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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

F-24

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des débats
(Hansard)**

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**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Working for Workers Act, 2023

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Wednesday 19 April 2023

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

Loi de 2023 visant à oeuvrer
pour les travailleurs

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mercredi 19 avril 2023

Chair: Ernie Hardeman
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Président : Ernie Hardeman
Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

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

Wednesday 19 April 2023

Mercredi 19 avril 2023

The committee met at 0902 in room 151.

**WORKING FOR WORKERS ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023 VISANT À OEUVRER
POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Good morning, everyone. I call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to order. We're meeting today to resume public hearings on Bill 79, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters. Please wait until I recognize you before you speak. As always, all comments should go through the Chair. The Clerk of the Committee has distributed committee documents, including written submissions, via SharePoint.

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

With that, we'll remind the presenters of the seven minutes in the presentation. At one minute to go, I will say, "One minute." Don't stop, because the one minute is time for your punchline. If you don't stop at the seven minutes, we will cut off the presentation.

**CODING FOR VETERANS
SKILLS ONTARIO
WCG SERVICES**

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): With that, we will start with the first panel: Coding for Veterans, Skills Ontario and WCG Services. The first to present is Coding for Veterans, so if you will start with leaving Hansard your name and your position, then your seven minutes starts now.

Mr. Jeff Musson: Perfect, thank you. My name is Jeff Musson. I'm the executive director of Coding for Veterans. I see that we have a couple of MPPs from Windsor here and I'm a Windsorite, so it's kind of nice to be in familiar company.

Coding for Veterans is an organization that helps Canada's military veterans, spouses, family members and reservists retrain for jobs in software development and cybersecurity. The program is delivered 100% online through the University of Ottawa, and individuals in the program not only receive their university credentials, but they also receive the important industry certifications. That is what employers look for to hire. As you may be aware, there is a significant talent gap in the tech industry in Ontario. Despite the news reports about layoffs in the tech industry, those are really marketing and business development. The pure tech people are still getting hired.

With our program, I want to say we fully support the initiatives of Bill 79 because it really protects reservists in our program and specifically protects their ability to return to a job that they had when they got called to duty. As you have seen in news reports, Canada is having a significant issue retaining talent in the regular forces. Consequently, they have to rely on the reservists to backfill that. Where individuals may not be able to commit to being a full-time soldier, more and more of them are taking the reservist route, and it's imperative that we protect that.

With regard to our program, there are currently over 400 students in this program and we have over a 90% placement rate. I have circulated some documents ahead of today's discussion, one of which is our year-end report, which talks a little bit about our program, but more importantly the report that Accenture did on our program. It really looks at the economic impact that a graduate from our program has, specifically the increase in salary that they have coming out, and that's including reservists in our program, as well as when you have a micro-credential program like we have, it puts them on the same earning trajectory as someone with a four-year university degree. But the greatest stat that came out of this report is that when someone goes through our program and ultimately retires, by the time they retire, they will have pumped an additional \$1.3 million into Ontario's GDP. For me, cybersecurity and technology is where the future is, and I think, as a province, we need to double down on that.

As part of my submissions, I also think that this legislation could be improved a little bit, and there's one minor

tweak that I would suggest. This is in talking to reservists that are in our program. A lot of times, when a reservist not only gets deployed—they actually have to go away for training. A lot of times, these employees will have to cash in their vacation days in order to go and train. What I would suggest is that—is there some way that reservists and their vacation days could be protected as part of this, whatever that looks like? I defer to the committee and those that are writing and ultimately passing and making amendments to the bill.

For the most part, I think where this legislation is going is in the right direction, and ultimately, when you end up talking to people, most are surprised that reservists' jobs haven't been protected like this. Everyone just naturally assumed.

From our organization, I appreciate the opportunity to speak, and I will be available for questions after.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for the presentation. We now go to Skills Ontario.

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning, everybody. My name is Paul Clipsham. I'm director of stakeholder relations with Skills Ontario. First, I'd like to acknowledge and thank the Ontario government for the support and partnership that has been developed with Skills Ontario. This support has been crucial in helping us to emerge even stronger through these challenging times and provide high-impact programming for students and youth to consider careers in skilled trades and technology.

For over 30 years, Skills Ontario has grown into the most impactful organization, empowering youth, parents and others to consider careers in the skilled trades and technologies. Notwithstanding the progress that we're making, the skills challenge continues to be one of the most significant economic challenges of our time. In total, the skills gap in Ontario costs an estimated \$25 billion in foregone GDP. The Conference Board of Canada also produced a study that highlighted that we will need over 500,000 new entrants to the skilled trades by 2030 to address shortages.

The challenges, of course, were made worse by the pandemic, with delays in training and certification coupled with growth and demand from key areas such as construction, health and safety, manufacturing, advanced IT and the service and hospitality sectors coming back stronger after the pandemic. For example, the construction sector is projecting a shortfall of over 100,000 skilled tradespeople over the next decade, just to keep pace with the demand, while a recent study by Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters highlighted 80% of survey respondents saying they were experiencing immediate skills shortages. This figure is expected to continue to grow in the coming years, with competition for skills intensifying.

Ontario's skilled professionals continue to be critical to keeping our economy, our health care system and our society operating.

0910

We're very excited that the Skills Ontario Competition will be returning to an in-person event at the Toronto Congress Centre, May 1 to 3. All of the members of this

committee have received an invitation, and I hope to see you there.

I am pleased to be here today in support of the Working for Workers Act, which takes some important further steps in helping to address the skills shortage by enabling more Ontarians to pursue rewarding careers in the skilled trades and technologies.

Firstly, in order to change the trajectory of the skills shortages, we have to break down barriers to under-represented groups entering the trades, and technology pathways in particular. Women have historically been significantly under-represented in the trades. The new requirements proposed in this bill that would provide access to at least one women's-only washroom on job sites and properly fitting equipment would go a long way to support more women entering the trades.

Furthermore, enabling students in grade 11 to start to transition to a full-time apprenticeship will help create more experiential learning opportunities for young people and help address shortages in those areas. Consultation with industry is critical to ensure the safety, quality and efficacy of the program.

We are also very supportive of the Ministry of Education changes to require all high school students to take tech education. It is very beneficial to provide students with experiential opportunities and open their eyes and minds to these new career paths.

Finally, we must continue to find better ways to integrate new Canadians into the workforce, to help address critical skills shortages. The measures introduced in the bill will open the door to foreign credential recognition by addressing the requirements for Canadian experiences, which is laudable.

Bill 79 will help to address the negative stigma in the trades and better help ensure these jobs have dignity and respect and are recognized as critical aspects of Ontario's economic success.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to the discussion.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for the presentation. We now go to WCG Services.

Ms. Deborah Childs: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning. I am Deborah Childs, director of contract management support for WCG Services and the Employment Ontario service system manager in Peel, York and Ottawa regions. I'm delighted to be here today for this incredibly important topic.

As an SSM in the newly transforming employment services system, WCG is proud to be part of the solution to help more Ontarians obtain good, sustainable jobs. As a partner in Ontario's employment service transformation, WCG works to create an improved system that enables a clear path to employment for all job seekers, especially those who are vulnerable to long-term employment, like people receiving social assistance. Our approach is to provide a seamless client experience, ensuring that there is no wrong door and easy access for all Ontarians into provincial employment services.

Central to our SSM work is ensuring an employment services system that integrates effectively with the social

assistance system to meet the needs of clients so they can achieve and sustain employment. WCG is passionate about ensuring equality of access and equality of opportunity to sustainable employment for clients with unique needs, including individuals in receipt of social assistance and ODSP.

We've been delivering employment services, including for social assistance clients, through contracts with governments in Canada for 28 years. Our team has many years of experience providing and overseeing a comprehensive range of evidence-based employment services. We have deep experience working with job seekers from every circumstance, and we've developed tried and tested methods to deliver individualized and confidential services that will help clients achieve sustainable employment.

In doing our work to enable positive employment outcomes for clients, we've learned that an integrated approach that includes information-sharing between the employment services system and the social assistance system is vital. This enables the life stability support challenges that clients have to ensure client information is protected in the context of delivering employment services. This includes system access controls, staff training on protection of client privacy, processes to ensure adherence to information protection clauses in our employment services contracts and compliance with provincial and federal privacy regulations.

In summary, to deliver employment services that ensure no one gets left behind from good-paying work in the labour market, information-sharing between the social assistance and employment services systems is important. We're delighted to work as an SSM with our ministry colleagues to build and deliver an integrated employment services system that eliminates barriers to employment and independence for social assistance clients and for other job seekers with unique needs.

Thank you, and I'd be pleased to answer any questions related to that.

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

We'll now go to the questions. The first round will start with MPP Brady.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Thank you to our three presenters today.

I guess my first question goes to you, Deborah: How does Bill 79 impact your services? Are you supporting Bill 79?

Ms. Deborah Childs: Absolutely, I'm supporting Bill 79. Do I speak to the Chair, or do I speak to you directly?

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: To me.

Ms. Deborah Childs: Okay. The information-sharing that is required between the social assistance programs and caseworkers and our Employment Ontario caseworkers and workers—it's vital for us to be able to share that information so there's no duplication and clients don't have to tell their story again. So we're in support of this amendment.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Perfect. My second question would be to you, Jeff: Can you describe to me what a typical reservist would look like?

Mr. Jeff Musson: A reservist in our program is in their late thirties, early forties. We actually have about 30%

females in our program and 70% males. The other thing is that they all typically are working full-time and they will be doing the reservist duties in addition to their job. So for them, they're looking at upskilling not only their current job but potentially looking to come into the tech industry.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Great. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): And the government side: MPP Byers.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you to all the presenters for your thoughts this morning. It's much appreciated.

Maybe a quick first question to you, on Coding for Veterans: It sounds like an interesting organization. I spent a few years on the board of the True Patriot Love Foundation, so I understand the challenge of transitioning from military to active employment. How long has your organization been around and doing the programs you are doing? Just a little bit more background—I was curious.

Mr. Jeff Musson: We started in the fall of 2019, and we had five students in the program. What was interesting was, when we rolled this program out, we actually built it backwards. We talked to employers first and said, "What are the skills that you're looking for in software development?" And then we also asked them, "What you are looking for in terms of industry certifications for cyber security?" So we made sure that our program aligned with that.

And then we set up focus groups talking to military members. They said, "Look, we're done uprooting our families, so whatever training happens, it has to be online and come to us." Well, then, we all know what happened in the spring of 2020—sometimes in life, I say that it's better to be lucky than good—and we were already online, and everyone scrambled to get online. So at that point, our program just started to exponentially grow.

The other key factor is that technology jobs are in demand out there, and they are high-paying. The average salary for someone coming out of our program is typically around \$80,000 to \$100,000. So when you match up a program that aligns perfectly with industry needs with a high salary and an over 90% placement rate, that's the recipe for success.

Mr. Rick Byers: That's great. So you're seeing that success continue, and, as you mentioned, the labour shortage we're facing in Ontario—you see your program being part of that solution, if you will?

Mr. Jeff Musson: Absolutely. What was interesting was, the program originally launched as veterans, because that's our name, but we had a number of military spouses, family members and others who wanted to retrain in this area. So I approached the provincial government, and I said, "Is there a way in which to contribute to offsetting the cost of tuition?" Through the Skills Development Fund, we were able to get some funding. The best part of all this is that the province actually sees a return on their investment in someone in our program in under two years, because if you look at what the cost of tuition is—and it's \$15,000—they will make that up in increased personal tax revenue coming back. So, to me, it's not only a good investment, but then start looking at the spinoff effect. Ontario is making a big

push in the area of EVs, right? It's not only a matter of having the propulsion system, but you better be sure that the hackers can't hack into those smart cars, right? So this is another thing to consider as part of that area.

0920

Mr. Rick Byers: Well, that's great, thank you. And maybe continuing to Paul and Deborah on the subject of the labour shortage in Ontario, perhaps you can again outline for us how this bill, in your organizations, will contribute to more employment in Ontario from the program.

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Sure. With respect to the bill, I think there are a few areas that I touched on that I think are really important. One is connecting with under-represented groups. In skilled trades and technologies, I mentioned that women are still significantly under-represented. I think the last I checked, less than 5% of the trades were filled by women. Now, I understand that enrolment in apprentices has really increased recently, which is fantastic, but there are all these barriers that kind of go along with that. The issue of washrooms: A lot of job sites have had porta-potties that are pretty gross, so trying to address that situation I think is great, and the bill supports that. Same with equipment: We do hear from women that the PPE and the work uniforms are fairly male-oriented, and so looking to change that or provide some help in that area I think is going to encourage more women to consider careers in skilled trades and technology. So I think that's one example.

The new Canadians piece I think is also important. We know that even if we're able to attract all of the students coming out of the high school system into skilled trades and technologies, we're still not going to be able to fulfill the shortages that we're talking about here. Part of this solution has to be better integrating international workers, right? So efforts to look at foreign credential recognition and other aspects that are going to help facilitate that I think are also crucial.

Those are just a couple of examples. Our programming aligns really well with that. We hold Canada's largest women in trades conference every year. We have 2,000 women and girls come out to the Toronto Congress Centre. We have female mentors and speakers that try to help break down those barriers and encourage young women and girls to consider those career paths. We've done events for new Canadians, and we want to do more of that. So I think it's a great fit, and hopefully will help encourage more into those pathways.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you.

Ms. Deborah Childs: Thank you. The aspect of bill—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Dowie.

Ms. Deborah Childs: Sorry.

Mr. Rick Byers: I had asked—

Ms. Deborah Childs: He asked both of us, right?

Interjections.

Ms. Deborah Childs: Okay. So the aspect of Bill 79 that allows for the information-sharing between the social assistance group and Employment Ontario's services helps us—

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

Ms. Deborah Childs: —to ensure that we are serving a broader population of clients with unique needs. There's a huge labour market demand for clients, and we have those individuals ready and willing, and I think the labour market can handle a more diversified group. Sharing that information helps us to know the client better and get them into employment quicker, developing relationships with organizations like Skills Ontario to build those pathways and get people working faster.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you, and we'll go to the opposition. MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good morning, everybody. I'm going to start with Coding for Veterans. I just want to say that I'm extremely proud that my dad fought and served. He was a veteran. He's not us with any longer, but he served from 1939 to 1945 and then came back. Obviously I'm glad he came back or I probably wouldn't be here, as we probably know. But I just want to let you know how much I respect the veterans.

Your program—95% placement. I want to say congratulations to you. It's obviously very successful. It's good that they're getting into good-paying jobs so they can support their families as they, in a lot of cases, risked their lives for us, not just as reservists but also serving in places that were very dangerous like Afghanistan, where we had a lot of our veterans get killed. They're getting fair wages, they're getting benefits and pensions, and that comes a lot with belonging to a union, so I want to say thank you.

On the question that was talked about on some of the job sites, you talked about the washrooms for women. I certainly agree with that. I agree they should have uniforms that actually fit. That way, it shows respect on the job site. But there's nothing in the bill that says that. I just want to be clear on that. You mentioned that it's in the bill, and it's not in the bill. It's very surprising. There's nothing to ensure clean washrooms or gender-equitable access to job sites as well as appropriate body safety gear. I just want you to understand that it's not in the bill. You know—you've been around long enough—that if it's not in the bill, and you're relying on it to be in regulation, it's not as strong and usually isn't watched as closely as in the bill. I just want you guys to know that, as you've been here.

I want to congratulate you on your program, but there's also some issues that I want to know if your group addresses as well. Our veterans are struggling, particularly our older veterans. A lot of them are homeless; they're living on our streets. In Kingston, they came up with a program called tiny homes. I just want to know: Is your group aware of that? Is that something that you would support to try to help some of our older veterans? I know your group is more on keeping the reservists around, getting them good jobs, making sure they have a good future. That's the one thing.

The other thing I want to say is that—and I'll talk to my party about it—I agree that they shouldn't be using their vacation time for training. That is a very good amendment that I'll talk to my colleagues about. So maybe you can answer a couple of those.

Mr. Jeff Musson: Yes. One thing that I love about the veterans' community is that we're plugged in with True

Patriot Love. We're plugged in with all the other groups, and it's one community. They not only support those older veterans—we have a very good relationship with all these organizations—but at the same time, we help out wherever we can, because there's only one veteran.

One thing that I can say is that when you look at issues like homelessness—and by no means am I an expert—you're starting to deal with mental health issues. We actually have a number of veterans in our program that have suffered from PTSD and others. I've got to tell you, there's nothing better for a person's mental health than to have a good-paying, solid job. We provide that pathway.

In fact, an interesting stat on our program: The largest number of people that we draw from, their trade in the military, is actually infantry and artillery. It's not from signals or communications. I asked our students, "Why is this?" When you look, if you're a pilot in the air force, you have a very easy transition to be a pilot in civilian life. But when you're infantry and artillery, there's no civilian occupation that would be firing missiles and artillery shells anywhere. But they're very familiar with technology. What our program does is that it takes that familiarity with technology and provides a pathway to a job.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Before I move on to the Skills Ontario, I just want to make sure you take it back to your organization that you're doing great work. We appreciate you. I certainly agree with you that a lot of our veterans are reservists. Even those that didn't know what post-traumatic stress disorder was coming out of World War II—they suffered during those times, as you know.

So I just want to say thank you to your organization. Thank you for the work you do. We'll certainly have the discussions around a couple of your suggestions, which I think are—certainly around the vacation time. It's not fair you work all year and you've got to take your vacation time to train. I think that's wrong, and it should be compensated, so I do appreciate your time.

I'll turn my time to Skills Ontario. I've got a question for you. I'm sure you're aware that we're seeing an increase in workplace accidents in our workplaces around the province. We're also seeing more fatal accidents. We've seen a couple of those in the last couple of weeks. But what also is disturbing to me is that a lot of the people that are dying on the job are young people.

We know that the safety records with unionized workplaces are extremely good. They spend a lot of money, including—when governments do something right, you have to say they did something right, including funding a lot of the training facilities, safety facilities right across the province, which is helping.

What do you think we can do better to make sure that people are safe on the job and also to make sure that the young people who are going into these situations—they're not all dying, but they're certainly getting into some serious accidents. What can we do better to make sure that not just unionized employees but all workers are safe?

0930

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Yes. It's a critical point, especially if we're talking about encouraging more young people, which obviously Skills Ontario is.

We have health and safety as a foundation across everything that we do. We have a great partnership with the WSIB, for example. We're going into schools, we're giving presentations, and the first thing we talk about is healthy and safety: that as you're going onto a job site—

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

Mr. Paul Clipsham:—you need to be conscious of what you're doing, and that you have rights and responsibilities associated with health and safety. So I think that's a key foundation piece, and we need more of that embedded in what we're doing.

Just as another example, we have our skills competition. If you violate a health and safety rule, it's an automatic disqualification from the competition, and we've had that happen. It's unfortunate, but we stick to that because it is so crucial. So I think we need to maintain that and certainly talk more about it with young people going into the workplace.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to do this quickly, because you raised WSIB. We're deeming skilled trades workers as well. This government should pass Bill 57, and nobody should live in poverty because they get injured on the job. In skilled trades, we're seeing a heavy use—particularly in construction trades, the opioid crisis. And what's happening—

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

We'll go to the independents. MPP Brady.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: To you again, Jeff: Maybe it was covered off and I missed it, but what is the average training period for a reservist?

Mr. Jeff Musson: Pardon me?

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: What is the average training period? How many weeks?

Mr. Jeff Musson: It all depends on their profession. I can tell you that within our Coding for Veterans program, the program actually is delivered online and they will do that as part of their civilian occupation and what have you, because there is a direct benefit. But when it comes to a reservist, they will typically, on average—and by no means is this written in stone. But you're probably looking at about a week to two weeks throughout the year, spread out, for their training.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: And that's coming right off their vacation time?

Mr. Jeff Musson: In some cases, yes. I'm not saying for everyone. Some employers step up to the table and don't allow them or charge them their vacation time.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: You're asking that it just be fair across the board.

Mr. Jeff Musson: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Perfect.

Paul, with respect to immigration, do you believe that there needs to be a better vetting of the applications to help defray or reduce the labour gap? If we started vetting applications a little better, we could fill those skilled trades job better?

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Yes. I would say I think prioritizing or considering their skilled trades—what their alignment is with actual in-demand careers is an important piece of the immigration puzzle, for sure.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: And you don't see that now?

Mr. Paul Clipsham: I do see that, but it could always be improved. I think that is part of the requirements now, but we can do better, I'm sure.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Sure. Thank you.

Deborah, you said in your presentation, "The clear path to employment," and it is a bit buzzwordy to me. I understand the need for the dialogue between you guys and ODSP or OW; that's fantastic. That change, in my opinion, is absolutely fantastic. But when you say, "The clear path to employment," what does the ideal clear path look like?

Ms. Deborah Childs: The ideal clear path looks like one call to an employment services centre or individual and a streamlined approach for that individual, so the individual—whoever is coming in to seek jobs—is not retelling their story over and over again to different people. They work with that one organization, one person, to follow them through, whether it's through some pre-employment training, access to skills, access to funds to support, removing some temporary barriers. But it's all packaged in a way that is not—that you have to go three blocks down the road to get this support, or go to another organization to get a mental health support, where they can get all that information wrapped around them as they do their job search and then sustain employment.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: So Bill 79 will help get rid of some of that muddy stuff.

Ms. Deborah Childs: Absolutely.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: What else could we be doing?

Ms. Deborah Childs: I can only speak on focusing on better client experience for individuals. Certainly, the biggest piece for us is that sharing of information. That's a number one priority.

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

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Thank you.

Ms. Deborah Childs: You're welcome.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'm good. Thanks, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Okay, thank you. MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you to everybody for being here. I've got a quick question; I think all of you would have a contribution to make. It has to do with schedule 3, the changes to the fair access to regulated professions. This is an area where I've seen a lot of newcomers struggling to leverage their education, to find access to their professions here in Ontario. I'm wondering if you could speak to the proposed changes in schedule 3 of the bill and what is your viewpoint on how effective they'll be at helping along those that are newcomers to Ontario?

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Sure, I can go first. I think there has been this issue where you have to have Canadian experience in order to register and get involved in an apprenticeship. If you are a new Canadian coming in, you may have a trades background, you may have worked in the trades somewhere else your entire life, but how are you supposed to get into the trades here if you can't demonstrate Canadian experience? It's a problem, and so you see individuals being an Uber driver or something when they may have a contribution in construction or trades or whatever. I think

that's what you're trying to address, or at least partially look at that, and if we can better facilitate new Canadians with existing experience and knowledge and education in the trades, that's going to really help with the whole skills shortage piece that we talked about.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Carry on.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Yes, I was hoping to just hear from the other witnesses, too, and then move on.

Ms. Deborah Childs: I don't have much more than my colleague to add, but essentially that is a huge issue, individuals coming into Canada and there's this skills gap. It could be a language barrier, but because of the mismatch of the skill set and employers maybe having difficulty accessing those individuals, that's where we need to do better.

Mr. Jeff Musson: What you're talking about is optimizing our workforce in the province, right? There's a shortage of workers across the board, so if you have someone that's very talented in one area and they're not doing the job that they should be—I think the amendments are good as proposed.

I can tell you what we've done from the Coding for Veterans perspective. I'm sure you are aware of the horrors that went on in Afghanistan when the Americans and the Canadians and everyone was pulled out. We reached out to Afghan interpreters because they served alongside some people that were in our program, and then we went to our corporate partners and we raised funding to pay for tuition for Afghan interpreters to take our program. We have two interpreters in our program because of that. So it's a matter of finding the right people and having the right fit, and I think that amendment does that.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, Chair. I'll pass to MPP Cuzzetto.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Cuzzetto.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Before we took power in 2018, the former finance minister of Ontario said that skilled trades and manufacturing jobs weren't a thing for this province anymore. But since we've taken office, we've created a lot of jobs in this province in the automotive industry. We've worked with our partners and we've gotten \$17 billion in investment, as well as in the construction industry—if you see Toronto and all of Ontario, it's booming. How will this bill help produce better jobs in the province of Ontario and do you think that every member should support this bill?

Mr. Paul Clipsham: I think, as I mentioned earlier, the skills shortages are a significant barrier to economic growth. We see that in manufacturing and construction; it exists in technology, as well. Anything that we can do to try and address that mismatch or those shortages I think is going to help not just those individuals who now are going to have access to better jobs, higher pay and higher wages, but also the overall economy, because now you can grow your manufacturing facility, you can grow your construction company, and that's going to create more economic activity, for sure.

0940

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you so much to the presenters today. I'm very taken by the fact that you're looking at ways to reach people who might otherwise have great barriers to entering employment. That, to me, is very laudable and I want to congratulate you for all the work that you're doing.

I wanted to also ask you, in terms of other jurisdictions in Canada or across the world, have you seen any other jurisdictions having moved ahead, taking these kinds of initiatives to be able to reach out to as many people who want to be employed in our economy?

Mr. Paul Clipsham: The one that springs to mind is the German model of apprenticeship. In theirs, you can start an apprenticeship as early as 15, and it's much more integrated. There's legislation that governs that whole system, but it's often held up as the model for the world in terms of better providing and creating experiential learning opportunities, starting that journey early, getting more people involved in trades and really celebrating those career paths, which I think is also an important model. So that's the one that springs to mind for me as far as a jurisdiction that has been doing this for many years, on the apprenticeship side, at least.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you. And perhaps this question to Deborah: You talked about the wraparound supports that are needed, particularly to help ODSP recipients be able to enter the employment force. I think that that's part of our initiative in terms of our government, to be able to provide the supports that are needed so that everyone who wants a job can get a job and no one will be left behind. I wonder if you could comment a little bit more about the kinds of services you've been offering.

Ms. Deborah Childs: Absolutely. Integrating the ODSP program into the Employment Ontario services program, we've been able to—actually, it has been quite successful. We've been able to provide not only job coaching on the job—when individuals might have a developmental disability or might have other cognitive disabilities that prevent them from entering normally, we can support them financially with having a job coach be on the job with them, to help train the employer on how to work with individuals who are furthest from the labour market. Those are just some examples of the supports we can provide to those particular individuals, accessing and having on-site mental health and other supports like that, which help with all the life-stabilization things to keep them employed.

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

We'll now go to the opposition. MPP Gretzky.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I was actually going to ask Mr. Musson some questions, but since we have WCG here, I think that's where I'm going to focus my time.

In this bill, schedule 6 amends the ODSP Act to permit the Ministry of Labour to collect personal data of ODSP and OW recipients, and, frankly, it is not clear what the ministry is going to do with that or how far they're going

to go with that. They could be collecting personal data of individuals on ODSP or OW, and that's alarming. It's very concerning, because with the current system, there have been several data breaches, where people's personal information has already been put out to the public. So I will say I have concern with that.

But specifically to Deborah: You had mentioned a clear path to employment. I just want to ask—WCG, in my understanding, is a subsidiary of an Australia-based company. Am I correct? So it's a foreign company who have been given contracts here in Canada for employment services. Are you aware that from 2005 to 2007, the McGuinty Liberals actually hired your company for a pilot program on privatization of social services and employment services, and that after an independent report came out that found that particular privatization pilot was both ineffective and did not save the government any money, the Liberals had to scrap that program? Were you aware of that?

Ms. Deborah Childs: I was not aware of the specifics of that.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Okay. That independent report found that the jobs secured by WCG were low-paying or short-term, and the results-based payment structure meant clients were often inappropriately placed in ill-suited jobs. So I'm wondering—my understanding with this government is that that structure is still in place, that there are financial incentives when people are placed in jobs. Is that still correct?

Ms. Deborah Childs: That structure is different from what you're describing in terms of how the integrated employment services are delivered today.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: So there's no—

Ms. Deborah Childs: There are incentives to employers to hire individuals who are already working within an employment structure, who are helping them to overcome training barriers. The placement dollars or the subsidies that employer might get to support an individual are to ensure a long-term, sustainable position. It's not just "get a job and we forget about you." It's a 12-month "keep someone sustained."

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Twelve months, okay—and you used the word "incentive."

Are you aware that similar privatization experiments in the UK and Australia—those results were bad because companies moved people into jobs to collect the fee whether they were ready or not? Were you aware of that?

Ms. Deborah Childs: I would have data that would show otherwise. I'd be happy to be able to present that somehow to the committee.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Okay, there was data for this. And in February 2019, it was reported that an Australian Senate report called the privatized Jobactive system a A\$7.3-billion—what they said was it was a "bureaucratic nightmare." The report also called for an overhaul of the program.

Also, in several states in the United States, similar programs—and I believe WCG was one of the service providers. Many states actually ended up in legal battles to end contracts with privatized companies providing employment services for people on social assistance.

Ms. Deborah Childs: WCG is a Canadian company started out of BC and has never operated in the States.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: But it is a subsidiary—

Ms. Deborah Childs: It's a subsidiary of APM.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —of an Australian-based company that has had dealings in other—

Ms. Deborah Childs: You mentioned WCG, so I just wanted to clarify.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: So my question is, then—because I'm hearing from my constituents. I know my colleague from Waterloo and I have started raising concerns about the direction this government was going, specifically because a previous Liberal government tried the exact same thing with the same companies and it was a failure. I know what I'm hearing from my constituents who are on social assistance is their very deep concern about the path forward to privatizing employment services and what that means for them. We know that there are people in this province—whether the government wants to recognize that or not—who have disabilities, who cannot work or can only work intermittently, and these people are indeed being encouraged or coerced, pushed into jobs that they are not capable of having or holding.

So I'm wondering, as this goes forward, what kind of public data is there available, whether that is through your company directly or through the government, to ensure that there is that public scrutiny, that there is that ability to then look at that data and say, "This is what's working and what's not working." It's not just about what's not working, but look at what's working, and how do we tweak or change the things that are working. What kind of public reporting requirements are there for you or through the government?

Ms. Deborah Childs: I just want to address—as someone who has worked in Employment Ontario services for 25 years, the way that the program is structured now, I would not ever imagine someone being coerced into a position they were either not ready for or having to go into. That would not be the case, experience or anything I have actually ever seen in all my years of working in Employment Ontario services. Additionally, we work with 55 service providers, and that definitely would not be the case.

In terms of reporting, we are responsible for reporting to our ministry. All of the data is open, and as far as I know, it's available. We are able to provide data on the success of the Employment Ontario programs as needed, as required, to our ministry. It's not protected or unavailable. It's—

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: So you're open with the data. That goes to the government—

Ms. Deborah Childs: Absolutely. It's transparent.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —and then what the government does with that, whether they report publicly or not on results, is up to them.

Ms. Deborah Childs: The positive results and even anything that is not working is public, and information is available for the general public.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Okay, all right. I appreciate that.

I think my colleague from Sudbury had a question.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute. MPP West.

MPP Jamie West: One minute? Okay. That doesn't leave me a lot of time.

I'll ask Paul a question. As my colleague MPP Gates had said, the PPE and washrooms aren't in this bill. It was announced several times at press conferences, and during debate on the bill I had said this is a bit of a headline bill because stuff that was announced wasn't in it. Do you think that would make a good amendment for us to include in the bill when we get to amendments?

Mr. Paul Clipsham: As far as the mechanics of how it gets done, I would defer to the representatives around this table about how best to do that. Directionally, it's the right thing to do, for sure. However that needs to get done, I'll leave it to you folks to decide.

MPP Jamie West: I would agree. I used to be a safety rep and I remember meeting a female worker who was stapling the sleeves of her coveralls so she didn't get caught in equipment. It really is something that should be taken seriously.

Mr. Paul Clipsham: Yes.

MPP Jamie West: I probably only have like 10 seconds, so I'll defer.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank very much. That concludes the time. Thank you very much to the panelists for presenting this morning. That concludes this panel, and it also concludes the presenters for today.

I just want to add a reminder that the deadline for written submissions for this bill is 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 19, 2023. If there's anything that the panelists wish to add in writing, they have until then to put that in to be considered.

Are there any questions from the committee? If not, the committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m., Tuesday, April 25, 2023, when we will meet for public hearings on Bill 85.

The committee adjourned at 0951.

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