sacrifices of wildland firefighters and investigators

with less than 20 years of service. Therefore, it is the position of the union and the wildland firefighters it represents that Bill 190 be amended such that:

Number one: an overall reduction in the minimum number of years of service be reduced by five years per cancer. So certain cancers require 10 years of service, 15 or 20. It is recommended that those years of service be reduced each by five years.

Number two: specifically for wildland firefighters, that service to the province and to the country between May and August, the peak or prime fire season, be considered one full year of service—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:**—due to the intensity and duration of toxic chemical exposure.

Number three—and this is something I could not get to due to timing: The report that this government commissioned also speaks about cluster studies. It is very important, as we've seen in the United States, that a voluntary cluster study investigating diseases found in present and former firefighters be legislated and funded by the government so that we can track diseases specific to firefighting and inform the WSIB's amendments in the coming years, because as we know, science is always changing, and we are always getting better.

Thank you very much for your time, and I will be taking questions after.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much for the presentation.

Our next presenter will be the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, and we will be receiving that virtually.

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My name is Steve Mantis, and I am the treasurer of the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group.

A little bit about our organization: We're celebrating our 40th year as a volunteer organization. We receive no ongoing funding from any source, and we're all volunteers, with no staff.

We're injured workers and are supporters who are supporting each other as we go through the transitions from being a healthy worker to one with a permanent impairment. Myself, I lost my left arm 46 years ago working construction, and I've been active, really, since then.

Our submission today is really focused on schedule 6 in Bill 190, changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Following the last two presentations, I really can't agree any more that the points they're making are similar with issues that we face on a regular basis as injured workers.

It's important to know that there are somewhere in the range of about 15,000 workers every year who end up with a permanent, lifelong disability because of an injury or illness at work. Those are accepted by the WSIB. There's many more who are never accepted along the way. Within that cohort, about 15% of those will end up with little or no benefits from WSIB. They will end up chronically unemployed, living with chronic pain, oftentimes losing

their families, their homes and their mental health along that journey. So we believe that much can be done to improve the outcomes of workers with a permanent impairment going forward.

The changes in Bill 190 to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act are fine, but they certainly don't go far enough. And before I really jump into that, I wanted to comment, too, on some of the proposed changes both to the Employment Standards Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which is really talking about how the rights of workers will only need to be posted online. Yes, we're moving to a digital world, but a lot of us aren't there yet, and to say that the only place we have to post as businesses what our rights are is online is actually restricting access. So why not just leave it that they have to post it on-site as well as online? What's the problem there? I don't get it.

When we look at some history of workers' compensation, it's important to really look at what's happened over the last 115 years. Workers' compensation was our first public program as part of our social security net in Canada. Our present system was really started here in Ontario through a royal commission appointed by the government of the day, a Conservative government. They appointed Sir William Meredith, the Chief Justice of the court in Ontario, to review what was happening in terms of injuries and fatalities at work and recommend changes. He came up with a number of principles that were the foundation of our first public system, workers' compensation, begun in 1914, now 110 years ago today.

#### 1120

Those principles included that there would be a non-adversarial system, that it would be an inquiry system, where the bureaucracy would look into what happened and make a decision based on that; that the system would have a collective liability, so individual employers would not be dinged for accidents that might occur on their site, but that liability would be spread across others in that same industry sector; and that there would be an impartial body to administer the act that would be arm's length from the government.

It's interesting that we have seen over the last 30 years, 40 years, those principles eroded so that the system has become very adversarial. I'm sure any of you as MPPs have heard that from people coming into your offices, how people are mistreated. Recent research from the Institute for Work and Health, a world-recognized body on workplace health and safety and workers' compensation, found almost 50% of workers with a permanent impairment ended up with mental illness because of how they were treated by the decision-maker at the WSIB. Here's a public system that is supposed to be supporting workers and, in fact, in many cases is making them ill.

About 15 years ago, a financial crisis was declared, that WSIB didn't have enough to pay their bills.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** This has really moved into a system of cutbacks for workers. The system is now over-funded. There's some \$35 billion-plus in investments. We're

asking for improvements for workers. We want to increase the benefit level from 85% to 90% of net earnings. Where we lost our pensions as a result, we want pension contributions set the same as what would go to Canada pension. And the system now stops at age 65, where many workers are working past age 65. We want that limit extended as well.

Thank you so much. I think I'm out of time, but I definitely have more to say. Thank you so much, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** You were nine seconds left over, so thank you very much for your presentation.

With that, that concludes the presentations. We now will start the first round of questions, and we'll start with the government. MPP Hamid.

**MPP Zee Hamid:** Thank you for your presentations. My question is actually for Joanna Mullen. I know you got cut off. Do you mind taking this time to just finish your presentation?

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Yes, thank you.

What I'm trying to explain is, what we see is that employers are aware, potentially, that section 132 exists, that they could face prosecution for not acting in compliance with the law. But what we see is that it hasn't made a significant difference. Employers violate the law all the time. I see that every day in the work that I do, especially when it comes to low-wage workers and wage theft. So we think that increasing the fine isn't going to make a significant difference, either because, as I said, employers don't think that they'll be prosecuted, or, as what we're seeing with this particular employer, even if he is prosecuted, what's the likelihood that the Ministry of Finance is going to collect another \$100,000 from him when he already owes so much money? So we need some mechanism for the ministry to have the power to stop employers like this from continuing to exploit workers, hire workers and know that they'll never pay them.

What I'm trying to say is that the regime that has been put in place for recruiters and temporary help agencies is excellent. If we had something similar like that for employers, where they would have to be licensed, they would have to post a security, it would have stopped this type of exploitation from happening. But I know that, feasibly, that might be difficult to put in place, so our other alternative is that the ministry should have more powers to strip employers of the licences that they need to operate a business, whether it's their business licence, a liquor licence, even a driver's licence for employers. They need to have some ability to actually go into these companies and say, "You can't do this anymore. You can't exploit these workers and take their money."

**MPP Zee Hamid:** Thank you for that. In this case, it almost sounds criminal. But thank you for sharing the stories of those individuals.

When I was a teenager, both my parents worked minimum wage jobs, so I understand how important every penny really is, not just every dollar. I can't imagine what the workers went through with intentional wage theft in

that case. That's heartbreaking, so we should definitely take that.

Sorry, I did have a question when I went to the side. Based on your experience, I'm curious to know, which aspects of Bill 190 do you think are helpful to low-income employees?

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Again, I mostly focused on 132 in my submissions. I have turned my mind to the act in some regards. Certainly, the changes around workplace harassment—any time that we're expanding the definition for what qualifies as harassment is a positive step forward because, of course, in my practice, we get many calls about people who have experienced workplace harassment not knowing what steps they're to follow to make those complaints or what the processes are like. So anything that will benefit workers in that regard I think is very positive.

And again, just to go back on what I'm saying, we do think it's excellent that the government is taking violations under the act more seriously and is enhancing the fine. But again, the question is, is it going to make a difference? We don't think it will.

**MPP Zee Hamid:** Thank you for that.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Further? MPP Anand.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you to the presenters for coming all the way and presenting on behalf of the people of Ontario and the stakeholders that you represent.

Chair, my question would be to Noah about the fire-fighters and the WSIB. I do remember, when I was working in the Ministry of Labour under the leadership of Minister Monte McNaughton back then and now Minister David Piccini, they both believe in serving those who serve the communities: our firefighters. So I just want to understand, in your opinion, compared to the rest of the provinces, where do we stand in Ontario in terms of the presumptive care—in terms of the number of years and the progress in the last three to four years—if you can share that with us.

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** It's an interesting question, because if you look at the report that the Ministry of Labour commissioned in 2019, overwhelmingly, the argument was that Ontario was much behind—that the country was much behind.

I think that what this bill did originally for presumptive cancers for firefighters was extremely beneficial to structural firefighters—city, volunteer etc.—but will have almost no effect on wildland firefighters because our careers are, as you can imagine, much shorter. Most people cannot work for 20 years on the ground, on the front line.

I apologize if I didn't answer your question correctly.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** No, no, absolutely. Again, I was just trying to understand, because I do remember talking about it when we were working on it, when we were saying the minimum duration of service required to become eligible for presumptive coverage for primary skin cancer, for example, was 10 years—the lowest in the country. I'm just trying to understand if there's anything that can be improved further, and you did mention about it that, yes,

making it more accessible and reducing the number of years.

Along with that, based on your experience—and you did mention it earlier as well—how is the impact of a prohibition of an employer requirement for a sick note important in this case, in your case or in the case of wildfire rescuers?

**1130**

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** I don't really understand the question, to be honest.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Okay. What are the changes that you're looking into this bill that can impact and help here?

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** Absolutely—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** Sorry, what was that?

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** One minute.

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** One minute?

I think the most important thing out of the three recommendations—and actually, it's kind of hard to rank them, but what's very important to understand is that when wildland firefighters are on the front line, we are on the front line for the entire fire season. So 2021 was incredibly bad in Ontario, especially in Canada; 2023 was incredibly bad in all of Canada.

When we are breathing in smoke 24 hours a day because we're camping on the fire line to help get to the fire line early and protect people, we are exposed, I would argue, far greater than your average city firefighter is, especially without respiratory protection. So to remove the barrier and say that the fire season for work—let's call it May through August—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That does conclude the time now.

We'll now go to the official opposition. MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** I'm going to start with Joanna. A lot of what you talked about I had questions for the minister about as well. I described the increasing of the fines as building a paper tiger, that increasing the penalty from \$50,000 to \$100,000 is meaningless. I had a hard time finding data, but from 2022, the highest fine was \$31,000 and change. So you can increase it to a million dollars, but if you're not even hitting the previous threshold, it's meaningless.

But your story about Dutchie's Fresh Market—I mean, this is outstanding, where there's 15 counts of charges for failure to pay, eight counts of failure to pay the director's orders to pay, and this business just keeps operating. So when you think of this penalty, it becomes meaningless. I can't remember if it's \$469,000 up to date that he stole—and that's only what's been reported.

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** That's right.

**MPP Jamie West:** It's unbelievable. It really is.

I also said this in debate on this bill—that the Toronto Star had an article. From 2020 to 2022, there were 8,400 successful claims—so this is people proving that wage theft was taken from them. Employers owed \$36 million. At the end of 2022, less than 40% was collected. So if you can steal \$36 million and you only have to pay back \$13

million, these bad actors pocket \$23 million. It's an incentive to do wage theft in there.

So what would you like? You talked about an increased power for ESA inspectors, but what would you like to see specifically? Because it's frustrating, as a member of the assembly, to see this happening. I know it's not all business owners, but when there's one that keeps coming up in Waterloo, like you had mentioned, this is disgraceful.

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Yes. I agree with your sentiments exactly. We want it to stop. We want this employer to have to shutter its doors and to stop.

So one of the positive impacts of these four brave workers coming forward with their story is that the public scrutiny that this employer experienced actually caused one of his locations that he operated to close. But he still has another location that he is operating out of, and my assumption, based on the track record, is that he's probably still not paying workers.

We need the ministry to have more power because, as we've seen, even though he's been charged, it still hasn't stopped because he knows—and I think a lot of employers know, as those statistics demonstrate—that, yes, it's a toothless piece of legislation. Because the reality is, either they'll never be prosecuted under section 132, which I think is very common, or even if they are, they won't have to pay because the Ministry of Finance's abilities that they have to be able to recover is—the stats show they're not successful. So there has to be an ability for the ministry to go in and say, “No more business licence. No more employees. No more liquor licence. You can't drive your car until you pay these orders.”

**MPP Jamie West:** I think that makes sense, because just looking at these numbers, you're looking at close to half a million dollars in stolen wages. I mean, even if, with public pressure, they close down Dutchie's, you can open up “Happy Bob's Fresh Market” and do the same thing. And that's only with the money he stole, not to mention the profits from his organization. So I agree more has to be done.

Noah, you pointed out in the video that people don't have respirators, so what do you currently use and what are your members, what are those workers, looking for in terms of respirators?

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** It's complicated. We can't rush scientific research. We certainly do not want our government rushing ahead with a half-finished product, because I would argue—and I believe the union argues—that it would be worse to have a product we're claiming works and the false sense of security when, in fact, the product does not work.

I think more importantly, with regard to this bill at this time, until this research catches up with where we need it to be, we have to recognize that in Ontario, people have been doing this job for over 100 years, and we've never had a respirator. Some fire seasons are okay, but some are bad, and they're getting worse. I just finished my ninth season. It is getting more difficult to do this job; it is getting more difficult to breathe. I'm not making that up

for the sake of an argument. This is a real thing that we deal with.

I think it's only fair that the legislation be amended to at least put wildland firefighters at the same level of structural—even though we are being added to the legislation that city and volunteer firefighters are put on, we aren't treated the same, because our hours of work just aren't the same.

**MPP Jamie West:** You spelled it out really well in terms of the exposure and just the way seasons work. There are fewer fires when it's snowing out, and so I think that you made a good argument.

When this bill came forward, I thought that this was a positive thing, and I think the minister probably felt the same way in terms of how we're aligning the wildland firefighters the same as the urban firefighters, the structural firefighters. But in the video I was looking at, for example, with the amount of smoke in a typical fire, you can exit the building to fresh air. There are not a lot of places to go when there's a fire all around you. And so, basically, you're saying, “You're on the right path, but there's got to be tweaks.” We've got to make sure it matches the workplace and what's happening in the workplace.

Some of the stuff I hadn't thought about: the suit and the exposure to cancer; wearing the same PPE for 19 days in a row. I came out of mining. Showers are mandatory every day. No access to a shower? All of this really shows a high exposure in a limited amount of time, and I think that it's reasonable that we could fix that.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** If I may add: The reason that we camp on the fire line, the reason that it is difficult to launder our clothing, is an issue of money, but it's because we are on the front line in the middle of nowhere, often at the fire's edge. We do that because we can wake up when the sun rises and go to bed when the sun sets and keep fighting the fire, sometimes 16 hours a day. We do that to do our service to the people of Ontario, but that also comes at our own detriment because we are exposed through the night from smoke exposure. So all we're looking for is just to be recognized for this and to start to be treated, I think, a little more fairly.

**MPP Jamie West:** I think that's my time.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** We'll go to the independent. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** First of all, thank you to every one of you for your presentations—very well taken.

I'm going to start with Noah. You mentioned the word “cancer,” and then I just lost it because I lost my mom. She was diagnosed with cancer; it took her within three weeks. Six months after that, my sister was also diagnosed, but she fought like hell, and she survived. So that word really took me by storm right now.

You're saying 16 hours of fighting fire so we all can be safe, and still we're not giving you what you're asking for. You mentioned May to August should be counted as one year. Can you detail that for me? And also, can you detail

your three priorities again? I really need to take that away from here.

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** Absolutely. The May-to-August is actually quite simple and more of a pragmatic solution to a problem. Unfortunately, as we're all aware, there is a recruitment and retention problem that is really harming Ontario's wildfire-fighting capacity. So many of our firefighters begin when they're in university or college, and so what that means is that they're available May through August. It also happens to coincide beautifully, because the worst parts of the fire season generally are May through August.

1140

I started when I was in school as well, so if you're going to tell me that those first four years that I only worked four months only count as 1.3 years of service, that doesn't really seem fair, and I think that the bulk of the chemical and toxic exposure happens between May and August due to the intensity of the fire season. So the argument is, to be treated in the same way that structural firefighters are would go an incredibly long way to consider that May through August be considered one full year of firefighting employment with regard to this legislation.

The other one is just—I won't go into it in too much detail. If you read the report, the report talks about the fact that these numbers, the minimum numbers, are quite arbitrary. I'm not going to try to convince you to eliminate them. That might happen down the road, but I believe that five years of service in what is a really dangerous and detrimental job is a fair balance between people not abusing the system. I don't know why anybody would work five years to abuse a presumptive cancer system, but that's my logic.

And the third and final was, if we have cluster studies, which is to say if we go to our former firefighters and the present firefighters and we track them through their lifetime and we track the diseases that they're getting, we can learn more about what diseases and cancers those occupations are most susceptible to, or, I should say, more susceptible to. It's something they've done in United States and other parts of the world.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I just want to say thank you for coming in and making your submission, but you cannot stop, because we need this change.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** You cannot stop. I'm just saying, show up at every meeting, show up at every opportunity that you can submit and present. It's very, very important. You're representing a lot of you, not just one of you.

Joanna Mullen, I am like, what the neck is going on with this organization? And as well as I know, it's criminal. It's really criminal. You've done the best that you could, but I didn't hear you say, "I've gone to the local MPPs. I've gone to my local MPs." Have you gone through that route? Because we all here around this table care about our constituents. We care about the newcomers. So have you gone through that route?

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Yes. We had a meeting with MPP Aislinn Clancy in, I want to say, June, I believe, and we

brought some of those workers who came forward, and we spoke with her—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

We'll now go to the government. MPP Anand.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Chair, through you again: I want to say thank you again for your presentations.

Talking about the Working for Workers bill, I'll say something that we're so proud of, one thing: It actually is a common-sense bill. Everything and most of the things that you see in this come from consultation with stakeholders. I still remember when I was talking with a truck driver through a blood donation campaign. At the time he talked about Tim Hortons, and that became part of it. Talking about helping and supporting the women: That came out of the consultation. Many, many times, the minister and I and many of our colleagues had visited these firefighters. Those changes that have come have come through those consultations. So I think this is not our bill; it is the bill from the people to us, and we're only implementing. We're making sure that we hear their voices and their voices are heard and implemented.

I just want to say thank you for your presence. Thank you for your asks. Please reach out to the ministry office. We do have an open policy to keep this communication on, and hopefully, I'll see many more changes coming from that conversation. I just wanted to share that with you.

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** I really appreciate it. And if I take your words to mean what I think they do, that some of these changes might come, then I would agree with you deeply that this is a common-sense bill for workers.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Absolutely.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** MPP Barnes.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** I'm going to have a question for Steve. He has been really quiet. Is he still online?

Hi, Steve. Thank you again for dialing in and being a part of the conversation. Having looked at the bill and some of the things that are in place right now, what are some of the things that you think are a positive step towards assisting the group that you represent? And what are some of the things you would really like to highlight in any forward bill?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Yes, thank you so much for your question. Number one: that the system, in terms of legislation, restore the balance that has been eroded over the last few decades. The number one is to increase the level of compensation when people are entitled from 85% of net earnings to 90% of net earnings. We're falling behind almost all of the other provinces in Canada on this issue and just kind of restoring that baseline.

The second is, what happens to workers as they get older? We all work away, and we make regular contributions to Canada pension benefits so that when we retire, we've got a little bit of income coming in. The changes to the workplace safety and insurance that happened in 1998 reduced the contribution from 10% of your benefits to 5% of your benefits. Over the same period, we have seen the

contributions to Canada pension increase, so that now, if we were to have the same contributions when we're unemployed or because of disability as if we were still working, the WSIB would have to put that loss of retirement income at a 15% contribution. So we're really just asking for it to maintain the losses that we have suffered as a result of unemployment based on our disability going forward.

Along that same issue is what happens as people reach the age of 65. Years ago, it was declared that at 65, you retire. Well, with our economy, that's really changed. Now, 30% of workers continue to work past the age of 65. So what we're asking for is that that cut-off that happens at the age of 65, in terms of entitlement to workers' compensation and workplace safety insurance benefits, be changed so that it accommodates workers who work beyond the age of 65.

The really big issue that we think is driving a lot of the changes that are detrimental to workers is because of the erosion of the collective liability aspect of the system. As I mentioned, the system was based on the idea of collective liability. In the mid-1980s and into the 1990s, individual liability was really promoted as a way to try to enhance health and safety. Well, that's been shown through research to not work. In fact, what it's done is encouraged employers to cheat the system, much like we heard from the grocery store in Waterloo. If businesses are not held accountable in a real way for their performance, they see that there's an economic benefit for working the system.

We're seeing more and more businesses now using claims management strategies to discourage their employees from registering a claim, not registering a claim themselves, opposing claims at all times, finding ways to deny workers their legal rights, and they end up benefiting financially as a result. So the system now, through the changes in law—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** —from collective liability to individual liability, has, in fact, encouraged bad behaviour among some businesses, where we think that the law should set the standard for good behaviour and then enforce that good behaviour. The legislation had changed in 2016 to address some of these issues around claim suppression, and large fines were included in that legislation if a company could be found to be suppressing claims. Well, in fact, it doesn't work. It's almost impossible to prove in the court that an employer intended to suppress claims, so there's very few actual charges brought forward that are successful. Once again, bad businesses see that, "Hey, there's not really a risk. There's not a downside risk. They're not going to catch us. Even if they catch us, what are they going to give us, a fine of up \$250?"

1150

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

We'll now go to the NDP, the official opposition. MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you, Chair. I like calling myself the NDP too.

I have one final question for Noah, and then I'm going to hand it off to my colleague. A couple of weeks ago I was here with MPP Wayne Gates, and we were talking about the prostate cancer test and the fact that it's about 50 bucks and the fact that some people don't get it because they feel like that cost makes it either prohibitive or maybe you don't need it.

One of the things that MPP Gates shared with me is that firefighters are 1.4 times more likely to get prostate cancer. I'm just wondering, do you and your workers support having the PSA test covered by OHIP?

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** I think anything to help earlier testing is definitely beneficial. I would actually argue that those numbers are probably much higher, based out of research from the United States. We don't do a very good job, truthfully, of working with our general practitioners, our doctors; they're not trained to look for occupational diseases in the same way that occupational hygienists and such are. So I think these cluster studies are very important, and obviously, affording tests to people would be absolutely beneficial.

**MPP Jamie West:** Okay. Thank you.

Chair, I'm going to hand it off to my colleague.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** MPP Wong-Tam.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate it. Thank you to all our speakers who've appeared at the committee today.

My first question is for you, Mr. Freedman. This is not the first time that we've heard from OPSEU or the wildfire crew. Every year at Queen's Park we have a reception with the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, and the issue continues to be raised by organizations that represent the health and well-being of firefighters, and that is primarily that the firefighting budget in Ontario needs to increase and not decrease—a trend that we have seen from 2022 to 2023 to 2024—and also the lack of proper firefighting equipment.

So I'm just curious to know, can you tell us how many times you have made this request to government and to committee?

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** We've made two very succinct requests over the last however many years, one of which is we're still not actually recognized as firefighters. This is not really the place for this, but I just want to reiterate to everybody that Ontario's wildland firefighters are not considered firefighters; we are classified as resource technicians, which means that we do not get treated as regular firefighters do. We have been pushing for the government to fix this. Caroline Mulroney and the Treasury Board could fix this quite simply. I've heard from their own negotiating team that that is absolutely a possibility if it's the will of the government. We are looking to be reclassified, which would also help us make better arguments about budgeting and things like that, because, right now, we're not treated the same.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you. And because our request has come before government and the appropriate minister on several occasions—in the meantime, while you are wrongly classified and not given the proper equip-

ment, the firefighters are going into work and experiencing and exposed to harm. Is that an accurate assessment?

**Mr. Noah A. Freedman:** Absolutely. I am not sure how things are going behind closed doors because I'm not invited behind closed doors. I do hear that things might be in the works, but it's a lot of bureaucracy, it's a lot of policy, and the people in this room are the ones who can fix it.

Professional laundering for our PPE: Even if they provide us five sets of uniforms instead of two, if they just ship us out a clean one and then professionally launder it, that would go a long way to helping us.

More showers or availability of shower units: Right now, the shower units that we have—they say they exist, but I've almost never seen one on a fire line because they weigh like 80 pounds. No one is shipping that out on a helicopter. It's a lot of complications.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you. I think we are seeing more wildfires. We're seeing more fires. We're seeing dwindling staffing levels. We're seeing reduced budgets year over year.

Ms. Mullen, thank you very much for coming out today. I am quite taken aback by the story that you shared. I'm very pleased to know that the press has picked up on it, but of course, the press is not government. They're not able to change the legislation. They're not going to be able to collect the fines on behalf of the workers, and they're also not going to be able to force the bad employer to pay up.

We also know that when it comes to vulnerable people—you mentioned that the workers, in this case for Dutchie's Fresh Market, are Ukrainian newcomers, refugees, so that has added additional hardship into their settlement into Canada, into the Kitchener-Waterloo area. But we also know that we see a pattern of vulnerable people in Ontario exploited for wage theft, and primarily women, as well as racialized people—Black, Indigenous, people of colour.

I also see that this has oftentimes impacted on sectors such as hospitality. We're seeing that with respect to hotel workers. We're seeing it with respect to farm workers, and truckers have made the news as of late around wage theft. And so this is not a one-off situation; this is a systemic problem in a system that is just broken, that rewards employers for bad behaviour. It has become very profitable. They build it into their financial statements as part of their profit centre.

The recommendation that you came forward to provide to the committee today specifically outlines what government can do to stop the bad behaviour. Do you believe that government is aware of these recommendations? Has any organization, especially workers' rights organizations, brought this to their attention before?

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Not that I am aware of, or at least not this very specific request. Again, in terms of the idea, though, of having a licensing regime, workers fought for that for a long time, specifically around temporary help agencies and recruiters—which, as you know, as of this July, is finally now in effect, and it's our hope that that is really going to make a big difference for workers who

work through temp agencies and recruiters to be able to recover.

But for everyone else, they're still struggling. They're not getting their wages, and you're absolutely right that companies exist on the fact that they just never intend to pay their workers.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Just to clarify, I'm not saying that the government is not aware of wage theft. They're aware of wage theft. This is the first time that a licensing regime or perhaps the ability to revoke existing licences if they come in breach of this type of criminal behaviour—that's what you're saying the government should explore. Is that correct?

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Yes, absolutely.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** And because—I mean, we're obviously discussing Bill 190. The recommendation that you would put before us is specifically to amend Bill 190 because right now the bill doesn't go far enough to support and protect workers, is what you're saying.

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Yes.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Okay. And with respect to the opportunities of legislation coming before advocates and lawyers like yourself: That doesn't happen very often, where a body of legislation is cracked open and you have the time and the opportunity to fix it. If we don't fix it at committee today or within this phase 3 study, it's a squandered opportunity, would you say?

**Ms. Joanna Mullen:** Yes, I would agree, absolutely.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Okay.

Thank you very much, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much, and that concludes the time for that one. We now go to the independent. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** How many minutes do I have?

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** You have four and a half.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Oh. Just checking.

My question is going to go to Steve Mantis. Steve Mantis, thank you for that robust presentation and the answers that you've given to MPP Barnes's questions as well. I want to focus on—in your presentation, you mentioned that approximately 15,000 workers end up with a permanent life injury within a year. My question to you—and I didn't know it was that much, so thank you for enlightening me with that data. What type of pressures does this figure have on your organization?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** So this is really a human tragedy. Us volunteers who are trying to help others going through the same thing, we suffer that stress as well. Just thinking about it now, it brings tears to my eyes because seeing, really, that human suffering that didn't have to happen; that, if we had a system that actually was there to support workers when they become injured and ill, that tragedy could be really minimized.

Yes, there's going to always be adjustment when you become disabled. Yes, you're not able to do all of the things you were able to do. Your health is going to be compromised. But it's a lifelong process once you become disabled. It doesn't go away. In fact, it gets worse over the



years. And being treated by a system that is there, that's supposed to help you—seeing you as a cheater, as someone just looking for a handout, rather than a person who actually was injured through usually no fault of their own and is now just trying to recover.

And instead of helping recover, it's like, “Oh, I don't think you're really doing the right thing,” and it leaves people in a limbo where they don't know what to do. They're afraid to move forward because they're afraid that it's the wrong thing and the WSIB is going to cut them off. And you need to be able to risk when you're now in that transition. You need to be able to try new things, see what you're able to do with your limited capacities, so that you can then chart a course forward, rather than being discouraged to continually identify as an ill or an injured person.

We want to get better. We want to go back to work. We want to get on with our lives, but we get stuck because of how the system will continually ask for more information about how sick you are, rather than saying, “We accept that. Now, let's move forward in the most positive way we can.”

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Thank you for that. So when you cannot support these workers through the compensation system, WSIB, that's supposed to be there for those workers, how do you support them?

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** What is next? Because we know they lose their homes. We know they end up homeless. Can you share some insights on that?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** It's a really big challenge for us. We're all just volunteers. So really, what we help is with that emotional support and information support. The systems that we have, people oftentimes then end up, as you say, homeless. A study done in Toronto by Street Health found 57% of the people that were homeless that they interviewed had been hurt at work.

This is what's happening to our workers. Instead of being treated like contributing members of society, they're thrown away, and if they end up homeless, then we blame them again because they're not “getting it together.” We need to have a system that says no one is left behind, that we're all valued, and we can all contribute. And in fact, that will help us—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That does conclude the time. We very much hate to cut that off.

That also concludes the time for this panel, so I want to thank all three of the panellists for a great job of bringing your positions forward and helping us with the deliberations on this bill.

With that, the committee is now recessed until 3 p.m.

*The committee recessed from 1204 to 1500.*

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Good afternoon. I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to order. We're meeting to resume public hearings on Bill 190, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters.

Just a reminder: Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments should come

through the Chair—that's a line we have to put in to make sure we keep everybody on both sides of the table in order.

As a reminder, each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation, and after we've heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from the members of the committee. This time for questions will be divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members, and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent member.

## ONTARIO MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

### TORONTO AND AREA ROAD BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

#### ELLISDON

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** We will now be prepared to call forward the first panel. The first panel is the Ontario Medical Association, the Toronto and Area Road Builders Association, and EllisDon.

We do ask that as you start your presentation, make sure you mention your name so we know who's speaking, for Hansard. Of the seven minutes, at six minutes, I will say “one minute.” Do not stop, because the punchline always comes in the one minute, and at the end of one minute, it's over.

With that, we will start first with the Ontario Medical Association.

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** Good morning—good afternoon—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** There we go. First mistake.

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** Good afternoon, Chair Hardeman and members of the standing committee and colleagues. My name is Dr. Dominik Nowak. I'm a family doctor in Toronto, but I'm here today in my role as president at the Ontario Medical Association to provide our perspective on Bill 190, the Working for Workers Five Act, 2024.

Before I begin, I want to share my gratitude to the group here at the standing committee, as well Minister David Piccini for his leadership in this important initiative. The Minister of Labour's commitment to our health care system is important, and his collaboration with the Ontario Medical Association has been key in shaping this legislation, especially as it pertains to sick notes. He and his team have worked closely with us to bring Bill 190 to where it is today, and we deeply appreciate their efforts in making sure the voices of health professionals are considered in this process. Also, on a personal note, I want to thank each of you for your public service and your dedication to a better health care system as we have these conversations.

Today, I'm going to tell you what a typical sick note visit would look like in my office as a family doctor. And I'm going to share with you two changes that we're recommending to this bill to avoid unintended consequences for workers and our health system, and to future-proof this bill for the years ahead.

I'll start with a story: Anna was sick a week ago. She stayed home from work to get better, but just as importantly to protect her friends and her colleagues from getting sick. I was writing a letter for Anna this week. In my letter, I write, "Anna tells me she was unwell last week. Thank you for accommodating her."

Sick notes ask doctors to be HR police for private organizations, but as you can see, they're rarely medically useful, and you don't exactly need a medical doctor degree to write one.

Anna's request for this note has several downstream effects:

(1) Unnecessary visits: Anna's visit, she knows, took a spot in my schedule that someone else could have used. The requirement for sick notes contributes to medically unnecessary visits that take valuable time away from patients who genuinely need care, and these are a drain on an already overburdened health care system.

(2) Avoidable spread: We know that, by coming into the office, Anna is using public transit, visiting other people along the way, maybe staying in our waiting room for a bit and maybe visiting with health professionals. That risk spreads to people that she meets along the way, as well as ourselves as health professionals. It also sidelines her from actually recovering fully when she's spending that entire day visiting me in the office and on the commute to me.

(3) Administrative burden: In family medicine alone, unnecessary administration, red tape, paperwork—the bureaucracy of our health care system—can take up an average of 19 hours for our family doctors per week. That's time that's taken away from work that we could be doing for patients. After all, I went to medical school to care for patients, not fill out forms.

So where do we go from here? We have some recommendations, and two in particular that are going to help avoid unintended consequences to workers in our health care system, and then future-proof this important work that all of us are talking about here today:

(1) The requirement for evidence: As the bill currently stands, while employers will no longer be able to demand a sick note from a qualified health professional like a doctor, like myself, for protected days, they're still able to request other forms of evidence. The OMA is concerned that this provision could still lead workers to feel obligated to seek out a doctor's note or some kind of documentation.

To strengthen the protections in this bill, we suggest removing the requirement for any type of evidence during protected sick days. And, as you saw, the evidence is not really robust in the first place. It's me writing a note based on the person's recollection of their experience last week—doesn't exactly take a medical doctor to do this.

(2) The number of protected sick days: The current provision of three protected sick days is not enough. While we understand the intention to align this with unpaid short-term sick leave protections, three days in a calendar year is very limited. The average number of absences per year exceeds this number and usually, by our counts, is around 11 or so per year.

An alternative approach could be what Nova Scotia is doing. Nova Scotia workers can have two separate absences of up to five consecutive days or fewer. Many people will take more than three sick days and, after an employee has taken those three sick days, we're back to square one where employers can once again request sick notes to substantiate that time away. We're back to where we started.

In conclusion, we support the intent behind this bill. At the same time, first, we strongly urge the committee to remove the requirement for any form of evidence for protected sick days; and second, increasing the number of protected sick days would better reflect the realities of illness and absenteeism in our workplace and that our health care system is experiencing.

We know the health care system is facing enormous challenges, and removing unnecessary administrative burden, like sick notes, is a win for patients, it's a win for doctors, and it's a win for our health care system. What we're asking for is future-proofing this important bill to make it robust for the years to come.

Thank you very much, and thank you again for your service to the public and the important work that you do on this committee.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much for your presentation—much appreciated.

Now we'll go to the Toronto and Area Road Builders Association.

**Ms. Raly Chakarova:** Good afternoon, Chair Hardeman and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

My name is Raly Chakarova, and I'm the executive director of the Toronto and Area Road Builders Association, or TARBA. TARBA is the collective bargaining agent for employers with LIUNA Local 183, operating engineers Local 793 and Teamsters Local 230.

The association represents unionized contractors in the greater Toronto and Simcoe areas who are building new and maintaining existing highways, roads, intersections, transit corridors, bike lanes and sidewalks, among other vital work to keep residents, visitors and goods moving across our region. Our goal is to champion industry best practices and keep building the critical infrastructure we all need—not just for now, but for future generations.

I want to start by acknowledging the leadership of this government, under Minister Piccini and Premier Ford, for prioritizing the construction sector, its employers and workers, and for these statutory efforts that ensure the legislation and regulation that govern work in Ontario reflect the needs of both Ontario businesses and workers.

We have appreciated the government's progressive sector- and issue-specific approach as part of these pieces of legislation that has taken input directly from industry on where improvements are needed and allowed room for consultation and further input in a targeted manner to ensure amendments actually reflect the realities on the ground and that adoption is tenable.

**1510**

We've been very supportive of past acts, and it's my privilege to speak to the fifth iteration of Working for Workers, another great legislative effort that focuses on enhancing safety on-site and reducing the barriers for individuals, both local and newcomers, to start meaningful and well-compensated careers in the construction skilled trades.

According to the 2024 BuildForce report, nearly a quarter, or what is 40,000 workers, of the current construction labour force are expected to retire just here in the greater Toronto area by 2030. To offset these retirements and meet the strong building demand and investments taking place across the region, the sector will need to hire, train and retain nearly 60,000 more workers by that time frame. That's likely a conservative estimate and the numbers are much higher.

As committee members have no doubt seen all around the Toronto region and in your own communities, this demand and investment is driven by both work to maintain our existing infrastructure in a state of good repair—work that is critical to catch up on years of underinvestment—as well as delivering on new, vital regional transportation and transit projects, like Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass, the Ontario Line, as well as house-enabling infrastructure like roads, water mains and sanitation, housing itself and other needed community projects for our growing population.

Given the current labour market needs of the province and the ambitious pipeline of infrastructure work and housing being built over the next decade, it is imperative that every consideration be made to ensure that Ontario has enough skilled trade workers to get the job done. We've seen the difference previous Working for Workers bills have made: an increase in apprenticeship registrations, an increase in the inclusion of BIPOC and women entering the industry, and younger people choosing a construction career for themselves as a first choice. In that regard, this legislation builds on previous important work to reduce barriers to entry with the introduction of the Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training stream in high schools, proposed changes to academic credentials for mature individuals, and ensuring washroom facilities are not only mandated but in good and sanitary conditions.

Through our membership with the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, on whose board I sit, we've been engaged in providing ongoing input on how to improve the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program and its role in helping to address construction sector labour shortages. This includes advocacy to amend the current application process for various OINP streams, particularly the in-demand skills stream, to make it more applicable to the unique employment considerations in the construction sector, as well as less onerous and administratively burdensome for employers to use, especially those who are small and medium-sized and can greatly benefit from access to a skilled labour force to meet their needs.

We look forward to working with the government and officials on the proposed legislative changes and ensuring

they serve the labour needs of the construction sector and beyond. TARBA and our members are also committed to health and safety, both from physical dangers and creating inclusive and safe workplaces for employees. Safety is not a matter of choice. It's a shared responsibility and a deliberate choice that each person makes. Everyone deserves to get home safe from work and to be free of harassment at their place of work.

Thank you again for your time today and for your commitment to your constituents and our province. I'm happy to give the remainder of my time back and take any questions after the deputations are over.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much for the presentation.

We now will go to EllisDon.

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** Good afternoon, Chair Hardeman and members. My name is Stephen Chaplin. I'm the senior vice-president for health, safety and environment for EllisDon. I'd like to give a little bit of context about EllisDon and some of our initiatives as it supports the bill.

EllisDon is an all-Canadian, employee-owned construction company founded in London, Ontario, in 1951. As some of you know, we build some of the most recognizable and large infrastructure projects across Canada, in addition to our vertical buildings and infrastructure site at the Port Lands waterfront. Currently, we have 5,200 direct employees, but within the subtrade community, we employ over 10,000 subcontractors.

We like to think that we are a leading general contractor with health, safety and environment and an active employer in working to implement measures to send folks home safe to their families each night. A couple of examples of initiatives that we're working on that we think makes a difference is hard hats. We've had a lot of critical injuries with head injuries. We recently have implemented these climber-style hard hats with side protection with an integrated chinstrap. We found that if we can just keep the hard hats on when employees fall, we have a greater chance of reducing traumatic injury.

The other one is working at height. Effective January 1, across all our operations, we're lowering the tie-off height requirement from the legislative standard of 10 feet to six feet and it will apply to all our subcontractors. We feel that this will make a difference in critical injuries as well—and implementing task-specific gloves.

So a bit about the bill: I'd like to say that EllisDon is in full support of the Working for Workers bill, Bill 190. We feel that this is an important piece of legislation that will help make a difference to all workers across Ontario.

I'm going to speak to a few sections about the bill. As employers and an industry, we all have a responsibility to provide better working conditions for our workers. Providing clean and sanitary restrooms is one of the important pieces of the bill that will help with that. We're already doing a lot of that now and I know that our trades appreciate that.

Creating environments where workers are free from harassment on and off the job site is another important part of this bill. We need to work together to make our work-

places safer, not just from physical trauma but from psychological trauma as well. Every worker has the right to go home safe each night to their families, for sure, but they also have the right to go home free from psychological trauma. With the addition of technology and social platforms being so integrated into our personal lives, harassment is often extended beyond the physical workplace. This addition of virtual harassment being added to the definition will make a difference. It's also really going to help improve mental health with our workers.

I'm going to speak a little bit about supporting women at work. We would say that, as an industry, we're just not doing enough. Women in construction is an important part of our business. We need to be doing more to encourage women to join our industry. Providing access to proper-fitting PPE, like safety vests and harnesses that they have to wear, is one of those ways. As a company, we struggle with that, and we struggle with finding a vest that fits smaller-frame bodies and being versatile for the different frames that are out there. We actually found that the products were not readily available, and we had to hire a company to build and make these vests so that we could supply them to our workers. We call that Fit Your Frame.

As an industry, we also need to be more inclusive, and we need to be providing menstrual products for those who need it. This is something I didn't think I'd be speaking to today, but I can tell you, we've been doing this for about a year now across all our sites and we were surprised at how much it's being utilized and well received. In fact, what we noticed is the products are generally being used by all the trade workers, not so much by the professional office-type workers. We think this is good for the industry and we support this.

**Keeping our workers safe and healthy:** As a safety person, we always need to be doing more to help keep our workers safe. Expanding the types of safety equipment on site will help with this. Very similar to the introduction of the naloxone kits, the addition of safety equipment like AEDs on work sites will help make a difference in critical events. Now, I can tell you, fortunately, we don't have to use a lot of AEDs for critical events, because fortunately, we don't have a lot. What we do find is we have these non-occupational events like heart attacks from just personal factors, and we have many examples where we're able to save colleagues' and workers' lives, or people walking down the street who have had an event, by just having the presence. We have over 250 work sites across Canada; AEDs are in every one of our work sites.

A side note on naloxone: again, same thing—all across Canada. And we found success. We found success that we were able to at least have one event where we saved a life and that's important to us—really important to everybody.

I would say we need to be more active in looking at ways to reduce critical injuries and fatalities. In industry, we call these SIF-type injuries—serious incident fatality—which also relates to life-ending, life-threatening and life-altering. I would say, although the industry has done a fairly good job of reducing these non-critical-type injuries, the fatality rate across the construction industry has re-

mained relatively flat across the last 10 years. As part of this bill, there is a focus on reviewing critical injuries and fatalities, which we are in support of.

Lastly, I'd like to talk about reducing barriers for employment and opening pathways. This is very important. As we all know, there's a shortage of skilled trades across the industry and we need to address that. I think this bill helps with that. It does help with that. It makes it easier for skilled trade immigrants to enter Canada, and programs like OINP and streaming the reduction of paperwork will help make it easier and more effective for employers to bring over skilled workers through the program.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** Thank you. As an example, in the OINP program, if you have any outstanding health and safety orders or acts, applicants are given a notice of a refused application. For companies the size of EllisDon, we always have some open orders. Some can be very minor, and they're closed within the same day—or they're not closed from the officers, I would say. This creates a lot of extra paperwork and running around to try to find and close those when, often, they're quite small. We need to have a mechanism for trusted employers and for people with good operating behaviours to help streamline that process. I believe this bill will help with that.

**1520**

In closing, what I would like to say is this bill helps to make it easier for trades to enter our industry. To me, and to us, it's all about creating a culture of care for our workers. I would end with: As an industry and government, we need to continually make our work sites safer and more inclusive.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you. Time's up. That concludes the time for the presentations.

We now will start with the official opposition. MPP Wong-Tam.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you to all of our presenters for taking the time to speak with us. You thanked us for our public service; I want to thank you for taking your time to bring your knowledge and your expertise to this committee.

I'm very interested in hearing from you again, Dr. Nowak, in particular about the administrative burden that health care professionals, especially doctors, are experiencing. Two million Ontarians are struggling to find a family physician, and for many of them, including my own parents—it took them almost three years to find someone who could actually take care of their needs. They're in their elderly years, so every day counts.

With respect to removing the administrative burden, I know this is not the first time that the OMA has appeared before Queen's Park. I know you have a good relationship with the ongoing and various Ministers of Health, so I know that the issue is not necessarily new; it has been socialized on many occasions at Queen's Park.

I'm just curious to know, because you've brought this matter before the members of provincial Parliament before, what are you hoping to hear from government members or this committee today? Is it a matter of amending the

legislation that's before us when that time appears so that we can reduce that evidence of burden that you're talking about?

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** Thank you, MPP Wong-Tam. The administrative burden is a death-by-a-thousand-cuts situation for our health care system. Right now, we have a situation where family doctors, on average, are spending 19 hours of unnecessary work every single week on things like forms, chasing down referrals, and navigating the sheer bureaucracy and red tape of our health care system. This is one example of that, and forms in general are one example of that. It doesn't take an MD to fill a sick note; it doesn't take an MD to fill many of the forms that come across our desks.

What I'm hoping to see more broadly is a concerted effort around removing a major part of that 19 hours. This is an important start to that. The important start that we'd like to say "yes, and" to would be, "Yes, this is important, and let's remove that specific requirement around substantiation."

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you. The 19 hours a week required for administrative purposes that doctors are deploying their heavily trained and highly educated skills to administering, I believe, adds up to almost 40% of their workweek. If we were to quantify that even further, I believe that this would free up about 2,000 additional doctors—or doctor hours, I should say of 2,000 individuals could be added back into that workforce today if we were to move that administrative burden. Is that information correct?

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** I'll say "yes, and," MPP Wong-Tam. I'll say, yes, that's important to making sure that doctors can focus on being doctors, and the consequence of doing that—letting doctors be doctors—would be that we actually reinvigorate the workforce that's now feeling like family practice is no longer a sustainable business model. Nearly half of family doctors are actually no longer practising family medicine, in large part because of how intense the administrative burden is and how strongly it leads to burnout in our colleagues.

I would say, yes, it lets the existing family doctors focus on family medicine work, but also, working on that administrative burden will pull in some of that workforce that's now being untapped to get back into family medicine, primary care, which we know makes a difference as that foundation to the health care system and saves taxpayers money for now and in the long run as well.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Earlier this year, the opposition put forward a recommendation that we hire more administrative staff to provide support for family doctors as well as create interdisciplinary health teams to remove some of that burdensome work doctors are being asked to do. A measure like that, I believe, would also go a distance in supporting the objective that the OMA is appearing before this committee to advocate for. Is that a fair assumption?

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** I would support any kind of concerted effort that would remove administrative burden, whether it's hiring folks who can take that off the plates of

doctors or, otherwise, other concerted efforts to make sure that 19 hours is being removed and we can focus on doing the care.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Okay. Thank you very much.

A question for you, my dear friend Stephen Chaplin from *EllisDon*. I was formerly a downtown city councillor in Toronto, so over the years, I've approved tens of thousands of housing units, probably, over my 12 years at city council. We definitely need to accelerate the development. Oftentimes, we've seen projects approved, but they don't necessarily go ahead in a timely fashion for a whole host of reasons.

Now, of course, market conditions have changed. I hear certain elected officials speaking about high interest rates, but I also hear about the need for skilled trades. So what in this bill, as you read it, will actually support the hiring of more skilled labourers to join the construction workforce?

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** Thank you. There are a few things in here, but one of them would be the pathways in terms of the OINP program; for us to reduce some of the paperwork to get them in quicker would be a benefit. But things that we're also seeing is the length of time it takes for folks with qualifications, like a doctor that comes from a different country. How many Uber drivers do you go out and see that say, "I'm a doctor," or "I'm a skilled trade from another area"? So parts of this bill could help with that.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** Sorry, I got startled. You've got a loud voice.

Arguably, I'm not—there are people at our office that are better on the skilled trades, but the part that I touch is the OINP, with bringing folks in. The trusted employers, I understand, is something that's being worked on that can help bring folks in quicker. Just helping to accelerate folks that already have certification in other countries—if we can move that quicker to move them and not be Uber drivers and move them into the trades program, that would help us as well.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** We'll now go to the independent. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for your detailed presentations.

In my first round of questions, I'm going to go to Dr. Nowak. It's great to see you again. My heart goes out to all the doctors today, all the nurses, all the PSWs, because we know that you guys are working tirelessly, and more hours than you should, and you're feeling the burnout.

I can attest to this. I took myself and my daughter—because we both suffer with asthma. It was around, maybe, I would say, 11 p.m. in the night. I'm not going to say which hospital we went to, but hallway medicine: It's for real. I was actually shocked at what I saw. I overheard other patients, what they were being treated for, so they overheard what I am being treated for. I didn't want to say, "I am an elected official." I hope no one was there that

recognized me at all. But we had to wait many, many, many hours for puffers.

My daughter does not have a family doctor, of course. She was playing basketball in the States, and she's back, and she got on the brunt side of not getting a family doctor. But that's besides the point of what I'm trying to raise here.

1530

The burnout that you guys are experiencing is real. The 19 hours of paperwork, how many years you've studied, to come back and be doing more paperwork than actually seeing patients—I think this is something the government can tweak vary easily.

You talk about team-based primary care. You touched on it very lightly. Can you expand on that? But also, can you talk about the sick days, the paper that you're just looking at and signing for someone to be off? It's repetitive; it's not going away. Can you talk about that for the record?

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** Yes. I'll start with team-based care. We know we have an aging population and an increased number of people coming into Ontario. People are living longer as well and also are sicker because of modern advances in medicine, public health and health care. From that lens, things are working well in terms of people actually living longer with disease. That also means our health care system is more strained, and no one profession can do it alone.

Right now, we have a situation where we're asking individuals to do—basically, doctors are forced to be the doctor and then also the social worker, also the form filler, also the etc. And team-based care says, "Look, it's a team effort." Health care is a team sport. Let's get folks working together. Let's get offices with doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, rehab specialists, folks that are amazing in terms of AI maybe, now and into the future, folks that can off-load some of that administration from the plates of health professionals. Let's get them working together for a population of people. That's what team-based care is.

We need to move in that direction. We've seen steps in that direction recently, in the last few years, but what our health care system is going to need is—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** —a robust approach, a robust investment in making sure that everybody has access to that care.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** So was that one of your recommendations? Because I came in a little bit late, but did you put forward that as a recommendation? Have you put this as a recommendation in the past?

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** Yes, we've been advocating for team-based care all the way through. I didn't mention it here specifically. It would make a difference also to the administrative burden that we're talking about today.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** These are common-sense solutions. Thank you for putting that on the record for me.

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** Yes, of course. Thank you, MPP Hazell.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** MPP Triantafilopoulos.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you very much to our speakers for joining us today. Obviously, your views and opinions, based on your own experience, are very important to us, so we're glad that you were able to join us.

I'd like to start, if I may, with Mr. Chaplin. I was very intrigued to hear that you describe that women seem to be more interested and appreciative of some of the changes that our government has put into place, particularly around PPE, menstrual products etc. It seems to me that that is one way that women can be more attracted into the skilled trades and to the construction sector, and it basically breaks down barriers. Perhaps you could describe to us a little bit more about what your company's experience has been, particularly on a national level.

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** Like I had mentioned earlier, it was a bit surprising to me about providing menstrual products, but the amount of people that actually use that—our teams, they're actually gentlemen. They look at what brands, what types, what's going, and they go to Walmart and they're buying them. They're being well used. Folks have said that when they have to use porta johns, they're looking for more eco-friendly places to dispose of the pads, so now we're providing that as well at the offices. It's really about providing levels of respect for women in the workplace.

But when we talk about the sanitation of the restrooms, not just for women but for all workers, we really take pride in trying to do an above-better job, so that when folks are at the work site, they can have as much care as they can at home.

The PPE—that's a really tough one. What we find is, they almost look like—forgive me—dresses. They're big. They're bulky. They don't fit the frame of a smaller-frame person. We just haven't found the supply that's out there, so we did have to find a tailor. We manufactured and we provided them. It's been quite appreciated. It's made a difference. It's made a difference with our inclusivity teams.

On the fall arrest gear, having a non-supportive fall arrest gear around the chest area of a lady or your hips can really be damaging, and often they just grab a universal fit. So the more that we can put women into the proper PPE, the better and the safer it is.

What I can tell you is they have been quite appreciative, it is making a difference, and we're going to continue to push there.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you. Can we also talk a little bit further about the issue around virtual harassment? Again, that's an important area of concern to our government and, obviously, with more and more jobs becoming remote and virtual, it has a role to play as well in making it a safer workplace. So perhaps you could expand on that as well.

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** We think we're already being fairly active on that as an organization. It does make an impact to the industry as a whole and to Ontario as a

whole. People just can't escape harassment now. We often will see harassment at the hoist between worker and worker. Often it would end there. There would be a skirmish. It would be a weekend. They'd come back fresh. But now, with social media and that, we find that people just can't escape it. In addition to drawings in bathroom stalls and that, now you've got this following them home.

When we look at the mental health of our employees across the industry, it's one of the highest suicide rates, as you all know, in construction. It plays on the mental health of our workers. Like many companies, EllisDon included, we've hired a mental health specialist—we're hiring another one—just to help provide that support for folks.

But adding this into the bill and to legislation, that virtual harassment can be anywhere, I think that's an important part. It's going to make a difference. I'm fully supportive of it.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** You mentioned that you have already employed people who are to provide the mental health supports. What is the take-up amongst the workforce? What are you finding? Is there a stigma attached to it, or do you find that they're actually able to use it?

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** It's interesting. What we found was, with certain EAP providers—externally, third party—we just weren't getting the response, or it would be too long. We do a lot of facilities management in the hospitals—our offices are often by the morgue—and our employees see things that people shouldn't normally see each day. The comments we hear are, “You've just got to toughen up. It takes three months, but you get over it. We're tough people. You just get hardened after a while.” And we thought, well, that's not a great response. We need to provide a level of care. Or, if they do call these third parties, it's long times.

So the uptake with the mental health person has been great. This person has also taken a number of what we call suicidal ideation calls. Fortunately, from those calls we didn't have any that were successful, if I put it that way. But it's the way the industry is going. Most of the general contractors in the industry are starting to provide mental health specialists.

We see that, when you're on site, there are different levels of care. If you talk to the workers, some people want to talk to someone and some people want resources. So it's learning what folks need.

On reducing the stigma, one of the things that we're doing is we've created an app so that anybody on the work site—any union, any person on site—can open up that app and get access to tools to help support them.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you.

I have a question for Ms. Chakarova—if I pronounced that correctly. I have a rather unusual last name as well, so I like to pride myself on saying it correctly.

I wonder if you could talk a little bit on the fact that we do have an aging demographic and that we know that many of the skilled tradespeople are at the higher end and aging out. What can we do, particularly with the current generation, to do more to attract them into the industries?

**Ms. Raly Chakarova:** That's a great question; thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Raly Chakarova:** I guess I'll summarize it to say that we're in trouble. As I shared with some of the BuildForce statistics, in the greater Toronto area alone, we simply can't deliver on our infrastructure agenda as a society and as a province without that skilled workforce.

I have to give a lot of credit to this government, because one of the biggest barriers was the stereotypes that came with a career in construction. It was a third-choice career, a last-choice career, a no-choice career. And starting with the leadership of Minister McNaughton and continued with Minister Piccini, that has really turned around, and we've seen a tangible difference in the interest of young people looking to start a career in construction that's measurable, that's there. I think now we're doing some great advances on how the province can leverage its own immigration numbers so that we can, as my co-deputants here said, attract the newcomers.

1540

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

We'll now go to the official opposition. MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** I'm going to continue with Raly, if that's okay, because I had a similar question about that. You had mentioned that your sector needs to hire and train 60,000 members, and that's in a core area, not including across the province. I've been thinking, from earlier deputations today, about how in my dad's generation, for example, we had a technical school that was all shops. And in my generation, every school had a shop. Now—I know it's me on record, so I don't want to say how many, but there are fewer schools that have shops. Are we missing an opportunity by not reinvesting in the shops in schools?

**Ms. Raly Chakarova:** Yes, absolutely. I think you can see that there was a shift in the education system that moved away from the skilled trades in favour of college and university and the careers that those education systems support. That's not a bad thing; we just went too hard the other way. We should absolutely have more doctors, as we've heard here today, but we also need a lot of skilled tradespeople.

Again, I would say some of the changes that have been made at the education level to bring that awareness that that is a career option, to make some hands-on opportunities like expanding co-op and, through this bill, the new FAST program that will be available in high schools—all of that is going to make a tangible difference. Bringing back shop class—of course.

This is more of a personal observation, but I think the failing of our education system is assuming that everybody learns in one single way. That's not the case. Some people are tactical learners, and they learn with their hands, so if they have the opportunity to participate in a class like that, then that would be the difference in the type of career that they choose.

The last thing I would say to that is a lot of research has shown the earlier that happens—so grades 1, 2, 3, 4, not

grade 11, grade 12, in your twenties, in your thirties—the bigger the difference that that’s going to make in terms of people being able to pick that as a career choice for them.

**MPP Jamie West:** Yes, I agree with that. I was at an event a couple of weeks ago and there was a kid in grade 8 who was learning to weld because his dad welded and he wanted to—and it blew me away, just to be able to do that.

Mr. Chaplin—sorry, I can’t read my own handwriting—from EllisDon. Chaplin, yes, sorry; I had “Champlain” written down.

I wanted to give a shout-out to Coveralls in Sudbury. I was on my PPE committee for the organization where I worked for years. They were really great in terms of moving beyond that mentality of “shrink it and pink it” into women’s PPE. I appreciate you bringing forward the need for PPE, because while I think it’s fine that we’re making sure washrooms are clean and stuff, but if you have coveralls—we had workers where I was working who were stapling their sleeves of their coveralls closed so they wouldn’t get caught in machinery, or having jackets that were XXL because of the size of their hips to fit properly, but they weren’t fitting properly. So I really think—thinking about that. And then the mental health as well was something that resonated.

I don’t particularly have questions about it. I just wanted to congratulate you on the work that EllisDon is doing on it.

I was wondering about—you did talk about the clean washrooms, and from a ground-floor perspective, maybe not in your organization specifically, was this an issue in the past? Because for me, this would be covered under the general duty clause in the first place about maintaining facilities. So is it an issue in construction sites?

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** It can be an issue on some construction sites, for sure. It’s a common—I don’t know; “complaint” is not the right word, but it’s a common piece of feedback that people get, that the facilities could be cleaner than what they are. Like I had mentioned, in our organization, that’s something that we work really hard at. But you’d be surprised at how messy some of them can be.

**MPP Jamie West:** I was wondering about, in terms of an inspector writing orders, they could already write orders, so having that extra legislation—but I guess the awareness would raise.

I’m going to go to Dr. Nowak, just because I’m not sure how much time I have and there is some stuff that I—you talked about family doctors, and I appreciate the opportunity to highlight this because I had a meeting with the OMA and there were a few family doctors in the room. One of them was a doctor who had about 26 years in the field. She was exiting because of the amount of paperwork. You talk about that 19 hours of paperwork. She said, “I am working all the time and doing paperwork on the weekends. So, as a result, I’m falling behind on my family obligations. I chose a career to have a work-life balance.” So she was exiting.

But what really shocked me was, there was a student who came who was very interested in family medicine and

told me that people in family medicine were telling him to pick another career, pick a different specialization, because of the burden.

I want to get that out on the record just to share with people because it really opened my eyes to, when you talk about sick notes, there really isn’t—the deterrent, I guess, is for people who would be worried about having a sick note, but those people are generally honest and wouldn’t call in sick when they’re not. The reality is, for people who would abuse the system, they know they could just go to the doctor and say, “I was sick last week,” because, like you had said, the note is—it’s not that it’s meaningless, but you just say what you were told, right?

I think it’s important to talk about reducing that administrative burden. We’re all looking for family doctors. I don’t have a family doctor right now, so if anyone’s looking—I’m in Toronto sometimes, so I can visit you. But what I’m saying right now is that we need family doctors and family medicine. If we can reduce that 19 hours, as my colleague MPP Wong-Tam said, if we can bring in administrative assistants to do it, if we can reduce sort of meaningless sick notes, I think all of that is going to help more people have access to a doctor.

In the bill, it talks about a provision on sick notes, but only for the three days that we have, but it also retains the right to require evidence. I can’t figure out what the other forms of evidence would be.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**MPP Jamie West:** Do you have an example?

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** It’s funny, some of the types of evidence that workplaces might require: a hospital ID tag—you know, the wristbands, if you end up in hospital, and most people don’t; a pharmacy receipt, these sorts of things. There is some room for creativity. Either way, most people don’t have access to that kind of evidence when they get sick. The most they need to do is stay at home, wait it out and get better. They’ll end up seeking out sick notes anyway.

I want to pick up on something else you said, MPP West, on why it matters that we have family doctors and primary care is the foundation. People who have a family doctor, especially if they’re well supported by a team, end up going to the hospital less often and off-loading pressure on our emergency departments. If you have a family doctor, you get cancer screening and other preventative care done on time, and you actually live longer. There are studies that show that you live longer if you have a family doctor, and you end up costing less to taxpayers.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

We’ll now go to MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** For my next round of questions, I’m going to go straight to EllisDon Corp. EllisDon has been around for many moons, since 1951. I really want to throw a question to you because I’m hoping—with you there is hope for women bridging the gap in the skilled trades. If EllisDon can’t do it, I really don’t think that we’re going to get over and close this gap. It has been a real gap. And I think when we look at inclusivity, there’s



a huge gap there as well, because we operate different from men. It doesn't matter how much money we throw to construction organizations or trade skills development organizations, the needle is not moving.

Can you help me to understand why, historically—and I could understand historically, but this is 2024—we are still facing the same challenges as we would be facing 15 or 20 years ago?

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** That's a good question. It's a hard one to answer. I can't speak for why industry hasn't got there. It's certainly the right thing to do, and that's where our company has been.

When we look at women in trades, some of them that I've seen are the most skilled people I have seen. If you take equipment operators, just their touch on the equipment and the joysticks, they are a smoother operator than most of the men out there. Over in our Edmonton operation, a lot of the operators are women, are Indigenous, and we try to work in those groups. It is a focus for us. A lot of companies haven't embraced, I would say, the movement. I would say it's coming. Certainly, with our company, we have a person that really provides that lens on inclusive diversity, and we've developed teams to help make sure we are moving the needle forward.

1550

I don't think there's any one approach. It's about working each group. The PPE is one, menstrual products are two, clean restrooms—jeez, you need to provide that for everybody, but it helps bring folks over.

What we're seeing a lot, in addition to skilled trades, is a lot of the women in our workforce are PMs—project managers—and a few of them are now becoming superintendents, so certainly it's coming. What I can tell you is, in the safety department, a lot of our team is predominantly more women gender based on our side.

I don't have a one-size solution for you. I think it's a concerted effort and focus on industry to keep driving and pushing for that.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I hope you keep driving that, because as I said, you've been around since 1951. I think you can step up and be the leader in this space.

Raly, what part of this bill—because you talk a lot about the positives of this bill. Are there any areas for improvement for this bill?

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Raly Chakarova:** Not that we can identify. Part of that is that this is the fifth iteration, so a lot of the low-hanging fruit has already been dealt with in the previous pieces of legislation, which were very, very welcomed.

I will say, if I can put on an answer to your question about women, that now there's a concerted effort to tell women that they are now welcomed into the industry and to actually make changes that will make them feel welcomed in the industry. As Steve said, there's actually a good representation at the professional and management level, but on site, it's still about 4.5% women. That's what we're working to change, and that is very much a concerted, multi-level effort, not just one silver bullet that's going to resolve that.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I am a big fan of supporting women.

**Ms. Raly Chakarova:** Likewise.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** If we can come to the table and support women in events in the construction industry—when women touch things, amazing things happen. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

MPP Smith.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I'll start off with: My colleagues have warned me that I tend to ramble on for a long period of time before asking any questions, so they've warned me not to do that. I apologize off the bat. I do like to talk. I like the sound of my voice.

Having said that, Ms. Chakarova, you touched on the immigrant skilled labour situation. Are you aware that the federal government actually dictates the number of immigrants that we can nominate here in Ontario for that? With that in mind, then, knowing that we have a significant limitation on the number of individuals that we could nominate to come in, should we be prioritizing certain skilled trades for that in particular? If so, which skilled trades do you think that we are in the shortest supply of based on what your experiences are in the industry so far?

**Ms. Raly Chakarova:** Yes, I'm aware of that, and we've been a long-standing advocate with the federal government to increase that allocation for Ontario because, in our view, the provinces have a really direct link to know what the labour shortages are in their particular economies and to be able to fill that at their own discretion in their own system.

In terms of the second part of your question, all of them. What is fascinating and fantastic about the construction sector is that it's a highly specialized skill set. A bricklayer doesn't do electrical work, a drywaller doesn't install plumbing, and so on and so forth. I would say that we work in a highly unionized environment, and the unions are probably the best ones to check in with that. But from what we've seen from the data that BuildForce provides, which is our big data provider for the sector in particular, it tends to be across the board. Some do have higher need, and that's something the government can take a look at and work with the unions on that front.

But one of the biggest challenges with our immigration system is the skilled credential component, because what we need on our side in terms of the public infrastructure sector is labourers, who might have some experience in their country of origin, but it's not like they have a master's or a PhD or some kind of education requirement that they can take part in as part of their application. So that's what makes identifying them challenging, while keeping the integrity of our immigration system. And that's what we're working with the ministry on, is how to resolve for that issue.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Thank you. I really appreciate that.

Mr. Chaplin from EllisDon, obviously you're doing a very proactive and progressive approach to the work that you're doing, trying to attract women to the skilled trades.

I commend you on the fact that you've spent the time and effort to tailor PPE specifically for women.

In my riding, in my area, I have two female-owned construction businesses. They're not very large, but I think they've done a fantastic job with some of the things that they are doing. One young lady in particular, Tania-Joy Bartlett, made the comment to me a number of times prior to her owning her own business that the biggest barrier she saw was the inequality on certain things that we as men take for granted. Carpooling was the one thing that she brought up a number of times: that if four guys were to hop in the truck and drive to the job site, and it was an hour drive, they would be talking about things that four guys would typically talk about, but if you threw a woman into that situation, a lot of times the conversations were very uncomfortable for that woman and created other challenges, then, for them. She said that she actually was supervisor at another construction company and had a great deal of difficulty keeping women working there, just because of those things.

So I'm curious: What have you been doing at EllisDon, then, that has gotten guys not to act like immature guys at times and change the culture in a way that has been so conducive to women joining your company and thriving with your company?

**Mr. Stephen Chaplin:** It really starts with a culture of care for the organization, having strong embedded values. Our values are inclusiveness, integrity, freedom, trust, entrepreneurial enthusiasm, and where people breach those values, we're very quick to come in. On the harassment side, whether it's virtual or it's in-place, we're very quick to do the investigation for that and then put the appropriate discipline or remedies in place for that.

It's a hard go, if I may just speak bluntly, for women in a lot of the industries. Construction predominantly was and still is male-dominated, but we need to break down that. Like I said previously, the skill set of women in the industry is very strong and it's much needed. They also help temper the work site, I find, contrary to what you had just experienced.

But I would say, yes, it's just that. It's creating that care. What we find is that on our sites, we do tend to be quite inclusive, and we generally have health and safety people on every one of our work sites. They become a conduit where people come and speak to them, and then we bring that forward to our teams to further investigate.

But honestly, my two sons work at EllisDon, and you've got to look at a company like, "Would you put your family there? Would you put your kids there? Would you put your daughters there?", and you've just got to keep on it. There's no magic bullet, as I heard already, but it's creating a culture of care, it's holding people accountable for their actions and it's providing the support when people need it. I would say it's that.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Thank you.

Chair, how much time left?

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** One minute?

Dr. Nowak, I'm going to throw it over to you. Taking out the sick note requirement that we have so far on this—I understand that there are some things that you'd like to see us go further with. One of the challenges that you have whenever you're doing any kind of legislation is that you have to make sure that you're not contravening some collective bargaining agreements on it, so there are a lot of times where it's an iterative process that we go through from it.

Some of the feedback, though, that you have given on this I think is very important as we move forward on different things. If we were to look at removing that completely, if there was something that was in a contractual agreement that had been collectively bargained, how would you suggest then that we approach that in a way that doesn't break any of the collective bargaining agreements so that we can move forward with something like you're suggesting?

1600

**Dr. Dominik Nowak:** MPP Smith, you're referring to the requirement for evidence, right?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Yes.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** That was a very good question, but you didn't leave any time for an answer, and that does conclude the time.

That includes the time for this panel, and I do want to thank each one of you. Thank you very much for presenting today and helping us with deliberations as we move forward on hearings on this bill. So thank you very much.

The next—

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Order. We're changing panels. If anybody wants to speak, speak outside.

Before we start—

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** If we could stop the discussions—that panel is finished.

NEWCOMER WOMEN'S  
SERVICES TORONTO

4S CONSULTING SERVICES INC.

THE OAKS REVITALIZATION  
ASSOCIATION

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Committee members, there are two individuals from the Oaks Revitalization Association. Is there agreement that both of the individuals sit at the table? There's room at the table because one of the delegates will be virtual.

With the committee's concurrence, our next panel is the Newcomer Women's Services Toronto, 4S Consulting Services Inc. and the Oaks Revitalization Association. With them, as they're coming forward, and as with previous delegations, the delegates will have seven minutes to make their presentation. At six minutes, I will say "one minute," and then one minute later, it's all over.

We thank you very much for being here. We ask each presenter to identify themselves as they start so Hansard

can record the presentation based on who was saying it, and if more than one is going to speak during the time, both have to introduce themselves before they speak.

So with that, we will start with the Newcomer Women's Services Toronto. Good afternoon, and the floor is yours.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Good afternoon, Chair, and honorable members of the standing committee. My name is Sara Asalya, and I am representing the Newcomer Women's Services Toronto, an organization that has been at the heart of supporting newcomer women and their families for over 40 years. Today, I stand here not only as a representative of this vital organization but also as someone who has experienced first-hand the many challenges newcomers face when trying to integrate into the Canadian labour market.

Newcomers bring skills, knowledge and an unmatched desire to contribute to the prosperity of this province, yet too often they are relegated to precarious work environments, low wages and systemic barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential. The Working for Workers Five Act has the power to change that.

Why this act matters and how we believe it will impact the communities we serve in positive ways: The Working for Workers Five Act is not just another piece of legislation; it is a critical step towards creating a more equitable, fair and supportive environment for workers across Ontario, particularly for the marginalized communities we serve at Newcomer Women's Services Toronto. The act addresses systemic challenges that have long been barriers for many workers, especially immigrants, women and racialized communities, who have often been overrepresented in precarious and low-paying jobs.

While we support many of the proposed amendments to this act, for the purpose of this presentation and in the interest of time, I will be speaking on a few provisions that we believe will eliminate systemic barriers and will improve labour market access and outcomes for the newcomer community.

First, we support provisions related to removing barriers to employment for internationally educated professionals. As a war survivor myself and as someone who struggled for many years to get my foreign credentials recognized due to the overwhelming bureaucracy and red tape, I understand first-hand the frustration and hardship that so many newcomers face when trying to rebuild their lives and get their credentials recognized. But how can they do that when, in the first place, many of them don't have access to their original transcripts and documents required to get their credentials recognized? When you flee war and when you are forced to leave, you just leave. You're not really afforded the opportunity to take with you anything. You're lucky if you are surviving. Many of the forcibly displaced and refugee communities that we serve don't have access to such documents required to get their credentials recognized. This is why we fully support making the foreign credential systems outcomes-oriented by requiring regulated professions to have a policy to accept alternatives where standard registration-related documents

cannot be obtained for reasons beyond an applicant's control, such as war or natural disasters.

Second, we support the provisions of the act that ensure fair wages and economic stability for workers, especially newcomers. Many of the women and families we support are working in low-wage jobs that barely cover basic necessities such as food, housing and child care. The act's provisions for increasing the minimum wage and ensuring that all workers are fairly compensated will help reduce poverty and improve the financial security of immigrants and newcomer families.

Finally, when it comes to supporting women at work, we note that in today's rapidly evolving digital work environment, the way we define and address workplace harassment must keep pace with the realities of modern work practices. The Working for Workers Five Act introduces much-needed updates to the definition of harassment, including protections against virtual harassment. We believe that this is a forward-looking response and a proactive piece of legislation to the future of work which will increasingly be more digitized and virtual.

We understand that the passing of the act is just beginning. The true impact of this legislation will only be realized if it's followed by tangible actions to ensure that its provisions are fully implemented and enforced. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you.

The next presenter is 4S Consulting Services, and I believe this is virtual.

**Ms. Sobi Ragunathan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee for allowing me to speak regarding Bill 190, Working for Workers Five Act. My name is Sobi Ragunathan. I'm the vice-president of operations, strategy and partnership for 4S Consulting Services Inc., located in Markham, Ontario.

4S is an Ontario-based occupational health and safety organization. We are the largest privately held occupational health and safety organization in Canada. We serve various different sectors: construction, public sectors, municipalities, manufacturing, service sectors.

4S has been in business for over 20 years—that's 20 years of experience in providing occupational health and safety solutions to Ontario businesses—and deeply believes in the direction set out in the five-year provincial health and safety strategy, Prevention Works. Our company has developed expertise in helping construction [*inaudible*] to implement health and safety management systems through core certifications and work with many companies outside of construction to become certified in ISO 45001.

We recently met with the Chief Prevention Officer to express our interest in moving many of our clients to become recognized under the supporting Ontario safe worker program. 4S continues to be a supporter of government efforts to improve opportunities for Ontario workers, making Ontario workplaces safer a priority within the workplaces and to modernize regulations to reflect the changing nature of the work.

The previous four iterations of Working for Workers Act have contributed significantly to improve and strengthen

Ontario's workplaces and the safety of its workers. As noted, 4S is a safety organization, and this has been our priority for the past 20 years. Improvements in workplace safety and response cannot be understated. We believe that interventions such as the introduction of naloxone in the workplace is life-saving. That being said, we would also support similar such legislation to include defibrillators in the workplaces, especially on construction sites, where accessing persons suffering from a cardiac arrest by first responders can be challenging.

We applaud the government move to modernize regulations to reflect the wide use of technology. The use of virtual meetings to ensure strong and robust joint health and safety committees is a must, especially in today's hybrid work environments. Along with that, postings of regulatory requirements going virtual with modernized technology is also a great support for many workers and employers.

#### 1610

As a training organization, 4S focuses on the importance of knowledge transfer and knowledge translation. As Ontario moves to recruit people from the skilled trades and to open Ontario to new Canadians, we at 4S believe offering more mandatory and essential health and safety training in languages in addition to English and French is crucial to ensuring new Canadians and workers whose primary language is not English or French can receive and understand the critical health and safety training, ensuring their knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of both the worker and the employer. So, 4S has begun to translate many of these training programs in multiple languages.

We really support that menstrual products are being made mandatory on construction sites. This really makes an opening for women to feel much more easy on construction sites, along with clean washroom facilities. Construction sites need much more regulations like this for everybody to feel safe and protected.

On a final note, workplace violence and harassment are a significant challenge in Ontario's workplaces, and 4S has trained hundreds, if not thousands, of Ontario workers and supervisors on this very subject. We are very supportive of the modernization of the regulation to include virtual mediums.

In closing, 4S supports the continuous and structured improvements of regulations governing Ontario's workplaces. In May of this year, 4S hosted a seminar attended by over 200 employers. The topic was changes included in Bill 79, the previous Working for Workers Act. The information was very well received, and it would be our intent to offer similar seminars upon the passing of this bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much for the presentation.

Our next presentation is the Oaks Revitalization Association. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Good afternoon, members of the committee. I am Joe Williams—this is Mark Tenaglia—managing director and the executive director of the Oaks

Revitalization Association's skilled trades development program. We are submitting this testimony in strong support of Bill 190, particularly the amendments concerning the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021.

As leaders of a program that has, in the past two years, placed 61 individuals into successful middle-income careers, we have seen first-hand the transformative power of the skilled trades. Our clients, many of whom have faced significant challenges including justice involvement, economic hardship and marginalization, have found a pathway through the trades.

We currently have a waiting list of 250 people, all eager to join this life-changing program, and we firmly believe that the amendments in Bill 190 will allow us to reach them faster and more effectively.

The provisions for alternative academic criteria are especially crucial. Many of the individuals we work with have not yet had the opportunity to meet traditional educational standards but possess the talent, dedication and grit necessary to strive in the skilled trades. Bill 190's proposed changes will open doors for these individuals, enabling them to break free from poverty, establish meaningful careers and contribute positively to Ontario's economy.

Our track record speaks for itself. We have consistently exceeded our targets, and our clients have gone on to secure careers with wages ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000 annually.

These are more than just jobs; these are careers. They are a pathway to stability, growth and a middle-class life. The passage of Bill 190 will allow us to extend these opportunities to more people, ensuring that Ontario continues to build a strong, capable workforce for the future.

In addition to the skilled trades act amendments, we fully support the changes to the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006, under schedule 3 of Bill 190. The ability for regulated professionals to accept alternative documentation for qualifications is critical for justice-involved individuals and those who face barriers accessing traditional paperwork. By recognizing alternative forms of qualification and experience, the bill enables individuals to access these rewarding careers, which, in turn, strengthens the program's ability to provide a direct pathway to the middle class for those most in need.

We would like to commend the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and Minister David Piccini for their visionary work. Their understanding of the life-changing potential of the skilled trades and their commitment to reducing barriers for marginalized individuals is clearly reflected in the amendments proposed in the bill. The work being done here is not just about filling labour shortages, it's about empowering individuals to take control of their futures, contribute to their communities, and build stronger families and a more resilient Ontario.

In conclusion, we strongly urge the committee to support Bill 190. The amendments align perfectly with our

mission of providing the quickest and most reliable path to the middle class for those who have been historically overlooked. The bill will allow us to continue changing lives, building a strong workforce for Ontario and meeting the growing demands of our economy.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time for the presentations.

Now we will start the first round of questioning with the independent. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for coming in and presenting to us.

I want to start my first round of questions with the Oaks Revitalization Association. You mentioned that you're fully supporting Bill 190; I get that from your presentation. I also noticed that you mentioned there are 250 people currently on your waiting list. That's a lot to me. We are going through an affordability crisis right now. I'm just curious: Are these people employed? Are they working? Are they just on hold? How are they muscling themselves through your waiting list and waiting for—I'm not too sure what they're waiting on.

My second question, following up on that: You were saying that in the skilled trade development program, the successful ones are moved on and receiving \$100,000 to \$150,000 annually. Can you share some stories with that for me? I do have other construction organizations out there that are looking for people to get into skills trade development and can't find those people. I'm just in awe about your 250 people that are waiting. So can you explain your company's program?

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Absolutely. When we first began the program, our target was justice-involved individuals, but we quickly realized that when you're dealing with justice-involved individuals, you begin to deal with justice-affected individuals. In this particular case, to explain that, a justice-involved person might be somebody who has crossed the law and might have a criminal record, might have served their time and is in a home. If that person lives with a brother, that's a justice-affected person, because then that person is also at risk. Statistics show that if you have one person who has gone to jail in a family, in a home, it's very likely that there might be more. That's the justice-affected. Then, people that live in the communities that we serve come together with the marginalized individuals. These might be people who just suffer from lower economic outcomes.

You're right when you say that things are difficult. Our success has drawn a lot of people from these three groups that I've mentioned who want to join the program. Some of them are just marginalized, which means they do work, but they work in lower-paying jobs than the skilled trades, and then you have the justice-affected and the justice-involved. Our list has those three groups of people that I've mentioned.

1620

You mentioned that you do have individuals that want to get into the skilled trades. Yes, that's why we started this organization: to make sure that we make a pathway

for marginalized people to have access to those jobs, to those careers. What you see as a challenge is something that Mark and I identified and we're working very hard to bridge.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Well, thank you for your explanation.

My next question is, for those individuals who are in those three categories that you've just described, are they coming to you for training? I just wanted to understand your training model and your funding model as well.

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Absolutely—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Our program is designed to break down individuals, build them up before we present them to the skilled trades. We firmly believe that you have to do that in order to make them successful. The model is, we get them, they come into the program, we mentor them and arm them, then we train them in the skilled trades, then they enter the workforce. That's how the model works.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Okay, and you have data to support the success of this?

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Absolutely—data which we'll be very happy to share with the committee.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Okay. That would have been very important, right?

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Yes, absolutely.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Because we need to support that.

**Mr. Joe Williams:** You will have the data.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** We now go to the government. MPP Barnes.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you to the presenters for presenting. I appreciate you being here today.

I wanted to ask Oaks Revitalization to just expand a little bit more on your success, because I think MPP Hazell was very interested in that and didn't get a chance to really find out. Highlight some of the success that your organization has had since you've started running this program.

**Mr. Mark Tenaglia:** Sure. Thank you so much. My name is Mark Tenaglia. I am the executive director of the Oaks Revitalization Association.

We've taken quite a few folks into our program, again, put them into the middle class. I'll give you an example. We just finished a cohort last week, on Friday, and the following week, Monday, we ended up having four of our gentlemen in our program enter into work. So these gentlemen have now gone into labor, into the market. One of them today was initiated into LIUNA 183, and now he's earning a fairly good wage. We've got a lot of people who we've put into these programs, and it starts with the mentoring process.

We take them into our program. Just to get into some details of it: It's a year long. In the first four weeks of the program, it's Monday to Friday. It's an in-depth mentoring process, which is 9 o'clock in the morning until about 3 in the afternoon. Then, once we feel that we're satisfied with the level of where they're at with mentoring, as my colleague said, we put them into the skilled labor market. We put them with our partners, different union sectors,

different training facilities, and they're there for another eight-plus weeks to get more training and all their certificates—so, first aid, WHMIS, all the tickets they need to work on any site in this province. From that point on, they either get placed by the union or we end up placing them or they end up finding the employment themselves.

**Mr. Joe Williams:** The gentleman that my colleague is speaking about was unemployed three months ago. In three months, he's been mentored, he's been trained in the skilled trades to a very high level, and today, he is working. That's a three-month turnaround. This is what the skilled trades in this province have to offer. It's life-changing. He has a 10-year-old daughter. Now, her life has changed, but not just that. When people come into our program, we always ask them, "Think of what your great-grandchildren are going to say about you," and that's the kind of change that the skilled trades are providing for people of this province.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you for that. In keeping with that, what you've shared, which elements of this bill do you think would be most impactful for the people that you serve?

**Mr. Joe Williams:** The two that we've mentioned here—the first one that allows people from marginalized communities like ours to have easier access to certification to get into the skilled trades is absolutely crucial. We also have situations where because the justice-involved might have left school at an earlier time, being able to have alternative qualifications that can match the ones that are required—to have them be able to get in through that way would be immensely helpful to them. If we could ease those regulations for them to be able to allow people to hand in an alternative to a qualification that's required, it would make a significant impact to the marginalized.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you for that.

Time?

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** You have 3.5.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Okay. Thank you.

I'll move on to the 4S consulting group. Your organization provides systems, resources and tools to client companies to help them maintain an effective health and safety program, with a goal to make compliance with health and safety requirements easier. Given that Bill 190 proposes amendments to OHSA, what do you think will be the most impactful for your clients?

**Ms. Sobi Ragunathan:** Definitely there are a couple of major points. One is allowing the technology-driven solutions such as postings to be allowed virtually. Currently, if you go to a job site or workplaces, there are mandatory postings that need to be in every workplace. For example, regulations get updated every year. Every year, when there are regulation changes, they do need to have physical copies of these regulations and the act posted in a workplace.

But with this particular bill's amendments, it can be done virtually, so any worker can have access to all the regulatory required postings. As well, companies can have postings available at any given time with a technology-driven solution.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you for that. I appreciate that.

I'm trying to spread the love around, so this next one is for Sara. Sara, I'm going to be quick on that one. A question for you is, you talked about the qualifying of international talent, being able to come in and having your papers acknowledged at a much earlier time. Can you sort of break down what the vision of that is that you see would be more impactful as we are rolling that out in the bill?

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** I think there are a lot of barriers at the outset of when a newcomer or an internationally trained professional is coming to this country and trying to build a whole life from scratch, and also figuring out their career. Usually, the first one is the foreign credentials, because you come with these foreign credentials and, oftentimes, they're not recognized. To go through the whole process of getting your credential recognized is a multi-step process.

I want to talk about the financial barriers, because there is a fee associated with that, but I do acknowledge there are organizations that help with those kinds of—you can apply for loans, and there are organizations who subsidize those. But the whole process sometimes—it's not user-friendly. You have to navigate the process on your own, and sometimes language barriers and everything—we live in a digital world. Right now, you just go online and you're trying to figure out what are the documents that are required, and oftentimes—I'll speak to the specific provision here that I'm very supportive of. Sometimes you just don't have the required documents, and you can't really move to the next step in the process without these documents.

For people like me—so many people are being forcibly displaced. Refugees right now—you literally just leave, right? I couldn't get my official transcripts and so many other documents that are a requirement to really get to proceed, to progress. That can take a long time for you to be able to access training, universities, colleges, upskilling opportunities and also, sometimes, jobs, because some employers would require—you know, they give you a conditional offer upon submission of an official transcript, sealed from the original institution.

So there are a lot of barriers that I don't believe—I think we can easily remove these barriers to make the process just more smooth and more—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

We'll now go to the official opposition. MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** I'm going to continue with MPP Barnes's questions for Sara, because I find this really fascinating. Originally, when I was thinking about this, I was thinking about the difference in qualifications. I met a dentist from another country who was taking dental hygienist because their qualifications weren't being recognized, even though he ran multiple dental offices.

But you said when you were speaking that when you flee war, you just leave, and that's something I hadn't really considered before—it's very common sense, but the passion you said it with. Obviously, after you leave, if

there are records, probably people have more things front and centre for them to track them down. How do we get the qualifications? What does that look like in reality for the people that you represent? Is there a test? Is it a hands-on practical thing that they do? I'm just trying to see how we close that gap.

1630

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** I think a lot of employers and even a lot of educational institutions are moving to a competency-based model. We know in 10, 20 years, the diploma or degree wouldn't hold the same weight as a competency where candidates or workers are being assessed on certain competency, where they can do the actual job or the skill, versus somebody who holds a degree. So I'm not sure how much of a weight a piece of paper can hold to prevent someone from really getting a first chance or a first opportunity. These are really barriers to just putting your foot in the door as a newcomer.

I come from a country where there isn't a lot of digital amazing stuff happening. When I fled my country, a lot of the things were paper-based. My university institution was bombed multiple times, so my record vanished. I can no longer ever, ever in my life get access to those records. And when I tried to apply to university here, I was rejected multiple times because I could not produce the sealed mail directly from my institution that's a requirement. So that's a barrier for me as a skilled immigrant coming here. My foreign credential is not recognized. I don't have the evidence of those foreign credentials anyway. All I have is just a certification, but I don't have the transcript that says—because you have to get a B+ to apply for a master's program etc. So I had to start from scratch. I had to go back and take courses, and they put me in university level 3 or 2. I was going through really a vicious cycle. It was not helpful for my family—a waste of time, a waste of money and resources. It delayed my ability to integrate.

I think for employers and even for educational institutions, they have to start thinking about that competency-based model versus a piece of paper that says you have—I mean, many newcomers have master's and double master's and doctorates, and still they can't get into the labour market anyway, so maybe more testing or more competency-based interviews that can assess the skills and qualification of a candidate.

**MPP Jamie West:** One of the things you said, as well: You were talking about the importance of raising the minimum wage and how a lot of the women that you represent as immigrant workers are often overrepresented in low-wage jobs. Just prior to you coming, Dr. Nowak was here, the president of the Ontario Medical Association. Part of his presentation was the importance of paid sick days.

For precarious workers, for new immigrants who are at the bottom wage level, what does it look like when you have the opportunity to have paid sick days?

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** I think we've seen the importance of paid sick days during the pandemic. Many people were forced to just report to work when they were sick because they did not have the benefit of sick days.

But while this bill talks about a lot of protections and it is working for workers and it's great to see all of these proposed amendments, I think we would greatly benefit if these protections are extended to all workers, especially workers in the gig economy, to make sure that they have some sort of benefits and protection when it comes to not only sick leaves but other access to benefits and protections as well.

**MPP Jamie West:** This is a little bit outside of what we're talking about today, but I was in an Uber and talking to one of the drivers who was an immigrant, and he was saying that his work as a gig worker, because he's classified as a contract worker, doesn't qualify as hours towards becoming a Canadian citizen. Has anyone experienced that? It's fine if not; I just—

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Well, part of what we deliver as part of our services, we actually deliver citizenship classes. We prepare those who are ready and eligible to become Canadian citizens to take the test and become Canadian citizens. I took that myself. I don't believe there are minimum working requirements. You could be unemployed and apply to become a Canadian citizen, I believe. There are language requirements though. You have to have certain language requirements, a certain level, and you have to take the test and score high in the test to become a Canadian citizen. I do not believe it has anything to do with employment because many of the newcomers we serve, they are in our employment program, and we help them towards their access to employment, but at the same time they are eligible to apply for citizenship.

**MPP Jamie West:** Okay. I appreciate that. I just was taking the opportunity because it was in the back of my head and it popped up.

I'm going to go to the Oaks Revitalization Association. It's fascinating the work that you're able to do. You talked a lot about justice-involved, marginalized groups. What are the barriers you'd like to see removed to help more people from these areas get involved, not just in the workforce, but skilled trades in particular or anywhere? There's certainly going to be more labour bills. What should we be looking at that would help more success for that demographic?

**Mr. Joe Williams:** This bill goes a long way in helping our particular clientele. As I mentioned, some of our clients begin crossing paths with the law quite early. Now, the minimum requirement for entering the skilled trades in Ontario is grade 10. You could have a situation where a young man, because of making bad choices, has been unable to acquire all the credits he needs at grade 10.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Joe Williams:** What we're doing is we're working very closely with the unions to be able to have something like the Canadian Armed Forces have, which is an entry test. So you might not have your grade 10, but if you can pass that entry test, it gives you entry into the skilled trades. That is something that is covered in this bill. I think that will go a long way in opening the doors to marginalized individuals.

**MPP Jamie West:** I appreciate that, because it was going to be my next question, which was alternative qualifications for education. What does that look like? I appreciate that response.

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Absolutely. We're working very closely with LIUNA 506, LIUNA 183, and I think we'll be working with Local 2, which is masonry, as well, to try and put those things in place for clients like ours.

**MPP Jamie West:** Okay. I think I have 20 seconds, so—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you.

We'll now go to the independent. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I'm going to go to Sara of Newcomer Women's Services Toronto. I want to learn more about your organization. Can you summarize your program for me today?

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** We are a non-profit charitable organization, multi-service. We offer everything and anything that you can think of that a newcomer might need, from English-language training to settlement, labour market orientation, employment services, upskilling, skills development training programs, mental health, gender-based violence prevention and awareness. We have also youth, seniors' and children's programs. Our mission especially focuses on newcomer women to build leadership capacity, so we're really focusing on upskilling and getting them into not only the labour market but also advancing in their careers, because we understand there is a lot of deskilling and underemployment happening to this specific demographic.

I can quickly share, maybe—I believe one of the best funding models and programs that the province has—

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** That was going to be my next question.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Okay, so that's, in a nutshell, what our organization is about. We serve anything between 8,000 to 10,000 newcomers annually. The majority of our clientele are newcomer women, and we operate in four locations across the GTA.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Okay. Very good to hear.

So within all of that and all the questions that you've answered here today, we know for new immigrants, especially women, the barriers they face. When you have those clientele and maybe you can't help them, what's the alternative? Because no program is perfect.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** No program is perfect, and this is where partnerships and service coordination and working with organizations across the sector to cover any service delivery gaps is critical. But I think—because we also operate in community hubs. Two of our locations are located in a community hub where there are six other organizations.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** What are the six other organizations?

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** We have Family Service Toronto. They are specialized in clients facing disabilities, family violence, gender-based violence—a wide range of services that we don't necessarily have, so we work directly with them.

We have Madison Community Services. They are specialized in mental health and housing.

We have Bereaved Families of Ontario. They are focused on healing for families that have experienced loss and trauma.

We have the Teresa Group, which is also specializing in helping families and mothers and kids with HIV.

So we are a group of organizations that work really well, and we are the organization that is specializing in employment and labour market orientation and settlement and newcomers as a demographic in particular. But because we are a multi-service agency, we have different streams of services, so if you come to us and we assess your needs, one of these services would meet your need, and if not, then we would refer you to a partner organization.

1640

We also recently—thanks to the government of Ontario, we have services for asylum claimants, so housing—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** —outreach, mental health support, and anything in between. And we help them with labour market orientation as well.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** One of the reasons why I wanted you to drill down on that is so I'm educated, and if I have anyone in my constituency, I know where to send them. It's important. We can't do this by ourselves, and I really love to hear the team-based care that you talk about. It's not just team-based care in the hospital, but at this point in time, when a lot of service levels are struggling, I think coming together, collaborating, working—I just wanted to make sure that no one gets left behind and the doors are not closed on any newcomers. Because they have already gone through so much to make it on this soil.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Right.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** So just thank you for sharing that.

I'm okay. I have no more questions. Thank you.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** My pleasure. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** MPP Hogarth.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I want to thank everyone who's been here today. Your stories are really amazing and it's heartwarming to hear what you've done.

As MPP Hazell said, we don't want anyone left behind. There are organizations out there, and sometimes we just have to connect the dots to bring people to those locations.

In my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, I have an organization called WoodGreen, which does some work similar to yourself, Sara. I was at an event with them about two weeks ago and they had newcomers coming in. Everybody wants to work. I said, "Well, why aren't you? Let's connect you. What do you want to do?" One lady said, "I just had my PSW training. How do we get a job?" It was really nice to have those conversations.

Some had credential issues like you had mentioned. I'm happy you mentioned it here because that is an issue out there. They were fleeing from their country; they didn't bring the paperwork with them. So now they're trying to figure out, how do you go back and get that information?



And then when we were listening to the gentleman from the Oaks, I just love hearing those stories. Those are really the Doug Ford stories.

I have an organization called Building Up. Do you work with them?

**Mr. Joe Williams:** We have crossed paths, yes.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** An amazing organization. There is a fellow named Marc who started this organization, really trying to get women in the skilled trades. But it is people who just want to work, right? They just want that extra little bit of help: “How do I get started?” They just celebrated their 10th anniversary with LIUNA. I was at that event. I missed the by-election that happened so I could celebrate with that organization, because it was just so heartwarming. When it came my turn to speak, I went, “I don’t know if there’s anything I can say because the people said it all.” It was people who didn’t have any hope. They may have been incarcerated prior, but the Skills Development Fund gave them that little bit of help. So now they can hold their head high, have a great-paying job, as you said, from \$50,000 to \$150,000 a year. And these are long-paying jobs; these are careers. So when you talk about the future, this is what it’s all about: making sure people have that opportunity.

So, first of all, I just wanted to thank you all for the work you do, because you are changing lives every day with the skills that you’re offering and that help.

Sara, just a couple of questions with regard to Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto. Do you have an organization in Etobicoke?

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** No, we don’t.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** No? Okay.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** We are mainly in Toronto.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Okay. So how do you network with organizations like Building Up or Oaks? We hear a lot from the opposition talk about women—that they’re always making minimum wage jobs. I hate when people say that, because I don’t think they have to. There are opportunities out there. There’s education. There’s training. We’re there. So every time I heard that, I went, “Uh-uh. You know what? We can do better and there are jobs out there.”

Can you share a little bit about how we help these women get off a minimum wage job? What are some opportunities that you would share with your clients?

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Right. I’ll tell you that the reason I took this role with this organization is because they had a vision. I was so fed up, because when I came as a newcomer, highly educated, without my credentials on hand, everybody would just not look at me. Nobody wanted to hire me. I was streamed into low-paying jobs. There was a job at a factory. My first job was at Tim Hortons—with pride I say that. I learned a lot from that job. But I felt I was just being so deskilled. It’s humanizing because I spent a whole life studying and I had a long career back home when I came here.

At Newcomer Women’s Services, we have employment services which serve any job seeker, but then we have the skills development program. We have been a

recipient of that fund for about three years now. To date, we have trained 600 highly educated women. This program’s speciality is in highly educated women—international, foreign-educated women—and the focus is on racialized newcomer women, because we understand that women have so many barriers to get anywhere into the labour market, let alone advance and be in leadership roles. Now add to this woman the identity of being an immigrant, and then add to that the race, right? All of these intersections create barriers for them to access and advance and build careers—as you mentioned, it’s not just about jobs.

The program has trained 600 women, and we have about a 95% completion rate of the program across the three years. All of them complete project management training in partnership with the Schulich business school, they complete MBA training with the Rotman school, they complete digital fluency in the workforce with Humber college and we also provide them with must-have soft skills: EDI training, conflict resolution. We really prepare them for the labour force. No employer can say no to someone who brings such qualification and skills and competencies. We work with a number of employers from across the province to really help them attract talent, so we are the bridge between the employers and the newcomer women who are looking to get jobs.

I can tell you just quickly some of the success stories. We had a woman who had an MBA and over 15 years of experience in HR. She came here and she was working at McDonald’s for so many years. She came into the program and within three months, she landed a job placement with a company, was hired as an HR generalist and then, within three months, she became an HR manager. I have another one who, within only six months of being in Canada, landed her first job as an executive director. It took me 12 years to become an executive director. If we can make this integration process much smoother and quicker for these communities, why not?

We have so many other success stories: people who lived in the shelters, who couldn’t find jobs. We move people from the OW system and from poverty into really building meaningful careers, and they love it, because a newcomer woman comes to you and says, “Hey, I’m going to give you MBA training.” Back in the day, I was told, “There is a food-handling certificate. Go work in a factory.” There wasn’t this kind of training. It was only possible because of the Skills Development Fund.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Our program has a 70% employment outcome rate. The provincial minimum is around 65%, and we top that. Seventy per cent of the participants who come through the program find employment by the end of the project, with a 95% completion rate in obtaining credentials—Canadian credentials—because it’s very helpful for them to get into the labour market.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Well, your story is amazing, and probably the reason we all got involved in politics: We wanted to right the wrongs of the past. You are telling Doug Ford’s story. Thank you all for being here today.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you.

We have two seconds—nothing.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I was going to say, where were you when I first came to Canada? That's it.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

We'll go to the opposition. MPP Wong-Tam.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to all the presenters today.

My first question is coming back to you, Sara, so you're very busy this afternoon. With respect to the amendments that are coming before Bill 190, this is the fifth Working for Workers omnibus bill. In previous submissions that came before us—mostly from lawyers who represent workers who are injured, workers who have had their wages stolen, workers who are looking for workplace environments that are harassment-free—they really wanted to impress upon this committee that the bill does not go far enough. It's the fifth time, right? Let's wrap it up before we have to come up with bills 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. We're just tinkering around the edges.

The lawyers who came before us were very specific about what they wanted to see, including the fact that there needed to be stronger language to ensure that workplaces are harassment-free. In particular, the population that you work with and serve—vulnerable women; women who are coming from abroad, perhaps—are oftentimes in a more susceptible space where they do experience more violence.

In the absence of stronger amendments here, or amendments period, that speak around the elimination of harassment in the workplaces, that ensure that for the woman, would you agree with the lawyers who appeared that having that codified in this legislation would actually go a distance in supporting more women having safe work environments?

1650

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Language really matters. The way we frame certain provisions of a law really matters.

Also, I think there need to be strong enforcement mechanisms, and these might come later, after the bill—and certain policies being enforced in workplaces. Enforcement mechanisms are really critical because—I don't get to see enough of them. What does it look like if there is a violation? I mean, the bill speaks—if there is a violation of the ESA and increasing those penalties—which is critical; we do agree with that.

Also, there have to be more of justice forums, like an anonymous platform for these workers to file complaints without fearing retaliation or losing their employment or their employment status.

So these are critical pathways and platforms that we can create to make sure that we are reinforcing certain mechanisms to make sure that we go further than the language being presented.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much. That is very helpful. I can see that you're lining up with

the previous speakers today in their advocacy for stronger legislation to protect vulnerable workers.

In 2018, the government actually decreased the administrative penalties for violations of the Employment Standards Act. So the fines have actually decreased. It's not higher; it has gone less.

In 2023, there were fewer proactive workplace inspections than there were in 2018-19. It's a drop of almost 1,500 proactive workplace inspections.

So, despite the intention of the bill to create a safer, stronger environment for workers, the actual numbers, especially with respect to the budgets, don't quite line up.

Given the opportunity to strengthen the bill—because that's what we want to do. We want to make legislation good and broad-reaching, but also truly effective to get to the right outcome. Would you agree that we need to have more workplace inspectors as well as more fines that can be collected afterwards, so there's real enforcement teeth—other than words at a press conference, which, of course, are important, but they need to follow up with legislation. Is that important?

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Yes, 100%. The enforcement mechanism could look like increased inspections and audits in workplaces, and also collection of data to see how far we have gone in terms of decreasing the workplace harassment complaints, how many we get in a certain year, and how this bill is decreasing or increasing, improving the numbers of—or we're seeing less cases of workplace harassment, right?

So I think you're right in terms of, the new bill has to align with the resources being invested to support organizational capacity to prevent harassment and to do more audits in workplaces and to be in compliance with this new law. The intention is more protection and improving the experiences of workers in the workplace. But also, you have to build capacity in organizations with employers. They need to do more education and more resources and invest in the infrastructure and their HR departments in terms of preventing harassment and expediting the investigation that happens if and when harassment is happening, and also the collection of data, the audits, the monitoring and the reporting back to see if the needle is moving.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you. That's very helpful.

A final quick question—maybe we'll do a rapid round: Do you believe it would be helpful to have 10 paid sick days in Ontario, anti-scab legislation, as well as equal pay legislation, three things that we currently don't have right now?

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Our organization has the 10 paid sick days in place, so—

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Oh, good for you.

**Ms. Sara Asalya:** Yes. And we're looking to increase that in the next round of bargaining with the union.

These are fantastic things to happen—why not? It's good to see small steps, and the bill being presented here is good, but I think more work needs to be done in terms of sick days and in terms of equal pay and all of these other things that are still gaps in our system.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Oh, just one minute? Okay.

Very quickly to Mr. Joe Williams: Nice to see you again. And I believe sitting next to you is Mr. Martin—

**Mr. Mark Tenaglia:** No, Mark Tenaglia.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Mark Tenaglia. Thank you. Your titles again?

**Mr. Mark Tenaglia:** Executive director.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** And yours?

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Managing director.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Managing director; fantastic.

And how large is your organization in terms of employees?

**Mr. Mark Tenaglia:** We're 10 employees.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** You're 10 employees? Thank you.

And just the same question: Would you agree that it would be helpful to protect workers by having anti-scab legislation, 10 paid sick days, as well as equal-pay legislation, embodied as amendments to this bill?

**Mr. Joe Williams:** Because we work with marginalized people and justice-involved people, we've found for us that the need for changes has been—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time, and also concludes the time for this panel. We want to thank this panel very much for taking the time to prepare, coming here and spending an hour with us, and helping us out with our deliberations as to the merits of this bill. Thank you very much for being here.

PROVINCIAL BUILDING AND  
CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL  
OF ONTARIO  
CARPENTERS' REGIONAL COUNCIL

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** We now will go to the next panel, and as soon as I find my paper, I will know who it is. The next panel is the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, the Carpenters' Regional Council and—

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Kattar):** That's it.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Just two? There are just two in this delegation.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** We just want to be careful here. This is not a social. The committee is going to carry on, so if we could just bring our focus back to the centre here.

As the people are coming forward—actually, I believe there's no one coming forward; there are two delegations, and they are both virtual. Oh, we do have somebody at the table. That's because there's one appearing virtually as part of the delegation.

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** That's correct.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Okay. So, as I mentioned, we have the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario and the Carpenters' Regional Council. The first one to speak is the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council—

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** —and we'd ask the members to take the discussion outside. If we could go outside with the conversations. Thank you.

I think we've heard the instructions before. You will have seven minutes to make your presentation. I will let you know at six minutes that there's one minute left, and at the end of seven minutes, it will be over.

We ask each presenter to introduce themselves when they start, to make sure that we have it in correct for Hansard. With that, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Carmine Tiano:** Good afternoon, committee. My name is Carmine Tiano, and I am the director of occupational services for the Ontario building trades. The Ontario building trades represent 16 craft unions, with a membership of around 150,000 in the province of Ontario. Our members and partners have built the skyline, the subways, the hospitals, and in the near future we are going to refurbish our nuclear stock to make Ontario the premier energy supplier in the world.

We have a long history of working with governments of all political stripes and our partners to ensure the most healthy, safe workplaces and the most vibrant construction sector in the world. We welcome the opportunity to discuss and provide comment on the government's proposed changes in Bill 190.

For clarity, I will just briefly go through the proposed changes to the ESA which talk about larger penalties, \$50,000 to \$100,000; tackling candidate ghosting and transparency in job posting; and abolishing the mandatory doctor's note. For the building trades, we completely support the changes to the ESA, especially the changes to the doctors' notes, which was causing major issues for both health care providers and workers when they're just having a simple three days off.

**1700**

The bill also discusses changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, namely, that it would apply to remote workplaces; expand the definition of workplace sexual harassment; employers may post OHS requirements electronically and host occupational joint committees virtually; while making changes to enhance regulations for washrooms.

We want to make a couple of comments on the joint health and safety committee remote meetings. Joint health and safety committees are an extremely [*inaudible*] part of the workplace health and safety partnership. Members of that committee have specific obligations to inspect and make recommendations to ensure that workers are not injured—or die—and go home safely. We do have concerns that the requirements may have unintended consequences in certain workplaces, of having remote meetings that will take away the importance of the in-person aspect. Construction is fluid, and to have good health and safety,

meetings should be an opportunity to discuss and implement changes based on the fluid environment. We would recommend that if these changes go through, there is direction that it doesn't lessen the requirements under other sections of the act for committees.

Enhanced washrooms—well, this one has been a problem as long as I've been at the building trades. Most of the proposals that the bill is talking about already exist, yet workplace hygiene is still a problem. One of the greatest problems is the inability to have flush toilets connected to a sanitary sewer. We would rather see something similar to what they did in British Columbia recently, that every workplace with 25 employees or more would automatically have toilets attached to a sanitary sewer. Additionally, we would have liked to see changes to the number of toilets. Right now, for every one to 15 workers, it's one toilet; 16 to 30 workers, two toilets.

The bill also talks about making changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act presumptive legislation for firefighters, to decrease the duration of 15 to 10 years for presumptive exposures. We support that, and we ask the committee to consider that building trades workers many times are exposed to multiple carcinogens at the same time on a daily basis. In many ways, our workers have greater propensity to cancers than firefighters because of the lack of proper PPE. We would ask that the committee, with additional changes in the future, look at presumptive legislation in construction, for cancers.

The bill also makes mention of creating opportunities in the skilled trades for women—mainly, allowing for menstrual products to be on work sites with 20 or more workers that last more than three months in duration. We support this. However, our women trades have made comments that that's not their priority. Their priority is clean washrooms and the size of washrooms. Think of it: Someone has their PPE on, their workboots, their overalls, and need to go into a washroom that's small. So that is something that came up with our women.

The bill also talks about expanding opportunities in the skilled trades while allowing regulations to provide alternative criteria. Our building trades have been attempting, with our partners, to professionalize the industry. Most affiliates encourage potential apprentices to complete high school—minimum grade 10. If someone doesn't have the ability or the wherewithal or the discipline to finish high school to grade 10, it is something—construction isn't the industry. If the government does go down this road of the regulation, we would advise that the trades be allowed to opt out and implement their own standards—if it's going to be grade 12, it's grade 12.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Carmine Tiano:** A one-size-fits-all solution is not conducive to all the trades. We do support getting people into the trades, but in no way can we support anything that will prevent a young person in this province from graduating high school.

I've finished my main comments, and I look forward to questions from the committee.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much for your presentation.

We now will hear from the Carpenters' Regional Council, who are here present at the meeting. The floor is yours, sir.

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the members of the committee for allowing us the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Finn Johnson, and I'm the director of government relations and communications for the Carpenters' Regional Council.

The Carpenters' Regional Council is the entity that oversees all of the local unions of the Carpenters' Union from Ontario to British Columbia. In Ontario alone we have 17 local unions that represent nearly 50,000 members working across a wide range of sectors within the skilled trades, including carpenters, drywallers, scaffolders, concrete form workers, welders, piledrivers and many more professions within the construction industry, as well as industrial workers and health care workers. Our members are at the forefront of building and maintaining the critical infrastructure that Ontario relies on, including energy projects, hospitals, schools, power plants, mining projects and homes. In addition to representing tens of thousands of workers in the skilled trades, the carpenters' union prides itself on delivering industry-leading training at our 16 training centres across Ontario.

My colleagues and I are here today to speak in support of Bill 190, Working for Workers Five Act, and the positive impact that this bill will have on Ontario's workforce. There are three areas in particular that this bill covers that we'd like to speak to: opening pathways into the skilled trades; removing barriers to employment; and supporting women at work.

As you may know, Ontario is anticipated to face a severe labour shortage in the next decade. BuildForce Canada projects that, in that time, approximately 20% of the current construction workforce will retire, resulting in the need for almost 300,000 workers to enter the industry over that period. Tackling this issue will require Ontario to invest in the recruitment of young Canadians into the skilled trades and break down barriers for under-represented groups in our industry, including women.

Decades ago, shop classes started disappearing in high schools as we prepared students for the jobs of the future in the knowledge economy. Parents, teachers and guidance counsellors alike urged kids to pursue a post-secondary education, which they perceived as their best chance at a lifelong career. With a decades-long shortfall of individuals entering the industry, the skilled trades are now where the jobs of the future really are. That is why it is necessary for Ontario to open more doors to apprenticeship opportunities for high school students, something this legislation does through the Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training stream of OYAP. This will positively impact the next generation, further exposing them to careers that they may not have otherwise considered. Our training centres have run cohorts of OYAP students for years in addition to offering specialized programming that we run for high school students in direct partnership with school boards.

Now, I would like to introduce my colleague Adam Gillis, our executive director of programs and initiatives, to speak to removing barriers to entering the trades.

*Failure of sound system.*

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Oh, there's no sound. We're not getting the sound.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** They can see you.

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** They can see me? I'll continue while we're working through the sound. Thank you.

This legislation seeks to streamline registration for internationally trained workers so they can work in the field that they have prior experience in. This is particularly relevant to our industry, given the labour shortage we face. While carpentry isn't a compulsory trade and therefore won't be directly impacted by this legislation, I'd still like to speak to the importance of this change and encourage the government of Ontario to consider expanding foreign credential recognition for non-compulsory trades in the construction industry in the future.

**Mr. Adam Gillis:** Thank you, Finn.

Many immigrants come to Canada with experience in construction, but it isn't always recognized by employers and the apprenticeship system. Immigrants from the US, UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand have less difficulty translating their previous experience given the similarities of our apprenticeship systems and the fact that these individuals often speak English as their first language. Immigrants from South America, Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia face much more difficulty having their credentials recognized. It is a huge deterrent to enter the skilled trades when you arrive to Canada if your 15 years of experience is not recognized and you must start your apprenticeship over again, earning the same wage as a first-term apprentice. Unfortunately, many immigrants in this situation end up pursuing other careers. Recognizing foreign credentials for internationally trained workers is the quickest and most cost-effective way for Ontario to meet its demand for experienced journeypersons.

Additionally, I'd like to speak in support of expanding the occupations eligible for the in-demand skills stream of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. We would welcome carpentry and other occupations our union represents to be included in the eligible occupations within this stream. Foreign workers are helping to build Ontario and its infrastructure every single day and it's critical for us, as a province, to retain these individuals to assist with our current and future labour supply challenges, and their status needs to be secured to ensure that they stay in our industry and our province. Providing them with a pathway to permanent residency through the in-demand skills stream of the OINP does just that.

1710

I'd like to now pass it over to my colleague Rokhaya Gueye, our community partnership coordinator, to speak on the impact this legislation will have on women in the trades.

**Ms. Rokhaya Gueye:** Thank you, Adam.

By providing easier access to menstrual products on large construction projects and requiring increased sanitation

standards for washrooms, this legislation will go a long way to helping recruit and retain more women in our industry. Having menstrual products on site is a basic need for women in the trades. Other workplaces have similar requirements in place, and it's about time that construction really gets caught up.

Women I've worked with have shared with me that there are many times when their cycle came early—sorry for the term—and they had to leave the job site to find products and also a clean washroom. In one more, a really extreme one: One of my co-workers mentioned that she had to use pile of toilet paper for the day because she couldn't leave the job site.

Having access to menstrual products helps with the health and safety of women on the job site, and it means comfort, it means dignity. It retains us there. It's hard to expect women to feel like they belong in the construction industry if their basic health needs cannot be met. This legislation changes just that.

Similarly, requiring stricter sanitation standards for washrooms on job sites and accountability in keeping them clean has an equally positive effect, not just for women but also for their brothers as well, for all workers. No one likes the feeling of having to use filthy washrooms. Luckily, for most people, this isn't a frequent occurrence, but for construction workers, this is something that we see all the time.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** You make a good point, but that's all the time we have, so thank you very much for the presentation.

Now, we will start the first round of questions. We start with the government. MPP Anand.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you to both of the presenters for coming. I truly appreciate that. It's something that—you touched my heart. I came to Canada on January 15, 2000. I had an undergrad in chemical engineering. I was working in a factory. I had a team of 15 people. When I came here, the first thing they told me: "You can't call yourself an engineer—foreign credentials."

So what I want to talk about is the foreign credentials. Thank you for advocating for foreign credentials. We talk about this all the time, the GDP lost every year, that we have people who can perform but they're not having the ability or able to give the job to perform, and we're losing about \$40 billion in GDP over five years. So that's a huge number.

But I want to talk a little bit about—in Working for Workers, 2023, we continued to advance international credential recognition by introducing further measures to help remove barriers facing international trade professionals when seeking registration in regulated professions in Ontario—I'm talking about professional engineers, for an example—which includes clarifying that a regulated profession can only accept Canadian experience in satisfaction of a qualification for registration, if it also accepts alternatives that meet criteria. So these are some of the things which we've done.

What I'm trying to understand—what you're saying is to not just stay with some of the careers, but we need to go

out and do it for the skilled trades as well. So what exactly is your suggestion on how we can work together to build that relationship and do more for society?

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** Sure. So you specifically referenced regulated professions and compulsory trades. Carpentry is not a compulsory trade so, unfortunately, we are not necessarily directly impacted by this proposed change. However, obviously, as you heard during our opening statement, we are very much in support of providing easier access for international workers to have their foreign credentials recognized. Like you said, the economic loss of the work that these individuals could be performing, especially in an industry like construction, which is projected to face a massive labour shortage in the next 10 years—it's not just something that's important to help workers, it's something that makes sense for us as a province. While carpenters aren't directly impacted by this, it's an absolutely really important step in the right direction for Ontario, and we look forward to hopefully seeing future changes that could also benefit carpenters.

In the meantime, I know our organization is very much invested in making sure that we are providing, internally, some of the best steps in skill assessments for our workers that come here from other countries to make sure that they have the recognition with our signatory employers to be able to perform work in the trade at the level they're at.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I said that to the earlier presenters as well: When we talk about the Working for Workers bill, it is not our bill; it is actually a bill that is from the people of Ontario. When we reach out to a lot of the stakeholders, they give us their suggestions. We take those suggestions with the team and we come up with the solution. So we just want to say thank you for all your suggestions in the past, and let's continue working on building a better, stronger Ontario.

That's it from me, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** MPP Hamid.

**MPP Zee Hamid:** Thank you for your delegation, your presentation. It was very, very helpful. I really like the cheat sheet because I was able to read ahead. It helped me understand better.

I've shared this story a couple of times before, so I won't share the whole story, but my youngest was fully lost in school and, last year, took a couple of shop classes and found that carpentry was his desired profession. He's taking a couple more classes this year, worked with a construction site, did pretty much everything—framing was his final thing—and he's applying for a skilled trade next year, so he might be one of your members in a few years.

With that preamble, thinking specifically of unionized workplaces in construction, what are some impacts, if any, that this bill would have or any of the proposed changes would have on workers that you represent?

The question could be for you or for Adam or anyone who wants to answer.

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** Sure. Yes, no problem.

Because you did mention your son's experience, and obviously we see that this legislation is going to have a

direct impact by opening doors through the FAST program, I'd like to maybe touch on how it impacts high school students and their transition into the trades.

Our union has been concerned with making sure that we're creating more pathways for young people to enter careers in the trades. We've got a great program that we're running out of one of our Locals in Windsor, Ontario, that actually allows high school students to be able to take their first semester of their grade 12 at our training centre with their teachers that come with them. They receive their English and math classes in the morning, and then they'll actually do hands-on training in the afternoon, and their second semester is spent doing a job placement with one of our signatory employers. During that time, they not only earn credits for co-op to complete their high school education, they're also able to gain up to seven health and safety certifications and then, of course, a work experience that directly translates into apprenticeship.

So this legislation is specifically opening pathways for more young people to get careers in the trades, where we know the jobs of the future are. And I think by targeting high-schoolers and even younger groups, it sort of destigmatizes some of the—I guess it ends some of the stigma that we've seen in the trades for the past few decades, and I think that's really important.

I'm not sure if Adam or Rok have anything to add to that.

**MPP Zee Hamid:** They're nodding now, so, Mr. Chair, I'll go again.

That's really helpful. So for students who might not be in the Windsor area, do you have programs there as well, or is that something you're planning in the future?

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** Sure. So we partner with the school boards directly, all over the province, so we actually will directly sponsor students in smaller school boards, where there's maybe only one or two students that might be, per semester, looking to enter carpentry and do some training at our training centres. We'll sponsor individual students from those school boards and bring them into—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Finn Johnson:**—a larger level 1 apprenticeship program that we're running, and we're also looking to expand that specific program that I mentioned in Windsor, hopefully to five school boards in the next year. So we're really excited about the potential that that's going to have to help train more young people into the skilled trades and in carpentry.

**MPP Zee Hamid:** We'll certainly need that, not just to fill the gap that exists today but also with more and more retiring workers.

Now, what are your thoughts on alternate education or other paths to get into skilled trades?

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** We see in many different ways that individuals will come and enter the skilled trades, whether you're new to Canada and you're looking for a great career—we helped place and brought in many Ukrainian refugees that came to our union looking for a start in life in Canada. We believe there are many different ways to enter the trades. I know not everyone's path is the same. I

know Adam's path and Rok's path were both very different, so the trades—it's not a cookie-cutter model, so we believe it's important to recognize other forms and make sure their pathways are open to all individuals with all different experience.

1720

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** That concludes the time for that question.

MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** I'm going to start with the provincial building and trades. Carmine, a couple of things that you had mentioned: You talked about the washrooms. When the Minister of Labour was here, I told him that we could do better than just the porta-potties. I worked in construction for 10 years, and there's nothing delightful about—no matter how clean a porta-potty is, it's basically a plastic bucket, and trying to wrap your coveralls around you and making sure your tools are in the right spot in a really tiny place, so I really appreciate you recommending the flush toilets connected to a sewer.

There have been a lot of increases, I'm sure you would know, with—you can bring trailers on site that have showers, that have full-sized washrooms, and when your colleague was speaking about women in the trades, it's just to have enough room to move things around. Men, very often, can stand, but that's not the case for women, and if you're talking about making construction sites attractive to people in terms of washrooms, we can't just say we're going to clean up what we had; I think we've got to go to the next level, so I appreciate you bringing that forward because that is really, really important.

You said that in BC, every workplace of 20 or more people, that this is a requirement already in their legislation?

**Mr. Carmine Tiano:** Yes. Thank you for the question. The BC Building Trades, in 2021 and 2022—you can go online and get the report—it's called Let's #GetFlushed. What they did, they started lobbying their respective government, and in that report they did a study, and it basically was, on a medium-sized construction site with 100 workers, they did an economic impact, and it basically said having a washroom tied to a sanitary sewer would cost \$1 per worker on site.

Something that's lost when it comes to safe sanitary conditions in a washroom—think of it: It's hot outside. Carmine knows the washroom is filthy. Carmine will not choose to stay hydrated because he's scared of going to the washroom. What happens? It's hot, Carmine's dehydrated. Carmine becomes disoriented. There's a cognitive impairment. On a construction site that's a fluid condition; if you're not cognitively aware, you can get hit or you can get injured.

If you look at our injury statistics—I'm not saying that it's a complete correlation, but struck-by and falls from heights are still the number one killers. Could there be a correlation between workers not choosing to hydrate because of improper sanitary conditions leading to deaths? That is something that we need to have a grown-up discussion about.

And, yes, British Columbia, as of the fall of this year, has made a legislative change that says that a workplace with 25 or more needs a flushed sanitary washroom. What we could do is there could be an automatic presumption that a workplace will have this. They can rebut the presumption by showing why they can't do it. Why not?

**MPP Jamie West:** I never even thought about the consideration about being hydrated. The majority of work is done in warm temperatures, and they often say that if you're feeling thirsty, it's probably a little late to start hydrating, so I hadn't considered that, and then, what it could do to mental capacity.

You talked about the presumptive legislation for firefighters in the previous bill and wildland firefighters for this one, and that building trades workers have a propensity for cancers as well. Where can I get that information so we can—

**Mr. Carmine Tiano:** The nice thing about Ontario's health and safety partnership is it's robust. Through transfer payments from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board—not taxpayer money—we've been able to fund centres of excellence. One of the centres of excellence that we funded is the Occupational Cancer Research Centre. If you go look at OCRC and the work they've done with the CAREX database, you will see the exposures in construction: solar, silica, asbestos, diesel, wood fibres and there's one more. Those are the top ones, all carcinogens. You will see in the CAREX database and in the work that OCRC has done that there is a propensity of cancers within construction.

What has been lost is—and my friends at the carpenters' will agree with me—a carpenter, Rok, when she was on the tools, Rok was being exposed to solar, diesel fumes, wood dust, all at the same time, in addition to vibration. I think we need to have OCRC, same way that Dr. Tee Guidotti did the presumptive legislation with the firefighters, to say, "Hey, here are the exposures in construction. Here's what we know. What preventive measures can we put in place? And if we can't, we need to go to either rebuttable or irrebuttable presumptions." The evidence is there.

**MPP Jamie West:** Okay. I appreciate that.

In terms of education, you were talking about education changes, and you'd like the opportunity for certain trades to be able to opt out. Can you expand on that?

**Mr. Carmine Tiano:** Sure. I'll give you an example. Say if the IBEW has a standard of grade 12 to get into the trade. Instead of having a one-fits-all approach, the individual trade could choose, "No, we feel comfortable with having high school to get into our trade." Another trade may say, "You know, looking at our supply-demand model, we're okay with taking grade 12. We're okay with taking someone that has grade 10." Based on the circumstances, that individual trade can say, "No, we don't want this. We could take a lower standard, or we could have a higher standard."

I don't believe in a cookie-cutter approach. You need to look at it individually based on the supply and demand. That's all we're saying. We're not saying the carpenters or

any other trade could choose what they want to do, but there needs to be some flexibility within the system. And I am happy that this government has been able to look at forecasting what we need into the future. So that's what I meant by that.

**MPP Jamie West:** Okay. I don't think I have time to get another question in with a response, so I'll wait for the next round.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

We'll now go to MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Thank you, guys, for your presentation—very well done. We've heard a lot about the same issues that you're bringing to the table.

I'm going to take my question to the Carpenters' Regional Council. I think I'm going to start with Finn Johnson. On your presentation page, you mention that Ontario is anticipated to face a severe labour shortage. That news is not new, but you've put in your notes, "20% of the current construction workforce will retire." That is resulting in over "300,000 workers to enter the industry over that period to fill this gap."

We already know that there's a gap in representing our underserved communities, but today, I want to concentrate on women, because I'm a big fan and big supporter of women. I talked a lot about that today. I just feel women are still getting left behind in this industry. What are your takes on bettering that situation and giving women more opportunities? We talk about the washrooms. We talk about the equipment. We talk about sanitary pads in the women's washroom. So how are you moving through these gaps to encourage more women—because I know they want to—to attract them into the trades?

Rokhaya, I know. I've seen you. I've heard you. I'm looking at you. I know you're doing the best you can. But it's going to take more than you to get this done, so I'm really tabling this question to the organization.

**Ms. Rokhaya Gueye:** So the—

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** Sorry, Rok. No, I think you should—

**Ms. Rokhaya Gueye:** Do you want to go ahead, Finn, first?

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** No. By all means, Rok, I think you should answer that, and then maybe Adam can speak to some of our programs.

**Ms. Rokhaya Gueye:** Sure. Thank you very much for the question. When it comes to the carpenters' union, what we've been doing is making sure that we have sisters in the brotherhood committees, because we know that representation matters: You see it, you be it. So we are going to classrooms. We are going to community events. We are also partnering and collaborating with the Toronto Community Benefits Network, which is a labour coalition that helps people and women to join the skilled trades, but particularly by working into the community benefit agreement so that those local individuals who live in those neighbourhoods where there are major construction projects have the opportunity to join the trade.

**1730**

We do have also the mentorship program at the carpenters' union that—we're making sure that the sisters are matched with mentors that are able to give them assistance. But not only that, we have also several sisters who are—whether they're Indigenous, they're equity-seeking groups or Canadian sisters who are going to the schools, making sure they speak. We do have sisters who are also teachers, instructors, at the union, so that also provides more—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Rokhaya Gueye:** It motivates us. We do have also special pre-apprenticeship programs.

I'll let Adam speak to it, as well.

**Mr. Adam Gillis:** We have programs specifically targeted to removing barriers for apprentices to continue their apprenticeship program. Some of those programs target our female members specifically for child care provisions. In some instances across Ontario, where you have to take your apprenticeship blocks could be two hours away from your house. We're able to give rent supports, travel supports, again, personal protective equipment supports, which look different, fit different for female members than they do their male counterparts. It is recognizing that the supports for women look differently to complete their apprenticeship—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time for that question.

We'll now go to the government. MPP Barnes.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you to all the presenters for being here today.

A pleasure to see you, Rok—a force within yourself advocating for women in trades. It's such a pleasure to see you as well as Finn.

My question, and I'll pose this to—all of you can probably take a stab at it. We know there's a shortage. We know that the government is investing a lot of money in growing the skilled trades. How do we really get our younger people into the trades? So I know, Carmine, you talk a little bit about that grade 10, that grade 11. I know grade 12. I know nobody really wants to oversee their 16-year-old on a job site, but recognizing that that is something that we really need to do if we're going to really talk about the job shortages and the silver tsunami, what would be some of the things that you would recommend?

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** Sure. So I think it's so important to start early. I remember when I was in high school, I didn't necessarily know about the opportunities that existed for careers in the trades. The vast majority of guidance counsellors in the province started their careers as teachers and then moved into becoming guidance counsellors. That's not to say that they're—obviously they're not deliberately not telling students about careers in the trades; they just simply don't know because they didn't come from those backgrounds. So you find that a lot of individuals that are in high school that decide to explore careers in the trades, that happens because they have family members that are in the trades or they find out about it through some other way—so to promote careers in the



trades to high school students and even earlier, grades 7 and 8, and normalize it as a career that is of value and has equal importance to any other white-collar career that might exist.

Our late chief of staff said it best to a room of apprentices when I was in the room with him. He said, “If you’re ever feeling down about starting a career in the trades, just remember that your hands are the ones that built the courthouse that the smartest lawyers that graduate from the best universities in the province will work at. Your hands built the hospital that the best doctors that our province puts out will work in. So their jobs cannot be performed without your work.”

It’s such a vital industry to be a part of for young people, and I think it’s so important to target getting them in the trades early.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you for that. I never really thought about that, the structures and infrastructure that make every other job possible.

Carmine, do you want to weigh in on that question, as well?

**Mr. Carmine Tiano:** Yes, thank you. I think that the same way, for the last 20 years, the education system has neglected and looked at the trades as second-class citizens—if it takes 20 years for us to get there, I think it’s going to take us a bit of time to change that structure.

One thing that has always shocked me—I look at teachers’ college. The actual teachers, even in professional development courses, should be guided to go understand what the individual 16 trades do; what the work is to be, say, a boilermaker. A boilermaker isn’t someone who goes in to fix boilers; a boilermaker is someone that can go into a Candu reactor, change a calandria tube, talk one on-one with a nuclear engineer and a nuclear house physicist and understand exposure to millirems etc.

If you start to promote the industry through teachers understanding the industry, you will get Carmine in grade 8 to say, “Hey, this is kind of cool. Maybe I don’t want to go to university to be an engineer, but if I go into the building trades, the boilermakers, I can go work in nuclear energy or wind-power energy, and I’m understanding how a reactor works.” You sell it that way and you get people to move into it.

That may sound simple, but you’re actually branding the trade and professionalizing it. That’s how I would do it, seriously: Get them to understand what we do, and then they could explain it to these grade 8s.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you for that. That’s interesting. I actually never thought about that, a boilermaker being actually a nuclear physicist. I think it’s such an interesting way that—like you said, we have missed how we have conversations about trades, and it comes down oftentimes to people thinking about carpenter, welder, plumber, electrician. So thank you very much for that.

Looking at the bill we have now, what do you think will be some of the bigger impacts on your industry in regard to not just your members, but actually growing your trades? I’ll put that to Finn first, and then I’ll go to you, Carmine.

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** Sure. This is something I’d love to hear Rok speak to after me. But I think in particular with the supports for women at work, it’s so important to increase the comfort and dignity that women feel in the workplace, especially in construction, which is obviously very much and always has been historically a male-dominated industry.

Retention is such a challenge for women in the trades. Even if we’re able to recruit them and introduce them to programs when they’re in high school, having easy access to menstrual products on job sites and clean washrooms—these are the little things that might seem like maybe something that’s small in a piece of legislation such as this, but to the women that are out there on the job site every day, it’s a huge change for them and it makes them feel like there’s a place for them in this industry.

I think maybe Rok can speak to it a little bit more, as well.

**Ms. Rokhaya Gueye:** Thank you, Finn.

Just to break it down even more, let’s say it’s winter-time. You’re in a porta-potty. Everything is frozen. You have no water to wash your hands. You have no way to clean up or do anything. I’ve been one of the ones who was there before as well, so this will definitely help tremendously. Retention will increase a lot, and then also not only retention, but also people will be happy. The membership will be happy.

We have about maybe 70% of first-year, second-term apprentices that leave. Perhaps that will also deter and will change.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you for that.

Adam, do you want to weigh in on that as the executive for initiatives and programs?

**Mr. Adam Gillis:** The saturation of women in the trades in 1991 was 5%. It’s 2024 and it’s still 5%. Seventy per cent of women who obtain journeyperson status in whatever trade they practise end up leaving the industry and going to another career. These are things that we have to change. I think that this bill provides steps for positive change in that fashion, and then we need to continue that good work.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much.

We’ll now go to the opposition. MPP West.

**MPP Jamie West:** I know that there has been a lot of conversation today about menstrual products in this bill, but I cannot find it in this bill. I know it was in several of the announcements back in May 2024. I’ll look again, but I really did a keyword search for it and looked around for it. I know that it was part of the speaking points. I’m hopeful it’s there. If it’s not there, I’ll be sure to bring it as an amendment, because I think that really is key. And it’s not just this group; all through the day, people have been talking about how important this is. We have to make sure that, when the rubber hits the road, the bill coming out matches the press conference that introduced the bill.

1740

I'm going to go to the Carpenters' Regional Council and Finn, or anyone, really, can answer who wants to come in here—well, maybe Adam. Adam, when you were speaking, you talked about immigrant workers with 15 years' experience not being able to prove their experience and going back to first-year apprentice wages. Just for my colleagues—I went through the apprenticeship program, but for my colleagues, can you just describe what that means in terms of wages for somebody, compared to a journeyman or a first-year apprentice?

**Mr. Adam Gillis:** A first-year apprentice in any trade typically makes 50% of what a journeyman makes. In some trades, it is less than 50% and they're expected to do the same amount of physical work. They are subject to the same harsh working conditions, whether that's the heat, whether that's the cold, whether that's confined spaces. And to convince someone with 15 years' experience that their experience isn't worth the same as someone who has 15 years' experience from Barrie or from Thornhill or whatever—Ottawa—it makes people leave the industry. Because if they're going to start over, they're going to start over doing something new.

**MPP Jamie West:** I appreciate you saying that. I really wanted to get it on the record so my colleagues would understand it, because it would be frustrating. I know, as someone who was an apprentice, you improve a lot. I didn't have 15 years' experience, but in my first year, I was certainly not as quick as I was in my fourth year or as effective in work as well, so I could see the frustration of losing up to 50% or more of your wages.

Having that high skill, that ability—I always shake my fist at the Home Depot commercials where—“You can do it.” You can't do that. That's a skilled worker. You can do something close to that, but there's a real skill to this work.

When Finn was speaking, he talked about opening more doors to apprenticeship and Carmine said something similar about the trades. My son's experience in high school was—he was trying to figure out what he was going to do when he was leaving high school and he had decent grades in everything and I said, “Sam, the only time you've ever stayed after school or talked about school was your shop classes. You should look at a trade.” He wasn't thinking about it. I worked in the trades. His grandfather worked in the trades—both grandfathers worked in the trades. It really is something in society that we've steered away from. And so that wasn't an option. He went into instrumentation and now he's hoping to become a shop teacher, which is great, but I think that that idea of getting people interested in the trades is really important.

Earlier today, previous presenters were talking about—I asked about bringing back shop class introduction, but they said bringing back the introduction earlier, in primary school—have you ever thought of that? Anyone can answer. I just wondered if you'd considered earlier than high school.

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** Sure, absolutely. I think we often say grade 7 or grade 8, even earlier than that. That doesn't necessarily need to be structured quite simply as, “We lost

all these shop classes over the past few decades and now we need to bring all of them back.” I think flexibility in delivering training to young people—people that are still in middle school or high school—is important.

I mentioned that our union often will run programs and run courses for individuals that are still in high school, where they can take some of their credits and obtain hands-on training at our training centres. I know that's not realistic for all parts of the province as well. That's why we also run programs. We'll send one of our instructors into a high school where they have the facilities to accommodate it already, because we know that not all tech teachers are jacks of all trades. Your tech teacher might be an electrician and they're trying to teach a class in carpentry; it doesn't always work. In fact, much of the time, it doesn't work.

So we're more than happy to send in an instructor and have that direct partnership with school boards, but like you say, it's so important to get them early. We're very grateful that families like yours exist, but unfortunately, they're the exception, not the rule, so we need to do better.

**MPP Jamie West:** Yes. Shortly after I was elected, Tom Cardinal invited me to the training facility out in Azilda and it just blew my mind, how effective it was. I really think that the partnership you're talking about in Windsor would be something effective across the province, really, in terms of—even if it was just to give the exposure to people whose families don't come from a trades background, to see what the other opportunities are, no different than visiting a university. Being able to see these different facilities so that light bulb can go off for them I think would be a real opportunity for these kids.

**Mr. Adam Gillis:** What the carpenters' union has been good at doing, too, is increasing those touch points for those students by hosting professional development days, PA days, for student success teachers and guidance counsellors at our 16 training centres across the province. They do the professional development within our training centres and they get a tour of our training facilities, the workshops, the types of programs that we put on, and they take those back to the students. So when John or Jane or whoever in grade 7 or grade 8 says, “I don't know what I want to do,” or shows interest in a career after school, in the back of that student success teacher's or that guidance counsellor's head—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**Mr. Adam Gillis:** —this is an option.

**MPP Jamie West:** Several times today, different people have talked about the legislation around clean washrooms. Do you feel like having the legislation specifically spell out clean washrooms will give the workers the authority to ask for this to be followed? We should have clean washrooms as it is, and we haven't in the past, in some places, so—

**Mr. Finn Johnson:** I think it's certainly a step in the right direction. It's another tool for workers to be able to, obviously, talk to their employers. We are a union, so we'd like to think that our union members would be able to talk to their business reps to help facilitate that connection. I

know it's not necessarily the same for individuals who aren't in a unionized environment. But it certainly gives another tool to workers to be able to make sure that they've got safe and sanitary conditions on their job sites, which, obviously, is of the utmost importance to everyone here.

**MPP Jamie West:** Okay. I just want to thank everyone for presenting—

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

We'll now go to the independent. MPP Hazell.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I'm going to go back to the Carpenters' Regional Council, and that's because I know them very well. My question is based on Adam Gillis's presentation.

You mentioned that many immigrants come to Canada with experience in the construction industry—we know that—but it isn't always recognized by employers. We've seen that happen. We've seen the punishments. The workers are coming across your organization—and you also mentioned that South Americans, Eastern Europeans, Africans and Asians face much more difficulty having their credentials recognized. So you have acknowledged that you've seen the difficulties for the workers facing those experiences. How are you helping the workers in that situation? Are you able to help them in that situation?

**Mr. Adam Gillis:** Thank you very much for your question. In short, we're trying. We are assessing these individuals; we're doing prior learning assessments. We're giving these individuals upskilling in English as an additional language, or French as an additional language, because the Red Seal exams can be taken in both official languages. We are assessing where their prior skill and education level would either slot them into our apprenticeship program for carpentry or whether it would be sufficient to challenge the Red Seal test. It's about building supports for these individuals who would then be able to take the time, upskill themselves and challenge that Red Seal test. We also have Red Seal preparatory courses within the trades that we represent, and we put those individuals through those courses as well.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Do you do follow-up to get your own data, to see the success ratio—because that also will motivate these underserved individuals, as well.

**Mr. Adam Gillis:** Yes. On all the programs we run or all the programs that we help facilitate or are intermediary for, whether it's provincial or federal funds, we keep data on those programs.

The retention level for members that either come in through or take part in one of our programs is higher than those individuals who just find us on their own or get brought in through an employer, because those touch points are increased, those support points are increased, and it's more of a sense of community and a part of something.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** I just want to leave with this comment—no more questions. Thank you so much for answering my questions.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** One minute.

**MPP Andrea Hazell:** Rok, I just want to give some praises to you with my one minute. Keep holding down the fort. Keep being out there. I see you everywhere, and I am really, really proud of you—very proud of you. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Thank you. That concludes the time for the panel. We want to thank all the panellists for being involved and preparing for this presentation and taking the time to come and share it with us. We very much appreciate that.

I also want to remind that the deadline for filing amendments to the bill is 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 17, 2024, so anyone who has made presentations can still send in written presentations too, if they so wish.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman):** Oh, I'm sorry. I read it on the wrong line. My apologies. The deadline for filing the written submissions is 7 p.m. on Thursday, October 10. The deadline for filing amendments to the bill is 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 17. That's the amendments. So we've got the two straight.

Even though you made presentations, if you have more that you would like to add after due consideration, we'd be happy to hear that, as long as they're in by 7 p.m. on Thursday, October 10.

With that, the committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m., Wednesday, October 9, when we will resume the hearings on Bill 190.

*The committee adjourned at 1752.*

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

### **Chair / Président**

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford PC)

### **Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente**

Ms. Catherine Fife (Waterloo ND)

Mr. Deepak Anand (Mississauga–Malton PC)

Ms. Patrice Barnes (Ajax PC)

Hon. Stephen Crawford (Oakville PC)

Ms. Catherine Fife (Waterloo ND)

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford PC)

Hon. Mike Harris (Kitchener–Conestoga PC)

MPP Andrea Hazell (Scarborough–Guildwood L)

Ms. Christine Hogarth (Etobicoke–Lakeshore PC)

Mr. Terence Kernaghan (London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord ND)

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos (Oakville North–Burlington / Oakville-Nord–Burlington PC)

### **Substitutions / Membres remplaçants**

MPP Zee Hamid (Milton PC)

Mr. Dave Smith (Peterborough–Kawartha PC)

MPP Jamie West (Sudbury ND)

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam (Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre ND)

### **Clerk / Greffière**

Ms. Vanessa Kattar

### **Staff / Personnel**

Mr. Andrew McNaught, research officer,  
Research Services