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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 12 May 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 12 mai 2021

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. We're going to begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE SKILLED TRADES ACT, 2021
LOI DE 2021 OUVRANT DES PERSPECTIVES
DANS LES MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 11, 2021, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. John Yakabuski: It is indeed an honour and a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 288, An Act to enact Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021. I want to seriously thank Minister McNaughton. This is indeed a game-changer. It completely changes the environment around apprenticeships and skilled trades in the province of Ontario and creates opportunities for so many young people that were not possible under the old regime. So thank you very much.

I also want to thank his parliamentary assistant, the member for Burlington, for her work on this bill as well, and all the people who have worked so hard to bring this—and so quickly, quite frankly. Once becoming the minister, this is something that you were committed to.

Speaker, when I got here in 2003, one of the first people I bonded with was Garfield Dunlop. Garfield and I lived in the same apartment building. We would meet in the lobby at a quarter to six in the morning and go for a walk. That's where I found out how passionate but also impatient Garfield was, because if I wasn't in the lobby at a quarter to six, he went without me. If I was in the lobby before him and he wasn't there at a quarter to six, I waited, because I was the rookie. So I waited for Garfield. I learned a lot from Garfield on those walks. What I learned a lot about was the passion with which he attacked issues.

One of the things that he became passionate about was the Liberals' decision to bring in the Ontario College of Trades and what a disaster that was going to be for apprenticeships and trades in the province of Ontario. It

was created by the Liberals for the benefit of the Liberals. This is what it was all about, sir. And Garfield saw that. Why he understood it better than I might have understood it at the time was because he was a tradesman himself. That was his life before politics. So, he absolutely attacked with unbelievable fervour. You've seen Garfield in action in the House here, going after the College of Trades.

And you know what, Speaker? He was 100% right, because what we saw happen—and the minister articulated that the other day. The average age of journeypersons in the province of Ontario is 55-plus. Where was the future if your average age is 55-plus? People were not getting into the trades. The system was strangling them, preventing them from doing that.

I remember when Garfield came up to Renfrew and we had a meeting of stakeholders, of people who were concerned about the impact of this Liberal boondoggle, of what it was. It was created, as I say, by the Liberals to benefit the Liberals, indirectly through their friends. But it had nothing to do with what was good for tradespeople, young people, apprentices; in fact, it caused the opposite. It caused them harm.

I remember we had this meeting in Renfrew, and Garfield was Garfield, and it was just wild. What it showed too was the small businesses that were there, that were not going to be able to participate in the apprenticeship program at all because of the ratios that had been established and everything else—it made it impossible for them to create the next generation of journeypersons. They saw the future, and it not only looked bleak for young people, but it looked bleak for them as small businessmen as well, because if they didn't have apprentices coming in, they were facing the very same problem that we're facing in Ontario, where their journeypersons were reaching an age where they would be leaving the trade. So, if you're a businessperson and you hire tradespeople and you have tradespeople and they're all getting older, reaching retirement, soon you're going to be out of business.

What Minister McNaughton has done is sent out a flare: "Folks, we're not done. Tradespeople in the province of Ontario, you have a future under this government. You have a future in this province of opportunity." When I was a kid, this was called the province of opportunity. With what Minister McNaughton has done, it's the province of opportunity again. With what Premier Ford has done with our open-for-business policies, this is the province of opportunity once again. There are great opportunities.

Full disclosure—it's not really full disclosure because I've disclosed it before—my son is a journeyman. He's a Red Seal carpenter. I will be forever grateful to Michael

Butt, the founder of Buttcon construction, who has a summer place up in my area. I've known Michael for decades. He used to come into the hardware store and we'd chat. One of the greatest things that happened to my son was Michael called me one summer and said, "John, do you think Lucas would like to come and help me put an addition on my place up back of Combermere?" I said, "I can't answer that for you, Michael, but I'll ask him."

Lucas said yes, and as he worked with Michael that summer—and Michael was in his eighties, but he was doing this himself. This was probably eight years ago or so. Michael took a shine to Lucas, but not just because he liked him, because obviously Lucas was nothing like me—just kidding—but he caught on so fast and he understood this. Now, he had worked a summer with Darcy Panke in carpentry once, a couple of summers before that, but Lucas picked up on it so fast that before the end of the summer, he was reading plans and doing things on his own. Michael said, "I'd like you to come to work for my company—our company—Buttcon, a 100% employee-owned company, as an apprentice." Well, Lucas took him up on that, and Minister McNaughton would know because he sent him a lovely certificate probably a year and a half ago, or maybe two—about a year and a half ago—when Lucas became a Red Seal carpenter. That's the top designation for a carpenter.

I'll say proudly about Lucas, when he passed his Red Seal, which is not an easy test to pass—because you'll all know people out there who have been challenged by it; it's supposed to be tough—he had a higher score on his Red Seal test than the instructor who gave it to him when he did his Red Seal test. So now you know he's nothing like his father, right?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: He takes after Vicky.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Yeah, he takes after his mother, Vicky.

Lucas is going to be 30 in a couple of months, July 9, and so he's that age there where now he's an apprentice—he's not an apprentice; he's a journeyman. He's a Red Seal. He's top of the trade. But he looks forward too, because he sees in that company the age of many of his counterparts who are fifty-ish—one just retired last year who he worked closely with. I think he was in his late fifties, maybe even his early sixties.

So, now we have an opportunity here in the province of Ontario to really change the game. We have so much need for these tradespeople, skilled trades. We are dying for them because there are so many things—the infrastructure programs that we've embarked on here in Ontario are just unbelievable.

I'm looking at the clock. You didn't give me enough time today, Speaker.

0910

The challenge facing us is to be able to build Ontario up after the 15 years of being in the wilderness. Now we have so much of this opportunity and so much of a challenge to get these jobs done, but we can't do them without the skilled trades—can't do them, not possible.

By having this legislation—I've looked at it closely and the amount of consultation that has gone into this. That's

why I'm so proud of what Minister McNaughton has done. We didn't do this by sitting in a backroom and coming up with a plan that we liked. The minister did this by sitting down with the people in the industry, whether they're the presidents of companies, the foremen, the superintendents or the workers. And they've come up with a plan that addresses the needs of Ontario, not for today, not just for tomorrow, but for decades into the future, because that's how you bring legislation to this House—not because you have a political agenda for today, which was the reason for the Ontario College of Trades under the previous government; not because they had an agenda for today, which is always just the next election. But because we have a plan to make Ontario the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family, I thank Minister McNaughton for bringing in this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You will have a little more time—since you accused me of not giving you enough time—in questions and response.

It is now time for questions, and I will turn to the member from Waterloo for a question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I always enjoy listening to the Minister of Natural Resources. It is a shame that you only had 10 minutes today. But we also have to do our due diligence, and I'm speaking as a proud mother of an electrical apprentice who has almost done his five years. Our due diligence is to make sure that the same mistakes that happened with the Liberals don't happen again with this piece of legislation.

Bill 288 does not name the construction trades in the compulsory trades or the non-compulsory trades. I'm asking, is this by design? And what guarantee does the government offer to not walk back the legitimacy and qualifications of construction trades and the apprenticeship system and go back to skill sets, which you know the previous PC Premier did back in the 1990s?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I appreciate not only the question from the member for Waterloo but also the fact that she also has a son in the trades. We're kindred spirits in that regard.

I want to say that I can't speak for the minister, but you have seen this man in action. What we're going to be doing when it comes to skilled trades and how he deals with labour issues and building those opportunities for people in the province of Ontario is going to be using the same *modus operandi* that he did in drafting this piece of legislation. We're going to sit down and talk to the folks who walk the walk. We're going to have the kinds of consultations when we bring in those—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Response.

Hon. John Yakabuski: That's time? Oh, sorry, 10 minutes, 10 seconds: I'm living on tens. Anyway. I may address that more in the next one. Who knows what the next question will be? But I appreciate the question.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Next question.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I listened intently to you, Minister. As we know here on this side, we have a responsibility to do what's best for the people of Ontario

and our constituents, obviously, to succeed, and we've done that with this Bill 288. But I did drive home last night after quickly thinking about the minister talking about the boondoggle and all the things that happened across the way with over 700 schools closed, only 611 beds in long-term care.

But I want him just to elaborate a bit on the one-stop shop. Don't you think it's about time that we had a one-stop shop so all the people in the skilled trades can actually benefit and grow?

Hon. John Yakubuski: I thank the member for Burlington for that question. I also want to thank her for her work and input into this piece of legislation.

I heard the minister talk the other day, in his address to the chamber here, about the one-stop shop, about how it was so confusing under the old regime. One minute you're dealing with the College of Trades; the next time, you're dealing with the ministry. You're dealing with one; you're dealing with the other. My son would have gone through all that, so he would have understood the confusion.

The point of some of the changes, in bringing this legislation in, is to avoid that, to make the process simpler, because our job here is to get the best-qualified people into the trades and get them certified so that they can do the kind of work that this province needs to grow into the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: It is a pleasure to be able to hear the minister speak. It's been quite some time since I've heard him stand up and fly in this House, as he used to do from this spot right here. I remember quite clearly. So, it's nice to hear him just have the opportunity to speak on a bill.

But I do have some questions, because I also consulted with some folks, and there are questions. We've heard several times all of the praise that they have quoted from the building trades. But there are concerns from the building trades that we have not heard the government speak to, one of them being the trade boards. The purpose of the trade boards was to be able to come together to ensure that there was education, that there were boots on the ground speaking about today's issues and how we move forward. Does the minister not see the concern of taking those boards of trade and not giving them that proper regulation and that standard to be able to continue to move our communities forward safely?

Hon. John Yakubuski: I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for the question. I appreciate the support that we're receiving from the opposition on this bill, because they understand what a game-changer and how positive this is.

I can't speak exactly to the issue, but I'm sure the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development will be able to speak to those. We also understand that when we bring in a piece of legislation, we don't expect perfection. That's why we debate it in this House, and that's why we'll have continuous conversations about the piece of legislation. But this legislation, it's a new way, a new

world here in the province of Ontario. This is one of the most positive steps forward in skilled trades that I have witnessed in my almost 18 years in this chamber.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the Minister of Natural Resources for his remarks this morning. I had a lot of experience through my office, and before I even got elected, with the College of Trades as well, because it was a real roadblock for industry and the construction sector in my community. The College of Trades—I called them the haircut police because they were policing barbers and hairdressers as well. But anyway, they'd show up on the job site, ask to see your certification. If you didn't have it, they'd pull that guy off—it was usually a man—that tradesperson off the job and shut the whole job down. The industry as a whole, Imperial Oil, Nova, they were just frantic about this, complained continually about the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Question?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Could the minister speak to how much of an improvement it is? I heard concerns yesterday about the involvement of the industry. We have so many people, and I won't name them, who are supporting this. Could you speak to that, please?

Hon. John Yakubuski: I want to thank the member for Sarnia-Lambton for that question. Here's another member of this House who has been a—he spent his life in the trades. He spent his life in labour before politics. He understands how the system works, he understands how it fails, and he also understands how it should work.

I know that he looks at this legislation—and when I look at the endorsements on this piece of legislation, this is not from one side of the ledger or another side of the ledger, or a little bit off the top—the barber reference. This is sector-wide. Management, employees, unions, they're all supporting this legislation. We must be getting it right.

0920

I can say to you, Speaker, as I've said repeatedly, this is the biggest step forward in labour and skilled trades in the history of this province, and I'm proud to be a member of a government that brought it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I hope the minister will let me get my question out without interrupting me today. I want to thank the minister for his presentation today. I believe we can all agree, with all individuals of this House, that we are going to lose a lot of experience within the skilled trades in Ontario. They're going to walk out the door because of retirement.

However, I've heard in this House everybody is so proud of their sons. I'm very proud of my son in his trade, but my daughter is training skilled trades. She is the number one trainer in her department. I want to know, is the government going to include women within this trade? Because I haven't seen it. There's no document saying that we are going to support women in skilled trades.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the minister for a final response.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for St. Catharines, and I want to congratulate her and her daughter on recognizing what a tremendous opportunity and what a tremendous career choice the trades can be. We want to see more and more. That's part of what we've been doing as a government to try to encourage more women to embark on a life in the trades. And the trades themselves, the sectors themselves are recognizing that they have to change the way that they embrace—the welcoming arms they have towards women to the trades as well. The need for tradespeople is so vast, we're going to see that women recognize the need to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. It's time for further debate.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It's a real honour to be able to get up and talk to this legislation this morning. I want to begin by telling a little bit more of a story I started to tell yesterday. I couldn't agree more with the importance of having the trades be a welcoming place that actually works for people.

I have four incredible kids. They're all grown. They're all doing marvelous things in their fields. One of them came to us and very sincerely said, "There's no way I want to do anything academic. I want to know how to make the trucks that go on the bottom of skateboards. I want to learn how that works." So he went off to do that, and he now co-owns and co-manages Longboard Haven, which is a small business in Toronto Centre that actually has done really well throughout the pandemic, one of the small businesses that has thrived as people look for alternate ways of getting around the city. I'm really proud of him for having been able to adapt.

But one of the things I want to mention here today is how important it is, as we're seeking to take the stigma out, that we have to make sure that women and Black and Indigenous and other people of colour feel comfortable in the trades.

I want to talk a little bit about something that happened last summer in Beaches–East York, and then across the city. There's a hospital, Michael Garron Hospital, which I have to shout out, because they have done an extraordinary job taking care of all of the community, just absolutely phenomenal. They're building a badly needed extension, and in the construction site, there were two nooses that were placed very strategically on equipment used by Black workers. And this was after the George Floyd murder and all of the protests that ensued. These nooses were absolutely chilling. I hope the government members are all listening, because it's really important that we understand the reverberation and the horror felt by Black workers after these nooses were placed.

And it wasn't only on this construction site. My colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth and I held community consultation, along with the hospital and the construction company, and the worker who found the nooses actually came on the call and was very clear that, in his experience, this happens, in his words, "all the time." It is an ongoing, constant concern that Black and Indigenous construction workers face. But, particularly for

him as a Black worker, to find a noose sent a message that he was not welcome. It sent a message, from people who wanted to remain anonymous, that white supremacist power was very much in place and was going to remain in place. It sent a message that other Black people were not welcome on construction sites. And it sent a message that he was in danger, not only psychologically in danger—and I have to pause for a moment here and make clear that everybody understands that nooses are not a prank, that they send a very chilling message of white supremacy and power and potential murder, because that is their history. He was also afraid—Black people in construction are also afraid when this happens for their physical safety. Construction sites are dangerous, and we need to be aware that people cannot work there and cannot thrive there unless they feel safe.

Over the course of the summer, of course, we know that nooses began to pop up at various sites. In some cases, people who investigated them felt that they were somewhat random, but in this case, particularly, they were very targeted. The worker who found them is struggling with his mental health to this day. He had to take time away from work and he's struggling to come back. Eventually, the worker who placed the nooses was found and he was charged by Toronto police.

There was a community group that came together, Community Solidarity Against Racism in Construction, to work with the unions, with the construction companies and with people working in the trades to figure out how to get rid of racism in construction. The person who was eventually charged has since passed away in a single-car crash, so there won't be consequences for him, although he has lost his life and we don't know, in fact, what the repercussions of that incident was in terms of why the crash happened. There was a push from this group, Community Solidarity Against Racism in Construction, to have him charged not just with harassment but with a hate crime, because it's really important that we understand that nooses constitute a hate crime.

The reason that I'm raising all of this here today is because I want you to understand, by dint of actually having heard the story and the repercussions that it has for individual human beings, that this is not a joke or a prank. As much as the stigma that exists, it is a factor that is preventing people from feeling that this is a safe place for them, that this is a place where they can thrive.

I'm mentioning this today because it is my hope that as the government amends the bill in committee, that it takes the opportunity to name anti-Black racism in construction as a health and safety hazard and that it takes real action with the trades, with unions and with construction companies and developers to make sure that it doesn't continue, that there is real action in place to make sure that people do not commit these acts of hatred, which are making it very difficult for people to feel comfortable on construction sites.

0930

Frankly, in a different way, it's important that misogyny and sexism be tackled as well. In the course of

doing that work to support community through the last year, I have had the opportunity to speak to many, many women who work on construction sites as engineers, architects, electricians or other tradespeople. All of them have spoken about the regular harassment that they experience. I feel like this is an opportunity to really tackle some of those difficult-to-tackle but critical-to-tackle issues that will make working in the trades truly welcoming to everybody who wants to take this up. I think it's absolutely crucial, because tackling the question of stigma is so important.

I think I have an understanding of why that stigma might be there for many, many families. Having kids go to university and become professionals is a huge deal. It just makes a big difference. For many people, they have not had that opportunity in the past. It's been denied to them. My grandfather, for instance, was a peddler. He couldn't go to university. My grandmothers grew up on farms. One of them very much wanted to go to university but that wasn't possible for her. And there was racism involved, there was discrimination involved and there was poverty involved—all sorts of things like that. So, when people have an opportunity to get their kids to university, they want them there.

I think it's really important that we do position trades as wonderful jobs with huge prestige and great pay-cheques, but we can't do that if there is also racism and sexism at work. I hope that the government will take the opportunity with this bill to take some crucial action to make sure that isn't true going forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I listened to you intently, the member from Beaches–East York, and hate has no place anywhere. As the minister has said, the reason that we bring bills forward is that we debate them in the House and then they do go to committee with other concerns as well.

But I want to ask you a question. The member from Niagara Falls once said in the Legislature, “Young people need to be given the support and encouragement to go on to become apprentices.” Does the member from Beaches–East York support legislation that outright addresses her own colleague's concerns?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I think it's absolutely important that legislation be put forward that enables people to go and feel completely enabled to do the work that they want to do. I know that we all want that to be the very best legislation possible, and so it's important that we be willing to create that very best legislation possible and make whatever shifts, tweaks and changes that are needed to make sure that's the case.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you to my colleague from Beaches–East York for her comments and a great presentation.

My question is: I know that the skilled trades are well-paid professions. I know there are so many barriers for young people, especially, as we know, in the middle of the pandemic. We have the impact of women, minorities,

racialized, Blacks and Indigenous, and we need to make sure that there is a set of targets for those groups. I want your thoughts about the importance of recruiting and also retention in this profession.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much to my colleague for the question. I want to say something that I also think is really important. Before I got asked to run for politics, I was teaching diaspora studies at the University of Toronto. I taught a great many racialized and Black kids who were encouraged by their teachers to not go on to university. They were told they couldn't. They were told they didn't have the capacity to do that. Many of them went on to study at Ivy League universities and proved their teachers wrong.

I think it's really important that nobody have their own ideas of what young people should do, just as it would have been wrong for us to force our child to go to university and study medicine when he wanted to study the trucks on the bottom of skateboards. It's wrong to push people into the trades. I think everybody needs to have the right to choose their own future, and the trades need to be a good choice among those.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member for Beaches–East York for her address to the Legislature this morning. I appreciate the passion with which she attacks issues as well. We certainly understand her feelings on many of those subjects.

She did speak at the end about the stigmatization. Anybody who is my age has seen the stigmatization of the trades from so many different angles over the years. This legislation is precisely designed to address that. This legislation speaks to the failure of the trades to attract skilled people from diverse backgrounds and the stigmatization from an education point of view as well. What we're learning today and we know—I know from my son—is that it's good-paying money. They're wonderfully paying jobs too; six figures in his trade.

What I'm going to ask the member—because what I see in this legislation is something that encourages broadening of the skill sets in the trades and the diversification. What is in this legislation that she feels prohibits that? And if this is encouraging, what we're trying to get at, hopefully we can expect the member's support on this issue.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much for the question. Anything that moves to removing stigma is absolutely going in the right direction, for sure. The question is, how can you take a piece of legislation whose intention is right and make it such that it actually does what it wants to do? If you're going to remove stigma, you need to actually go so far as to put in place something like ensuring that people understand that anti-Black racism is, in fact, a health and safety hazard on a job site, and then making sure that you make the job site safe for everybody, including Black workers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate that my colleague from Beaches–East York talked about how it can be difficult for Black people to enter the trades, to be on construction sites. It can be difficult for women, and if you are a racialized woman, it becomes even more difficult. Speaker, I remember—it still happens, not as frequently—a time when women walked past construction sites and there were catcalls and other things that happened. To this day, women are still not comfortable in many of these jobs.

I want to recognize Shelley Harding-Smith who passed away in 2019. She was Canada's first Black female master electrician in 1978. She became a master electrician in 1978. She was born and raised in Windsor, Ontario. At the time, again, she was the first racialized female master electrician and faced a lot of obstacles.

I'd like to know if the member for Beaches–East York, when you're looking at this bill and you're looking at the makeup—how they say there will be 11 people on this trade board—do you see anything in this legislation that would ensure an equity lens, making sure that there are women in trades on the board, racialized women in trades on the board?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much to my colleague from Windsor West for that question. It's absolutely crucial. You're not going to get the changes that you need in the industry that will drive to the goal you want to get to unless you ensure that that equity in terms of gender and in terms of—in fact, in every possible way. You want to make sure that there are queer folks on that board. You want to make sure that there are Black, Indigenous or other racialized folks on that board as well. And you want to make sure that there are enough people who are not white men that you're going to be able to drive for real change, because this is actually, to be honest, a very knotty situation that needs to be unknotted if we're going to drive to the place where everybody feels welcome in the trades.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Mike Harris: It's always a pleasure to hear the member from Beaches–East York take part in debate here in the Ontario Legislature. She often brings such a very different perspective and a different lens to things, and I just wanted to thank her for that. We've had a chance to get to know each other a little bit over the years, doing some committee business, and it's certainly been nice to have her participate obviously in debate here today.

I wanted to touch a little bit on the one-window approach that we're looking at building into this legislation, just to get a little bit of her thoughts on, when we talk about diversity and inclusion, how making it easier and breaking down some of those barriers for racialized people here in the province to be able to actually apply for these apprenticeships in a much easier way, to be able to sort out their certifications, any payments or any classes they have to do—just to get her thoughts on what she thinks about that one-window approach that's being built into this bill.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much to the member. This is exactly why, at the very beginning of my talk, I asked that everybody listen because I really wanted this member to be hearing what I was saying, and I really do appreciate the question.

The issue about racism is that, yes, you make things easier, but if you don't untangle the racism that happens on the back end, if there's only one path in, that can actually make it more complicated. In order to get rid of all the barriers, it's not just about what makes it easier for somebody who doesn't have to deal with racism, it's actually about ensuring that all the barriers, the hidden ones as well as the obvious bureaucratic ones, are tackled and demolished.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There really isn't enough time for another question and response. I apologize for that, but we're just running pretty tight.

Therefore, it's time for further debate. I recognize the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I actually wasn't expecting to speak till this afternoon, but anyway—

Hon. John Yakabuski: You're a morning person anyway.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I'm more of a morning person, like a mourning dove. But anyway—

Hon. John Yakabuski: Pretty as a picture.

Mr. Robert Bailey: With that said—yes, you get the picture. I'm presently awaiting remarks, but I'm going to just wing it as we go, as we say back in Sarnia.

I heard a number of people—and I know there are concerns; I won't say there aren't. There's an old quote: Never let the perfect be the enemy of the good. I'd say that applies with this bill here.

We'll get to committee. We'll get all kinds of comments, I'm sure, from the construction sector, from owners, managers and also from the labour community and, of course, from our colleagues across the aisle.

I'm surprised that so far in this debate, I don't think any of the—maybe it's more by design than accident that none of the Liberal members have chosen to speak to this, but that's—

Hon. John Yakabuski: They haven't spoken?

Mr. Robert Bailey: No, they haven't spoken yet, to my knowledge.

Hon. John Yakabuski: They're so ashamed of what they had, I guess.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I guess they're ashamed of what they replaced, as the minister said.

I would like to read a couple of quotes. I don't usually use this, but I don't have my own notes. This here is from the commercial news—it just came out this morning. I only had the chance to read it at about 6, but it says here:

“We welcome a new agency that takes a fresh approach and genuine interest in advancing Ontario's skilled trades and apprenticeship system,” said Stephen Hamilton.”

That's the end of the quote from Stephen Hamilton from Ontario Skilled Trades Alliance.

“McNaughton said he was implementing the first phase of the recommendations of the Skilled Trades Panel, established last September with Michael Sherrard as chair,” who is “currently consulting on the second phase of its mandate....”

“Under the new system,” Skilled Trades Ontario—that’s the new crown agency—“would become the province’s training authority to lead the promotion, research and development of apprenticeship training and curriculum standards. It will consolidate services including apprentice registration, issuance of certificates and renewals.”

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development “will provide system oversight, be responsible for regulatory decisions and financial supports....”

“‘Mike Sherrard did a fantastic job of listening to everybody’s concerns and coming up with a set of recommendations,’ said government relations associate for the Ontario General Contractors Association ... Erich Schmidt.

“‘We’re very excited for the second phase of consultations to engage once again....’”

The Council of Ontario Construction Associations, COCA, has had meetings here with the members in the chamber, on both sides, for a number of years, led by Ian Cunningham, their president. He said, “The realignment of responsibilities should reduce confusion experienced by apprentices and employers, who were ‘pinballed’ between the ministry and OCOT.

“As in all enabling legislation, ‘the devil will be in the details,’ Cunningham said. He said in his view the panel’s recommendations appeared balanced and neutral, with the ‘sticky’ decisions such as the classification of trades” left to the future for Sherrard and his new committee to deal with.

“‘My general sense is that what has been proposed by Minister McNaughton is a compromise,’ said Cunningham.”

We also heard from RESCON, the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, and the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, RCCAO, who “also praised the” minister and the “government’s attempts to streamline the apprenticeship system.” That was from RESCON president Richard Lyall. He “stated the legislation would create clearer pathways for youths” to enter the trades.

Ian Howcroft, who is the CEO of Skills Ontario, also “praised the focus the government is placing on promoting the skilled trades and said he expects his organization will continue to play a complementary role, implementing programs set up by the ministry and STO as the new agency begins to establish itself.

“‘There’s going to be some interplay between the agency and the ministry, and that will also involve other ministries as well’”—and I think the minister said that a number of times. This was a cross-ministry effort, when it comes to involving young women and women in second and third careers or young women to enter the trades,

become apprentices and go on, whether it’s in any trade, but hopefully the skilled trades as well.

I took a few minutes yesterday to call back home to the head of our construction association in Sarnia, Andy Pilat, a long-time friend of ours. I asked Andy, “Andy, how is it going in Sarnia–Lambton? We were debating women and young girls entering the trades.” He said, “We’re working at it. We’ve got a number in a couple of the trades: the electricians trade, for sure, and some electrical.” He said that it’s not as successful in heavier trades. A lot of welders—young women have chosen to enter the welding field. Then, with our First Nations and Indigenous community, we’ve had some success there as well, because the First Nation of Aamjiwnaang, our First Nations community, is wholly within the city. We’ve had great success there as well.

I have a quote here from James Barry, the executive secretary treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He’s also supported by Joseph Mancinelli, who said the new system would eliminate “red tape for apprenticeship training” and modernize the skilled trades. Both Barry and Patrick Dillon, who is the business manager of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario—just as a side note, Mr. Dillon and I worked together, more years than I’d like to think, in Sarnia, when we were building the massive Petrosar plant at the time. We commissioned that in 1977. I was there the day after my boys were born. They were born November 11, 1974. I started there on November 12 on construction and spent all my career either on construction and/or with Petrosar, which later became Nova Chemicals, which most people here would be a little more familiar with. It was a great time to be alive, a great time to be in industry.

I rode back in a plane with a contractor from down home. I remember him saying this about two years ago. He was younger than my dad would be, but he was a lot older than me. He said, “Bob, I only wish I was 25 years younger. There are so many opportunities in Ontario and in this part of the province,” where we lived at the time. This is long before the boom we’re seeing now. He said, “There are so many opportunities to make money.” He was still working. His boys run the business, but he was travelling around getting new jobs. They’re installing solar plants. They do the excavation and groundwork and install all the ground services. I remember that day on the airplane flying from Sarnia back to Toronto. He was going to Ottawa. He was going on to Ottawa to look at some job down there.

So, we’ve had opportunities in Sarnia–Lambton because of the petrochemical industry. That brings us to line 5. The federal filed yesterday an amicus brief to keep line 5 open. They’re in the courts. I’m hoping that Governor Whitmer, when she sees what’s going on with the Colonial pipe system—I don’t know how many people follow this, but the Colonial pipeline down in the southwest part of the United States, through ransomware, shut down—shortages, lineups at gas stations. It might be one of these cases where a disaster in one part of the country focuses more attention on something, the potential up here in Michigan and Ontario.

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I'm hoping that those jobs will continue. We've put a real effort there in the Sarnia–Lambton area. I want to applaud the Sarnia Construction Association, the building trades, all of those people, the federal member of Parliament and, of course, the federal government. Minister O'Regan spoke very strongly about keeping line 5 open there. Their fallback is a treaty signed by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and former President James—Jimmy—Carter back in 1977 that one country couldn't arbitrarily cut another country off of trade. So, at the end of the day, we're willing to fall back on that if we have to, but I hope that good sense will come.

One of the senators who voted in favour of that treaty 30-some years ago—no, it was 50 years ago now—was a young Joe Biden, who was a newly elected senator in the United States Senate. He's now in the White House. The son of a former Prime Minister is the Prime Minister of Canada. I'm hoping that those two individuals can get their acts together and persuade Governor Whitmer to take another look at this, because for jobs, for the economy in Ontario, in Sarnia–Lambton, but also all of Quebec—they get, actually, more fuel through that line than the rest of Ontario does.

But anyway, to close up, yes, we want to see this. I want to applaud the minister and his parliamentary assistant for the work they've done on getting the bill this far. I'm looking forward to it going to committee and having the chance to speak again. I didn't expect to speak this morning. I'll have to apologize; I didn't have my remarks prepared as much as I'd like. Maybe we can get another 10 minutes through unanimous consent.

One thing I did want to say was that I do remember—it was about 45 or 46 years ago. It was very unusual to have women on the job at that time. I remember everybody going down to the welding shop. I said, "Where's everybody going?"

"They've got a woman welder."

"What?"

"They've got a woman welder in there." It was very unusual at that time.

Let's hope that it's not unusual going forward. We'll see more women and young ladies in the job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It's now time for questions.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thanks to the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his presentation.

I just want to remind the member that the Conservative Premier Mike Harris removed shop from the school curriculum back in the 1990s. I know that getting young folks into the skilled trades is such a great, great career, but I'm also worried about how the pandemic impacts unequally. More people are impacted more, like women, minorities and so forth.

Is there a set target to recruit and to invest in the economy as the she-recovery, and to include and expand to the folks who are not part of the skilled trades at the moment?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I've heard the minister speak, and the parliamentary assistant as well: Starting this September, we're going to be going into the schools—I think that's across Ontario as a whole—and having guidance counsellors. We'll be competing with the universities, who always show up and try to entice students away to go to the different colleges, Georgian College, Western University etc.

The minister has made a commitment that the skilled trades themselves, the building trades and, of course, probably members like himself and his PA—I offered to do something too, back home or wherever. We're going to make a concentrated effort to encourage young people, young men and women, people of colour and First Nations communities to certainly consider the trades for a great, solid career.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his interesting impromptu speech. If it was scripted, I'm sure we would have heard praise for the Minister of Labour in there. I didn't hear that today, so maybe in your response to this question, you could slip some in there.

I know that the member has been involved with the trades. This bill is moving things forward in many ways, providing opportunities for young people to develop in the skilled trades, but I really want to know what it means for your riding of Sarnia–Lambton. Maybe you could talk about how important this is for your riding.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would have talked a lot more about my own riding in my prepared remarks, so thanks for giving me that opportunity. Of course, I would have praised the minister of colleges and skilled trades and labour more in my prepared remarks—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me, could the member please address the Chair, please?

Mr. Robert Bailey: We'll have to do it this way. Yes, I'm keeping my eyes on you. I've got my eyes on you too.

Yes, this is very important to Sarnia–Lambton because we have about 5,500 skilled tradespeople in Sarnia–Lambton. The average age is 55 or more. I worked with a lot of those fellows. I'm now representing some of their sons or grandsons. I go to all their graduation ceremonies. Definitely, this is an important bill for Sarnia–Lambton as well as the rest of the province. We need to replace those men and women with this next generation.

That's why I was glad to see that the minister talked about going into the high schools this September and the grade schools, exposing young people from kindergarten to grade 8 to skilled trades, carpentry, whatever. I'm looking forward to that debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Thank you to the member from Sarnia–Lambton. I think this week the minister was telling me that you used to be a tradesman also. So was I. We're probably in the same generation of tradesmen.

Back when I started as a tradesman, I was lucky enough to get an apprenticeship. We were successful in getting apprenticeships because there were big incentives for employers to do so. It was on wages. Employers were getting a lot of offsets on wages to bring in apprentices, and that's why we gained a lot of apprenticeships.

I'd like to hear from you on this, because I used to negotiate for a living and that was a big thing that we kept hearing from employers: "We need to go back to what it used to be, that we get these offsets." It is expensive to develop a tradesman because sometimes people change. They get through two years and the first thing you know, they say, "You know what? This is not for me."

Trades are not easy. It's good money, absolutely. But I'd like to hear your perspective on that question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the member for the question. It's during debates like this that you find out about people's pasts, where they worked. I've been trying to keep track on my hands of how many people—members, I should say—have represented the trades, either in negotiations and/or who were tradesmen. I know the member from Timiskaming is a long-time electrician. That was a long time ago because he's been here 30 years. Anyway, he was also a tradesman—a number of people around us on my side, your side. I think that those people will bring that kind of perspective to the debate.

We know that there's going to be a real incentive by employers to go out and entice young men and women to join their companies and to apprentice them.

I remember when I was at Petrosar a long time ago—which is now Nova—we had what were called multi-skilled trades. A lot of the fellows wanted to get their certificates and the company was very reluctant to do it. It was pretty short thinking. They thought, "If you get your trade, you'll be more mobile and you'll leave here."

Hopefully that kind of thought and thinking is gone in this day and age, because I think if anybody prospers, the whole province prospers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I want to capitalize on what was just said there from the member across. There was \$195 million to support the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit and \$194 million to support Employment Ontario youth training and employment. The list goes on and on, totalling up to \$614.3 million in 2020-21.

I know we call the minister affectionately your son, but can you elaborate on what a phenomenal job he's actually done and just say a few things about how this bill has come to fruition because of all of his hard work?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Can you say something nice?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you very much. I won't take the bait on that. Yes, I know the minister because I talk to him quite a bit, maybe a couple of times a day or maybe oftener, as his wife said. So I know the consultation he's done since he took over this portfolio. He did a great job

on the other one as well, but this portfolio he's really sunk his teeth into.

I think the Premier and others around the cabinet table said, "Look, with all this money—billions of dollars we're spending on infrastructure—the contractors and the owners are saying, 'We don't have the people to do this work.'" Even with something as simple as locates through One Call, there's a real shortage of people working for companies like G-Tel and others to do the locates.

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I know the minister put a real focus—a laser focus, I think he said—on this industry and on this trade and what he could do to make it better, with his parliamentary assistant from Burlington, of course, at his side, who worked on the consultations. I know he's laboured hard to have relations with the contractors, the owners and the Patrick Dillons and James Barrys of the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I just want to point out again what several of my colleagues have pointed out: It was actually a Conservative government that removed shop classes from schools. I remember, in elementary school, getting bused to the nearest high school to do home ec and shop. It was mandatory that you did both. Yet the Conservatives pulled it out. Now they want to stand here and sound like they're the heroes for the trades.

But I'm going to ask the question to the member from Sarnia that I asked my colleague from Beaches-East York. When we look at this bill and it talks about this trade board made up of 11 people appointed by the government—and we see the history when it comes to the Tarion board, where it was stacked with developers, with only one homeowner. When we look at government agencies—it just happened yesterday: Conservative appointees, former MPPs, former candidates and those who donate to the PC Party getting appointed to jobs they're not qualified to do. How is it that the people in this province, the tradespeople, can believe that you will have qualified tradespeople in the positions on the boards, including women—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Back to the member from Sarnia-Lambton for a response.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I think that the people—I won't read their names; they've been read into the record too many times. But many members—I'll use Patrick Dillon, head of the Ontario building trades, James Barry with the electricians and there's another gentleman with the boilermakers; I forget his name now.

Interjection: Joe Mancinelli.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, Mr. Mancinelli from LiUNA. These people all support this, and they're going to keep an eye on this, because they're speaking for their members across Ontario. I've got great faith. It's going to be a smaller board; it's going to be 11 members. The minister heard from both the trades and the building trades business managers that this has to be a fair board. They'll soon speak up. I know Pat Dillon—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further debate?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il me fait toujours plaisir de me lever en Chambre pour parler d'un projet de loi ou de représenter ma circonscription de Mushkegowuk—Baie James. En particulier, à mon collègue de Niagara Falls, qui je sais m'écoute ce matin, je suis désolé que je vais faire mon discours—parce qu'il m'a dit : « Guy, j'espère que tu vas parler plus en anglais. » Sorry, buddy, it will all be in French.

Le gouvernement, avec le projet de loi 47 en 2019, a annulé le College of Trades et, en 2021, l'a remplacé, avec le projet de loi 288 qu'on traite aujourd'hui, par un nouveau nom, qui va s'appeler Skilled Trades Ontario. Pour plus de deux ans, ils ont laissé les métiers, les apprentis, en confusion sans standards ou régulations ou encadrement pour les métiers.

Cette semaine, durant l'allocution du ministre du Travail, qui considère son gouvernement comme les champions des métiers, le ministre a oublié de dire que pour deux ans, ils ont traîné les pieds, laissé les métiers et les apprentissages sans structure, sans standards d'encadrement. Pas fort, monsieur le Président, comme champion.

Avant d'être politicien, j'étais représentant syndical des Métallos pour 21 ans. Mais avant ça, j'étais mécanicien industriel pour 15 ans, et je suis un produit d'apprentissage. Je viens d'une famille de métiers. Mon père a étudié comme mécanicien, machinerie lourde. Mon frère est un électricien. Mon neveu est un mécanicien de machinerie lourde. Mon gendre est mécanicien d'automobiles et présentement en apprentissage pour être mécanicien industriel. Ma nièce est enregistrée à Boréal comme charpentière. Et mon fils, Jérémy, est électricien et présentement en apprentissage à Kapuskasing dans l'industrie de papier. Je peux vous dire qu'il n'y a pas un papa plus fier de son fils électricien et que le sang de métier coule à flots dans les veines de notre famille.

J'ai eu la chance, jeune, de faire partie d'un syndicat, qui m'a permis d'avoir un apprentissage avec de bons salaires, de bonnes conditions de travail et, surtout, le support négocié par mon syndicat pour que je puisse faire mon apprentissage sans contrainte financière. C'est important, ça : sans contrainte financière.

J'écoutais le gouvernement dire que beaucoup d'apprentis ont eu des problèmes à passer leurs certifications ou leur métier ou de compléter leur apprentissage. Je dois admettre que je n'ai pas eu ces contraintes. Je n'ai pas eu ces problèmes-là. J'ai fait mes trois étapes avec succès, j'ai eu les deux certifications—provinciale, interprovinciale—et plusieurs de mes collègues ont réussi la même chose. Peut-être une des raisons qu'ils ou elles n'ont pas réussi leur cheminement dans le métier, c'est peut-être qu'ils n'avaient pas un syndicat qui les appuyait, avec de bonnes conditions négociées. Mais, encore plus important, la contrainte financière était là, ce qui fait une grosse différence. Quand tu élèves une jeune famille, tu as des paiements sur une hypothèque, tu as d'autres contraintes budgétaires, financières. Le fait de ne pas avoir ces contraintes-là, que

tu sais que tu as plus de chance de réussite, peut faire une grosse différence pour avoir une réussite dans les métiers.

Quand j'écrivais ce discours, j'essayais de me souvenir, de retourner en arrière pour voir quand j'y étais quelles étaient les plus grosses contraintes. Une des plus grosses contraintes dont je me souviens—puis, j'étais chanceux. J'étais entouré par beaucoup d'hommes de métier, des hommes de métier de qualité, qui m'ont partagé leurs connaissances. J'étais gratifié et j'étais content qu'ils le fassent. Mais dans le parcours, on rencontre du monde, d'autres hommes de métier qui sont réticents à partager. Je me souviens d'un individu, j'avais demandé—puis il ne voulait même pas m'aider. Il disait non. Je peux vous dire, monsieur le Président, quand je lui ai demandé pourquoi il était contre partager ces connaissances, il m'a dit : « Quand moi j'ai commencé, il n'y avait personne qui voulait m'aider. » Je peux vous dire que la discussion a « tournée sud » assez vite. Les mots qui se sont partagés ne sont pas parlementaires.

Mais le fait est que les personnes—puis, j'encourage le monde qui est dans les métiers de ne pas avoir peur de partager. Partager vos connaissances, ce qui peut faire une différence pour un apprenti, pour mettre sa vie ou peut-être ne pas mettre sa vie en danger. Vous avez de l'expérience, partagez-la avec les personnes, les jeunes apprentis, parce que ça fait toute la différence quand ça vient à une personne de métier.

Mais un des plus gros problèmes que j'ai trouvés, c'est que souvent j'étais laissé à moi-même parce que je venais d'une communauté isolée. Ça, c'est un autre problème qu'il faut que le gouvernement se penche dessus, parce que pour les communautés isolées, le problème, tu peux l'exaspérer par 10. Pourquoi? Parce que moi, je l'ai vécu. Souvent, j'ai été laissé, obligé de faire du travail qui excédait peut-être mes connaissances, mais je voulais avancer, puis je voulais faire mon travail, puis je le faisais. Je dois avoir été né sous une bonne étoile, parce que j'ai eu plusieurs « close calls », comme on dit en anglais, mais je me suis assez bien sorti.

Mais il reste que c'est important que le gouvernement se penche là-dessus. On sait dans le sud qu'il y a de grosses compagnies de construction, mais dans les régions isolées, on parle d'industries où il y a un gros manque d'hommes de métier, d'hommes certifiés, capables d'amener le ratio, pour démontrer l'expérience à ces jeunes-là qui commencent dans le métier. C'est très important. Des usines qui essayent de bâtir des équipes de maintenance ont besoin de ces hommes de métier-là.

C'est pour ça que j'en ai parlé un petit peu, j'ai demandé la question au membre, puis j'ai dit que l'apport financier à une compagnie est important. Je sais que l'assistante du ministre a dit qu'ils ont investi beaucoup pour les taxes et tout ça, mais ce n'est pas ça—c'est du direct qu'ils ont besoin. On a besoin de l'aide directe. Puis dans mon temps, ça, c'était fait. Ils ont fait des gros apports. Il faut ramener à ça.

1010

Je suis l'un des premiers à supporter les métiers. Oui, il faut faire de la promotion. Il faut aller dans les écoles

primaires et secondaires. Mais il faut faire un retour en arrière de ramener les « shops » dans les écoles. Il faut les ramener : pourquoi? C'est beau, la promotion, mais il faut que les jeunes aient les mains; il faut que tu touches aux produits pour avoir plus de succès.

Moi, je pense à mon fils qui a fait un an d'apprentissage—pas l'apprentissage, mais il a fait des stages. Il essayait d'autres métiers. Ça ne fonctionnait pas. Il a dit : « Non, papa, ce n'est pas pour moi. » Mais quand il a goûté ou qu'il a eu la chance d'aller faire un peu d'exposé, puis aller à l'électricien, son choix était fait. Mais le « hands-on » vaut toute sa monnaie. C'est pour ça que c'est important de ramener des « shops » dans les écoles.

On peut faire toutes les promotions, on peut faire toutes les bonnes choses, mais si on ne supporte pas l'employeur dans les temps difficiles, ou même dans les bons temps, pour investir dans la nouvelle génération qui va nous remplacer—j'en suis un qui, si j'avais continué dans le métier, je serais proche de ma retraite. C'est le temps d'investir. Il faut donner ces « incentives » aux employeurs pour remplacer la nouvelle génération, comme dans le temps, et ramener les « shops ». Les jeunes en ont besoin. Il y a du bon argent; je suis le premier à le reconnaître. Mon fils, dans une couple d'années, va faire plus d'argent que moi, puis bien pour lui. C'est bien. Il y a du bon argent, faire des métiers. Si j'avais continué dans le temps, peut-être que je ferais plus d'argent que je fais aujourd'hui, mais ça, c'est une autre question, monsieur le Président.

Mais c'est une réalité. J'ai négocié des conditions de travail des hommes de métier. Je le sais. J'ai entendu les employeurs dire ce qu'ils ont besoin. Mais dans le projet de loi, il y a beaucoup de choses qui sont silencieuses qui doivent être adressées : les standards, les hommes de métier sont mieux placés; les conditions de travail. C'est pour ça que les experts, les vrais experts, c'est qui? Ce sont les hommes de métier dans n'importe quel métier. Ça fait que, donner ce pouvoir-là à un ministre, je pense que—c'est faux que ç'a été donné aux personnes qui sont qualifiées pour donner cette information et de faire certain que les standards, les modules, la nouvelle technologie—on oublie qu'il y a la nouvelle technologie. Le métier change, avance à grand pas. Il y a des modulaires.

J'ai eu la chance, moi, d'aller voir dans un site de « carpenters » à Sudbury un « trading centre ». Ils ont tellement à offrir. Mais encore, le milieu syndical amène tout ce surplus-là. C'est important. Il y a des raisons pourquoi les gros salaires sont rendus dans les métiers. On peut remercier un syndicat pour ça.

Là-dessus, monsieur le Président, je vois que je suis près de manquer de temps. Merci, et bon matin.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Unfortunately, there is not enough time for questions and responses. But to the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay, when this bill comes back up, then you will have that opportunity to complete the 10-minute question and response time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Jill Andrew: I would first like to start by thanking all of our nurses in St. Paul's and across Ontario. It is National Nursing Week, and I want to thank all of you for working so hard under unbelievable circumstances, even before COVID but certainly now during COVID, considering how understaffed and underresourced our health care system is, courtesy of this government.

I also want to say, yesterday I lost a loved one, a very dear friend of mine, to COVID. I had known her since I was 14 years old. She would often speak about how proud she was of me, but I was even that much more proud of her because she was a mother. And now her kids lost their mother.

So I just want to remind everyone who's watching today, please wear your mask—double mask—socially distance, stay at home. There is no hairstyle or haircut or party or dinner or even a hug—I haven't hugged my mother in forever—that's worth losing your life. And please, when your time for a vaccine comes, get it. The federal and provincial government—yes, they have made mistakes, and we know that. But when you have a chance to get your vaccine, please get your vaccine. It will help save your life. Thank you.

To my dear friend: I didn't even know you were sick. I love you and I will miss you.

FIRE SERVICES

Mr. Lorne Coe: The government has listened to fire services across the province and recognizes the impact COVID-19 has had on their operations. In response, \$5 million has been allocated to fire departments, like the town of Whitby's, to respond to the local impacts of COVID-19.

Whitby's fire chief, Dave Speed, said recently that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way they conduct safety inspections and firefighter training. This funding from the province will be used to help Whitby's Fire and Emergency Services department further develop new ways of providing services to the public as they continue to creatively adapt to our new normal.

Speaker, I and the other members of my caucus remain committed to supporting Ontario's fire services, and recognizing our heroic first responders for their dedication and commitment in protecting hard-working families in the town of Whitby and other parts of the region of Durham.

RÉPONSE À LA COVID-19

M. Guy Bourguin: Je suis honoré de me lever aujourd'hui pour parler des préoccupations des résidents de Mushkegowuk—Baie James.

Nous, les gens du Nord, sommes des amateurs de la nature. Nous apprécions tous les bienfaits qu'apporte la

nature. Ce qui cause bien des soucis aux gens de Mushkegowuk–Baie James est encore l’interdiction de camper et de demeurer en roulotte sur les terres de la Couronne et aussi d’avoir accès à des ressources récréationnelles telles que nos terrains de golf.

Je peux comprendre qu’il n’est pas facile de gérer une crise de pandémie, mais les décisions du gouvernement doivent être prises sur le support ou les preuves scientifiques, et je n’ai vu aucun document de support ou de preuve scientifique qui recommande de fermer les terres de la Couronne ou les terrains de golf.

Si c’est un problème de distanciation physique, en Mushkegowuk–Baie James nous avons de la place en masse sur les terres de la Couronne. Nos terrains de golf sont vastes et utilisés en pleine sécurité. Comment justifier une telle fermeture quand la distanciation physique et les mesures sanitaires peuvent se faire?

Je demande donc au ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts et à la ministre du sport de revoir leur décision dans les plus brefs délais.

DOUGLAS MILLIKIN

KIMBERLY-CLARK

Mr. Norman Miller: I rise today to celebrate an important anniversary in my riding. Fifty years ago in March, Kimberly-Clark opened its mill in Huntsville under the supervision of mill manager Douglas Millikin. Doug began working for Kimberly-Clark in 1969 to oversee the construction, and stayed as mill manager until 1978. Now in his nineties, Doug still lives in Huntsville and attended the drive-through celebration of the mill’s 50th anniversary.

Kimberly-Clark makes products we are all very familiar with, including Cottonelle toilet paper, Kleenex tissue, Huggies diapers, Scott paper towels and more. The facility ensures that none of the solid waste from its manufacturing process goes into landfill, using as much as possible on-site, while a small amount is used in an off-site waste-to-energy operation. As well, the mill has an on-site water treatment system that recycles 80% of the water used in the manufacturing process.

Over the past half-century, Kimberly-Clark has made a huge contribution to the town of Huntsville, sponsoring all kinds of local organizations and events like the Table Soup Kitchen, Huntsville Minor Hockey, and the Paddle for Fairvern fundraiser. K-C also sponsors the Huntsville High School robotics team and offers scholarships to local students going to post-secondary education.

Congratulations to everyone who has worked at Kimberly-Clark over those 50 years, from the first plant manager, Douglas Millikin, to the 230 current staff led by manager Joe Welsh.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today is May 12. It is the International Awareness Day for myalgic encephalomyelitis,

chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, environmental sensitivity and multiple chemical sensitivities.

1020

The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, better known as MEAO, is a registered Ontario charity which supports and represents people living with any one of these conditions. MEAO has had several awareness day events here at Queen’s Park to mark International Awareness Day. Since we are in the middle of a global pandemic, MEAO is holding an awareness webinar today to mark the day.

Since 2013, they have advocated for changes to the health care system to better support people living with these medical conditions.

In 2016, the Ministry of Health announced a Task Force on Environmental Health, which delivered its final report back in December 2018. The final report contained concrete recommendations to improve care for the patients afflicted with these medical conditions.

In early 2020, the Minister of Health mandated Public Health Ontario to prepare and submit an action plan with regard to the recommendations set out in the task force’s final report.

Here we are in May 2021, and very little has changed. So I urge the Minister of Health to publicly release the action plan, implement and fund the recommendations of the plan, make sure that care is available now, and specify the locations where the care will be available.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Stephen Blais: Working families know the struggle between being able to afford child care, so both parents can go to work and pursue their dreams, or having someone stay home—most often the mother—in order to take care of their precious gift. It’s time that this choice not be based on economics. For far too long, the expense of child care has caused families to struggle and has taken enormous numbers of women out of the workforce.

And it is women who have been hit the hardest during the pandemic as well. An analysis by RBC shows that working-age Canadian women are leaving the workforce at a rate 10 times higher than men.

Recently, the federal government unveiled a new national child care plan, to partner with provinces to make child care more affordable for families. Unfortunately, here in Ontario, the response from the government has been anything but enthusiastic.

Ontario needs a robust and affordable child care plan. With licensed child care at \$10 a day, Ontario families could save \$10,000 a year for every child. But it’s not only about relief for parents, it’s also about improving the economy. Increasing women’s workforce participation has the potential to grow the economy by \$7 billion a year, and every dollar invested in child care will return \$2.50.

It’s time for this government to get behind affordable child care; it’s not time for blusters or fights with their political rivals. Families need help. Our economy needs

and wants moms to be successful. It's time for the government to get on board with affordable child care.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Mike Harris: This has been a very special week for me, school bus operators, safety advocates and all of the other stakeholders I've worked with over the past year. Last Thursday my private member's bill, the Safer School Buses Act, passed third reading with the unanimous support of the chamber.

Speaker, Ontario is the only place in North America where you will find school buses with an eight-lamp all-red warning system. As the House has heard me say repeatedly, every other province and state uses the dual amber-red system. It may be only a different colour of light, but based on data from other jurisdictions and studies done by Transport Canada, we know it will make the 18,000 school buses on our roads safer.

You can think about it like a stoplight, Mr. Speaker. Drivers would know to proceed with caution when the amber lights are flashing. And when those lights turn red, there is absolutely a 100% chance that there could be a student getting off or on that bus, and that driver must stop when they see those red lights.

I want to thank my colleagues for supporting this long-overdue common sense change. And to everyone across the province who has vocalized their support, this would not have been possible without you.

As a father of five, child safety is always something that is very important to me. I can't wait for the first day of school in September 2022, to see the buses pulling up with amber lights and to know that I was part of making the 800,000 students who take the bus every day here in Ontario just a little bit safer.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It's an honour to rise and to speak on behalf of my constituents of Brampton North.

Speaker, last week, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance requesting this government mandate lower auto insurance rates. I wrote a similar letter to the Premier in February, but I have yet to hear back. I hope the minister is a little more open to working with me and the official opposition to reduce auto insurance premiums and make life more affordable for Ontarians.

In my letter, I went over the fact that, in Ontario, we pay some of the highest auto insurance rates in the country—twice as much as our neighbors in Quebec pay on average. My constituents of Brampton North pay the highest auto insurance premiums in the entire province, more than twice the provincial average. These expensive auto insurance premiums in Brampton are made worse by the fact that Brampton is one of the hardest-hit cities by this pandemic. Bramptonians have seen some of the highest positivity rates and are struggling with the financial implications of the pandemic. They urgently

need relief on these excessively high auto insurance premiums.

There have been fewer drivers and fewer accidents on the road during this pandemic. Insurance companies have raked in record profits, but the drivers of Ontario have not seen any meaningful rebates. This is why the official opposition has been asking for months that this government implement a 50% decrease on auto insurance payments during this pandemic and allow payment deferrals for those who have lost their jobs in these times of economic uncertainty.

I am urging this government to work with me and the official opposition to provide relief on auto insurance rates for the people of Ontario and, instead, stop pointing fingers and deflecting blame.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's an honour to rise today and inform the House of a tremendous opportunity available to the young men and women of our province with the tabling of the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021, by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

In my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, thousands of men and women already know that skilled trades training can open the door to a long, high-paying, successful career in the trades. Tradespeople build and maintain our hospitals, broadband, bridges and roads, energy infrastructure, our homes and so much more. But many skilled tradespeople in Ontario will soon be retiring. Nearly one in three journey persons in Ontario is 55 years of age or older.

Before the pandemic, more than 200,000 jobs went unfilled every single day. Many of these jobs are in the skilled trades. In my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, where Ontario's petrochemical industry is focused, a looming trades shortage in 2022 will present a serious challenge for companies to complete the important maintenance work necessary to meet the province's energy needs. But with that challenge comes opportunity.

For too long, young people who have natural talent on the shop floor have been pushed into university lecture halls. Our government is committed to showing these young people that a career in the trades means good-paying jobs and exciting career paths that are in demand right now in our province. I encourage all members of this House to push for swift passage of the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act. Doing so will mean we are helping people to get back to work in meaningful careers right away.

ATTACKS IN ISRAEL

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Hear that silence? Over the last 24 hours, there has been no silence in the state of Israel. Instead, there have been sirens warning people to seek shelter from a barrage of terrorist attacks. We were all disturbed by the scenes of violence on the Temple

Mount/Haram al-Sharif this weekend. This site, of religious significance to Muslims and Jews, should be a place of prayer and peace.

Israel immediately took action and de-escalated tensions in Jerusalem to restore calm. Hamas and Palestinian terrorist groups have instead continued to incite violent riots, lynching, and have fired more than 700 missiles at Israeli civilians. Synagogues and schools are being burned, families attacked; innocent people are being injured and killed because of Hamas's murderous actions, which once again endanger Israelis and Palestinians alike. I remember when I visited Israel and saw the shrapnel at schools, and that should not be a reality for any child.

Ontario and Israel enjoy strong, long-standing cultural and economic ties, built on a strong foundation of shared values. The government of Canada must support our democratic friends and allies in Israel and their responsibility to defend its people from terrorist attacks. The Prime Minister must unequivocally condemn Hamas for perpetuating these tragic hostilities.

Creating an equivalency between Israel, a democracy that wants peace, and Hamas, a terrorist organization bent on destruction in Israel, enables terror and costs lives. The failure to speak up and clearly distinguish between those who want peace and those who want violence and the death of civilians is morally reprehensible. I hope the Prime Minister stands up and condemns these attacks by Hamas, and I pray for everyone in that region to be safe.

1030

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a special report entitled COVID-19 Preparedness and Management: Special Report on Management of Health-Related COVID-19 Expenditures, from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

GREG DIDIANO

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): As we all know, there are literally hundreds of staff who work so very hard here at the Legislative Assembly, without whom this place would come to a sudden, abject halt. Today we pay tribute to one of them, Greg Didiano, and we thank him for service to the Assembly going back to 1988—1988; that was before some of our current members were even born.

As a key part of our broadcast and recording service, Greg has spent the last 33 years keeping a keen, watchful eye on the House proceedings, turning on your microphones when you stand up—and, I might add, when the Speaker stands up, turning you off—operating from the crow's nest over there in the Speaker's gallery or from the audio console in one of our committee rooms. Greg has been a steady and sure hand on the camera, catching the image of hundreds of our distinguished Order of Ontario recipients in recent years, as well as the courage and valour

of countless firefighters and police officers during their award ceremonies.

For the past four years, Greg has been a calming presence, training and supporting his staff colleagues as the House has continued to sit in person, serving the people of Ontario, as all of us on both sides of the House were elected to do. This week, after more than three decades of steady—no, exemplary—service, Greg is retiring. I'm told that Greg loves to go fishing and that he's an avid angler, but up until this point that elusive big one has always gotten away.

Greg, you just caught it. Congratulations. We thank you and we wish you many, many years of happy and healthy retirement. Please join me in acknowledging the service of Greg Didiano here at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Thank you, Greg.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I start, I just want to acknowledge that Eid starts this evening and into tomorrow and I want to wish Eid Mubarak to all of our Muslim friends who are celebrating the end of Ramadan in the next 24 to 48 hours.

I also want to acknowledge that today is International Nurses Day and thank all of the nurses who have worked so hard to help get us through this COVID-19 pandemic. They deserve our respect and gratitude.

I can say to Greg, congratulations. I was just talking to John Vanthof, our House leader, who says that any of us after 33 years would not be looking as young and vigorous as you in retirement.

My question is to the Premier. Thank you for the opportunity, Speaker. The long-term care commission, as we know, obtained notes from the long-term care minister about some of her thoughts around what was happening at the beginning of the first wave of COVID-19 in long-term care. On April 17, she wrote this: "Military plan needed, get them in within 24-48 hours ... homes spiral down quickly."

The Premier didn't ask for the Canadian Armed Forces to come in until about five days later. My question is, why did the Premier wait five days to act on this urgent issue?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: As the Leader of the Opposition will know from yesterday's question period and the question period before, of course we were very grateful for the Canadian Armed Forces and the service that they provided to the people of the province of Ontario. I know that they were active in other provinces as well.

As I said yesterday, and I know the Leader of the Opposition will appreciate this, we were on the defence

for the better part of a year in the first wave of COVID-19, primarily because of the situation that the previous Liberal government had left the province's long-term-care homes in. But we moved very quickly to address that, both before the pandemic, during the pandemic and since, whether it's on a staffing strategy to bring in 27,000 additional PSWs, a build-out of our long-term-care homes—thousands of new homes—or the refurbishing of old homes so that we can eliminate the ward homes. A lot has been done. More needs to be done, but as I said yesterday and the day before, we're very grateful for the work of the Canadian Armed Forces.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would hope that the Premier would show one iota of respect for these families and answer the questions that they have as to what went on in long-term care. The military personnel, when they arrived, found two particular homes that were in disgraceful disrepair: infested with cockroaches, infested with other animals; mould, mushrooms growing in the homes. They also found 26 seniors who died not of COVID-19 but of dehydration and neglect, is how they put it; dehydration and neglect, when all they needed—and I quote from the military personnel—“was water and a wipe down.”

The Minister of Long-Term Care knew that the Canadian Armed Forces needed to be called in urgently on April 17, but yet they were not requested until five days later. So my question is, when did the Minister of Long-Term Care ask the Premier to call in the military?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. First of all, again, I want to thank the military. I've always supported the military. They did a great job. They came in when we were under a crisis. There's no secret about long-term care being under a crisis.

I first want to acknowledge the families who lost loved ones and who were impacted by what happened in long-term care. It was tragic, and it was very troubling. It was a terrible situation. Our government called the commission to action to provide accountability and justice to the families as soon as possible.

Now, all of our responsibilities are to fix the system—the system that was broken, Mr. Speaker, for 15 years; a system that was ignored for 15 years under the NDP and the Liberal government. We're throwing hundreds of millions of dollars, fixing the system. We're making sure we're building new long-term-care beds, new long-term rapid-care facilities in long-term care. We're going to fix the problem that was neglected for 15 years under the Liberal-NDP government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's really clear that the Premier just slid past the obligation for accountability and justice for those families, and that is not acceptable. The military trained for combat were actually—these folks are expected

to see the worst in their training, right? They were horrified by the very thought of having to go back into those homes. They didn't want to go. In fact, one person said the thought of doing so “sucked the life right out of you.”

One medic said that he saw more death in one week alone in long-term care than he had seen in all of his tours of duty combined.

On April 17, the Minister of Long-Term Care noted that the military were needed immediately, in 24 hours, and yet it didn't happen. So did she not pass that urgency on to the Premier, or did he just decide to wait five days instead of being urgent in the response?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, Mr. Speaker, as our military folks went in there, we're very grateful. We're very appreciative. And it just showed—I came out numerous times; there were problems. There were holes in the system, again, ignored and created for 15 years—not even 15 years. Not Bob Rae, not Mike Harris, not Dalton McGuinty, not Kathleen Wynne could even fix the problem. They ignored the problem.

As a matter of fact, under the NDP-Liberal government, they created 600 beds. We're going to create 30,000 new beds. We're going to hire 28,000 new PSWs and nursing staff. We're going to make sure every single home has air conditioning. Again, I go back to the CBC reporter who brought that up. We're listening to people. As of yesterday, they have a plan: Over 90% of the homes are going to have air conditioning in the rooms, in the common areas.

We're going to fix every single problem that decades and multiple governments of all stripes failed. We will fix that problem once and for all.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Speaker, on May 26 of last year, the Premier promised families who watched their loved ones die in horrifying conditions in long-term care that they would have justice and they would get an investigation into what happened to their loved ones. Again in July, the Premier made the promise: “I made a commitment to our long-term-care residents and their families that there would be accountability and justice....”

These are the Premier's own words, back in July, but a year later—I'm sure that the Premier knows this, but I'm going to remind him, because he seems to have forgotten in response to the last question I asked—the accountability and justice has not yet arrived for the families who lost loved ones in long-term care, for the survivors of the horrors that happened all through last year.

1040

My question is, a year after nothing has happened, why did the Premier break his promise to these families?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that I was the one who called for the commission. I was happy that the commission was putting together a report. I was happy the Auditor General was called for a report. I was happy that we called on the OPP, if there was anything that went

wrong illegally, to go in there and investigate. It was our government that did it.

According to the commission report, “Many of the challenges that had festered in the long-term-care sector for decades—chronic underfunding, severe staffing shortages,” again, under the NDP leadership and Liberal leadership, “outdated infrastructure and poor oversight—contributed to deadly consequences for Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens during the pandemic.” That was quoted from the commission.

My question is, what did the Leader of the Opposition do for 15 years when these homes were in disarray? We’re going to fix the problem, we’re going to build thousands of new beds—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reports are many—there’s just no doubt about it—but they describe horrors. Of course, we’ve just seen recently some military reports, debriefing notes from the military. Here’s what they were dealing with: cockroaches and animal infestations; residents literally abandoned in their beds, crying out for help; management denying military teams access to crucial information in the medical charts of these residents. One Canadian Armed Forces member said this, “Management should be charged.” That’s what the military opinion was of the situation.

So why didn’t this Premier act immediately? Why did he break his promise to the families in Ontario for that justice and accountability that they so deserve? To this day, he is still denying accountability and justice for families. Why?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think it’s just the opposite, Mr. Speaker. I think what you’ve seen is that the Premier, as he just said, was very quick to ensure that a commission of inquiry was called. The Auditor General has done an investigation on this.

We had started well in advance of the pandemic to address some of the problems that we knew were part of the long-term-care system: the chronic underfunding of the system, the fact that only 600 beds had been built in the decade leading up to the pandemic. We were addressing a lot of those issues.

Thousands of new PSWs coming into the system; thousands of new beds; refurbishing old, outdated buildings; four hours of care: These are things we’re doing, in addition to the transition to the Ontario health teams, so that there is a blanket of care. Whether it’s long-term care, home care, acute care or increasing ICU beds, we are taking the actions that should have been taken decades before. We’re doing it now, before, during and after the pandemic.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Our Canadian Armed Forces personnel were pretty clear: In their opinion, what happened was criminal. “This was criminal,” is what they said.

So I wrote to the OPP commissioner last week, and on Monday I received the response that they are reviewing my request asking them to look at what the CAF described. This Premier, this minister or any one of those cabinet ministers on the other side should have taken the initiative to march those Canadian Armed Forces notes and reports straight over to the OPP for review.

My question is: Why, instead of doing that, did they bring legislation forward to protect private operators of long-term care and the government from accountability and justice?

Interjections.

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

The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, Mr. Speaker, just to compare notes here: Over a few short years, a couple of years, our government is investing \$9.6 billion that the previous government and the NDP—they just never do. They just left it there. They invested zero into long-term care. We’re exceeding the NDP’s own platform target of a 30% increase in spending by 2028. With our pandemic pay program alone, we hired 8,636 staff.

The budget contained \$4.9 billion in new funding over four years to reach standards of four hours of care, which is really unheard of—four hours of care. We’re blazing a new trail in Canada and in the US with this four hours of care and a lot of people are going to follow our lead.

We announced—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The official opposition will come to order. The next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Three weeks ago, a journalist asked the science table’s Dr. Peter Jüni if the science table advised the Premier to close outdoor recreational activities, like tennis and golf courses. Dr. Jüni said, “No, of course not. The opposite....”

Ontario’s science table has been clear: Allowing safe outdoor recreational activity is smart. By shutting these things down, the Premier and cabinet are not getting to the root cause of the pandemic, which is indoor spread. Restrictions on the outdoors disproportionately affect and harm children and people who don’t have access to their own green space.

My question is to the government and to the Premier: Who advised cabinet to close outdoor recreational facilities in the first place, and what evidence was used to make that decision?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I have a great deal of respect for the health table and the science table. We did receive a couple of messages there to limit mobility, so we wanted to limit mobility.

When I asked Dr. Brown from the science table—he has a little chart: yes/no; what you can do and what you can’t do. When it was outdoor playgrounds—I just saw it

last week and will send a copy over to the Leader of the Opposition—it had a big “no” to it; yes, to open it up if everyone wore masks. Mr. Speaker, when you drive by those playgrounds, how many people do you see wearing a mask? You don’t see anyone wearing a mask.

So, there was a little bit of a message: Limit mobility, make sure everyone stays at home, but in other cases, if they go out, everyone has to wear a mask. I understand that.

The good news is numbers are levelling off. The protocol and the guidelines are working.

Mr. Speaker, I listen to everyone, but I listen to Dr. Williams. He’s the Chief Medical Officer and he believes that people need to limit mobility. They need to stay home. That’s—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, on Monday the Toronto Board of Health unanimously voted to ask the government to walk back the closures of outdoor amenities. Closing these facilities was not based on science or health.

Dr. de Villa put it nicely: “There’s a real opportunity to use the outdoors and use the warm weather ... as allies to help us support people in enjoying better physical health, enjoying better mental health and at the same time doing it in a way that reduces the spread of COVID-19.”

Speaker, there is overwhelming evidence and support for safe outdoor activities. Instead of cabinet ministers debating the question “to golf or not to golf,” please take this question off the table and focus on opening schools and creating safer workplaces. Work with our science table to lift the restrictions on outdoor recreation with clear communication guidelines. This is possible.

Will the government commit to this action today? You actually can do something right, right here, right now, during this pandemic.

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, I appreciate the question. I always go down to root cause. Root cause: Why are we in this situation, Mr. Speaker? We’re in the situation because—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Take your seat.

Opposition, come to order. Premier, please reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: The variants: We know 90% of all cases flew into this country or came across the border into this country. As the report came out, one third of the people who are supposed to be staying in a quarantine hotel don’t even bother staying in there. We have thousands of people who come through Pearson—150,000 in the last two weeks—crossing the borders into Canada, with two separate rules. There are thousands of people coming here with the variants and it’s being spread right across the province.

We need the federal government to have tougher restrictions at the land borders, tougher restrictions at Pearson, tougher restrictions flying in from across the country—

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

1050

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Stan Cho: I don’t think there is any doubt that we all agree that Toronto is a world-class city, and one of the biggest reasons for that is because of my neighbourhood of Willowdale. But Willowdale is not without its challenges. One of those challenges is that my neighbourhood has the dubious distinction of being the only neighbourhood I know of in the country that has two subway lines that dead-end in our neighbourhood. This is a big deal for Willowdalers. Our subway maps have been embarrassing for decades. When you look around the world to other world-class cities like New York, Paris or Seoul, their subway maps look like cobwebs. It’s something that is important to the people of my neighbourhood.

So, yesterday marked a big day for our government, because we heard an announcement confirming that the funding was there to get these projects built in the greater Toronto area, including in my home neighbourhood of Willowdale. My question is to the Associate Minister of Transportation: What will this announcement made yesterday mean for priority transit projects in the GTA?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much for the question. Yesterday was a great day. We did it, Mr. Speaker. We achieved what many called the impossible. I want to thank the federal government for endorsing the Premier’s transit plan. Since 2019, Minister Mulroney has been advocating for transit infrastructure investment to get a good deal for Ontario.

Combined with the province’s \$17-billion commitment, the transit plan for the greater Toronto area marks the largest subway expansion in Canadian history. We now have secured funding for our Ontario Line, our three-stop Scarborough subway, the Yonge North subway extension and, of course, the predominantly tunnelled Eglinton Crosstown West extension. Residents of Toronto and York region can rest assured that our subway plan will be built.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Stan Cho: I agree with the associate minister: Yesterday was a fantastic day. Not only did we, thanks to the efforts of our health team, get six and a half million first doses into the arms of adults here in Ontario, but this is a project that we campaigned on, that the Premier campaigned on, and said, “We’re going to get subways built.” It’s one of my election promises, Speaker, to no longer have two subway lines that dead-end in the great riding of Willowdale. So I agree, I share the optimism of the associate minister.

But forgive Willowdalers for being questioning. They’re wondering how we’re going to make sure that we actually get shovels into the ground. Back to the associate minister, Speaker: How is the province going to seize on this opportunity to make sure that we actually get this thing right?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much. Our government is committed to re-envisioning how transit is built, and the people it will serve. While building our

transit expansion, we will also be building transit-oriented communities—dynamic, complete communities, centred around good planning principles.

We have all seen over the past 13 months that people living within large urban centres like Toronto and York region have been confined to their immediate neighbourhoods. This further demonstrates the need to build complete communities around transit that can connect people to where they need to go and to essential services, communities where everything you need is within 15 minutes' walking around your neighbourhood. That is the dream, Mr. Speaker. It is time to make public transit a more attractive option and to rethink the way we plan and build infrastructure projects as we lay the foundation for Ontario's lasting prosperity.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question is to the Premier. We now know that the Financial Accountability Office estimates that the surgical backlog in Ontario will require \$1.3 billion and nearly 3.5 years to clear. But the government's budget is approximately \$700 million short of what is needed to get folks the surgeries they desperately need. The government's failure to provide this money means that our community members across Ontario will suffer worsening health conditions, pain, loss of mobility and severe depression.

My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier and his Conservative government spend the money which they have and clear the backlog ASAP? If not, what is their rationale for not investing in people and leaving our community members in unbearable pain?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Unfortunately, we have had to postpone some surgeries and procedures. As we did between the first and second waves, we are now having to do this in the third wave because, as the member will know, our hospitals are very crowded right now with COVID-19 patients, as well as our ICUs. Although the numbers are starting to go down, they are not yet at the point where we can resume those scheduled surgeries and procedures.

We are watching this on a daily basis, because we know that many people have been waiting for a long time to have these surgeries done, but I think it's also important to note that prior to this phase coming forward, we had already put over \$500 million into bringing forward these surgeries, so that our hospitals could operate longer hours, evenings and weekends. We are looking at a regional wait-list, and as soon as we can get back to performing those surgeries and procedures, we will certainly do so, because we know it's important to the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: The surgical backlog is impacting my community members, like Gloria, a senior, who has

been waiting in excruciating pain, now completely immobile because of delays to her hip replacement.

Failing to invest and clear the surgical backlog means people like Gloria will see their health decline for months, even years, before surgery is scheduled. These delays can cause an irreversible decline in health and have worsened conditions like Gloria's degenerative osteoarthritis. All she has ever known is that she's on some mythical wait-list. She doesn't know where she is on the wait-list, how long it will take, whose wait-list—nothing.

This government is responsible for her care, but since last summer she has heard nothing, not even whether or not she'll have to wait weeks, months or years for her surgery. The lines of communication are non-existent for Gloria and many others who have contacted me and the government.

Question: Why is the Conservative government failing to provide essential health care funding to help people like Gloria get the surgery they so desperately need? You've got the funds. Help Gloria—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

Minister of Health, please reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: It's important to note that it's not—money will be helpful when we're able to resume those surgeries so that we can start hastening them. Right now, it's a question of space in our hospitals. Right now, our hospitals are full of COVID patients. We are starting to see the numbers go down. We're starting to see the numbers in our intensive care units go down. Right now, we need both the spaces in hospitals and the staff to care for the very ill COVID-19 patients.

But we recognize that others are waiting. We have put \$500 million into hastening these surgeries, when we're able to do them, and we are watching this on a very careful, daily basis. This is a priority for our government, to make sure the health and the well-being of all Ontarians is our top priority. We want to get to those surgeries, but we are not able to do that until the numbers come down more in our hospitals.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Then why not fund it? Fund it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's, come to order. The next question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. It's been 12 days since the long-term care commission released their final report, outlining 85 recommendations that the government must undertake to improve conditions in long-term care. On Monday I introduced a private member's bill, Bill 290, that fulfills the 85th recommendation in that report. The bill mandates the government to report on the progress they've made in implementing the remaining recommendations in the commission's report in one year and again three years from now. It's the easiest and simplest measure in the report for this government to implement.

Speaker, through you: Will the Premier make reporting mandatory by passing Bill 290 or introducing legislation of his own that will require the government to publicly report on the progress that they've made to implement the commission's recommendations?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member for the question. I'm glad Johnny-come-lately just all of a sudden came up with this, after being down here for 15 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm just going to interrupt the Premier. We use riding names or ministerial titles.

Hon. Doug Ford: Yes, I apologize, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm glad the member came up with this after 15 years of coming here and being able to build—what was it?—600 homes. We take the commission's report very seriously. We're well on our way to making sure that we fix the problems in some of the areas that the commission came out with.

Mr. Speaker, just to again remind you, we've allocated over 20,000 beds to date, more than two thirds our 30,000 commitment, and there are thousands of beds under construction as we speak right now—the rapid builds. We have rapid builds going around Toronto and the GTA that are going to be ready by 2022. We're hiring 27,000 new PSWs and nurses, and again, I go back to the four hours of daily direct care.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The Premier said last May that he'd build an iron ring around long-term care. That never happened. More residents died in the second wave than in the first.

Then after the release of the military's report, which outlined how 26 residents died from dehydration and other squalid conditions, the Premier said, "We've launched an investigation and the results will be turned over to police." That never happened either.

The answer that I'm hearing from the Premier right now feels like the same thing: "Don't worry, we're going to take care of it." Well, Ontarians can have no confidence that the government is going to take care of it.

Speaker, the Premier can assign blame wherever he wants and make fun of me, but the reality is our collective responsibility is to ensure that every single one of those recommendations in the report is reported on.

So, I'm going to ask the Premier again, and hopefully he can give just a simple yes or no: Will he pass legislation mandating the government to publicly report on the progress in the recommendations of his own long-term care commission's report?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, I find it very rich and ironic that the member of the Liberal Party that was down here for 15 years did absolutely nothing to protect the most vulnerable, did nothing to protect the long-term-care system as a whole.

We are moving. People can see the difference—right now, they can see they difference. We're making sure that we're making the appropriate changes that the commission recommended, making sure we're making the appropriate

changes that the Auditor General recommended. We're well on our way to making sure that we have a sustainable long-term-care system in this province. We're pouring money into it. We're pouring staff into it—as I mention again, 28,000 new PSWs and nurses.

These two governments sat by and watched it all happen and did absolutely nothing to protect these most vulnerable people. We're doing something—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order. Okay, I'm going to caution everybody on their language. Order.

The next question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Stan Cho: I think it's clear to me that Willowdale is a very special place, but I didn't always live there—43 years ago, in fact, I was born in Etobicoke. And Etobicoke, in that time, has changed a lot. The population has boomed. But it's not just the west end of our city; it's west of Etobicoke. When you look to Peel, Brampton is now the sixth-largest city in our entire country. And our subway system, sadly, has changed very little in that time of four decades. That's unacceptable.

The Eglinton Crosstown West extension is going to run nine kilometres and bring more rapid transit—desperately needed transit—to Etobicoke and Mississauga.

Speaker, my question is to the Associate Minister of Transportation. I'm wondering if the minister can tell us when this line may be in operation and why it is so vital.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. Of course, I would be very happy to speak about the Eglinton Crosstown West extension. If you live in Toronto, you know that the suburbs are not as well served when it comes to public transit as the downtown core.

With the predominantly tunneled Eglinton Crosstown West extension, residents in Etobicoke will finally have access to fast, reliable public transit. Now residents who rely on the TTC will have shorter trips and many residents won't have to rely on their car to get around the city. It will also better connect Mississauga and Toronto residents and allow for service integration between MiWay and the TTC at Renforth station. It also has the potential to connect people to the largest employment hub in the GTA, which is Pearson airport.

Mr. Speaker, we are connecting people to places, people to jobs and truly building a transit network that the people of the GTA can be proud of.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you to the minister. I want to share with the House a story that many Willowdalers are all too familiar with. It's the painful story—that I had to do for decades, really—of getting to the train to go southbound at Sheppard station during morning rush hour and having to take the subway north to Finch just to get a spot to get downtown. Willowdalers know that transit in

this city has just been, frankly, not good enough for way too long.

The minister talked about the Eglinton West project, but that's just one of four priorities. We also have the Ontario Line, which Willowdalers desperately need to get relief for those commuters trying to get downtown, to provide that seamless connectivity for the great city of Toronto.

My question is back to the Associate Minister of Transportation: How is the Ontario Line going to reduce the gridlock and congestion that has been plaguing our city for decades?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you for the question. The 16-kilometre Ontario Line will provide more than just rush hour relief. It will not only reduce crowding on the TTC's Line 1, it will connect the people of Toronto like never before.

As you mentioned, it will include 15 stations that will link communities from east to west and north to south, with a travel time of only 30 minutes from Ontario Place to the Ontario Science Centre. This line will also provide many communities north of Pape, such as Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park, with access to a subway line. We are expecting over 380,000 daily boardings on this line and over 250,000 more people will find themselves within walking distance of transit, resulting in 28,000 fewer vehicles on our roads.

Rush hour crowding on subways will also be reduced by tens of thousands of people, which will go a long way in making transit a more attractive option post-COVID-19.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. COVID-19 took a deadly toll on long-term-care homes. The Premier promised an iron ring around long-term care in the first wave of COVID-19, yet more seniors died in the second wave than in the first. His iron ring was a myth. It never materialized.

At the Village at St. Clair in my riding, hundreds of residents and staff got COVID; almost 40 people died. The CAF and long-term care commission reports confirmed that this government failed long-term-care residents. Staff carried the burden of the pandemic on their shoulders, largely alone, ignored by this government. "Staff told the commission about crying before, during and after work, vomiting in locker rooms from stress, and watching residents whom they loved die in great numbers."

Lives could have been saved if this government—this government now—had stepped up to protect staff and residents. Instead, they put a legislative iron ring around private, for-profit corporations and themselves.

Will the Premier take responsibility for his failure to protect long-term-care staff and residents, and implement the long-term care commission's recommendations immediately?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: As I've said, we are well on our way to doing just that. There is no doubt, as I've said on a number of occasions, we were certainly on the defence for the first part of the COVID-19 crisis. Predominantly, we had seen what the underinvestment by previous governments had meant to long-term care: understaffing and not enough long-term-care homes. I talked about the enormous waiting lists in my own riding with respect to long-term-care-home placements. We had outdated homes that needed to be refurbished. We saw a lot of that.

The pandemic, yes, made it worse, but we were trying to catch up before, during and after. What we've done, as the Premier has talked about—hiring thousands of additional staff; building hundreds, thousands of new places; four hours of care.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done. We are finally on the offence in this province when it comes to attacking COVID-19, with over six million doses in arms. We are on our way to a better long-term-care system, to a better result for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: To the government House leader: To be on the defence, you actually have to be in the game instead of on the sidelines, like your government was.

Some 4,000 long-term-care residents died on this government's watch. The Canadian Armed Forces report revealed that 26 seniors died from neglect, simply needing "water and a wipe down." I'll say it again: Seniors died because they weren't given water, and that was during this Conservative government's watch. It is on them.

The long-term care commission wrote, "As a result of staff shortages, and with no family members to help, residents were confined to their rooms for extended periods without access to recreation programs or visitors.... Many residents experienced symptoms of what is known as 'confinement syndrome.'"

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Families could have safely been there to get residents water and provide support. Congregate care homes continue—continue to this day—to refuse residents access to their designated caregivers, as this government tinkers with unenforceable directives.

Speaker, my Bill 203, More Than a Visitor Act, passed second reading in September. Will the Premier immediately make it law so no resident in congregate care is forced to suffer from neglect or isolation like this again?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It certainly is on us—it is on us to fix the system that was broken, and that's exactly what we're doing. Before the pandemic even hit, we had identified the serious problems in long-term care. Understaffing: We knew that staff was getting trained but not staying in the system, so we studied that, and now we've come up with a plan to hire over 27,000 new PSWs for the system. We knew that there was chronic underfunding, which led to no new homes being built. Before the pandemic, we began building thousands of new homes, including 600 new spaces in my riding alone. During the pandemic, we announced even more funding for long-term-care homes. We're on our way to 30,000 new long-

term-care spaces, Mr. Speaker. We began to phase out the ward rooms, because we saw that that was a problem.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving mountains to fix a system that had been so chronically underfunded in the 15 years before we got there. It's our responsibility to fix it, and we—

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

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, the minister knows very well that there have been significant challenges organizing, booking and distributing the first dose of the vaccine. Now, more and more Ontarians are approaching the timeline to think about their second dose, and anxiety about how this is going to work is sinking in.

Some people received an exact date for their second dose; others have received information that's more nebulous. Some have been given date ranges. Some have been given telephone numbers to follow up. Others have received absolutely no information whatsoever. Now the government has also ended the use of AstraZeneca for second doses and provided very little information as to what that means for the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who received it as their first dose.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, the process for the second dose isn't looking like it's going to be much better than the first. When will the government come forward with a clear plan and process to ensure all Ontarians understand how to receive their second dose?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. Actually, there is a very clear plan in place that is rolling out very well. We have administered vaccines to almost six and a half million people, which is over 50% of the population of Ontario over 18. In addition to that, we have 4.9 million doses already booked, some for second doses, some for first doses.

The plan is rolling forward. It is clear. If you have booked your vaccine—your second vaccine, your first vaccine—through the online booking system, you will already have your second dose booked. The pharmacies have asked to use their own booking system, which is the system that they use for booking flu vaccines. We have directed them to book the second dose at the same time as the first dose. That is happening in most of the pharmacies, but not all of them right now, and we are working to get them to move forward with that so that people, everyone in Ontario, will know when their second dose is.

With respect to AstraZeneca, the member is right: We have put a pause on further doses of AstraZeneca while we await the results of reviews to be done by Public Health Ontario, Ontario Health and Health Canada—

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

Interjection.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the heckles from the Solicitor General.

What is clear, Mr. Speaker, is that not all pharmacies are booking the second dose. Pop-up clinics aren't booking the second dose. There are tens if not hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who don't know when they're going to get their second dose. Now, with the AstraZeneca situation, that number is only completely multiplied exponentially.

Everyone can understand the science is evolving, but it's hard to understand how an important and meaningful decision that was announced yesterday could have been done without there being any kind of path or clear information going forward. The government has already elongated the second dose of the vaccination window, and so it has time to decide and to communicate. But communications isn't this government's forte—we all know that, Mr. Speaker—and just-in-time delivery, while it works for Amazon and Walmart, doesn't work for your health.

When will the government tell those hundreds of thousands of people who have already received AstraZeneca how and when they're going to get a second dose of the vaccine?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, I would just indicate to the member opposite that the vast majority of people aren't due to receive their second dose, if they received a first dose of AstraZeneca, until June, so there is time for us to receive the information that we need to receive from Health Canada and from NACI with respect to the continued safety of AstraZeneca.

The health and well-being of the people of Ontario is our foremost priority. We have them already in the system. We know when their second doses are coming up. When it has been determined what the second dose should be, if it's not AstraZeneca—because we are awaiting results of the NACI determination of what's gone on in the UK—people will be informed.

We have a system. We already have four million people who are booked for their second doses. We've already given 50% of the people of Ontario over 18 their vaccines. Clearly, the system is working.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Stan Cho: My question is going to be back to the Associate Minister of Transportation, because we can't ignore the great people of Scarborough. I see from the members opposite that we have two members representing Scarborough, and I think they'll agree with me when I say that the people of Scarborough have been way too long underserved when it comes to their transit needs—for far too long. So, I'm sure they join me in celebrating yesterday's announcement, because it was a really big deal. It announced funding for three stops along the subway expansion in Scarborough. This is something that the people of Scarborough have waited too long for.

My question to the associate minister: How will these three stops address the community's transit needs and help improve the quality of life for the people in Scarborough?

Hon. Kinga Surma: It's no secret that the three-stop Scarborough subway extension was something that the

government's MPPs have been fighting for, which includes the Honourable Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, the MPP for Scarborough Centre, the MPP for Scarborough–Agincourt and, last but certainly not least, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, the MPP for Scarborough–Rouge Park.

The plan will bring the TTC's Line 2 subway service nearly eight kilometres farther into Scarborough, extending from Kennedy Station to Sheppard Avenue and McCowan Road. This extension will provide greater connectivity to GO Transit and the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. Our projections show 105,000 daily boardings; 38,000 more people and 34,000 more jobs will be within walking distance to transit. Thanks to the Premier, the people of Scarborough will finally get the transit they deserve and that they have been waiting for.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you to the associate minister for that answer.

I have now asked about the east part of our city, the west part of our city and a relief line for downtown, but we can't ignore the northern part of our city and beyond. Right now, the subway—

Interjection.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you.

Our subways end at Finch Station. I mean, Finch? That's not as far north as our city extends, and certainly we need to make sure that we expand subway service beyond Finch. Looking north to the people of York region, this is going to greatly benefit the people of York region, who have been waiting for a subway expansion for too long. I'm wondering if the associate minister can tell us about this line and how it will address the much-needed transit needs in the region and finally get these subways built in the city of Toronto and beyond.

Hon. Kinga Surma: As I mentioned in my earlier responses, a priority for the government is not only to invest in public transit infrastructure but also to ensure regional connectivity, building a regional transit system.

The Yonge North extension will seamlessly connect the people of York region with the city of Toronto. This project will extend the TTC's Line 1 service north from Finch Station to Vaughan, to Markham and to Richmond Hill, with up to four stations along an eight-kilometre extension. Riders won't have to transfer. The trip will be easy and convenient. For example, travel times from the Yonge Street and Langstaff Road area to downtown Toronto will be reduced by as much as 22 minutes.

But the point is, Mr. Speaker, that none of this would be possible without the Premier championing public transit expansion right here in the GTA, and for that we say thank you.

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COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Toronto Star reported on internationally trained physicians who are forced to sit on the sidelines

and watch as this pandemic unfolds. "People are dying," said Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan, "and our government is failing to use the tools at hand."

I've spoken to Dr. Bhuiyan and many other qualified physicians who are asking why the province chose to spend resources on flying in doctors from other provinces when we have untapped resources here at home.

Will the government call on the thousands of qualified, ready-to-practise, internationally trained physicians who are here in Ontario and desperate to help relieve the pressure of this punishing third wave?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are very grateful for the people who have come in from other jurisdictions to help us, but we also recognize that we have very many talented health professionals in Ontario as well. We have asked some of the people who have been trained in other jurisdictions, who are now living in Ontario, to help out. They have applied through the portal and they have been matched with hospitals, long-term-care homes and other locations. We're grateful for their efforts, and we are utilizing their talents as well.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, that portal was an insult to a lot of these physicians.

Because of this government's inaction, what we're hearing from the hospitals is that patients will be left waiting three and a half years for surgeries as a result of COVID triaging, yet there are over 13,000 internationally trained physicians here in Ontario, 3,500 of whom have already taken all of their qualifying exams and have been working in our health care systems in various capacities and were left out of this province's pandemic health care strategy.

Speaker, they want to help. Dr. Puja is an ENT specialist and surgeon from India who spent years working free and unpaid jobs simply to help people and gain experience. In a crisis like this, it makes no sense to leave talented and eager people on the sidelines.

So, again, my question is, why won't this government let Dr. Puja and doctors alike relieve and revive our health care system as we navigate this punishing third wave?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'm sure the member will be aware that it's the College of Physicians and Surgeons that makes that determination as to whether someone will be able to practise in their specialty or as a family doctor in Ontario. That is up to the physician to make arrangements to write the exams and whatever needs to be done to be approved by the college to practise in their desired area.

However, the internationally trained doctors and others are of great help in our hospitals right now. We have matched them, as close as possible, to the work that they wish to do through the portal. They are performing incredible work on the front lines, working with patients with COVID and other issues as we fight this third wave. But their talents are appreciated. They are working in the system, and they will continue to do so. We're very grateful for their work.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. With children and parents having been stuck at home for the better part of a year, parents are concerned about the growing learning gaps for children. Women's careers and earning potential are also developing gaps as well.

Parents are wondering about what their children can do this summer. What are the plans for summer programs? How is the government going to address support to these learning gaps? If summer is cancelled, what does this mean for September?

Speaker, children, parents and women are looking for some leadership from this government. The federal government and the Ontario Liberals put forward an option of hope with a \$10-a-day daycare plan and programs for before and after school. Will this government put aside its partisan politics and work with us on providing hope to Ontario families?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: As usual, it's a very multi-faceted question from the member opposite. The member, of course, will understand that we are doing everything we can, by all the public health measures we have put in place, to ensure that Ontario can get back to normal as soon as possible. That has been the goal of the measures that we have brought in place, really, since the beginning but surely during this third wave. The member will obviously recognize the fact that we have also flooded vaccines into high-risk areas; 50% of our vaccines are going into some of these high-risk areas and essential workplaces.

The goal of the government is to get things back to normal as soon as possible for all Ontarians, Mr. Speaker, and that includes for our students. The Minister of Education brought forward, I think, through this past year, a nationwide-leading program to make sure that our schools are safe for our children. I know the Minister of Finance has been working to ensure that women who have been impacted by the pandemic more so than others have a better place in our economy—

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the Premier: We know that the COVID hot spot communities are still raging with test positivity. In the Morningside postal code in Scarborough, the test positivity per 100,000 is well over 1,200. Dr. Williams, Ontario's chief medical officer, said that in order for this province to reopen, the test positivity has to be well below 1,000 per 100,000 residents. In our hot spot communities, we are nowhere near achieving that.

My question to this government is, what is your plan to extend the 50% vaccine allocation to COVID hot spot communities like the Morningside community in Scarborough, so that we can get people vaccinated as quickly as possible and look forward to all Ontarians re-opening from the lockdown?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: The member will be aware that we have dedicated 50% of incoming vaccines for the

weeks of May 3 and May 10 to get the numbers down in the hot spot areas. I can tell the member that this is working, that we are seeing a difference, that the numbers that are being delivered are helping to turn around the numbers that we're seeing in the hot spot areas. We're starting to see the numbers come down in terms of overall cases and we're starting to see the numbers come down in intensive care, so it's clear that the plan is working, that this two weeks of intense saturation within the ridings with the hot spot areas is actually working. There will be information that will be available very shortly with more specific information on that.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier. People from my community are finding housing unaffordable. When they have to rent, residents are finding the market overpriced and cruel. Ashley Callaghan is a single mother of four recently evicted by an investor that does not reside in St. Catharines. Ashley almost ended up on the streets with her children when she was unable to find a rental place, and then she found one at the last minute. Ashley is an ODSP recipient and so almost all of her money now goes to rent. At \$2,000 a month, her new rent is double what she had to pay before. That is what the affordability deficit looks like in Niagara. It is rent or food, Speaker.

Premier, what are you going to do today to address a wildly outdated provincial assistance program and a housing market that leaves residents with nowhere to turn?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's a very good question from the member opposite, especially given the fact that this government has been working on affordability, really, since day one. I know the member would appreciate all of the things that we have done to make it more affordable to live in the province of Ontario. We understand how important it is for people to have either their first home or a place to rent. That is why yesterday's announcement and what the Premier has been working on so hard with respect to transit and transportation is so important, because it's not just about transit and transportation; it's about, as the associate minister talked about, transit-oriented communities.

I'm sure the members opposite would agree with me that when you have transit-oriented communities, when you build homes where people can get around and move around, it will make a huge difference for the people of the province of Ontario. Whether it's transit-oriented communities that are coming through this massive investment, whether it's the expansion of GO train services—two-way, all-day GO train services—in different parts of the province where it has never been before, including in the member's own area, there is a lot of work being done, more to do. I hope that the member will support us on making life more affordable.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: When you're living on ODSP, you cannot even afford transit, let alone put food on the table. Last week, the local paper reported skyrocketing food applications in Niagara. That same week, our social sector in Niagara released a joint statement that they need help from upper levels of government. This is the canary in the coal mine. Creating an affordable housing market is one solution; so is increasing what social assistance recipients benefit from, especially when it comes to paying rent or buying a home in Niagara. As it is becoming increasingly more difficult, families like Ashley's who are recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program are receiving below-poverty support from this province and this government.

Will the Premier commit to a long-overdue review of Ontario Works and review the Ontario Disability Support Program, to ensure that families like Ashley's will not be pushed into a housing market where they cannot afford to put food on the table for their children?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. Like yourself, I have heard housing concerns across the province. We know programs like Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program are so critical to helping those who have lost their job or those who are unable to work, but the system itself is facing challenges that limit our ability to help these people get back on their feet. The COVID pandemic has exacerbated those challenges.

Working alongside our municipal partners, we have developed a shared vision for social assistance. We are moving ahead to improve services. Along with the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, we are improving access to employment and training services, and helping to connect those people with meaningful work in their communities. We are also making it easier to access services with new digital tools and modern systems. These changes will transform the system to provide better supports for our most vulnerable people and allow front-line service providers to focus on supporting those people.

NURSES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good morning. I want to thank nurses on International Nurses Day and just say it has never been more clear how essential nurses are to caring for our loved ones. To use the Premier's term, nurses are the champions of the pandemic, health care heroes.

But the Premier has capped their wages at 1%. These heroes deserve more than kind words. They deserve a real pay increase, not a below-inflation wage cut. Will the Premier repeal Bill 124 and give our health care heroes the pay raise they deserve?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Willowdale to reply.

Mr. Stan Cho: Our government absolutely supports our critical front-line workers, and that includes our nurses. I want to wish them all a very happy nurse week.

We will celebrate the vital services that they provide every single day to protect the health and safety of Ontarians.

Ontario's public sector employees, under Bill 124, will still be able to receive salary increases for merit, seniority, performance and increased qualifications, as they do currently. It's important to note that since its introduction, collective agreements covering over 340,000 unionized public sector employees have been settled in compliance with this act. This represents over 40% of unionized employees in the broader public sector.

Our government will continue to protect the people of Ontario, the finances of Ontario and a sustainable public sector in Ontario, not just for today but for many generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

DEFERRED VOTES

TENANT PROTECTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next we have a deferred vote on private member's notice of motion number 157, as moved by Ms. Andrew. The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I'll ask the Clerks to please prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1205.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on private members' notice of motion number 157 has taken place.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 19; the nays are 32.

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

Motion negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1500.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to proclaim Tamil Genocide Education Week / Loi proclamant la Semaine de sensibilisation au génocide des Tamouls.

An Act to proclaim Lupus Awareness Day / Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation au lupus.

An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act / Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

An Act to proclaim Recovery Month / Loi proclamant le Mois du rétablissement.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. John Fraser: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Hawke-Lea Holdings Ltd.
Bill Pr43, An Act to revive 2271767 Ontario Inc.
Bill Pr46, An Act to revive Shuang Ying Company Ltd.
Bill Pr49, An Act to revive Woodex Inc.

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

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY MEMORIALS FOR FALLEN
POLICE OFFICERS AMENDMENT ACT
(IN MEMORY OF OFFICERS IMPACTED
BY TRAUMATIC EVENTS), 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES CONSTRUCTIONS SITUÉES
SUR LA VOIE PUBLIQUE ET NOMMÉES
À LA MÉMOIRE DES AGENTS DE POLICE
DÉCÉDÉS (À LA MÉMOIRE DES AGENTS
TOUCHÉS PAR DES ÉVÉNEMENTS
TRAUMATISANTS)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 292, An Act to amend the Highway Memorials for Fallen Police Officers Act, 2002 in respect of police officers who have taken their own lives as a consequence of being in the line of duty / Projet de loi 292, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur les constructions situées sur la voie publique et nommées à la mémoire des agents de police décédés en ce qui concerne les agents de police qui ont mis fin à leurs jours en raison de leur travail.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Nickel Belt care to explain her bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: First, I would like to thank Amanda Robichaud, who brought this idea forward in memory of her brother, Constable Christopher Labreche.

The bill re-enacts section 1 of the Highway Memorials for Fallen Police Officers Act to provide that the Legislative Assembly may, by resolution, name bridges and other structures on the King's Highway in memory of police officers who have taken their own lives as a consequence of being in the line of duty.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Motions? Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Sorry, I actually have a point of order more than a motion.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to notify the House that pursuant to standing order 9(f), no business will be called during orders of the day tomorrow morning.

Also, since I'm on my feet, I notify the House that there will be no night sitting this evening.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting notice for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I thank the government House leader for that information.

The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice respecting notice for private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that notice for ballot item number 87, standing in the name of Ms. Singh, Brampton Centre; ballot item number 97, standing in the name of Ms. Shaw; ballot item number 92, standing in the name of Mr. Sabawy; and ballot item 94, standing in the name of Madame Simard, be waived for the order of precedence drawn on November 4, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that notice for ballot item number 87, standing in the name of Ms. Singh, Brampton Centre—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I have a petition entitled "Fix the Truck Insurance Mess.

"Whereas the trucking industry is a key component of Ontario's supply chain;

"Whereas recent data estimates that Canada's 300,000 truck drivers move about" \$550 "billion in goods annually;

"Whereas" a truck "driver shortage in the industry is expected to increase from 22,000 to 34,000 by 2024;

“Whereas truck drivers have gone above and beyond to sustain the province’s supply chain in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic;

“Whereas owner-operators throughout Ontario face arbitrary rules and increasing costs” and insurance for “their commercial vehicles; and

“Whereas current insurance norms, policies and rates put many of these small businesses on the verge of closure, and hundreds of jobs at risk;

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

“—to call on the Ford government and the Minister of Finance to help small and medium-sized businesses in the trucking sector;

“—to put an end to arbitrary regulatory policies and rules, predatory premium rates, and skyrocketing training costs;

“—to act diligently to address the systemic truck driver shortage in Ontario.”

I support this petition. I will sign it and send it to the Clerks’ table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SKILLED TRADES ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 OUVRANT DES PERSPECTIVES DANS LES MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 12, 2021, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I have lots of questions about this bill, and I’m happy to ask a question of the honourable member.

My concern is with the government’s approach when it comes to ratios. We had this discussion during the conception and evolution of the College of Trades. The opposition at the time, the PC Party, were adamant about a 1-to-1 ratio. In a lot of trades, that just doesn’t make sense, and it also isn’t safe, especially in the electrical trade.

I just want to ask the member a question: Would they feel safer working with two experienced journeypeople and one apprentice, or two apprentices and one journey-person on a really important, sensitive electrical job, let’s say?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay to reply.

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: I want to thank my colleague from Essex.

My son is on an apprenticeship for electrical at a paper mill, so the question is very easy. Of course, 2 to 1—because it would definitely put my mind at ease when it comes to his security.

1510

The trades are great jobs, but they are also dangerous jobs if you don’t know what you’re doing. This is why we need people with skills—certified—who will pass on their knowledge, show what is the danger, what can be done, what cannot be done, lockout procedures, and the list goes on.

Yes, they get training. Again, if you’re in a union environment, I can tell you, your brothers and sisters do take care of you a lot more, but if you’re not and the boss says, “You go do that job”—all of a sudden, “If you don’t want to work here, that’s fine. Leave.” But in a union environment—huge change; he has protection.

So if you ask me, 2 to 1—absolutely, because you can save lives that way, and you can protect apprentices and make sure they learn their trade adequately and safely.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to thank the member for this presentation.

This morning and in earlier discussions here in the Legislative Assembly, he noted that the College of Trades needs to be fixed—and at its core, in this legislation, it does exactly that. So will he be supporting this legislation? It addresses, with all the new system features, exactly what he has been requesting.

M. Guy Bourgoin: Merci au député de Whitby. Écoute, je suis certain—je supporte mes paroles—qu’il y avait des problèmes avec le College of Trades. Il n’y a aucun doute là. Je pense que tous les partis le reconnaissent.

Mais le député me demande si je vais supporter la motion. J’ai une responsabilité, j’ai été élu pour—c’est comme quand j’étais en négociation. L’employeur me donnait le premier document. On ne disait pas oui sur toutes les propositions; on prenait le temps d’avoir des discussions, comme on le fait comme c’est là. On prenait le temps d’étudier puis d’entendre les deux côtés de la médaille.

On est dans le processus d’étudier le projet de loi. On vient d’avoir ce projet de loi-là. Ils ont eu plus de deux ans à déposer ce projet de loi, à travailler, consulter. Nous, on est dans le processus d’évaluer, d’avoir ces discussions avec vous, pour faire certain qu’on donne notre « due diligence » puis faire certain qu’on protège les apprentis. Il y a beaucoup d’affaires dans votre projet de loi qui ne vont pas fort, qui ne vont pas loin, là, puis qu’on sait sont très ambiguës.

Avec votre gouvernement, on est habitué à des pilules empoisonnées, ce qui fait qu’on se protège et on veut faire certain qu’on fait du bon travail.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member, my colleague. I listened intently to his speech this morning about skilled trades and all of his experience, and his son—congratulations to him, as well.

My daughter teaches and certifies many different individuals within the skilled trades. She makes sure that the safety of the individuals within the trades is there.

You mentioned, within your dialogue this morning, supporting employees and investing within the skilled trades and making sure that the individuals learn at a young age. Do you think that maybe this government should also pay attention to when we're bringing it into the schools—and if we do, how they can invest in that? How can they invest with the skilled trades at an early age?

Also, can you elaborate on what supports employers would be looking for?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you to my colleague.

It's important that we surround students—it's important that we promote early. We need to start at primary, at secondary. We need to bring back shops. We can promote all we want, but they need to feel, they need to see, they need to be able to use their hands so that they—just the example of my son: He did two co-ops, but when he went through the co-op for electricians, that's when they hooked him. That's when he decided—“Dad, that's what I want to do in my life.” Shops used to do that. The Harris government removed that. We need to bring it back. We need to do that and make sure students are exposed to the trades.

The first one is to promote trades, but we also need to make sure employers have the finances so that when we have collective agreements with good trade apprenticeship programs—I've negotiated lots of trade apprenticeship programs, but employers would not move towards them because they couldn't afford them, because trades are expensive. It's expensive to develop a tradesman. Why? Simple: Because sometimes people go into the trades, and all of a sudden, they find out that this is not easy, so they decide to take a different path. But the employer says to the union—they used to tell me, “Guy, we invested two years in this person, and yet we lost these two years.”

That's why they went to certified tradesmen. We can put in all the structure, but if we don't fix that problem, they will go to certified again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I want to say that, over the pandemic, we added another \$614.3 million, through 2021-22.

I also appreciate all the conversations we've had in here, because there are so many of us who recognize that the skilled trades haven't been at the table for 15 years. All of us have kids or grandkids we've talked about today who are all feeling that we needed to make a massive change. It was cumbersome. You couldn't navigate it.

Under the proposed legislation, Skilled Trades Ontario would allow apprentices and employees to access registration, write exams, obtain certificates and trade equivalency assessments in one place, offered digitally.

Do you not agree, along with the many other things, with a one-stop shop and that it's time to get into the 21st century for digital?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci pour la question. Ce n'est pas juste une question de « one-stop shop ». Je pense que,

dans le projet de loi, il y a bien des choses qui nous font peur—ou qu'il y a des « concernes ». Je devrais dire plus le terme des « concernes ».

Quand on parle de standards, quand on parle de protections ou d'appointements—juste d'appointements : il va y avoir 11 postes sur le conseil d'administration. Puis on sait que le ministère va les appointer. Je m'excuse, je doute un peu de l'appointement, parce que vous n'avez pas un trop bon record quand ça vient aux appointements, avec les appointements controversés que vous avez mis. On est obligé de questionner ces choses-là.

Puis je peux vous dire, si vous êtes pour appointer du monde dans ce conseil d'administration, prenez des métiers qualifiés, certifiés. Prenez le monde qui savent de quoi ils parlent, pour faire certain qu'on protège les hommes de métier, puis qu'on fasse sûr que les intérêts des hommes de métier soient protégés.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have time for one more quick question and response.

Miss Monique Taylor: Bill 288 does not name construction trades in the compulsory or non-compulsory trades, and there is a lot of overlapping of the compulsory and non-compulsory certifications.

With the government's track record, as we've definitely heard, do you see a concern about gutting the trades and going back to skill sets?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci à la députée pour la question. C'est sûr que j'ai des « concernes ». On n'a rien qu'à regarder le langage dans le projet de loi : des mots comme—words like “may,” not words like “will.” I think my colleague from Niagara Falls said it best: This is wishy-washy language.

When I used to negotiate, I used to tell the employers, “Tu me donnes un cheval mort”—you gave me a dead horse. But what my colleague from Sudbury says is, “You gave me a plastic carrot”—tu me donnes une carotte en plastique. Monsieur le Président, du plastique, ça ne se mange pas. C'est du langage de même qui fait peur, ou qu'il y a des craintes.

Oui, c'est certain qu'on est concernés. Puis, on questionne le gouvernement quand ça vient à des points comme ça, parce que la transparence n'est pas là, le langage n'est pas là. Quand tu mets du langage comme “may”—you should be putting “will.” It's a lot more stronger and will make a huge difference in the bill. Sur ce, madame, je pense que j'ai répondu à ta question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 288, Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act.

The first thing that I'm going to address, which my colleague from Essex raised, is the ratios. That's of great concern. We have to ensure that apprentices are getting complete training, that they are having complete access to as much support as possible from our tradespeople. We have to ensure that there is proper health and safety taken into consideration.

1520

Not long ago, there was a story of a young man who was left to work on his own while the tradesperson he was

with was off doing the work he needed to do, and that young man fell and died because he didn't have the support he needed.

We need to ensure that we have not only enough tradespeople with these apprentices, who are all sharing their experiences—because I can tell you, my dad immigrated to Canada during the Second World War and got into construction. He could do many, many things—eventually, he settled on drywall—but that doesn't mean that he should have been doing them or that it was safe for him to do them. Over the years, he developed a real skill set—so it wasn't just about the learning in school; it was about learning from doing the job.

So the ratios are concerning, when you're looking at all the different experiences that tradespeople bring to the table, that are there to share with the apprentices. That's something that's very concerning.

The other thing that's concerning is, this government tabled this bill in the late afternoon on Thursday, and we had to speak to it—one of my colleagues had to speak to it for an hour on Monday—when the government knew that it was not only the weekend, but it was Mother's Day weekend, and it would be difficult for us to get a hold of some of the folks we need to talk to.

But I have spoken to some of my constituents about it, and they have some concerns. Whether this government wants to acknowledge that or not, they have concerns about some of the things that are in this bill; for instance, this trade board that this government is talking about. There is no clear language around who will be appointed to this board. It is completely up to the government to appoint the individuals to the board. The term limit, or lack of, for the chair and others on the board is concerning. There is nothing in the legislation that specifically states that there will be skilled tradespeople on that board. There's nothing in there that states that there will be a representative of apprentices on that board.

I was in here on Monday, and the government side, some of them—I have to say, I believe it was largely women on that side, not men, especially the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, who spoke about the importance of engaging women and young girls and young women to get into the trades. Yet there is nothing in this bill specifically around women and girls. In fact—and I did it; I encourage anybody else to do it—if you get on the legislative website and you bring up a bill, you can search for certain words in a bill, and it will tell you exactly how many times it is mentioned in a bill and highlight it for you. Not once were the words “woman,” “women,” “girls,” “she,” “her” mentioned. So while some of them spent a great deal of time on Monday talking about the importance of women in the trades, there is nothing in here specifically talking about women in the trades.

And if I can take that a step further, because it is relevant—so before anybody on the other side, if they're listening, gets up and says it's not relevant to the bill, this is incredibly relevant to the bill, and you would know if you were a woman—if you look at the policy directions this government has gone in in the nearly three years they

have been government, there have been constant barriers put in place for women to enter the workforce at all, let alone the trades.

We are in a she-cession right now. And do you know who it is who drops the tools to stay home to look after the kids? It's the women. Do you know who it is who drops the tools and stays home with the kids because they can't find affordable, accessible child care? It's largely women.

So I do find it disturbing that there is not a single mention, although the government wants to say this is largely about getting women interested in the trades—and on the surface, that's fantastic. I applaud efforts to get women into the trades. But there's nothing in this bill to actually address that. There's nothing in this bill that says someone on that 11-person board will be a woman in the skilled trades.

I know this government says, “Well, we're working it out. Just trust us.” Oh, Speaker, I'm not sure that there are many Ontarians left who just trust them. You just have to look at long-term care. You just have to look at the Tarion board.

I know the government side doesn't like it when we bring up the Tarion board, but again, it's relevant, because that is a board they appoint people to, and it's largely made up of developers. You get one homeowner on that board.

So of course people are going to question their intention when it comes to 11 people on this board—and it's up to the minister to appoint them. We want to know that they have the appropriate credentials. We want to know they have experience. We want to know the tradespeople are represented, and that it's more to the side of the tradespeople than anybody else—that there's that fair representation.

Speaker, this morning, I mentioned—and the member for Essex will be very familiar with the individual I mentioned this morning. I believe wholeheartedly that she is worth mentioning again, when we are talking about the trades, but especially women in the trades. My colleague from Beaches–East York was talking about racialized workers and women. This morning, I mentioned Shelley Harding-Smith. Shelley Harding-Smith was born and raised in Windsor. She was a second-generation master electrician. Her father was a master electrician who started a business. Shelley ended up going to work for her dad and then eventually took over that business. She was Canada's first Black female master electrician. She became a master electrician in 1978, and that was quite the feat for any woman at that time, let alone a racialized woman. Shelley passed away in October 2019. She had her own company, but she also worked at Chrysler as an electrician there. Shelley gained that love of the trade from her father. She then passed that on to her son, who is also a master electrician, and I believe he is carrying on the family business.

I want to give another mention to a very good friend of mine who is a trailblazer. When you want to talk about promoting women in the trades, this is the woman you should be talking to. Her name is Terry Weymouth. She is an electrician. She's with Unifor, and she works with the

trades and promotion of the trades within Unifor. I highly recommend that this government reach out to Terry when you are talking about promoting women in the trades. She will be quite honest about the barriers that women face when it comes to getting any job, let alone in the trades.

The biggest concern that I have heard from people is that they haven't had enough time to really digest and dissect this legislation. These are tradespeople I'm talking to. The government can stand up and say that they've got all these people supporting it, and that's fantastic, but the tradespeople I'm talking to haven't had time to actually read and digest this legislation, and they've raised concerns. They've raised concerns around the ratio, and they've raised concerns around the makeup of the board.

Again, the government side, and the minister specifically, Minister McNaughton, can say, "Just trust us on this one." I've already addressed the issue of trust. But the reality is, some day there will be a new Minister of Labour. It could be with a new political party. And what's in this bill leaves it open—through regulation, I should say. Regulation is very different than legislation. Any government can come along at any time—this government, six, seven months down the road, can change a regulation if they want to, under something they just brought under this bill.

Speaker, we need to tighten the language in this legislation to ensure that those tradespeople are on that board, that there is equitable representation from women within skilled trades, that it can't be political appointments, and that we have safe ratios for apprentices.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the member for Windsor West?

1530

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the member from Windsor West for her 10 minutes. I enjoyed listening to her.

I've sat through most of this debate for the last couple of days and last week, and it's very interesting to find out people's backgrounds and who has been exposed to the trades through parents—or themselves, before they got here.

All I can say about the 11-member board—and I go back again: Jerry Dias from Unifor; Mr. Mancinelli from LIUNA, the international vice-president; Patrick Dillon, no shrinking violet, as we all know here; James St. John, the financial secretary for the carpenters, I think; James Barry, with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; and many others have expressed support for this bill. If they have concerns—we've still got to work out the details—I'm sure they're going to speak up, because they all represent different trades that have ratios from all the different backgrounds.

Our minister of women's issues comes from that background herself. She's going to have a lot of impact on this bill.

Would you not agree that those people from the industry, the different union locals, who have spoken up in support, have some degree of comfort with this bill?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I would just like to ask the member for Sarnia—Lambton: How many women were on that list?

In the three days that this has been debated, not once have I heard a woman's name mentioned.

Speaker, what I will say is, those are all incredible leaders within their unions; absolutely, nobody is arguing that. But I think he missed my point.

I'm hearing from members of those unions, as they're beginning to digest this, and they are raising concerns. I think that they deserve to get answers from this government. I'm hearing from people who are looking to get into the trades.

I have a son who wants to be an electrician. I thought he might want to be a plumber, and then he realized that maybe being a plumber was a little messier than being an electrician, and there was stuff he didn't want to get elbow deep in—so now I'm trying to talk my daughter into it, or being a carpenter. I'm trying to stack the deck in my house so I can get free home repairs from my kids.

The reality is, I'm getting these questions, and so I think it's valid that I bring them forward. I think that's what my constituents want me to do. And for the government to stand up every time one of us asks a question and say that we shouldn't be questioning this because so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so support it—the point is, you haven't given us time to have those conversations with those people. That's what we're saying. That's why we're here debating it today and raising the concerns of our constituents.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to my colleague from Windsor West. She effectively highlighted a lot of our concerns.

Specifically, back to the 1-to-1 ratio that the government seems bent on pursuing across the board for all trades across the province: One of the unintended consequences is that—a lot of the union halls that support and train apprentices act as hiring halls. So you go on a list, and if a journeyperson is competing against an apprentice at a 1-to-1 ratio, so one journeyperson goes out of the hall, a journeyperson apprentice—that means that journeyperson is going to take twice as long to achieve their pensionable hours, on a yearly basis. It's going to take them longer to retire.

In a career like construction, you get tired. You get beat up. It hurts. It's a painful job, over a 30-year career.

My question to my colleague from Windsor West: Do you think this government is considering any effects on journeypersons who are looking towards retirement and not going to be able to achieve those hours because they're competing against low-wage apprentices for the same jobs?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The answer to your question is no; it's just that simple.

It has been raised several times in this House—the fact that we need to get more people into the trades because we have tradespeople who are retiring, but it's taking longer for them to get there. And it's making it more difficult for

those coming into the trades to be able to get their hours in and to have those jobs. I appreciate the member for Essex raising that, because that is another real concern.

Instead of using somebody who has the hands-on experience, has the hours on the job, what you're going to find is them leaning towards someone who doesn't have the same amount of experience, who is newer to the job, and by extension, the concern is, then, health and safety.

We don't want to be seeing anyone in this province die on the job. Nobody should have to worry about going to work and dying or getting injured on the job.

That is really one of the key concerns I'm hearing from my constituents who are either in the trades or looking to get into the trades.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: I think this has actually been one of the best debates we've had here, I would say, probably in the last little while. It has been pretty cordial, and a lot of good points have been raised.

I know there have been a few other members who mentioned this, but getting to know a little bit more of the backstory of some of the people here in the Legislature has been, for me, kind of exciting, because we don't often, especially over the last little while, get the opportunities to have some of those chats that we would normally have had before the pandemic.

One thing that I didn't hear the member from Windsor West talk about during her time was the new one-window approach. When you're looking at applications, when you're looking at training schedules, where you can pay your fees, different things like that, moving that from that really, really decentralized approach into a one-window—how do you think that's going to impact people who want to get into the skilled trades and also simplify things for the people who are already there?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the question from the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

What he's talking about is centralizing things. They have talked about digitizing things, which I think is interesting, because what we're seeing is a government that's moving towards online learning for students from kindergarten right through to 12. Where I'm going with that is, it was that member's father who pulled the trades out of our schools.

What we need to be doing is looking at a fulsome approach. If you want to get people interested, to get to a system that's easier to navigate, you have to start that in schools. We have to have those shop programs back in our schools, otherwise you're not going to get the young people or the students interested.

The Minister of Labour talked about, "We want to introduce them to the trades in kindergarten." I'd be interested to know what that looks like, because many of them are still learning how to count or say their ABCs. They don't even know how to tie their shoelaces. It would be interesting to see how that works. But part of that is having those programs within the schools to get them interested in getting into the trades.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It really has been a good debate this week, talking about Bill 288.

We know the challenges that were within OCOT. We know we need a better pathway into the skilled trades, particularly when it comes to our youth.

I've heard all of the accolades that came from the leaders in the trades industry, but I also heard from the trades industry, and they have five major concerns. They are concerned about the trade jurisdictional disputes. Will they be handled by the OLRB? They're worried about the compulsory and non-compulsory aspects. They're worried about the possibility of future skill-setting. They're worried about overlap. There are still many concerns that need to be dealt with.

Has the member heard from her constituents these same concerns that the minister needs to address?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the question from the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Yes, there are concerns around the OLRB decision-making process, around lawyers making decisions rather than tradespeople from divisional boards.

There are concerns, as I've said before, about the makeup of the trades board. Who is going to be on that trades board, and why are there not term limits on the people who are on that board?

Again, as we've raised several times, there are concerns around ratios.

There are concerns with what the compliance and enforcement framework would look like underneath the ministry, because it's very vague and there are no details.

I know that on Monday, this government—again, tabled it Thursday afternoon, debating it Monday—kept trying to get to us say we're going to support or not support the bill, but the reality is, as we're having conversations with people, there are very real concerns coming forward, which is why it's so important for us to be having this debate. It's important for the government to hear what the people in the province are saying.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. McNaughton has moved second reading of Bill 288, An Act to enact the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Would you like to refer that to a committee, government House leader?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Speaker, for your wise advice. I would like to send it to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The government House leader is referring the bill to the committee on finance and economic affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

Orders of the day? I recognize again the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The government House leader is seeking agreement to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND LONG-TERM CARE AMENDMENT
ACT (ADVANCED GLUCOSE
MONITORING DEVICES), 2021
LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE
(APPAREILS ET ACCESSOIRES
AVANCÉS DE SURVEILLANCE
DE LA GLYCÉMIE)

Mr. Natyshak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 272, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act with respect to the inclusion of advanced glucose monitoring devices in the Assistive Devices Program / Projet de loi 272, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne l'inclusion des appareils et accessoires avancés de surveillance de la glycémie dans le Programme d'appareils et accessoires fonctionnels.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Natyshak has moved second reading of Bill 272. Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. At the end of your opening remarks, debate will proceed with members of the various parties speaking in rotation.

Therefore, let's start with the member from Essex. You can kick this puppy off. Let's go.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Hold on tight. It is my pleasure and my honour, Speaker.

This is a bill that I have thought about from the first day that I stepped foot into this building as an elected official, because of my experience living with a person who was a type 1 diabetic: my dad, Boris Natyshak, who passed away two years ago, in March 2019. So it's a little bit emotional. To be debating what I know helped him and what I know can help so many other type 1 diabetics in the province is really—it's such a huge honour to be able to do that in his memory, in his honour and on behalf of so many other type 1 diabetics who have reached out to me so far, since I tabled this bill just a few short weeks ago.

Speaker, let me start at the top. Type 1 diabetes is essentially a disease that affects the pancreas. It shuts down a person's pancreas. A person can be born with it, it can be genetic, it can be autoimmune. There are environmental factors that could lead to someone becoming a type 1 diabetic, but it's pretty rare, actually. In Ontario, we only

have roughly 90,000 type 1 diabetics. They live constantly with a chain around their necks—the chain of diabetes—where they have to continuously monitor and check their blood glucose levels.

Normal people have a fully functional pancreas that delivers insulin and keeps our blood sugar regulated constantly throughout the day. No matter our level of activity, no matter how much we eat, it works for us. But for diabetics, that is a minute-to-minute challenge, depending on what they do for activity, depending on what they eat. They are constantly concerned about a fluctuating hyper level of blood sugar.

The reason that that is really important to maintain and to monitor is because it affects all of the other vital systems of a person's body. If you aren't able to fully and continuously regulate your blood sugar, other systems fail. We know that type 1 diabetics are more prone to heart disease, to hypertension, to liver failure, kidney failure, glaucoma, eye disease and amputations. The list goes on and on about some of the chronic illnesses that they are vulnerable to due to type 1 diabetes.

Speaker, I will also let you know, and for members of the House, this year—specifically, this month—is the 100th anniversary of the synthesization of insulin, just a couple of blocks away from here. We all know Banting and Best, the co-discoverers of insulin. Right here in Ontario, right down the street, they discovered insulin and launched it to the world, for free. They sold their patent for \$1, just a ceremonial gesture, to make sure that people had access to this life-saving discovery. And it changed the course of the world.

We can be pioneers here today in Ontario. We can continue that legacy as leaders, as champions in Ontario for type 1 diabetics. We've set a lot of standards so far. OHIP does a lot of great work in covering supports for type 1 diabetics, but this bill specifically would help type 1 diabetics access technology called continuous glucose monitors. They're really, really great. They are subdermal patches that go onto an arm or a stomach and they give constant readouts of that person's blood sugar level. So minute to minute, you're getting data to let you know where you're at and where you're trending to as well.

Also, the very cool thing about this is that other people—family members—can tack on to that technology through the power of smartphones. A mother with a young child who is ultimately concerned about her child's welfare can continuously follow where that person's blood sugar is. No more waking up in the middle of the night at 3 in the morning to wonder about your daughter or your son's blood sugar level and if they're going to go into a diabetic coma. This technology has revolutionized the management of type 1 diabetes.

Ultimately, what it has done is, it has provided for fewer people in our hospitals. In the context of COVID, when we are doing everything we can to maintain capacity in our acute care hospital centres, this is a tool that will keep people out of the hospital, not only for acute reasons but for chronic reasons. It's going to keep them healthier longer. Downstream, we're going to save money.

As that technology becomes more and more broad and encompassing—there are many manufacturers—the cost for these technologies is going down. That’s why now is the appropriate time for us as a province to look at advancing this and adopting it through the Assistive Devices Program so that we can cover and help people access that technology. It covers 75% of the cost. It’s going to pay dividends down the road. We know it.

The Canadian diabetes association knows it, and I was honoured to have their support in this bill. They wrote, “The use of advanced glucose monitoring devices gives people living with diabetes a more complete picture of their blood sugar levels and can lead to improved health outcomes. This bill would expand access for people who would medically benefit from this technology and is an important step in the right direction.” That’s from Ashley Bergwerff, the director of provincial government relations for Diabetes Canada.

I’ve had over 4,000 people sign a petition to support this bill in the last two weeks. I’ve had countless people reach out to me on Facebook and on social media.

I was really honoured to be joined just a couple of weeks ago by a very prominent type 1 diabetic, Max Domi. Many would know his dad, Tie Domi, who is a legendary Toronto Maple Leaf. As a family friend of the Domis growing up in Belle River, Ontario, I watched Max grow up and knew that he, at 12 years old, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. He has gone on to be incredibly successful, an incredible ambassador and a wonderful athlete, currently playing with the Columbus Blue Jackets. We can’t wait to cross the border to go and watch him play. But Max will tell you—and in our Zoom call, Max told us all—that there is no way that he could ever have achieved what he has achieved without the adoption of that technology. He remembers the nights when his mom would wake up worried sick about what his blood sugar level was at 3 in the morning.

1550

I was also joined on that call by a young hockey player from Belle River as well: Mason Vieau, 12 years old, plays for the Windsor Junior Spitfires. He was diagnosed at three years old. Mason is another incredible ambassador, and wouldn’t you know it? His favourite player and idol is Max Domi, that type 1 diabetic. He even wears the same jersey number.

I was joined by these two champions, but also have had lots of people reach out to me just on Facebook alone. Heather Knight: “Thanks for doing this. I’ve had type 1 diabetes for 43 years. I am a small business owner with only Trillium for benefits. I cannot afford the latest diabetes technology and can only take advantage of it when Trillium decides to cover it. I’m behind those with employment benefits that cover these expenses.” There are so many people that this would help.

The costs related to the savings that we would achieve in our health care system are enormous escalators. We would definitely be able to save not only money for our health care system—but it’s about quality of life, Speaker. It’s about not having that chain of diabetes around your

neck, constantly worrying about your health and having your family members constantly worry about your health. It’s something that the wonderment of technology has delivered to us in North America and across the world and something that we are primed, as a province, to adopt, certainly through the Assistive Devices Program.

Currently, people who can’t access this technology are left to the old method, where you have to physically prick your finger, drop a droplet of blood on and wait up to a minute for that readout to come. It’s arduous, it’s onerous and it numbs the fingertips. It’s really difficult, it’s cumbersome, and sometimes, people just give up on doing it. I watched my own dad just—he couldn’t do it anymore. It was 60 years of doing this. But once he got that patch and he was able to take that device and simply scan it, he couldn’t wait to tell us. It allowed him many more years with us. It gave him an extra lease on life, later on in his years.

Now, imagine if we can help people who are early in their diagnosis of diabetes manage that disease right from the get-go. That’s the key: to enable them to keep such a constant level of blood sugar that they don’t suffer any of the chronic diseases that are associated with diabetes; they never get liver or kidney failure; their cardiovascular system is maintained because they’re not under the constant bombardment of fluctuation of glucose levels and insulin levels as well, when they’re on injection. It takes a toll on a human body.

But we can do this, Speaker. The cost of these devices has gone down drastically since they were first introduced. This is in a time when we need and we can deliver some hope to people in this province. This is a bill that can do this today. If people outside of this House hear that we’ve taken on the initiative to understand their challenges and to help them out, this can breed hope like you have never seen before.

I’m hearing not so many optimistic things from the government side. I’m not hearing that they’re ready to support this. I hope I’m wrong, because it would definitely be a difficult thing for people to hear that their government isn’t ready to adopt this technology that has been widely adopted, but is still out of reach for so many people. It would be so discouraging to hear that their government isn’t there for them, especially when this province is known as the pioneer. We developed, we synthesized insulin here. We gave it away for free for the world to enjoy and to benefit from.

Ultimately, eventually, I think we need to cure type 1 diabetes here. Islet transplantation: We know that the advent of islet transplantation and stem cell use—we’re getting close. We can be there. We need to be there. We need to eradicate that. But in the absence of that, today, we can get closer, and we can give type 1 diabetics the freedom that they deserve, that the technology allows them to have, and support them to be productive members of society and of their families, to alleviate the stress and anxiety that we know living with type 1 diabetes has, and to deliver some hope not only to type 1 diabetics but to all people in the province of Ontario, that their government has their back.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm very happy to speak to this bill today, and I want to thank the member from Essex for bringing it forward and for sharing his father's story a little bit. I always think it's nice when we're in private members' business, where we can talk a little bit about some of the personal things that we're passionate about; clearly the member from Essex is very passionate about this issue.

I'm going to start this afternoon by making a few short remarks about our Assistive Devices Program, or ADP program. This program provides supports to Ontario's seniors and people with long-term physical disabilities to stay healthy and stay home longer, reducing the strain on our hospitals, as the member pointed out, and our long-term care homes, and contributing to the engagement of seniors and people with disabilities in society and in the workforce. It does this by providing funding assistance for Ontario residents who have long-term physical disabilities requiring assistive devices for at least six months.

The ADP's funding is intended to support clients' access to personalized assistive devices appropriate for that individual's basic needs. This means providing funding toward assistive devices such as wheelchairs and walkers, home oxygen, hearing aids, respiratory equipment, insulin pumps, orthotic devices, limb prosthesis, ostomy supplies—a total of over 8,000 pieces of equipment and supplies for 18 types of devices assisting over 400,000 Ontarians each year. The ADP accomplishes this in partnership with a province-wide network of private-sector businesses, public health care organizations, health care service providers, and health professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and audiologists, and these partnerships ensure that Ontarians have fair and affordable access to a range of devices within their communities.

The program provides funding assistance for some equipment and supplies used by individuals with type 1 and type 2 diabetes. These include the following: insulin pumps and their related supplies for individuals with type 1 diabetes, needles and syringes for seniors with type 1 or type 2 diabetes who take insulin by injection, and blood glucose metres and their related supplies for individuals with type 1 or type 2 diabetes who do not have access to other government assistance programs or workplace or private insurance benefits.

We know that diabetes is a serious challenge for people right across this province. Diabetes Canada estimates that 10% of Ontarians are diagnosed with type 1 or type 2 diabetes, while up to 30% of Ontarians live with some form of diabetes or prediabetes, including often undiagnosed cases.

The risk factors for type 1 diabetes are not well understood, but Diabetes Canada suggests interaction between genetic and environmental factors are likely involved. Type 2 diabetes, in contrast, is caused by a combination of individual, social, environmental and genetic factors. Certain populations seem to be at higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes, and those include people of

African, Arab, Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous, or South Asian descent; those who are older; often those who have low levels of income or education or are physically inactive; and those who are overweight or obese. A 20-year-old in Canada, unfortunately, at this time has a 50% chance of being diagnosed with diabetes in their lifetime.

People living with diabetes must make changes every day in order to manage their condition. They must do things like watching what they eat, monitoring their blood sugar, pricking their fingers and taking insulin injections. I have diabetes in my family as well, so I've certainly experienced some of the difficulties that come with that.

According to Diabetes Canada's 2018 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Diabetes, optimal control of blood glucose levels is fundamental to the management of diabetes and reduces or delays the risk of complications from diabetes. To achieve optimal control, regular testing of blood glucose levels is critical.

1600

Continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors, consisting of the device and the related supplies that go with them, measure glucose levels through a needle inserted under the skin, taking a reading every five minutes. The primary difference is that continuous glucose monitors display the results continuously, while flash glucose monitors only display the results when prompted by the user or the caregiver. But both devices replace the traditional or conventional method—as the member mentioned—of measuring blood glucose levels through a small amount of blood taken through a finger prick and analyzed on a blood glucose meter.

Speaker, Ontario's public funding of assistive devices and drugs is based on health technology reviews that provide independent evidence and recommendations to the Ministry of Health. As a result of a health technology assessment by Health Quality Ontario, which is now part of Ontario Health, the ministry has been funding the FreeStyle Libre flash glucose monitoring system since September 2019 for all Ontario Drug Benefit Program recipients on insulin therapy with a valid prescription from a physician or a nurse practitioner. Ontario, of course, is one of the only provinces in Canada to fund this important technology through our public drug program, along with our neighbours in Quebec.

In addition, at the current time, continuous glucose monitors are publicly funded through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for Ontario residents receiving social assistance through Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program.

And I can confirm that the Ministry of Health has received and is reviewing a report by Health Quality Ontario that evaluates the evidence for funding stand-alone continuous glucose monitors for people with type 1 diabetes and hypoglycemia unawareness.

Program expansion or the introduction of funding for new device categories such as advanced glucose monitoring devices takes into consideration a number of factors, including device safety and durability.

So I want to assure all the members of this House that the ministry continues to get advice from diabetes experts on how the province could potentially fund continuous glucose monitors going forward, based on the report that Health Quality Ontario has prepared, which is being reviewed.

Together, I think we can all continue to work to improve the lives of people living with diabetes in our province.

And I highly recommend Max Domi's book, which I've seen myself and read a little bit of.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really proud of my colleague for bringing this bill forward.

Continuous glucose monitoring is not new technology. It has been used for the last 11 years by people who can afford it. But everybody else continues with the old method that is not as accurate and that is really difficult.

I can tell you that children with type 1 diabetes will have a finger prick before breakfast, before their morning snack, before lunch, before their afternoon snack, before supper, before their evening snack. And if they have a low through the day, they will have another finger prick during the low and test it 15 minutes after the low. So you're talking about little kids with little fingers that need to have those pricks eight, 10, 11 times a day. Their fingers are covered in callouses. They can barely hold a pencil because they have so many. All of this could be gone if they had the continuous glucose monitor for type 1 diabetes available to them. Where they're what we call hypoglycemic unaware, that is—most of the time, it happens at night, but it can happen during the day. Their blood sugar drops so low that they'll go into a coma, and some of them won't wake up the next day. With the continuous glucose monitor, it changes all that. The monitor will wake you up. It will wake up your partner, your parents, your caregiver, so that you'll know your blood sugar is getting too low—a drink of orange juice or whatever you do to bring it back up, and you're done, you're back in bed. But none of this is possible if you cannot afford it, and this is the reality for so many people.

You have to look at, if you make it too hard to manage your diabetes—we are all human beings. After a while, you just give up. After a while, you're tired of pricking your fingers 11 times a day; you do it once in a while, and then your three-month readings are out of the charts, and then you end up having eye problems and develop blindness. Then you end up having circulatory problems and you end up with an amputation, and you end up having all sorts of internal organ problems. All of this can be prevented if your diabetes is managed.

This is what this member wants to do. He wants to help the people who have a hard time managing diabetes, the ones who we know will end up—I'm not wishing harm upon anybody, but the evidence is there. If you don't manage your diabetes, you will end up with all sorts of serious health problems—health problems that our health care system will help you with, for sure; we're not going

to let you die. But it's better to have two feet than just one foot. It is better to be able to see than be blind. It is better for your liver to work than not. All of this is preventable if you manage diabetes, and this is what continuous glucose monitors would do.

I know the price that the different companies—there are two big companies that dominate the market in Ontario. They charge \$100 for the scanner on your arm. A hundred dollars is a lot of money, and I'm okay for the government to negotiate this down, but do this quickly, because there are a lot of people with type 1 diabetes who cannot wait anymore.

Pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm proud to support the member's initiative.

I think it's a good thing that continuous glucose monitoring was supported by the ministry for people on social assistance and for kids. You've got to give credit where credit is due.

But the Assistive Devices Program is glacial. I've worked inside the ministry. It does not respond quickly to the needs of Ontarians. I don't know if it's the way it's designed.

My colleague from Nickel Belt, who just left, was a big advocate for offloading devices—I had not heard about them until sometime in 2016 or 2017—which are devices that prevent amputation. It was relatively inexpensive, but we didn't fund it. We eventually funded it, but it took forever. This can't take forever.

It's not just an issue with people's lifestyle and being able to live, in a sense, an easier life. It's actually about staying healthy and not getting those comorbidities that can happen with poorly managed diabetes. It's really about people with type 1 diabetes who might be hypoglycemic unaware. That has really tragic consequences.

Can you imagine going in and finding your son or daughter dead in bed in the morning? Some people don't sleep at night because that's the thing that's in front of them. Continuous glucose monitoring would let them sleep at night.

My friend Russell Williams, who's with Diabetes Canada—I've known him for a while; I worked with him on palliative care—brought this issue to me a while ago. He introduced me to a father who was always concerned about his son being away at university, with type 1 diabetes, and at risk of being hypoglycemic unaware. Well, this device allowed the dad, who lived miles and miles away, to know that his son was okay in the middle of the night, and that if something went wrong, he could pick up the phone and call in that area for someone to do something.

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I know that the government wants to—I don't believe, on the other side, that anybody over there wouldn't want to solve that problem, or anybody in this place. I don't believe that for a second. I think there's a willingness and an openness to doing this.

The real question is, how quickly can we do it? It can't be like offloading devices, which took forever, arguably. "Glacial" is too kind a word. There's a way to figure these things out and figure out how we drive down the cost, how we figure out payer of first resort, how we make sure that we get it to the people who need it most, but you've got to start on doing that.

I think the member's motion—that's what he's trying to articulate here, that it's important. There has been a step forward, and it's an important step forward, but we need to take more. We can't just sit back. So I would encourage the government to keep doing what they're doing, but faster.

I want to thank the member for bringing this forward.

I appreciate your time, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please.

I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that on the ballot list draw of November 4, 2019, Mr. Phillips assumes ballot item number 90, and on the ballot list draw for May 5, 2021, Mr. Piccini assumes ballot item number 41.

Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to rise to speak to my colleague from Essex's bill, Bill 272, about advanced glucose monitoring devices.

I had the pleasure of knowing Boris. Someday, I'll share a story about the first time I met him. There was some questionable language used, but that was Boris. Boris was a force. He was a tireless advocate for the things that he believed in—and it was always about lifting other people up and supporting other people. I mention that because I noticed that the lights dipped while the member from Essex was talking, and I can't help but think that that was Boris. It was right around the time that the member from Essex said that there were some members from the other side who didn't seem all that supportive of his motion. That's when the lights dimmed. I can't help but think that that was Boris trying to send a message. You don't want to mess with Boris.

My mom has diabetes. My mom, who will be turning 80 years old in just a few short days, has struggled with diabetes her entire life. She was a working parent. She worked in a hospital. I remember numerous times, far too many times, when we would get a call because my mom had gone to lay down in the nurses' lounge because she was tired and not feeling well. My mom struggled with her sugar levels; it was up and down. She would spike. So what would happen is that she would drop, and she'd drink orange juice or something else and shoot her levels way up, and then she'd come back down. I raise that issue because, to this day, at 80 years old, she still struggles with it.

The member from Nickel Belt talked about how people struggle with fitting constant testing into their lives—and then imagine what that's like for a child, especially a young child. It's unmanageable for anybody.

I had a constituent reach out—this was a few months ago, but I've had many, many constituents reach out around this issue over the years, especially since the member from Essex was tabling his bill. I'm going to take the opportunity to read this email from Sylvie McFadden.

"As your constituent, I am writing to you on a matter important to people living with diabetes in our riding, and in our province."

Because Boris dimmed the lights, I have to put my glasses on. I can't read. Thanks, Boris.

"Advanced glucose monitoring devices are life-changing for many people living with diabetes. The flash and continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) devices are helping people who could not otherwise stabilize their blood sugar (glucose) and prevent life-threatening emergencies. But too many people lack insurance coverage so cannot afford the device they urgently need.

"People with type 1, type 2 and gestational disease have a common goal of stabilizing blood sugar to prevent life-threatening emergencies and reduce the risk of developing long-term complications. The standard blood glucose monitoring practice of placing a drop of blood on a test strip that is inserted into a meter remains enough for many people with diabetes; for those who struggle with stabilizing their blood sugar and who are at risk of life-threatening emergencies, flash and CGM devices provide a valuable solution. Whether it's a person who can't feel a dangerous low blood sugar, a child whose parent needs to monitor their blood sugar while they're at school or a woman with diabetes whose insulin needs are rapidly changing during pregnancy, some people need more information than intermittent finger pokes can provide. To best manage their condition and live well, people with diabetes must be able to use the tools that best meet their individual needs."

This is important—because the member from Eglinton—Lawrence had raised Diabetes Canada: "While advanced glucose monitoring devices are covered by many private health insurance plans, coverage is insufficient across the country. Diabetes Canada recommends that provincial and territorial governments publicly fund" them.

I wholeheartedly support the motion before us and hope the government will do the same, pass this motion and get these devices covered immediately.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm rising to support my colleague from Essex on Bill 272—for continuous glucose monitoring devices and flash monitoring devices covered by the Assistive Devices Program.

To the member, I just want to say that you're in my thoughts and prayers with your father—and forever in your memory—and introducing this bill in this House will forever be helping with your pain, and it will guide you through some difficult times.

When I first was elected as a member of provincial Parliament, one of the bigger personal adjustments for me was how large the pool of stakeholder issues is in the province. Moving from a city councillor to a higher office just deepened the pool and enlightened me on issues.

During one of the first weeks I was elected provincially, I had a meeting with a constituent who was requesting about this very same issue that my colleague is proposing a solution for and has brought forward here in this Legislature. The ask was subsidizing this life-saving test and showing what a difference it would make. Why I recall this so vividly is because the person who came to meet me was a mother who was worried about her small child, who had recently been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. She explained that children have difficulty feeling whether their blood sugars are high or low, and this can be a real game-changer and a wonderful technology. It is certainly a tool that can help with gaining control of anyone's diabetes—while also fantastic for families and parents to be able to know what their child's blood sugars are doing. What she was talking about was making this technology affordable for her, but what I heard, as a mother and a grandmother, was a parent who wanted to keep her child safe and to have peace of mind.

Health care is a right. No one should be left behind or left on their own for reasons of health. This is why I stand here to support this legislation. The resident who came to see me that day was not the last to talk to me about the need for coverage of continuous glucose monitoring devices. In fact, it became shocking that the Liberals and now the Ford Conservatives have ignored people with type 1 diabetes for years. How could these people, these mothers, these families, be left on their own for this long? How many deaths have occurred? How many lives could we have saved? These devices can be expensive. Putting them out of reach for many families is inexcusable.

This bill responds to calls from the Canadian Diabetes Association and many constituents over the years who have relayed their struggles with the cost of maintaining their health.

I will leave the research studies and the endorsements from stakeholders and doctors to other members of this chamber. However, I wanted to share another story from a mother, in addition to why these monitoring devices mean less pain, less hassle and more freedom for children and for humans. Devices are important for helping some children and families control their diabetes. This means fewer tears, less frustration and improvement of mental health. Monitoring and caring for blood sugar keeps people with diabetes healthy, at home and out of our emergency rooms.

From one parent to every parent who has to take care of their child with type 1 diabetes: I see you, my colleagues see you, I fully support this measure, and I have your back.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? Further debate? The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to all my colleagues who joined in on the debate today. It was an honour to table this bill. I hope that I presented—and we presented—the case why this needs to happen now. The technology is here. We can't wait any longer. It's tested. It's proven.

In the language of the bill, we were cognizant of the government's need to have an implementation plan, so we gave a one-year runway. The bill would come into force on the one-year anniversary of passage of this bill. I think that's reasonable, given the data that already exists through the mechanisms that already allow people to access continuous glucose monitoring. There are no excuses. We're going to have to do this one way, one day or another. It will save lives. It will save money. It will increase type 1 diabetics' quality of life, their families' quality of life.

There are no negative aspects to this bill. It does everything that we should aspire to do as legislators in this House: to identify a problem, to find a reasonable solution, to adopt the best practices and the best technology available, and to help our constituents. This is what this does. Your heart can sing songs of joy knowing that you passed something that will make a tangible, life-changing difference for so many families in this province. It's rare that we see a bill that has no negatives. It's rare that we see something that we can work on together, collectively, to immediately give hope to people in this province. It's why we're all here. It's an honour to table a bill of that sort. I implore my colleagues across the way to vote and support this bill and deliver that hope to the residents of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Natyshak has moved second reading of Bill 272, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act with respect to the inclusion of advanced glucose monitoring devices in the Assistive Devices Program.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded division being required, the vote on this item of private members' public business will be deferred until the next proceeding of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House now stands adjourned until 10:15 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1623.

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Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
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