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Mardi 3 mai 2016

Standing Committee on
Estimates

Ministry of Transportation

Comité permanent des
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 3 May 2016

Mardi 3 mai 2016

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): The committee is about to begin consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation for a total of seven hours and 30 minutes.

As we have some new members, a new ministry and a new minister before the committee, I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that the purpose of the estimates committee is for the members of the Legislature to determine if the government is spending money appropriately, wisely and effectively in the delivery of the services intended.

I would also like to remind everyone that the estimates process has always worked well with a give-and-take approach. On one hand, members of the committee take care to keep their questions relevant to the estimates of the ministry, and the ministry, for its part, demonstrates openness by providing information requested by the committee.

As Chair, I will allow members to ask a wide range of questions pertaining to the estimates before the committee to ensure that they are confident that the ministry will spend those dollars appropriately. In the past, members have asked questions about the delivery of similar programs in the previous fiscal years, about the policy framework that supports a ministry approach to a problem or to service delivery, or about the competence of a ministry to spend the money wisely and efficiently.

However, it must be noted that the onus is on the member asking the question to make the questioning relevant to the estimates under consideration. The ministry is required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues the ministry undertakes to address. I trust that the deputy minister has made arrangements to have the hearings closely monitored with respect to the questions raised, so that the ministry can respond accordingly.

If you wish, you may, at the end of your appearance, verify the questions and issues being tracked by the research officer. Any questions before we start?

I'm now required to call vote 2701, which sets the review process in motion. We will begin with a statement of not more than 30 minutes by the minister, followed by the statements of up to 30 minutes by the official opposition and 30 minutes by the third party. Then the minister

will have 30 minutes for a reply. The remaining time will be apportioned equally amongst the three parties.

Minister, the floor is yours.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to be here at estimates committee with all of you. I want to begin by thanking the committee for giving me the opportunity to be here to talk about a topic or a wide range of issues that are, of course, near and dear to my heart, as the Minister of Transportation.

This is my second opportunity, since first becoming Minister of Transportation, to appear at estimates. I found the first go-around at estimates interesting and educational, and I look forward to a similar approach being taken over the next seven and a half hours.

I wanted to say that I'm delighted to be joined here at the table by the Deputy Minister of Transportation, Stephen Rhodes. There are a number of individuals from the ministry who are here in the room. We will do our best, as always, to respond to the questions posed by members of the committee and to help provide information to the best of our abilities.

I think that most people here will know that I've now served as Minister of Transportation since June 2014. I don't say this in any way, shape or form to take anything away from the other ministries that exist, but, of course, I do believe that transportation is extremely important here in a province like ours; a province that is vast geographically and has many different challenges, whether we're talking about public transit in densely populated urban areas and suburban areas of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, Waterloo region or some communities in the north, like Thunder Bay, or we're discussing how we link ourselves by way of roads, highways and bridges.

I would be remiss, I think, if I didn't mention off the top that in 2016, earlier this year, the Ministry of Transportation proudly celebrated its 100th anniversary as a ministry here in the province of Ontario. That's 100 years of building that connectivity right across this province.

Over the last two years, I've had a chance—as someone who's lived his entire life in the GTHA, but who's very proud to call Ontario home—to be in every corner of this province, from Cambridge to Northumberland–Quinte West, certainly a lot of time in Trinity–Spadina by nature of its physical proximity to this building, and, of course, in Kingston and the Islands and many other parts of the province.

I can tell you that we have—which no doubt committee members will know—a very ambitious plan to build the province up over the next number of years. Our Moving Ontario Forward plan, which, of course—\$31.5 billion over the next 10 years. That’s roughly \$16 billion for priority transit projects in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area—which I’ll come back to in a second—but also approximately \$15 billion for transit, transportation and other critical forms of infrastructure beyond the GTHA and other parts of Ontario. It’s an exciting plan.

Wherever I travel in the province, there is a great deal of awareness about the fact that we are a government that is moving forward aggressively with this robust plan to make sure that we’re making the investments that will ultimately matter most, not only to our economy here in the province—which, of course, is crucial—but also with respect to improving the quality of life for the people that we are very proud—I know in this room, all of us, regardless of which caucus we’re from—to represent.

I’m also fond of saying—in fact, I was at a conference this morning and I used these very words or similar words at that conference—that we do find ourselves in an interesting time in Ontario. Prior to 2003, we had experienced, as a province, I would say, more than a generation’s worth of chronic underinvestment in the infrastructure that we need, whether we’re talking about highways or ferries or public transit or cycling infrastructure—a long list of very worthy undertakings and projects. I would argue we had, again, chronically underinvested in those.

We are currently dealing with what I call the twin challenges of both trying to catch up, because of that underinvestment, and keep up at the same time. I think everybody would recognize, whether you’re from Hamilton or any other community in the province, for the most part, that we continue to experience significant population growth and will continue, particularly in our urban and suburban areas, but frankly, even beyond those. Making sure that we keep our eyes on the ball, that we keep focused on moving the province forward and building it up with those investments is something that I know is important. I hear that wherever I go. I hear a lot of excitement about the fact that we have alignment now between our provincial government here at Queen’s Park and our new federal partners in Ottawa with respect to moving forward in that particular direction.

We’re also contending with that requirement to keep up and to keep investing in the right way in those projects and communities that will, again, help support not only our existing middle class, but help us grow our middle class, help our economy continue to be strengthened and help ensure, at the end of the day, that our quality of life is not only maintained, but that it’s enhanced right across the province of Ontario.

I know, or at least I anticipate, that we’re going to delve into a number of interesting topics while I’m here at committee, but I would say that in the last number of months we’ve made tremendous progress, for example, in areas beyond some of the infrastructure investments, in

areas such as our road user safety agenda—something that we’re all very proud of.

I will say, over the last two years, being able to serve as minister—to not only introduce but watch Bill 31, the Making Ontario’s Roads Safer act, be passed in the Legislature is something that I’m particularly proud of. From my perspective, what’s most interesting about the passage of that legislation was that it did pass unanimously. It was very encouraging to see members of all three caucuses standing in support of legislation that will help ensure that Ontario remains right at the leading edge of all of those issues, whether we’re talking about increased sanctions for distracted driving, increased sanctions for alcohol-impaired driving, for the first time ever, significant sanctions for drug-impaired driving—which I believe is of crucial importance, particularly as we go forward—to enhanced sanctions for those who are engaging in practices such as dooring and a number of others. There’s a long list, as you would know, Madam Chair, of initiatives that were contained in Bill 31. To see that legislation pass unanimously, I think, again, is very encouraging.

I know that within our road user safety division, we continue to work very closely with all of our partners right across this country.

0910

I did have the opportunity, not that many months ago, to co-chair the council of transport ministers from across Canada meeting. I can share with the committee that there’s broad recognition on the part of my counterparts across this country that as it relates to road and highway safety, Ontario continues to be a leader. I think that’s reflected in the data that demonstrates that over the last 13 years, we have ranked first or second right across North America with respect to road and highway safety.

I’m also fond of saying that doesn’t mean that our work is done. It doesn’t mean that we put away the tools and say that we don’t have to continue to monitor what’s happening in other jurisdictions, to learn from their best practices. I certainly acknowledge that we continue to have more work to do. There are new technologies coming into the market that we anticipate will be available over the next number of months with respect to drug-impaired driving in particular. I know it is of great importance to me. There are a number of initiatives that we’re going to continue to watch closely to make sure that we’re always at that leading edge with respect to road user safety.

Earlier in my remarks, I mentioned our very ambitious plan to continue to build and invest in transit and transportation infrastructure. I think everybody here would be very well aware of some of the very exciting projects that we have in places like the GTHA. We have, of course, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT that’s currently under construction, the single largest public transit project in the province’s history that’s going to run from west to east along Eglinton—roughly 19 kilometres. I had the privilege of standing with the Premier and a number of our caucus colleagues as we announced the

official start of construction for the Keele station, the first station for that LRT. This is a project that I know will transform the lives of people who live not just in Toronto itself but right around this entire region.

One of the things that is a crucial component of my mandate from the Premier is to deliver on that seamless and integrated transit network here in the GTHA, to give people more options to leave their cars at home and to take public transit. That connectivity, that notion of connecting all forms of transit so that it's easier for people around this entire region to move, whether we're talking about getting to and from work or to and from school, or simply wanting to get down to a Raptors playoff game if the chance should provide itself to people in this region—that's something that we all strive to work towards, and we're going to continue to do that work.

We have LRT projects, along Finch in northwestern Toronto. We have, of course, LRT projects in Hamilton—we're very excited about that project—and in Mississauga and Peel region, while at the same time we continue to support, in very substantial ways, the LRT project currently under construction in Waterloo region and, of course, in the city of Ottawa. These are ground-breaking investments that are being made, literally ground-breaking investments that are being made, because we all do understand the importance of making sure that we get it right.

Here in the GTHA and slightly beyond the GTHA, the most important part, I would say, or the foundation of that connectivity, is the GO regional express rail plan. In 2014, we made the commitment to move forward, over a decade, with two-way, all-day GO service, electrified service up to 15-minute intervals on core segments of the network. In April 2015, I stood with the Premier in Barrie when we announced the \$13.5-billion plan and how we would embark, particularly on those corridors where we have 100% ownership. Across all seven corridors that we have in the GO network, committee members may be aware, roughly 80% are owned by the people of Ontario. In April 2015, the Premier announced what our GO regional express rail delivery plan would look like. We've made some tremendous progress in that regard, for example, with some double-tracking work that's already taking place on the Barrie corridor and I believe the Stouffville corridor as well, with significantly more to come.

When you think about that opportunity, whether you live in the 416, 905 or 519, depending on where you are across the whole region, to be able to travel in both directions all day long at frequent intervals—electrified service in particular over that decade—it is something that I know will, not to repeat myself, literally transform this entire region. It will give people more options to leave their cars at home, to travel in and out of the Toronto area, but frankly, we've seen an explosion of interest in particular from Waterloo region in the last number of months.

We see—I guess I would call them—informal partnerships coming about with respect to our municipal leadership along that corridor, and understandably so.

I know that our Premier and our caucus understand the urgent need to be able to move forward along that innovation corridor that's so crucial to Ontario's economic future and make sure that we have better transportation connectivity. That's something that I know the member from Cambridge, who serves as my parliamentary assistant, and the member from Kitchener Centre and the Premier herself—we get it. We know it. We're working hard.

Of course, budget 2016, which was introduced earlier this year here in the Legislature, spoke to the need to make sure that we continue to work with our freight rail partners, CN and CP, to unlock the potential of both the Kitchener corridor and the Milton corridor. That's work that will continue. But, beyond that, we also have the requirement to make sure that we continue to deliver all of the GO regional express rail vision for the people of this region. That's something that I know is terribly exciting.

Chair, if I could just ask: How much time do I have left in my 30?

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): About 17 minutes.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Okay; great.

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you. I don't have a clock here, so it's hard for me to know for sure.

If I could take off my minister's hat for just a quick second and talk as somebody who's very proud to serve as a member of provincial Parliament for York region, we also have the York region Viva BRT running along Highway 7.

I do say that I've lived in this region my entire life, but I lived specifically in Vaughan for close to 30 years. I will tell you—and it's not unique to Vaughan; I would say that it exists right around, particularly, our 905 communities. There has been, and understandably, a historic cultural tendency, as it relates to transportation to tilt towards using cars because those were the only options that were, by and large, available to people who wanted to move from point A to point B, as the saying goes. To witness what's happening along Highway 7 in York region, with the significant investment—roughly \$1.4 billion that the province of Ontario is investing—in the Viva BRT is something that's interesting, not just from a transportation perspective but, I would also say, particularly at Jane and Highway 7 in the riding of Thornhill.

Earlier, I referenced the importance of connectivity. The Toronto-York Spadina subway extension that will run and end at Jane and Highway 7 and at what's soon to be known—or is known currently, but being built out—as the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, a brand new downtown core for Vaughan and for that part of York region. But what's really interesting is that you have the literal intersection between the Toronto-York Spadina subway extension, the TYSSE—that extension of the TTC up to Jane and 7, which will intersect with a terminal along Highway 7 for the Viva BRT. So when I talk about connectivity—and frankly, some of these lines—not just

those two, but others—will also have very easy connections into the GO network. This is what I'm talking about when I say that we will deliver on a network that will help support that degree of connectivity, which is certainly required.

This is true in Durham when you look at some of the projects that we're undertaking there, which I'll circle back to in just a quick second. It's certainly true in Mississauga and in Brampton and, again, right across York region. I mentioned Durham just a second ago. We have a very exciting project that is nearing completion in Durham, with Highway 407 East. I can tell you that, in conversations with individual municipal representatives and our own caucus colleagues from the entire Durham region and beyond, to those in Peterborough, Northumberland–Quinte West and others, there's tremendous excitement about the fact that the government of Ontario is currently building the 407 East, which of course will run from where the 407 ETR ends, right out to—eventually, when phase 2 is completed—Highway 35 and Highway 115, which is great news. In addition to that, there is, I would say, tremendous excitement when I explain to people that we're also building two north-south links so that, as part of both phase 1 and then phase 2 of 407 East, there will be an additional highway—a 400-series, controlled-access highway—running to link the 407 East down to the 401.

When you look at that part of Durham, when you look at that part of the GTHA, you see very clearly the need for those continued investments. Actually, if anybody has spent any time driving around that part of the region, it really does help to give you a sense of exactly how significant and how large these infrastructure projects are—because when you're talking about a highway project that's the length of the 407 East and others that I'll talk about in just a second, you really see not only how we're transforming the region but you actually see how many people we're putting to work with these infrastructure investments that we're making.

0920

The government's overall infrastructure plan is ambitious, but ultimately it will help create and sustain, over the next decade, in each and every year, 110,000 jobs. That's interesting when it's numbers on a piece of paper, but when you go out and look at the Crosstown, the 407 East and some of the other projects like Waterloo region's ION and so many others, you actually see how many skilled tradespeople and others throughout the entire infrastructure employment spectrum, as I like to call it, are being put to work because of the ambitious infrastructure plan that we have.

I think many in the room will know that not that many weeks ago I was very happy to stand alongside Minister Brad Duguid as we launched the RFP, the request for proposals, for the Highway 427 widening and expansion. In an area of Highway 427, portions of that highway are already currently being widened south of Finch, but from Finch up to roughly Highway 7, the 427 will continue to be widened, and then from Highway 7 up to Major

MacKenzie Drive in York region it will be extended. That's roughly a seven-kilometre extension. All told, this is a very significant project that will unlock tremendous economic development potential through that part of York region—a huge employment land potential and, therefore, job creation potential not just because of the jobs that will be created because of the investment in the highway itself but the jobs that will be created because the municipalities and the private sector will leverage that significant provincial investment to develop the employment lands that are immediately adjacent to that highway.

That's an example, but we see that in many other parts of the province with the significant investments that we're making.

I should point out that the Highway 427 extension RFP has been released. We anticipate that construction will begin next spring and that vehicles will be on that completed extension of that highway in 2020.

I think many in the room will also know that not that many months ago I had the opportunity to do a couple of very exciting things that were, I would say, groundbreaking or innovative or unusual for the province of Ontario in the transportation realm. Number one: Last November I was in London with the Deputy Premier to announce that we were launching the environmental assessment for the high-speed rail project. High-speed rail, of course, is something that we had talked about and committed to. Part of my mandate letter from the Premier did include advancing the environmental assessment for what really has the potential to be something revolutionary through southwestern Ontario: high-speed rail from Toronto to Windsor, with stops in Waterloo region and London.

We announced that we were launching the environmental assessment in London. I know that just in that community alone, whether we're talking about the municipality itself or we're talking about a number of those from the private sector or from the university and college sector who are looking at the future with respect to creating that kind of higher-speed connectivity between London and the GTA, there was tremendous excitement. That excitement remains. Of course, not that many months after we launched the environmental assessment, we announced that former federal transport minister David Collenette had been appointed to serve as a special adviser to both myself and Minister Duguid with respect to doing some additional work on this important project. Of course, Mr. Collenette brings a tremendous breadth of experience in the transportation and transport realm to that work. I know that he has been out in communities along that potential new corridor to have conversations with First Nations and municipalities and others to gather feedback as part of his work.

The other thing that I think garnered a great deal of interest following the very successful Pan Am/Parapan Am Games was the announcement that I had the chance to make with respect to Ontario moving forward with HOT lanes. I referenced the 427 extension just a second

ago. The first electronic—I'll call them "electronically tolled"—HOT lanes will be deployed on that 427 extension on both a portion of the existing 427 that's currently being widened and the extension itself. We anticipate that those HOT lanes will be in place in 2021, but I also did announce at that same time that we would be launching a pilot for HOT lanes on the QEW or a segment of the QEW. More information will be forthcoming on that in the next number of weeks and months, but we anticipate that, as originally suggested when we made the announcement, the QEW pilot will be effectively rolled out a little bit later this year.

Two other areas I know have triggered a great deal of excitement, and understandably so, Chair. Late last year, Minister Duguid and I were in Waterloo, at the University of Waterloo, to announce that Ontario would be the first province in Canada to permit the testing of automated vehicles, or driverless vehicles, on its roads and highways.

I have to tell you that it was a bit of a chilly day. I know that the member from Cambridge was there that day. It was a bit of chilly day, but we had the chance, if you can imagine this, Chair, both Minister Duguid and I, to ride in the automated golf cart that two students—I think that it's two students; maybe more—from Waterloo had basically devised and created, and to take that automated, essentially driverless golf cart from where we were originally positioned to the announcement itself.

It was actually quite remarkable to see and witness in a very tangible way how the world of transportation, as it relates to disruptive innovation and technology, is literally transforming under our feet, and how Ontario is positioning itself right at the forefront of that technology, again, as the first province in the country that's permitting the testing of these vehicles on our roads and highways. It's something that's very exciting from the transportation perspective, yes, but also from the perspective of encouraging more innovation, whether we're talking about our university campuses or we're talking about other aspects of the private sector and the research world.

I mentioned earlier the Toronto-to-Waterloo innovation corridor, but I think that that's the kind of technology that we are able to not only harness and work on here in Ontario—I know that we all do feel a great deal of pride about what's happening within that realm and recognize that we're going to continue to go forward and be aggressive. I think that we have to take advantage of all of the benefits and be prepared for some of the challenges that might exist as more of those technologies evolve.

Just a couple of days ago, I was in Mississauga to announce that we were awarding \$20 million to support the build-out of a network of fast-charging electric vehicle stations essentially right across the province of Ontario. From what I recall, 500 charging stations will be rolled out or supported as a result of this significant investment. That's great news, because in my two years as transportation minister, when we've looked at, for example, modernizing and updating the Electric Vehicle

Incentive Program, or I've had the chance to witness some of the new technologies, for example, at the auto show here in Toronto, or to talk to the private sector in the realm of auto about what they're planning to do, and the interaction that they have with consumers in their realm, one of the big challenges, of course, as it relates to more widespread adoption of electric vehicles, is what we call the range anxiety that many consumers would feel.

Even though we see more technology and we see more investments from the private sector to help extend exactly what kind of range some of these vehicles will have, at the end of the day we want to be in a position—which is why we've made this \$20-million investment—so that we can provide comfort to consumers having the knowledge that whether they are just going on a fairly short, finite commute on a daily basis or they're planning to travel a little bit farther away from home, for whatever reason, they'll have the ability to recharge their vehicle, which in turn will help support, I think, their decisions in a more aggressive, robust way to purchase some of these vehicles, particularly as more and more of these vehicles are coming on stream and coming onto the market, providing them with more purchasing options.

Of course this then segues into the fact that within the transportation sector, roughly 34% of all of the greenhouse gas emissions that we emit as a province do flow from the transportation sector, which provides us with a significant challenge but also a wonderful opportunity in the transportation world. It's why we are moving aggressively forward with more of the technological innovation in supporting it. It's why we're also moving forward with respect to building that network of fast-charging stations.

How am I doing for time?

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): You have three minutes left.

0930

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Three minutes? Thank you very much.

It's why we're also moving forward aggressively with the network that I talked about. I will say that whether it was at the announcement itself in Mississauga or whether I'd been talking to others from that world, there is tremendous interest and excitement about those monies that we put out into the market to support that network of fast-charging stations. There is tremendous interest in working with us to try to make sure not only that those get built, but that we find ways to leverage that investment to deploy potentially even more of this infrastructure over the next number of months, which, again, will be crucial as it relates to our fight against climate change.

I will say that in my own community of Vaughan, friends of mine have talked about the excitement, now that they've heard that this particular network of fast-charging stations will be built and deployed.

I would say, with my remaining time, that I do certainly look forward to hearing questions from all of the representatives, all of the caucuses on today's committee. I know that we all share a passion—all of us, regardless of

partisan stripe—for making sure that we are making sound investments in transit and transportation infrastructure. It affects each and every single one of us, whether we're coming from an urban or suburban community, a remote northern community or a rural community.

We at the Ministry of Transportation, again, are very proud of 100 years of doing this kind of work in the province of Ontario, building the province up and making sure that we are going in the right direction. I certainly know that in debate, even in the Legislature, we all share the determination to find creative ways to make sure that we get it right. I certainly do look forward to the questions. I look forward to the back-and-forth.

I mentioned at the outset that I'm joined here by the deputy and a number of individuals who are here from the ministry. We will, as always, endeavour to provide the answers that are required, and I look forward to the discussion.

How am I doing for time now, Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): One minute.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: One minute? So I will actually finish off by talking a little bit, very quickly, about the fact—which I often do in speeches; I know some of my colleagues have heard me say this before—that it's really important, when you think about the time horizon for the investments and the decisions that we're making, whether it's in road user safety, transit investments or other forms of the transportation infrastructure that we need—we talk in 10-year horizons. Why that's really important to me, beyond the obvious, is that I have young kids, and I know other committee members do as well. When I think of my eight-year-old and my five-year-old, and where they will be in a decade—we want to make sure that they can continue to live and thrive in a province like Ontario, and I know that at the very heart, the very backbone of making sure that they have that opportunity, there is a responsibility that we collectively have to make sure that we get our transportation plan right. I know that, working together, we'll find a way to do that.

Thank you very much for having me here today.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Thank you, Minister.

Now, to the official opposition. You have 30 minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Good morning, Minister. Good morning, folks from the—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Mr. Harris—sorry, I had to put your name on record.

Mr. Michael Harris: That's fine. They know who it is.

I appreciated your presentation. I look forward to spending the next seven or so hours with you and your staff.

First off, you're responsible for the Moving Ontario Forward plan, the billions of dollars that will be invested in public infrastructure. The core agency that is responsible to execute that, the planning agency, is Metrolinx. I think we can both agree that there have been some missteps with that agency over the last while, in fact.

I want to ask you specifically about a letter that you recently sent to the chair of the board at Metrolinx, Robert Prichard. In the letter you say you need to ensure value. You go on to explain that there's a continued need to ensure value for money in Metrolinx corporate administration processes.

Would you not say, though, that the oversight of this agency ultimately falls with you?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think there are a couple of things. I would say off the top—thank you for the question, by the way—that yes, of course, as Minister of Transportation I am responsible for delivering on all aspects of the mandate letter that I received from the Premier, including, of course, working closely with Metrolinx to make sure that we do deliver successfully on the very ambitious plan that we have.

I would say that Metrolinx is an agency that over the last number of years, in my estimation, has not only done tremendous work with respect to the delivery on that mandate—and, frankly, even predating me as the Minister of Transportation—but I would also say that we have to keep a couple of things in mind. Because of that chronic underinvestment prior to 2003 in all of these areas that I know are so important to all of us—you included, from Waterloo region, and I respect that—I know that there has been a tremendous demand on the agency with respect to how quickly it has had to grow and how quickly it has had to deal with all of the challenges that we're facing.

The other part of it is that I think if all of us could go back half a century—unfortunately we can't, but if we could go back half a century as we built up all of our communities, as they continue to grow, if we had the opportunity to start with a blank slate as those communities were growing and make the investments at least at the foundational level for the transportation and transit network that we need, we would be dealing with one set of challenges. Whether we're talking about Parkdale-High Park or York South-Weston or Waterloo region, the fact that we are coming after our communities have grown and been built—and, in many cases, those communities are fairly densely populated and we are now building into those communities—and I'm just making this terminology up—in-fill transit infrastructure. There are significant challenges with that approach. I've said this many times publicly. To do this degree of work in all of our communities is disruptive, it is expensive and it takes time. So there are some tremendous challenges there.

Just really quickly on the Metrolinx piece itself, I know that the agency has grown dramatically over the last number of years. They have provided tremendous outcomes—I know you don't want me to, but I could list off a whole bunch. We probably will get into some of them at some point in the course of my time here at estimates. But I will also say that we all have a responsibility—which I think you would respect—Metrolinx included, to make sure that at all times we are delivering value for the people that we represent and that

we are focused on the mandate that we are given, which is to plan, develop, support, deploy and ultimately operate the transit service that we're talking about.

Mr. Michael Harris: Calling for this review: Would that be a sign or an admission that your ministry in fact has failed to provide proper oversight of Metrolinx?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No. Again, I would say that we work very closely with the agency. I think we've had tremendous success. When you look at the work that we are not only involved in right now but you also look at the scope, the size and the volume of the work that's to come, I think that we have done a tremendous job. Just by nature of my personality itself, I'm also somebody that believes that we can always improve, that we can always collectively roll up our sleeves to work hard. I think we do have to recognize exactly how ambitious the plan is for the GTHA and beyond the GTHA, into places like your home community in Waterloo region and the palpable desire that exists in all of our communities to see that we get it right. I think that, if I can say this, when you look at the scorecard of what we've been able to deliver, not just in the last two years but in the last 13, it has been considerable. I know that over the next number of years we have significantly more to deliver, and I don't think there's anything wrong with making sure that we collectively keep our eyes on the ball and deliver the outcomes and do it in a way that demonstrates that we're providing value for the investments that we're making.

Mr. Michael Harris: This review is an internal review. A lot of critics suggest that an internal review will not bring forward tangible changes that are actually necessary. Why not go to more of a public review? Who will actually be in charge of leading this internal review at Metrolinx?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: The communication that I provided to the chair does require that Metrolinx work closely with the chief administrative officer at MTO to report back not only on an interim basis but over a slightly longer time horizon.

I guess my perspective on that would be that, here in this part of Ontario, in the GTHA and beyond, we have struggled throughout much of my life, particularly prior to 2003, with a certain overemphasis on endless debate, endless dialogue and endless process. In 2014, when I was first appointed as minister, I said publicly, and I have said it repeatedly since, that from my perspective the most important thing was that we actually got on with the work that's required to deliver the outcomes people expect. To me, that means approving the right projects, getting shovels in the ground, putting people to work, and demonstrating to the people we all represent that we are producing the outcomes that they've asked of us—in this case, putting more transit options into service. That is the lion's share of the work that we're focused on. In this instance, I felt it was important, and I still do, to make sure that at all times we're maintaining and supporting that approach in a way that demonstrates to the people we represent that they're getting value for what they deserve.

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The last thing in the world that I want to do, and the last thing in the world that the people in my home community—and, I would hazard a guess, in your home community—want us to do is end up in a world where we are inadvertently delaying the outcomes for the sake of the trap that we've always fallen into in this region and beyond.

That's the work that we are focused on. I think we're doing a good job of delivering it. There's always room for improvement in anything we undertake as human beings.

Mr. Michael Harris: One of the first bullet points in the letter to the chair of the board was a review of agency-ministry communication protocols to ensure that they are meeting their intended purposes for both parties. Do you have a specific concern with the fact that the agency is commenting on issues before getting prior approval from the ministry? What specifically are you looking for?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No, it's a fair point, a fair question. When you consider the rapid expansion and the rapid growth of the agency itself in order to respond to exactly how ambitious our plan is, I think it's fair to say that, like any entity in life that grows very quickly and has a very demanding and very high-profile mandate to deliver on, it's actually a healthy thing to do regularly scheduled check-ins to make sure that there's a reasonable flow of information back and forth, and from my perspective, in two years as minister, I've always found that there has been. Again I see nothing wrong with wanting to make sure, whether it's that one specific piece or other elements—in this case, this correspondence—that they remain as true to the best practices that we can deploy as possible. I think it's only natural in any organization or in any relationship between two organizations, when the task is so considerable, when the plan is so ambitious and when the stakes are very high for the entire province, that we continue to strive to get it right. That's the spirit in which that correspondence was written and deployed, and I believe that's the spirit in which it has been received.

Mr. Michael Harris: What is the current communication protocol over at Metrolinx with regard to the ministry? Can you briefly explain?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I can briefly, from my perspective, explain that I have the opportunity to be briefed by representatives from Metrolinx on a regular basis. I know that there are similar briefings that are provided to my office back and forth—and the deputy, if he wants to speak to this, certainly can jump in. From the MTO public service to Metrolinx itself, I know there is a significant amount of, I'll call it, synergistic communications, if that's even the right word to use to describe it, but there's a lot of co-operation, and there has to be, because, at the end of the day, as the agency that's tasked with delivering on the mandate the Premier has given to me and then, therefore, that flows through to the public service at MTO, there would have to be significant,

ongoing back-and-forth to make sure we're getting it right.

Deputy, if you'd like to speak specifically to some of the other protocols that exist.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): If you could just identify yourself for Hansard, please.

Mr. Stephen Rhodes: Certainly. I'm Steve Rhodes, deputy for transportation.

From a communications perspective, to your specific question, our staff meets on a regular basis—the communications directors—to make sure that we're all clear on what's coming down the pipe—forward planning, that sort of thing—to avoid any surprises. That's the nature of what I've seen so far in my 10 weeks on the job. It's a bit of a learning curve. But that's exactly what's done on a regular basis. We have periodic meetings on specific projects, some of which the minister spoke about at the start of his opening remarks.

Mr. Michael Harris: You mentioned communication. How often—and I know that when we've asked some of the questions in the House on some of the specific instances that we've had issues with Metrolinx or folks have had issues, you've been speaking with the chair and other members of the board into the wee hours of the evening, I guess. How often do you yourself actually communicate with Bruce McCuaig, the CEO of Metrolinx?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Bruce and others from Metrolinx at senior levels will participate in briefings with me on a regular basis. I will say that from a communications standpoint my direct conduit to Metrolinx, of course, is the board chair, Rob Prichard. Mr. Prichard and I, from my earliest days as minister at MTO, established that we would—and fundamentally because from my perspective this is the best way to make sure that everybody is on the same page, that we're moving in the right direction, that everybody understands what needs to be done and that there is a fairly easy flow of information back and forth on an as-needed basis.

It's hard for me to quantify exactly how frequently we talk. We talk as needed. I would say that it's fairly frequent, but I have no way of measuring that against what other ministers have done prior to me arriving on the job.

Mr. Michael Harris: Moving on, obviously UP Express has been a significant issue that you and Metrolinx have had to deal with. You know what? Let's get it out at the outset: It's great that world-class cities have world-class transportation modes like the UP Express from Pearson to downtown.

We asked you back in September, in question period, and you told me that UP Express ridership would be around the 5,000-rider mark by the end of year one. Now, there was a change in the fare structure in March. How close were you to meeting that before the change in the fare makeup—up until March, I suppose—of meeting that 5,000?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks for the question. Thanks also for being someone who I know uses the UP

Express from time to time, because I've seen evidence of that on Twitter and it's much appreciated.

I think there are a couple of things to remember. One is that the UP Express itself—and I know that you've heard me say this, but I think it bears repeating because I think we do have to celebrate our successes—is a significant infrastructure project that was delivered both on time and on budget. It was in time for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games, as we had committed to.

It's a brand new service for this entire region. It's something that we've never had the chance to participate in before and, I think, as someone who has lived here his entire life—I actually grew up in Etobicoke, not far from Pearson, before moving to Vaughan. I think if you, historically, had talked to most individuals living in this region, quite apart from visitors to the region, there was what I would call a behavioural tendency towards consistently using specific modes of transporting yourself to the airport: your own car, a relative or a friend dropping you off, a taxi or a limo. To break into that market, which I think we all recognized would be a degree of a challenge, was more challenging than I think we anticipated, or that I anticipated. I'm not happy to say it, but I'm fine to say it. As a brand new service, putting it out into the market, I think that we learned that we needed to make sure that we were promoting it at all times in a way that made sense. I certainly heard anecdotally, even from colleagues and others, about the requirement for better way-finding and signs so that people, whether they were at Union itself or at Pearson, could have a better sense of literally how to access it. That's for people who live or work in this region, let alone for people who are visiting the region itself.

From my recollection—and the deputy is welcome to correct me if I'm not remembering properly—I think that we started off reasonably well. In the first number of weeks with UP Express—which launched, I believe, on June 6 of last year if I'm not mistaken about that. We started off reasonably well. We anticipated and certainly worked towards seeing that ridership grow. I think, Mr. Harris, you mentioned September when you asked me the question. I can't remember off of the top of my head where ridership stood specifically in September. What I can tell you is that over the course of the first eight months of service, despite very strong efforts on everybody's part to drive up ridership, what we saw was that ridership was not growing at a rate that I felt was satisfactory, especially since we knew—and I know that you've heard me say this publicly, because it's true, and I think you had acknowledged this as well, as someone who has used the service—that it is a great service.

When people actually have the opportunity to get on it, it's something they recognize as—you know, a 25-minute trip to Pearson from Union every 15 minutes, 19 and a half hours a day. It's a comfortable ride. Depending on the time of day, if you can see it, it's a scenic ride. You're getting a chance to see what the city of Toronto looks like from a perspective that most people wouldn't have the chance to see. That doesn't even speak to some of the amenities that come along with the service.

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It's a great service, so we needed to drive up ridership. I said at the time, just prior to March break, when we made the change and reduced the fares to make them more affordable, that we needed to do more to drive people towards the service. So in addition to the promotion and the way-finding and everything else, there were issues with respect to fares and affordability, not only for visitors but also for people in the west end of the GTHA who were looking to this as a potential option to support their daily commute, whether we're talking about from Weston or from the Bloor area.

We made the decision, as you know, just prior to March break, to reduce the fares, and I think that we have seen, since that point in time, that ridership has grown. Although I have not seen final numbers, necessarily, for the last couple of months, I certainly expect and I have heard anecdotally and seen preliminary numbers that suggest ridership has grown significantly.

Mr. Michael Harris: I have numbers until the end of December. I'm wondering if someone can provide to the committee the monthly passenger ridership numbers for January, February, March—can someone share those numbers with me?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We can take that back, yes.

Mr. Michael Harris: You don't have that available here?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm not sure if we do. I'm not sure.

Mr. Michael Harris: Nobody has it?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: John does.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): If you could just identify yourself first, please, for Hansard? Thank you.

Mr. John Lieou: Hi. My name is John Lieou. I am the ADM for policy and planning at the ministry.

Mr. Harris, you asked for the ridership numbers in January, February and March. Here they are: The monthly January ridership is 60,976. On a daily basis, it averages around 2,200. The February number is 64,046; on average, it is roughly 2,400.

Mr. Michael Harris: That includes the free day—family week?

Mr. John Lieou: Yes, this is the overall. Does that answer your question, Mr. Harris?

Mr. Michael Harris: March?

Mr. John Lieou: For March, there are two segments, as the minister has said. The pre-March 9 number is 17,000; that's ridership for that period. It is roughly 2,300 a day. After the change, it's at 103,000. So, roughly, it's 4,950 on a daily basis.

Mr. Michael Harris: Now, of the different class—and maybe you want to stay just in case they will need to refer to you for questions—but of the 60,976 for January, for instance, that would be a cross-section of fare prices, so you have got the top fare at \$29, was it not?

Mr. John Lieou: And \$19 with the Presto card.

Mr. Michael Harris: These are just riders, period, no matter what fare they've paid for? I know you break it

out significantly, and I'm wondering if you can provide to the committee how many of those were discounted, beyond the Presto discount.

I'll give you an example. These are everywhere in the city. Of the 60,976, how many of those riders for the month of January would in fact be complimentary or under some promotion?

Mr. John Lieou: I do not have that information.

Mr. Michael Harris: You would be able to get that to the committee, though?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We can take that back. I know that even the last two numbers that John gave with respect to the first part of March and post—those numbers are still approximate. I know Metrolinx is working towards complete reconciliation, so we'll take that request back.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes. I guess we'll build on that ask, then, for legislative research here. If you can provide to the committee—you've listed the daily ridership numbers. We've been given a monthly number up until the end of March, roughly. If you can at least, on a monthly basis, provide to the committee how many of those riders rode on a complimentary basis, for zero dollars, or were part of a promotional program. That's specifically what I'm curious about.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We'll take that back.

Mr. Michael Harris: I guess, initially, the UP Express—they talked about a three- to five-year break-even point. I'm assuming that it is safe to say that that three- to five-year break-even point will not be met, correct?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I would say, and I said this the day that we had announced that we were reducing fares, that at the end of it all, a train that's running mostly empty or running virtually empty never breaks even. We saw, as John pointed out, with some of the ridership numbers that he gave you for January, as an example, that over the course of the first eight months, the ridership wasn't where we wanted it to be, wasn't where it needed to be.

Again, just to emphasize the point, because I think it bears repeating, we have seen fairly dramatic spikes in ridership from people who are taking the entire trip, but also, frankly, ridership from people who are using it essentially as a commuter service in the west end of Toronto because the fares on those two interim stops are now in alignment with the GO fare that existed for the same length of travel.

At the end of the day, it's important for everybody to remember that when a train is running empty or nearly empty—you can project that it's going to break even at a certain point, but without ridership growth it would never break even. Obviously, Metrolinx is still in the process of not only reconciling some of the ridership numbers John referenced a second ago—we have not yet completed our full first year of service, and that's work that we're going to continue to monitor over the next number of months leading up to June 6 of this year, about a month from now, and have a chance to reconcile all those numbers and do the analysis to have a better sense of where things stand.

Again, notwithstanding the fact that transit pretty much right across Ontario—municipal transit, GO Transit in its current form—is a subsidized service, as you pointed out, Mr. Harris, there was anticipation that for a stretch of time the UP Express would require subsidy. Notwithstanding all of that, without ridership on the train, or with the train running so below capacity for so long, we would be in a position where we would not, virtually regardless of price point, necessarily break even. The focus with the reduction in fares is to drive people to the service, which it's obviously doing at this point in time. We will be able to analyze the numbers once we've gotten to the point of the first year of service being complete, to see where things stand.

Mr. Michael Harris: You've talked about the subsidy. What is the actual operating cost of the UP Express on a monthly basis?

Mr. John Lieou: I don't have that.

Mr. Michael Harris: You don't have that?

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Harris: No one has that number? You have no idea what it costs to operate the UP Express on a monthly basis?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: At this point, here at committee, no, I don't.

Mr. Michael Harris: You've never been told what it roughly costs to operate on a monthly basis?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It is possible, let me stress, that I would have heard at some point what an annual operating cost is, but I don't remember what that number is right now.

Mr. Michael Harris: Does somebody here from the ministry have an idea of what the annual projected operating cost of the UP Express is?

Mr. Ian Freeman: I'm Ian Freeman. I'm the director of finance at the Ministry of Transportation.

I have an annual estimate for the UP Express, and it's approximately \$68 million a year.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's \$68 million annually to operate it?

Mr. Ian Freeman: Yes.

Mr. Michael Harris: The break-even point would have initially been three to five years, at 5,000 riders a day, at the fare set initially. That's how you got to the three- to five-year breaking point, based on a ridership of 5,000 a day, with the fares that were initially put into place?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: From my recollection, it was 5,000 and growing. It was 5,000 by the end of the first year and then growth after that, beyond 5,000.

Mr. Michael Harris: What would be the projected annual subsidy for the UP Express, based on the \$68 million? You said \$68 million; right?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sorry. This is historically or—

Mr. Michael Harris: We've got the UP annual operating cost. I'm curious to know, what was the forecasted or projected subsidy in the first year, based on that operating cost—

Mr. Ian Freeman: Prior to the fare change, it was approximately \$17 million for the current fiscal year.

Mr. Michael Harris: So that ended March 31?

Mr. Ian Freeman: That will end next March 31.

Mr. Michael Harris: This—

Mr. Ian Freeman: So the coming March 31: March 31, 2017.

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Mr. Michael Harris: Metrolinx: Your first fiscal year-end was March 31. You'd have the number up until then, right?

Mr. Ian Freeman: Yes. For the year prior, it was \$7 million, which reflects a partial year.

Mr. Michael Harris: Have you had a look at that? Have you updated that number at all based on the first eight months of ridership?

Mr. Ian Freeman: We're currently going through the finalization of public accounts, so we don't have the figure yet.

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, would you agree that the fares that were set—the cost for riders—predominantly was the major factor in low ridership?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Look, I said this earlier in one of my answers to one of the questions that you asked: I think that when you're introducing a brand new service into this region that nobody has ever had the chance to experience, that presents a challenge. I think that we continue to need to do a better job around the signage and way-finding, though I believe that it has improved, from what I've seen first-hand. But I know the team at Metrolinx understands that we have to continue to move forward aggressively in that regard.

I think part of that is also some of the promotional work that's required. I know you pointed out some of the promotional materials that you've seen yourself. I think continuing to spread the word to drive people to this service, so that they can have the chance to experience it and—as I'm fond of saying—fall in love it, which most people who have taken it do, is all-important.

I recognize that, obviously, we made the decision, in advance of March break, to reduce the fares to make them more affordable for people living in the west end, people who are travelling downtown and people who are visiting our region.

From my perspective, there is no one single cause. I think it was a collection of a brand new service—better way-finding, better promotion and reducing the fares, so that we can be on a stronger footing with this service going forward.

I think that, in the earliest weeks and months, we see that ridership has grown. But as I said at the very outset today, from your first questions, it doesn't mean that our work ends. Regardless of any of this, we have to continue to work hard, keep our sleeves rolled up, drive more people towards this service and continue to support it.

Mr. Michael Harris: Have you ridden on the UP Express, aside from the days when you've opened it up?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Aside from the day that I opened it up, yes. The one thing that I have not yet man-

aged to do, despite my best efforts, was to give my daughters the chance to ride on the train. I'm anticipating, one day soon, that we're going to be able to hop on the train at Pearson and head down.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll send a coupon for you.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate that. If you have a coupon for Ripley's Aquarium, I'd take that one, too.

Laughter.

Mr. Michael Harris: I know, vice versa, totally. Thanks, Minister.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Ms. DiNovo, you have about 12 minutes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Minister, for being here, and deputy ministers et al.

I just wanted to first of all share a bit of the feedback that I get in my riding about Metrolinx. It's not just my riding; I hear from people in Mr. Dong's riding, from Mrs. Albanese's riding and from Mrs. Martins's riding as well. If there were a theme to that response—this is going back eight years, and I've been in office for 10 years—it's that they're unresponsive; that this is the agency that has caused property damage to them, if they live near the tracks, and that still rings bells every 15 minutes and keeps them awake at night and doesn't respond when they complain; that this is the agency that plowed ahead with diesel trains when the community was asking for electrification from the get-go; and that this was an agency that didn't listen when people said, "We need more stops. We need more affordable fares. Wouldn't it be nice if this were a relief line?"

From what you're saying now, basically, the feedback that we've been hearing for lo these many years is, in fact, part right: The fares were too high and the agency hasn't been as responsive or transparent as it should have been. That's the feedback that I'm getting.

I just wanted to also point out some of the figures here. You talk about a daily high for the UP Express, for example, of 4,950. I think that was the figure. If we compare that to the 504 streetcar, which runs along King Street, they get 53,000 riders a day. The Dufferin bus gets 44,000 riders a day.

Residents in downtown Toronto: It might be fair if they asked, "Why all the money into the UP Express when we still can't get to work because the 504 and the Dufferin bus are so crowded? Why the priority of this premium express service for folk who can afford it," because basically that's what it is, "over our needs as commuters just trying to get to work and who desperately need a relief line?" This points, again, to a problem with Metrolinx, which is their interaction with the Toronto Transit Commission on an ongoing basis and how those two agencies communicate with each other. For example, when new builds are happening, like the Eglinton Crosstown, how is that going to be maintained? Who will maintain it?

Again, coming back to Metrolinx and its operations as an agency, none of this is new. I've been through a few transportation ministers before yourself, sir, and we've had this conversation over and over and over again in the

same context. What I'm saying really is just out there; it's fact.

The question—and this is building off what my colleague said over here in the Progressive Conservatives, the official opposition party—is if, for example, UPX continues to lose money, continues not to add ridership at the rate to which it will ever be self-sustaining, what are the plans in the future for this line that may just never be functional? You must have thought about this.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm going to use the word "preamble" not to be disrespectful. I appreciate the preamble and you and I have had a number of bilateral conversations, and certainly you've done a great job of holding my feet to the fire in the Legislature on some of these issues.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that, historically over the last number of years, at least the last eight, there have been challenges. I said earlier with respect to one of my answers to Mr. Harris that when you're building transit, I don't know of a jurisdiction anywhere in North America, where the transit investment or infrastructure investment plan is as considerable as ours, where there isn't significant disruption felt by people living in communities along the way. That doesn't mean that the concerns that they're expressing shouldn't be respected, shouldn't be acknowledged and that we shouldn't continue to do or try our best to do the best job possible to be responsive.

I've served now as an MPP for just under four years. I have heard from colleagues of mine, who have been around for a longer stretch than me and who have historically had challenges, that they do feel that it has gotten better and that there have been lessons learned. I don't think it means that our work ends or that we've achieved any level of perfection as it relates to not being as disruptive and being 24/7/365 or as responsive as some people would feel that we need to be because of how much disruption they're feeling in their daily life in their home or in their business if they're near one of the projects that we're working on. But I believe it has gotten better. I believe we have to do more. Frankly, given how much more we intend to build along, for example, all of our GO corridors, Metrolinx and we at MTO know that the challenges will actually not shrink; they will continue to be significant. All of us have to collectively up our game to make sure that we are being as responsive as we possibly can be.

On the question itself with respect to the UP Express, I would say that I think it's very encouraging that ridership has grown. I think the fact that it is a more affordable option for people living in the west end of the GTHA or people who are travelling from Union all the way to Pearson or vice versa has definitely had a positive impact. I know that I said this earlier: Anecdotally, I have friends who live in the west end who are now using it to get to Union in a much shorter time period, for somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$5 to \$6 if you have a Presto card, for example, which yes, is more expensive than the TTC, but it's also a service that would get you to

Union much quicker than a traditional TTC route might. From the perspective of that value proposition for some of those folks, they acknowledge that the extra couple of dollars they're paying are worth it because they're saving time.

I completely respect the premise of the question, around what does it look like in terms of the service being self-sustaining? Obviously, that's the goal that we have—I'll speak for myself—not only as it relates to the UP Express, but also when we look at GO regional express rail. What we anticipate will happen in the outer years when we're running trains all day long during off-peak periods in particular—there's exciting potential there with respect to revenue that's going to be generated to help support the overall system. But I think we do have to recognize that whether we're talking about the TTC, York Region Transit, Waterloo transit or virtually all municipal transit systems that we have in the province, they are all subsidized. They are all subsidized not for three years, not for five years, but essentially in an ongoing manner. I don't think anybody, in a perfect world, would want that to necessarily be the case, but it is effectively the status quo.

So we will continue to do our best to driver ridership towards the UP Express. We'll continue to support not only the city of Toronto with the investments that we're making already, from the Crosstown to the Finch LRT to the \$416 million, for example, for streetcars, and the fact that a number of other projects remain in Metrolinx's next wave of transit projects and a number of those are here in the 416, and the fact that our commitment towards the—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Excuse me, Minister. If I could, quite quickly, because there's limited time left—in terms of subsidization, absolutely. Certainly, we in the NDP think that transit should be a right. We have a right to transit, to be able to commute at an affordable price.

In that regard, it used to be done that 50% of the operating cost of the Toronto Transit Commission was uploaded. This was set aside during the Harris era; it has never been brought back. That alone—from all of our city councillors in the city of Toronto—would make a huge difference in how the TTC could function, first of all with its deficit, because it has one—and second of all with moving ahead in terms of providing that transportation to those 53,000 and 44,000 and not the 4,000 that use the UP Express, and also, of course, generate income, because we need it for our economy in Toronto.

Will your government upload 50% of the operating costs of the Toronto Transit Commission?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think it's really important, when we're talking about some of these issues, to make sure that we do our best to look at the entire picture—look at it holistically. I think that, whether we're talking about the gas tax funding that we provide province-wide to those municipalities that have transit systems—I think this year it was \$332 million, if I'm not mistaken, and because it is based on a combination of population and transit ridership, more than 50% of that flows to the city

of Toronto—\$5.3 billion for the Crosstown, \$870 million for the Spadina subway extension, \$416 million for the streetcar purchase, funding commitments in place to help resolve some of the transit challenges or support for the Scarborough subway. I mean, I could continue to talk about the billions of dollars we're going to invest in the GO network within the 416 itself to help support the RER vision that the Premier and I and others in our caucus have, which will in turn benefit people in Toronto because they will have that fast and frequent electrified service within that decade that we committed to, plus the Union Pearson Express.

I think, if we're looking at the totality of the picture here over the last 13 years—and we're just looking at Toronto, not even the entire region—it has literally been in the order of magnitude of billions of dollars that the provincial Liberal government has invested in transit in the 416. I certainly—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Sorry, we have two minutes until recess, okay?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I was just going to say, I've heard the concern about the operating and support for that, but right now, our focus and my mandate letter from the Premier is about making sure that we build out more and put more service out there for the people in Toronto and beyond. That's what I'm focused on.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: So the answer is no. Thank you, Minister.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): With it being 10:13, we will call recess until after routine proceedings this afternoon.

The committee recessed from 1013 to 1554.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Good afternoon, members. We are here to resume consideration of vote 2701 of the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation. There is a total of six hours and 17 minutes remaining.

When the committee recessed this morning, the NDP had 19 minutes and 30 seconds left in their rotation.

Ms. DiNovo, the floor is yours.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister and ministry staff, for being here.

I was at a very interesting community gathering for Cycle TO in my riding, with a number of cyclists. It was interesting for a number of reasons, but one of them being their question about funding for cycling paths, for new cycling infrastructure, both within Toronto but also across Ontario.

At the same meeting, our new MP, Arif Virani—this is not his portfolio federally, but still—was asked how much federal infrastructure dollars we will be getting in Ontario for transportation. His answer was \$1.5 billion. I guess it's a twofold question. Their question to him and through me to you was, is any money scheduled to go to cycling infrastructure? How much, and what will that infrastructure look like?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sorry, if I could just clarify, that's of the federal contribution—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, the federal contribution but also what your plans are outside of the federal contribution.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sure. I'll start with the federal contribution. Obviously, I'm not in a position to confirm at this point in time how the federal money—I think \$1.48 billion is being confirmed publicly by the federal government for the province of Ontario in additional new monies over and above, I guess we can call it, the base-line amounts that pre-existed. I think that's the safest way to describe it. I think Building Canada, which is a federal program—that \$1.48 billion, from what I understand, is a slice of the national \$3.4 billion that the feds confirmed in their budget, again in new money, based on transit ridership. The \$1.48 billion is based on Ontario's share of transit ridership nationally. That's the way that it's being defined publicly.

I think we all, our municipal partners and ourselves, still await details from the federal government with respect to how that \$1.48 billion will flow into the province of Ontario. Again, what I've heard and what others have heard them say publicly is that the calculations are based on transit ridership. With all of these things at every level of government, the devil is in the details. I fully anticipate that our government will continue to work with our federal partners to determine how those funds will flow. I guess that's still to be determined, and that work is being undertaken right now, from what I understand.

In terms of specifically what the province is doing, I think you would be aware—I know you've been a long-time advocate for supporting cycling initiatives and cycling infrastructure. Of course, some in the room will know that for MPP McGarry, who serves as my PA, part of her mandate letter from me is to work specifically on the cycling file. The #CycleON strategy, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, contains \$25 million over three years in it.

Just recently, over the last little while, the \$10 million that we assigned to the municipal cycling infrastructure fund has started to flow. That's \$10 million over two years, specifically to support municipalities that responded to a call from the ministry. I know I had the privilege of making those announcements, so far, in communities like Hamilton and like Orillia, and I know that MPP McGarry and others from our caucus have been literally fanning out across the province to those municipalities that were successful.

I think, whether we're talking about myself; MPP McGarry; any one of my caucus members; certainly my predecessor, Minister Murray; Eleanor McMahon, our caucus colleague from Burlington; and from the Premier to others, there's broad recognition that we need to continue to do whatever we can to support cycling and support active transportation. Part of it is funding. Part of it is also measures like those that we included in Bill 31 around stiffened penalties for dooring and the requirement for the one-metre rule, which I know you're a strong advocate for historically. But again, I don't think our work ends. I think we have more to do.

I've had the chance over the last number of months to meet with representatives from various cycling clubs from different parts of the GTHA, for example, who talked to me a little bit about how we might go forward and improve some of our design processes with respect to how we're building out the infrastructure. So the door is open. We're engaged in that dialogue right now, but specifically it was a \$25-million, three-year fund in #CycleON: \$15 million, sort of, I'll say, at the provincial level to build in more connectivity, and \$10 million over two years, specifically to support municipal cycling infrastructure.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Minister, how much of that for Toronto infrastructure?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Specifically, out of the municipal cycling infrastructure fund, that \$10 million over two years, I know that—I'm forgetting the number now about how many communities actually put forward submissions. It was quite a few, certainly more than \$10 million worth of interest in response to the \$10 million that we put out. My understanding is that Toronto, as it relates to that specific intake, wasn't successful in its application because the application that they submitted didn't necessarily fit with the parameters established by the fund.

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Having said that, I think that when you look at not only moving Ontario forward, but also where I suspect we'll go with respect to some of the initiatives being undertaken by colleague ministries—for example, how we intend to fight climate change and a number of other initiatives that our government, I'm sure, will be talking about more in the next number of weeks and months—I think there probably will be more to say about how we can continue to improve.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Some of the cap-and-trade funding may go to this, as well, then? So Toronto may be able to reapply for—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm not in a position to confirm that right now, because it's a different ministry, but I think there's broad interest in our caucus to make sure that we're continuing to support cycling—cycling infrastructure and cycling generally speaking.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay. Thank you. My next series of questions is around Eglinton Crosstown and that particular project. The first is: Why is the contracted \$9.1-billion value of the Eglinton Crosstown so much higher than the \$7.7-billion comparator that is shown in the value-for-money document? There's about a \$2-billion discrepancy there. Why is that?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Perhaps others here who are with me today can speak to the value-for-money document, but I would comment, because I have said this publicly in the past, that the design—it's a design, build, finance and maintain AFP project, obviously, that we're delivering. I've talked extensively about the \$5.3 billion that is being invested in this from a capital perspective. I know that we were able to go out to the market and Crosslinx Transit Solutions, the consortium that ultimate-

ly was awarded the contract, brought their creativity and innovation to bear. I've said this publicly before: We actually saw considerable savings—I'll put in quotations the term "savings"—with respect to the \$9 billion or so that they came in at with respect to their bid, and they were ultimately awarded the contract. They are, as we speak, doing the work along the Crosstown, which is, as we all know, a transformative project.

I'm not sure if there is another individual here—Vinay perhaps—who would like to come forward and speak to the difference in those two numbers.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Right. Thank you.

Mr. Vinay Sharda: Vinay Sharda. I'm the director of transit policy at the Ministry of Transportation.

As it relates to the \$7-billion number, that's something we'll certainly take back. The capital construction cost for the Eglinton Crosstown was valued at \$5.3 billion. As part of that, as the minister has mentioned, when an AFP contract is let, the consortia that bid on this are required to also include maintenance and operations within their costs. That is the number that you are referring to, in terms of the \$9 billion—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: So that includes maintenance and operation as well as—okay.

Mr. Vinay Sharda: That's right.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Is it possible that it will go over the \$9.1 billion? Is that a possibility?

Mr. Vinay Sharda: At this point, the project is on the budget that it's currently allocated for.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay. Is it possible to get the unredacted Eglinton Crosstown project agreement, including dollar figures? Is that possible, that the committee could have that?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We could look into that. My sense, without knowing the specifics of it off the top of my head, is that portions that may have been redacted probably were done so for reasons that make sense. But I'll look into it.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay. Could that be noted, Jeff, as something that we request?

Another question: Will money from the Trillium Trust be used to pay for part of the Eglinton Crosstown?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I participated in the first announcement that we made. I stood alongside Finance Minister Charles Sousa at the time, where we specifically did highlight—I believe it was in the first tranche as it relates to the—actually, no. I am confusing green bonds with Trillium Trust. Forgive me for that. Vinay can respond to the Trillium Trust portion.

Mr. Vinay Sharda: My understanding is, and we can take this back to confirm, that it is not being included as part of this. But the green bonds initiative is being included as part of the Crosstown.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: So the money that is Trillium Trust funds, where is that going, then, as related to Eglinton Crosstown? Is it not involved at all?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: To Vinay's point of a second ago, the Trillium Trust monies are not being used specifically for the Crosstown.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay. We understand that Metrolinx will be making payments to Crosslinx during construction, instead of making payments only when the project has reached substantial completion. Infrastructure Ontario has told us, our researchers in the NDP, that Metrolinx will have paid about 85% of the construction cost to Crosslinx, even before the project is completely finished. Doesn't this, in a sense, transfer risk back to the government, since Crosslinx will have less incentive to finish the job on time, having been mostly paid? I've had work done in my house and usually there's a holdback based on getting the project done on time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Given that Infrastructure Ontario is an agency that falls under the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, I'm not sure that I'm best positioned to respond to the specifics of how the procurement is being handled. I know that IO is working on some of that.

I can say, obviously, that we have a very strong and, I guess, proud track record using this form of procurement, if I can speak at a high level, more broadly, because, again, it's not an agency that falls under MTO's responsibility of being able to deliver a substantial portion—overwhelming, virtually—of all other projects on time and a substantial portion also on budget.

As Vinay mentioned just a second ago, on Crosslinx, specifically, it is a project that is currently proceeding as per the schedule and as per all of the other costs that were anticipated to date, so far. I have every expectation that the Crosslinx consortium will continue to do their work in accordance with what's required.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay, but you are in touch—you must be in touch—with Infrastructure Ontario around this kind of discussion?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Well, obviously, it is a partnership. There are multiple pieces in this. I think that we do also have to recognize the uniqueness of the Crosstown project, not only with the costs that are attached to it in terms of the investment that's being made, but—I think that I referenced this in my opening today—it is the single largest public transit procurement or project in Ontario history and one of the largest that's taking place right now, I think, anywhere in North America, if I'm not mistaken.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Which is why we're so concerned about the possible cost overruns, because they could be considerable.

Just moving on: During the RFQ and RFP stages of the procurement process, bidders are given the government's top price that it's willing to pay for the project, which, in the case of the Eglinton Crosstown, was around \$11 billion.

I guess the question is, why are bidders given this top price? If you look at bids that are made at the municipal level, it's quite different.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I think that—with respect, Chair—this might be moving into a realm that is more the responsibility of Infrastructure Ontario. Therefore, I don't think that it falls under the purview of MTO

directly. I'm looking for guidance as to whether you want me to try and hazard a guess at this, because it's not—

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I think they may be talking about baseball or something. We can move on.

You can understand that there is concern about the bidding process here. So although, yes, you're sharing that responsibility with Infrastructure Ontario, surely there's some shared responsibility in terms of this. This is, as you said, the biggest project undertaken by your ministry.

The other concern about it was that there were only two bidders. There were only two bidders, which doesn't seem particularly competitive. Again, any comments on that process?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think that when you're talking about an essentially \$5.3-billion transit construction project, there are a finite number of companies, generally speaking—even though we're blessed, here in Ontario, to have a world-class infrastructure industry. There are a finite number of companies that have the capacity and knowledge across all aspects of this, because it is a design, build, finance and maintain project.

To be able to pull together all those pieces and be able to bid on something of this size takes a degree of capacity that a number of other participants in the infrastructure world would likely not have.

Again, I don't want to delve too far into responsibilities that fall under a different ministry, but I think that you see, which I mentioned a second ago, that our government does have a track record that's strong with respect to delivering. Whether we're talking about transportation or we're talking about some of the other sectors that we deal with in the infrastructure realm, we have a very strong track record of delivering on time and on budget.

Again, this is a big one. There's no doubt about that. We all know that. But the players involved have considerable experience and they've obviously met the capacity thresholds to be able to bid.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: But part of the problem here, according to those who are looking at it from the outside, was the bundling together of all these small projects to make this kind of unwieldiness. As you say, for such a large project, there were very few people who were in a position to bid upon it.

For example, the Construction Design Alliance of Ontario warned that the Eglinton Crosstown contract was too big and that it bundled together, in their words, a bunch of smaller projects that could have been tendered separately.

As well, the Ontario General Contractors Association predicted that the lack of competitive bidding on the bloated, as they described it, Eglinton Crosstown mega-contract would waste at least \$500 million.

The TTC and the American Public Transportation Association also warned—this was a TTC staff report; I'm going to quote from it—that “there is a very real possibility that such large contracts may actually inhibit

competition and may result in no competition.” To the public's gaze—to our gaze—looking at it from the outside, this seems to be exactly what happened.

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I guess the other question is, did Metrolinx—this would be in your jurisdiction—or MTO ask Infrastructure Ontario for a report explaining the lack of bidders, how it would affect the quality of the bids, and, if you did, could we get a copy of that report?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I have a ton of experience not only as an MPP but as an individual, prior to becoming an elected official, with respect to the construction and infrastructure community that exists in Ontario. I said a second ago that I think we're very fortunate here in this province because we have a world-leading infrastructure community at all levels—I'll call them smaller players, mid-sized players and certainly the largest players that we have, including some that are involved in this particular project. It goes beyond that, frankly. We have the best skilled tradespeople, I would argue, not just in North America, but compared to anywhere else in the world.

I can understand where some of the associations that you referenced in your question are coming from, but I think that those were likely comments that were made before it was publicly stated by me and confirmed that this was a project that came in roughly \$2 billion below what the anticipated price was for the project.

I think also, when you're talking about these kinds of large-scale infrastructure projects, there's a lot to be said for the economies of scale that are created when you move forward with one piece. We've seen historically that there are other kinds of transit infrastructure projects that are being delivered using more traditional means. We have one currently under way in the GTA right now using a smaller process, if you want to call it that, being managed specifically by the TTC, that is actually behind schedule dramatically at this point in time.

So I get that there are different schools of thought with respect to how these large-scale infrastructure projects are delivered.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): You have two minutes, Ms. DiNovo.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I would only say, if you're looking at the AFP model that we have deployed since 2003 across all sectors, that the numbers actually do demonstrate, in terms of on-time performance and largely on-budget performance, that it's the best track record that this province has ever had in infrastructure.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: So there is no report? Or is there a report and we can't get it?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Is there a report?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: About this conversation between Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario and yourself and the MTO about the number of bidders, how the process worked?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: There are two things I would say to that. One, I think you're trying to create mystery and intrigue around something for which there is none—because you take a holistic view of how we do our pro-

curement for infrastructure projects, generally speaking. Secondly, there is no report that I'm aware of regarding the topic that you're talking about.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay. No conversations or communications that are documented between yourself and Infrastructure Ontario or Metrolinx on these issues?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Regarding the number of bidders on this project? No.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Number of bidders, the fact that there's \$11 billion put out there—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: On that, though I don't want to delve into IO's work, I'm not aware of the fact that generally on our procurements we post a number or provide a number to the pre-qualified bidders as to what we anticipate the project will come in at. I'm looking at my colleagues to see if that's the case. I don't believe that we do specifically.

Mr. Vinay Sharda: We can take that back as well, but I don't think we do.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: If you could and just get back to us, that would be great.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sure.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Minister, you have 30 minutes to respond.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Fantastic. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

One of the things that I didn't say this morning, which I realized when I showed up here before routine proceedings ended: I thank the committee generally speaking, but I didn't thank all of the staff of the Legislature that are supporting the committee's work and support all of our committees' work, from our researchers to the Clerk and, of course, everyone else involved in this entire process. I wanted to just circle back with some of my 30 minutes to say thank you to everyone else who is supporting the work that happens, not just here at estimates but more broadly speaking with all the work that happens here at the Legislature.

I also want to thank both the Conservative and NDP caucus representatives here so far. I know we still have a fair bit of additional ground to cover and I'm looking forward to that. But I do want to thank them for their interest and for the questions that have been posed thus far. Obviously, in keeping with some of the concerns that have been expressed to me by both opposition caucuses over the last two years, if I could step back and finish off or at least start where I finished off with Ms. DiNovo around questions related to the Crosstown, I think it's important to recognize that over the last couple of years—more than a couple of years now, when we're talking about the Crosstown specifically—this is really very much part and parcel of exactly how ambitious the government's agenda is with respect to the infrastructure that we're building. Something that I've said publicly on many occasions is that not just in the GTHA, but right across the province of Ontario—and I may have alluded to this this morning; forgive me if I'm sounding a little bit repetitive, but I think it's really important to empha-

size some of these points—we deal consistently with a challenge. I call it the challenge of catching up and keeping up. I may have said this this morning; I say it all the time, but it does bear repeating.

Prior to 2003—and this is not a partisan comment, because I would argue that governments of all levels, and of all stripes, by the way, prior to 2003 really had not come to the table with the kind of infrastructure investments that were needed to make sure we could continue to have a strong economy and to make sure that we had a quality of life that the people of all of our communities expect, and I think rightly so.

Since 2003, we've made some significant progress. Again, I could provide a laundry list, as I like to say, of some of the projects and some of the other initiatives that we've supported since 2003. I would argue that in particular over the last two or three years that's really gone into overdrive with respect to making sure we have the resources available to deploy and invest in this infrastructure. And it's not just about slogans. It's not just about what's being called by others “bumper sticker politics.” It actually is shovels in the ground, putting people to work, delivering on projects, helping people in all of our communities understand that we actually have a plan and we're building on that plan, which I would argue helps to demonstrate that it's real, which is really important. Because whether we're in Hamilton or in the GTA or in northern Ontario or we're right downtown in Trinity-Spadina—anywhere in the province—I think it's understandable in one way that people would sometimes take a step back and say, “Can governments, working together, hopefully”—or in some cases not working together—“Do they have a plan? Can they get it right?” There's a bit of a credibility deficit. It's not about any one government. This is about government at large and what that means.

To have a plan that we are following through on—to talk about the investments, yes, but to actually put those investments into play, into action—I think is of crucial importance. People here in this region can now see it because the Crosstown, as you know and as others know, is very much a project they can touch and feel. There are obviously disruptions that come along with this kind of infrastructure build-out, but disruptions that will ultimately lead to a transit service through the middle of the GTHA, providing all kinds of connectivity: connectivity to GO lines, connectivity to subways, connectivity to I think north of 50 different bus routes just on the Crosstown itself, which is incredibly exciting for all of the people in this region who rely heavily on the existing transit system that we have.

The same can be said in northern Ontario. I've had the chance now over the last two years to be up to Sudbury and the area around Sudbury a couple of times. I know the excitement that's felt on a regular basis in that community because of the success that we've had with respect to four-laning Highway 69. I know certainly the member from Sudbury, since his arrival in this Legislature, has continued the good fight that was started many

years ago by one of his predecessors and a good friend of mine, Rick Bartolucci, around the importance of making sure that we get this right. Piece by piece, segment by segment, there is considerable progress that's being made. I know that just over the last number of months, more elements or components of the four-laned Highway 69 have come into service, and more will be coming into service over the next year or two, which I know is exciting.

If I can talk for just a moment about northern Ontario specifically, I think that speaks to a government that understands, as our Premier is fond of saying, that this is not about the north versus the south. It's not about urban versus rural. This is about creating one Ontario, and we mean it and we back it up, not just with pledges or commitments; we back it up with real money. The amount of investment that has been made over the last 13 years in our northern highways program—though I am a relatively new MPP, that amount is considerable. Our colleagues from northern Ontario will tell you that they can remember a time when investments in a northern highways program were, by comparison, significantly smaller.

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We obviously know exactly how massive the geography is of this beautiful province in which we all reside. We know we have more work to do. The fact of the matter is, whether we're talking about bridges, whether we're talking about additional roads or support for roads, whether we're talking about additional support for First Nations in northern Ontario and remote communities, whether we're talking about the commitment that our government has made around unlocking the potential of the Ring of Fire and so much more, we know that we have to do more. But we are making considerable progress.

Over the last couple of months, I've had the chance, for example, to be in the wonderful community of Puslinch—not that long ago—where I stood alongside the member who's represented—I believe Wellington-Halton Hills is the correct name for Mr. Arnott's riding—someone who has advocated, along with Ted McMeekin and Liz Sandals, for a number of years for a project that's known as the Morriston bypass. That was a really wonderful example of a local and regional business community—sort of a multi-partisan effort—and municipalities all coming to the table to say, "We have a significant challenge in this part of Ontario. It's hampering the quality of life of the people living in Puslinch, living in Morriston, living in the area around those communities in terms of their experience or their quality of life." But it's also hampering the economic development of the region, whether you're coming out of the Hamilton harbour trying to get up to the 401, whether you're coming out of Guelph, whether you're coming out of that entire area around Aberfoyle, where you have major plants—Nestlé, Maple Leaf and so many others—that just want to be able to safely access some of our infrastructure or some of our transportation corridors, in this case, the 401.

Anyway, suffice it to say that because of that groundswell of support, because, on its technical merit, there

was a defined need there—this is just one example—MTO, as a result of budget 2016, was in a position to announce that we are confirming we are going forward, for example, with the Morriston bypass. And I don't mind telling a story, because I think I still have time—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Lots of time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: That's good to know—lots of time. Fantastic. I have lots more to talk about, so that's encouraging.

To be able to be in Puslinch at their community centre shortly after I stood alongside both Ted McMeekin and Liz Sandals at the Aberfoyle GO bus station—which recently has been expanded dramatically to serve those growing needs in that part of our province—and to go into the Puslinch Community Centre, where I expected, to be fair, maybe a dozen or maybe two dozen people would be there—it was the middle of a weekday afternoon. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that there must have been somewhere between 100 and 200 people crammed into that community centre, from local residents who had been fighting for this particular project now for years to representatives from chambers of commerce, boards of trade, other community-based organizations and local publications; to other political representatives from the municipalities and others; to federal MPs; to, of course, Ted Arnott himself, McMeekin, Sandals—all of us there. Not that I needed convincing about the importance of the kind of investment that we're making in the province's infrastructure, but that was a particularly touching and heartwarming moment: for so many people, cutting across so many different communities, to recognize that we do have an ability as government to move these projects forward, to get it right, to be responsive and to build. That's just one example. We have so many more.

Of course, I had the chance in the Legislature earlier today to respond to a bit of a direct but also very professionally composed and put together question from MPP Vernile, my colleague from Kitchener, talking about some of the challenges that we face in Waterloo region and beyond.

Just last week, I was very happy to stand alongside the Premier in Brantford. Now, the MPP for Brantford, who I did cite in my response to the question today, who I did acknowledge because of his advocacy on this, has for years been working to convince government to move forward with providing GO bus service to the community of Brantford. To have the Premier confirm that, again, as a result of Ontario budget 2016, we are, in fact, able to provide GO bus service from Brantford to the Aldershot GO station in Burlington with a stop at McMaster University, was something—again, the feeling of excitement and enthusiasm at the Brantford bus terminal was palpable. Mayors were there and other municipal representatives. People who had been standing alongside MPP Levac, Speaker Levac, for a number of years on this particular project were actually—I don't want to say overcome with emotion, but there was emotion there,

very, very positive emotion, because they had seen not only the fruits of their labour in terms of the advocacy itself, but they also recognized that whether you're off to university or off to college, you want to connect into the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. You want to connect into GO regional express rail, which will be delivered along Lakeshore West out to the Aldershot GO station, as per the RER plan that we announced in April 2015. There's just tons of excitement there.

A couple of days later, I was in Cambridge to stand alongside the MPP for Cambridge and announce that we're adding additional GO bus service for the community of Cambridge into the Milton GO station. To see representatives—not only the mayor of Cambridge but also Regional Chair Seiling and other municipal representatives—there with us to not only applaud that achievement, that announcement, but to provide recognition to us that we're moving in the right direction with respect to some of these investments, helps to underscore not only that we've already done quite a bit but that we continue to move these files forward in the right way.

I would also say that over the last few months, I've had the chance to do a number of transit and transportation town halls in a variety of communities. Again, as someone who is proud to have lived in this region my whole life, it really does help to give you a sense of exactly how vast and varied the challenges are that we face in communities right across the province as it relates to these transportation issues.

I want to thank the MPPs who have managed to host some of these town halls so far. I look forward to doing additional ones.

I remember last summer or fall—I'm looking at MPP Kiwala. I forget exactly what the date was, so forgive me for that. It was fall, and I was with MPP Kiwala on Wolfe Island, where we had the chance to meet with a couple of hundred, a few hundred, of your constituents and people from neighbourhood islands who were very determined to be there with us that night, to convey in very direct and clear terms to the Minister of Transportation that they were feeling a sense of frustration about some of the issues relating to the ferry system that MTO supports and provides for eastern Ontario.

I know that because of their very down-to-earth and direct conveyance of that information to me, and because of the continued advocacy of MPP Kiwala, we were not only able to get the Wolfe Islander ferry back into service according to the commitments that were made in the aftermath of that town hall, but we also did provide in Ontario budget 2016 some additional news about additional ferry services that are much needed for that part of Ontario. I recognize that there is still more work to be done in that regard.

It's interesting to note that that was a momentous occasion for a couple of reasons. One, it was personally my first time on Wolfe Island. It was a really educational opportunity for me to hear directly from people who did feel some degree of frustration. But it was also the night of the infamous Jose Bautista bat flip, because it took

place on the same night as that game. In fact, in the audience, while we were in the midst of hearing a fairly passionate exchange or passionate intervention from some of the people, others who were watching, I guess, or perhaps following Twitter and seeing what was happening in the game, erupted in cheers. I thought maybe it was my presentation that triggered some of that reaction, but, alas, no, it wasn't mine and it wasn't MPP Kiwala, although I think we did manage to do all right that particular night.

I've done similar town halls in the riding of Davenport. I know that MPP DiNovo was in attendance that evening. That was another one that was very well attended. Certainly, I've done one in Liberty Village with MPP Dong. I look forward to doing additional ones. I've done them right across not only the GTHA but beyond.

Not that I needed convincing, but it does really help to reinforce how important it is that we get this right—that we get the transportation planning, and the delivery of more transportation service, right. It's one of the reasons, having been out to a number of communities—for example, we were able to re-establish a stand-alone Connecting Links program at the Ministry of Transportation. There are 77 communities across the province of Ontario, including municipalities like Barrie, like Guelph, like so many others—Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Windsor—the list goes on. It's a fairly significant list of communities that have, by definition, Connecting Links within their municipal boundaries. A few years ago, a decision was made to take Connecting Links, as a program, and fold it into a larger opportunity for infrastructure funding.

What we heard over the last couple of years, both at AMO conferences and at ROMA/OGRA conferences, and in bilateral meetings with municipalities, was that it wasn't responsive enough to their needs to put all of the funding into one larger bucket and then make them choose between whether they needed to support this kind of infrastructure or their Connecting Link.

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Thanks to Moving Ontario Forward and thanks to the Premier's leadership, we were able to create that stand-alone fund. Then, the really exciting news is that we were able to more recently announce that we weren't just going to have that fund; we were going to actually increase the size of the funding available. I believe it's by the third year—I want to say by next year, but I could be wrong about that—that it's going to go from \$20 million up to the \$30-million mark on an annual basis going forward, which is really exciting news.

When you think historically about that fund—I know there was a bit of a challenge with some communities who felt that they had somehow missed an opportunity because they weren't successful with the first intake. So the message that we've been able to convey back out to those communities is that there's nothing to worry about. It's an ongoing annual fund. There will be intakes on an annual basis. There will be another intake for the next round of Connecting Links funding that will be opened up in the relatively near future.

This is significant for a number of these communities because, if memory serves me correctly, the maximum funding available is \$3 million from this stand-alone program, which, when you take into account some of the needs that exist out there—I've seen this first-hand in some communities where I've had a chance to go and actually look at the Connecting Link itself—it is money that I know will be invested very wisely by these communities.

And this list goes on. I've had the chance now to be in different parts of eastern Ontario, where I know that, beyond the ferry infrastructure that's required around Kingston and the Islands, from Wolfe Island to some of the others, I've had inquiries and interventions from members on all sides of the Legislature about some of the challenges and needs that their own constituents face with respect to making sure that we continue to invest in roads, highways, bridges and all of the other crucial transportation infrastructure that we need for a strong and growing economy. I have every expectation that we're going to be able to continue to provide assurances on the one hand that we will continue to move in the right direction, but real dollars, real investments, real shovels getting into the ground to do more.

Certainly across other parts of northern Ontario, I know one of the focal points is making sure that we're in a position to continue to four-lane crucial portions—or important, strategic portions—of the Trans-Canada and 11/17. We did reference again in this year's budget that there is funding set aside for some of the continued four-laning of 11/17. Having spent some time, as I think we all have, in parts of northern Ontario, I think we all recognize that there are significant design and construction challenges that one confronts when building in that kind of geography, that kind of terrain.

But I know, being the minister of a ministry that has a 100-year tradition of making sure that we do build well, that we do build in a very world-leading way here in this province of Ontario. We'll continue to be humbled by that geography that our province has, but we'll also continue to endeavour to make sure that we are four-laning where the needs are. In particular, when you consider that we now have a federal funding partner that understands the importance of making these kinds of investments, we will continue to show fairly significant progress across the north as it relates to some of that crucial infrastructure.

Earlier today, I know that I did reference in passing some of the municipal transit investments that are being made. I know that there's a ton of excitement in Ottawa; this is obviously relating to the Ottawa LRT project that all three levels of government are participating in with respect to providing funding. I had the chance a number of months ago to be in Ottawa when there was an official unveiling of what was called the mock-up of the actual LRT vehicle, the LRV that will be deployed in their brilliant red and white colours—very patriotic, which one would expect to see, I think, in our nation's capital.

But it was kind of a take-your-breath-away moment. The reason I put it that way is because one of the

challenges for a lot of people who live in different parts of the province is that we've never had a functioning LRT in Ontario. It's transit technology that we're not particularly familiar with. We're used to subways, we're used to buses, we're used to streetcars if you're from Toronto, but we've never actually had the chance—for most people who've spent their lives here—to take an LRT. So with all of these LRT projects actually under way in terms of the construction, and with the delivery of the LRTs in Ottawa, in Waterloo region, along Eglinton, along Finch, ultimately along Hurontario and Mississauga and, of course, in Hamilton itself, and as we go forward with these projects and put them into service, and as people in these communities, in our communities, have the chance to actually hop on the LRT and see exactly how it functions so well and how it provides that connectivity that I talked about a little bit earlier today, I think that will help a great deal with respect to those who may still remain, in this province, a little bit skeptical about this kind of transit technology, which I think everyone in this room recognizes is used right around the world and used very well right around the world. So it's a very exciting time because in the next number of years—in the near future—we are going to see some of these LRTs start to come into service. I think, again, that will only help to reinforce the notion that we're moving in the right direction and that we're getting it right.

I will also say, as someone who serves as an MPP for a community that's served by GO, if I can pivot back to GO—Chair, can I just ask how much time I have left?

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): You have eight minutes—just shy.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sorry, how much?

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Just shy of eight minutes.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Okay, great. Thanks.

As someone whose community is served by GO Transit, specifically by the Barrie GO line—but I think this is true of all of the corridors that we have in the network—I will tell you that I hear loudly and clearly from my constituents how much they love the GO Transit service and how much more they want to see. I think that's one of the other reasons that our GO regional express rail plan is really going to provide that game-changing outcome for the people of this entire region and the people of areas just beyond the GTHA, like Waterloo region and all the way up to Barrie, of course, on the Barrie corridor itself, because we know what the gridlock on our roads and highways looks like. We've experienced extraordinary growth over the last 20 years. I mentioned earlier today that we anticipate considerable growth in terms of population for this region over the next number of years. So we have to be in a position to provide more options and more options that make sense.

I've talked a lot about connectivity today. I think that's one of the most important things: making it easy for people to be able to access transit, higher-order transit in particular. A sense that it's predictable and a sense that it's reasonable, affordable, accessible: I think those are all

things—dependable, I guess, in some respects. I think those are things that all have to be taken into account. They have been, when you look at our transit investment plan for the next few years.

The day that I was in Brantford, just last week when we were talking about GO buses, I heard from others in the community who have some really fascinating ideas, talking about how we've now managed, with GO buses, to connect Brantford into the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. But what else can we do in that part of south-central and southwestern Ontario to establish more connectivity beyond just the GTHA into some of the other communities that exist just beyond to the west, just beyond to the north, just beyond to the east?

It's really interesting, from my perspective. Whether we're talking about the cycling infrastructure, where the dollar figure amounts were important but not billions—you know what I mean? Hundreds of thousands of dollars, low millions—the excitement that those announcements generated in the communities that are receiving funding for municipal cycling infrastructure, not unlike—and this is where I was going to go, talking about providing additional connectivity for communities beyond the GTHA, particularly rural communities. The community transportation pilot program that we announced—in the first instance, the million dollars that we set aside to invest through that. I believe we then doubled that to \$2 million, if I'm not mistaken.

Being in different parts of the province where communities were receiving—again, I don't mean to make it sound like it wasn't significant—relatively speaking, small or smallish dollar figures, the creativity and the innovation that these communities were demonstrating with respect to how they planned to take that investment and deploy it to provide people in their communities with more connections, more options and more transit was actually something that I found extraordinarily impressive. That goes to show you sometimes, that, yes, we do need to make sure we keep investing the hundreds of millions and the billions in the crucial transit infrastructure that we need: the LRTs, the BRTs, GO regional express rail, and the list goes on. But for a number of communities across this province, support that's smaller in scale, and also support by way of expertise flowing from the ministry, which has a ton of internal expertise, is something that can actually go a long way to help support those larger investments. I know that we still have more work to do.

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I talked earlier today—quite a bit, actually—about GO regional express rail. We also have a number of other communities that continue to look for an ability to have GO, whether it's GO bus or GO train service, come to their communities. I've certainly heard loud and clear from municipal representatives and our colleagues about the need to look at some other areas of the province.

The budget wasn't silent on it this year. The budget explicitly talked about the continued work that we are undertaking with our freight rail partners, CN and CP,

and looking at other options pending reaching agreements with them, and looking at some of the other internal approvals that we have to deal with.

We're talking about communities that have—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): You're at the three-minute mark, Minister.

Hon. Steven Del Duca:—thank you, Chair—communities that have now pressed ahead very aggressively, from Bowmanville to Niagara Falls. Obviously, we've heard loud and clear from Waterloo region and others about the need to make sure that we get it right.

This is all to say that whether we're talking about northern Ontario—and the roads, bridges and highways that we need to continue to support, which we will, whether we're taking about road use or safety, which cuts across every single community regardless of size: making sure that we get that right, making sure that we maintain the very proud and well-deserved safety record that we have on our highways, over the last 13 years in particular and making sure that we continue to invest in those signature transit projects in more densely populated areas like the GTHA and others.

This is all to say that I really and truly believe—I don't think it would come as a shock to the opposition members—that I think we're moving in the right direction. I think that there is broad recognition from all parties that we need to continue to build the province up. We need to continue to move the province forward. We do need to do as much as we possibly can to provide people with as many transportation options that are safe—and, again, accessible and affordable—for them going forward. It's important for us economically. It's important for our short-term quality of life.

It's important, as I referenced earlier today, in our fight with respect to climate change, which we all recognize—and the Premier said it in the Legislature today—is a significant challenge that we face on a global scale. But each of us has a role to play in that fight. Again, transportation has a significant responsibility as a sector here in Ontario, because we represent roughly 34% or so of all of the GHG emissions that are currently produced in the province.

Just to echo some of what I said earlier today, I think tremendous progress has been demonstrated. But I can tell you, heading up a ministry that, again, is past the century mark, that we haven't managed to make all the progress that we've made for those 100 years by resting on our laurels. We haven't in the past; we're not currently. I can guarantee this committee that going forward for the months and years ahead, we'll continue to keep our sleeves rolled up and work together with all of you to make sure that fundamentally we are getting this right.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): We'll now move into 20-minute rotations beginning with the official opposition and Mr. Harris.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm going to carry on with the UP Express. I couldn't help but chime in, perhaps. I know the member for Kitchener Centre asked a great question this morning. Unfortunately, she didn't get a

good enough answer. I was kind of hoping maybe even a late show would probably be more appropriate.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I could elaborate on the answer, if you would like, a little bit.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm just curious on what you would tell Kitchener-Waterloo folks when you boast about GO service in Brantford. How many people in Kitchener-Waterloo, do you think, will drive to Brantford to get on the GO bus?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: That's a great question. We obviously have an existing service that provides the region of Waterloo with GO Transit opportunities. I think you know—obviously my colleague knows—

Mr. Michael Harris: Will people drive to Brantford to get on the GO bus? The announcement in Brantford: Was that great news for people in Kitchener-Waterloo?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We also did mention, of course, that we're expanding GO bus service out of Cambridge as well. You would know, because—

Mr. Michael Harris: So how many people in Kitchener-Waterloo are going to drive to Cambridge on the GO bus?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I forget the specific page in the budget now; I want to say page 71, I could be wrong about that. But page 71 in Ontario budget 2016 explicitly talked about our plan to continue to have dialogue with CN and CP to unlock, in my words, the potential in its entirety of the Kitchener corridor and the Milton corridor.

I think it's important to recognize that, notwithstanding our efforts to make that happen for your region, you voted against the budget, as you have consistently for the last few years, which is unfortunate. I'm sure you have a good explanation for why you don't want to see more GO service for Kitchener and Waterloo and you don't want to fund that additional GO service. Having said all of that—

Mr. Michael Harris: We'll come back to this. Anyway, I think I've got the answer.

This morning, we talked about the UP Express. The gentleman—I'm sorry; I don't recall your name. You'll probably want to come back up because I'd like to get into and clarify some of the fiscal numbers that we had talked about.

He had mentioned the annual operating cost of the UP Express at \$68 million. Is that correct?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sounds right.

Mr. Michael Harris: So for the last fiscal year, which would have ended March 31, what was the budgeted subsidy for the UP Express, ending, I guess, this past March? He said—was it \$17 million or \$7 million?

Ms. Linda McAusland: Seventeen million.

Mr. Michael Harris: It was \$17 million. So for the portion of June 1 to the end of March, \$17 million was the subsidy. What is the forecasted operating cost in this fiscal year?

Ms. Linda McAusland: It's a total of—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): If you could just identify yourself for Hansard, please.

Ms. Linda McAusland: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Linda McAusland. I'm the CAO for the Ministry of Transportation.

The total is \$43 million.

Mr. Michael Harris: That's the annual operating cost?

Ms. Linda McAusland: For UP Express.

Mr. Michael Harris: The annual operating cost for this fiscal year, so from April 1—

Ms. Linda McAusland: It is \$64 million, of which \$7 million is a subsidy.

Mr. Michael Harris: Sorry, \$64 million for this fiscal year? So it's down \$4 million, actually, from \$68 million to—oh, sorry, because \$68 million wouldn't have been a full year.

Ms. Linda McAusland: That's right.

Mr. Michael Harris: But it's still higher, though, in the first—because that would encompass what? June, July, August, September, October, November, December, and then—so \$68 million in the last fiscal year was the operating expense or cost for UP Express.

Ms. Linda McAusland: That's right.

Mr. Michael Harris: And you're saying that this fiscal year, for the full year starting April 1, it would be \$64 million?

Ms. Linda McAusland: Yes, \$57 million in consolidation and \$7 million in subsidy.

Mr. Michael Harris: Okay, and \$7 million. How does it come down? What factors led to \$68 million versus \$64 million?

Mr. Ian Freeman: I can answer. So the—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Could you identify yourself, please.

Mr. Ian Freeman: Ian Freeman, the director of finance.

The first year includes some transitional costs such as training and other upfit costs that don't occur in the second year.

Mr. Michael Harris: So, I guess for the minister, back in 2012 the AG report talked about Metrolinx's preliminary estimate of the air-rail link—that's what they referred to it as—annual operating cost to be approximately \$30 million. How would Metrolinx's estimate go from \$30 million to \$68 million?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm not in a position to know about the 2012 auditor's—

Mr. Michael Harris: You're the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Would you like an answer to the question?

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Others around the table—I'm happy to look at either the deputy or Linda or Ian, who might comment about what an anticipated plan was. What I can talk about and which I think is important to stress is that notwithstanding what might have been an estimate, I guess I'll say, in 2012, when this service started in June of last year—I said this earlier today and I think it does bear repeating—it was a significant infra-

structure project that was delivered on time and on budget. It is a service, I think, that the people who have had the chance to use it here in this region, both visitors to the region and people who live in this area, obviously enjoy using.

It's a service that has had its challenges, obviously. That's one of the reasons that we decided to move in advance of the March break with respect to a reduction in fares. Even beyond the reduction in fares, and I've said this earlier today, more work is required with respect to promoting the service, and additional support for some of the way-finding and signs that we see both at Union and Pearson. But the bottom line is that we've seen significant uptake in terms of the ridership since the reduction in fares took place just in advance of March break.

I anticipate that we're going to continue to do that work, the work that's required to drive the ridership up.

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Mr. Michael Harris: Do you not agree, though, that a preliminary estimate of \$30 million in operating costs to the actual \$68 million is a pretty significant—you guys talk a lot about overachieving. This would be maybe underachieving. Would you not agree that that's a significant increase?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think, actually, in the wording you chose for your question, you effectively hit the nail on the head. That was a preliminary estimate I'd done several years in advance of the service actually being operational. We're talking about four years in advance, and it was a preliminary estimate. We can speak to exactly what the operating costs are in the current sense and what they're projected to be for the fiscal year that we find ourselves in right now.

I think what's most important to people across the region, though, is that we have made the service significantly more affordable so that they actually have the opportunity to use it—again, in a more affordable way. That's why the numbers are growing.

Mr. Michael Harris: You got a subsidy of \$17 million last fiscal year, so what would that per-rider subsidy come out to be, roughly?

Ms. Linda McAusland: That I wouldn't know off-hand. We'd have to—

Mr. Michael Harris: Get back to us on that. Have you calculated what the per-rider subsidy will be this year based on forecasts of ridership?

Ms. Linda McAusland: That's something we can look at.

Mr. Michael Harris: Have you done a forecast of ridership since you've changed the fare structure?

Ms. Linda McAusland: Well, Metrolinx is responsible for the ridership and we do connect with them on a regular basis to recalibrate what the numbers are, going forward.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I mentioned earlier today, I know that some of the figures were provided by one of the other folks from MTO with John Lieou as it relates to some of the ridership changes that we've seen leading into the price change, and even the ridership numbers

that we've received so far since the fares have been reduced, are preliminary numbers. Metrolinx will continue to refine and do the calibration.

Mr. Michael Harris: Back in 2012, the recommendation in the Auditor General's report read:

"Metrolinx should work with the Ministry of Transportation to clearly define the business model under which the air-rail link ... should operate to ensure that the ARL will be a viable and sustainable operation. Given the importance of having a reliable estimate of projected ridership at the various possible fare levels, Metrolinx should periodically update its ridership forecast."

Can you tell me what actions you've done to meet those recommendations of the auditor's report in 2012?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It was hard for me to hear a part of the question, so I apologize for that, but I think that what we did experience over the first eight months of the Union Pearson Express operating was that ridership wasn't where we wanted it to be. Ridership was not consistent. Obviously, we wanted to hit that goal of 5,000 riders per day by the end of the first year of service. At the eight-month mark, we recognized that we had not yet, obviously, achieved consistently that 5,000 riders per day. There was, I think, recognition that we didn't anticipate we would.

Given some of the other challenges, including promotional work, way-finding and the fare itself, that's one of many reasons that we, as I said earlier this morning, made the change to make it more affordable. We're in the process now of receiving what the new ridership numbers look like and getting final numbers from Metrolinx. I anticipate we'll know a little bit more once we've reached the end of the first full year of service, which would be June 6 of this year.

Mr. Michael Harris: So you were the minister when the air-rail link or UP Express commenced. Did you get a monthly update in terms of the ridership numbers? Were you given a briefing or update?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Yes. I won't say it was actually monthly; it might have been in some cases more frequently than monthly, or less frequently. I can't remember the frequency, but I was getting relatively regular updates.

Mr. Michael Harris: At what point throughout its service did you become concerned yourself about overall ridership numbers to the point where you asked Metrolinx to have a look at the fare structure?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I would say that from my perspective, when you're putting a brand new service into the market, something that you're convinced will work in terms of providing people with that dedicated air-rail link, something that this region has never experienced before—something that, by the way, many other cities, even in North America, don't have by way of a dedicated air-rail link; I know a number of others have as part of their existing commuter transit network connections to their airport.

But I would say that throughout the process, particularly as we headed into the Christmas season, I expressed

on a regular basis—as others did, as well—that we needed to redouble our efforts to make sure that we got the word out there, and that we continue to improve, again, some of the promotional work that needed to be done, some of the signage and way-finding.

I heard anecdotally from friends who were very interested in taking it those few months that it was a bit of a challenge to navigate through parts of Pearson to actually find where the train was. That kind of speaks to some of the challenge around way-finding. Metrolinx certainly heard, I would say, not only my concerns, but other concerns expressed in the region from people who were using the service and were tweeting about it or commenting about it that we needed to do a better job.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm glad you brought up the concerns from folks, because there were reports that were commissioned by Metrolinx. When you became minister, were you briefed on the studies that were done to calculate or suggest the setting of the fares?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I received a briefing relatively early in my tenure as minister—forgive me for not remembering the exact date—with respect to what the anticipated service would look like and what the service would be by way of fare structure, based on global comparisons and a number of other factors.

Mr. Michael Harris: Were you aware that Metrolinx has since commissioned nine separate reports? Were you aware that they commissioned that many?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: At a high level, yes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Have you read any of them?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Have I personally read any of those nine reports since we reduced the fares? Is that what you're asking?

Mr. Michael Harris: No.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sorry.

Mr. Michael Harris: Once you became minister, or since being minister, have you read any of the reports that were commissioned by Metrolinx advising them on the fare structure?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm aware of them. Have I read the individual reports? No. Have I been briefed on them? Yes.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm just curious: Do you have any idea what these nine reports cost? Can anybody tell me roughly the cost to have nine separate reports commissioned? Can you get back to me on what that cost was?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We can look into that.

Mr. Michael Harris: You know what? A lot of the unfortunate problem with the UP Express was the fare structure, which led to the low ridership numbers, yet all of the nine reports that were commissioned basically stated—I'll give you an example. In one of the reports, the Northstar report dated November 7, 2011, said a dramatic decrease in ridership would happen at a fare over \$20.

There is ample advice—I've got a stack here—continuing to give Metrolinx advice that the \$27.50 fare would result in the actual ridership numbers that we were

seeing. Why didn't they take the advice of all these nine studies that they did? Why was your government so fixated on the \$27.50 fare?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think it's important to recognize, Chair, in the interests of making sure that the committee has all of the information, that the fare with a Presto card prior to the reduction was actually \$19, which from what I recall from fairly elementary math would be below \$20. But I get the point that the member from Kitchener is asking.

Mr. Michael Harris: That's just one of them.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I know, but it's the one you highlighted. So \$19 with a Presto card was the fare. Obviously it's now \$9 with a Presto card since we embarked on the reduction in fares.

One of the things—I said this in the Legislature, I believe, when both Ms. DiNovo and Mr. Harris asked questions of me about the Union Pearson Express—is that when you take into account directly analogous air-rail links that are dedicated in other parts of the world, not necessarily broader commuter transit systems that have a stop at the airport, the price point that was originally established for the Union Pearson Express was not, in fact, out of whack.

Having said that—and this is what I said earlier today—I think we know that this is a brand new service for this region. It was trying to break into a region where some of the behavioural practices—understandably, from people like myself, as a lifelong resident of this region—were that we have a fairly set way of getting from wherever we live in the GTHA to the airport. To break through that behavioural pattern requires a few things: (1) getting the service out there, in this case on budget and on time; (2) promoting it in a way that people understand it's there and it's accessible—

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm going to jump in, because I—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No, hang on—the way-finding itself, if I can just finish my answer—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Minister, the floor is Mr. Harris's.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: But he has asked a question, and I'm actually in the position of responding to the question.

Mr. Michael Harris: How much time do we have left?

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): He has the opportunity of whether to continue or not.

You have less than four minutes left.

Mr. Michael Harris: I guess I just want to know, of the nine studies that were completed—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: To me, to be fair, that's a little bit—if he asks a question, I should have the right to answer.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): I've allowed lots of going back and forth.

Mr. Michael Harris: And I've been pretty good to listen to you.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I know you are, but I should have the right to answer questions.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): It's up to him.

Mr. Michael Harris: We're getting down to four minutes.

With the nine reports all advising that the fare structure was too high, how come they continued to move forward? Were you told of the \$27.50 then? With all these reports, did you agree, or put your stamp of approval, on the initial fare structure? Were you comfortable with the fare structure, even though all nine reports suggested that if you do, you'll see what you get?

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Hon. Steven Del Duca: I was comfortable in knowing, when you looked around the world at directly analogous comparisons of other dedicated air-rail links, that this was in keeping and consistent. As I was trying to say in response to the previous question, given that this was a brand new service coming into this region, and, frankly, given that, right off the bat, there was fairly negative media attention that attached itself to the fare, coming from other individuals, other municipal elected representatives in this region—which is fine; that's fair game because that's the system that we live in—it was always going to be a bit of an uphill battle with respect to bringing a new service into the region. There needed to be, and there still needs to be, a very ambitious plan to make sure that we are reminding people that the service is there and that it works really well, in addition to our decision to reduce the fare—

Mr. Michael Harris: So whose decision was it to eventually change the fare structure? Was it your office or was it the Premier's office?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: There was broad recognition both by the team at Metrolinx and the team at MTO, myself included, that we needed to do something to make it a more affordable option for people visiting the region and for people living in the region, for commuters who wanted to use it through the west end of the GTA, which is what we're seeing.

Mr. Michael Harris: Did you ever speak with the Premier specifically about the fare structure at UP Express?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I did have a conversation with the Premier to talk about the Union Pearson Express when we had settled on a game plan to go forward, and I made her aware of what the game plan was.

Mr. Michael Harris: Did she express concerns to you that that fare should be reduced?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm talking about a point at which we had settled upon a game plan in advance of March break to go after the—

Mr. Michael Harris: So you never spoke to the Premier before the fare reduction at all? She never expressed to you that the fares should be reduced?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I personally had one conversation with the Premier. It was shortly before we were making the announcement, once both MTO and Metro-

linx—myself included—had settled on the decision to reduce the fare, to bring it down to \$9 with a Presto card, to make sure that she was aware of it.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): One minute, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Michael Harris: Do you think you waited too long to reduce the fees?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You would both remember that in response to both of you, I had said, in the Legislature previously, that we wanted to see—because our goal was to be at 5,000 riders a day by the end of the first year, we made the change in advance of that first full 12 months. I wanted to make sure we had it out before March break to take advantage of some of the travel that would normally occur during March break. We also saw, over the Family Day weekend, when it was free—to be fair, it was free—that the interest was actually off the chart. So I think all of these factors contributed to us making the decision.

Mr. Michael Harris: Just finally, on the \$7-million subsidy for this year, that was budgeted. Will that have to be re-looked at, now that the fare structure was reduced? Or was that after the fare structure—

Ms. Linda McAusland: That was after. That's in the books. That's in—

Mr. Ian Freeman: Sorry. It was before the decision on fare structure.

Ms. Linda McAusland: That's right.

Mr. Michael Harris: So that number will have to be revisited, likely, for this year.

Mr. Ian Freeman: It may have to, based on the forecasts.

Ms. Linda McAusland: There may be a pressure we need to manage.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We'll take a look at that. Just to be clear, we'll take a look at that once we have the final numbers.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Thank you. We'll now move on to the third party, and Ms. DiNovo.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Minister, to segue from what Mr. Harris was talking about, both he and I were here at public accounts, by the way, when Mr. McCuaig came. When asked directly—at that point, the fare was still in the \$27 range—“Are you considering, or are you looking at, reducing these fares at all?”, his answer was succinct. It was, “No.”

Within two weeks, I believe it was, there was an announcement about the fares going down. So you can understand the consternation on this side about the way consultation was happening.

This was, of course, after the briefings. All of them said that this fare is unworkable, and this was before the fare was put into place.

Yes, you're right: I was at a town hall meeting in Davenport. It wasn't exactly a happy crowd. One might describe it as an angry mob. But you did an excellent job at defending Metrolinx—perhaps the indefensible, in terms of that crowd and my crowd and many in the downtown core, and you can understand why.

I have over 100,000 riders per day—not 5,000; 100,000—on streetcars 504 and 505 and on the Dufferin bus, who are watching streetcars go by full, getting on subways, watching subways go by full, and yet they see this premium service rattling through their backyards half-empty all the time. That is the source of consternation. Just to paint a picture, that's what I hear, that's what we get in our constituency office and that's what I carry forward.

But I want to not dwell on that. I want to go on to talk about the procurement process, again with Eglinton and others. We've obtained the most recent risk matrix template, which was used for urban transit projects such as the Eglinton Crosstown. Just as before—and this has raised the ire of a couple of Auditors General—the new risk matrix was prepared by a private consultant without knowledge of the project to be procured, the relevant public agency or the relevant private contractor. Yet templates like these are the sole basis for the government's claim that P3s, public-private partnerships, save the government money as compared to traditional public procurement.

Even if the relevant public agency has a 100-year record of always being on time and on budget while the private contractor has a record of bankruptcy, corruption and negligence, this risk matrix will always give a result that says that P3 procurement is better than public. It's just the way it's built. In 2012, the Auditor General, because of that, recommended that Metrolinx rely on the actual past performance of the relevant public agency when comparing the risks of public versus P3 procurement. His successor made similar recommendations in 2014.

My question is: Why have Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario—but Metrolinx is part of your division—ignored the recommendations of two Auditors General by relying on a template to justify public-private partnerships instead of the relevant historical data?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I said earlier, I'm not in a position to comment about Infrastructure Ontario. As you know, it's a different minister.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Right. But Metrolinx is part of your—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No, that's fair. I just wanted to make sure you didn't think I was avoiding that half of the equation for any other reason.

I would say that in the benchmarking I've seen with respect to how we've done procurement at a higher level, looking across all different sectors, there's very clear evidence that we deliver these projects on time and largely on budget as well.

I think the one thing you have to take into account with some of the Auditors General reports on this—obviously, there's a difference of opinion around the latest one; I say “latest”; it was, I believe, a year or two ago, and forgive me for not remembering exactly when it landed—in terms of what we would argue, and I think rightly so, the cost savings ultimately are to the people of Ontario when we pursue the model that we have versus,

in terms of the risk transfer, in terms of all of those other aspects that ultimately benefit the people, versus what the auditor at that point felt were the additional costs—for example, some of the financing costs etc.

Obviously, there's a difference of opinion around some of those pieces, which I think is on the public record. I've certainly said it in the Legislature; others have. I think even at the time, in direct response to that particular auditor's report, our government was fairly clear that we didn't necessarily agree with those findings.

Having said that, I think you also have to recognize that some of the transportation projects that we've embarked on recently, whether it's the Crosstown or others, don't really have a precedent in Ontario. There hasn't been a \$5.3-billion capital transit project, at least not in my lifetime. I'm 42; almost 43. In that length of time, there hasn't been a project of that size or scope that I know of. Again, when you're talking about that size or scope, or a significant highway project or some of the other work that we do, you have examples where we are on track to deliver, we are delivering, we have delivered and we'll continue to deliver, versus some of the projects on the transit side that are currently under construction in the GTA that are using a slightly more traditional approach that are behind schedule and, it's already being confirmed publicly, will be likely over budget.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let me—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: The only thing I would say, though—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Sure.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to make sure I stress that you mentioned that it's a 100-year-old ministry. You're right about that. Of course, across a number of other infrastructure projects that we undertake around bridges and roads and highways etc., there is a really great track record at MTO. Not just as a ministry but as a government, we assess on a project-by-project basis what the best approach is. There are internal approvals that we have to go through—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to pick up on something you talked about: the risk involved. One of the leading bidding partners here was SNC-Lavalin, which was and is part of the Crosslinx consortium and eventually won the \$9.1-billion contract. During the procurement process—and really, for those who read Hansard who are the transit nerds out there, they should know this—SNC-Lavalin was facing RCMP charges for allegedly paying a \$22.5-million bribe to win the McGill megahospital public-private partnership contract. It was also facing separate charges for its links to the Gadhafi regime. If SNC-Lavalin—and just remember, this is one of bidders—the successful one—it would receive a 10-year ban on bidding federal projects after already being slapped with a 10-year ban on bidding World Bank projects due to yet another bribery conviction.

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CEO Robert Card said that such a federal ban could be fatal to the company. Also, during this same time, several foreign buyers from Spain and Australia were reportedly

interested in buying SNC-Lavalin. How, if at all—and one's eyebrows go up at all this information—did any of these obvious risk factors, and these are true risk factors, affect the risk assessment of, again, the public-private partnership procurement for the Eglinton Crosstown? We're dealing with criminals.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm not going to comment on that allegation; it's not my place to comment on that. I will say that the consortium had multiple partners. Crosslinx Transit Solutions, along with the other bidding consortia, came forward. They responded to the RFQ that was first put out, and then they responded to the RFP. They were in accordance with all our procurement rules and Infrastructure Ontario's procurement rules. They were awarded the contract and achieved financial close, and they are now in the process of building the Crosstown.

It was—I said this earlier today—a bid that came in roughly \$2 billion below what was originally anticipated, which I think speaks very clearly to the creativity and innovation that the private sector brings to bear on these kinds of projects, and—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Obviously, a lot of creativity, according to the RCMP.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Just to be clear on this, Chair, I want to say that as far as I'm aware, there is no RCMP investigation into the Eglinton Crosstown, which is the project that this ministry is responsible for delivering.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): I can't have you talking over each other. That's all.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I just wanted to make sure that was clear on the record.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To go on about SNC-Lavalin, they just filed a lawsuit against the McGill University Health Centre claiming \$33 million in damages. This is the same project for which SNC-Lavalin is facing bribery charges. It's called gall, I guess. Should the public worry that Metrolinx may one day find itself being sued by one of its P3 partners?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm not in a position to speculate on what might or might not happen in the future. It's beyond the scope, frankly, of the estimates committee.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Does it not worry you, though, when you're doing business with folk who—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I am not in a position to speculate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): I'm sorry. We'll have to go back to estimates.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly, that's part of it. If any of the P3 partners gets into trouble during the construction phase, what is to stop the partner from just packing up and going home, leaving a big hole in the ground where an LRT line is supposed to be? Again, you're dealing with highly leveraged hedge funds that are financed with other people's money, with a prime directive of off-loading risk to everyone else while extracting as much money from the situation as possible, which is their right. They're a company, and they want to make a good return

on their investment. I'll give you an example. A few years ago in Great Britain, the private partners of the Transport for London public-private partnership demanded huge concessions from the government when they got into trouble. Then the government had to pay huge sums of money to take over the projects when the private partners walked away. Do you have no concerns about this with the Eglinton Crosstown?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I can only track back to what I said earlier. We have now—I'm sorry that I'm not remembering the numbers right now, although I did use them in a speech not that long ago—when you look at the AFP projects that have been delivered over the last 13 years across multiple sectors, not just transit and transportation, the independent verification or benchmarking demonstrates that over those last 13 years across all those sectors, we have consistently delivered on time and largely on budget as well.

I said earlier today that I think we in Ontario have a world-leading infrastructure community, and there are a number of examples of that, including within the Crosslinx Transit Solutions partnership, and others—not just that one, but others. And I have every confidence that they will continue to deliver on time and on budget for this project.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay. You live in hope, Minister. I would be a little concerned, and I think taxpayers are a little concerned. Let's move on.

Metrolinx released a fare integration review in September. The review said, "The fare strategy will reflect the value of the trip taken and maintain the financial sustainability of transit services." My question is: Why is value described here only in consumer terms and not in terms of the value of transit to the economy or even as a public policy tool?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: That's a good question, but from my perspective those are aspects almost at the philosophical level, which I do respect, that are kind of intrinsic to the larger discussion. They're inherent, but from my perspective, they're implied as part of the broader discussion, and I know that Metrolinx has not only discussed this publicly; they're engaged, in this particular region, the GTHA, with our municipal partners. There's an ongoing conversation around fare integration, and I know that there will be more updates in the coming weeks.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I know I've talked to you about this, but it's come to my attention, for example, that those with intellectual disabilities—those who are quite disabled—don't get any breaks on their fares; seniors don't. Is there any move to accommodate folk who have special challenges, for example, on transit?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Nothing that's currently planned per se that I could speak to definitively, but I do hear those concerns expressed. I hear them in my own community, and I certainly hear them right across this region and beyond. We're always looking for ways to improve accessibility and enhance the ability people have to use transit comfortably, reliably and affordably. But there's nothing specifically planned at this moment.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay. And back to an earlier question, when I asked about operating versus the construction phase of transit projects: Does Metrolinx think it's possible to integrate fares without offering operating subsidies—that's part one; the second is, how can Metrolinx avoid inter-agency squabbles—this goes back to my earlier question—if it does not offer operating subsidies to smooth over conflicts with respect to fare sharing. If you could talk about that communication issue.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: They're both great questions. I think fare integration is contained within my mandate letter, and it's something that I'm responsible for working with Metrolinx to deliver. I think that you would know, and frankly, it's kind of suggested even in your question, that it's a fairly complicated conversation that needs to happen. We have very ingrained practices here in this region, whether we're talking about TTC or some of the 905 municipal transit systems.

On the good-news front, there's not a place that I go from downtown to the outer reaches of the GTHA where there is a lack of desire to achieve fare integration; but with all of these things, the devil is always in the details. The discussions have been ongoing for some time. I know at the board meeting that's planned, I believe for the end of June, there will be additional discussions happening and additional presentations coming out with respect to what some of the models might look like.

But with all other things that relate to—to sound a little bit crass, forgive me—like all other things where we're talking about money and we're talking about how we can make sure that there is an equitable sharing of whatever fare integration might produce by way of a by-product, aside from the fact that we're building that seamless transit network, there will be a challenge on the other side. That's part of the conversation that we have to have, and that we are having.

The other thing I would say is that I think we all do recognize that the goal we have is to drive more people towards transit and to convince more people—especially those who don't currently use it—that they should use it, that it should be an option. Part of it is the infrastructure build-out, and then part of it is that we're going to make it easy for you. So if you've been using transit most of your life, we're going to make it one step easier. If we're trying to convince you to leave your car at home, we don't want you to face too many barriers in using that system.

I feel a very urgent need to deliver on that part of my mandate, but I also know that if, collectively, we inadvertently get it wrong, it has the potential to be counterproductive. So rest assured—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Like the fares at Metrolinx for UP Express.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —we are working on this one.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Right. Got it.

The Auditor General's 2012 report commented on the Liberal government and Metrolinx's decision in 2011 to cancel Transit City at the request of Mayor Rob Ford.

Metrolinx had performed cost-benefit analysis to support the Transit City plans—everybody was very excited about it in my neighbourhood—but Rob Ford had conducted no cost-benefit analysis to support his plan. Rob Ford had not even sought council approval to cancel Transit City, and yet Metrolinx agreed to scrap all this planning and start again. So, again, political involvement is at the basis of this question.

The 2014 AG follow-up report says: “Little or no progress” has been made with respect to this recommendation. Indeed, since the 2012 report, Metrolinx has agreed to cancel an LRT line in Scarborough—arguably, to win a by-election. It even endorsed a report that claimed it was feasible to run a subway along the current RT corridor, something that TTC engineers had claimed was technologically impossible.

Often, when I've talked about the way we do transit in this province with people from other jurisdictions in the world, they're aghast at the political involvement—manipulation, some might say—in what should be evidence-based decisions, so if you could just comment on that, the AG's report and her concerns.

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Hon. Steven Del Duca: A couple of things: One is, in the first round of media interviews that I did in 2014 after becoming minister, I guess in some respects I kind of spoke to that challenge that we faced in the region for most of my adult life and probably longer than that, and that we seemed to settle—as a region, not any one particular politician or government. As a region, we kind of historically seemed to settle on a decision to go forward in a particular direction. Then, either because of an election at some level or a different personality coming onto the scene or a different political party taking over, we cancelled the Eglinton subway, as an example. We filled in the holes that were already tunneled for that project at that point in time.

There are lots of examples of this. Right? You cited some in the opening of your question a second ago. I think that that's one of the reasons that it has been so important for me to get as many shovels in the ground and to get as much transit started in terms of the construction—not just the approval and the announcements that go along with that and the media attention, but to actually get the shovels in the ground and to get the procurements out so that people can actually—two things. One is, it's obviously not impossible, as we saw in 1995, but it's harder once a project is under way, because the people of an area, the people of a region, say, “Well, this is something that we need. It's coming to us and we can see” —

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Two minutes.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —“tangible evidence of that.” It makes it harder. It doesn't make transit projects bullet-proof, but it makes them harder to reverse.

Secondly, it helps reduce that tiny bit of a credibility deficit that still exists, I think, out there around whether or not governments at all levels and of all stripes can get this stuff done. So it's important to get as much of this done as possible.

We did, obviously, shift the Metrolinx board. We moved away from having elected representatives on the board to a professional—you know what I'm saying—the professional-based board. I forget the right terminology on that.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It doesn't look like it's worked.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: But you can't have it both ways. You can't tell me there's too much political interference and then, when we move towards a board that's not full of politicians, that somehow we should go back to something like that.

The only thing I would say, though, is that I do believe that it is important for us, as we're making these decisions, to maintain an accountability link between those that we're actually delivering for and how we're making the decisions—evidence-based, 100% absolutely true. Getting as much done as possible, but also recognizing that, ultimately, it's the 107 of us that are accountable to the people, not somebody sitting off in a—and by the way, even amongst transit experts, we know that there are a multitude of opinions about how these decisions should be made.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Do I have any time?

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just very quickly—really, really racing—looking at the extension, possibly, of the Yonge subway versus a relief line, we've heard mixed signals—again, political signals—as to whether we're going to get a relief line. If the Yonge extension is just built, it will be a nightmare from my thinking and many downtowners thinking, because it's already packed. We need a relief line. Thoughts?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Do I have enough time?

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): You've got 20 seconds.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Okay, so I have to say, both projects remain in Metrolinx's next wave. Neither project is shovel-ready today. The only other thing I'll say, which I've said publicly before, is we all have to remember that this is not a 416/905 debate. Gridlock doesn't respect municipal boundaries or postal codes. It's a regional problem that needs regional solutions. We all have to work together to make sure that we find those solutions.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Thank you very much. We will now move on to the government and Ms. Vernile.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Good afternoon, Minister. Thank you very much for being before us today to speak about an issue that is dear and near to my heart, and that is improving transit in my region of Kitchener Centre and across the province of Ontario.

The first thing I want to do is offer you the opportunity to finish the answer that you were giving before you were interrupted by Mr. Harris. I know it was 20 minutes ago. You were talking about the UP Express. Was there anything more that you wanted to add to that comment?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much for that and for the opening. I think I would just finish off by saying there's no doubt that we continue to have more

work to do with respect to promoting this service here in the region and reminding people that it's there. I think we've landed in a great place regarding the fare, obviously, at \$9 with a Presto card. Aligning the fares at the two stations in-between Union and Pearson with the GO fare structure that exists there is making it very accessible and affordable. I think—if I'm not mistaken—kids under 12 are free on the UP Express. This is all great news. It's great progress: family discounts etc.

We have more work to do, but the one thing, fundamentally, that we all know is that when people take this service, because it runs 19 and a half hours a day, because it's a 25-minute trip from Union to Pearson, regardless of whether there's a traffic jam on the 427 or some other regional road or municipal road in the area or there's an accident, God forbid. It's 25 minutes from end to end—19.5 hours a day with trains running at 15-minute intervals. It's a really extraordinary service that was delivered on time and on budget. So I think we're on the right track—to use a bit of a pun—but we still have more work to do.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Minister, I actually had the opportunity this past Sunday to ride, for the first time, the UP Express from Toronto airport into downtown Toronto. It was fast. It was affordable. The train was spotless. I had WiFi. I encourage more people to use it.

Let me start by saying to you that your government was elected with a very strong mandate to improve transit for our province. Since the 2014 election, you have made significant announcements with regard to transit across Ontario.

I know that in my riding of Kitchener Centre, our community was very excited when we heard in the 2014 election campaign that you would be delivering all-day, two-way GO train service. Currently, we've got two trains that leave Kitchener in the morning and two that come back in the afternoon from the GTA. As you know, there are many interested parties in my community who want to see that increased. This, of course, is tied to economic development along what is being referred to as the "tech super-corridor" in our region, from Kitchener-Waterloo to the GTA.

I can tell you that Google, for instance, is loading up three buses of employees in the GTA every day and bringing them down the highway to the new headquarters in Kitchener.

Recently, I had a meeting with a government relations person with a local insurance company—and let's not forget that Kitchener-Waterloo is home to the headquarters for several insurance companies in Canada. This GR person told me that, at her company, where there are 3,800 employees in Kitchener and 4,000 in Toronto, on any given day they've got 200 people going back and forth. They're looking for better options than the traffic-choked 401, so they're hoping for a rail announcement soon.

But I know that you've had some challenges in rolling out all-day, two-way GO train service on certain lines, including the Kitchener line, and this is tied to CN and

CP ownership. On the Kitchener line, for instance, we've got about 30 kilometres of track between the Georgetown and Bramalea stations where CN owns the track. We've been piggybacking on this track, moving people and GO trains. For people who want the trains to go faster or to have more trains, this is the reason why we're not able to deliver at this point.

I would like to ask you to give us an update on how you are working with Metrolinx and what they are doing to deal with our rail partners to deliver on that promise.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much. I did mention a little bit earlier today that in budget 2016 we did reinforce or re-emphasize the point that we've made the commitment around two-way, all-day GO service on all of our corridors.

We also recognize that there is continued work that needs to occur with respect to not only dealing with the individual communities affected—for example, the corridor communities on the Kitchener line or the Milton corridor or some of the others. Obviously, it's a broad recognition, because I've had the chance, along with you and MPP McGarry and others, to sit down with municipal representatives from the corridor communities. We've all heard loud and clear, both bilaterally and collectively, about the urgent need to make sure that we can deliver on that commitment.

You're 100% right in that part of the conversation that has been ongoing has been with—as the budget mentioned—both CN and CP to gauge their appetite for how best to move forward to liberate both corridors. I think that the conversations have been going well.

By the way, it's not just the Kitchener corridor and it's not just the Milton corridor; CN owns a portion of Lakeshore West as well, and there are other bits and pieces.

I think that, in the last few years, we have made tremendous progress in that, when you look at the entirety of the GO rail network, you would see that the province owns 80% of the tracks that we run our GO trains on, which is great. Not long after I became Minister of Transportation, I was able to participate in an announcement about a piece of the Kitchener corridor that we had just picked up shortly after I became minister, which was great news.

But you are right. If I can zero in on the Kitchener corridor itself for a second, there is that chunk—a relatively small chunk, but an important chunk—that continues to be owned by CN. I think that we also have to recognize that, as frustrating as it can be sometimes, because it feels like it's a bit of an impediment, I don't think that we can ignore the fact that when you look, more broadly speaking, at our economy here in the province of Ontario, goods movement is crucial. We have, both in CN and CP, two significant companies that help support that goods movement by the work they do.

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I think we need to make sure that we have a balanced solution that permits us to deliver on the commitment that we made not only to Kitchener and Waterloo region

residents and the rest of the folks along that corridor—it's Brampton, it's Acton, it's Georgetown, it's Guelph, it's Waterloo region itself and also on the Milton corridor, from Mississauga and the communities out to Milton. We definitely need to continue to have that dialogue and conversation.

I said earlier today—and I'm pretty sure I said it here in this room—I'm an optimistic person by nature. I know I've said that to you many times, as you've been a very strong advocate for delivering on that commitment. I'm an optimistic person. I think our freight rail partners understand the challenge and the importance of supporting us in our plan to unlock the potential of both corridors. We're going to keep at it. We're going to keep working hard on it. We are absolutely determined to deliver on the commitment we made in 2014. We are making progress, but we still have more work to do.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You have stated publicly, quite recently, that you are prepared to make a significant announcement before the summer on this particular line. Would you say that you were still on track with that?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think we're on track to provide an update before the summer.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: If that happens in my community—no insult to Mr. Bautista—it will be bigger than a bat flip. Thank you.

My colleague is going to continue.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: We'll just carry on, if that's all right, on rail.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sure.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: When we're looking at high-speed rail and the whole idea of going from Windsor to the airport with stops in London and Kitchener-Waterloo—that generated quite a lot of excitement. I remember, in 2014, when you were with the Deputy Premier in London, announcing that we were starting work as a province on this very exciting corridor. In order to be able to consult with people, you were appointing a former federal transport minister, David Collenette, to help us with this project. He'll be a special adviser on the file.

In February, in Kitchener—actually, I think we had three members here. I know that MPP Harris was there and MPP Vernile and I were there at that public consultation regarding an update and how we're going to move forward with the high-speed rail and what that is going to look like.

Could you provide us with a progress report on what Mr. Collenette is conducting for you on this file?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Yes. Thanks very much for that question and, again, for your continued advocacy on this piece but also everything else that we're working on together.

You are 100% right as well that last November, I believe it was, I was in London with Deputy Premier Deb Matthews, where we announced that we were launching the environmental assessment. I'm pretty sure I did say this again earlier today here in the room, but just to repeat, because it's important to remind ourselves that

there's a ton of interest and excitement in London—frankly, in Windsor and throughout southwestern Ontario, and in Waterloo region as well—about the fact that we, at long last in this province, have embraced the idea that there might be some solutions that high- or higher-speed rail could provide to some of the connectivity and economic challenges that we have, particularly in southwestern Ontario.

I said publicly in November when we launched the environmental assessment that it is a process that will take anywhere from four to six years to complete—the environmental assessment itself. This is an unprecedented project. Obviously, we've never moved forward on an EA, to my knowledge, for high-speed rail in the province of Ontario. I know that other studies were done in the eastern half of the province, but moving it forward tangibly is something that's unprecedented.

I've had the chance to sit down with Mr. Collenette on a couple of occasions. I'm delighted that he agreed to take up the challenge. He's someone who brings his breadth of knowledge and experience to transport and transportation issues. Having him serve as a special adviser to both myself and Minister Duguid on this is something that I know is extremely encouraging.

To your point, he has been out to the local communities and he's consulted with some of the communities, broadly speaking, along the route, though a finalized route has not been determined yet. That is part of some of the work that he and MTO are doing jointly around looking at various aspects of the feasibility of this project as part of the environmental assessment. Also, he is talking to, liaising with and consulting with our First Nations partners as well—something that's important for us to make sure we do in the most appropriate way, respecting our duty to consult on so much else through southwestern Ontario.

I expect that I'll be hearing a more substantial update from Mr. Collenette over the next number of months, but I know that wherever he has gone on this process so far, it has generated a ton of excitement. I know as well, from the Premier to others who have had a chance to be in other parts of the world, particularly in Asia, and experience higher- or high-speed rail projects that are actually in service, it's quite the eye-opener.

Again, I feel a degree of urgency with respect to making sure that we do move forward, as we are, with the environmental assessment. I look forward to hearing something more comprehensive from Mr. Collenette in the coming months, and then we'll provide updates out to the affected communities after that.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Ms. McGarry.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I know that, when we're looking at the full transit plan of Moving Ontario Forward—and, Minister, earlier today and just recently, you mentioned again that Ontario to this point hasn't experienced light rail transit and we haven't experienced high-speed rail. So this is a very exciting time in the province of Ontario to start looking at major projects that

will help with goods and services. It's obviously a unique time for Ontario to look at these projects going forward.

When we're looking at putting down a lot more rail track and looking at some of these projects, especially when it comes to high-speed rail, I know that there have been several people who have talked to me about rail safety. I know this falls under federal jurisdiction as well, but I know that some comments about the recent train derailments in Lac-Mégantic and Gogama have raised a number of concerns about rail safety. I'm just wondering if you might speak to that. At AMO and over at ROMA I've had several of the mayors and councillors talk about what it means for them to have rail going through their communities, and having just a little bit of discomfort about what rail safety is going to look like. So could you talk to members of the committee about rail safety in the future?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely. It's a great point. I've had the chance and I know that the member from Sudbury, MPP Thibeault, also had a chance to visit Gogama after the incident up there. Obviously, we all read with horror the reports coming out of Lac-Mégantic when that tragedy occurred there.

Both former federal transport minister Lisa Raitt and current federal transport minister Marc Garneau have heard directly from Ontario, but also from me directly, about the importance of making sure that we get this piece right. I've had the chance now to attend a couple of council of transport ministers meetings, one shortly after I became minister that took place in Montreal and then one more recently that took place in Ottawa, where, because it's now Ontario's turn in the rotation, both myself and current Minister Garneau served as co-chairs.

It is an issue that comes up, I know, even among the deputies across the country, it's something that's discussed on a regular basis. We all recognize that it's of crucial importance, regardless of where you are in our provinces, regardless of where you are right across the country, but particularly when you're in and around any kind of densely populated—or not even densely populated, necessarily—part of a province or a territory. It's something that can have tragic consequences.

I've had the occasion, on more than one occasion, to correspond directly with the minister to raise some of the concerns. I know that the federal government, both the current administration and the previous one, has taken steps to ensure that we're moving in the right direction on this. But I would say to people, including some of the coalitions that exist right here in the city of Toronto that have gathered together to talk about some of their concerns, that we all know, whether we're here in Toronto or in parts of western Canada, there are communities—Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto itself—that were really built up around some of this freight rail traffic that helped build the country, helped build our province and helped feed our economy. But now we have explosive growth in and around these rail corridors and we have goods that are flowing through, and there's been some concern expressed, I think rightly so, about awareness with respect to what's actually being transported on the

rail corridors, how much information is known, how much knowledge is provided to communities.

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It's a bit of a challenge because, as you pointed out, we don't have direct responsibility, provincially, for guaranteeing or ensuring that rail safety piece is there. But I know that we will continue to be very strong advocates to make sure that our federal colleagues understand the importance of getting this piece right.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you. I think—the member from Sudbury?

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Mr. Thibeault?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

I'm going to refer to pages 29 through 32 in the estimates briefing. It's talking about improving Ontario's highways, border and bridges infrastructure. It's pretty extensive, when you look through the document to see all of the investments that your ministry is making in improving highways, bridges and border infrastructure right across the province. Of course, being from the north, I'm going to specifically talk about page 31 and talk about the northeast region.

One of the things I think is very important to highlight—and I would like your comment on this, Minister—is the bullet under “Northeast Region,” the last one: “Commenced widening of Highway 69 from two to four lanes from north of Highway 522 in the vicinity of French River, including two interchanges, 10”—I'm going to emphasize that again—“10 new bridges and multiple structural culvert replacements.”

This, in northern Ontario, specifically in northeastern Ontario, is just another huge investment that we're seeing, because we're now able, for example, Minister, to go from Sudbury almost all the way to—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Two minutes.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you—all the way to the Key River. That announcement was a \$173-million investment by this government to ensure that we can have safer roads in the north.

Your comment specifically on the importance of seeing these types of investments and what we can foresee in the future when it comes to the four-laning of Highway 69?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sure. We don't have a lot of time to answer this. I will say, as quickly as I can, that this—obviously you would know this, as the MPP for Sudbury—has been a massive undertaking on the part of our government. It goes back many years. A number of your predecessors have spoken very clearly about the need to make sure that we continue moving forward and get it right. Over the last number of months since you've been the MPP, you've certainly talked to me on a number of occasions. We had the chance to stand outside in the cold a number of months ago to talk specifically about how we are going forward with this project.

I think that, from a highway and road safety perspective, but also from an economic perspective, it is so

important that we finish off that project. It has not been a project without its complications. Since it started, we've had a lot of work that has been required, and it still is required in terms of our partnerships and our discussions with the affected First Nations in the area.

But I think everybody recognizes the importance of making sure that we continue to invest, that we continue to procure those contracts that are required to complete the four-laning and that we meet our goals with respect to the schedule as provided by way of the last update that we provided to the community. So, rest assured, MTO recognizes the importance of making sure that we complete the four-laning of Highway 69, and we will get it done.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Twenty seconds; 15.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Well, with that, I think it's just important to recognize, under the section that I was talking about on page 31, there's so much more in there in terms of investments that are being made in northern Ontario. So, it's not just Highway 69, but right across the northeast and the northwest.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Thank you. Back to Mr. Harris.

Mr. Michael Harris: I think it's important to note, just to get back to estimates, that this 20 minutes is our time, and we'll ask the questions. We appreciate the dialogue back and forth. We'll save the stories for when it's their turn. But as I get the answer, I will move on to the next question. We've had a good dialogue so far, but I just want to make it clear to everybody that, when I've got the answer, I'm going to move on. All right? Fair.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As long as I have the chance to answer, that's great. Sure.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes. When I feel I've got the answer, I'll move on.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We'll see how it goes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Whether I'm going to get it or not—you know.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We'll see how it goes.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: We've got a Chair for that.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Order.

Mr. Michael Harris: Union Station revitalization—clearly, significant cost overruns down at Union Station. Let me see here. The AG had a concern over the lack of cost controls and cost overruns for the train shed, specifically—25% over Metrolinx's initial estimate, bringing the total to \$270 million, which is quite a bit. It's well over a quarter of a billion dollars. What cost controls have been put in place since the auditor's warnings?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I've asked Vinay to come to the table. We're obviously joined by others here who may want to amplify, I guess, or elaborate on some of the comments that I'm going to make.

I would say—and I know you've asked a question about this in the Legislature—that one of the things, when you look at a project like the Union Station revitalization, that is really important for everyone to remember is that it's not only a massive undertaking, like so much of the other work that we are doing; it's very crucial in

terms of how much traffic will be flowing into Union Station, not just currently—obviously, it's a very busy terminal—but how much more will flow in there once we've completed all of the work that's currently in our plan.

I think the other thing that people do recognize, whether we're talking about the train shed or some of the other components, is that we are dealing with a building that is of historical importance and significance, not just here in this region but from a national perspective, so there are obviously some challenges that result from that inherent heritage perspective, I guess I would say.

The specific question around cost controls—Vinay, I'm not sure if you'd like to jump in. Please identify yourself.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Identify yourself, please.

Mr. Vinay Sharda: I'm Vinay Sharda, the director of transit policy at the Ministry of Transportation.

I would say, in relation to the Union Station revitalization, the project is actually led by the city of Toronto. The province is a contributor, as is the federal government, as is the city. In that regard, the responsibility for the cost overruns in relation to the revitalization work is the responsibility, therefore, of the city. The province itself has contributed \$172 million towards that revitalization work.

Mr. Michael Harris: So the train shed, though, would be within the scope of Metrolinx?

Mr. Vinay Sharda: That would be. As the minister has mentioned, the project itself is complex, in that there are layers of how different aspects of the work that takes place at the revitalization of the station are connected to things like the train shed and other works that Metrolinx would need to get done as part of their use of the station.

Mr. Michael Harris: What can taxpayers expect to pay, from the initial projections for specifically the train shed now, with some of the difficulties or problems that they've run into? Is there a number that has been put on that?

Mr. Vinay Sharda: I would have to take that back. I don't have that with me.

Mr. Michael Harris: You've not done any projections in terms of costs for the train shed?

Mr. Vinay Sharda: I don't have those with me presently. I can get back to you on that.

Mr. Michael Harris: So I guess, Minister, ultimately you would have approved a plan for the train shed renovation. I'm just wondering how they neglected to factor in the electric train—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I don't actually accept the premise of the question, which is what I've said to you in the Legislature. All of these considerations were factored in. I know that the team at Metrolinx is working towards making sure that, on the one hand, they are respecting and preserving whatever heritage features are required—that's an ongoing conversation—but also recognizing that we do have to accommodate the full build-out of GO regional express rail, which includes electrification. So I don't think there has been neglect here, per se. This is an iterative process that continues to unfold.

Mr. Michael Harris: So the electric train height was in fact calculated into this initially?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sorry, say that again? I couldn't hear.

Mr. Michael Harris: The electric train height, you're saying, was factored in—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: The delivery of GO regional express rail, which includes an electrification component—the team at Metrolinx is very well aware of the fact that we had to deliver on that. That does present an engineering challenge as it relates to the train shed, not just because of the work we need to do but also some of those heritage features that I talked about a second ago. I know that they are working on that. They are making progress on it. We will be able to provide the outcome that we have committed to.

Mr. Michael Harris: So would the proposed future electric trains fit in the actual train shed that's there now?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: When the work is complete, my understanding is that—again, Metrolinx is looking at a variety of options to make sure that the electrification that we've committed to and will deliver can be accommodated within the updated, revised, refurbished train shed.

Mr. Michael Harris: Any idea what the additional costs would be to have—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Did you say “additional costs”?

Mr. Michael Harris: Or costs.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I don't have the number for the exact cost of the train shed, that portion of the project itself, but I can look into that.

Mr. Michael Harris: That project is, what, 25% over cost already—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Are we talking about the train shed or are we talking about—

Mr. Michael Harris: The train shed.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm looking at Vinay to see if there's a specific number—

Mr. Michael Harris: What was the estimated project total, initially?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Just on the train shed.

Mr. Michael Harris: Right.

Mr. Vinay Sharda: I will have to get back to you.

Mr. Michael Harris: You don't have the estimate for the train shed?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: One specific project within the broader delivery of everything else that we're doing? We don't have it right here, but we'll take that back.

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Mr. Michael Harris: All right, you'll get that to me.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We'll take that back.

Mr. Michael Harris: All right. And you can't tell me, I guess, what the additional costs would be with the factoring in of whether they have to lower the tracks or raise the roof. You've not calculated what that's going to cost.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, there's a presumption in the question that suggests that there will be an addi-

ional cost for that over and above what was originally budgeted for the project.

Mr. Michael Harris: Does one or the other have to be done? Does the lowering of the tracks or the raising of the roof have to be done?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, at the end of the day, I said a second ago that there's no doubt there are some engineering and design challenges because we're dealing with a heritage structure. The full build-out of electrification is, obviously, generally speaking, a very challenging undertaking. So I'm not in a position to accept the presumption in the question that there's an additional cost for doing what we would need to do anyway as part of delivering GO regional express rail, but we will take the other question back.

Mr. Michael Harris: All right. Burlington GO station: You've pushed back the scheduled completion of the new Burlington GO station for the third time. Does that make sense? It was supposed to be completed in the spring of 2014. What would be the new date for completion of the Burlington GO station?

Mr. Vinay Sharda: I'm sorry—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We'll take that one back as well. I don't have a new date with us right here, but we'll take that one back. I can't recall if we've already publicly disclosed, so forgive me for that one, but we'll take that back—with respect to the new date, as you put it.

Mr. Michael Harris: When was the last time Metrolinx gave you an update on the Burlington GO station?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: For me, personally? It's been quite some time.

Mr. Michael Harris: So perhaps tomorrow you'll have that answer for me?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'll take it back.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm just surprised that you wouldn't know when the completion date for the Burlington GO station would be. Why wouldn't you have an answer for that? Why wouldn't you know when—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Off the top of my head?

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You're aware of the fact that there are lot of projects that MTO is undertaking.

Mr. Michael Harris: Or anybody, for that matter, here. Anyway—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sure.

Mr. Michael Harris: I guess we'll talk about Burlington afterwards.

The Metrolinx Act actually requires the review of the transportation plan. That's correct, right? The five-year plan calls for a review to be completed in mid-2016. We're in May now. Where is that review? When will it be completed?

Interjections.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I was just confirming that the work is under way with respect to preparing for that review and making sure that we do go forward. There is, again, a lot of interest out there in the broader community for the affected service area that Metrolinx is responsible

for, for making sure that we do complete that update. That is work that's currently under way.

Mr. Michael Harris: When do you expect that review to be completed?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm not in a position to confirm a date at this point.

Mr. Michael Harris: What is your involvement with the review?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I've been briefed on it. I've given, from my perspective, some direction about some of the aspects, some of the moving parts, that we should be looking at, specifically based on the feedback I've heard over the last two years from a number of our partners and from people right around the region. I look forward to seeing that work completed.

Mr. Michael Harris: Mayor Tory's SmartTrack plans—I understand Metrolinx is looking at options to merge those plans with the current regional express rail or GO. Is that correct?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Over the last number of months there have been a number of conversations between Metrolinx, the city of Toronto and MTO about working together to look for opportunities to align the services. Those conversations are ongoing. I know that later in June there will be an additional discussion, I think both at the city of Toronto and at the Metrolinx board, meeting around some of the results of the work that's been undertaken over the last couple of years.

My specific mandate as minister, though, is to deliver on GO regional express rail. That is work that's already under way and that will continue.

Mr. Michael Harris: Is SmartTrack doable?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: My mandate letter contains a requirement to deliver on GO regional express rail, but at the same time I know that we will continue to work closely with Mayor Tory and the city of Toronto so that we are delivering on those promises. I think that we'll hear more information later in June about how the two service concepts will align to ultimately provide people here in the 416 and into the region beyond with what they're looking for.

Mr. Michael Harris: Has Metrolinx briefed or indicated to you that, in fact, John Tory's SmartTrack plan cannot be done?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, my mandate and Metrolinx's responsibility is to deliver on GO regional express rail.

Mr. Michael Harris: So you've had no discussions with Metrolinx on SmartTrack in terms of its feasibility and the ability to execute SmartTrack as is.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, we're focused on GO regional express rail. The SmartTrack vision, I think you might remember, does look at using existing GO corridors, for the most part, to deliver on its commitment.

Mr. Michael Harris: Right.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's a city of Toronto initiative. There is very close work already under way to collaborate between Metrolinx, GO, MTO and the city of Toronto. I think a little bit later in June, there'll be some

more public confirmations about how the services will align.

Mr. Michael Harris: So over in Brampton, there was an LRT commitment from the government to the tune of what, \$1.6 billion was it?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Yes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Now, with the Brampton council's decision, where is that at?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: The LRT itself?

Mr. Michael Harris: Well, the \$1.6 billion that has been allocated to Brampton.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We're going to continue, I've said this publicly, with building an LRT along Hurontario, from Port Credit GO in the southern end of Mississauga up to Steeles, roughly, which is technically in Brampton, I think, but at the very southern edge of Brampton. That's where that LRT will finish or conclude.

Some of the monies that would have been required from the Moving Ontario Forward plan to support building the LRT all the way to the Brampton GO station, which was the original plan that we'd had, will be returned to Moving Ontario Forward, to be invested in priority transit projects in the GTHA.

Mr. Michael Harris: Have you had any discussions with stakeholders throughout the Brampton area with regard to the actual route itself?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I did do a transportation town hall for MPP Harinder Malhi before the final decision was rendered by council. There were a number of stakeholders from all sides of the debate in attendance at that transportation town hall. Ultimately, I said repeatedly at that time, and I stand by this, I respect the wishes of council. It's disappointing, because of course we wanted to build that LRT all the way to the Brampton GO to provide what I talked about earlier with respect to that connectivity in the three GO stations, but we will continue to build it up to Steeles from Port Credit GO and continue to work with Brampton and the rest of the municipalities in the GTHA on other transit priorities.

Mr. Michael Harris: Is it your hope that Brampton would have a re-look at their decision on this?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm really not in a position to comment on what that or any other municipality may choose to do. I know, and again I've said this publicly, the funds that would have been assigned for that portion of the LRT will go back to Moving Ontario Forward and they will ultimately be invested in priority transit projects in the GTHA, which could include Brampton but will not necessarily be Brampton.

Mr. Michael Harris: Moving west, we're getting into the region of Waterloo, of course. I know you talk a lot about the region of Waterloo's eye on LRT, despite the province's funding cut, from two thirds that it initially had promised, to one third that we're still moving forward with.

I want to specifically talk about the Bombardier delays. We've heard a lot in the news about the test

vehicles that were not being delivered or haven't been delivered to Toronto. Have you directly spoken with someone at Bombardier about the specific delays for the test unit you need?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Over the last, I would say, year or so, I've had a couple of conversations with Bombardier about some of the challenges that are being experienced across a couple of different platforms they had over that time period. I'm saying a year, I think it has been the last year—it might be a little bit longer than a year—but there has been more than one occasion where I've met with representatives from Bombardier where they have repeatedly assured us that they will be able to deliver.

Obviously, it's always concerning when we hear that there might be some challenges with respect to the delivery of a fleet, I guess I'll call it, that has been committed to. I don't believe at this point in time that we have necessarily crossed the threshold at which any of the projects are endangered to this point.

Mr. Michael Harris: But that first test vehicle was supposed to be delivered, what, last year?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Are we talking about for Waterloo, for ION?

Mr. Michael Harris: I know that I brought up Waterloo. I wanted to just throw in there the two thirds down to one third, but we'll get to Waterloo. Waterloo lumped in on the Bombardier deal with the province. The first test vehicle for Bombardier was supposed to be delivered last year, right?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Vinay is going to just confirm that.

Mr. Michael Harris: Last year?

Mr. Vinay Sharda: That's right.

Mr. Michael Harris: I mean, you said you've not crossed that threshold yet as to where you're concerned, but yet they've—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No, no, I did express concern, just to be clear, but we have not, to my knowledge, crossed the threshold at which the conclusion of being able to put it in service is necessarily imperiled. Having said that, there is concern. Obviously, there is concern here in the city of Toronto. When you actually take into account the enormous amount of additional fleet that we're going to need, both for GO regional express rail and for the rest of the LRTs that we have—

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): Minister, we've reached our 6 o'clock point.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Oh, sorry.

Mr. Michael Harris: We'll carry on tomorrow.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I look forward to it.

The Vice-Chair (Miss Monique Taylor): It now being 6 o'clock, the committee will stand adjourned until tomorrow afternoon after routine proceedings. At that time, the Conservatives will have three minutes and 54 seconds remaining of their time.

The committee adjourned at 1800.

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