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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 October 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 octobre 2024

Report continued from volume A.

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WORKING FOR WORKERS FIVE
ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, CINQ

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

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

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am very pleased to rise in this place on behalf of the people I represent in London West. This is my first opportunity to participate in a debate since our long hiatus of over five months, I believe, since we were last in this chamber. It's always a pleasure to debate bills, especially bills that affect workers in this province.

What we are debating today is what the government likes to call the latest in its series of Working for Workers bills. This is Working for Workers 5. This bill includes six schedules, but I want to say today that the majority, pretty much all of my time, the limited time I have, will be spent on schedule 2, which concerns amendments to the Employment Standards Act.

There are three main provisions included in schedule 2. The first is amendments around the provision of sick notes for workers who are sick and unable to go into work, the second concerns maximum fines for convictions for contraventions of the Employment Standards Act and the third puts in place new requirements with respect to job postings.

On the first of those measures, the one regarding sick notes, we have a health care crisis in the province of Ontario. We have 2.5 million Ontarians who do not have access to a family physician, to a primary care provider. Earlier this week, I hope that all MPPs took the opportunity to meet with members of the Ontario Medical Association who were here at Queen's Park to identify all of the things that this government could do to help more Ontarians be able to access primary care.

Certainly, eliminating sick notes is something that doctors have been calling for—for years, in fact. And they were calling for it a decade ago, which is why, in 2018, legislation was passed in this place that did eliminate the

requirement for sick notes because, as the doctors from the OMA told us when they were here at Queen's Park, doctors are spending an average of 19 hours a week writing sick notes for their patients who—there are really two scenarios: One is, by the time they are able to get into their doctor's office to see their doctor to get a sick note, they're no longer sick, so the note the doctor is able to provide says that the patient was sick.

The second scenario, the more worrisome scenario, is that a sick worker drags themselves out of bed and goes into a doctor's office where there are lots of vulnerable people. The person who is sick has an infectious disease and the last place that person should be is around other vulnerable people. Yet this was what was happening in Ontario. This led to a very sensible decision by this Legislature that employers would no longer be able to require sick notes from workers who are sick. But this government, when they were elected in 2018, in their wisdom, they decided to eliminate that prohibition on sick notes.

Six years later, we find ourselves in a place where the number of Ontarians who don't have family doctors is greater than ever. In my community, in London, three years ago, we were talking about 62,000 Londoners without access to a family physician. Last year, we were talking about 85,000 Londoners who don't have access to a family physician. Do you know what the number is now? According to the Ministry of Health's own records, 128,000 Londoners do not have access to a family physician.

We have 52 doctors' offices in our city that are sitting vacant. Because doctors are so overwhelmed with the administrative burden that they carry, many are just closing up their practices, they're retiring early, they're switching to other specialties that let them work 9 to 5, a reasonable workday, and don't require them to carry all these administrative responsibilities that amount to 19 hours of work per week. Six years after this government created this problem by allowing employers to require sick notes, we have legislation before us that says employers will no longer be able to require a certificate from a qualified health practitioner from a worker who is sick.

Now, that sounds like a good thing. It says that an employer will no longer be able to ask the worker to produce a note from a doctor, nurse practitioner or other qualified health practitioners. But what the OMA pointed out is that the government, while eliminating the requirements for notes from qualified health practitioners, has said that employers can still require evidence that the worker was sick. It can't be a note from a qualified health practitioner but has to be evidence.

The OMA says that the issue is that there should be no evidence required because—and this is a quote from the OMA’s submission to the government—“workers will struggle to find other satisfactory evidence and will still end up in their doctor’s office for a note, because they don’t have any other options.”

In attempting to solve the problem that this government has created, they’re not solving the problem at all. They are still leading the reality for our physicians in this province, that many of them are going to still have to deal with the number of administrative hours that are spent on tasks like writing sick notes for patients who are sick.

The other thing that the OMA points out is that the government’s legislation only applies to the three personal emergency days that workers in Ontario are currently entitled to. For three unpaid days that a worker is sick, they don’t have to have a note from a qualified health care practitioner. They still need to provide evidence if the employer asks, but they don’t need the note from the qualified health practitioner. But what if they are sick for more than three days? What if they need to be away from work for longer than three days? The OMA points out that three days not requiring a sick note is far fewer than the average of 11.2 days that Canadian employees are absent in a year. So this government’s legislation, while I guess there was some kind of well-intentioned purpose behind it, is not really going to deal with the problem.

1610

We question why the government didn’t take up the amendment that the NDP proposed, and that was to move forward with the provisions of a private member’s bill that I brought forward multiple times called the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act which would provide 10 days of employer-paid sick days for every worker in the province of Ontario, because that is what working for workers would really mean, Speaker. If a government was really concerned about supporting workers in the province of Ontario, they would ensure that they have access to at least 10 paid sick days, because as the OMA points out, it’s an average of 11.2 days that Canadian employees are absent in a year.

The other measure that’s included in schedule 2 of the bill that relates to the Employment Standards Act is an increase in the maximum fine for a contravention of the act by an individual to \$100,000. That’s actually a doubling of the current maximum fine. On the one hand, that sounds really impressive: This government is going to really get tough on employers who contravene the Employment Standards Act, so they’ve increased the fine from \$50,000 for an individual to \$100,000 for an individual.

But we have to look at the history in this province of fines that are levied against employers who violate the Employment Standards Act. And what we see when we look at that history is that in 2022, the highest fine, the single highest fine levied by this government was \$31,000, and this is when the maximum was \$50,000. So why on earth the government thinks that increasing the fine to \$100,000 is going to make a difference when they don’t

have a history of applying anywhere near the maximum fine is a real mystery. But, certainly, it does help make the government look good. It does help them say, “Look, with this bill, we are working for workers. We’re getting tough. We’re increasing the maximum fine. Never mind that we never impose the maximum fine.” Never mind that 90% of employers who violate the Employment Standards Act don’t see any fine. They don’t see any penalty at all. That’s 90% of employers who violate the ESA.

If this government was really serious about getting tough with employers who violate the Employment Standards Act, they would start a program of proactive enforcement of the act. We know that, again, back to 2018, when this government was elected, one of the first things that they did, along with removing the two paid sick days that workers used to have, along with removing the prohibition on paid sick notes, one of the other things that they did in the labour file was to suspend the Ministry of Labour’s program of proactive enforcement.

When this government was elected in 2018, there were 2,345 proactive workplace inspections to see whether employers were actually adhering to their obligations under the Employment Standards Act. In 2021, there were 788 proactive inspections. The number rose a little bit this past year, to 1,025, but it’s a 50% reduction from the number of proactive inspections that were taking place in Ontario when this government was elected.

It’s also ironic and worth pointing out, Speaker, that another thing that this government’s labour minister did in 2018 was to reduce administrative penalties for violations of the Employment Standards Act. So they reduced the monetary fine for the first contravention of the act, for the second contravention, for the third contravention of the act. It does raise the question of how serious this government is in terms of protecting workers and getting tough on employers who are taking advantage of workers.

One of the things that the committee that was studying this bill heard is that the biggest issue that workers in Ontario are facing right now is wage theft. Let’s consider, Speaker: We don’t have proactive inspections. What we have in the Ministry of Labour is a system that requires a worker to make a complaint to launch an investigation, to understand their rights under the legislation so that they know the grounds by which they can make a complaint. But we have a complaints-based system, and there are lots of violations that workers in Ontario experience on a daily basis of their rights under the Employment Standards Act. Workers are failing to receive the overtime that they are owed. They’re not getting minimum wage. They’re not getting severance. They’re not getting termination pay. They’re not getting vacation pay. All of these are entitlements under the Employment Standards Act, and these are often overlooked by employers, who are stealing those wages that are owed to that employee.

Between 2020 and 2022, of all the workers who experienced wage theft and all the workers who then launched a complaint to the Ministry of Labour about this theft of their wages, there were 8,400 successful claims for violations of workers’ rights under the Employment

Standards Act, totalling \$36 million. So this theft of wages was valid, was investigated by the Ministry of Labour, validated and then the government went about to try to recoup those lost wages for those employees. Of the \$36 million that was owed, workers in this province only got back \$13 million, because that's as far as the government collection efforts would go. So you really have to question, Speaker, how serious this government is about actually working for workers.

I also want to reference the concern about employee misclassification, because that is one of the biggest causes of wage theft in this province. It's when workers who are gig workers, contract workers, who are actually employees—they meet all the criteria of employees, but they are denied the benefits to which they are entitled under the ESA, because the employer says, "Sorry, you're not an employee under the legislation. We're not going to observe our responsibilities under the act."

We know that a growing number of digital workers—Uber drivers, the gig economy, workers who work in food delivery services, those kinds of businesses—are routinely seeing their wages stolen by their employer, because they have been misclassified as not being the employees that they are. That's why one of the amendments that the NDP unsuccessfully moved with this bill was to try to get digital workers recognized as employees under the Employment Standards Act, so that they could benefit from those entitlements that they deserve under the ESA.

1620

The final section of this act that I just wanted to briefly comment on is around the new requirements for job postings. So this kind of builds on what the government did in the last Working for Workers bill, requiring employers to include pay range information for jobs that they posted. Now employers are required to say, the job that they're posting for, does it actually exist? Then they are also required to respond to all job applicants who are interviewed.

Speaker, I have news for this government. If this government thinks that the pay range information that they required in Working for Workers 4 and this new requirement for disclosing whether a job vacancy actually exists—if they think that that is actually addressing the need for pay transparency legislation that women in this province rely on in order to get equal pay for equal work, then they are sorely mistaken, because this is a very, very weak and feeble approach to dealing with pay transparency in the province.

So while there is no egregious flaw to this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Thank you to the member from London West for the remarks.

It's time for questions.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: There are over 1,000 carpenter positions that are available in the province of Ontario. We need more carpenters in the province of Ontario. This government, in partnership with some of the carpenters' unions, has now initiated training to train over 1,000 carpenters in the province of Ontario for all of the jobs that are available. We need carpenters everywhere, especially

in my area, Essex county. There's a great organization in my area called the carpenters' union Local 494. They have a longer name; I just call them the carpenters' union Local 494. Great organization—they've got a Skills Development Fund grant to help train carpenters.

I'd like to hear whether or not the NDP supports that government initiative and supports that union.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I really do appreciate the question from my colleague across the way. My father was a union carpenter. I'm very proud of that fact. He put me and my sister through university on a blue-collar, union job, and helped grow the economy here in Ontario.

Certainly, the official opposition recognizes the importance of investing in the skilled trades. We recognize the importance of ensuring that there are education workers in our schools, shop teachers in our classrooms—qualified shop teachers in our classrooms who are able to educate that next generation of skilled workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member from London West for your excellent summary of the bill and identifying some of its flaws and shortcomings.

I want to speak a little bit about gig workers. In my riding, we have gig workers. They're some of the most underpaid people in our riding. They're delivering food, taking people from A to B, and they're just not earning enough money to survive in this city. What can this government do to help gig workers obtain the protections and the wages that they deserve?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague the member from University–Rosedale for that question.

I think the most important thing that this government can do is not treat gig workers as second-class workers in Ontario who don't deserve the same rights and protections that other Ontario workers have. And the way they can do that is to implement the ABC test, to make it the default that a worker will be considered an employee unless a set of criteria is met. The problem we have right now is that too many gig workers, too many contract workers, are told, "You're not an employee; I'm not going to recognize you as an employee," even though they really are. The employer, therefore, does not meet their obligations under the Employment Standards Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions? I see the Associate Minister of Forestry—no. The Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Speaker. Call me whatever you like, just not late to a vote—that was for the whips.

I appreciate my colleague's speech. My colleague is certainly very progressive. One of the things that I find a little nerve-racking about some of our progressive politicians is, recently, they talked about the lack of need for roads. You hear this idea that we shouldn't build any roads; you induce demand when you build roads, you increase traffic, you increase congestion. I think that's a ridiculous argument. I think we need roads. I think people

in my community need roads. We can't just get everywhere on a bicycle. We have winter. We have places to be.

For a lot of workers that deal with long commute times, if an NDP government were to bring forward legislation and had the opportunity to actually work for workers and be in government, would any workers actually be able to get to work?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I find that question very ironic, because there is one thing this government could do tomorrow—today—to help workers get back and forth to work, and that's to eliminate tolls on Highway 407 for truckers. That would relieve so much congestion on the 401. It would be a huge help to workers in this province, and this government has absolutely refused to support the NDP motion to make that change, which experts have said is an important and immediate way to help deal with some of the congestion issues that we face in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further questions?

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank my colleague from London West for her speech. I got an understanding of some of the essential bits and pieces that are missing from this bill. I know one of the very important pieces was a private member's bill that she herself brought to this House many, many times—more than 25 times, I think.

During COVID, we understood how important it was to have people have the ability to take time off when they're sick. I was wondering if the member could elaborate a little bit on how that could really add an important piece to this bill and actually improve this bill and do justice to the workers across this province.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague for that question. Certainly what we saw with COVID, and it's the same with any infectious disease, is that workers who don't have access to paid sick days—and that is the majority of workers in this province—when they are sick or when their child is sick, they have two choices before them: They can stay home and give up their pay, not be able to pay the rent, not be able to pay for groceries, or they can go to work or they can send their child to school and risk making everybody else sick in that workplace or in that classroom. That is an unconscionable position to put workers in this province in, and that's why the NDP fought so hard for paid sick days.

This government eliminated the two paid sick days, which was inadequate as it was, but they have refused to provide the paid sick days that workers in Ontario need.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: It is indeed a pleasure to officially be able to rise in this House as the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, and I'd like to talk to you a little bit about red tape, to the member from London West, for a second.

Earlier in her remarks, she had mentioned that we have doctors in this province that are spending roughly 19 hours a week administering sick notes. I'd like to give her the opportunity to maybe touch on the fact that it's 19 hours a week doing paperwork—not just sick notes; doing paperwork—a lot of which I view as red tape. I had an oppor-

tunity to sit down with the OMA and talk about the forms and different ways that we can help our doctors in this province—and, quite frankly, all workers across this province—do their jobs more quickly and more efficiently.

1630

So I'd like to give the member an opportunity to talk about some of the things that maybe she heard from the OMA, and how she thinks she can work across the aisle constructively—and I will say it again: constructively—not just coming with complaints, but coming with concrete solutions that can actually address the problems that the people of Ontario are facing.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank the minister for that question. I think that one of the most constructive things that the government could have done, and all parties who sat on the committee that was reviewing this legislation, was to move forward with the amendments that were suggested by the OMA on the sick note provisions of this bill.

Doctors spend an average of 19 hours a week on administrative tasks, including writing sick notes. The OMA has pointed out that because this bill still allows employers to require evidence that they were sick when they missed a day of work, workers will often still end up at the doctor's office asking for a sick note because they don't have any other options. They don't have any other option to get another form of evidence that the employer may deem acceptable. So why didn't the government take the OMA's suggestion?

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

I will recognize the member from Toronto Centre. Please, members, if you're going to speak, pay attention. Thank you.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you for that indulgence. I was actually anticipating a member of the government side to stand. I thought it was their rotation.

Again, it's always a pleasure to rise in this House to speak to the important legislation that the House is deliberating on. Today we, of course, are debating the government's Bill 190, Working for Workers Five. The government has promised us in the past that we will see bills 6 and 7 and 8 and 9 and so forth and so forth, which is great, except I think the substance of the bill is somewhat lacking, which is why we continue to see the government tinker around the edges around advancing the rights of workers, but not really getting to the substance of it.

And with the myriad of other government bills that have come before—1, 2, 3 and 4—we recognize that the meat of the bill is again to be decided in regulations: something that this House will not have a chance to deliberate on, something that none of us will get to see, but something that is going to happen after the vote is cast. In other parliamentary spaces, I think we would call this a bit of a sham and a bit of a joke. Certainly I think that the residents of Ontario would want to know what their governments are debating and what the governments are

speaking about before seeing us cast a vote. I know I certainly would like that.

The people of Ontario deserve to know what the bill is going to do before it is passed. We, as legislators, also would like to know this. How are we going to be voting on a bill if we don't know what the regulations are going to say? So I want to know those details and when we will find out those details. Right now, despite the fact that the government has made several announcements—they've spoken to the media about the bill; they have put out this headline-catching bill—one more time, we still don't know the actual details. Over the past few years, we've seen this government do this time and time again. I have said this before about these types of bills, that it is potentially supportable, albeit not very praiseworthy. I think that this government needs to hold themselves to a higher standard and respect this House of democracy.

The bill is largely inoffensive, except that its ineffectiveness and opaque language is offensive to many, including myself. I would say that this bill doesn't go far enough to support workers.

What would really make workers' lives that much better? We know that workers are struggling under the unbearable and punishing costs of housing, and so rent control would certainly make the lives of working-class workers much more, I would say, comfortable. And we know that we need to have housing costs that are stable and predictable.

Another thing that workers are reliant on, especially working families struggling to make ends meet, is \$10-a-day child care. The government is lacking and moving very slowly to administer this. Of course, it means that families are struggling. Workers are now paying mortgage-sized child care payments. I know I certainly did until literally September when my kid moved on to school, but I know I am not the only one.

The government needs to make more investments in child care spaces. They need to train, retain and recruit more ECEs. We need to give them the respect that they deserve. And we are hearing from parents that expecting parents have to register their children for daycare and child care as soon as they find out the good news, because immediately after that, they go into a fit of panic about what happens when the child is born and whether or not they'll get a spot in the child care facility.

For the government to chip in and help workers, another thing that they can do is switch to heat pumps for low- and middle-income Ontarians. This would certainly help, not to mention the fact that it will be greener and better for the climate. We'll also see their energy bills fall. This government should join provinces like Nova Scotia and enhance those heat pump subsidies as soon as possible.

Making home care more accessible and high-quality by paying workers a living wage and retaining them would make lives better for workers. That's how you work for workers.

I also want to note that this party, the opposition, has on numerous occasions passed many bills to advance the well-being and welfare of workers. I look forward to a

question from the government side on what type of bills we've passed because I've got a list ready to read out to you. So please make sure you do that; ask me that question.

We also know that a workplace has to be safe. This is why we need to absolutely ensure that the powerful and the politically well-connected are not going to use and misuse the non-disclosure agreements. We have to stop the misuse of NDAs especially as they silence those who have been harmed in their workplaces. Abusers are protected. More people are being victimized. The survivors are being silenced.

It's in my bill. I submitted a private member's bill. It's entitled Stopping the Misuse of Non-Disclosure Agreements Act. It's on the order paper. The government could have taken that entire bill and actually inserted it wholesale into this current edition of the Working for Workers government bill and it would be significantly stronger, not to mention the fact that it would meet the needs, the requirements and the demands of survivors today.

I want to talk about some of the schedules that we see in the bill, Speaker. I'm going to start to speak about the alternative criteria for academic standards in the trades. This is actually very important because these alternative criteria will be set out in regulations. That means that right now we have no way of understanding what these criteria are. It could be the equivalent of the on-the-job training or a skills test, but it could be that those wanting to be a carpenter can simply take a high school shop class or just simply express an interest in becoming a carpenter. I want to give the benefit of the doubt to the government, but it's very hard to support a schedule when it has zero information about what it will actually contain.

1640

I want to trust that the named registrar that is mentioned in this bill is a person that's going to be capable of setting out those criteria. However, the government's bill does just not stop with the naming of the registrar; they add a few more words after that. Those words are: "or another person." The government is saying that that the criteria will be set out by the registrar to be named or another person, and we have no idea who that other person would be. Are they an esteemed expert in their field, or are they just somebody connected politically to the government? Perhaps it could be a political donor that is a favourite of the government, or it could be someone who is just right off the street. We have no idea, and I'm not even sure why the government needed to put those three other words in that schedule, those other words being "or another person."

It's clear that the government is rushing through this legislation. It hasn't fully consulted with stakeholders. In committee, we asked oftentimes the stakeholders who appear before us: "Did the government speak to you? Were you consulted?" Time and time again, they said, "No. No one called us. Nobody invited us to speak," and they were significant stakeholders. Hiding details in the regulations to come is simply not good enough.

There's a lot to be said about doctor's notes, and we've heard from the Ontario Medical Association that doctors are spending 19 hours a week on just paperwork, and they're asking and pleading with this government to cut the red tape. Absolutely, the doctors are supportive of making sure we don't have the elimination of these small requirements of doctor's notes to prove sick days, and we want that to be crystal clear.

The language around this criteria is also all over the place around the bill. We are, as the official opposition, in favour of removing the requirement for employers to have the sick notes for a simple few days off. Many folks in this House have already spoken to that, especially when it comes to a minor ailment or when the ailment is highly contagious—people should not be leaving their house. We ask you to stay home and rest, and we want you to get better quicker so you can get back to work. We certainly don't want you walking into a place, such as a doctor's office, where people are highly immunocompromised and, of course, you could be spreading your cold. That is a very good move.

There's also a portion of this schedule that includes a shadow schedule, which I think leaves a lot to be considered. It's befogging and also very frustrating. During one of the press conferences, press events that the minister held, he explained that he wanted to leave entitlements that would mirror federal EI leave allotments, but none of what was said at the press conference is actually in the bill—not in the schedule. Again, that leaves us with the assumption that the government will be putting out the details again in regulation, perhaps with or without consultation.

It is very frustrating and, I think, also insulting to members of this House to be asked to vote on something basically announced at a press conference and have no details here. I certainly think that for the stakeholders who have asked for consultation and not have received it, it's very frustrating for them as well.

I'm going to talk about the transparency around job posting, which I think is highly commendable. We want to make sure that job postings have accurate and important information for potential applicants and what they need before they submit their résumés. But the section, again, in the bill doesn't give you any details.

The entire bill reads like a set of rules that may come from an elementary school secret club, and it would be something like this—this is the essence: “These are the rules of the club, except for when they're not, and I won't tell you when they do or do not apply.” These are the rules that we are working in, and this is what you're telling us when you don't put information in the bill. This is very frustrating for every single member involved.

We also know that women and gender advocates in the province and across the country have been asking for equal pay. They've been asking and putting forth data as well as a business case on why we want to make sure that the demands of the Equal Pay Coalition are adhered to, because that will certainly protect and enhance the rights of women and gender-diverse workers, something that this bill does not do. Despite their years of advocacy, govern-

ments have failed them time and time again. And it doesn't matter if it's the Conservatives or the Liberals—their particular requests have never been met.

I want to speak about the Employment Standards Act fines that this bill now references—that individuals are to be fined up to \$100,000, which is a substantial increase, I must admit, from \$50,000. I welcome the increase in fines. I believe that bad actors must be punished. They must feel the pain and then be deterred from doing bad things to workers again. But the problem is, these fines are so rarely levied. And I am unsure about whether or not this would make any difference. Currently, under the Employment Standards Act, corporations can already be fined up to \$100,000 and repeat corporate offenders can be fined up to a half a million dollars. On paper, this does look good. But the reality is that many of these fines, especially fines of this type, at these amounts, almost never get levied. There is little to no enforcement.

According to the Ministry of Labour's own data collected by the Workers' Action Centre, it showed that most recently, in 2022, two years ago, a company was fined this highest fine. The highest fine levied in 2022 was a mere \$31,250. So what use are these higher fines when current fines don't even approach the upper limit?

Worker advocates point out that the greater need is around enforcement, which has lagged, and it has been purposefully stalled under this administration since 2018, when proactive enforcements were actually suspended. That's what we actually need: We need proactive enforcements. Workers are literally run off their feet. They fear reprisals from their employers, so they are often hesitant to report. Enforcement coming from the government would not threaten any individual worker, and they could even catch infractions that workers overlook because they're not ESA experts. That's why the proactive investigations, proactive enforcement, is so highly desired by all the labour-represented stakeholders.

Regarding regulated professionals, it has yet to be explained by the minister, in his press events, what it means to address this issue. The government is choosing to communicate their legislation through the media, which is absolutely fine, but we need to see it backed up in the proposed legislation. I don't get to vote on a minister's press conference; I only get to vote on the legislation that is properly before us. And by not writing that out, once again, in the bill, it leaves us all as parliamentarians in a very precarious situation. We need to see that legislation, those details fleshed out much, much sooner. We have an opportunity to improve the bill at committee, and the government has routinely and systematically voted down every single amendment from the official opposition to improve and strengthen the bill.

1650

It is possible to change in the bill, the regulated professionals legislation—when we're considering foreign-born professionals, they may not have the documentation; they need to establish their credentials by other means. But, again, the bill doesn't solve it because it leaves it rather unclear. If this bill were clearer, it would give real hope to

professionals with foreign credentials. I wish that you could share that hope with them today through this legislation, but instead we'll have to wait for the next Working for Workers bill—number 6, or perhaps number 7, number 8, number 9, number 10—because we've been promised more of these bills. So that's what we're going to see, that's what we will have to wait for: the sequel to the sequel to the sequel.

But we also know that when it comes to advancing this type of legislation, we need to make sure that these types of policies, especially as they relate to professional organizations, have to be submitted to the Fairness Commissioner for review and that any feedback and input from the Fairness Commissioner should be considered before implementing the policy further. We are not seeing those details in this bill, or the schedule, and we don't know what the Fairness Commissioner will be considering or not.

We know the regulations will have to have written policies set out for reasonable alternatives. That is not before us today.

All that being said, we need to be able to do everything we can to protect workers in Ontario. We want to support them. We want to make sure they have a pathway to a good living, to support a family, to grow a family in Ontario—being able to contribute to the economy.

It would be helpful for the government to tackle the issue around workplace inequality once and for all, rather than have us debate these very opaque bills time and time again and then waiting for the next shoe to drop the next time out.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Toronto Centre for the summary of this bill. My question is pretty simple. If you could make two changes to this bill to improve it, what would you recommend this government do?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the wonderful member from University–Rosedale. Obviously, there are many things that we can do and many private members' bills that we have advanced.

You could adopt Bill 90, which we put through, which is the anti-scab labour piece of legislation. I know that many workers would like to see that. You could also adopt Bill 76 which we advanced, the respecting workers in health care and related acts. We could adopt Bill 57, Respecting Injured Workers Act; Bill 55, Four-Day Work Week Act; Bill 4, Stay Home If You Are Sick Act; as well as Bill 127, which is the Captain Craig Bowman Act.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I listened to the debate, and it's been quite interesting, but I also sat on that committee when we had numerous, numerous people from different trades, different organizations, applauding this bill. So I'm not sure whether the member was picking and choosing what she was listening to, but there were a lot of people who were very positive about this bill. It is changing lives.

It is changing lives for our workers, our skilled trades workers, which we are in desperate need of.

We want to provide training, and I guess my question for the member opposite would be something I asked one of your colleagues earlier: We had a Skills Development Fund which has made a tremendous difference in numerous people's lives. They will tell you the stories directly of how they are being trained for jobs that they had no idea they could even do. We keep pushing people back and we say, "Minimum wage, minimum wage"—let's encourage those women that we talk about to get into the skilled trades and get those jobs. That's why we talk about having clean bathrooms at construction sites.

Why did the member opposite—why did your party vote against \$1.4 billion for the Skills Development Fund, and will you be supporting women in the trades?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Having sat through at least one of those rounds of consultations, I know that the stakeholders who came forward said that they were supportive of the bill, but when asked whether or not the bill goes far enough or whether or not there's more that could be done, a number of them, if not all of them, said, "Yes, it could always do more. It could always be better, always be stronger." And then they actually gave us the solutions through their written submissions, or they actually answered it in further detail. That is really what's missing in the bill, is that they have said that they were not consulted.

Yes, absolutely, this party—the official opposition support everybody in the trades and advancing apprenticeships for women and gender-diverse people as well.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from Toronto Centre for those eloquent, excellent debate remarks. You really touched on a lot of points that would help employees and workers across the province. One of the things the Workers' Action Centre pointed out was that in order to make these fines that we talk about meaningful, you have to have things like inspections.

I wonder if the member would elaborate a little bit and talk about some of the things that you think this bill could have done to actually make it more concrete, because you can have a paper bill but it doesn't really mean anything if you don't have the inspections, if you don't have the ability for workers to have protection against wrongful dismissals. So it won't go far enough. I would like the member to talk a little bit about that.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you, and welcome back to the member from Scarborough Southwest.

I believe that the bill can be strengthened, and I think we've heard that repeatedly from the Workers' Action Centre. What is causing a great deal of concern and frustration for them is that they've been asking this government for the same thing many years over now. It doesn't matter if it's the Conservatives or the Liberals; they haven't gone far enough, especially when it comes to proactive investigations and enforcements. The fact that we know that there are bad actors out there, and the highest fine has

only been over \$31,000 back in 2022, that tells you enough that the government needs to do more, and they started it off by suspending these proactive enforcements, which also tells you who they're working for.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: I heard the member from London West earlier talking about her father who was a carpenter and supported her family when she was young and helped put them through school. I find it very interesting. We've kind of come full circle to this point, where the carpenters' union, in fact, is now working with us to build training centres, using the Skills Development Fund to help minorities, to help racially marginalized people in Ontario get a good-paying job and allow them to support their family, like her father did for her.

I don't understand, and I'm hopeful that the member from Toronto Centre can explain to me why it sounds like she's going to vote against a bill that works truly for workers, works for marginalized citizens in Ontario, helps provide a good job, union jobs with pensions. Why does she stand here in this place and continue to vote against these bills?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I think that the member needs to be corrected. I'm not saying that I'm voting against the bill; I'm saying it's not praiseworthy because there isn't enough, and it doesn't go far enough. That's what we heard from different unions and different labour stakeholders that came before us. If the member would like to insert words in my mouth, that is not what I said. I said it is not praiseworthy and it doesn't go far enough.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Toronto Centre.

A couple of comments before my question: In my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, this past summer, I spent a lot of time with non-profits, specifically Women's Centre of York Region—they deal with women who are looking to get into the job market after being in abusive situations—also, dealing with the owner of Fair-Trades Toolbox, who likes to work with women to help them get into the skilled trades because it is a good-paying job, and they need more women in the trades. One of her comments to me, Brandi Ferenc, was, "It's a matter of changing the culture of skilled trades for women."

1700

My comment to the member from Toronto Centre is that this bill promotes women in trades, and we know there are a lot of women who want to get in there and stay in there. But I have to say that I haven't seen your party really taking concrete steps to help move more women forward in the trades. So my question is, will you vote with us for action, or are you going to stay on the inaction side of things?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you for that important question from the great member of Newmarket–Aurora. It's always a pleasure to hear from you.

Our party was founded by farmers, founded by workers. We continue to be a strong advocate for all workers in Ontario. So I think our track record is unmatched in this House despite the headline bills that the government will put forward.

What women are looking for in order for them to have a safe work environment, a welcoming work environment, is anti-harassment, anti-violence legislation. That's not embodied in here.

What they're also looking for, and we've heard it in droves, is to have employers stop the misuse of the non-disclosure agreements, because it muzzles them when they've been harassed and it muzzles them when they've been sexually assaulted.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity. I want to thank all those who have spoken before me. They've made some really excellent points.

I had the opportunity to review the speech given by my colleague MPP Jamie West when this bill was first put forward, and I'd like to revisit many of his comments because I thought they were quite useful.

He talks about high school apprenticeships. I agree with him that there is some real potential there, but I also agree with him that you have to make sure that things are structured so that young people are not precluded from taking other steps as life goes on. People will well remember their state of mind when they were 13, 14, 15—well, maybe some will and some won't; but anyway, things were not always clear as to where you were going to wind up.

My father was an auto mechanic. I grew up in Hamilton, in the east end, near the steel mills. Our guidance teachers would sometimes point out the window at the stacks and say, "I know that's where all you guys are going to wind up, so I don't know why you're here. But anyway, take a look: There's the future."

My father was a bit more ambitious and wanted to make sure I got some trades, so I went to auto shop, I went to electricity shop, I went to carpentry shop. Happily, friends, I still have 10 digits. I did listen to the teachers on occasion, particularly when it came to power tools.

I have to say—again, this is an important point that was made by my colleague—that we need to make sure, when we make these opportunities available to young people to get into trades—and I think it makes a lot of sense to have those opportunities open to them. People in the trades these days are in high demand. If they're unionized, they can make a decent wage; they can make a decent living. But don't preclude including other forms of education so that they may decide or are able to decide that they're going to take a different course of action with their lives.

Certainly, my colleague MPP West made that point that he was interested in the trades, but ultimately found that being an electrician was not satisfying to him—not that it was bad work or dull work, but it was ultimately not what he was born to do. What he'd found was his calling was working on occupational health and safety. Fair enough. I

just want to make sure, when we structure things, that young people—female and male, gender-diverse—are able to keep a variety of options open before them as they go through their lives. That is going to be very important in any legislation that comes forward.

One of the concerns that my colleague raised, and I want to speak about this as well, is unscrupulous employers.

Back in the 1990s, when the Harris government was going after the skilled trades, there was a lot of work done by those trades to protect their organizing rights, and one of the things they found and they publicized in their fight to protect the unionization of construction trades was that there was a sharp difference between unionized and non-unionized workers in terms of deaths and injuries. That should be quite a red light to all of us—that if there's a big difference in deaths and injuries, we should be making sure that workers are protected, and that means ensuring that they're unionized.

There are many companies that try to operate on an under-the-table, cash-only basis. Frankly, those workers are probably working in very difficult circumstances, working in risky circumstances, and should they be injured, should they be knocked out of the workforce, you can be certain that they're not covered by WSIB.

It would have been far better, in this bill, if steps had been taken to crack down on those unscrupulous employers who take advantage, largely, I would say, of people who are most vulnerable; people who have had difficulty getting into the workforce; people who are new immigrants, whose legal status is uncertain.

It would have been very good if this government had said, "We will be taking steps, in as many spheres as we can, to ensure that the workers we employ are unionized and to make requirements for those companies that provide services to the government that their employees be unionized."

If you want to protect workers, if you want to make sure they wind up with 10 digits at the end of the day, they need to have a union card, they need to have a union contract, they need to have union leadership that's looking out for them.

Schedule 2 of this act deals with advertising job postings, and I have to say that although I think this is useful and although my colleague Jamie West felt it was useful as well, there may be more critical things out there than this. I'm not saying you should dismiss it. But I'll go back to, should we be making sure that we take every step we possibly can to ensure that people are unionized, so that they get maximum protection, so that if you've got an unscrupulous employer, people have legal protection, the political protection, the solidarity that comes from being part of a larger union movement?

One of the requirements is that people should be told when they don't get a job. I have to say, I have heard from people who've said to me, "I applied, and I never heard back." Most of us would deduce that if you didn't hear back, you didn't get the job. I think that's fair, but I also think it's fair to require employers who've advertised,

who've received a résumé, to send out a communication saying either, "Sorry. You didn't get an interview. You didn't quite meet our qualifications," or "You had an interview, and we selected another candidate." I don't have any problem with that. I think that's useful.

One of the things that's really striking to me is this whole question of wage theft. It's astounding to me that wage theft is not dealt with more aggressively than it is in this province. My colleague MPP West noted that he had always had in his mind that the running total per year of money stolen from workers by unscrupulous employers was about \$10 million a year. In fact, the Toronto Star did an investigation between 2020 and 2022, and in those two years, there were almost 8,500 successful claims for workplace violations for wage theft. He said, "If you calculate all those together, workers in our province are owed more than \$36 million by employers who have stolen money from them, the wage theft employers."

1710

Now, I may be going way out on a limb, but I would say you should have police action against people who do that. If you steal my wallet, I can go to the police, and you can be charged for theft. If you steal wages from me, I think you should be charged as well. Theft is theft—theft is theft, and that's what's happening. We aren't enforcing that in this province. That's not happening. It's not happening.

At the end of 2022, the government was able to recover less than half, less than 40% of that. If you're into the numbers, \$36 million was owed to Ontario workers, and the Ontario government was only able to collect \$13 million. So you've got people out there who realize, "Damn, I could make a lot of money stealing wages. It's unlikely I'll get caught, and if I get caught, maybe I'll have to cough up half. I'm in really good shape doing this."

They calculated about \$23 million was left in the hands of those unscrupulous employers, those thieves. I think it's incumbent on this government, any government, to regularly be checking employers, making sure that workers are paid and taking very severe, punitive action against thieves who pretend to be decent employers, but are actually just bottom-dwelling, thieving creeps.

The other thing is that you have to have a system of protecting people from reprisals. I don't think there's any question, as I argued a few minutes ago, that the best protection for people is being in a union—a well-organized one, a well-led one—and having that union protected by government so that people could win first contracts, so they can get certification on a card basis. But not everyone is going to be unionized. What you do, then, need is legal protection for those workers who make complaints. I've had people in my riding, my constituents, come to me talking about the difficulties they've had in their workplace and their fear that, should they actually make a complaint, they will be fired or in some way punished, demoted, blackballed. And I think it's incumbent on the government, that says it's in favour of workers, that it acts to protect workers against reprisals from employers who aren't happy that an employee is talking about employ-

ment safety act violations; aren't happy about an employee who doesn't feel that they are adequately being protected on the job.

Section 4 of this bill has to do with maximum fines for those who are convicted of committing an offence under the legislation. It's really interesting. Again, I want to thank MPP West. I thought he did a really good job summarizing what's going on here. He notes that, if you were convicted of an offence, in the past the maximum fine was \$50,000. Now, under this act, it's going up to \$100,000. Man, I can see the argument today; I can even see the ad on YouTube: "We're tough on bad employers. We're tough on bad bosses. We're really going to stick it to them."

But if you look at the history, what have people actually paid? Was that \$50,000 fine ever actually levied against anyone? What my colleague found when he looked around was that the \$50,000 fine was almost never levied, never charged. If they're not going to go after \$50,000, can you tell me they're actually going to go after people for \$100,000? I have my doubts. The highest fine that he could see levied was in 2022: \$31,250. So if they're paying about a third of the maximum fine, if that's the most that actually practically happens, then, frankly, Speaker, this is a paper tiger. This is something that an employer can say, "Yeah, they have the number on the books, but it's not real."

Years ago, I read a book about Uber—and people should look at that corporation, because if you want to learn about how pirates operate today, they are the people to learn from. The head of Uber at the time was talking with his employees about how they were going into new markets and what the laws were. His slogan was, "The law is not what's on the books; it's what's enforced." It may well be cynical, but I have to say it's probably true. If you're not actually enforcing the \$100,000 fine, if you're not actually levying it to catch the attention of bad actors, then I have to question whether or not you're serious about protecting workers. You have to be questioning that.

Now, again, my colleague—many thanks to Mr. West. Oh, I can't mention that, can I? I am sorry he's not standing right beside me at this moment. He noted that there are penalties under the Employment Standards Act that function like tickets, like speeding tickets. You know: You didn't make sure that the restroom was clean for the employees, and you can get ticketed. Interestingly, in 2018, the present government decreased those administrative penalties. They cut those tickets, so if you violate the Employment Standards Act, a fine that used to be \$350 dropped to \$250—a deep discount. "Hey, we know it must be tough for you paying all these tickets so we're going to give you a break." A \$700 penalty was dropped to \$500 and the \$1,500 penalty was dropped down to \$1,000—a \$500 cut, amazing. This is Doug Ford's bargain basement fine emporium.

What you do when you cut these fees for penalties for employers who violated the Employment Standards Act is you encourage them. It's a sign from the government saying, "Eh, we don't think it's really that bad. We don't

think you should really pay." Between this, which is a sign that for the small stuff we don't care, and the big stuff that we don't actually levy the fines for that we say we have on the books, I think it's a pretty clear message: "We don't like messing with you; we don't really want to protect workers."

Going from that on to sick notes—and my colleagues have talked about sick notes today—I have to say that it's always struck me as a very bizarre situation. First of all, as a number of people have said, do you really want people coming in to work who are sick, who will give you the flu or COVID or a cold or something else? I don't think you do. The vast majority of people I talk to want to work. They have a sense of purpose. They have a sense of self-responsibility. They want to run their own lives, and they will try to get to work if they can possibly do that. But sometimes what happens is, they come into work and they make other people sick. A friend of mine was working at a theatre recently, where virtually the whole of the staff in that theatre was cleared out, because one person got sick and everyone else came down with the bug as well.

This section about sick notes is kind of ambiguous. That was the thing that was interesting, when you read through it. I mean, the announcement is, "We're getting rid of sick notes," but the rubber never quite hit the road on this. I would say that there should be clarity here that workers will be trusted to declare what their situation is and that we're not wasting the time of doctors, nurse practitioners and other medical practitioners pumping out notes. When they're not doing big diagnostics, they're seeing someone come into their waiting room, perhaps coughing on all their clients; coming in and perhaps coughing on the doctor; and getting a note and going back. This whole approach that we have needs clarity and needs protection for workers. I don't think that what's in place, what has been in place and even this is actually going to root out those people who are irresponsible. Let's face it, there are irresponsible people in every part of society. Most people are responsible, but the irresponsible ones—this ain't going to clear them out. It's unfortunately the reality.

1720

Section 1 of schedule 4 talks about updating the definition of industrial establishments and clarifying that it refers to an office. I think it is a good thing to do that. We have a lot of people in this society, in this economy, in Ontario who work in offices. They need to have protection, just as people do in warehouse work, light manufacturing and other kinds of processing—no question at all. But it's useful here to have some clarification.

Another section is going to update the definitions for workplace harassment and workplace sexual harassment to include certain virtual activities. I think it is a good idea. I don't think people should have to suffer through harassment at work. I don't think they should have to suffer through harassment that is propagated against them through the Internet onto the phones after-hours. That's just junk. They deserve to be protected. It's unfortunate—people come together in the workplace, the employer has overall responsibility for that workplace, and I think the

employer is the person who is properly situated to take action on those matters.

There are approximately six schedules in this bill. I haven't touched on them all. I have pretty much touched on the ones highlighted by my colleague. There are many other issues that I think need to be addressed in terms of protecting workers. I think a bill that came forward with card-based certification for unionization would make a big, big difference in the lives of working people. I think that legislation that ensures that first-contract negotiations were ones that had special rules so that employers couldn't block and demoralize the workforce would make sense to me. I look forward to that being brought forward next week by the government. Maybe they will listen to my speech and say, "Yes, yes, I had a come-to-the-light moment when I realized that we have to do that kind of work."

Speaker, thank you for your patience.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I listened intently to the presentation by the honourable member, which was, in many respects, thoughtful and very absent of the type of rhetoric that oftentimes both that member and myself enjoy participating in. So I wanted to ask an equally thoughtful question to the member with regard to the skilled trades fund that the government has set up to train various workers in various skilled trades. Does that member have any thoughts that he would like to offer this assembly on other ideas with regard to the skilled trades and other ideas of potential funds that he would like to discuss?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Two things: First, I appreciate you listening to my speech. It's unusual in this space, as you are well aware. Sometimes, it's a very lonely place to speak in, because you are the only one who is listening to yourself. Secondly, I appreciate the question.

I think funding for training for workers is a good idea. But I will go back to this—and it is very critical; I would like you to think about it. I am not being rhetorical. You need to do something about these fly-by-night outfits that pay cash only. Because a lot of people who go to apprenticeships, become journeypeople, want to apply their trades, will find situations where their work is undercut by someone who comes in, really operating under the table, ignoring WSIB and so on. It's undermining the security of those trades positions.

So you are asking me a serious question, and I'm giving you a serious answer. I think that's something that would make a big difference in the lives of working people in this province.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, I want to give a shout-out to a constituent of mine Rachel Buttigieg. She is an advocate with MS Canada. I met with her last week, and one of the things that MS Canada is really pushing for is an extension to job-protected leave, because MS is an episodic illness, and workers don't know when they will be able to go to work or not.

My question to the member is, is he concerned that this legislation does not include an extension to job-protected leave for workers who have to access the federal EI sickness benefits when they are experiencing an episodic illness? Right now, people with MS don't know if they'll have a job waiting for them when they recover and are able to go back to work.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks for that question, because I think protection for people in those circumstances—we're talking, effectively, about an ongoing disability, where a person, really, wants to support themselves. They want a job. They want a sense of purpose and productivity. Making provision for that in the law makes tons of sense to me.

Obviously, people don't want to be on social assistance. If they have to be, they have to be, but they can earn more, they can have a stronger sense of purpose when they're at a place of employment. So what you're suggesting would make a huge difference, I think, in the lives of people who have those sorts of episodic illnesses.

A number of years ago, I was working with a group of bereaved parents, and I didn't realize this—if you have a child who dies, you only would get about a week or two in leave that would be protected. People were often really devastated by that. Sometimes the stars align, and we were able to push through a one-year leave, because often people psychologically have huge difficulties adjusting. I was glad the government of the day recognized that. I think it would be worthwhile to recognize exactly what you've raised.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: I enjoyed the member opposite's comments—his speech.

As I think most people know, I spent my life in agribusiness, working in rural Ontario, working in small-town Ontario. One of the things I found in my entire career was you could always get young talent to come in and get skilled up, traded up, for the particular business we're in—grain elevation, feed manufacturing, dealing with those plants. The last number of years, it's been very difficult.

My question is—and, again, I say this sincerely—why would you support a carbon tax that's going to hurt those workers that we're getting skilled up? That's the part that just amazes me. It's really hurting our farmers and the people that produce the food in this province.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Since we're ranging pretty widely, because I don't think the bill touches on the issue—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You guys. It's Thursday afternoon. Clearly, people have had very liquid lunches.

I'm going to go back to your question—and ask the question: What do you do about carbon emissions? As you know, we supported cap-and-trade. You guys got rid of cap-and-trade. You brought in the federal carbon tax program. The cap-and-trade system was actually helping people by putting money into businesses and homes all over this province. That's something that we think makes

sense. Putting the burden on the big polluters makes tons of sense. I think what you should do—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Bring back the cap-and-trade, my friend. Bring back the cap-and-trade and I think you can make a real difference for the environment in this province.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Toronto—Danforth for your summary of this bill, including noting some of its many weaknesses.

I want to draw attention to some of the concerns that the Workers' Action Centre had about this bill and its failure to address wage theft, where workers are in a situation where their employer doesn't pay them and they fear that there will be reprisal if they speak out.

Does this bill address the issue of wage theft? If it doesn't, what do you think should be in the bill to address it?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think if you're going to address wage theft—and I don't see it in this bill—you actually need to have a program of inspection and enforcement that we don't see happening right now. We don't see the aggressive action on the part of government to prosecute those who have stolen wages, to treat them as the thieves that they are. That isn't happening. And as I said in my speech, I'm not seeing the action on the part of government to protect people from reprisals either.

1730

I'm glad you asked the question, because the two things do come together: If people are worried that they're going to lose a job—"Well, my employer couldn't pay me fully the wages this week, but they'll come through next week and I'll just hold on." Because people need to pay their rent and they need to pay for groceries. If they feel that they're going to be subject to reprisals, then they're going to keep their mouth shut. We need to make sure that they're protected and they know they will be protected by the full force of law and the government against employers who treat them badly, who punish them for speaking up for their legal rights or steal the wages out of their pockets.

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

Hon. Graham McGregor: I was troubled by the member opposite's answer to the question. I think the member really felt, in his heart, he wanted to speak his mind on the carbon tax. I know there's strict party discipline over in the opposition benches. I know the House leader's staff are watching. I know the leader's office may call you after this, but I felt the member was almost getting there for the real answer he wanted to give on the carbon tax. And I just want to invite my colleague, on behalf of democracy and parliamentary openness and just one elected official to another—please give the opportunity to the member. Please, just speak your mind. Just tell us exactly how you feel about the carbon tax.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There are two things here, Speaker, and I appreciate the diligence on the part of the member

and his commitment to democracy and openness—pretty exotic in this place, but nonetheless, some people speak up for it.

First of all, I think that it would be a great thing if this government was to bring in cap-and-trade so that the federal carbon tax system no longer applied in Ontario. You could do that; we'd support you. Do it. It would be a great thing. So you need to know that.

And I think the other thing is: When are you actually going to take action on climate change? You have an embarrassing plan that is not going to make its targets, and the targets are totally inadequate. Where is your action on that end?

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today to add my words to the debate of Bill 190.

One would think that, in the fifth iteration of a bill that is titled Working for Workers, it would comprise consultation with workers. One would think that the government of the day would actually speak with the Ontario Federation of Labour. One would think that the government would speak with the Workers' Action Centre and many other organizations that support and promote the rights of workers, and yet that has not happened. So for this bill to come forward again with this title is, I would suggest, at best, unintentionally, ironically titled.

As I first start off my remarks, I'm always focused on the concept of fairness. It's something that we have all been taught and all learned from the age of kindergarten—how to listen, how to share, how to take turns—and yet, for some odd reason, people seem to forget that in their later years. And much to that point, I would say that the government forgets about the concept of fairness once their heads go through the door as they form government. But fairness really should be considered in this Legislature in terms of pay, in terms of responsibility, in terms of respect for the jobs that people do.

This government has admitted in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs' report on the pre-budget consultations of 2024 that wage parity remains a significantly problematic issue in the health care field. And the reason for that is that home care workers and community mental health care workers are paid the lowest of the low, so, oftentimes, even though somebody might enter that field, it may be ideally suited for them, they may love it, they may be motivated by it, yet given the cost-of-living crisis, they will often seek better-paying jobs. So they'll often move to the long-term-care field, and after being there for a while, they'll often want to move to the acute care sector because that is the gold standard; that is the highest paying. This government could fix it. It could pay people fairly, yet it chooses not to.

I would actually say that this Legislature is potentially one of the worst thieves. When we consider what happened during the last Liberal government with Bill 115 and their overt, concerted attacks on educators—it was absolutely a disgrace with Bill 115. They knew that their bill would not withstand a charter challenge. In fact, the

Conservatives, who were in opposition at the time, informed the Liberals that their legislation would not pass a charter challenge, yet they still plowed forward.

They also did other disturbing things to educators. One of the benefits that had been negotiated through the collective bargaining agreement was that teachers used to hang on to their sick days. I used to work with an educator—he was a talented, talented man—Steve Desmond. We worked together in the library learning commons at Emily Carr Public School. He had never taken a single sick day in his entire career. This man is still teaching and taught for a number of years, and it wasn't a matter of the money that he had accrued, it was the honour that he had for his profession. He was also a very healthy person. He took very good care of himself. But the Liberals also stole that from educators. They ripped it out from underneath them.

With this government, we've seen further attacks on workers and further theft from workers. Bill 124 was yet another attack on nurses, on educators—on women-dominated professions—by holding them to a 1% increase during a cost-of-living crisis. At a time when nurses were risking their health, their safety, the health of their families, were often away from their families, this government on the one side would call them heroes, and then on the other side would kick them and tell them that they were only worth 1%.

With Bill 28, we saw even another attack on female-dominated professions by attacking some of the lowest-paid, hardest-working individuals within the education sector, our educational assistants. I have had the opportunity to work with many talented educational assistants, and as it turns out, in the Thames Valley District School Board, educational assistants, who are absolutely fundamental to the proper operation of a classroom—they're often putting out fires, they are taking care of special-needs kids who really need the best supports possible, yet, in Thames Valley, they're paid \$5 less than their equal counterparts within the London District Catholic School Board. This government could fix it. Does it choose to? Absolutely not. With a one-time payment, they could fix that disparity.

Ontario used to be a leader. Ontario did have, and has, the Pay Equity Act, and it had the Pay Equity Commission, yet still, despite this government's ironic titles of Working for Workers, we don't see women paid equally to men.

I want to provide a comparison for this House so we can see what happens in progressive, forward-thinking jurisdictions that do pay women equally. In Iceland—now, this was reported in 2018. I quote Jon Henley: “For nearly a decade” Iceland “has been rated the ... most gender-equal country. It was the first to directly elect a female president, nearly half its MPs and company directors are women, and first-class daycare and parental leave help ensure almost four in five women have jobs.” But yet it came as a shock for a business owner to learn—she was managing a team of 10 home carers in Reykjavik and found that men were earning more than women.

What Iceland did was incredibly progressive and forward-thinking. Iceland actually enacted policy in 2018, and it is

the first policy in the world where companies and institutions with more than 25 employees had to prove that they paid men and women equally for a job of equal value. They used a job evaluation tool called the equal wage management standard. In 2020, certification was a requirement, and companies without that certification would incur a daily fine.

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What this did was fascinating, because instead of putting the onus upon the worker, the onus was placed upon the employer. It had a number of net benefits, of course. It only makes sense that paying people equally provides greater economic participation within their society. But, also, there was a greater confidence in the abilities of co-workers. There was an increase in trust in employers. There was also a sense of pride among all employees that they knew that they worked in a place and in a country that was truly progressive and valued them.

It goes to show us that equal pay certification schemes are only effective when they are strongly enforced. The daily fine, as I would point out, for bad actors who don't pay men and women equally is a daily fine of around \$500, and they make sure to check this by an enforceable pay system. Employees have the right to ask their employer to inform them of the wages and conditions under which they are employed, so this keeps bad-acting employers from having people sign wage agreements and non-disclosure agreements. It really is the gold standard of pay equity. It's a shame; Ontario, which had enacted the Pay Equity Act and the Pay Equity Commission many years ago, has really made not significant progress towards that goal.

This piece of legislation is really missing a lot of emphasis and a lot of attention on wage theft. We had the opportunity at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to hear from Parkdale Community Legal Services and the Workers' Action Centre, who pointed out many of these thefts.

They also talked about the issue of proactive workplace inspections. According to this government's own data from the Ministry of Labour on proactive workplace inspections, from 2018 to 2019, there were 2,345 proactive inspections. And yet, four short years later, in 2022, that number dropped to 788—so that was 2,345, all the way down to 788.

And further, in 2018, Premier Ford actually decreased the penalties for violations under the ESA. They went from \$350 down to \$250 for the first offence; for the second offence, they went down from \$700 to \$500; and for the third offence, they went from \$1,500 to \$1,000—

Hon. David Piccini: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Point of order: I recognize the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: I just want to add a point of order for clarity for those watching at home. The member spoke to COVID-19 pandemic years. For the record, proactive field visits are up in 2024—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Sorry, Minister. That doesn't really—

Hon. David Piccini: Just for the record—

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

The member from London can continue.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the Speaker for returning debate to me, considering the numbers that I was talking about were 2018, and 2022 to 2023.

Now, there were many amendments that were moved at committee, amendments that this government, curiously, voted down. You see, it's very distressing and quite surprising that we have a piece of legislation before us called Working for Workers, and when amendments are brought forward that would support workers, this government would say no.

Now, I wanted to quickly touch on what Parkdale and the Workers' Action Centre had said about wage theft before I move to my next section. They pointed out that there is \$22 million owed to workers in the last fiscal year, and as a result of this—because of a lack of workplace protection—these workers are unable to advocate for themselves. They don't have union backing, so when they go and advocate for their stolen wages, they might end up losing their job, they might end up losing all money in the future. So the Workers' Action Centre recommended that there be protections in place for protected, concerted activity, or wrongful dismissal protection.

It should be a shock and it should be an embarrassment to this government that workers are owed \$22 million. I would suggest that by ignoring this and by not acting upon this, this government, through their neglect and through their lack of enforcement by their own ministry are not simply ignoring, but they are condoning wage theft in this province. It has been found that for 90% of all violations, there is no penalty for bad actors, and when workers do actually end up winning, the enforcement is low—it's not even half; it's 40%. This is according to investigations done by the Toronto Star. It should be jarring for anyone on the government benches to have a piece of legislation titled Working for Workers and to actually not work for workers in this way. We should not allow people to be stolen from. People have earned this money, and the fact that it is still sitting in the accounts and in the hands of bad actors should give the government pause.

Within the legislation from this government, we had the opportunity to add some amendments, one of which was that there should be further protections for digital workers—and yet, this government decided no. We had an amendment about qualified health care practitioners—this government said no. We talked about personal emergency leaves—this government said no.

It should be also noted that at the very beginning of this government's mandate, they removed the personal leave protections that had been placed by the past government as one of their first actions. That's incredibly distressing, especially after COVID-19, when we understand the need for paid sick days to protect all of us—and ourselves. And despite the fact that the member from London West has introduced this numerous times—for 10 employer paid sick days—this government keeps saying no.

I also want to turn to some of the comments from our excellent labour critic, the MPP from Sudbury. This bill talks about washroom provisions as if they're the gold standard, and yet, we know that in jurisdictions such as British Columbia, they have properly functioning washrooms with flush toilets, not plastic outhouses.

This government really should not have such a lack of ideas, because there are examples across the globe of what they could do to truly support workers, and yet, they seem to continually say no.

I also want to point out that if this government were truly serious about standing up for workers, it would do one of the major requests that workers have been asking for for a number of years, which would be to enact anti-scab legislation. Strikes are the last tool that any worker wants to use in labour negotiations, but it really is the final tool—it is the removal of labour in order to get fairness from the employer, and it's not without risk. Employees and workers end up taking much lower pay, and they do so for sometimes extended periods of time. Let's face it, the unionized workers of ACTRA have been out on strike for more than two years now while this government uses scab labour for their own advertisements. This government is not bargaining fairly with workers despite how many times and how many iterations we have of this ironically titled bill.

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This government could also support workers by ending the process of deeming. We see that the WSIB will end up deciding that someone who has been injured on the job is capable of performing another phantom job. They will decide, sometimes without a physician actually seeing this person in person. A physician will look at their file—one of the hired guns from the WSIB—and decide that they can do a job. That is ridiculous. When the injured worker's physician has seen them and will write out forms and say that this person is incapable to work, somehow, mysteriously and magically, the WSIB's own doctors have a vastly different opinion.

Now, it's really quite strange because the WSIB was set up in order to protect workers, to help them, to advocate for their rights, because nobody wants to be injured on the job. And, yet, because of the neglect from this government and past governments, we see that that system does not protect workers whatsoever. It is actually hoping to push them off of support as quickly as possible. What happens as a result of that, Speaker? As a result, those people, who are no longer provided with the protections that they have paid into, end up having to resort to being on the Ontario Disability Support Program, which keeps people in legislated poverty, ends up making them far more sick than they ever have been in the first place. It is unconscionable that we in this province, a province as rich as Ontario, a province that pretends to support workers, has such a failing grade.

Now, this bill itself is not entirely odious. There are no poison pills in here. There's nothing that is going to take away workers' rights, but it leaves so much to be desired. There are so many opportunities for this government to

stand up for workers through legislation, through strong protections—and they would learn this if they'd just stop and listen; if they listened to workers, learned what workers need. I would suggest that this government is quite content to say that they stand for workers, but when the rubber hits the road, they don't. They could enact anti-scab legislation, but instead they actually like to use scabs.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: In 157 years in this province, there has been one NDP government—one. And during that time, in that 157 years, there again, I will say, has only been one government that couldn't afford to pay their employees. Guess which government it was? The Bob Rae government with the NDP when they had their one shot. You want to talk about wage theft? That government had to ask people to take time off work—12 days—because they couldn't afford to pay them.

It's ridiculous that this member and, quite frankly, all the members in the NDP feel self-righteous enough to stand up here and talk about wage theft when the one shot that they had at government totally did that to the workers of Ontario. I'm sure they got paid, Madam Speaker; I'm sure they did eventually get paid.

But I will say, when we talk about wage theft, and when our provincial inspectors actually bring this to the courts, it's the judges in the Ontario courts that actually set the rate of remuneration. Will you stand up for tougher justice here in Ontario—

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Well, it just confirms what I've been saying all along, Speaker, that this government is okay with theft. They're okay with employers stealing from their workers because their own Ministry of Labour is not recovering the money. They had Bill 124 where they stole from nurses. They had Bill 28 where they attempted to steal from educational assistants.

The Harris government of the 1990s cut social assistance rates by 22.5%, and they have led on a path to many, many people being a part of the homeless crisis. This government is responsible for tent cities across the province because they have kept their foot on the head of people receiving social assistance, keeping them under the poverty line. It is absolutely inhumane, it is disgraceful and it should be a shock all of our hearts and our souls.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciated the member highlighting anti-scab legislation. That's a real opportunity that the government had before them with this bill but chose not to include.

The member and I come from the community of London, where we just saw CUPE workers from Local 2361 at Western, 330 of them—they provide janitorial and maintenance services. They were forced to stay on strike for six weeks just to get parity with similar workers at the school boards and at the college because Western was able to bring in scabs.

I wondered if the member wanted to elaborate a little bit further on the importance of anti-scab legislation as a way for a government to actually work for workers in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Absolutely. Scab labour is possibly the most vile exploitation of people imaginable. We have a collective agreement which is fairly negotiated between and employer and employees. The employees have had no other choice but to withdraw their labour because their employer has chosen to be unfair. So what does that employer do? Instead of doing the right and honourable thing by negotiating with the employees, they bring in people—these hired guns, these temporary workers, these people that are desperate for any pay—to replace those workers. It ought to be against the law because all it does is extend these strikes for an inordinate length of time.

This government should know. They have ignored ACTRA and they have used scab labourers in terms of making their own government advertisements. They have certified and they have endorsed the wage theft through the Ministry of Labour, and they have done so as well by the use of scab labour. It is unconscionable.

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

Mr. John Fraser: While I appreciate the Minister of Red Tape Reduction's history lesson, I would like to remind him that it was the government right after that government that fired 8,000 nurses. If we are describing that as wage theft, then we can include that as well too. Here is my point.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Order.

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, wow. I got them all going.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member has the floor.

Mr. John Fraser: Here's my point. With all due respect to the member—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Order.

I return to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: With all due respect to the member, I understand the sentiment in talking about stealing wages, but when we talk about it, it is one very specific thing that happens directly from employers to employees. I think it takes away the importance of trying to protect employees when we start describing stealing wages as something that's a government action. That was my point.

My question for you is more open. This is the fourth edition for the Working for Workers act, and the question always has been, does—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Fifth? No, it's the fifth edition. Does the Working for Workers act actually work for workers—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member from Ottawa South.

The member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank the member from Ottawa South for the question. You would

think that if this government truly stood for workers such as it would claim that it does, they wouldn't need five different iterations of a bill. It would actually achieve them within, possibly, one or two.

I would suggest that this government is impotent when it comes to actually protecting workers, supporting workers and delivering what workers need. It's truly disgraceful that we don't have anti-scab legislation, that the province still allows the process of deeming that there are phantom jobs and that wage theft is not being prosecuted properly by this government's own Ministry of Labour. We need to have more proactive workplace inspections to ensure that workers are being protected.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Orders of the day?

1800

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

KEEPING PRIMARY CARE FAIR ACT (RESTRICTING PRIVATE PAYMENTS FOR NURSE PRACTITIONER SERVICES), 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À MAINTENIR DES SOINS PRIMAIRES ÉQUITABLES EN RESTREIGNANT LE PAIEMENT PRIVÉ DE SERVICES FOURNIS PAR DU PERSONNEL INFIRMIER PRATICIEN

Mr. Shamji moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 203, An Act to amend the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004 with respect to payments to nurse practitioners / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur l'engagement d'assurer l'avenir de l'assurance-santé à l'égard des honoraires à verser aux infirmières praticiennes et aux infirmiers praticiens.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: I am honoured to rise in the House and debate this bill, a bill that I think could change the face of primary care in Ontario for the better—for once. Madam Speaker, a change is something we really need in this province: a change from the mismanagement plaguing our health care system; a change from the inaction costing patients their lives; a change from the wilful negligence that serves only a select few.

We need a change from this government, because today we learned that 5 million people in Canada don't have access to primary care. Ontario is only 36% of Canada's population, but we make up 50% of everyone without primary care. As my younger staff would say, "The math ain't mathing."

On one hand, we have a government that says they have spent more money on doctors, nurses and hospitals than any government in history. On the other hand, the one based in reality, we have a vastly disproportionate amount of people in Ontario without primary care. Either this government sucks at investing money or they're just not really investing it. Something tells me, in fact, that both are true.

Under this government, family doctors don't want to work in family medicine anymore, nurses don't want to work in hospitals anymore, and PSWs don't want to work in long-term care or home care anymore. Actually, I will correct that, Madam Speaker: It's not that they don't want to work in these fields anymore—I know they do—it's that this Premier and this government have made it not worth it for them to do so any longer. That's how you get a primary care shortage. That's how you get 4.4 million people without primary care by 2026.

Wait times for family docs are months long and ERs are overcrowded. There were 1,300 ER closures last year, 11,000 people died waiting for tests and surgeries, and 2,000 people languish in hospital hallways, bathrooms and closets every day. And now, people are dying at home without essential supplies.

Let's be crystal clear about the problem we're trying to solve. While we have a massive shortage of family doctors, we also have a massive oversupply of unemployed nurse practitioners.

A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse with advanced university education who provides personalized, quality health care to patients. Ontario's NPs provide a full range of health care services and can prescribe medications, perform procedures, work as part of a team or work entirely independently. I have worked with many nurse practitioners. In fact, I served as a medical director supporting 11 nurse practitioner-led clinics in shelters during the pandemic. They were amazing and those NPs have my profound respect and admiration.

But because of this government's lack of investment in primary care and underfunding of nurses in general, NPs literally cannot find work in the province of Ontario. There are family health teams that want to hire them, that have NPs who want to be hired but can't because the funding doesn't exist. There are nurse practitioners who are literally leaving our province to find jobs. Nurse practitioners should be fully empowered, fully funded and fully employed in Ontario in any of many different models.

I have established that we have a shortage of family doctors and that we have unemployed, unfunded nurse practitioners in the public system. This has created a third problem: There is a private, for-profit marketplace for patients desperate to find primary care, and nurse practitioners desperate to help them. As a result, patients are paying with their credit card instead of their OHIP card for medically necessary care. It's happening because nurse practitioners aren't explicitly mentioned in the Canada Health Act. They're not explicitly mentioned in the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which is Ontario's interpretation of that. Because of this ambiguity, some

nurse practitioners have been billing patients privately in Ontario for medically necessary care.

There are dozens of clinics across the province in which patients are paying fees for services by an NP that would be covered if provided by a physician. Some patients are paying \$400 subscription fees just to get in the door. Patients are paying \$200 for pap smears which would be covered if provided by a physician.

This violates the spirit of the Canada Health Act, which seeks to ensure that health care is publicly administered, portable, comprehensive, universal and accessible. My bill addresses all three of these problems: the shortage of family doctors, the oversupply of unemployed nurse practitioners, and the patients being forced to pay with their credit cards for medically necessary care.

There's a very simple solution: Give nurse practitioners the legitimacy they deserve. Embrace and fund them fully within Ontario's health care system. Give them jobs. Give them the recognition they deserve. Give them the funding and give them to Ontarians. This is what my bill does.

For the first time, it formalizes them in the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. It gives the government six months to embrace nurse practitioners fully into the public system within a framework that ensures medically necessary care will be publicly funded through any of the following models, such as a publicly funded primary care clinic like an NP-led clinic, family health team, community health centre, family health organization, or something else. It could be through a public hospital, or it could even be through a negotiated arrangement under the Health Insurance Act, which we also know as OHIP. No other legislation has attempted to so completely bring nurse practitioners into the public realm or to do this on such an expedited timeline. Nurse practitioners deserve this and so do Ontarians.

The other thing that Ontarians deserve is the right to access the care of a nurse practitioner regardless of their financial circumstances and ability to pay. Bringing NPs fully into the public health care system will accomplish this. And by fully employing NPs in the public system within six months, we will finally be able to achieve the promise of ensuring that patients always pay with their OHIP card and never their credit card. By bringing NPs within the public system and giving them recognition under the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, private billing will no longer be necessary. In fact, it will no longer be possible.

Physicians provide medically necessary care that is covered by our public health care system and consequently are not allowed to bill patients privately. With nurse practitioners finally brought under the public umbrella, they too will not be able to bill privately. We're keeping primary care fair.

If you have a sore throat, you shouldn't have to pay for treatment whether you see a physician or a nurse practitioner. If you need a pap smear, it shouldn't cost you whether you see a doctor or a nurse practitioner. And if you need an appointment, you shouldn't have to pay a

subscription fee regardless of whether you see an MD or an NP.

Under my legislation, if a patient is charged to their credit card for publicly funded, medically necessary care, the provider will be fined. In fact, the fine will be doubled. This applies to anyone, whether they are physicians or nurse practitioners. I want to be crystal clear on that. There must be zero tolerance for violating the Canada Health Act, because this is about keeping primary care fair.

Madam Speaker, nurse practitioners are a mighty workforce that stands ready to solve the primary care crisis. They are an untapped gold mine that could transform our health care system. The reason this bill is even necessary is because the members on this side of the aisle and the members on that side of the aisle disagree on what kind of gold mine nurse practitioners really are. The Premier and Minister of Health believe they are a gold mine for private interests and shareholders—another class of health care worker they don't want to pay, and we've seen this before.

Bill 124 helped their friends running temporary staffing agencies get rich, and their ignoring the violations of the Canada Health Act helped their friends that are keeping private clinics get rich. It's always the same story.

Ontario's Liberals believe that nurse practitioners are a different kind of a gold mine: a gold mine for the families, workers and patients of Ontario, full stop.

The members opposite will have you believe things I would caution you against. They will tell you that these private clinics are the result of a loophole in the Canada Health Act, and they can do nothing about it. This is not true. The Minister of Health could amend the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act which would close the so-called loophole by finally recognizing nurse practitioners the way they deserve.

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The minister might tell you she is waiting for an interpretation letter regarding nurse practitioners from the Prime Minister's office and that she can't do anything without it. That is not true, and this bill proves that.

They may tell you this bill is punitive to nurse practitioners, and that is not true. I remind you that this is a two-part bill. Prohibiting nurse practitioners from private billing goes hand in hand with providing them a publicly funded alternative. Whether or not this bill is punitive to nurse practitioners is entirely up to this government. Will they bargain in good faith and create a good deal, or will they cast NPs to the side like they did with Bill 124?

The bill is designed to create a smooth transition for nurse practitioners into the public system, but, of course, this government is opposed to any kind of change at all. Patients will even be reimbursed any private fees that they are forced to pay during the six-month transition period.

The members opposite may tell you that this is anti-business. Madam Speaker, the very purpose of the Canada Health Act is to ensure that medically necessary services, which include primary care, do not become a business. Medically necessary services are just that: services. Every single person in Ontario is already paying for them with their tax dollars; they are just not getting them. That's why

when the members opposite tell you we don't have the money for this, I would tell the people of Ontario, "You're already paying for this. This government just wants you to pay twice."

Madam Speaker, we have a decision to make. Are we a province that values nurse practitioners? Are we a province that honours the spirit of the Canada Health Act, a province that upholds its own laws, the same laws that have been passed to protect us? Ontario's Liberals believe the answer is yes.

The Canada Health Act and the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act protect us, and that's why this bill protects them. This bill does not single out nurse practitioners. The only people truly being singled out by this bill are the Premier, the Minister of Health, and any members opposite who support them. Our health care system is in dire straits, and we have an opportunity to enfranchise a disenfranchised group of health care workers, bring primary care to all of Ontario, and keep the Canada Health Act and Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act intact.

Passing this bill is the right thing to do for patients, for nurse practitioners, for our health care system, for all of us. Thank you.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I am going to be responding to this bill that is before us this evening. It is a piece of legislation, or proposed legislation, and it seeks to amend another piece of legislation, and the piece of legislation that it seeks to amend is called the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. Now, I want to offer some observations on that. Again, it is called the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. That is the piece of legislation that the Liberal MPP is seeking to amend. He is seeking to amend a piece of Liberal legislation that was passed in 2004. So, that piece of legislation was, again, passed by a Liberal government, and now, the member from Don Valley East, who is also a Liberal, is seeking to amend that Liberal legislation. Essentially, he is saying the Liberals got it wrong in the first place.

Let's take a look at the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. At the time, the Premier was Dalton McGuinty. I had to look that up, of course, because as members of this House know, I am rather young, so I don't remember all this history. Back then, Dalton McGuinty was talking about the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, and this is what he said—this is a direct quote from Dalton McGuinty: "Ontarians want shorter waiting times for important procedures and tests" such as "cataracts, and MRIs and CT scans." And then what happened under the previous Liberal government? We didn't get shorter waiting times; we got longer waiting times. In fact, in the county of Essex, we didn't get any extra MRI machines or extra CT machines. We didn't get that. Although the Liberals had made a promise to build a brand new hospital in the county of Essex region, we didn't get that either. They reneged on that promise.

Do you know who actually did something for Essex county health care? Do you know who actually added not

one, but two MRI machines to Essex county? Premier Doug Ford added two new MRI machines to Essex county, a new one located at Erie Shores HealthCare and another one located at Windsor Regional Hospital, now being used to service people in Essex county and give them better health care.

In fact, one of those MRI machines is located in Leamington, which is in the riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington. It has a beautiful new machine at Erie Shores HealthCare, and it recently completed its 1,000th test. I want to congratulate Erie Shores HealthCare on their 1,000th test, and I want to thank CEO Kristin Kennedy and all her team for the hard work and dedication that they're doing assisting the delivery of better health care to people in Essex county. That's another 1,000 tests that were done under the Doug Ford government that never got done under the previous Liberal government.

Now, let's get back to CT scans. That's also what Dalton McGuinty was talking about, and he didn't deliver any CT scanners to Essex county either, but of course, that is a story for another day. Now, let's talk again about what Dalton McGuinty said. He said he wanted shorter wait times for cataract surgery. What do you think happened? They got longer under the Liberal government. Do you know who had to fix that problem? Premier Doug Ford fixed that problem. And now, in Essex county, we have a community surgical centre that's dedicated to curing the backlog of cataract surgeries. It's run by a fantastic doctor. You've heard me talk about this doctor before. His name is Dr. Fouad Tayfour. He has partners: another fantastic doctor named Dr. Emara and another partner, Dr. Dean. They do cataract surgeries. They restore eyesight to people who are losing theirs. They are modern-day miracle workers giving sight back to people who are going blind, and that is what is happening for us in Essex county. Of course, cataract surgery is covered by OHIP, so you pay at the clinical surgery centre with your OHIP card, not your credit card.

But we know the opposition don't support those clinical surgery clinics. We know they're against Dr. Tayfour. We know they're against Dr. Emara. We know they're against Dr. Dean. If they had their way, they would shut that clinic down and thousands of people in Essex county who have benefited from cataract surgery—eye-saving surgery—would have to go elsewhere to get their eyes saved. That is what the Liberals would do to people in Essex county.

Now, here's another good reason not to support the bill. Here's another good reason why members should reject this proposal. We need a Canada-wide solution on nurse practitioners. We can't have nurse practitioners leaving Ontario to go to Quebec or Manitoba. We need a Canada-wide solution, because that is what the Minister of Health has specifically communicated to the federal Minister of Health. Because when it comes to health, we don't care what party you're from. We'll reach across party lines. We'll work with you. We don't care if you're the blue stripe or the red stripe or the pink stripe or the purple strip. If you want to deliver better health care in the province of

Ontario, we'll work with you. The Premier will work with you.

The federal Minister of Health, who is a Liberal, to his credit has indicated that he is aware of this and therefore, I wonder if the member from Don Valley East, who spoke on this issue, will do what the Minister of Health has done and communicate with the federal Liberal Minister of Health, who shares his political stripe, and maybe do the same thing that the Minister of Health did: request a Canada-wide solution so that this can be solved.

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Let's get back to Dalton McGuinty, because I learned a little bit about him. Here's another quote from Dalton McGuinty: "Ontarians want a solution to the shortage of family doctors that affects more than 130 communities in our province, including some of our major cities." That's what Dalton McGuinty said in 2004. That's 20 years ago.

And then what happened? Well, that shortage existed under the Liberals. They had 15 years to cure that shortage, and they never did. Did they open new training spots for family doctors? No. In fact, they did the opposite. They shut them down. They shut down training spots at universities for family doctors. And who had to fix that problem? Doug Ford fixed that problem. That's who fixed that problem.

We're increasing the number of training spots for doctors in the province of Ontario: new training spots for doctors at the University of Toronto, new training spots for doctors at McMaster University, new training spots for doctors at the University of Ottawa, new training spots for doctors at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

We're actually building more medical schools—one new one at York University; another one at Toronto Metropolitan University. These are the first new medical schools to be built in Ontario since the last Conservative Premier built new medical schools in Ontario.

But we're not just training more doctors, Madam Speaker; we're training more nurses. We've licensed over 80,000 new nurses in the province of Ontario since we were elected in 2018.

In addition to that, we're not stopping there. We've invested millions of dollars in expanding nurse practitioner-led clinics. Here are a couple of examples for you.

In the riding of Don Valley East, we've added another 1,650 spots for people to get primary care at the Flemingdon Health Centre. That's 1,650 more people who will now have access to primary care who didn't have that access before.

But we're not stopping there either. We're giving people health care where and when they need it. We've expanded the scope of practice for pharmacists. They can now treat 19 common ailments. Now you don't have to go to a doctor anymore to get treatment for those 19 common ailments; you can go right to a pharmacist, and you can get the treatment you need. Those common ailments include things like diaper rash and pink eye, so you can skip the doctor and go right to the pharmacist.

Madam Speaker, I'm glad I've had this opportunity to outline the various successes of the Ford government. As

I've said before, it's going to take a long time to fix all of the mistakes of the previous Liberal government, but we're curing those mistakes. We're training more doctors, we're training more nurses and we're opening up more spots at nurse practitioner-led clinics. Of course, we're doing this by increasing the health care budget which, at 2018, stood at \$60 billion, but, in 2024, now stands at \$85 billion—a 41% increase, which stands in stark, stark contrast to the previous Liberal government.

In the words of George Smitherman, the former Liberal Minister of Health—he says the following: The Ontario Liberals "really starved health care for five years and ... that is not spoken enough..." Well, I want to thank the former Minister of Health for making that point, and on that point, I will end my comments for this evening and urge every member of his House to vote against this terrible Liberal amendment.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: That was quite a speech, member from Essex.

Also, thank you to the member for Don Valley East for the bill that you're introducing today, which, among other things, moves to ban for-profit nurse-led clinics from charging patients for medically necessary expenses.

I want to thank the nurses, the doctors and the health care workers who live and work in University–Rosedale. We have many sole practitioners. We have Planned Parenthood that provides primary family health care to, especially, young people and racialized people in our riding. We have the Taddle Creek health clinic, which serves over 20,000 patients. It's an excellent example of a family health team. I want to thank the Toronto Western Family Health Team that's at Bathurst and College—it serves over 30,000 people; it's the family health team you really want to get into—as well as the health care workers, the nurse practitioners and the doctors who work at Mount Sinai, at SickKids, at Women's College, at St. Mike's, at Toronto General, at Princess Margaret and Toronto Western. I am very grateful for your service, and it's an honour to represent the large health care worker sector that works in University–Rosedale.

I'm very concerned about the impact of the Conservative government's policies on the ability of people in my riding and across Ontario to access primary care. Recently, we were lobbied by the OMA, and they had some very concerning statistics when they met with you and me. Some 2.3 million people do not have access to a family doctor. That's a lot. What's also concerning is that when we look at the age of family doctors, we see that many of them have been serving for over 30, 40 years and they're looking at retiring, so we know this number of 2.3 million is going up because, as doctors retire, their patient load of 1,000 to 2,000 people—they all have to go out and find another doctor. It's very concerning. We're seeing this in my riding. Even though we have some of Canada and North America's best hospitals, we also have a primary care provider shortage, and it's impacting the quality of care people get in our riding.

I recently did a health care pop-up near Toronto Western to speak to the health care workers who were coming in and out of the hospital and ask them questions about what it's like to work at Toronto Western. I had a family doctor come up to me who said that 80%—she works in the emergency room—of the patients, her rough estimate, who are coming into the emergency room in Toronto Western should and could have been seen by a family doctor, but many of them could not get a family doctor, so they went to the overcrowded emergency room at Toronto Western instead. That is not a good use of the resources that we have in our health care sector.

When people do not have access to a family doctor, they are delaying screenings, and they're finding out they have major issues, sometimes life-threatening health issues, because they didn't get medical attention earlier. That's not good for anyone.

What we're also seeing in Ontario, and also in my riding, is this big increase in accessing for-profit medical care. It's difficult to get a primary care provider—a nurse practitioner or a family doctor—but it's becoming increasingly easier to find a medical clinic that can provide you with primary care, provided that you pay. The example we have in our riding is MDDirect, where, if you are able to pay \$5,000 a year as a fee, then you can access these doctors, who then also bill OHIP. That's what's happening. And it's not just MDDirect—there's Felix Health; there's Prime Medical Centre; there's Cleveland Clinic; there's Care&; there's ExecHealth; there's La Vie health; there's South Keys Health Center; there's Appletree; there's ReVive Health Solutions, Telus Health, and more. You probably see these advertisements now on the TTC—you probably do, because I see them. And what's so concerning about this is that the Conservatives are making it easier for us to access private, fee-based health care, while literally millions of people cannot get access to a family doctor, where they use their OHIP card to access medically necessary services and not their credit card.

I saw the impact of privatization on the medical system in Australia; I saw the impact of a two-tier system and how it's brought in. And I see that happening here in Ontario and in Canada right now—and Ontario, in particular. When we give private, for-profit clinics the freedom to offer health care services, it will mean that those who can afford to pay will get that care more quickly, and it means that everyone else will be forced to wait longer. It means that privatization will drive away competent, well-trained nurses, doctors and health care workers from the public system to the private care system, and that is very concerning. It's very concerning.

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What I would like to see is a commitment from this government to ensure that everybody in Ontario has access to a primary care provider—nurse practitioner, doctor—and that they access this care using their OHIP card and not their credit card. It's who we are as Canadians. This is what Ontarians want. I urge this government to enforce its own laws and improve them so that that can be a reality again.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to rise to speak in support of nurse practitioners today.

London North Centre is home to a wonderful nurse practitioner-led clinic, the Health Zone NPLC. I had the chance to visit with them years ago when actually they were outside of the riding, and I was, at that time, incredibly impressed. I must have taken so many notes during that meeting. They're so passionate about their model, the care they provide and how they address the gaps in the health care system.

Nurse practitioners recognize the complexity of human health, and they work alongside a team of health care professionals who consider the whole person. In the model, they include nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered practical nurses, social workers, dietitians and so many more.

I think about things such as diabetes management, for instance. While there are medical interventions, it is also about lifestyle. It's also about diabetes management to make sure that they're looking after what they're eating, they're looking after their exercise, and that can mean such a vital difference in terms of their overall health. You think about protecting eyesight, as well as protecting from losing feet and limbs, for instance—so incredibly important.

Too often, people are limited seeing a primary care practitioner and can only speak about one issue. It's so wrong-headed and it ignores the complexity of human health. Just like the organs in our body depend on one another, illness can be alleviated through a variety of forms, and that's why NPLCs are such an interesting answer to the problems that we face right now in our health care deficit.

Right now, in Ontario, 2.5 million Ontarians lack access to a primary health care provider and that number is going to double in less than two years. Primary health is the doorway to the rest of health care, directing people to specialists and so many other things. Primary health care providers provide that longitudinal care because it's based on relationships. It's knowledge of the person; it's their history, their needs and their goals.

Nurse practitioners are ready, willing and able. In Ontario, hundreds of NPs are eager to provide that care to Ontarians. The RAO points out that more than 100 team-based primary care proposals are still awaiting funding. NPs, advanced practice nurses with graduate clinical education and the legal authority to diagnose and treat ailments, have been providing high-quality, cost-effective primary care for decades.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the time-consuming tasks that family health care providers have to undertake. There's a great deal of bureaucracy in our health care. Administrative tasks like filling out forms take up 40% of a primary care practitioner's work week. It boggles my mind that highly trained professionals use their time to do this, and it's disappointing that the Conservative government voted against an official opposition motion to ad-

dress this administrative backlog and free up spaces for two million Ontarians.

While I have a little time, I just wanted to shout-out a great nurse practitioner, Mia Biondi. She's now an assistant professor at York University and is the nurse practitioner program coordinator and is herself a primary health care nurse practitioner. It would take far too much time to speak about all her educational accomplishments, but on the record, I want to say about all the wonderful work Mia has done on HIV prevention, hepatitis B and C, as well as street outreach, mental health and supporting those at risk of or who are being trafficked.

When people lack a primary care provider, they go to the emergency room. This is the most costly place and not one where relationships can be built. There is no longitudinal care. We need more NPs across this province. They're a vital, vastly underutilized workforce of educated, dedicated and passionate health care providers. They can roster a great number of patients and would help alleviate the unattached 2.5 million Ontarians without that primary health care provider.

I also had the honour of serving on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. During pre-budget consultations, we had the opportunity to listen and learn from the Capreol Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic. They spoke about the high demands that they see in their northern community, how they offer same-day appointments and even an after-hours clinic. In their area of Sudbury, there is no urgent care or a walk-in; the north would love more nurse practitioners to fix the health care crisis.

Right now, there are 128,000 Londoners who don't have a primary health care practitioner, and there are 52 empty health care offices ready to go. It sounds like a problem of political will and political choices. For far too long, nurse practitioners have not been given the respect by this government, and far too often legislators have ignored them.

I want to thank the member from Don Valley East for introducing this, and I want to thank the House for your indulgence in listening to my speech today.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm very pleased to speak to my colleague's bill. I know he put a lot of effort into this, and I know what his intent is, despite what I hear in here from some members.

Some 2.5 million Ontarians don't have access to basic primary health care—a nurse practitioner or a family doctor. That has forced too many families in our province to use their credit card instead of their OHIP card to get access to the basic services they need. Your access to basic health care should not be based upon your ability to pay. That's a thing that I thought we all agreed on, but it seems it's like the Wild West now, and this government doesn't want to do anything about the expansion of clinics with memberships and charging a fee for basic primary care. That's the first thing this bill moves to address.

There seems to be no desire on the part of the government to recognize that it's a problem. I know that it is. I have at least two of those clinics in my riding. Who are the people most affected by doctor shortages? We're all affected by it. People of lower income, new Canadians, rural, northern: These are the people that are having to pay, if they can. That's wrong. In my books, that's wrong.

The second thing is, nurse practitioners are a critical part of our health care system. They can help us through this primary care crisis. What my colleague's bill attempts to do is to say that we need to bring them in. We need them to be part of the system. We need to include them. We need to make sure that they're compensated properly. We need to make sure that they have things like pensions and benefits and an opportunity to practise their craft without having to hang out a shingle and ask a patient to give them their credit card. Those are the two things that this bill attempts to do. I don't quite understand what's wrong with that.

If we want a history lesson, guess which government froze the expansion of nurse practitioner clinics for six years? This government—six years. Not one from 2018 until they were announced, and as one of the members from the other side mentioned, the money hasn't flowed yet.

So 2.5 million Ontarians without access to basic primary care—a nurse practitioner or a family doctor—is a serious problem. I want you to think about this. Here's a few numbers, and these are numbers that are lower because they're from 2022, so they're higher: In the Bay of Quinte, 39,000 people; Mississauga–Malton, 28,000 people; Etobicoke Lakeshore, 21,000 people; Essex—13,000 people in your riding, sir, don't have a family doctor; Scarborough–Agincourt, 14,000. If you want to go and check, go on the OMA's website. Don't believe me.

It's a serious problem because if you don't have a family doctor, it's hard to stay healthy—just basically healthy, right? Like getting good guidance about what to eat.

If you don't have a nurse practitioner and you have a chronic disease, like diabetes or a heart condition, wow, it makes it even harder for you. If you don't have access to basic primary care, a nurse practitioner or a family doctor and you're at risk for cancer, or a stroke or heart disease, wow, you're in pretty rough shape. That's why it's serious.

They call it primary care for a reason, and do you know what that reason is? It means it comes first, and if the thing that comes first isn't there, it doesn't work for people very well. That's the point and the intent of this bill, and I encourage all members of this House to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa South, the member from London North Centre and the member from University–Rosedale for rising and speaking up in favour of this bill and specifically for their constituents.

I would like to respond to the member from Essex, who in his own riding has 13,000 people without a family

doctor, which only two years earlier was 10,000. He had an opportunity today to stand up for his constituents, to fight for their access to primary health care, and regrettably, he chose not to do that. I also want to say I didn't think that it was possible to debate a bill for that long without actually talking about it. It is a true testament to his ability to ramble nonsensically.

The Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act was landmark legislation that every Ontario Liberal in this House is proud of. This may be news to the member from Essex, but things change over time. It has been two decades, and your refusal to help us make a great law better is a stain on this government.

With 2.5 million people not having a family doctor, expected to be 4.4 million within the next two years, embracing and empowering nurse practitioners is a powerful way in which we can meaningfully make a dent into this crisis.

To summarize, any member who is not supporting this bill is saying the following: They're saying they do not believe that you should always pay with your OHIP card, not your credit card; they do not want to address the 2.5 million Ontarians that do not have a family doctor; and they do not support nurses or nurse practitioners.

I hope that all of the members in this House will stand up for their constituents, will stand up for nurses and health care workers and will stand up for primary care in Ontario.

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

Mr. Shamji has moved second reading of Bill 203, An Act to amend the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004 with respect to payments to nurse practitioners.

Is it the pleasure the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): All matters pertaining to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 28, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1844.

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		Premier / Premier ministre
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McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Ministre associé de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences Deputy Government Whip / Whip adjointe du gouvernement
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	