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**Official Report
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SP-6

**Standing Committee on
Social Policy**

Working for Workers Act, 2021

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday 18 November 2021

**Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Loi de 2021 visant à oeuvrer
pour les travailleurs

2^e session
42^e législature

Jeudi 18 novembre 2021

Chair: Natalia Kusendova
Clerk: Tanzima Khan

Présidente : Natalia Kusendova
Greffière : Tanzima Khan

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL POLICY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE**

Thursday 18 November 2021

Jeudi 18 novembre 2021

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1 and by video conference.

ACHÈV

ATU CANADA

ONTARIO GREENHOUSE VEGETABLE
GROWERS

WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2021

**LOI DE 2021 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Social Policy will now come to order. We are here to resume public hearings on Bill 27, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters.

As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 6 p.m. today, Thursday, November 18, 2021. Legislative research has been requested to provide committee members with a summary of oral presentations and written submissions as soon as possible following the written submission deadline. The deadline for filing amendments to the bill is 6 p.m. on Friday, November 19, 2021. The Clerk of the Committee has distributed committee documents virtually via Sharepoint.

Do we have any new members joining us since our pre-meeting? I don't see any.

We are also joined by also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, please make all of your comments through the Chair. Are there any questions before we begin?

Seeing none, we will begin with our first group of presenters. As always, each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation for a total of 21 minutes, and the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be questions from members of the committee. The questions will be broken down into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for government members and opposition members respectively, as well as two rounds for the independent member, but I believe he is not with us this morning. Are there any questions at this time?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Seeing none, it is my pleasure to welcome our first group of presenters. We have Tonie Chaltas, chief executive officer; Moya MacKinnon, vice-president, employment and newcomer services; and Karen McNeil, vice-president, language services. Welcome. These are guests from my riding, so I'm very pleased to welcome you this morning. You have seven minutes, and you may begin.

Ms. Tonie Chaltas: Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of the changes proposed in Bill 27 related to the removal of barriers for internationally trained professionals, schedule 3 of the bill. My name is Tonie Chaltas. I am the CEO of Achèv. I'm joined today by my colleagues Moya MacKinnon, who is the vice-president of employment and newcomer services, and Karen McNeil, our vice-president of language services. Both Karen and Moya have over 25 years of experience each in this sector. As the new CEO at Achèv, I will turn to them as experts in their respective areas to answer any questions you may have.

Achèv is one of the largest providers of employment, newcomer, language and youth services with nine locations across the GTA. We serve over 90,000 clients annually, many of whom who are newcomers to Canada, and we have been in business for over 30 years. Achèv works with internationally trained professionals across a wide range of sectors: engineers, lawyers, HR professionals, teachers and a range of skilled trades as well, to just name a few. We also run a federally funded program for internationally trained professionals that offers guaranteed loans up to \$15,000 to aid in costs related to their accreditation, which includes covering costs related to exams and education.

As members of the standing committee know, Bill 27 addresses a number of different elements in support of workers' rights. Today, we would like to focus specifically in an area that we know well: the proposed changes to remove barriers for internationally trained immigrants. We bring a unique perspective into the challenges these immigrants face and would like to share some insights from our staff who work with these individuals every day.

The process for international professional accreditation recognition has for far too long been a significant barrier to newcomers to Canada. It's lengthy, expensive, complicated and time-consuming. For regulated professions, it can cost tens of thousands of dollars. They must write multiple exams and have documents attested over and over again. Credential assessments cause numerous challenges and delays involving curriculum verification and securing original documentation. The process can take 15 months to three years, and in some cases, five years—all of this with no guarantee of continuing their career in their chosen profession.

Our staff see the impact this is having on newcomers: increased stress, mental health struggles, low self-esteem, not to mention the financial stresses that they and their family will bear. Many persevere at all costs, sacrificing savings and borrowing money to get their education recognized. Unfortunately, others do not persevere.

We have noted that age plays a significant factor in this. Over 45 years of age seems to be the tipping point. They will likely elect to find alternative work instead of going through the often expensive hoops to get their professional accreditations recognized. Many take odd jobs, shift professions or simply give up and take survival jobs in order to be able to look after their family.

The requirement of Canadian work experience continues to be a significant barrier. In fact, based on our experience, it's the number one barrier these immigrants face.

By way of example, I would like to share the story of a client who is an internationally trained teacher from India. He had been a principal of a school in the UAE, came to Canada, received his teaching licence from the Ontario College of Teachers, but could not secure a job because of lack of local experience. This individual, even then, completed a master of education at an Ontario university, taking a lot of money and time to successfully graduate, but could still not get a job as a teacher here in Ontario. Needless to say, he was incredibly upset and frustrated. He made a 180-degree shift and went to a college for gas technical training. He's currently working with a gas company. He is not a teacher.

This is why we're pleased to see the changes proposed in schedule 3 of the bill. By eliminating unfair Canadian work experience requirements for professional registration, newcomers to Canada will be able to access meaningful employment faster. Not only is this the right thing to do for immigrants, it's the right thing to do for Ontario. It's no secret hundreds of thousands of jobs continue to go unfilled in this province. Immigration will be critical to our economic future, particularly as we recover from the effects of COVID.

However, it's simply not good enough to welcome newcomers to our country; we must ensure those who come are able to use their qualifications, contribute to our economy and build a better life here in Ontario. Canada will welcome 1.2 million immigrants in the next three years, many of whom we all know will settle here in Ontario. But with only one quarter of internationally trained

immigrants in Ontario employed in the regulated professions they're trained in, we must remove the barriers to ensure they arrive in Ontario and are given a fair chance at building their own Canadian dream.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our insights today. We look forward to answering any questions you may have.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much.

We will now move on to John Di Nino, who is the president of ATU Canada. Welcome. You have seven minutes, and you may begin by stating your name.

Mr. John Di Nino: Good morning. I'm John Di Nino, the president of the Amalgamated Transit Union in Canada, representing 34,000 transit workers across the country, including tens of thousands in Ontario. Washroom access is one of the top issues I often hear from our members.

Members of this committee: What would you do if you could not use the bathroom for hours on end? Would you be able to hold it in? Would you still work if you soiled yourself? This question is, fortunately for many of you, something you do not have to think about, because most of you work from home or in an office. But this is a question that most transit workers have to ask themselves every day. I would like to thank you for inviting me to speak to this important issue on washroom access for workers.

Employees of all industries and sectors deserve access to clean and safe bathrooms. This is about dignity, respect and safety. Though we are pleased to hear that this government is addressing the issue of the lack of bathroom access for workers in the transport sector, we are extremely disheartened and disappointed to learn that your proposed bathroom mandate legislation will not include transit workers, despite our continued and consistent advocacy on this issue for decades.

0910

There is no reason why transit workers should have been left out of this legislation. Access to bathrooms is a health and safety problem for all those in the transport sector, and our members have been leading the fight for years because of the hardship faced. Just like delivery drivers, transit workers deserve to receive the same amount of respect and dignity.

For years, operators have avoided drinking water during the workday, relieved themselves into bottles on the streets and even soiled themselves in the line of duty. The problem is especially prevalent for women in the workplace, pregnant women, older operators, those with medical conditions of the bladder or bowels and for people taking diuretic medication.

Lack of restroom access for transit workers has also put everyone else on the road in danger. A 2011 study published in *Neurology and Urodynamics* revealed that driving with an extreme urge to use the bathroom affects attention and thinking, equal to that of staying awake for 24 hours or equivalent to a 0.05% blood alcohol content, close to the legal limit.

An ATU survey of bus operators found that 82% say they try to hold it in to cope with the lack of access. Holding it in causes negative health impacts. Over 30% of bus operators report urinary tract infections or kidney infections, compared to 11% of the general population. The survey also found that 68% of bus operators say they avoid eating and drinking altogether to cope with the lack of access. Meanwhile, 26%—and I'll say this again: 26%—of operators have reported soiling themselves while on duty because they lacked restroom access.

One of the main reasons that Minister McNaughton gave for not including transit workers in schedule 5 of this legislation, when pressed by the media, was that transit workers have predictable routes and scheduled break times. For many transit workers, that's actually not the case. Just because the route is predictable doesn't mean that the schedule is. It also does not mean that there could be washrooms at the end of the line.

If drivers have to undergo long routes, they may not be able to go to the washroom for 90 to 120 minutes per route. There might be a dedicated break throughout the day, but this break often gives drivers enough time to eat lunch and very little time to do anything else. Schedule pressures may mean that operators do not have time to access, use and return from a restroom. Procedures for leaving and securing the bus may be vague or unrealistic. Concerns about embarrassment or negative passenger reaction could also discourage the operators from going to the restrooms. Some operators have been disciplined for taking an unauthorized break to use restrooms.

The problem has been more prevalent throughout this pandemic, and especially for women, as depicted in a recent Toronto Star article. An ATU 113 member, Beth Kielty, tried to get bathroom access but was unsuccessful, contrary to what the labour minister and the press secretary might have said. I want to quote:

"Beth Kielty, a veteran TTC driver, recalled one distressing episode earlier in the pandemic when she tried three different businesses along the route in north Etobicoke but none of them would allow her to use their washroom.

"She had to race back to Kipling station in her bus ... in tears."

She says, "I almost peed my pants. I know of other (drivers) that have literally had their period and bled through their pants because they could not use a bathroom."

Unlike Minister McNaughton, transit workers don't work in an office and cannot go to the bathroom whenever they want.

Members of this committee, I would ask all of you, is this the way to treat front-line workers, those who have put their lives on the line to keep our province moving in one of the most difficult times in our history? Why are transit workers left out of this legislation? Does this government think it's dignified to force transit workers to soil themselves instead of having access to washrooms? Do you think it's acceptable to allow the potential of drivers not using the bathroom to put the lives of workers and passengers at risk?

Unlike delivery drivers, transit workers are responsible for busloads of passengers. Not including them in this legislation will continue to put unnecessary pressure on our workplaces. What would you expect from your government if your washroom was not accessible every day of work for the remainder of your careers?

In closing, we strongly ask that you reconsider this legislation and make the single amendment to schedule 5 to include transit workers. Not only will this give peace of mind to our drivers, but it will make our roads safer and restore dignity to our front-line heroes that everybody around this table has lauded so loudly through this pandemic.

Thank you. I look forward to questions.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much.

Next, we have Aaron Coristine, manager of science, regulatory affairs and government relations, as well as Joe Sbrocchi, general manager, representing Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers. Welcome. You have seven minutes, and you may begin by stating your name.

Mr. Aaron Coristine: Thank you and good morning, honourable standing committee. My name is Aaron Coristine, manager of science, government and regulatory affairs with the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers association.

On behalf of our membership, we would like to thank you for the proposed amendments under Bill 27, specifically as they relate to schedules 1, 2 and 4. Our members and our sector at large are one of the largest employers of temporary foreign workers, who are integral to the operations of our farms and the ability to provide affordable, healthy food to Ontarians and Canadians. The importance of the proposed amendments in these bills will not only ensure the protection and security of our workers, but allow us to not worry about the supply chain of workers required to be successful in our sector.

I'd like to pass it over to my general manager to provide further commentary on what this bill means to us.

Mr. Joe Sbrocchi: Good morning, everybody. My name is Joe Sbrocchi. I am the executive director and general manager of the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, also known as OGVG. We're pleased to provide commentary to the standing committee regarding updated modifications to Bill 27.

OGVG represents approximately 220 farmers, responsible for over 3,500 acres of greenhouse tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers across the province. To put that into context, to replace that, you would need about 140,000 acres of fields. The sector is a valuable economic driver for Ontario, contributing both directly and indirectly to regional economics, provincial GDP and job creation.

In calendar year 2020, farm gate revenues derived from greenhouse vegetables exceeded \$1.25 billion, and we anticipate a robust growth rate for the next several years. Our members strive to grow fresh, nutritious and affordable food year-round, while meeting healthy eating and food security goals.

The Ontario greenhouse sector is a major employer in the southwestern region of Ontario, and yet still growing.

We depend on a large pool of many types of workers to meet our growing needs. Labour challenges before the pandemic were aggravated significantly over the past 20 months, as I'm sure you can imagine. Like many businesses across the province, our greenhouse farmers have struggled in the face of COVID-19, but our members and their employees have risen to the challenge and continue to fulfill our essential role in providing quality local food, while ensuring the safety and well-being of our workers, our families and our communities.

The safety and well-being of our workers is paramount. OGVG does not condone the use of undocumented workers. We work with our members to ensure that they are aware of the risks associated with this potential practice and will continue to advocate and communicate to our members with regard to best practices in workforce attraction and retention.

In no scenario do we want to see our workers, international or domestic, placed in vulnerable situations, whether it be by recruiter, employer or temporary help agencies. That is why the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers are here today to support Bill 27, specifically as it relates to the following sections, which directly impact our farms.

As outlined in Bill 27, there are several improvements that can and should be made to a comprehensive enforcement regime in support of our workers and our businesses. In schedule 1, we endorse the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act amendment requiring a recruiter that uses the services of another recruiter in connection with the recruitment or employment of these foreign nationals to be jointly and severally liable to repay fees charged to the foreign national by the other recruiter that are in contravention of subsection 7(1) of the act.

0920

In schedule 2, we support article XVIII.1 of the act, amended to include licensing requirements for temporary help agencies and recruiters. Prohibiting persons from operating as a temporary help agency or acting as a recruiter without a licence for that purpose and prohibiting against knowingly engaging or using the services of an unlicensed temporary help agency or recruiter is imperative to the safety of our workers and the legitimacy of our labour supply chain. We would further support temp help agency registry listings; licensing requirements and their status, i.e., if they're in good standing or not; recruiter registry listings with the same above criteria—so that would be the recruiters as well as temp help agencies.

In schedule 4 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act, we generally are supportive of amendments enabling the ministry to review matters related to agriculture, food and rural affairs, and establish policies; and provide recommendations, advice, coordination and assistance to the government in matters related to agriculture, food and rural affairs.

The proposed new section 4.1 of the act, authorizing the minister to collect information, including personal information, for the purposes set out in the section is supported. However, it must be done in as reasonable a way as

possible so that the data can readily be shared and accessible. Understanding confidentiality and integrity is a necessity. There must be an operational purpose to collecting this so that the organizations and associations can utilize it for the betterment of their membership such as where, when and how many workers are arriving, on which contracts, and other data points. We see this activity as an enabler to evolving our worker programs for the better over time.

It also bears noting that agriculture has certain nuances that cannot be divorced from the picture, be it harvesting pressures, flushes and periods of disease stressors, just to name a few.

In short, we believe Bill 27 is aligned with the continued improvement of our industry and supports our shared values of ensuring the safety and well-being of our employees. We are thankful for the ongoing support we have received from all levels of government and elected members from all parties, and appreciate their inherent understanding of the critical nature of our part in securing our province's and, indeed, Canada's food supply chain.

Thank you again for your continued support and the opportunity to speak before this committee. We're happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much for your presentation.

We will begin this morning with the official opposition. Who would like to take the floor? MPP Sattler, go ahead.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Good morning, and thanks to all three presenters.

I would like to focus our first round of questions on Mr. Di Nino from Amalgamated Transit Union. Thank you very much for your difficult presentation, but it is a reality that I think we all have to be mindful of. I wanted to ask you, Mr. Di Nino, was the ATU consulted at all on this legislation, either while it was being developed or since your concerns have been raised?

Mr. John Di Nino: Thank you for the question. No, there was no consultation, and we have not been communicated with through this whole process. There was no effort to reach out to us, even after we sent letters asking for some consideration in this matter. We've had zero correspondence from this government.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. You mentioned in your remarks that Minister McNaughton had said that transit workers weren't included in the bill because they have predictable routes and scheduled break times. Can you elaborate on that? Is that really the case? How predictable are the schedules of transit workers?

Mr. John Di Nino: Well, in theory and on paper, schedules look great, but what schedules don't do is consider traffic flow patterns, construction, if there are accidents or inclement weather. So operators on routes—we can use something like Finch Avenue or Steeles Avenue in the city of Toronto. Those routes could take 90 minutes to 120 minutes from start to finish. The only time that an operator will come into contact with accessible washroom facilities is at a terminal or transit hub. When you get to the most western point on Finch Avenue, there

is no washroom access. So, along the route, we hope and would anticipate and expect that, if an operator is in dire need of a washroom break, businesses would allow them to access those facilities and not be turned away.

When routes are designed by employers, they're looking at the best possible results for the passengers, and I get that. Timing is everything. They have to work on plus-or-minus three minutes to get from one end of the route to the other. So when you do get to a terminal and you may have access to the washroom, you're on a very limited time frame. Those are complicating the matter. And we've seen through the pandemic that our operators have been turned away from gas stations, they've been turned away from restaurant facilities, saying, "Sorry, we're not open for you. Figure it out on your own." Schedules are not predictable. They look great on paper, but they're not realistic.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Thanks for that response. Now, I understand that there is access to porta-potties in some cases. I just wondered if you wanted to comment on that. Is that an alternative that is working for transit workers?

Mr. John Di Nino: Well, thanks again for that question, but, look, have you ever gone to the washroom in a porta-potty? They're disgusting. They are totally, totally unacceptable. They're not being serviced and cleaned regularly, and a porta-potty doesn't offer fresh running water to wash your hands after you've gone to the washroom.

These porta-potties at the ends of the lines in very dark and remote sections of the city are also used by the common people. These are not specific or just for transit operators that have a special key. This is crazy. I mean, everybody can use it. They're not maintained and, quite honestly, there's a serious concern with hygiene and safety in those porta-potties.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Right. So any suggestion that that is an acceptable alternative is not the case.

You talked about the front-line heroism of transit workers, and we certainly agree. They've been working throughout this pandemic on the front lines. Do you have any comments on whether access to washrooms has been affected by COVID-19?

Mr. John Di Nino: Well, absolutely. Prior to the pandemic, there were some informal agreements with coffee shops, gas stations and other businesses along the routes to allow our members and operators to go in and access those facilities. But since the outbreak began, drivers say businesses have stopped letting them in. Transit workers say that it's more than a mild inconvenience. If you're used to having the ability to go to a washroom in a certain location and now they're denying you that, that has complicated the problem.

One bus driver who works in Toronto's east end said that before the pandemic, operators on the Steeles Avenue route would regularly stop at a fast-food restaurant at Middlefield and Steeles, and now they're being denied, saying, "Sorry, we're not letting you in. COVID-19. We have restrictions. You can't access our facilities." Gas stations have shut their doors down as well, saying, "Hey, listen, this is your problem. You figure it out. But we're not letting you use our facilities." So the pandemic has

exemplified that and caused a much more severe problem for our transit professionals out there.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Have you ever raised concerns about washroom access for transit workers with the ministry prior to this bill all of a sudden being announced? Is this a particular issue that has come to a head because of the pandemic and the closure of businesses and some of these informal arrangements no longer working?

Mr. John Di Nino: Yes. Look, we've been looking at washroom access for decades, and I said that in my deposition. One of the challenges we have is negotiating those things with employers and allowing access, but it has been that much more exemplified during COVID-19. Even though I said there were some informal agreements with some restaurants and gas stations, they have now turned a blind eye and said, "You know what? Sorry. So sad, too bad. You're on your own."

0930

In a perfect world, we would love to see employers allow facilities built and maintained at each end of each route. We understand that that's not practical in some circumstances, but there is a cheaper and alternative way, and that is to include operators in schedule 5 of this legislation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you. We are out of time. We will now move on to the government. MPP Anand.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate it. I'm just going to continue with John.

John, thank you for that presentation. Quickly, I wanted to ask you a couple of things. Number one, you said that at some transit hubs and terminals, there is a washroom. How many of them have at the transit hubs and terminals—as an example, if there are 100 terminals, how many of those would have washrooms?

Mr. John Di Nino: That's going to be hard for me to judge right across Ontario, understanding that some northern and remote communities have more difficulties in maintaining those facilities. But for example, if buses are going in—we'll talk about the city of Toronto. If they're going into Finch Station, there is going to be washroom access at Finch Station, similarly at Kipling Station or at Warden Station. They are going to have washroom access at those facilities.

One of the problems is that by the time that operator does a complete route, it could be a number of hours, with traffic congestion and inclement weather. That's a very long time to have to go with having to hold your washroom ability, and it affects how you drive that vehicle.

We understand that there are facilities, but there aren't enough to service our people when they need them.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Do you think it is more a rural issue compared to the urban issue?

Mr. John Di Nino: No, I think it's an issue right across. I don't think one way is more than the other. In rural, there are issues. Your routing may be much longer than in the urban centre. The principles and the problems are exactly the same: having the ability to access those facilities en route. We shouldn't be denied by business to offer a transit

professional a two-minute pee break. We can fix that through this legislation.

Mr. Deepak Anand: When I was talking with the truck drivers, I did hear from them—they said thank you for acknowledging, thank you for making this change, but their worry was the exact same thing. They said some of the organizations, what are they going to do? They're going to put a small, portable washroom outside. That is a concern that I have raised as well, within ourselves.

Of course, we will be looking at that at our end. I'm just asking you your advice, your deputation on that. What is your suggestion on what can be done to make sure that portable washrooms should be put in maybe somewhere along—maybe in this bill, maybe around other places; some kind of audit. What can be done in this case, in your opinion, as advice to us?

Mr. John Di Nino: Sure. There are a number of things that we could look at. Number one is we need to be able to force transit agencies and municipalities to look at investing in real washrooms, not portable porta-potties. Simply having a porta-potty when you go to the washroom—and you can't wash your hands and keep your personal hygiene intact—is a huge problem. If you've seen the conditions, if you've ever had the unfortunate experience of having to use a porta-potty—I mean, you have to hold your breath when you go in, notwithstanding the disaster that is in front of you with people who are irresponsible when they use those facilities. That is unconscionable in our world.

As I said, if your workplace said to you, “We're not going to offer you washroom access in your eight-hour day, five days a week, for the rest of your career. Find your own way to go,” I think this discussion would be a little bit different.

Mr. Deepak Anand: No, thank you. That's why it is something very close to my heart. I was thinking about it as well. I've seen some of the portable washrooms. I hope and I'm guessing the people from your union are going to go back to the transit that you work for to advocate for real washrooms, not for portable washrooms.

Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Three minutes.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Okay. I'm not sure if any of my colleagues—MPP Martin would like to ask a question.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): MPP Martin, go ahead.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank all the presenters for coming. It's always very interesting to hear from you.

I'm very interested in the foreign credential recognition aspect. I wanted to ask some questions of Achēv. I know you have a lot of expertise in the area, and certainly it's important, I think, that we get people working to their fullest potential, whatever that is. It's better for all of us, of course, and it's better for them and their lives. I know you've dealt with many people in these circumstances. I'm just wondering if you can help us understand how streamlining the credentialing process is going for help those newcomers, and also if you want to also add some of the biggest obstacles that might be faced by newcomers and what else can be done to help them integrate better and get

working to their full potential. I don't care which of you answers.

Ms. Tonie Chaltas: Thank you, MPP Martin. We're pleased to comment on that. In terms of streamlining, some of the commitments that we've heard from government—we did participate in a consultation earlier this year. There was a lot of talk about interest in streamlining the process: trying to eliminate duplication; areas around clarity of information.

One of the challenges that newcomers face is actually accessing timely, accurate information that allows them to make decisions—including pre-arrival, as they look to understand and plan what they need to be doing to gather credentials. One of the challenges that we're hearing they face, especially with international universities, is actually being able to collect original documentation. That certainly is one piece of it, and the attestation of materials again and again, so the streamlining of that would be one.

We cannot underemphasize the need to remove the barrier of Canadian work experience. I will say that when that is done, the opportunity that that presents—for individuals who are not just professionally trained, but also any immigrant to Canada—it is a consistent challenge that they face in this sector. I think that as government takes this step as this bill moves forward, I think you're putting solid plans in place that will remove those barriers. The biggest barrier that we have seen is the Canadian experience.

But I would ask my colleague, Moya, who is responsible for employment services, if there's anything she would like to add to that that gives us some specifics.

Ms. Moya MacKinnon: Yes. You know, as you've pointed out, MPP Martin, we do have extensive experience—

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): I'm so sorry to interrupt, but unfortunately we are out of time.

We will go back to the opposition. MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks for all your presentations. I'm going to be very clear on this: When I ask a question, please keep it short. I want to get to all three presenters. This whole set-up doesn't give us enough time to ask questions.

I'm going to ask Achēv: Did you read the whole bill? Did anybody read the whole bill? Any of you can answer, just yes or no. Did you all read the whole bill?

Mr. John Di Nino: No, I have not.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. Thank you. Just asking.

Some areas of this legislation are aimed at tightening the regulations around your industry. One area is to ensure that the recruiters of foreign nationals are registered and held accountable if charging illegal recruiting fees. However, the bill doesn't hold employers liable for using these recruiters, employers that drive the recruitment business model. Why do you think the government chose to leave them out? Do you think this was wise? If somebody could answer that for me, please.

Mr. Joseph Sbrocchi: If I understand—

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's for Achēv, so, whoever wants to answer that.

Ms. Tonie Chaltas: Oh, I'm sorry. We're not involved in the migrant worker recruitment or the temporary agency side of the business at all, so I'm afraid we're not able to comment on something that we're not responsible for.

0940

Mr. Wayne Gates: Can the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers answer it, then? Go ahead.

Mr. Joe Sbrocchi: So when it comes to recruiters in other countries, the reason why we fall on our recognized programs is because those are literally treaties between Canada and Mexico, Canada and Jamaica. Would we like, perhaps, to have other countries that we could source that labour from? That would be great, but one of the reasons that we were reluctant to do that is because we don't have that same assurance that on the other side of the ocean or wherever those people might come from, everything is done on the up and up. I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, I appreciate it.

I'm going to go to ATU Canada for a second. John, without sounding too bad, I'm old and I understand the fact that when you've got to go to the washroom, you have to go to the washroom. There should be facilities for your members who have that same situation, particularly some of the older members, some of the members who would have medical conditions. I want to be very clear that I'm sure that our party would support an amendment to take care of your members and include you in the bill. I think that's important. It is a health and safety issue, quite frankly. Nobody should have to be driving, wondering if they're going to go to the washroom in their pants, or no woman should be at work bleeding through their clothing. I think it's absolutely ridiculous, and it is kind of disheartening that the government did not include a lot of labour in this bill, even though they're talking about workers.

The OFL was here yesterday. CUPE was here. You're here today. None of you guys we talked to were consulted on what would be a good way to do this to make sure it works for everybody.

One area that is very important to me as a critic for WSIB—I'm going to ask you a question on WSIB, if you don't mind, John. One area of this legislation that's seriously concerning to me is schedule 6. This section of this legislation will divert surplus revenue over from the WSIB directly to employers. As you are aware, many workers are still fighting to get what they are owed by WSIB. Do you think this is fair to ATU members who may have been injured on the job and can't collect WSIB and the surplus is going to employers?

Mr. John Di Nino: Oh, my God. Listen, absolutely not. I think that's an atrocity to the process of WSIB. It's challenging enough, as you indicated, to get payments when you're injured on the job or when you're assaulted on the job. To put things like that in place that are going to benefit employers is only going to complicate this process and put our workers in greater debt while they wait for these payments to come forward. Look, it's absolutely appalling.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. I'll also add that 50% of the people that collect WSIB end up living in poverty. There's a process—I don't know if you're aware

of it, John—with deeming. I have a bill before the House, Bill 119, to include deeming in this bill, which would stop deeming in the province of Ontario forcing workers to live in poverty, forcing them to lose their homes, lose their families, lose their community, lose their identity. That was the type of consultation that should have been done with your union as well.

I've got another question on WSIB, and then I'll move on to the other presenters. In other jurisdictions, WSIB would use surplus revenue for initiating to assist health and safety training. Do you think that might be a better use of excess revenue rather than rewarding employers? I'll use Fiera Foods as an example. They will be getting millions of dollars from this surplus. They had five people die on the job, but because they were temp agencies, they're not considered working for them. I would appreciate a response to that, John. Thank you.

Mr. John Di Nino: Again, taking money out of workers' hands in a time of crisis is, I think, absolutely irresponsible. We have the Labour Relations Act and we have the Occupational Health and Safety Act that can deal with workplace issues and health and safety issues. I think the money needs to remain where it is and not go back to the employers.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Time?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): One and a half minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay, I've only got a minute and a half left. I'll go to the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers.

The greenhouses, as you know, had some COVID outbreaks over the last 19 months. In my area—not necessarily in my riding, but in my area in St. Catharines, we had a severe outbreak of COVID-19. So I'm going to ask you, did you have the opportunity to read schedule 6 of the bill?

Mr. Joe Sbrocchi: Aaron, have you looked at that?

Mr. Aaron Coristine: Yes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Have you looked at it? Do you think that schedule 6 should be taken out of the bill, knowing what the greenhouses have gone through with injured workers on the job and migrant workers who are coming to our country?

I agree with you that our food supply, the work that they do, they're very skilled. They do a great job. But when they do get injured on the job, they should have the opportunity to be taken care of. I know that in our area, we had terrible outbreak of COVID in a greenhouse. So do you think that that part of the bill should be taken out?

Mr. Aaron Coristine: Yes, we feel that if there is a workplace injury such as that, it's important to us that both workers and employers are protected, and however that looks, it is important to us that there's fairness in the process and a common-sense approach.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate—

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We are out of time. We will go back to the government. I believe MPP Babikian has a question.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Good morning, everyone, and thank you all for coming and sharing your ideas and your

suggestions with us. That is the intention of this process of public hearings, so that we can hear from the stakeholders from both sides of the aisle so that we can improve on the bill.

Before I continue my own questions, I would like to ask Moya if she would like to finish her thoughts in answering my colleague MPP Martin's question. Go ahead, and after then I will continue.

Ms. Moya MacKinnon: Yes, thank you so much for allowing me to finish my thought. It's so important. We see, on a daily basis, many internationally trained professionals who are coming to Canada and especially settling here in Ontario who are so frustrated with the process of accreditation. They're willing to work hard and to put in the time that's necessary because they've come to settle in Ontario to be successful and to support their families, to have better education for their children as well. The issue around the experience piece is really holding individuals back. Skilled trade professionals coming into Ontario have their work experience from outside Canada assessed as part of the education process, but that's not the same for many internationally trained professionals. We really are supportive of this bill because it does hasten access for internationally trained professionals to get into their intended job market or their profession that they wish to be in.

One of the projects that we run is a guaranteed loan program for foreign-trained professionals. We're seeing this on a daily basis, the struggle that many of our clients are going through. As Tonie earlier alluded to, it's multiple attestations of their documents, it is multiple exams. The expense of it all and the time frame that it takes are forcing many of our skilled professionals to look for alternative careers and to give up on the dream of why they came to Canada.

We're hopeful that by removing a number of these barriers, it is going to assist a much-needed resource here in Ontario to fill those positions that employers need so that our businesses thrive and so that our communities are prospering.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you very much. Of course, when there are certain issues that have been ignored for so long, and when any government tries to tackle any issue, there are accumulated factors and there are multiple jurisdictions that will interfere in bringing a wholesome bill to address every concern, every issue, because we are in a delicate situation. We have to trade with our partners on various levels of government. So that's why this is a step in the right direction.

From your own experience with what you do, I remember very well when I was a citizenship judge and I used to preside over ceremonies, I would meet lots of people. I talked with them and I asked them what they have been doing. They would tell me they're working as cab drivers, gas station attendants etc., those minimum-wage jobs. And when I asked them, "What is your profession?" they would tell me, "I'm a doctor, dentist, pharmacist, engineer etc." So I appreciate what you do, because I understand the

difficulties, the challenges that you have been facing for the last few years to bring this issue to fruition and address this issue.

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I know that there are many industries that will be positively affected by this bill, and many sectors and professions like lawyers, engineers, architects, plumbers, electricians and accountants. So from your experience, are there any other skills and fields where it should be considered? How can we make this portion of this bill much stronger to avoid any kind of loopholes in the future? Thank you.

Ms. Tonie Chaltas: We do believe that the government has taken a broad approach, and we appreciate that. I do think we would certainly support the expansion into the health sector. I know this is a complex area, but we also understand that the ministry is [*inaudible*] with health to look at that. So we would encourage the government to continue with that discussion and, when possible, expand this to include the health profession.

Certainly from a perspective of COVID recovery, we absolutely need these essential workers. Many of them are arriving in our country, and with additional training that can be expedited and a credentials process, I think that will help the overall system. So we would encourage government to move in that direction.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Okay. Great. Just for the sake of neutrality and fairness, I would like to quote some statements from labour industry leaders: "Important announcement by Min @MonteMcNaughton, intro legislation to address ON labour shortage by removing barriers & empower career building opportunities for newcomers, recognizing & developing skills across many in-demand sectors that help our economy & communities thrive." This is from LIUNA's vice-president.

Another quote from the OPSEU leader: "I'm proud to say, and pleased to see, that all our work with Minister McNaughton and his staff is paying off. So much can be achieved through conversation and collaboration, instead of just name-calling. This government is listening to us, and as a result, real working people will benefit."

I can go on and on. There are so many quotes from labour leaders. For example, this is another one from Teamsters Canada: "For professional drivers and delivery workers who have been on front lines of the pandemic for the last 19 months, the inability to access restroom facilities has been a major irritant. This legislation recognizes the essential work that these men and women have been doing and provides them with the working conditions and respect they deserve."

So as you see, there is so much support, endorsement, praise for this bill. Is it complete? Of course, no one can claim that every bill will address any concern, but as a beginning, as a start, I think this bill will move forward the labour movement to safeguard—

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. I'm afraid that concludes all the time we have for

this morning. I'd like to thank our presenters and our staff, as well as all the members.

As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 6 p.m. today, and the deadline for filing amendments to the bill is 6 p.m. on Friday, November 19, 2021.

That concludes our business for today, and this committee now stands adjourned until Tuesday, November 23, 2021, at 9 a.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. Thank you very much, and have a great day.

The committee adjourned at 0954.

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