

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

E-11

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

E-11

**Standing Committee on  
Estimates**

Ministry of Transportation

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament

Tuesday 26 November 2019

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Transports

1<sup>re</sup> session  
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Mardi 26 novembre 2019

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Chair: Peter Tabuns  
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Peter Tabuns  
Greffière : Julia Douglas

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services  
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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement  
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 26 November 2019

Mardi 26 novembre 2019

*The committee met at 0900 in room 151.*

## MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Good morning, everyone. We're going to resume consideration of vote 2701 of the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation. There is a total of three hours and nine minutes remaining.

Before we resume consideration of the estimates, if there are any inquiries from the previous meeting that the minister has responses to, perhaps that information can be distributed by the Clerk. Are there any items, Minister?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Yes. I will turn the microphone to Deputy Minister Tapp.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** I'm Deputy Tapp, Ministry of Transportation. We have responses for two of the questions. The first was our highway winter maintenance information—we have 20 copies of materials—and the second was MPP Bell's question on the Metrolinx 2018-19 business plan. We have copies of that draft plan.

The other outstanding question was about the information on the breakdown of the tolls from Highway 412. We're still working on that information.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

When the committee last adjourned, the official opposition had three minutes and 27 seconds remaining in their rotation. Ms. French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I am happy to resume that same question about the employment lands. The lands along the 407 east extension have yet to be returned to the fine folks of Durham region, whereas along the way, before the Durham portion, they have been turned back. So I have been asking—and I think the one comment that the minister's team was able to get on the record was that there isn't a benefit to the province to hold on to them, so I'd like to pick up from there, please.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll ask Jennifer to join the table.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** And if you'd introduce yourself for Hansard.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes. Good morning. I'm Jennifer Graham Harkness. I'm the executive director and chief engineer, provincial highways management, Ministry of Transportation.

In response to your question regarding the lands, as you indicated, there is no benefit for the ministry to hold on to the lands—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I didn't say that; your team said that. I think there is a benefit. I want to know why we can't have them back. I want to know when we can have them back, and I'd like them back.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Oh, sorry. My apologies. We have—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** That's okay. We've only got two minutes.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes. So in regard to the lands, once the work is completed, we assess the lands to determine what portions of lands can be released. We have had conversations, with the town of Whitby and other municipalities, related to lands. There are a number of properties. There is some land that needs to be held on to for environmental purposes in order to meet requirements for environmental conditions for the new highway, but there are certainly going to be—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So the stretch in north Oshawa and all of that area that Durham region has been asking for since at least when this team became government—what's the answer? When can we have them back and what's the holdup? What's the timeline, please?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** There are approximately 97 sections of land that are available. About 37 of those actually have access and are likely to be desirable. The—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** When can we have our land back in Durham region?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** One minute left.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** We have been working with the municipalities, and it's really about assessing the lands, working with municipalities and going through the process—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I understand it's all about process. My ask is, when can we have that back? When can we anticipate that the lands will be back for the region of Durham and the town of Whitby? I'm asking for a when, not telling me about the process, please.

If there's not a when, then that's my answer, that there is no plan to give them back. Is that correct, Minister?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** As the deputy said, we are working with the municipalities to assess each property, and when the assessment is complete, then we'll be able to move forward.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, so I guess I'd like a clearer understanding; is that something the ministry is willing to provide? Are then the lands specific to the newer

part—the breakdown of where those assessments are or where that process is? Because we've been asking, as a region—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm sorry to say that you're out of time.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** —for 18 months.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Sorry.

To the government: Mr. Pettapiece.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Good morning, Minister and staff, on this nice warm day. I'm going to open my comments by saying it's great to have you here, Minister. You and I represent two of the best ridings in Ontario.

As you know, I represent the riding of Perth–Wellington, which is a more rural community outside of the GTA, and while the riding is geographically large, about the same size as Hong Kong, the riding generally consists of low-density residential areas and working farms—working family farms, I might add. Thus the riding features many small but lovely communities, and I realize this possesses many different challenges from the GTA in terms of transit needs.

While we have spent much of this committee talking about GTA projects, I would like to speak about some of the transportation needs in my community and what the government is doing to address them in Perth–Wellington and other similar ridings that can be found throughout Ontario. How does the ministry address transportation needs for these types of ridings?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** You're right. We've spoken a lot at this committee about our government's plans for public transit in some of our larger areas. In our rural areas, the ministry has other programs in place to support people getting around.

The Community Transportation Grant Program is one of those programs. It is designed to make it easier for people in areas that have fewer transportation options. So the Community Transportation Grant Program is one that would impact people in your riding and in mine, York–Simcoe, as well.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Okay. And what exactly would that money be going towards, Minister?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** The Community Transportation Grant Program is \$30 million that goes to fund partnerships with community organizations that will help coordinate local transportation services. They help people get around, coordinate, make it to appointments, get to doctors' appointments, visit family and friends. Since the program was started in 2015, more than 28,000 people have used the new service to make over 100,000 trips, so it has had a big impact on the lives of a lot of people living in some of our rural communities.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Yes, we have gotten some reports in to our office that people are very thankful for some of these programs that have been starting up. I'm sure you are aware that living in a rural community, sometimes it's a long way to go somewhere—especially for health care needs, it's an issue. We have our share of

seniors in the riding who need transportation—some don't drive—so it certainly helps them out.

Who are some of the other major recipients of grants with this program?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I think I'll turn it over to the deputy, who's going to give some more specifics on the recipients of the community grants program.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** We funded 44 projects in 39 municipalities across the province: 29 of those are for local transit projects, which is a maximum grant of \$500,000, and another 15 are intercommunity bus projects, so those would be projects that would be providing a bus service, for example, from smaller communities to another community and making connections in the north, for example, to the Northland.

In your particular community, in the riding of Perth–Wellington, Perth county was funded \$1.4 million; Stratford partnering with St. Marys another \$1.49 million; and Wellington \$500,000. Those three examples that I'm just providing provided for different opportunities for funding. So Perth county transit provides access to medical services. Wellington was for mobile apps, for people to be able to look for on-demand services. And Stratford was an intercommunity bus project to connect people from Stratford to Kitchener and London for those kinds of appointments and needs, as you had mentioned.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Yes, I actually helped make the announcement in Wellington county, and it was very well attended. There's a lot of interest in that type of thing in rural Ontario. Again, we've been getting phone calls in about some of the people who have used that service already and are quite appreciative of it. It certainly costs them less than having to buy a car and pay for insurance and everything. Also, as you know, winter driving up our way can be difficult. I'm sure you know that; you know that area quite well. So you'd understand that.

How have these recipients and other communities been putting the community transportation grants to use?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** As I mentioned, there are a variety of ways that all the recipients are using the programs. Atikokan, as an example, is partnering with health agencies and a native friendship centre to share vehicles and drivers and coordinate trips to serve the vulnerable populations. Elliot Lake—this is another example in the north—has a shuttle service to connect Elliot Lake residents to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission in Spragge. Simcoe county partners with the Canadian Red Cross and local social service agencies in expanding an online portal to be able to facilitate services to riders so that they can submit their requests and find out when they can get their transportation services. Prince Edward county, in the east, is expanding intercommunity bus service to the residents of Wellington and increasing connections to public transportation services in local communities. So it really is a grants program that is spread out across the province. As you said, there is a lot of focus on the work that the ministry does in terms of the GTA, but we are supporting the local smaller communities, rural communities with this kind of program as well.

0910

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Have you been monitoring the effect the program has had on these communities at all? Have you been getting any feedback?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Yes. We do ongoing feedback. Since 2015, I think as the minister mentioned, 28,000 people have benefited from the program, and that is about 105,000 trips. We have yearly reports back from the municipalities, in terms of consultation, to make sure that the program is meeting their needs. It's a very popular program. As I said, it was a pilot in 2015. There was such a huge receptivity to the program that we then released it in 2018 as an ongoing program.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I know in my riding the grant has had a very positive effect, such that Perth county transit is aiming to link several small communities such as Stratford, St. Marys, Mitchell, Sebringville, Monkton, Atwood, Milverton, Listowel and Millbank. The effect of this would be to better connect people with friends, families, employment and enjoyment throughout Perth county. It also allows them to better access essential services, especially seniors, students and persons with disabilities.

Will this grant program be continuing?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** I need to correct what I said just a minute ago when I said it was an ongoing program. It's ongoing for five years. The program ends in 2023. Then we'll do an assessment to determine if it has reached the milestones that we needed and whether we would continue on an ongoing basis.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Can you give me an idea of how much is being invested over the next several years?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** It's \$30 million for 39 municipalities.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** How many projects are being funded throughout the province through this grant program?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** There are 39 municipalities, but it's supporting 44 projects. So there are some instances where some municipalities have more than one project.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** What is the process that applicants go through for the Community Transportation Grant Program? How are municipalities selected to receive these grants?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** It is an application-based program, so municipalities would have submitted an application. We had 66 municipalities that had submitted proposals, 79 distinct proposals. Those were reviewed by staff and had a set of criteria. The criteria, just for your awareness: improving mobility options for vulnerable populations, building and enhancing capacity to better meet transportation demand, creating and contributing to existing networks of transportation hubs, improving service delivery through collaboration, leveraging existing resources and innovation through information sharing.

Of course, any time there's a grants program, you generally get more demand than you have money for, so after careful deliberation, in terms of reviewing the criteria and community needs, that's where we landed with the 39 municipalities.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I'm certainly pleased to hear about the investment that the province is making in communities outside the GTA to improve their transit needs.

I want to change things up a little bit on rural Ontario transportation needs. Many of my constituents use roads, highways and bridges to get around. Maintenance of the local roads and bridges often puts a strain on these smaller municipalities. I understand the province has a Connecting Links Program that supports these local projects in Ontario. Would you be able to give me a high-level overview of this program?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Sure. A connecting link is a municipal road between two provincial highways or a municipal road connection from a provincial highway to an international bridge or interprovincial bridge. MTO has developed a program around these connecting links to provide funding for the repair and ongoing maintenance of these municipal roads. The way the program works is that funding for up to 90% of the total eligible project cost is provided with the maximum funding available of \$3 million per project. It addresses the needs that we have in smaller communities around the province to provide the necessary funding for the repair and the maintenance of these municipally designated roads.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I know when I was a councillor in Listowel in North Perth there were ongoing talks about our Connecting Links system. At that time, the 23 Highway went north out through Listowel, and we were debating whether to try to get control of the whole thing, from boundary to boundary or leave it as it was. They finally did get it done, and what it has allowed the community to do is grow in that some businesses that were thinking of building along the connecting link weren't allowed to do so because of MTO regulations, but they were allowed to do so when the town was able to take them over. They've widened the roads a little bit. They put in some crosswalks and whatever else. It has been a pretty good program, and if you could have seen the before and the after picture of what it looks like now, I think you could see that it has been quite successful.

Could you detail some of the larger investments the province has made through this program and what effect these projects have had on local communities?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I think I'll turn it over to the deputy for the details.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** The maximum grant that anyone can be allocated is \$3 million. This year, we have funded 25 projects in 23 municipalities. If I was just to highlight some of the ones that were the \$3-million maximum:

—Espanola: Highway 6, which is a reconstruction of the Espanola Centre Street;

—Fort Frances: Highway 11, reconstruction of Scott Street from Colonization Road east to Reid Avenue;

—Halton Hills: Highway 7, rehab of Main Street North bridge over CNR tracks;

—South Bruce Peninsula: Highway 6, a full reconstruction of Berford Street from Mary Street to Division Street;

—Wawa: Highway 101, reconstruction of Mission Road and Main Street; and

—Windsor: Highway 3, reconstruction of Huron Church Road from Malden to Pool.

Within that list of the 25 that I mentioned there's a total of \$42 million for this year, and they range from the projects from as low as—I'm just looking quickly—\$72,000 in Loyalist township to the \$3 million. So it's a variety, depending on the needs of the communities. Right now, as of last week, we closed the intake for funding applications for next year, so that will begin that process of evaluating for the ongoing program.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Is there any time frame that you try to get on announcing who's going to get these grants?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Generally, we try to announce in February in advance of the construction season, so that municipalities can then get prepared for the tendering, the design and the steps that they need to go towards construction. It's generally January/February.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Okay. It certainly helps in the bidding process if they can get them out.

I was glad to hear about one of the program recipients in my riding. Could you please detail work that this investment will be able to fund?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Yes. This was the \$1 million towards the Arthur Street East portion of Highway 89 in the town of Minto, and that is the last section of connecting link in that area to be replaced. That stretch of highway has an increased traffic load as a connection from the east-west corridor from Lake Huron in central Ontario. The town is planning to award a tender in early 2020 in time for next year's construction season.

I would just say that that is a really good example of how the funding program between the municipality and the province is investing in an important part of the highway system.

0920

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** It's interesting. If you're in those towns that have an east-west corridor through them, you don't want to be there on a Friday night. A lot of people are going to the lake or going cottaging somewhere, and it's best to stay off them for a while, until the traffic clears out. It's quite incredible, the amount of people who come from, I would suppose, the Kitchener-Waterloo area, southeast of us, who use these highways. They're very well-travelled. They're heavily used. So it's nice to see that we're maintaining this. I know this will have a tremendous effect on the way people get around in Perth-Wellington. Overall, roads and bridges are in good condition, keep families safe and support jobs and growth in local communities, such as those found in my riding.

I want to thank you very much for your answers.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Ms. Triantafilopoulos.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Good morning, Minister. I'm very pleased to have you before our committee again today.

Our colleague MPP Pettapiece was speaking about the importance of highways and the connecting bridges in his riding. As you know, I represent the riding of Oakville North-Burlington, and it's a very fast-growing community in the GTHA. In fact, in the last six years, the growth has been almost 13%. As the population grows, so does the demand on the transportation infrastructure and the congestion on the roads. I know many of my constituents use our highways, roads and bridges to get in and around on a daily basis—especially many on the east-west corridors, as they travel to the main regional employment centres in Toronto or Mississauga, or westward to Hamilton. In fact, I'd say we have about 86% of people in my riding who commute on a daily basis. It's a phenomenal amount of people on the roads.

I'd like to begin by asking you about some of the specific projects of benefit to my constituents, and then take a few moments to look at the overall picture of what the Ministry of Transportation is doing across Ontario. Could you please begin with some local projects in the Halton region? What road or bridge infrastructure is the—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** One minute left.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:**—ministry is working on in Halton?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll turn it over to the deputy for some details on Halton-specific roads and bridges.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** I'm pleased to answer that question. As a commuter, I'm very familiar with the QEW.

One of the projects of particular benefit to Halton is the rehab of the Main Street North bridge over the CNR tracks in Halton Hills. That's part of the Connecting Links Program. That's a \$2.97-million program. The Connecting Links Program, as I mentioned earlier, are the municipally owned roads that connect the provincial highway network, and also the border crossings. We're investing \$30 million to support 25 Connecting Links Programs. It's a one-year allocation for that program—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm afraid you're out of time.

We now go to the official opposition—but before we do, you are all very gentle speakers, so I urge you to bring the microphone closer. It's your friend. You'll have more accurate transcription in Hansard if you can do that.

Ms. French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Just some final thoughts on the 407 extension, those lands, understanding—I have heard clearly that there are many pieces of land and there are different considerations for them. What I'm asking for is a commitment that those lands will indeed be returned at the end of that process. Can I have that assurance, Minister?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I can't speak to specific parcels of land, but I can give you the assurance that we're doing the work to look closely at each parcel and work with the municipalities and then make those decisions as quickly as possible.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So I cannot, today, have a commitment that the land along the 407 extension in Durham region, specifically, and north Whitby—I do not

have a commitment that at the end of those discussions and work, that they will indeed be returned?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** You have a commitment that the work on the next steps with those parcels of lands is ongoing and will be done in conjunction with the municipalities.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Can we have a breakdown of the different pieces and the stages that they're in so that we can make up our own timeline of when that might be finished? Is that a possibility?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll turn it over to Jennifer.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Is there a reason at this point, looking at it mid-process, that we could not have those lands, those employment lands, back? When you're looking at it right now, do you know that there is some reason—some project the government has in mind—why our community cannot have those lands back?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Welcome back and introduce yourself, please.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Hi, I'm Jennifer Graham Harkness, executive director and chief engineer, Ministry of Transportation.

In terms of those properties, there is certainly a plan that illustrates the fabric of lands that are available—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I really need this answer, because I really want to move on and I'm limited for time. Is there a reason we will not be able to have those lands back, as we look at it today? Is there some plan that the government has to keep those lands? Because crossing my fingers and hoping does not work for me.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The lands that can be released that are not required for environmental purposes, we are going to work through the process to get those lands freed up.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Minister, barring any environmental or significant concern, can we have the commitment that those lands will indeed come back to the municipalities?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** As you heard, we're working through the process, and we will be working with the municipalities on each parcel and making the right decisions at that time.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I'm going to move on and move back to the community transportation grants. I had asked this last time and got an answer from Mr. Fung that, in his words, "The Community Transportation Grant Program is funded out of our provincial gas tax program as part of our provincial gas tax revenue. Therefore, it's not shown as the Community Transportation Grant Program per se. The funding that has been built into our statutory appropriation reflects that."

He also said that he felt that I would be able to find that in the program description. I looked. It was not publicly findable, the specifics there. But I do have some questions, then. Based on the conversation around funding, that that \$30 million is part of the \$338 million, I think it was incorrect to say that the Community Transportation Grant Program is in there, because it's showing funding flowing

in 2019-20. All it shows is the \$338 million in gas tax allocation.

Are other transit agencies effectively going to be paying for the Community Transportation Grant Program through reductions in the gas tax transfers? Can I have a further discussion to this—because since Toronto gets roughly half of the total gas tax funding and the funding for the Community Transportation Grant Program is \$6 million this year, it follows that Toronto is then contributing about \$3 million to this program through lower-than-planned gas tax revenues. Am I mistaken?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll ask Felix to come back to the table.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Welcome back.

**Mr. Felix Fung:** Good morning. I'm Felix Fung, finance director at MTO.

MPP French, I believe your question is: How does the Community Transportation Grant Program get funded out of the gas tax program?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** That was what we talked about last time, and I appreciated the breakdown because, as I said, I wasn't able to find that. You suggested that the description was there. It was not, as far as we could find. The program description wasn't on the MTO website and it wasn't in the relevant pages from the MTO estimates briefing book, so I don't know how that's publicly findable.

My concern is, if you're basically saying that the Community Transportation Grant Program is effectively being funded by other municipalities via reductions in the gas tax funding that they would otherwise have received if the program was still funded by MTO allocations—I would like to know if I am somehow following that incorrectly.

**Mr. Felix Fung:** The gas tax program has certain parameters around how the municipalities will be getting their share of the gas tax funding. These parameters include things like how much municipalities will be spending on their municipal gas tax, and there are others, and that impacts the amount of provincial gas tax funding that the municipality will receive. In this case, the Community Transportation Grant Program is the residual or the unallocated amount after all the funding has been given to municipalities, based on the program criteria. As a result, we often don't allocate the entire gas tax revenue pot. Therefore, there is residual funding that is left over to support the transportation grant program.

**0930**

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. So then it follows that you've got all of these projects and municipalities applying for the community transportation grant, but then you're also crossing your fingers that you end up with enough leftovers in the big overall pot that you said we don't usually allocate. So what if you do allocate that? What if the municipalities actually need all of that money and there aren't leftovers? It's all being funded from that. To me, it feels like secretly imposing another funding cut on transit agencies like the TTC or OC Transpo.

**Mr. Felix Fung:** I'm going to pass it to John to talk a little bit more about the program's parameters.

**Mr. John Lieou:** John Lieou, deputy minister with policy and planning at MTO.

MPP French, the gas tax program funding allocation formula has been, I think, in place for a number of years. As Felix Fung was saying, it's based on a formula that includes population and ridership in a particular municipality or municipal system, and then it's also based on how much money the municipality wants to spend out of its own budget. Then, we match it to 70%, so basically a dollar to—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** What has happened with the leftovers in previous years?

**Mr. John Lieou:** It stays in the special purpose account.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. The special purpose account, though, is not labelled “community transportation fund.” That was my concern the last time: Where is that line in the gas tax funding?

**Mr. John Lieou:** Right. Let me try and get to that to answer your question—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Quickly, please, because I have a list of questions, and I want the answer.

**Mr. John Lieou:** Sure. I will try to do that. It's just a technical budgeting question. So the act—it's not called the gas tax act, but what it says is that—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The Dedicated Funding for Public Transportation Act?

**Mr. John Lieou:** Yes. Two cents of every litre of gasoline sold will be used for municipal public transportation purposes. So that's the definition. The CT program: You said that “local transit” needs to have a definition, and so on. Based on the allocation that goes to municipalities and so on, there is an amount that is unallocated. That is saved in a special purpose account. That doesn't go away; it actually stays there for the purposes of municipal public transit projects. So you can actually design other programs around that funding allocation that are truly municipal public transit projects.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. So the gas tax, I get; it's the Community Transportation Grant that I think should be more clearly labelled. As I said, if I hadn't happened to ask this—it isn't publicly findable. The fact that a city like Toronto thinks they're getting this from the gas tax, but they're also, it would seem—it follows that they're funding this for others.

**Mr. John Lieou:** I think Toronto is very clear about what they should be getting because, as I said, it is a very clear formula, so there's no mistaking or misunderstanding about what Toronto should be getting, or any municipality should be getting.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm going to move on to some smaller community priorities. I don't mean “smaller” in terms of importance, but just more focused.

We've talked about the Thorold tunnel closure. I would just like to know, while I have the minister here this morning: Has that meeting been arranged with their local folks and MPPs?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I spoke to the mayor on Friday and the regional chair on Friday and indicated that

a meeting of officials would be organized yesterday between MTO staff and city officials. So I will turn it to—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** No, that's all I wanted. So, no: There's no meeting with the other MPPs and the municipal folks; just the ministry and the city, not the other elected representatives as they had requested formally?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** At this point, MTO has been developing options. City staff also proposed options. So the first step is to have experts on how to solve these issues get together around a table, propose solutions and work closely with the municipality. I'm happy to work with local representatives—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Right. Well, I know that my colleagues are part of the community. Certainly, this was a decision made without the community. So perhaps the minister will reconsider their request and meet with all of the elected folks connected.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll just say that no decisions have been made at this point. Options are being put on the table and discussed between experts.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I'm sorry that my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan can't join us this morning, because I know she really wanted to ask this, so I will. It's an issue in her area. It's been a consistent issue for constituents that there has not been a rest stop on a very long stretch of highway. The province had a temporary one. People were, she said, relieved about it. But that, unfortunately, now has disappeared, and they can't get any more information. Will the MTO be making the rest stop permanent? Will they indeed have a stop where they can go?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll ask Jennifer to join the table and speak to rest stops.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Jennifer Graham Harkness, Ministry of Transportation, executive director and chief engineer.

In regard to the specific rest stop, unfortunately I'm not familiar with that particular location, but we would be happy to gather some information on that and find out what the status of that rest stop is.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Will you provide that to this committee? I know that the folks there would really like to know what's happening because it's obviously of local and immediate concern.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Rest stops are an important part of the provincial highway network. Absolutely we'll gather that information.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. So the Clerk will make a note that we have the rest stop response to the committee. Thank you very much.

Provincial highways management, sub-item services, includes oversight of winter road maintenance. It has been increased by \$81 million, so it goes from \$405.8 million to \$487.1 million; it's an increase of 20%. We're wondering about that. I'm specifically curious to know if there was more money that went to Emcon to take over the Carillion contracts. I'd like to know if taxpayers are being forced to pay more for privatized winter road maintenance after the collapse of Carillion and the transfer of the

contracts to Emcon under undisclosed new terms. I'd like to know how you account for this. Are you giving more money to these contracts, giving more to Emcon than Carillion got? Have you cut back service standards? Are they the same? Why are we spending an extra \$81 million on services? All of the above, please and thank you.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** I can respond to that.

In response to the contracts, when Carillion's parent company collapsed, there was a sale of the contracts that Carillion had. A number of them went to Emcon. As part of that transfer, the contracts directly went to Emcon. There was no change. The contracts were transferred over. I believe there was a question that was raised that we have provided a reply for in the materials that you received this morning.

In terms of the changes in the contract and the changes in value—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Specifically, what are we spending \$81 million on? What is that for? If we handed it over with no change, then why the change?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Since 2015, there have been a number of changes to the contracts and the services that we've provided as a result of changes that we've made relative to increasing equipment for providing service to truck-climbing lanes and passing lanes. There have also been changes as a result of the severity of the winter conditions in terms of the supply of materials that we've needed to put down—road salt and other winter maintenance materials. There have been a number of different things that have resulted in the increase in the dollar value.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Just a side question, because it seems to come up a lot, with my critic hat on for transportation and highways: Does the government have any guidelines or any specifics around the use of salt in the province of Ontario? Are there rules for usage and how much and what you do to dispose of it at the end of the season or to store it? It's just occurring to me because I have a lot of constituents who are quite concerned about the runoff of salt at the end of the season for the rest of the spring and summer. I was just curious.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** There are best practices in terms of salt management. The ministry has those—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** It's a thing that's documented?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes.  
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**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Is that something that is publicly findable for real?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** I can't tell you right off the top whether it's publicly, but I can find out if—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Can I have it if it is?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I've got some enthusiastic constituents who would actually love to have that.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** So we have application rates that our maintenance contractors and the operators use to apply for salt.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I didn't mean to redirect myself there.

In terms of the equipment that has been purchased, does that then add up to \$81 million, basically, with salt, resources and equipment? Do we get to keep those? Are those our assets or do they belong to others—are we buying other people equipment?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The contractor was asked to provide an additional service. As a result, they were required to provide additional pieces of equipment.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, so we bought them the equipment but—

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** We are paying for that service. We've made a change to the contract and we asked for a service to be provided, and they provide that service by having both equipment and operators and materials available to provide that service.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** I was just going to say we don't own any of the equipment. The contractors own the equipment and we pay them for the service, to deliver it.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, so we were giving them essentially \$81 million to buy stuff to provide the service to a contract that we're giving them? They didn't have sufficient equipment. They didn't have what they needed to do the job, but we gave the contract anyway—that we say there was no change in comparable.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** This is additional—so they took over the contract from Carillion. There were equipment, people and services available to provide that service. Then there were changes made to that contract in order to enhance the service. Those changes, we have paid additional monies for.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Can we see those contracts or are they hidden in the vault?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** There are materials that are made available, and we've provided a number of them as part of the materials today, I believe.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So that material, the changes to that contract and the new services we've asked for since the original 2015 when they took over the Carillion stuff, that is somewhere in a package?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** There are public materials, and we will make them available for you.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, so that is something the government will make available for this committee. Thank you. That's great.

Moving on, Nipigon bridge failure in 2016: Do we know yet who is responsible for the failure of the Nipigon bridge in January 2016? Was a report ever prepared that assigned liability? Have all claims been settled yet? What are the final repair costs? How much of the costs, if any, were paid for by the provincial government and how much by the contractor?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** One minute left.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Go.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** I'm so sorry; that was very quick, and I didn't hear all that you asked.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Sorry. Okay, so what do we know? Was a report ever prepared that assigned liability?

Have all of those claims been settled? What are the final repair costs? And how much of those costs ended up being paid for by the provincial government and how much by the contractors?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Those are very detailed questions. I will have to provide you with some additional—it's very technical information and very detailed.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I recognize that.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** There are a number of things that are ongoing. There was an assessment done of what happened with the bridge.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm sorry to say you're out of time.

We go to the government. Ms. Triantafilopoulos.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Deputy, you were just in the process of replying to my question when we had to switch to the opposition side. I wonder if you could elaborate further in terms of your answer.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** In addition to the Connecting Links funding that we talked about, there's also the Wycroft Road extension project. That is to connect both sides of Wycroft Road, including building a bridge over Bronte Creek. That road extension on the bridge would also include a mixed-use path for active transportation.

That's a really important east-west connection between Burlington and Oakville, which will help the people who are in the community getting to the various GO stations. That means that commuters will spend less time getting to the GO train, while also reducing congestion on the QEW, which we know is quite congested. That extension also gives buses in Oakville and Burlington a more direct route to the Bronte and Appleby GO stations.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you very much for your reply, and for specifically making reference to the Wycroft Road extension, which is something that I do think will greatly benefit my community. I happen to represent part of Oakville and part of Burlington, so a lot of constituents will be very happy with that news.

Can you please let me know what type of selection criteria went into choosing this project? Also, what kinds of benefits do you think it will bring to the local community?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** In terms of the selection criteria, I would have to turn that over to Jennifer, I believe.

I would just say that the province provided \$57.6 million in funding for Halton region to support this project, and that we worked closely with Halton to allocate the funds. On February 26, 2019, the ministry approved the use of the Quick Wins funding amount of \$53 million for that Wycroft extension, including the construction of the Bronte Creek bridge.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** In terms of the allocation of funding for that particular project, it came from the Quick Wins funding amount that was received in order to support transit projects. It was directly to support transit projects.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** What was the overall cost for the project to the ministry?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The overall project cost was \$53.11 million.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thanks for that reply.

I'd like to move on to another question. This refers to the report by the Financial Accountability Office. I note that in the report, there was an estimated \$670 million to be spent this year on the provincial highways management program.

Could you provide, Minister, a breakdown of that figure?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** That \$670 million is broken into two components: \$562 million in operating expense, and \$107 million in our capital expense. That is to ensure a safe and efficient provincial highway network.

Of the \$562 million, that is for routine maintenance and operations of our highway infrastructure assets. Just to give you a bit of scope, that's 40,000 lane kilometres of highway, 2,900 bridges, over 2,000 culverts across the province, and 15 tunnels. Most of that budget is for the highway maintenance contracts—as we've been speaking about earlier, winter maintenance—but also the maintenance and routine operations that happen during the rest of the year to make sure that the highways are safe.

The remainder of that funding is used for operation and maintenance of other programs that the ministry is responsible for, including the ferry services across the province; our 29 remote airports; the ONroute service centres across the province; traffic management; corridor management; and providing highway closure and road information to the public. We have the 511 system for communication to the public on transportation.

Just in summary, that \$562 million is for highway planning; standards and administration; highway operations and maintenance, which is the majority of the funding; remote aviation at our 29 airports; unincorporated areas across the province, which is about 4,400 kilometres of unincorporated roads, mostly in northern Ontario; and then the customer and traveller information system that we have.

**0950**

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Could we go a little further into the \$107 million of capital spending? And could you elaborate on exactly what goes into that? Can you talk about some of the bigger projects or investments the ministry is making in that area?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Yes. The \$107 million of capital spending supports infrastructure improvements on municipal roads. It also supports, as I mentioned earlier, remote airports and transfer payments to programs such as First Nations.

So, just in a little bit more detail, we provide conditional road subsidies to assist First Nations in the operation, maintenance and rehabilitation of their municipal roads and bridges. Quite often, we'll provide funding for a number of First Nations across the province. Municipal road infrastructure impacted by provincial highway expansion projects—so if we are building something on the 401 and it affects a municipality, then we would pay for that. It also includes our contributions to our planning-

design environmental assessments for future highway projects. The Connecting Links Program that we spoke to earlier—that funding is contained within there and also highway land transfers to other levels of government. Quite often, we will upload or transfer land to a municipality.

And then remote aviation, which is a very important program for the ministry—the 29 remote airports in northern Ontario. We run the operations of those airports, which is, outstanding the winter roads, the only way of transportation for those communities.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** I understand. Thank you.

Later in the FAO report it notes that, over the next five years, there will be about \$12.9 billion spent on the highways capital spending plan. What are some of the highlights or major improvements the ministry is doing with this money? Again, Minister or Deputy.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** There are, as you said, over the next five years, \$12.9 billion on highways to be spent. There's about five key projects that I would summarize.

Highway 401 widening from Mississauga to Milton: This project is being delivered with a P3 model and jointly managed by Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation. That is awarded a fixed-price contract of \$638 million to West Corridor Constructors to design, build and finance this widening project. The construction is expected to start later this year and the fully expanded facility should be ready by 2020-22.

The second one that I want to highlight is Highway 427, from Finch Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive, and that is also widening of lanes between Highway 409 and Highway 7, extending the highway from Highway 7 to Major Mackenzie Drive.

Thirdly, Highway 404, from Highway 407 to Major Mackenzie also in York region, and that includes realignment of the west south ramp at Major Mackenzie Drive and the construction of a 171-vehicle carpool lot in the southwestern quadrant to support commuters, and that will end up with also widening Highway 404 from six to eight lanes.

Ferries: We have two ferries that are under construction. They are for Wolfe Island and Amherst Island, and they are due to arrive in 2020. They are electric ferries. They're the first electric ferries, I believe, in North America.

Then, finally, our rehab and renewal: We do a thorough assessment of all of our highways in terms of asset condition, so repaving, resurfacing. There are renewal projects that you'll see all across the province throughout the year in terms of upgrading as opposed to rebuilding new expansion and new projects. It's fixing what we have.

Those would be the major projects.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you. That's very helpful, very thorough and interesting to hear about Wolfe Island and Amherst Island having electric ferries.

I'm also very happy to hear about the 401 expansion project that happens to run just north of my riding and certainly a highway that is very frequented by many, many people, including my constituents, on a daily basis.

As well, my riding happens to be situated so that the QEW is just south of the riding. We have people going back and forth on both highways on a daily basis. Is there work being planned along the QEW west of Toronto?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** There are a number of things that are happening, that are being planned. We recently completed the preliminary design, and it's called a class environmental assessment, to address capacity and operational needs along the QEW from Trafalgar Road to Winston Churchill Boulevard and Highway 403 from the QEW northerly to Highway 407—Highway 403 includes the extension of the existing HOV lane network up to Winston Churchill Boulevard. The study recommends that Highway 403 be widened from the QEW to 407, with four general-purpose lanes in the northbound direction and three general-purpose lanes in the southbound direction. The proposed work is subject to further study and available funding approvals and prioritization with other needs across Ontario.

We are also maintaining the existing transportation network and our infrastructure and improving traffic flow in the area. Bridges within the Highway 403/QEW interchange are in the process of being rehabilitated and replaced. The bridge work has been designed to accommodate the future widening of the QEW and connection to Highway 403.

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Ontario are also undertaking the QEW/Credit River bridge improvement project to ensure that the QEW in Mississauga, including the Credit River bridge, remains in good repair. The QEW is a major corridor for commuters and commercial traffic, carrying almost 160,000 vehicles per day.

In 2019, we began to implement the project through a design, build, finance, or a P3 model. A request for proposals to select a consortium for the QEW/Credit River improvement project was released to three shortlisted teams on August 12, 2019. It requested bidders to include bids both for the rehabilitation of the existing structure as well as replacement. The RFP is expected to close in February 2020.

We're also undertaking a preliminary design and environmental assessment study for improvements to the QEW and Highway 403 at the Freeman interchange in Burlington. The study is expected to be completed in the first half of 2020. The goal of the study is to plan for short-term bridge repairs that have an eye to the future. The bridge rehabilitations will be taking place over the next five years, but it will look at the long-term transportation needs and ensure that that work is compatible and consistent with what the long-term needs are for this vital corridor. The recommended plan includes the future expansion of the QEW by one new high-occupancy vehicle lane and a general-purpose lane in each direction, from North Shore Boulevard to Guelph Line.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** I really appreciate hearing that some of the capital plan spending includes the QEW.

The Halton region, as you may know, is projected to grow greatly in the next 20-plus years. It's projected that

by 2041 the growth will have been 56.2%. That's huge growth in that region.

I'd like to ask you, from the ministry perspective, how does the Ministry of Transportation anticipate that these capital improvements will help local communities and businesses and accommodate this growth in the Halton region and, frankly, across the GTHA?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Recognizing the tremendous growth of the region—in addition to the highway expansion and work that we're doing on the QEW and other roads—is also the GO rail expansion work that is being led through Metrolinx, on behalf of the province, to get more trains out to the communities to get people off the roads. The four subway projects will also help to facilitate that.

Having said that, the work that we do on the highways and the bridges is recognized as a—that's the way that people get to work, that they visit their families, but also an important trade corridor, in terms of the QEW linking all the way to the States, and the importance of making sure that corridor moves as smoothly as possible. With the increase in capital funding, job creation for the province is a direct result, in terms of people working in the road-building industry.

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Those are some of the benefits and some of the priorities that we're doing to try to effect that change.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The investments that we make in infrastructure are enormous, and it has that ripple effect in terms of job creation. We see that approximately seven jobs are created with every \$1 million of spending, and it increases our GDP by 0.58%. So there are certainly direct and indirect impacts in the construction industry with the work that we do, and it's important.

Of course, our goal is to maintain and have our highway infrastructure in good condition so that we can continue with the economic growth and prosperity we want.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** I'm very interested to hear you note that seven jobs for every \$1 million of spending would be created. Are these jobs that would be tied specifically to the construction industry or would they be more permanent jobs in terms of—

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The construction industry is a permanent industry, in that the money that is invested each year in terms of keeping our highways in good repair and building our transit is something that is year over year and occurs on an annual basis. They are definitely long-term jobs.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** I'd like to go back to the \$670 million of total spending for the highways for 2019-20. We talked about the \$107 million that relates to engineering and construction. What about the remaining \$563 million, which goes to operations and maintenance? What exactly goes into the operations and maintenance that costs \$563 million?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** About 80% of that funding is for our highway maintenance contracts.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** One minute left.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** That is to keep Ontario's roads safe and reliable. That includes both winter and summer maintenance—snow and ice control, shoulder grading, pothole

filling etc. The remainder of the funding is for internal costs for the operation of the 11 ferry systems that we have across the province and 29 remote airports, as I mentioned earlier, and the maintenance of other infrastructure programs.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** The ministry has major assets throughout the province, and I can see from our annual and five-year budgeted spending that the ministry spends a good deal of money and attention to ensure that these are in good condition, both through the operations and maintenance as well as capital investment.

I've heard expressed by the minister and others that we have some of the safest roads in North America. Do you have some metrics on how good our highway systems are?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Yes, we do. We have—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm sorry to say you're out of time.

We'll go to the official opposition. Ms. French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Just the final word on the Nipigon bridge, recognizing, as Jennifer has said, it's a very detailed technical question and is ongoing, but if there's a report or if there are—especially the liability pieces, the cost pieces, if the province has been on the hook for that. Do we have that information yet? Is that available, and can I have it?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** In regard to the Nipigon bridge, there is litigation related to the bridge in terms of the malfunction that occurred that caused the bridge to lift. The matter is being dealt with through litigation, so we will work on what we can share in terms of those—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So the pieces that are closed or understood or finished, we can have access to.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. I'd like to ask about the community and environmental improvements program. It's a program in the estimates. It was there; it's been cut. Basically, what is the community and environmental improvements program, and why has its funding been cut by 72% this year?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll turn it over to Ramneet.

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** Sorry, MPP French. Could you repeat the name of the program that you referenced?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The community—

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** Sorry, it's Ramneet Aujla, CAO for the Ministry of Transportation.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The community and environmental improvements program. It's in the estimates. It was there; it's been cut.

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** Could you point me to the page number that you found that on in the estimates?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** No. I don't have that with me.

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** Okay. I'll take that back, and we can get back to you later this afternoon.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I was just curious what it is, and why it's been cut by 72%. I'm unfamiliar, so it would seem we are unfamiliar. If you can provide some clarity on that.

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** Yes, definitely.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you.

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** We'll get back to you this afternoon when we return.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Highway 407, the municipal program: The Highway 407 municipal program presumably compensates municipalities for capital spending related to Highway 407. This program has been cut nearly in half, so we'd like to understand what that means. According to the 2018-19 public accounts, which tells us what was actually spent, the government spent only \$12.7 million on this program in 2018 to 2019, which is 73% less than what was budgeted. I would like to know how the ministry accounts for this. How much did municipalities request versus how much was spent? What is the Highway 407 municipal program? Why has its funding been cut by 47% this year as compared to last?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll ask Jennifer to go.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I can't ask the clock to stop, can I?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** No, you can't.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** My apologies. So, in terms of the Highway 407 municipal funding, I will have to look into that. I will happily do that.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, so we can expect an answer to that to this committee?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes, I will look into that.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. Okay, another local one, quickly. Harmony Road interchange in Durham: Actually, many governments, long before your time, have committed to reviewing and fixing the Harmony Road interchange. It used to be a very busy intersection because of the thousands of General Motors workers. Now it's a super busy intersection because of the 407 traffic and just growth in the area, massive new developments.

But this interchange, as has been committed by the ministry recently, has been planned. It's being reviewed. But whatever the plan has been in the past—that has been made, apparently—it seems to either be in a drawer, or have been shelved, or being reconsidered. So could the minister please tell us the government's plan for the future rehabilitation and/or expansion of Highway 401, including the reconstruction of the Highway 401/Harmony Road interchange?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll let Jennifer speak to the specifics of Harmony Road.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** I don't have any current specifics related to the interchange, but again, I will take that away.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I had an order paper question that did receive an answer from the previous minister, but it basically said, "It, specifically, is under review." I'd like to know the state of that review and if decisions have been made, certainly, and what the plan may or may not be shaping up to look like. So I would appreciate—

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I can say, as the new minister, I have not made any decisions on this, so I assume it's still under review. But Jennifer will check in and report back.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, thank you. Another local community priority—not local to me—but the Prescott Russell Road 7 program. Last year, the government budgeted \$10 million for the Prescott Russell Road 7 program, but never spent this money. This year, the Prescott Russell Road 7 program is not funded at all. Why?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** I am aware of the project. I just don't have the information in terms of the why.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, because I know that folks in that community would be grateful for some clarity. It was budgeted. It wasn't spent. Now it's not there.

**1010**

I'm glad to know that the ministry is familiar with the project, but if we could get a clear understanding of what has happened to the project—if it has been nixed, if details have been changed, when it will be funded—the specifics on that project that I know that community would appreciate. At this time, the ministry is aware, but there are no specifics available today to the committee?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Unfortunately, no.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** When will those specifics be available to the committee?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** I will investigate, and we'll get back to you as quickly as possible.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I received some letters from folks in the Wellington–Halton Hills area, Aberfoyle, concerned about the new roundabout on Old Brock Road, Highway 6. There have never been lights or stop signs in the middle of that highway; now there's a huge roundabout. It's at the driveway that's utilized by the Nestlé water trucks. Folks in that community are curious to know and I'm curious to know: Do we know who paid for that roundabout? How is it funded? Did the province approve the roundabout? Were there provincial dollars that went to that project?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I can't speak to the funding for that roundabout, so I'll ask Jennifer.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Highway 6 has two separate junctions—south of the 401 is Highway 6; north of the 401 is Old Brock Road—I believe, in that area.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Yes. It's a roundabout on Old Brock Road.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** It may well be a municipal roundabout.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I suspect that is the case, but I wondered if the province had been involved in the approvals or if there was any provincial funding for that project?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** I would have to look into details of approvals, but I would suspect that as a municipal project, it was likely funded through the municipality.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. When I had the opportunity to spend time driving around with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, she was showing me some of the local transportation challenges. Big transport trucks are forced to drive through the downtown. For years, that

community has been promised a bypass. They would like to know when their roadways will be safe. The specific question is, what is the plan for Thunder Bay? Will they get the bypass? How much would be allocated? Could you imagine that there would ever be a completion plan? Is this something that they should give up on or still hope for?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** There is continuing four-laning of Highway 11/17 from Thunder Bay to Nipigon. That work began in 2010. It involved 49 kilometres of new four-laning—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm sorry to say that's all the time we have for this morning. We're now recessed until following routine proceedings this afternoon.

*The committee recessed from 1015 to 1557.*

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Good afternoon, everyone. We're going to resume consideration of vote 2701 of the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation. There is now a total of one hour and 56 minutes remaining.

When the committee last adjourned, the official opposition had 10 minutes and 20 seconds remaining in their rotation. Ms. French, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you very much, Chair. Here we go again. I would like to finish the thought that I had started this morning, and that was about the highway in Thunder Bay. I believe Jennifer was answering about continuing the four-laning—that's fine—but I'm specifically asking about the bypass; if I could have details on whether or not the community of Thunder Bay will get that bypass and how much would be allocated. Let's imagine a completion plan. All of the details, please and thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Welcome back.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Thank you. I'm Jennifer Graham Harkness and I'm the executive director and chief engineer with the Ministry of Transportation.

The Thunder Bay Expressway is approximately a 16-kilometre stretch of Highways 11, 17 and 61. It consists of four lanes of undivided highway with eight signalised intersections, and those signalised intersections are not grade-separated, so they don't look like freeways. Median rumble strips were installed along the corridor back in 2017—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Right, but just the bypass. I've been on the highway; some parts look great, some parts will look better, but what's the plan for the bypass specifically?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes, so the ministry's ultimate vision for the Thunder Bay Expressway from Balsam Street to Chippewa Road is for a four-lane divided highway with grade-separated interchanges.

With respect to that plan, we have secured our design and environmental approvals for a plan for the section between Balsam Street and Arthur Street. The design activities for those proposed improvements, including pre-engineering investigations, property acquisition and utility work would all need to be necessary before the project would be ready to advance towards constructions.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So the bypass?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** That is along the bypass, correct.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, so the bypass—all of these things have to happen before—

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** So we have a preliminary design plan, and so that—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Does that mean a commitment that if all things go according to plan, there will one day be a bypass in Thunder Bay?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** So that design work has started and that is the first step in an ultimate plan.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Thank you. I will cede the floor to my colleague.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Ms. Bell.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you very much for being here all today. I have a bunch of questions that I would like to ask. The first series of questions I'd like to ask is about the gas tax funding.

This year, the government chose to cancel the first rollout of the planned increase to the gas tax, which would have, once fully rolled out, lead to an increase of \$1.1 billion in funding over the next five years to transit agencies across Ontario. That's a good amount of money that is sorely needed, and now what has happened is the government reversed its election promise and has cancelled the planned gas tax increase. What that has meant is that municipalities all across the region are now starting to grapple with that reduction in funding that they did anticipate.

One of the first transit agencies that's dealing with that is London. It has had its share of funding to local transit cut by about 20%, and it means that they are looking at either big fare hikes or service cuts, which is very concerning because it's a sign of what is going to happen moving forward.

Looking at the Ministry of Transportation's metrics, you are looking at increasing ridership by a certain amount each year. How do you plan to do that in the next five years if you're looking at cutting operations and maintenance funding? Because the vast majority of people are using local transit systems to get around. Could you square that with me?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll ask James to join the table, but with respect to the gas tax program, what we announced in our budget was that we were going to undertake a review of the gas tax program. I actually had the chance to speak to a number of municipalities at the AMO conference about it. They welcomed the idea of a review and were anxious to participate in that. So we are undertaking that review process now with municipalities and we're looking at the parameters and the opportunities to improve it.

But I'll let James speak to issues with respect to London.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Are you going to speak to the issues of London; is that right?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** James Nowlan, executive director, transit policy and programs group, Ministry of Transportation.

I think, as it related to London, but in the broader context, the gas tax is obviously one set of funding. In addition to the gas tax, there are a number of other potential opportunities for municipal funding of transit, including the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. There is funding that exists through what's called PTIF, and I'll try to remember what the exact acronym stands for—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Public Transit Infrastructure Fund.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Thank you.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** But now it's called ICIP. Who knows why?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Yes. I'm used to the ICIP term. But in terms of that, there is funding for municipalities; for example, London is receiving funding through ICIP for 10 projects, including three large bus rapid transit projects and intelligent traffic lights. So in addition to the gas tax, there are significant funds available through other programs that support transit investments.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Could I get a list of the projects that were going to be funded by the gas tax increase that have now been cancelled as a result of the decision to not go forward with the gas tax increase? Do you have that information?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** We do not have that information. The gas tax fund is a formula. The money is provided to the municipalities, and they make their decisions on their priorities with no input from government. We do not approve a list. We do not require a list. It is a formulaic fund, so they receive a certain allocation and they use that for funding, within the parameters of the gas tax program obviously. But there is no specific list that's required.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay; thanks for that.

I want to move to the community transportation program. I noticed that the allocation for that has gone down to \$0. What came up in a previous conversation is that gas tax funding is now being reallocated to a fund for that program. Correct? I think that was right.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** The Community Transportation Grant Program is a \$30-million program over five years.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Right. And now the gas tax funding is being reallocated to fund that program? That's correct, right?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** We had discussed it a bit this morning. The way the gas tax program is established—it's a special purpose account, an SPA. The money comes in and is held in that account year over year. The parameters of the program are set out in terms of what municipalities can use that for. They can access that money based on their transit needs. They may use all of the money, because there is a split. It depends on their spend as well. We will match certain amounts—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I get that. I just want to clarify: Is it coming from gas tax money?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** It is gas tax money—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay, great. Out of the 25 projects that you're looking at funding through the community

transportation program—is that right; 25 projects—how many of them are in Toronto?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Can you repeat? Sorry.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** How many of those 25 projects that are part of the community transportation program are in Toronto? Any of them?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Sorry, it's not 25; I think it's 44 projects in 39 municipalities.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Oh, 44; my mistake. Do you know how many of them are in Toronto?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** There are no projects in Toronto under the community transportation program. The focus of the program is for smaller communities to establish transportation systems.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I guess that's my question. With the gas tax, it is a formula that is determined by population and ridership. It means that Toronto drivers' gas tax money is roughly allocated to go to Toronto transit projects. So why is money that is meant to be proportioned based on population—why is essentially Toronto money going to fund projects outside of Toronto? Doesn't that seem to be a violation of the gas tax formula?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** I would go back to my earlier response, where I was saying that the gas tax formula allocates those funds. In certain instances, some municipalities may not receive their full allocation, because they may not request a full allocation, based on their in-year spend.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** One minute left.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Has Toronto not requested their full gas tax funding?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Toronto received their full allocation, based on the gas tax formula.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Toronto is receiving \$28.5 billion in spending for transit over the next few years. But they do get their full allocation.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** They do get their full allocation? Okay, sure.

Now I've got questions around GO. Thank you for that, James. When I last addressed—with the new GO regional express rail contract that is going through the works for GO expansion, one of the questions that I had was whether Metrolinx would still be able to set fare standards.

John, I was under the impression you said that, correct, Metrolinx would still be able to set fare standards. So my—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** And I'm sorry to say, with that, you're out of time.

We go to the government. Mr. Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Minister, I understand that the environmental assessment for the GTA west corridor project has now been reopened by the Ministry of Transportation after being suspended and later cancelled by the previous government. I would like to start with a general question about projects of this nature and the scope. What is the process they go through?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Thank you. I'll turn it to Jennifer for details on the process.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** My apologies. I'm just going to open my paper here.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** While Jennifer is getting ready, I'll just say that the environmental assessment process in general for the GTA west corridor will help identify and address the transportation needs in the area, in a specific study area that's covering portions of York, Peel and Halton regions.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you. On this specific project, the GTA west corridor, what work had already been done before the cancellation? What was accomplished already?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Prior to the cancellation, the project team had generated a long list and a short list of route alternatives within the study area, and was working to evaluate those into a short list, to arrive at a technically preferred alternative.

The team also held a public information centre first, and two community workshops, to gather feedback.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much for that background. Will MTO have to start from square one on this project, or will the previous work done by the ministry be applicable to the same?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The previous work done is still applicable, and when the project resumed, we started back at the point where it was suspended.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Perfect. That's certainly good to hear, that we wouldn't have to start all over again. Since the recent announcement that the project has been revived, could you please tell me what work has been done to continue?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes, absolutely. The project team resumed, and they've been working to review and update the evaluation of the shortlisted route alternatives. That includes looking at more recent plans and things that have changed since the time that it was suspended, such as the greenbelt plan from 2017.

The team also held the public information centre—that's our second—in the fall to present the technically preferred route, and the 2019 focused analysis area. They presented that to the public.

We're now gathering feedback from that consultation, and meeting with stakeholders and various advisory groups. After this, we will confirm the technically preferred alternative and the 2019 focused analysis area, and bring that back in the spring of 2020.

1610

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Perfect. I appreciate that there has been work on this project since it began again, and that the MTO is working fast to find solutions to the problems of gridlock throughout the GTA. Could you please provide me the next steps for this project and the timelines for the completion? When should we expect that?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Sure. After the technically preferred plan is presented in spring 2020, what will happen next is that the project team will get involved in doing the actual details of the preliminary design. That would take place in fall-winter 2020-21. A public information centre is held to present that preliminary design plan to the public for their review and comment again.

After this, the project team will work to prepare technical reports and other documentation that's needed by the end of 2022, and we submit everything as an environmental assessment document to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for their review and approval.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Okay. Why is this project so important for those regions, York, Peel and Halton? Are you just working to meet current demand, or is the project looking also into future population projections? If so, what would be the projections for the population growth and the anticipated demand on our highways?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Resuming the EA and completing this design work gives us the ability to build needed infrastructure, improve the flow of traffic, and help people and relieve congestion.

The 2006 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe forecasted that the area population would grow to 11.5 million by 2031. This will result in approximately 1.5 million additional trips by cars and trucks per day in the GTA west area by 2031—a considerable amount of traffic. Without changes, the average commute times would be expected to increase by at least 27 minutes a day.

The updated 2019 growth plan shows that the area could grow to 13.5 million people, with 6.3 million jobs, by 2041. That's why it was announced that we've resumed the environmental assessment for the GTA west corridor.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Can I just ask for clarification?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** You mentioned that the first study was in 2006. The latest one was 2009?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The 2019 growth plan.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** The growth plan—that was refreshed this year?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Okay, thank you.

What transit connections will this corridor aim to make? Is it connecting highways or public transit?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The GTA west corridor will have both a highway corridor and a transit way adjacent to it. The transit way will run parallel to the GTA west highway and will allow buses to operate on express shoulders. Stations will be proposed at strategic locations along the corridor and will provide connections for buses onto major arterial roads. That could be Highways 401, 407 ETR, 427, 410 or, of course, Highway 400.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I understand that when the previous government cancelled the GTA west corridor project, and before the ministry resumed this project earlier this year, an alternate project began work: the Northwest GTA Corridor Identification Study. Could you please explain the difference between those two different projects?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The Northwest GTA Corridor Identification Study was initiated jointly with the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ministry of Energy to assess long-term infrastructure needs in the GTA west area and to protect lands for their

corridor purposes—so for energy purposes. It was not a highway corridor or a transportation corridor study.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** So there's a different effect when it comes to the different effect between the growing grid-lock in these regions and the one we discussed earlier.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** That's right. It didn't focus in on highway work; it focused in on other needs.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** So is this alternate project—like, now we are back to the original plan. That project is dead?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The work that they did under that study is still applicable for the work for their needs. Upon resumption of the GTA west EA study, the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and the Independent Electricity System Operator have started a separate, new study to identify an adjacent electricity transmission corridor.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Perfect, perfect. So with the revival of the GTA west corridor study, is the Northwest GTA Corridor Identification Study off the table—I already asked this in a different way. So that's it for me. I pass the microphone.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Ms. McKenna.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Thank you so much. I'm actually thrilled to be here today, and thank you so much for everybody coming out. It's always a privilege to be on committee and to be able to ask questions.

If you've been on the GO system for many, many years, it really is a family. We all get on the same train; we talk to the same people.

I'll tell you a funny, quick story. My ex-husband used to get on the same train with the same people all the time, and he used to sit beside a woman named Fran. Everybody is very family-oriented when you get on, especially at Burlington—I'm not saying everybody else isn't, here. Anyway, he fell asleep and had his head on her shoulder. He was drooling the whole way. She didn't want to push him up because they'd been sitting side by side for 15 years—but anyway, he ended up paying for her dry cleaning.

The only reason I'm saying that is that GO Transit is very family-oriented, and we love it. We get on it; it's always the same people; we get on the same trains all the time. I'm thrilled for Burlington that we've gone to 15 minutes because there are so many people that go in. Burlington is a bedroom community, and a huge percentage of people go in on the train. We have a lot of people, like Sam Oosterhoff, who comes from Niagara, who come on the train that I get on in Burlington as well. I'm thrilled today because of the WiFi that's on there. You can get a ton of work done going there and back because it is like an office for you when you're on it, so thank you so much for that as well.

I want also to just chat about—Jennifer, you brought up earlier today about the HOV lanes. I've had it twice and I'm in the lottery now for the next one, but it does make a huge difference for people coming in from Burlington. I think you said something earlier this morning and maybe you can say something about it—that you're going to add one more HOV lane. Is that correct?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Along the QEW corridor, there are plans, actually, for an extension of the HOV lanes, yes.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** And it's very successful for you, correct?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** It is, yes.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** And it does make a big difference when people are on there. I'm thrilled, because we've had many, many years where we haven't done what was needed to be done and everybody gets frustrated with, obviously, the GO train and driving because it is exhausting to get on there. Besides goods and services that aren't getting back and forth, it is—you have to get back to go to an event and you're sitting there for even a couple of hours when it really is only a 45-minute drive for me when the traffic isn't bad. So I'm thrilled because it's the largest, obviously, in transit—\$28.5 billion. And you must be excited as well to be part of this process, because we need to make a change. It's not going to be something that happens overnight. I get that people bring up the fact that there are lots of things that have to be done. But clearly it has to be done.

In Burlington, I know that a lot of us go out to Niagara on the weekends, to the wineries.

I understand that GO rail expansion is just one component of the Ministry of Transportation's work, but I was hoping you would be able to put all of these various announcements into perspective. What is the overall vision for GO Transit?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Well, I think, just to back up and reflect on your story—

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** It was a really funny story.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** It's a good story.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** I just had to tell it to you.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I wouldn't touch that story; trust me.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Since I've been in this role, it's clear that transportation affects all of us in some way, shape or form. We used a highway or transit to get here today, and we will when we go home at the end of the day. It really affects the quality of your life. Given the growth in the GTHA, it's clear that we need to build out our infrastructure to provide convenience and to ensure that we are improving, as people are commuting back and forth, the quality of people's experiences along our GO rail network.

For me, I think, at the Ministry of Transportation, we want to increase service. We want two-way, all-day GO every 15 minutes along core segments of our network. We want to ensure that we're bringing in service enhancements that customers would expect. You mentioned WiFi, which will be coming and was incredibly popular when we announced that this will be coming.

**1620**

We are going to be looking at electrification, and we're going to be looking at other market-driven approaches, so that we can provide services at stations along the way.

It's a big project. We've been rolling out certain announcements, as you mentioned, in Burlington. Overall,

it's going to really transform the way people get around in the GTHA.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** It is, because as you said, Minister, going back and forth to work is a very—you don't want to be stressed out, and you want to be in an environment where you are engaging. Obviously, it is very community-driven, right? I say that because I've lived in Burlington my whole life and have been on that many, many times. But it is exciting.

There have to be changes. I think people are excited about the WiFi. I say that because we don't all sit in an office all day long, as we all know. Many years ago, you didn't have to be so connected to people, but if you don't respond within a few minutes, which is unfortunate in today's day and age—but people do feel that they want a response. It is great to be able to have that offered on there, because it is like a mini office, and if you're on there for an hour, or whatever your timeline is, going back and forth, it gives you an opportunity to get caught up.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** And as people's lives get busier, it will be an opportunity to get people out of their cars, onto GO Transit, and they can continue to work or socialize or do whatever it is they need to. It's a way to reduce congestion at the same time while providing a service that people are looking for.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** I'm thrilled about it. It has been many years in the making. We keep talking about things we need to do. When you are at a standstill, and we haven't done anything, it's unfortunate, because so many people do stress about that and struggle about it. Even being on the highway, you see people just screaming and yelling at each other because they can't move, or they're frustrated because they're late, trying to get to work. So, it's very, very positive.

I'm thrilled about the HOV lanes, because it does make a big difference for myself. We have three stops in Burlington. We have Aldershot, we have Burlington Fairview and then we have Appleby. You can tell from the tone of the people who are there, and how they're feeling when they're getting on the train, that there have been changes made.

I wondered if you can elaborate further on the specific service increases that my community in Burlington and those along the Lakeshore West corridor saw.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Absolutely. I'll turn it over to the deputy for some more details.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** The GO rail expansion that is under way is an iterative process. There's an initiative to expand GO rail over the next few years, and there is an RFP that's out for consultation. But we are working to increase services and to improve the rail services at the same time. We're not waiting to do everything in one big bang.

Over the last year, there's a number of new initiatives that we have implemented. As of November, 423 new weekly train trips have been introduced on GO rail, compared to July 2018, which was an increase of about 21%.

In addition, Metrolinx has also added 84 more train trips and extended 65 existing train trips each way across the GO network, including Lakeshore West, which would

be the line that you would be most interested in. We've added 19 new GO train trips, with the extension of 25 existing GO train trips, each week on the Lakeshore West line. The introduction and expansion service is double the rush hour to West Harbour GO station and GO. So that improves all the rush hour service for customers in Burlington, Oakville and Mississauga.

Also, there has been an addition for the weekend train service to Niagara and St. Catharines. Previously, it was just for the summer, and now that's year-long. There's also daily service from St. Catharines, one train in and one train out.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** That's extremely exciting. Are there any stations along the Lakeshore West corridor that will be seeing any upgrades in the near future?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Yes. The province is undertaking infrastructure work to expand all our GO rail services and especially along Lakeshore West. As you're aware, in October 2018, the province signed a letter of intent with Vandyk companies to negotiate the construction of a new GO station at Mimico in exchange for the right to build above the station. This is one of our first initiatives in terms of a transit-oriented development approach to expanding our GO stations. In this example, the developer will pay all the costs associated with the construction of the main station, the new underground parking and improved connections. So it provides value to the taxpayer and we get expanded service at the same time.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** What is the approval process and bidding process used for the new stations or station upgrades?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** The government uses an open and transparent procurement process to make sure that there's value for taxpayers. For any new stations, we are using a public-private partnership with Infrastructure Ontario for the transit-oriented development, so we would go through a normal procurement process. The 2019 budget announced that the government would adopt this new strategy to adopt a market-driven approach to leverage the third-party investment. In response to this, Metrolinx, in partnership with Infrastructure Ontario, has been working with the ministry to leverage this new approach to transit.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm sorry. With that, you're out of time.

We'll go to the official opposition. Mr. Gates.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Thank you very much. To the minister: I understand that the ministry has allocated \$755 million to GO Transit expansion in the province, with \$22 million dedicated to the Niagara GO expansion. Could the minister please discuss how the \$22 million is allocated to bring fully operational GO rail commuter transit all the way to Niagara Falls?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll turn it to James.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I don't want to cut you off, but I've only got a few minutes of my time here, so I want to make sure they're short answers, if possible. I know he likes to talk a lot.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Your name, please.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** James Nowlan, executive director, transit policy and programs group.

As it relates to the \$22 million, I think I'll have to get back to you on that. My initial assumption would be that this is probably planning as it relates to the Niagara expansion—

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Well, why don't we do this—just get back to me. It's an undertaking that you'll get back to me. I'm fine with that. Get back to me with the details, and I'll go on to the next question. How long would it be: 12 hours, 18 hours? What do you need?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** We'll get back to you as soon as we can.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Thanks. Okay. All right, that's fair.

I'll follow up with the next question. Metrolinx recently updated their Niagara Falls rail extension initial business case. It outlined and examined three all-day service patterns along the updated line, using data from the Niagara tourism market 2018 growth forecast. Does the minister believe that the \$22 million allocated in the budget is sufficient to achieve these goals outlined in the updated business case?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Well, I'll pass it to James, but as the deputy minister alluded to in her comments previously, we are building out GO service enhancements in an incremental way. We're committed to increasing service in segments all across the network. Metrolinx is making determinations about the best ways to go about doing that.

I'll turn it over to James for more details on Niagara.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** As noted, we'll get back to you on the \$22 million, though in all likelihood that is planning money associated with the work of the IBC which enables and supports government decision-making around investments. It would not necessarily be associated with significant infrastructure investments at this time.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Okay. I've got another question—and you'll undertake to make sure that that's done as quickly as possible, and I appreciate that.

The project's annual growth rate in transit capital spending has been pegged at 7%, which is significantly lower than the previous year's annual growth rate. It's nearly half of what previous growth in transit capital spending was, which is very concerning. However, once you look at the capital spending commitments for each year, you realize that the project's annual growth rate of 7% is actually 0% for the first two years, then it decreases in the third year, and it only reaches 7% because of a \$1.5-billion increase in the 2023-24 projections. Could the minister clarify that the transit capital spending is currently projected to not increase until 2022-23, even though the ministry has seen annual growth of 14.6% in their actual transit capital spending since 2010?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Ramneet, are you going to take the details?

We've been committed to investing in transit and, as you know, we've made significant announcements on transit capital spending and we intend to follow through

on it. I think you're referring to the FAO's report. We made some changes in the plan with respect to high-speed rail along the Toronto-Windsor corridor, but there are some other changes that really reflect more of an accounting change in terms of the rigour that we use in allocating funding based on transit plans and how those spending needs should be allocated.

I'll turn it over to Ramneet to speak to that accounting issue.

**1630**

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** Sure. Ramneet Aujla, the chief administrative officer for the Ministry of Transportation.

As the minister mentioned, really, what you are seeing is the result of accounting practices. The ministry has been working with Metrolinx to ensure that we're better aligning our capital funding requirements with the actual construction timelines of projects. The variance that you see is primarily due to the ministry taking a more accurate and realistic approach in providing that capital funding based on the projects' construction period. The reason that we are taking this approach is to really maximize the dollars that we have.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Okay. I only have 10 seconds left. The numbers that I presented in my question are accurate. You have decided to do something else with the money that has been allocated. I just wanted to get that out. I'll turn it over to my colleague.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Ms. Bell.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I just want to make a few comments about the community transportation program. From where I sit, I see a gas tax program that's allocated based on ridership and population. Then I see \$30 million creamed off the top and allocated—not based on ridership and population, but based on different criteria and given to communities that are outside Toronto.

From where I sit, as the MPP for University-Rosedale, I see gas tax money potentially that was raised from Toronto drivers going to fund other municipalities when the TTC is chronically underfunded. It would be good to get some clarity on that—not now, but some clarity on that. From my perspective, it doesn't add up.

I do want to go back to the issue of service standards. This is related to the big expansion of GO regional express rail with the contract that you're getting closer to negotiating with a future consortium. My question is, can you confirm that service standards will be set by Metrolinx with no penalty, which means that if service standards change, for whatever reason, during this 30-year contract—can you confirm that there will be no penalty if service standards are changed? Thank you, John.

**Mr. John Lieou:** I'm John Lieou. I'm the ADM for policy and planning at MTO.

MPP Bell, we're not at the contracting stage yet. You're absolutely right. When I say "we," I mean Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario are in the process of procuring. They have a very large request for proposal process and they're releasing the RFP in tranches, in segments.

For sure, to your point, there will be a release in the near future that will be the contract. Also to your point, it is

Metrolinx—the province through Metrolinx—which will specify the service level, and it will be very much an output-based contract. And, yes, there will be measures to hold whoever wins the contract to that service level and there will be a clause in there, to answer your question, that will speak to—if there are amendments to the service level, for example, further up, whatever, how do we do that? Like, processes and so on.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Right. The reason why I bring this up is because our experience with Toronto and Presto is that when there have been reasonable and positive changes to fares in Toronto—for instance, we’ve brought in two-hour fare transfers—it resulted in Toronto having to pay not only the fare change but also the private company, Presto, a penalty, essentially, for changing its original contract. What I don’t think would make sense is if we decide to increase service or change service that we would pay a penalty for doing that. It doesn’t seem like you’re at that stage, and you don’t have any clarity on whether there will be penalties at this point.

**Mr. John Lieou:** No, not yet, for sure. But to your point, MPP, there will be a process, actually, to change level of service.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay. I also want to talk a little bit more about this GO regional express rail contract. From the public’s perspective, there have been numerous press conferences and numerous announcements about when electrification will happen, to what line, and so on. Unfortunately, people are getting a little cynical, because we’ve been seeing a lot of press conferences but not a lot of output.

So my question is, can this committee have a copy of the deliverables that the contract must fulfill—it’s often called the “project-specific output specifications”—for the GO expansion project? Can we get a copy of that?

**Mr. John Lieou:** Because it is a commercial process, right now, this actually is that document. But we need to make sure that we’re not breaching any commercial processes at this point in time because it is very much a live procurement right now. So I will have to examine that with the procurement people.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay. Well, I am requesting it for this committee. The reason why I’m requesting it is that, yes, it might be commercial, but it’s also taxpayer money that is being spent to move forward on transit projects that we will benefit from or be left behind from. So there is a public interest in making that document public before all of these contracts are signed.

I have some specific questions around the Kitchener-Waterloo transit line. Once again, that community has become very cynical because they’ve seen a lot of promises and not a lot delivered. When are you going to deliver 15-minute all-day, two-way GO to Kitchener-Waterloo? What is the timeline and what is the funding that has already been allocated to that project?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** With respect to Kitchener-Waterloo, MTO has been working with a working group, the Connect the Corridor working group, made up of representatives of businesses and organizations along the

corridor that have an interest in seeing two-way, all-day GO service. I think, to your point, they’re skeptical because they’ve been waiting for this for a long time and invested in this, and so we are working with them.

We have made a number of announcements. I would take issue that people are seeing announcements and are skeptical. As you heard from MPP McKenna, people are excited about the announcements that we are making about service enhancements.

But I’ll let James speak about the specifics about the Kitchener line.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I do want to be very clear here. My specific question is, when are you going to deliver 15-minute all-day, two-way GO to Kitchener-Waterloo? If you don’t know, just tell me. But if you do know, I just need an answer on that.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** We don’t have a timeline for delivery of all-way GO—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** So no timeline. Okay; good to know. How much funding is in place to deliver all-day, two-way 15-minute GO?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Through the entire network or through the core elements of the network?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Sorry; my mistake. How much funding is in place to deliver all-day, two-way 15-minute GO to Kitchener-Waterloo?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** The increase in service on Kitchener, and in terms of two-way, all-day service, is subject to further approvals. But I would also say it’s subject to negotiations with Canadian National. The track bed and the lines in that area are not owned by the province. They’re not property of the province or Metrolinx, so there are negotiations that need to happen with the owner of the lines. That reflects upon the service levels, the service times, the service frequency—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you. I have a very specific question, though: How much funding is in place to deliver 15-minute all-day, two-way GO? This is estimates, so I just need to know how much funding is being allocated to that expansion.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** As it relates to the expansion, the funding and where we’re at in the process is the initial business case. That was just released last week, so the funding as it relates to Kitchener is planning and development funding.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, and how much funding is that?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** That will then support future decisions on infrastructure funding. I don’t have the specific number for that.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I’ll ask Felix to come. He has some more information.

1640

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Do you have a specific number to give me?

**Mr. Felix Fung:** I can tell you a specific number.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Great.

**Mr. Felix Fung:** Felix Fung, director of finance at MTO.

Our capital funding is over our 10-year capital plan, so over the 10 years we have about a billion dollars allocated for our Kitchener GO rail extension project. This is part of the \$29.2 billion over 10 years for public transit that is listed in the FAO report.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay, so \$1 billion for 10 years for Kitchener-Waterloo. Thank you.

I do request that this committee be given a clear timeline for when the Kitchener-Waterloo corridor will be given 15-minute, all-day, two-way GO, when the line will be electrified, and how much funding will be allocated to both of these projects, if that number could be incorporated into that question.

So one of the concerns that numerous stakeholders in that area have brought up to me is around the changes to how increased service will take place on that line. The original plan was to have a freight bypass, and now that is being changed to negotiate directly with CN to essentially have greater access to that line. That's my summary.

My question is—I'm a bit confused—how can a shared corridor owned and controlled by CN have the exact same benefits as an exclusive corridor that is 100% owned by Metrolinx?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** In looking at the IBC, obviously with the existing corridor we have a number of existing tracks, so you're dividing access on an existing corridor with tracks infrastructure in place. Building the freight bypass would be much more restrictive in terms of—you'd have more track access, obviously, but the number of tracks that you'd be working with would be reduced in comparison.

So it's looking at the existing works that are there, making improvements in terms of those tracks, adding additional infrastructure associated with the connections between tracks, the ability to move trains across tracks etc. That would be put in place, and that would enable you to move more trains through that area quicker and to coordinate with the freight rail. So it's using kind of an existing built-out infrastructure versus building something new yet smaller.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay. So I also have a question around—I'm going to read this into the record so that it can be addressed or given to the committee at another time, which is to request that the committee receive a timeline for electrification of GO for each line, as well as the amount of funding that has been allocated to electrify each line.

I want to move on a little bit. One of the things that I noticed recently was the changing attitude toward the Sheppard subway. On November 13, the minister said that the Sheppard subway is happening from Don Mills to McCowan, but, from our understanding, there is no money allocated to the Sheppard subway.

My question is, how much funding exactly has been allocated to the Sheppard subway?

**Mr. John Lieou:** So, MPP, at this point in time, if you're talking about the segment of a possible subway from Don Mills to McCowan, there's no capital money allocated at this point in time. The subway program

announced through the budget is made up of those four-party projects, and it only mentions subway as something that Metrolinx is to start thinking about how to do next. So it'll come next.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** In my experience, when there's no money allocated to a project, it means that the project is essentially not happening, especially when the timelines for these projects are 10 years out. If there's no money allocated to it and you're already planning 10 years out, then that sends a pretty clear message to those communities that a subway is not on the table.

**Mr. John Lieou:** Many projects started with planning money. Basically, the downtown relief line also started as planning money. At some point in time, the government will announce its overall prioritization process when the time is ready, and government will decide when to prioritize a project.

In my own experience, many projects like that started with planning money.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, I'm aware of that too, and the good thing is that I did request the regional transportation plan, the 41 projects and how they're being prioritized, and what's being funded, so the information that you have can also be shared with the public.

A recent thing that came out recently was the use of influencer ads on the Ontario Line, where Metrolinx was paying people to promote an Ontario Line, essentially a non-existent line at this point, while at the same time GO bus service is being cut.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** One minute left.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** That's concerning. How much money did Metrolinx spend on paying influencers to promote the Ontario Line?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** As you know, Metrolinx is an independent agency. Requests can be made directly to Metrolinx. I know that it has already been made; I've heard a lot about this issue in the news. But Metrolinx's job—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Minister Mulroney, I think it's very clear that you decide Metrolinx's budget, and that any decision Metrolinx has made, you can override and change. It's in your own legislation. Have you made that request to Metrolinx, to find out how much money they have spent?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Metrolinx's job is to increase ridership and to make sure that people are aware of the transit options that are available to them—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Do you know how much money was spent on social media influencers?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I can tell you that Metrolinx has done a tremendous job in increasing ridership on its existing network. As I said, they're an independent agency that makes these decisions about marketing and how best to promote—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** And with that, I'm sorry to say, we're out of time.

We go to the government. Ms. McKenna?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Thank you so much. I'm still giggling about my story; I hope my ex-husband isn't watching.

Anyway, I want to just digress a bit. Many, many years ago—I think it was 1968, but I could be wrong—Freeman Station obviously had a stop in Burlington. The reason I say that is that we went to go meet some cousins in Kitchener. It was a Sunday. You were so excited to have a dress on, to be able to go and have the experience to ride at Freeman Station.

The reason I'm saying this is that two of my grandchildren, Charlie and Georgia, were thrilled. I was telling them, Minister, that I was here with you today, and they both said to thank you very much, because they went on the GO train for the very first time. It was free for under 12, and they were very excited.

I digress to my days when I was on at Freeman Station, and how exciting it is for young kids when they've never experienced it. They're both from Windsor and had never been on it. So I'm just passing that along to thank you very much, from both of them.

I just want to also—

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Well, that's great. I'll just say that one of the benefits, we hope, of allowing kids to ride free is that it will create a lifelong habit for children, as they grow into adults, to use public transit and get them off our roads. It's about creating habits for life. So I'm glad that Charlie and Georgia are already aware of their choices and choosing transit.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Well, that's because of you, so thank you very, very much.

I also want to thank you—I do appreciate the added services investment along the Lakeshore West line, and I know my constituents in Burlington do as well. I'm sure those communities along the other corridors with expanded service feel the same way.

I would like to drill down a bit further. Increasing services and improving the commuter experience at stations is all good, but is it having the intended effect across all the GO rail corridors? Are we seeing increases in ridership to match the added investment in services?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I think I'll turn it to the deputy.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Sure. Yes, we are seeing increases in ridership to match the added investment. For example, in the last quarter, from July to September 30, 2019, GO ridership was 4.8% higher than in the same period last year. Further, a 7.8% increase in September GO ridership was supported with the introduction of more rail service on Lakeshore West, Lakeshore East, and the Kitchener and Stouffville GO lines.

The GO expansion's full business case also indicates that investments that are being made through the expansion will nearly double GO rail's ridership. By 2055, annual ridership will exceed 200 million riders, compared to 105 million if we didn't do the GO rail expansion.

This ridership increase reflects the demand that is needed in all of our local communities and in the regions. Delivering the GO expansion alongside the new rapid transit projects in municipalities, and improved station access, will allow GO rail to act as a foundation for broader rail expansion and increased use.

1650

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** That's great to hear. I'm sure this is an obvious question: With all the investment in additional services, will this lead to increased fares for GO Transit users?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Metrolinx reviews its GO Transit fares as part of its regular business planning process, and any fare changes are intended to be moderate and consistent over time. When deciding to implement fare changes, Metrolinx takes into account a number of factors, including new service improvements, annual escalation of costs related to operating contracts, market conditions, maintenance and operation. But, to the minister's point, Metrolinx has a number of strategies that they're using to encourage more ridership, so that there's not the dependence on increased fares: riders under 12 for free; the WiFi, making it more accessible to people in their communities. The goal is: more riders results in more revenue, but not necessarily higher fares.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Ruth from my riding—she knew I was here today—said, for her purpose, she's been riding the GO train for probably 19 years.

How does the cost compare to drivers and is there a per-kilometre breakdown used?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** As estimated in GO's full business case, it's anticipated that GO rail passengers save over 10 minutes a trip on average, while drivers benefit from less congested roads. It's estimated that the program will lead to 165,000 fewer cars per day on our highways and that generates a \$3.3-billion savings in regional auto travel benefits related to reduced congestion and also \$1.9 billion in automobile operating, maintenance and fuel costs, so people are spending less money on their vehicles. So there is a savings to the individual taxpayer and also business.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Thank you very much. Just before we pass it over to the PA for transportation, MPP Park would like to ask one quick question.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Ms. Park.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** Thank you. So I just wanted to expand on one of the questions. MPP McKenna was asking you to explain how there's been an increase in service across the GO rail network. You mentioned a number of different lines, but the Lakeshore East line is the line that comes out to Durham region. Over the last two decades, we've seen massive population growth out in Durham region and, unfortunately, we really just have not seen the increases in GO rail service to match that growth. I'm really, really proud to be part of a government that's paying attention to Durham region, finally. First off, the expansion to Bowmanville is obviously huge for our area. But we've actually seen some increases in service just even in this first year and half that we've been elected. I just wondered if you could highlight the specific increases in service on the Lakeshore East line—that's to the minister or staff, whoever is best placed to answer that.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Yes, there's been a lot of work done on Lakeshore East and also in the discussions with Bowmanville in terms of the options. But, just to answer your question, in terms of service enhancements or expansion on Lakeshore East: In January 2018, we added a new

park-and-ride GO bus service at the parking lots at Howard Street in Oshawa and also at Courtice Road in Courtice, and provided a much-needed transit solution to Bowmanville and surrounding areas, since that gives people more options in terms of getting to work and connecting. We are also working closely with Durham region in the analysis of the Bowmanville station. So I would say, probably, in addition to the increased hours on Lakeshore East, that's where and what we've invested at this point.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** I wonder if you can specifically highlight—I don't have the numbers on the top of my head, but there has been a significant increase in the number of trips along the Lakeshore East line even within the last year, one of the biggest increases in service in a number of years. That may not be a question for you, but it's a substantial increase, so I wondered if you could just highlight that for the committee, because I know that doesn't come without a cost—since we're at estimates committee. I know we're really grateful for these investments in Durham region.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** I don't have those numbers—  
*Interjection.*

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Does James have them? Okay.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Sorry, I'll have to ask if you could repeat the question. Apologies.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** No problem. Would you like me to repeat it?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Yes, sorry.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** Okay. No problem. We were talking a little bit more about the expansion project to Bowmanville on the capital side. I know, just specifically in the last year and half, there has been a substantial increase in the number of trips on the current GO Lakeshore East line out to Oshawa: increasing frequency of midday service but also all-day service. I wondered if you could just highlight the number of trips we've added.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Sure. Over the last year, there has been an increase of 160 trips along the Lakeshore East line out to Oshawa. Really, I think that's about a 25% increase versus what was in place before. We've also seen extensions to existing trips: offering more seats in terms of the existing trains that are on there—so not only increases from new trains, but also from longer trains, so having greater access for folks to take those services as well.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** Excellent. And maybe I'll just ask one last question and then pass it off to the parliamentary assistant.

I know that one of the things that people are excited about as well all across the province is WiFi being added to these trips so that riders can be more productive. I think that one of the advantages of taking the GO train over driving is that you can actually get work done, for those who want to work. You can also listen to music and read magazines, which is always an option. But WiFi service can be critical to that and can mean that your workday can start earlier or extend later, and add flexibility to your schedule as a commuter. So what's the plan as far as how we're phasing in the WiFi? You may not have specific

timelines, but maybe you can explain how that process is being rolled out.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Sure. Unfortunately, I don't have any specific timelines that I can provide on that. It is an ongoing work. Metrolinx is taking various activities to increase WiFi access both on trains and on buses. It's part of overall customer experience work that's under way—improvements at stations—but really to provide additional amenities that will bring more people to GO trains and make the commute more enjoyable. It's being phased in over the next little while. I don't have the specifics around that timeline, but they are prioritizing those core areas along the Lakeshore and other lines.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** Excellent. Thank you. I'll pass the questions over to Parliamentary Assistant Thanigasalam.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** You still have up until 10 minutes.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** Oh, I still have time. Excellent.

Continuing in that vein, one of the other projects—and I'll highlight this because it's something I say to my constituents, but I'll say it in front of the minister. I've said it to the minister in private meetings before, though we have nothing to hide. The extension to Bowmanville is just huge for our community. We've been waiting for it for decades. I joke—I shouldn't joke—that they've been talking about this since our federal member, Erin O'Toole, was in high school. His dad was the provincial member at that time. Our federal member's daughter is now in high school and we're still talking about this GO train.

I know I reiterated to the minister many times, as have my colleagues in Durham region, how important this project is to us and to my constituents—and even east of me, to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South, to his constituents. So I want to thank the whole team for your work on that project. It's ongoing.

I also want to thank you for undertaking the economic analysis of the tolls on Highways 412 and 418. Unfortunately, this was a project that commenced—the toll roads that were built by the Liberals. Having tolls on these roads for the next 25 years was cemented into the plan to pay for these roads. I know that that kind of plan is a bit disappointing to the people of Durham region, to hear that that was the plan: for 25 years, to keep increasing tolls on these roads. So I hear a lot about it. Very soon, Highway 418 is going to be opening up in my riding. I know that your ministry is committed to a study, so I just wanted to thank you for that.

1700

I just wanted to leave it open to the minister, if you wanted to comment on either of those projects. I know that the people of Durham appreciate you looking into them.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Thank you. I'm happy to comment on it. Obviously, you, as well as our other caucus colleagues from the Durham region, have been advocates for looking at the tolls and trying to make life more affordable for the residents of your ridings, and also finally seeing some movement, hopefully, on a Bowmanville GO. That's why we've been working very hard at the Ministry of Transportation to move forward on these.

The study on tolls is ongoing, but I know that many residents are waiting for the results of that study. It's part of our commitment to trying to find ways to make life more affordable and making sure that our transportation infrastructure is as efficient as possible. The study is ongoing. I don't want to prejudge the outcome of that work, but we are doing that.

With respect to the Bowmanville GO, I understand that it has been something that residents have been looking for for a very long time. I don't know how old Erin O'Toole is, but it could be a very, very long time.

We are moving on working closely with the municipalities and the region to address some of their questions, and we look forward to being able to move forward once we have some more clarity on that.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** That's excellent.

I am ceding the floor to the parliamentary assistant from Scarborough.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Mr. Thanigasalam.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you. Hello, Minister; hello, staff. Thank you so much for answering all the questions, and thanks for the great work.

Today I want to focus on a few questions on winter maintenance on Ontario highways.

Before I go into that, I want to put out a quick summary of my last three questions regarding the three-stop Scarborough subway and how well it was received in Scarborough. It's a very similar story to Durham; the residents of Scarborough have been waiting for a Scarborough subway for three decades—almost 35 years. So thank you for that.

If you want to comment on what it means to our ministry as well as the good agreement with the city of Toronto and the government of Ontario—that agreement and that work, I think we should applaud. Both the city of Toronto and the ministry worked on that file. You can also comment on that.

Obviously, as we are approaching Christmas and the winter months, we all know that winter maintenance is an essential part of highway safety, and keeping Ontarians moving through our snowy months is our core mandate in terms of safety. In my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park, we have Highway 401 that runs through it, and many of my constituents use Highway 401. I usually take the GO train to get to Queen's Park, but today I decided to drive because I have a couple of other meetings here. All my constituents use Highway 401.

Can the minister please update the committee on the current highway maintenance practice for Highway 401?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'm going to turn it over to the deputy to speak about some of the winter maintenance, but to comment on your opening remarks about the agreement with the city of Toronto, the previous minister, Minister Yurek, did a great amount of work within his ministry's office and with the department to have a number of conversations and meetings with officials from the city of Toronto to talk about the plan that we had proposed for our four priority projects.

When I took over the role, it was clear that a lot of work had been done and I was going to be building upon a spirit of collaboration that had been developed over time. I think

that part of the spirit of collaboration was drawn or was developed because people see the need to finally invest in transit infrastructure. The people of the region have been asking for it for some time. I know that after I was appointed, I kept hearing, "I don't care who owns it. I don't care who does it. We just need it built." So people are very anxious to get it done.

The city of Toronto staff and MTO staff did a lot of work on some of the technical aspects, but in general there was just a great spirit of collaboration to finally move these projects forward. One of those projects, as you mentioned, is the Scarborough subway extension. We had heard from MPPs such as yourself, as well as other members of our caucus and people across Scarborough, that they were looking for the same level of transit as was being provided to residents in the city of Toronto as well—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** One minute left.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** —so that's why we are moving forward with the three-stop Scarborough subway extension, which we know was well-received across Scarborough. We think it's essential to being able to provide the right level of service in Scarborough.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you, Minister. I heard you saying that many times—that commuters in Scarborough should be treated equal to commuters in downtown. Also, I heard you mention that there are a couple of other situations—people just want to see the subway built. It doesn't matter who; they just want to get the subway built across the GTHA. Can you please elaborate on that, if you don't mind?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Yes. It was sort of a sense. People are very emotional about the need to get transit built in the city. There was just overall enthusiasm for the idea that the city and the province were—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** With that, I'm sorry to say you're out of time.

We go to the official opposition. Ms. Bell.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you very much. Because I think this is our final round, or close to it, I do want to make a few comments and add some things into the record.

It is, overall, pretty concerning to me the lack of transparency and clarity around some pretty basic questions that the opposition has been asking over these last few days. It concerns me because this is taxpayer money that we're spending. It's not just us that have the right to know; it's the public that has a right to know how money is being spent.

I do have a request: that a lot of the information we have requested is provided. I'm going to provide a summary now of some information that I would like for this committee to receive. I'm just going to start.

Could you provide the committee with the full business case analysis of the Ontario Line?

Could you provide the committee with Metrolinx's mitigation plan for residents who live near the Ontario Line who will be impacted by the construction and operation of the line?

Can the ministry inform the committee whether it is going to allow the city of Toronto, as it requested, to set fares on all lines?

Can the ministry inform the committee whether it's going to allow the city of Toronto to maintain the new lines, as they did request?

Could you provide the committee with the project-specific, output-specifications—that's the deliverables—for the Ontario Line before the beginning of the procurement process?

Could you provide the committee with information for the timeline for electrification of each GO line, as well as funding that has been allocated to electrify each line?

Could you provide the committee with a full and unredacted copy of the monthly maintenance contract for the LRT in Ottawa? We will get to that question shortly.

Could you provide the committee with a clear answer on whether Metrolinx will need to pay a penalty to change GO service standards as part of the GO RER contract?

Could you provide the committee with information on how much funding has been allocated to providing community benefits to the Davenport Diamond project?

The reason why I'm reading that all at once is because a lot of these questions I have asked in estimates, they are valid questions that come from other MPPs and from stakeholders and, to a large extent, I haven't received that kind of information that people reasonably want. So I am putting on the record that I am formally requesting it.

I want to spend a few minutes asking some additional questions about two projects, and then I'll be handing it over to MPP Harden to address some issues that he's facing in his own riding.

The first one is around the Davenport Diamond. The Davenport Diamond is part of a project that is running through the Davenport riding to allow for increased service to Barrie. It's an above ground line essentially. There's been a lot of concern about that project because local residents were concerned about the impact of that line on their community. They did ask for some community benefits to basically ease the pain of the construction and the noise that would result from that expansion. Those benefits included an art mural. It included some noise mitigation measures—I think it's called panelling, but I could be wrong—a cycling path; a walkway—basically, community benefits to make this expansion more palatable.

1710

The question is, can you give me some understanding of how much funding has been allocated to ensure that community benefits come with the Davenport Diamond project? I know there have been changes, but how much funding is allocated to that community benefits piece?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I'll ask James to come and speak to that.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you.

**Mr. James Nowlan:** In terms of any specific number, I will have to go to Metrolinx to understand what that specific allocation would be as it relates to the public realm.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay, thank you.

One thing that's very concerning with this example is that there were promises that were made—Metrolinx did

make some promises to move forward on some mitigation—then they found out, from the news, actually, that a lot of those community benefits had been cancelled.

What is concerning is that there are a lot of communities that are going to be significantly impacted by the GO expansion and the Ontario Line. When they see Metrolinx make promises for community benefits, on the one hand, and then secretly take them away, on the other, they're worried that that same situation is going to happen to them.

My question is, what are you going to do to make sure this doesn't happen again—when Metrolinx is promising a lot and then changing their mind when it comes to community benefits? What measures are you going to take to ensure that doesn't happen? Maybe this is a question for the minister.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Since I have been appointed minister, community concerns have been raised. They're ones that we certainly take seriously. I know that Metrolinx is taking steps to make sure that it's working closely with community stakeholders. GO rail expansion is a big project, and it is going to affect a lot of communities. We want to make sure that Metrolinx is taking the steps necessary to consult with local stakeholders.

I can't speak to the specifics around some of the questions you're asking there, but with respect to the funding, we can get back to you on that.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you. I do have an additional request. Moving forward, my hope is that this ministry does everything it can to provide necessary mitigation for noise and construction and pollution to these communities, and that you're transparent and honest, you do your proper consultation and you really help these communities to have the benefits they need to make these projects palatable.

I want to speak to the questions around what's happening in Ottawa. I'm joined here by MPP Harden, who is the MPP for Ottawa Centre.

As many of you are probably aware, the LRT has just opened in Ottawa, and there have been many, many problems with that opening. News reports are saying that it has broken down 31 times in the last 53 days. It has created, essentially, a commuter crisis, because a lot of the buses that used to operate were funnelling into the LRT, and they weren't operating anymore, so a lot more people were reliant on the LRT.

There have been some concerns about how some of these issues are related to using P3s to deliver projects. When companies are required to deliver on time and on budget, they will often provide a lower-quality product in order to meet those deliverables, and it can mean real, negative consequences when the project comes online, in terms of service delays and breakdowns. There are many people who feel that what is happening in Ottawa is an example of that, and that is what they are seeing.

There are also many elected officials and stakeholders who are wanting some clarity around what is going on. One of the requests is coming from councillors from the OC Transpo commission and Ottawa city councillors, who are simply asking that a full and unredacted copy of the

monthly maintenance contract for the LRT in Ottawa is made public, so that there is a better understanding of why these maintenance issues aren't being addressed.

This is my question: Can this committee have a full and unredacted copy of the monthly maintenance contract for the LRT in Ottawa?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** As you know, the Ottawa LRT project is a municipally run project, so the operating and maintenance responsibilities, which fall to the municipality—that information would be with them.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay. What is this government going to do to help address the transit crisis in Ottawa?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Well, it certainly is a difficult situation for transit riders in Ottawa. We've heard about it from members of our caucus, and obviously from people that we know who have been stranded. The ministry has reached out to the city, to city officials, to see if there are any options that we could consider in terms of being of assistance. We've been proactive in reaching out to the city of Ottawa. I'll let the deputy speak to some of the conversations that have been had, but it is a municipally run project and we've offered our help. I believe that we're waiting to hear back from them on what they think would be the right way to help.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay. If there is nothing specific that you're doing, just let me know, but it would be good to get some specifics about what exactly, if anything, you're looking at doing to help in this situation.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** As the minister said, we have had conversations. I have had a conversation, and our staff, and we are looking at, if they need to increase their bus lanes, in terms of our construction of some of our projects, how we can facilitate that. We're waiting for them to come back to us. They know that we're willing to help them; we're waiting to hear back from them.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you for that. I do want to turn to some questions about Presto. Presto has been an ongoing thorn in the side of the TTC. As you'll see, this government is looking at allocating \$100 million for Presto implementation and state of good repair.

I mentioned this earlier, but one of the problems with Presto is that the technology is already outdated. It is what the Auditor General calls the most expensive fare-card system in the Western world, and the TTC is moving forward with suing Metrolinx because of Metrolinx's refusal to hand over lost fare revenue that was caused by Presto, which Metrolinx is responsible for. So there are a lot of concerns with this fare collection system.

My question is, could you provide additional information to explain what this \$100 million that Metrolinx will spend on Presto—what exactly is that for?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** In terms of the \$100 million you've identified that Metrolinx is proposing, I think Metrolinx is looking at a number of potential upgrades that would modernize Presto in the short term. These would include things like looking at services like open fare payment, as one example—one I specifically note that the TTC has identified as being important. I would say that, at this time, the government is still considering the approach

that Metrolinx is proposing as it relates to the modernization of Presto and in terms of any future steps.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Just to clarify, is that \$100 million related to moving Presto to an open payment system?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** That's one of the potential modernization-type activities that could be associated with that, and that would be looking at both the infrastructure associated with the Presto machines, but also the actual IT systems that would be required for that. But that is one thing that is being considered.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I've got to say, that's a lot of money to go to a system that is already a very, very expensive system that is not working as well as it should. It would be good to get some clarity. I request that information on how that \$100 million is being spent be given to the committee so that we can understand fully how money is being spent on Presto.

An additional question that transit agencies have repeatedly brought up with me is the high premium that they are required to pay to use Presto. As you might know, many transit agencies didn't want to adopt Presto; it was shoved down their throats by the Liberal government, where they essentially said, "Well, do you want your gas tax money?" And they do, so they said, "Okay, well, if you want your gas tax money, you're also going to take Presto." What we're seeing now is that many transit agencies are paying upwards of 9% of fare revenue to Metrolinx to use Presto, which is an extremely high figure—higher than the cost to use their previous fare collection systems. Is this ministry looking at reducing the percentage that Presto is requiring these transit agencies to pay? Is that something you've explored?

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**Mr. James Nowlan:** I would start by identifying that the benefit of Presto, of course, across all the agencies is that it provides for a single form of payment that is consistent across the agencies in the greater Toronto area. The contracts that are in place, both with the TTC and with the 905 agencies, go out to 2027.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay, so they're on 9% of fare revenue, essentially, until 2027. Is that correct?

**Mr. James Nowlan:** Those are the contracts that are in place at this time. I wouldn't comment on the review of those contracts.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Okay. Those are all my questions.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Can I ask the Chair how many minutes there are remaining in total?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** It looks like about nine. MPP French, go ahead.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Is that in total until the end of—

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas):** Yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I wouldn't mind revisiting a few of the items that we had talked about. They're not fresh ideas, but they're just a few pieces I'd like to, as I said, revisit.

The southern highways program and northern highways program: I remember, Minister, that you had said

that you guys have your 10-year plan, that you have what is essentially those documents of those programs, but there isn't a public-facing version of those. I wanted to revisit that and find out if the information is similar to what used to be provided in those public-facing documents, if the ministry has that, if that is something that could be made public, if that is something that this committee could see—the next five years of projects.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** The elements of our highways program have been announced in different documents, as we discussed last time, and those have been made public. In the past, the previous government had a public-facing document. We have made a series of announcements, and our highway program has been made public. We went through a few of the elements of our program at this committee. As I said to you last time, we have been public with the elements of our plan, and—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Public with some of the elements. As the different folks from the ministry had said, you guys have a good idea of what you're doing. Well, that's fine, but to the point made earlier by my colleague Ms. Bell, we have tried to get some of the specifics, and frankly we've been met with a lot of, "I don't know. We'll get back to you." It is disconcerting, to say the least, when there have been a few projects that we have asked about that I didn't think were that quiet or unknown, and the answer has been, "I'm not familiar with that." That's not the minister's words—but just that the ministry has said that there are a few things they're not familiar with.

These are projects that we would have expected to see in those documents, and as I said, if the minister wants to rebrand them and lose the Liberal language and titles, that's fine, but I do want to be on record as saying that I think the public deserves that clear breakdown of the next five years, not just the top-line messaging.

Some of the specifics with the projects that I wanted to revisit—I wanted to give the minister another opportunity on the Northlander. The Premier has committed; the member from Nipissing has said, "It's coming. It's definitely coming back." I know, Minister, that you had said it is a goal, but I want to know if there is the commitment to bring the train back if all goes according to plan.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** As I said, the Premier and the minister have said that we will be bringing it back. We will be bringing it back, but there are steps that need to be taken, and the first one is looking at this feasibility study and making sure that we are following all of the appropriate steps. I think that is—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I appreciate that, because I was frustrated with our last exchange. I didn't feel that you had said that you wanted to bring it back, so I appreciate this language today, which is more in keeping with what we have heard from the Premier. I want the folks up north to be reassured that they are a part of Ontario and do deserve to get around, and that that train is coming—with all of the other things that have to happen first; I understand that.

The rest stop between Atikokan and Thunder Bay: I'm just revisiting that, with the last couple of minutes. The

commitment had been that your ministry would get back to us. That was earlier this morning. Jennifer had said that she was unfortunately not familiar with that project. Are you familiar with it now?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes, I have looked into it.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, so are they getting a permanent rest stop? Is that in the works?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** My understanding was that it has been installed.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** There was a temporary one, and the people were happy about it, but now it has disappeared. They can't get more information. Can they have it back? Will it be permanent? Will they have a place to stop and go?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** My understanding is that there is a temporary rest stop and—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** It is no longer there. It has disappeared. They would like more information, so I would like the ministry to also get more information.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** My apologies, because I understood it was there.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan would really appreciate that answer, if the minister will allow her folks to communicate. That's outside of committee. Is that something we can ask? She would be relieved—ha, ha—to hear it.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. Also, you were going to let me know what the provincial highways management—no, that wasn't it. There was something. Oh, the community and environmental improvements program. It was there; it has been cut. Do we know what it is yet?

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** I can speak to that. The community and environmental improvements program—I think your question this morning was around why the funding has decreased.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Why it has decreased, and also: What is it?

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** Yes. Funding in this program helps to support municipal projects. The reason why we're seeing a decrease in it in 2019-20 is that it's the final year of funding for a multi-year project that has been taking place in the hamlet of Welcome in the municipality of Port Hope. Because the project is in its final year, there is not as much of a need for funding compared to previous years, as the project is winding down.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So that whole program was just for the folks in Port Hope?

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** No. It's to support different municipal projects—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So no other municipalities need help with community and environmental improvement?

**Ms. Ramneet Aujla:** The project that is being supported right now is a project in the hamlet of Welcome in the municipality of Port Hope.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. So no one else applied for any money?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** It's a line for projects. There are times when we have highway projects or other projects that require municipal improvements. It could be that there's a highway project going through and we need to have an intersection adjusted as a result of that work, so we would fund under that line. The money in that line fluctuates from year to year to supply those needs.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. So projects like that in the past would have been part of that public-facing five-year plan that now we don't have anymore, so we don't know these things. Is that a fair comment?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** No, this is actually work that's peripheral to a highway project, but it would be a municipality that would be doing the work to support those improvements.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. In our last minute: the Nipigon bridge failure, so again a very detailed, technical question. You guys were going to bring something back to the committee. In the last 30 seconds, is there anything?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** You had asked about the project. We are plaintiffs in litigation related to the malfunction of the bridge. We're continuing to seek compensation for the costs associated with that malfunction and the repair that had to take place.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So the costs to the province we're seeking—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** I'm sorry. Your time is up, MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** I'll turn it back to the government. MPP Thanigasalam?

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you, Chair. I would like to know how much time is left for the committee. How much time do we have left overall?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** We have 23 minutes.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** That's 23 minutes overall?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** It's 23 minutes, yes.

1730

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** All right. I want to start where we left off. Thank you, Minister, for that answer regarding the Scarborough three-stop subway and the agreement with the city of Toronto.

This question is for the minister or staff. I want to restate the question. We all know that winter maintenance is an essential part of highway safety. The 401 runs through my riding, and many of my constituents use the 401. Can the minister or staff please update this committee on the current highway maintenance practices for the 401 highway?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** As we've said a few times over the past few days, Ontario has some of the highest winter maintenance standards in North America. Over the past few years, we've worked hard with our contractors to continue to enhance highway maintenance across the province.

The operations that are provided for winter maintenance are active 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during and following a winter storm, until bare pavement is restored.

We also provide information to drivers through the 511 website, so that they can make informed decisions on the conditions of the road. Also on that website, there is the "track my plow," so that people can focus in on their area to see where the plows are actively engaged.

The 401 is an urban freeway, which means that equipment and materials are deployed so that snow is removed from all lanes at once. It is congested, and operations are optimized to work with traffic to regain the bare pavement within eight hours, which is the standard for this type of highway, which is also known as a class 1 standard highway.

Higher traffic volumes and relatively warmer temperatures in southern Ontario allow for the salt that's applied to melt quicker, and it also helps with the snow removal. Our requirement with our contractors is that as soon as we know in advance that a storm is coming, salt is applied as soon as possible.

By contrast, in northern Ontario, with the lower temperatures, we require more time for the salt to melt the snow and the ice.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you for that answer, Deputy Minister. I'm glad to hear that our ministry is taking winter maintenance and highway safety so seriously.

I understand from your response that the 401 is a class 1 highway. What are the other classes and the standards that we have for them?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Highway maintenance service levels are determined by the winter traffic volumes. The higher the traffic volume, the more frequently we need to have plowing and salting operations.

There are five classes of highways across the province. Those considerations are based on, as I said, traffic volume, highways that are international gateways, hospitals, schools, winter tourism and route alternatives.

To your question, class 1 highways are freeways and urban highways that handle traffic volumes of more than 10,000 vehicles a day. Examples of that would be Highway 401, the QEW and the Highway 11 four-lane sections.

Class 2 highways are what we would call major highways, or highways that handle traffic volumes of 2,000 to 10,000 vehicles per day in southern Ontario. An example of that would be Highway 17, the Trans-Canada Highway.

Class 3 highways are intermediate highways. The traffic volumes are at 1,000 to 2,000 vehicles per day in southern Ontario, and 800 to 1,500 vehicles in northern Ontario. An example of that would be Highway 35, which links Highway 401 with Peterborough and Kawartha Lakes.

Class 4 highways are minor highways that handle traffic volumes of 500 to 1,000 vehicles in southern Ontario, and 400 to 800 vehicles in northern Ontario. An example of that would be Highway 516 in northwestern

Ontario, connecting Highway 642, near Sioux Lookout, and Highway 599.

Finally, class 5 highways would be considered local highways that handle traffic volumes of less than 500 in southern Ontario, and fewer than 400 in northern Ontario. An example of that would be Highway 502 in northwestern Ontario.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Great, thank you. We heard during last week's committee about Highways 11 and 17 in northern Ontario. What classes are those highways?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** For Highways 11 and 17, there are two different classifications. In the urban areas of those highways, they are class 1. In the more rural areas, the traffic volumes are lower, so they would be considered class 2. For consistency, that includes sections where traffic volumes do not exceed the criteria for a class 2 highway.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** So, from my understanding, from last week's committee discussion, what my colleague was referring to in his questions are class 2 sections. Is that correct?

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** Yes.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Again, thank you. Say there's a highway 1, classification 1, and there's a highway for classification 2, just for comparison, how long would it take to clear the snow or achieve bare pavement for classification 1 and classification 2? I just want to get the comparison of the timing so that this committee can understand the differences.

**Ms. Shelley Tapp:** I'll let Jennifer provide that answer.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Sure. For class 1 sections of Highways 11 and 17, the average time to achieve bare pavement that we've currently measured is 4.6 hours. For class 2 sections, for those highways, the average is 6.1 hours. So both those sections are exceeding our bare-pavement standards.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you for that answer. Where did the numbers come from? Are there any public statistics available for these numbers?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes. We do have our maintenance data, and we're very transparent with it. For example, our contractor performance, broken down by the maintenance contract areas that we have, is available on our public website. What we've done is we've taken the results from the maintenance areas and we've looked at the specific highway sections for Highways 11 and 17 and determined the average length for these highways and these corridors.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Okay, thank you. In terms of Highways 11 and 17, what are the costs involved in clearing the snow for these two highways?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Highway maintenance contracts are fixed-cost contracts, and they include all highways within the contract area that the maintenance contractor has. With this type of contract, the amount of contract cost per specific highway, such as Highways 11 and 17, are impractical to separate out or to determine an estimate from, because we're looking at an aggregated area.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Okay. If you are not able to give a figure for the specifics of Highways 11 and 17, are you able to let me know what is the cost for snow clearing for the entire region?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Yes. In 2018-19, winter maintenance services for northern Ontario were \$115 million.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you. Comparing this to the 400-series highways, say the 401—as I mentioned, it goes through my riding. How do you compare these highways to the 400-series highways?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Because they're fixed-cost contracts, it's hard to make a direct comparison. But what we know is that for 2018-19, the winter maintenance services for southern Ontario were \$141 million. Again, the difference there is related to—there's winter severity. In the north, we have more frequent and long-duration operations, and in the south we have multi-lane freeways that require a certain coordination, so we have plows that operate together in order to clear the highways. The other thing that is a difference between the north and the south is that, certainly, salt is more effective in warmer temperatures and with higher traffic volumes. Again, that makes a difference between the two areas.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Okay. It makes sense. We saw the cost for classification 1 and 2 highways. Are there any differences in time to achieve bare pavement after a storm, for example, on northern class 1 highways versus 400-series highways? What are the differences in terms of timing to clear the snow, and why is that?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** So there is a difference. The primary difference is related to higher temperatures in southern Ontario and higher traffic volumes. What that does is it increases the effectiveness of the salt that we apply, because certainly the grinding and traction of vehicles on that salt gets it working faster, and of course the warmer temperatures make it respond quicker.

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When temperatures drop below minus 12 degrees Celsius, which is often the case in northern Ontario, salt is not effective. What we do there is our maintenance crews apply sand on the highways to increase traction for drivers in the colder temperatures, and then they continue to work until bare pavement is achieved with their maintenance activities. In this case, excess snow is plowed off; in warmer temperatures, we gain bare pavement faster.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Okay. Thank you for that answer.

Last week, we heard that \$40 million is being spent on highway maintenance in the north. Can you please explain to this committee where that number is coming from, the \$40 million?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Since 2015-16, the cost of winter maintenance in northern Ontario has increased by \$40 million. The increased costs are the result of increased service levels since that time. That's related to increased winter material costs, winter severity, inflation, additions such as the passing lane and truck-

climbing lane, adding new lanes to the corridor when we expand our highways, and the cost of the new contracts related to market correction and bid prices for the ones that we had advertised.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you for those answers.

Now I want to focus on an FAO report. I see that, in the FAO report, the province is spending more money on operations and maintenance, which the report notes includes snow removal. Could you please let me and this committee know why the costs are going up from last year's province-wide spending?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** So the price of winter maintenance increased by \$40 million, similar to the value in the north, as a result of a market correction that took place related to the bid prices of our new contracts. This means that there's inflation, the increase in winter material costs due to the winter severity and highway additions, again, such as ramps, lanes and new highway sections that have been built. The changes also reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and responsible program management.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Okay. Thank you. The reason I'm asking these questions about the winter maintenance is just to get to the ultimate point, because I would like to know one thing about winter maintenance overall: Are we achieving our target, province-wide? If not, why are we not achieving the targets?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** We strive to achieve bare pavement and regain bare pavement at least 90% of the time, and we understand that in some cases the weather, the temperatures, they don't work for us, so we are not able to achieve that. Last year, we met and exceeded our bare pavement standard—we achieved it 96% of the time, so that's very good.

The information that we have related to bare pavement and those statistics is available on our website, and it's broken down by maintenance contract area. Beside that, we also have a winter severity index, which provides a little bit of context related to how we achieve the bare pavement. Certainly, a more severe winter makes it more challenging, obviously, for our winter maintenance operations.

While we measure overall performance of our ability to return highways to bare pavement condition, we recognize that, during storms, visibility and driving conditions are going to be less than ideal. That's why we provide other things like the Road Weather Information System. As has been said previously, we have our 511 number and we have our website, and we provide forecasted driving conditions and camera images so drivers can plan their trips and determine when best to travel.

With everything that we do, and despite the best efforts of our maintenance crews, there are instances where visibility and the weather conditions are so poor that the highways are challenging, or ice forms and ice can't melt on it, so sometimes it is too dangerous to drive. When that occurs, usually because of visibility and during the storm,

OPP will at times close highways to ensure the safety for travellers and our crews. We understand it's disruptive, and we make every effort to make sure that the highways stay clear and our maintenance operations are continuous throughout the storm.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Great. Thank you for that answer. It's good to hear that we are exceeding our snow removal targets.

I would like to touch upon one more area in terms of winter maintenance, which is contractors. We heard that topic last week, about switching contractors, and renegotiations. Who are the province's snow removal contractors?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** We currently have five maintenance contractors that service our 23 highway maintenance areas. The contractors we have are Integrated Maintenance and Operations Services, which we reference as IMOS; C-Highway Maintenance Contracting; Fowler Construction; Emcon Services; and Ferrovial Services Canada.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you. Are they chosen through an open tendering process?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Absolutely, yes. In accordance with our OPS procurement directive, we select the contract through an open and competitive process.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you. How many bidders does the province typically get on these types of contracts?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** For contracts tendered since 2018, we've had six bidders with an interest, on average—we've had four to eight bidders. There has been a healthy competition in the industry, and interest, in this specialized work.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you.

Chair, I would like to know the remaining time for me.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Sure. It's seven minutes.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Seven minutes. Thank you, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** You're welcome.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** If I recall correctly, we heard about one of the contract companies failing or collapsing. What exactly happened over there?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** Carillion Canada's parent company collapsed in January 2018. When we learned about this and were advised, the ministry worked with Carillion Canada to ensure that our highway maintenance operations continued to be delivered uninterrupted, until eight contracts that they had with us could be transferred to new contractors.

Emcon Services, from Merritt, B.C., purchased Carillion Canada's roads business and assumed seven of the remaining contracts. The eighth contract had already been retendered and a new contractor had assumed the work. That was Ferrovial.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** All right, thank you. The reason I touched on the contractors topic is—no contracts

were negotiated as a result of this particular company's bankruptcy, correct?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** That's correct. On July 31, 2018, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice approved Carillion Canada's sale of their Ontario roads business to Emcon Services.

MTO, Carillion and Emcon executed a consent-to-assignment agreement for the seven area maintenance contracts, in accordance with the provisions that exist in the contracts. The contracts were assigned as is, and the highway maintenance services continued without interruption to the travelling public.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Okay. To be clear and address a point in this committee, was there a sweetening of the deal that occurred as a result of this? Was there a sweetening of the deal that happened because of the bankruptcy?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** The assigned contracts incorporated all the service enhancements we have introduced across the province over the last few winters. The contract requirements were publicly tendered in a form and request for proposal, and can be shared with the committee.

As long as the term of a contract of this nature—from time to time, there are negotiations and changes that are implemented. Again, it could be for the addition of extra lanes, or changes such as the passing lanes or the truck climbing lanes. For those changes, they are negotiated, and the contracts are made to improve service levels, and of course to increase the plowing and operations on those additional lanes.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** That made a clear point for the point that was raised last week, so thank you for clearing that up.

Was there any service interruption due to this whole bankruptcy and the whole collapse?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** No, there was no service interruption. The transition was seamless, and the travelling public remains safe while driving our provincial highways.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you. How are the contractors doing in general? For example, is there a mechanism that the province uses to hold them accountable?

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** We are committed to keeping Ontario's highways as safe as possible during winter weather conditions. Over the past few years, the ministry has worked to enhance the quality of its highway maintenance across the province. We have strengthened oversight of our private contractors. We've worked with the contractors to add equipment to clear truck-climbing lanes and passing lanes, freeway ramps and shoulders, and to do that more quickly.

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The past winters, our contractors did a very good job in meeting the contract requirements, and over the past two winters, ministry staff have observed significant improvements for winter maintenance operations by them.

We've added more winter maintenance equipment to the fleet. There are now over 1,100 pieces of winter maintenance equipment ready to fight the winter weather. To better advise our contractors about atmospheric conditions, we've added more roadside cameras, including cameras for each of our 152 Road Weather Information System sites.

We work very closely with our contractors to ensure that they're equipped with reliable equipment and materials to help them fight the weather and to get back to bare pavement as quickly as possible. We encourage them to use anti-icing liquid in advance before the storm to help prevent ice or snowpack forming on the road surface.

In terms of oversight, ministry staff have extensive experience in road maintenance, contract administration and really understand the specification requirements.

We oversee our contractors using various tools and techniques. We use a GPS-based system for monitoring their equipment activities. You can actually see some of it on Track My Plow. We monitor the weather and road conditions, using the information that we have supplied through our Road Weather Information System—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness:** —and we perform selective in-storm monitoring. So staff go out and monitor the situation during select storms to make sure our contractors are performing.

We also conduct audits that look at documents and records that are kept as the contractor is maintaining the highways. That includes equipment reports, looking at the material usage and also looking at the communications that happen between our radio system and with the OPP to make sure that they're out and doing the work they say.

We assess our contractor operations according to whether they meet the 30 contract requirements that we ask of them. That includes looking at the amount of time it takes for them to respond to a storm, the amount of equipment they have in use, the distribution of their salt and sanding to make sure of the quantities they're using and looking at the circuit times they have for plowing and spreading operations to make sure that they're—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Thank you very much. Your time's up. This concludes the committee's consideration of estimates of the Ministry of Transportation.

Standing order 66(b) requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. Are members ready to vote?

Is the Clerk ready to vote?

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** It's all right.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Mr. Gates?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** MPP Bell.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Can I request that all votes are recorded votes?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Absolutely. Shall vote 2701, ministry administration, carry?

**Ayes**

McKenna, Park, Pettapiece, Sabawy, Thanigasalam, Triantafilopoulos.

**Nays**

Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Shall vote 2702, policy and planning, carry?

**Ayes**

McKenna, Park, Pettapiece, Sabawy, Thanigasalam, Triantafilopoulos.

**Nays**

Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Shall vote 2703, road user safety, carry?

**Ayes**

McKenna, Park, Pettapiece, Sabawy, Thanigasalam, Triantafilopoulos.

**Nays**

Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Shall vote 2704, provincial highways management, carry?

**Ayes**

McKenna, Park, Pettapiece, Sabawy, Thanigasalam, Triantafilopoulos.

**Nays**

Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Shall vote 2705, labour and transportation cluster, carry?

**Ayes**

McKenna, Park, Pettapiece, Sabawy, Thanigasalam, Triantafilopoulos.

**Nays**

Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Shall the 2019-20 estimates of the Ministry of Transportation carry?

**Ayes**

McKenna, Park, Pettapiece, Sabawy, Thanigasalam, Triantafilopoulos.

**Nays**

Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Shall the Chair report the 2019-20 estimates of the Ministry of Transportation to the House?

**Ayes**

McKenna, Park, Pettapiece, Sabawy, Thanigasalam, Triantafilopoulos.

**Nays**

Bell.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** It's now 6 o'clock. The committee is now adjourned until following routine proceedings tomorrow morning.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas):** Tomorrow afternoon.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Gates):** Oh, sorry, tomorrow afternoon—I guess tomorrow.

*The committee adjourned at 1758.*



## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES**

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Ms. Andrea Khanjin (Barrie–Innisfil PC)

Ms. Jane McKenna (Burlington PC)

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell (Thunder Bay–Atikokan ND)

Ms. Lindsey Park (Durham PC)

Mr. Michael Parsa (Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill PC)

Mr. Randy Pettapiece (Perth–Wellington PC)

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth ND)

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos (Oakville North–Burlington / Oakville-Nord–Burlington PC)

### **Substitutions / Membres remplaçants**

Ms. Jessica Bell (University–Rosedale ND)

Ms. Andrea Khanjin (Barrie–Innisfil PC)

Mr. Jeremy Roberts (Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean PC)

Mr. Sheref Sabawy (Mississauga–Erin Mills PC)

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam (Scarborough–Rouge Park PC)

### **Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes**

Ms. Jennifer K. French (Oshawa ND)

### **Clerk / Greffière**

Ms. Julia Douglas

### **Staff / Personnel**

Ms. Pia Anthony Muttu, research officer,  
Research Services

Mr. Jason Apostolopoulos, research officer,  
Research Services