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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 24 February 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 24 février 2020

The House met at 1015.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pray.
Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to acknowledge this territory as a traditional gathering place for many Indigenous nations, most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, I would ask everyone to join with me in the singing of the Canadian national anthem followed by the royal anthem.

Singing of the national anthem.

Singing of the royal anthem.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the members to introduce their visitors, I wish to acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery this morning special guests: members of the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you here.

We have five minutes for introduction of visitors.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome Mia Bourque, Hannah Mackie, Masoud Manzouri and Farhan Yousaf from our own Lakehead University with the Canadian Federation of Students here today.

I would also like to welcome FASD Ontario. I had the pleasure of meeting with Rick Graham, Eric Kayia and Mary-Kate Bridson this morning.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I want to introduce my dear friends Irv and Lorie Murphy today, here with their grandchildren Clark and Paige Murphy, from the great riding of Ajax.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome from the Ontario Autism Coalition Michau van Speyk.

I don't see them here yet, but the folks from Hamilton FASD are expected. We have Irene McLean, Mary Walford, Dawn Clarke, and I welcome all the other folks from the FASD community here to Queen's Park today.

1020

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Can you stop the clock? I have to acknowledge that the Chair has made a mistake. We're supposed to be doing members' statements. I'd like to propose that we continue with introduction of visitors for today only, to complete the five minutes and then revert to members' statements. Is that acceptable to the House?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Start the clock. Introduction of visitors.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure to introduce Reverend Pamela Fitkin from the Canadian Baptists, a good friend and long-time resident of Scarborough–Agincourt. Welcome, Pamela.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Darlene Durand, from the Ontario FASD Action Network. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you, members of the Rural FASD Support Network of eastern Ontario, including Rob and Shelley More and Diane Greer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jamie West: I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome members of the Society of United Professionals and their president, Scott Travers, who are in the Legislature today to meet with MPPs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'd also like to introduce today from the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance and their member organizations, Devshri Bidaye, Pegeen Walsh, Loretta Ryan, Chris Markham, Stephen Piazza, Daniel Nowoselski, Zahir Din, Gabriella Simo, Jennifer Buccino, Wendy Katherine, Katerina Firlova, Shannon Fogarasi, Monica Sulej, John Armstrong, Nicole Beier, Mariam Botros, Amanda Thambirajah and Akanksha Ganguly.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce four guests in the lobby, good friends of mine: Bob Woolvett, from Plympton-Wyoming; Tim Wilkins, from Plympton-Wyoming; Muriel Wright, deputy mayor of Plympton-Wyoming; and Gary Atkinson, also of Wyoming. They're all down here for Good Roads. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to welcome the OCDPA member organizations that are making their way in: Alliance for Healthier Communities, Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, Association of Local Public Health Agencies, Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division, Canadian Diabetes Association, Canadian Mental Health Association, Cardiac Health Foundation of Canada, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada, Dietitians of Canada, Health Nexus, Heart and Stroke, Kidney Foundation, nurse practitioners, Ontario chronic disease prevention managers in public health, Ontario Kinesiology, Ontario Public Health Association, Ontario Society for Health and Fitness, Ophea, Parks and Recreation, and Wounds Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park, as well as all the midwives who are coming in.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like, as well, to recognize and acknowledge the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Network. As the member from Nickel Belt has listed everybody, I will not do that, but I will say that they have

a reception in room 228 at 12:15 today, and I hope everybody can attend.

Mr. Parm Gill: I'd like to welcome Ian Bourke from my great riding of Milton. Along with him is Zubair Chaudhry, a long-time friend, and he is from your riding, Mr. Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Ian Arthur: I stand today to express a deep gratitude to the 200,000 teachers and education workers who stood on picket lines across Ontario on Friday to protect the quality of public education in this province. Teachers changed my life. They listened, they inspired and they taught. Without our public education system, I would never have had the opportunity to stand in this chamber and deliver this message.

Public education is the great equalizer, and we can never back away from our commitment to it. Not only must the government reverse their cuts, they must provide the in-classroom support and funding that has been asked for through years of Liberal and Conservative governments.

I want to thank the parents and the families who expressed their support with honks, with food, with letters and emails to our office. One letter from Deborah read, "My children are part of the Limestone District School Board. I would like you to know that I am behind teachers all the way. I believe we need smaller class sizes and the cuts" need "to stop. We need the educational support in our schools for our" children "to succeed."

I want education workers to know: In the face of these reckless cuts, this attack on a generation by the Ford government, the Ontario NDP, parents and students stand with you—poll after poll, letter after letter, conversation after conversation. You are on the right side of history.

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

Ms. Jane McKenna: On February 10, it was my tremendous honour to host a gathering of vibrant and varied perspectives from across Burlington and Halton region as part of my annual pre-budget consultation. We heard a remarkable range of ideas and generous expertise shared from key decision-makers in education, health care, business and locally based charitable organizations, Speaker.

From the education sector, I was pleased to welcome leaders from the Burlington Public Library, Halton Catholic District School Board, Halton Children's Aid Society, Halton District School Board, Halton Industry Education Council, Learning Disabilities Association of Halton-Hamilton, McMaster University, Mohawk College, Sheridan College and Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services.

From the health care sector, we had leaders from Bethany Residence, Carpenter Hospice, Hamilton Health Sciences, Home Care Ontario and Joseph Brant Hospital.

From the environmental, business and non-profit sectors, we had leaders from the Art Gallery of Burlington, Burlington Bingo Connection, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, BurlingtonGreen, Canadian Federation of University Women, Halton Environmental Network and the Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association.

I am deeply grateful to all who made time to share their ideas and insights with me. The sessions sparked a lot of powerful conversations and a number of recommendations that I've shared with the Ministry of Finance.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Ms. Doly Begum: On Thursday night, I had the honour of joining a beautiful gathering in Toronto's Banglatown, near Danforth and Victoria Park, to recognize International Mother Language Day. Around the world, February 21, or Ekushey February, is a celebration of linguistic and cultural diversity and multiculturalism.

It is also a moment to reflect on the sacrifices that have been made to preserve our unique cultural identities. The roots of IMLD are in Bangladesh, with the 1952 language movement in Dhaka, where students took to the streets to demand their right to speak their mother language and faced terrible violence in response. Many lost their lives in order to preserve the cultural heritage of the Bangla language.

In Ontario, the movement to protect language rights is critical, especially as we stand with our Indigenous communities and francophones, who continue to face an increasing threat to their mother languages. For all of us, language is a part of our identity, a part of our development, a part of our culture. It connects us to our roots, and it helps us understand the world around us.

Speaker, I want to thank all the dedicated organizers of Toronto's Bangladeshi Canadian community who have put the midnight vigil together for many years in the freezing cold. Our community is stronger because of their dedication and grassroots leadership.

This year, work will finally begin in building a permanent IMLD monument in Dentonia Park. We're grateful for the hard work and vision of the Organization for the Toronto IMLD Monument in making this long-held goal a reality.

WILL DWYER

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I am honoured and humbled to recognize Will Dwyer, a resident from the riding of the Attorney General, the honourable member for Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte.

Will Dwyer is a 94-year-old World War II veteran who served for 25 years in the military. At the age of 60, he began volunteering at the Royal Victoria hospital. For nine years, he volunteered with the Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Fund and for 24 years, for the Parkinson Society. His numerous awards include the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal and the Order of the Spirit Catcher.

In 1980, cancer took Will's 22-year-old nephew, the same type of cancer that took Terry Fox the following year. Watching Terry Fox's determination inspired Will Dwyer to participate in the first-ever Terry Fox Run in Barrie in 1981.

Will has battled cancer himself. He lost two of his children to cancer and lost his mother, who was only 51 years old. Through determination, Will Dwyer set a goal to raise \$1 million for the Terry Fox Foundation. Last fall, Will surpassed his goal, through his hard work, dedication, perseverance and knocking on more doors than anyone in this chamber. Now Will has set himself a new goal: to raise another \$1 million to fight against cancer.

1030

On behalf of MPP Doug Downey, the community of Barrie and the people across Ontario: Mr. Will Dwyer, thank you.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Today, for the first time since I became the MPP for Kiiwetinoong, the British national anthem, God Save the Queen, was sung here in the chamber. For me, the singing of God Save the Queen is a celebration of Ontario's colonial past. As settlers of this province, there are people in this House who may want to sing an anthem that celebrates violence, oppression and discrimination carried out by the British Empire, but for me as a First Nations person, I will not celebrate colonialism.

Colonialism and racism remain the foundation that the buildings and institutions of this province and country were built on. Because of this, truth and reconciliation demands improved relations between the federal and provincial governments of Canada and Indigenous nations. The report highlights the need for public education on the injustices done to Indigenous peoples throughout Canada's history.

I see the revival of God Save the Queen in this House as a step backwards, a shift from modern reconciliation to a past that celebrated colonialism, that sought the destruction of cultures, languages and communities. For me, singing God Save the Queen is a celebration of a hurtful and violent colonial past. I cannot be part of it. Chi meegwetch for listening.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to encourage all members of this House to support my private member's resolution this Thursday, February 27. The resolution asks the government to immediately approve the redevelopment and construction of both the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital and Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston.

I have raised this matter several times over many years to remind members of the real need for these projects. I recently sent a letter to all MPPs that included a list of some of the serious deficiencies at each hospital. The problems stem from the fact that these are old buildings; their systems are outdated and they're simply out of space. These are hospitals that have had virtually nothing done to them since they were built 50 and 60 years ago.

I would also like to point out that during my 30 years as an MPP, all of the hospitals surrounding my riding have either been extensively redeveloped or had new builds. Owen Sound received a new hospital. Barrie has had two new hospitals built and has just submitted plans for a third hospital. A new hospital has been built in Orangeville. The Midland hospital has had extensive upgrades, and Newmarket has had several hundreds of millions of dollars of upgrades over the past 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, I'm thankful to the government for mentioning both the Alliston and Collingwood hospitals in last year's Ontario budget and P3 market update. Today, Stevenson Memorial Hospital has received stage 1 approval and was given the green light to move to stage 2, and the Collingwood hospital is still waiting to hear from the government on their stage 1 submission. The hospitals need to get moving to the next stages of redevelopment, and I encourage all members to support my resolution.

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR WALKATHON

Mr. Michael Parsa: This year, I am proud to say that the number of participants at the Coldest Night of the Year increased, which was great for us. It's a pleasure to rise today to bring attention to this very important event that occurred in my riding this past weekend.

As I said, the Coldest Night of the Year walkathon took place this past Saturday in Richmond Hill and in various towns, cities and provinces across Canada. This annual walkathon is organized every year to bring awareness to the terrible plight of homelessness and to raise funds for the building and maintenance of shelter spaces for those in need.

As I said, Speaker, once again I would like to reiterate that I'm proud to say that thanks to all the participants and the organizers, participation had doubled from last year, and this walkathon surpassed its goal by raising over \$50,000 in support of much-needed shelter spaces in York region. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Mosaic Interfaith, Rehana Sumar and all the volunteers who made this event possible, and I urge everyone to get involved there and support this great initiative.

APOLLO RESTAURANT

Mr. Jamie West: Speaker, it's my pleasure today to tell you about the Apollo Restaurant in Sudbury. This March, the Apollo will celebrate its 50th anniversary in Sudbury. There's not a Sudburian or person from Nickel Belt who hasn't heard of the Apollo. It's synonymous with Sudbury's finest Greek dining.

But it wasn't always known for Greek food. In the early 1970s, before we had heard of Tim Hortons in Sudbury, the Apollo was one of Sudbury's favourite early morning coffee shops. It was a family restaurant with a variety of foods that never seemed to close. From breakfast, lunch and supper to late night snacks, you could find Toulas Sakellaris or her late husband, George, at the Apollo. It opened at 6 a.m. and closed at 2 a.m. the next morning.

Both Toula and George came from small villages in southern Greece. They met in Sudbury, fell in love with each other, fell in love with our city, and we've all benefited from it ever since.

The Apollo is the definition of a small business that continues to grow. It was renovated in the 1970s and then further expanded in the 1980s because of the growing demand. Over time, the Apollo began to shift to a more Greek menu. About a decade ago, the restaurant began selling olive oil, but not just any olive oil—olive oil that came from Toula's family farm in the southeast of Sparta. This olive oil is so popular that it's not uncommon to run out of stock. In 2018, the Apollo opened Toula's Market, featuring Greek products that Toula personally likes to serve or cook with.

The success of a restaurant like the Apollo is people like Toula and her late husband, George. In a recent interview, she summed it up best when she said, "It's not about the money; it's about the people."

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's Invasive Species Awareness Week in Ontario. Each day of the week focuses on a different aspect of invasive species prevention, monitoring and control. Many resources are available to learn about how invasive species are spread, through horticulture or boating, for example, and good ways to stop it.

So many community groups across Ontario have been successful in preventing the spread of invasive species and reducing damage through community control projects and volunteer surveying efforts. Invasives can harm the biodiversity of an ecosystem, which affects the beauty of our environment, the wildlife within it and our livelihoods by disrupting farming, tourism and sustainable use of our natural resources.

In my riding, phragmites has been a major threat over the years. This invasive plant infests our wetlands and pushes out native species. In recent years, community groups have taken action to stop the spread in the big Lake Erie marshes down at Long Point and Turkey Point. This is a great example of local communities and government working hand in hand to address this common threat.

Our government has taken steps to propose the addition of 13 new plants and animals to be added to the list of invasive species. In 2019-20, Ontario invested over \$2 million to support research, monitoring and management of invasive species across our province.

God save the Queen.

BRANSON AMBULATORY CARE CENTRE

Mr. Roman Baber: I have some very exciting news to share with the House.

Branson hospital is a medium-sized health care facility located at the corner of Finch and Bathurst in my riding of York Centre. It has been a pillar of the North York community for 50 years. Unfortunately, with few and intermittent health care services, Branson has been underutilized

for the past two decades. In June 2018, just a week before our election, under the watch of the previous Liberal government, Branson's urgent care centre was shut down, leaving the building largely empty and putting the remainder of the few health care services offered in Branson at risk.

Since before my election, I advocated for the return of health care services to Branson. This is the most important file in my constituency, as North York has one of the lowest rates of beds per capita in the province.

I'm thrilled to share that last Thursday, February 20, the Minister of Health and I announced the development of a new reactivation care centre at Branson hospital. The RCC will consist of 130 new in-patient beds. It will be completed in winter 2020-21 and operated by North York General Hospital. This investment in Branson will provide much-needed relief to the people of North York while leveraging an existing health care asset. It will be an anchor tenant, enabling the entire facility to remain open and be a huge step in ending hallway health care in the GTA and the province of Ontario.

On behalf of the people of York Centre and North York, I am sincerely grateful to the Premier, the Minister of Health and our entire government. Thank you so very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members' statements.

Before I ask for oral questions, the member for Don Valley West has informed me she has a point of order.

1040

DAVID AYRES

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, a brief point of order: I just didn't want this moment to pass without doing a shout-out to David Ayres, the Zamboni driver who had the night of his life on Saturday night, sadly at the expense of the Toronto Maple Leafs, but it's going to make a great Canadian legend.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Technically not a point of order, but we thank you nonetheless.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have in the visitors' gallery a former member of the Legislature who served the riding of Kingston and the Islands in the 41st Parliament. Sophie Kiwala is here with us again today. Welcome, Sophie.

QUESTION PERIOD

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, thousands of teachers, parents and students came from across Ontario to send a clear message to this government: Stop the cuts to our classrooms, and stop attacking the people who make our schools work.

The Premier claims he gets text messages of support from parents and teachers, but when he's asked to produce

them, they simply can't be found. He spent the weekend talking with PC insiders while hiding behind a wall of security. That's really not leadership. Why is the Premier refusing to listen to parents?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I talk to parents every single day, like each and every one of us, and I'm just saying what I hear: "Keep going. Do not back down. There has to be accountability for the first time in 15 years." That's what I'm hearing.

I'm also hearing that these strikes are hurting families. They're hurting families when thousands and thousands of parents who couldn't afford a day off, like some people take days off—they couldn't afford it. They get docked pay. That's what they're frustrated with. It's hurting our kids who should be in school.

Our great Minister of Education is doing everything he can to make sure we strike a fair deal that's going to be fair to the parents and the students and the teachers.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Premier to hear from a few parents who have reached out to share their stories with us, like Kassandra, a single mother of a teenager who lives in my riding of Brampton Centre. She says, "My daughter Marina has always struggled with school and relied on the support of teachers and quality face-to-face education. I really worry about her falling further behind if she's forced to take e-courses. She needs the in-person supports to succeed and these cuts would have the opposite effect."

Marina needs to be in a classroom with proper supports so that she can succeed. What does the Premier have to say to parents like Kassandra?

Hon. Doug Ford: I appreciate what Kassandra said, but I heard another story from a father, actually, who said, "My grade 12 son wants to take online courses." If they had a choice of doing an online or staying in the classroom, they'll take the online, because guess what? As he said, his son gets an additional 70 minutes to study for his other courses. That's what we're focused on, making sure we keep the students in the classroom.

We want to make sure we look at merit-based pay—not based on seniority, as the NDP believe we should be doing, but who's the most qualified to teach our kids math. That's what people are focused on.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: It's pretty clear that the Conservatives' cuts are actually keeping kids out of classrooms, and it's clear they don't care what parents have to say, so maybe they'll start listening to what students have to say.

Another student in the riding of Brampton Centre reached out to say that thanks to these Conservative cuts, they don't have access to the courses they need to graduate. They told me, "Unfortunately, due to teachers being laid off and the increase in class sizes ... I may not be able to complete my requirements to ... be considered into the program of my choice" when they apply to college or university.

Speaker, let's be real. Conservative cuts are hurting students, plain and simple. Is the Premier going to start listening to people in Ontario and reverse these cuts to education?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, I don't know where they get the cuts from when we're increasing \$1.2 billion of funding into education. We increased \$1.6 billion to make sure no teachers lost their jobs.

But do you know what's hurting the children? It's when the teachers go on strike. They go on strike and then they pull back their services. Who are they hurting? They're hurting the parents, they're hurting the students who should be back in the classroom. That's the people they're hurting.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Despite months of chaos, this government still, to this day, is refusing to accept that their attack on education isn't just unpopular, it's hurting families all across this province. In fact, the Toronto Star reports that over the weekend, behind closed doors, one of the Premier's top advisers claimed that the education workers protesting outside had grown "fat from ... largesse." How ironic coming from a government spending millions hiring insiders and relatives. Mr. Speaker, that's pretty rich.

Does the Premier think that sort of attack is going to improve education in our schools?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, it is time for a deal that keeps kids in class in this province. It is why, today, we are negotiating in good faith with the Catholic teachers: because this has gone on for too long. In this negotiation, we want a good deal for students. We are affirming that we want to protect full-day kindergarten. We are committed to maintaining historic investments in special education. We are keeping class sizes low and we are ensuring the hiring of new teachers is premised on qualification, not seniority in a union.

Political actors have to make choices. We choose investment in schools, in students, in curriculum—not in higher compensation for the second-highest paid teachers in this nation.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I've said it before, I'll say it again: A cut to a cut is still a cut.

The government wants to have it both ways. They want to make deep cuts to our education system and then claim they're enhancing it. They want to rip resources away from kids and say they're preparing them for the future. They want to replace in-person learning with isolating online courses and claim they care about student mental health.

Speaker, this government can't even get their vanity licence plates right, and they expect us to trust them with the future of education in this province. Will the Premier finally read the writing on the wall and reverse these cuts?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: What parents want is accountability for their hard-earned tax dollars actually helping

their children succeed in life. That's why, when 80 cents on the dollar is spent on compensation, we know in this party that we can do better for the students of this province. It's why in the negotiations we believe, unlike the other parties, that merit must guide the hiring of new educators. That is a consequential position that we believe, on a matter of principle, we must advance.

We believe that investments ought to go toward our students, not toward heightening compensation for wage and benefits for individuals, for workers—though we value them. But we pay them—the second-highest in the nation. After a decade of service, they are the highest paid in the nation. We want a fair deal that works for our kids. That's what we're fighting for. It starts, Mr. Speaker, with keeping kids in class.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, you're darned right that people in this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Okay, the excessive clapping is not helpful.

I apologize to the member. Please restart the clock. The member for Davenport has the floor.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister is darned right that people in this province care about the quality of their children's education. That's why tens of thousands of them came out here on Friday to protest this government's cuts.

The government unilaterally cut classrooms. They can unilaterally reverse them now. There is nothing to stop the Premier from doing that today.

It is unacceptable to be using our children as pawns. Instead of twisting themselves into a pretzel to make it seem like they've invested in education, they could actually invest in our kids' future and stop balancing the budget on their backs.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier, or the education minister, or any one of these members willing to pull their head out of the sand for a minute and face some facts: When will they listen and reverse their cuts?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I am proud to be part of a government that is investing more in public education than any government in the history of Ontario. It is under this government, under the leadership of this Premier, that more money is being spent and being given to school boards in this province to ensure public education is improved for the next generation. It is this government that is investing at the highest levels ever recorded in special education—\$3.1 billion—to support the most vulnerable kids within our schools. It is this government that more than doubled the mental health portfolio to support those in need in our schools. It is this government that has—

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the minister. The official opposition will come to order to allow the minister to respond to the question that you've asked.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is this government that is investing in a \$200-million, four-year math strategy to improve math scores after a decade of stagnation. We're investing historic amounts in the skilled trades, an initiative that Minister McNaughton and I both believe is so important to the future prosperity of this province.

We're investing more. We expect more for our kids. We're going to stand up for that every day in this negotiation.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: My question is for the Premier. Last night, the OPP gave an ultimatum to the land defenders at Tyendinaga that as of midnight last night they would arrest anyone who had not cleared the camp. Now, as we speak, the OPP have moved in and made arrests of the land defenders there.

When was the Premier made aware of this police action by the OPP, and what role did he, his office and the cabinet play?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines to reply.

Hon. Greg Rickford: From the outset of this blockade, our government, the Tyendinaga police, the Ontario Provincial Police and Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald have facilitated, supported and leveraged a respectful dialogue with the activists at the site of the blockade. Over the past couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker, we have continued to be patient as we believe that an Indigenous-led solution was the best scenario that we could all hope for.

We appreciate the leadership, in particular of the Tyendinaga chief and council and, as I said earlier, Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald, who facilitated discussions that have protected and respected the recommendations from Ipperwash.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Last week, when I asked the Premier about his government's commitment to reconciliation, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs replied to say that, "With respect to the Tyendinaga blockade, we moved quickly to leverage support and facilitate Indigenous leadership to bring a resolution to that blockade."

Now that the OPP have arrested Mohawk land defenders, potentially creating a flashpoint not just here but across the country, what exactly did this government do to facilitate a resolution in this protest?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of weeks, at every turn, the Premier of this province, myself, the Solicitor General and the member from Bay of Quinte have worked closely with folks from that community. We've communicated frequently with our Indigenous counterparts across the province to come up with a peaceful plan to move forward.

We continue to challenge the federal government and spoke with them frequently, including the Prime Minister, to take leadership on a matter that asked profound questions: the scope and power of hereditary chiefs, the duty to consult hereditary chiefs, the ability and the application of

Indigenous law to be considered in the context of resource projects. These were all questions that demanded leadership from the federal government.

Fortunately, here in the province of Ontario, we all worked together towards a peaceful resolution of this challenge. We look forward to working with Indigenous communities across this province moving forward so that this doesn't happen again.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is to the Premier. Premier, our government inherited a fiscal and economic mess from the previous government. The Liberals were spending \$40 million a day more than they brought in. And what did the people of this province have to show for it? Historic job losses throughout the entire province, companies being forced to close shop and relocate to other places in Canada and the United States and the highest energy rates in all of North America, which forced people to choose between heating and eating in this province.

Premier, since our election two years ago, can you share with the Legislature how the actions that our government has taken have helped to turn this province around?

Hon. Doug Ford: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our all-star MPP from Ottawa West–Nepean. They love him up there.

Our plan to build Ontario together is working. Our economy is firing on all cylinders right now. We've created over 307,000 jobs—new jobs—since we've taken office. That's 307,000 new opportunities. That's 307,000 new paycheques that people can go out and put food on their table, pay rent, pay a mortgage and get moving forward. That's 307,000 more people giving back to the economy. That's over 500 new jobs each and every day since we've been elected. We're leading the country in job creation: 76% of every job created in Canada—

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Back to the Premier: Those are incredible numbers and show why people are referring to the economic miracle that is happening in our province.

Premier, you said it best that when you trust in the people of the province, when you embrace our spirit of ingenuity, entrepreneurship and decency, this province will always come out on top. When you have a government that understands the workers and business leaders of this province and supports them, instead of working against them, the potential for success is unlimited.

Premier, can you share with the House what initiatives our government is introducing to support the people of this province and build up its potential once again?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member. We've created more jobs in just 18 months than the Liberals and the NDP have chased out of this province. They chased out 300,000 jobs in a decade. We created 307,000. We're creating more opportunities than ever before, more opportunities for those forgotten by the previous government.

We stopped taxing minimum wage workers, low-income workers, saving them up to \$850 a year. Do you

know how many people we're saving \$850 a year? It's 1.1 million people. The lowest-income folks in the entire province are paying 0% tax.

We're promoting the skilled trades. We're connecting our young people with rewarding careers. We're providing 1,800 placements for students this year in pre-apprenticeship programs alone. That is up 14% since we've taken office.

LICENCE PLATES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Ontario's licence plate fiasco has been a glaring example of what can go wrong when a government is in a hurry to make a name for itself, but not to make responsible decisions. The plates reflect too much and are unreadable. Under some conditions, the letters and numbers disappear and can't be read. Toronto photo radar can't read the small letters in the word "Ontario." Speaker, I received a letter with a photo highlighting yet another issue: The plates can't be read clearly in broad daylight. Bright sun makes them over-reflect.

If sunshine wasn't a part of your "exhaustive" testing, what was? A cellphone flash at your photo ops? All of this is absurd, but more than it is ridiculous, it is about safety. So how will you fix this and keep us safe?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand in this House today and assure everyone—the members opposite, Ontarians from across one end of this province to another—that safety is a number one concern. I can also share with you that I'm 100% committed to reviewing concerns, I'm committed to continuing to listen, and I'm committed to getting this right. I'm very pleased to share with you that we're working collaboratively with all of our key stakeholders, as well as 3M, to deliver an enhanced product in the coming weeks. Speaker, I want everyone in Ontario to know that we have been assured by 3M that they stand by their products and will deliver our enhanced licence plate to Ontarians as quickly as possible.

Again, we have heard, we continue to listen, and we continually work collaboratively with not only our key stakeholders but with 3M to get this right.

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

1100

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Premier: This morning, CTV reported that the shiny, new blue licence plates cannot be read by automated licence plate readers at our Canadian borders. Border officials are forced to input the plates manually. What is next? We haven't had a good rain yet. Are the plates going to dissolve? Stop putting more of these unsafe plates on the road.

First, we understood the government had destroyed the leftover white plates, but reporters were told that you do have inventory but just don't want to use them. Responsible government means responsible decision-making, and this government makes mistakes—big, branded and blue

mistakes. One thing is clear, Speaker—and it isn't the plates—we should not be putting more stealth plates out onto the roads.

Why can't this minister and Premier see that this is a glaring safety issue?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Unlike the member opposite, who stands up to position herself based on one report, we're actually working collaboratively with all of our key stakeholders—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition, come to order.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: —with regard to our enhanced plates.

Safety is a number one concern. Speaker, I can tell you that I am really, really proud of the team and how hard they're working to make sure, as we move forward with our enhanced licence plate, that we're collaborating, we're listening, we're hearing and we're working very well with 3M. They stand by their product, and we're standing with them to deliver an enhanced plate in the coming weeks.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Premier. Education in Ontario is in a state of crisis the likes of which we have not seen since the last Conservative government in the 1990s under Premier Mike Harris. The current government is intent on imposing policies on schools, including reducing per pupil funding, and disregarding the experience and knowledge of teachers, the best interests of students and their families, and evidence from other jurisdictions.

Today is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day at Queen's Park, and I know that members of the government will be expressing their concern for young people suffering from FASD.

Can the Premier tell this House and the people of Ontario how the policies they're implementing will benefit the children in our 5,000 publicly funded schools, and particularly how their cuts will support vulnerable children like those with FASD?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to reply.

Hon. Todd Smith: I want to thank the member opposite for that question this morning. I know there are members from the FASD community who are here with us today. We want to continue to raise awareness for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and the expert research that has been done in this area that shows that there is no known amount of alcohol that's safe to consume during pregnancy. I think it's important that we emphasize that fact.

Our ministry and our government are continuing to provide services to families dealing with FASD, and we'll continue to improve on those services every day. Our ministry continues to offer a range of services to families, caregivers, individuals, community-based fetal alcohol spectrum disorder workers and the Indigenous Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Child Nutrition Program, as well as family and caregiver support groups across the

province. This includes improving outcomes for children, youth and families affected by FASD.

There's more we can do, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the supplementary in answering that question.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: The more that could be done is that the government could actually implement the FASD strategy that is on the books, because we put it on the books, Mr. Speaker, but it has not been fully implemented. And in fact, there is much more needed in terms of support in communities, support in schools, and I introduced a private member's bill last week that would go a long way.

But instead of doing that, what's happening is that the government is in a pitched battle with teachers and support staff across the province. It almost seems as though the government wants to have a full-out war so that they can then have the Education Relations Commission declare that the students' year is at risk and then they can bring in back-to-work legislation, which should be a last resort.

Mr. Speaker, is that the plan that the government has put in place, the plan to support students—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition come to order.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: —including kids with FASD, that the government wants—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I stopped the clock. Both sides of the House were interrupting the member for Don Valley West such that I couldn't hear her question.

I'm going to start the clock again and allow the member to restate her question if she chooses to do so.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question was: In light of the fact that students across the province need support, particularly vulnerable kids like kids with FASD, is it the plan of the government to wait until the Education Relations Commission declares that the students' year is at risk and then legislate teachers back to work? Is that the plan that the government is putting in place?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

To the Minister of Education to reply.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: There is a little bit of irony in the question from the member opposite. However, Speaker, let me tell you what our plan is: It's to get a deal that keeps kids in this province in class. That's what we're negotiating at the table.

What we seek to do, unlike the former Liberal government, which consented to provide 100% of hiring predicated on seniority in the union, is that we are fighting to ensure that qualification, merit and diversity lead the way. In this negotiation, we're protecting full-day kindergarten. We are committed to keeping classroom sizes low. In this negotiation, we are also ensuring historic investments for special education.

Speaker, we have to make choices. This government, every day, will choose investments in students over

heightened compensation. That's the mission of the government. We want a deal that keeps kids in class.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, people in communities all across Ontario have been struggling to navigate Ontario's mental health and addiction system for years. Previous governments have simply failed to address the lack of coordination and best practices that have led to differences in quality and availability of services across this province.

But there is hope. Ontarians elected a government that fully recognizes that mental health is health. We have made historic investments. I wanted to ask the minister if she could update this House and this Legislature on the actions our government has taken to help those struggling with mental health and addictions.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Barrie–Innisfil for her question. Last week, we formally established the new Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence within Ontario Health. This centre will play a key role in supporting our efforts to build a mental health and addictions system that all Ontarians can be proud of and can use. It will act as a central point of oversight for mental health and addictions care, monitoring the quality and delivery of evidence-based services. The centre will also provide support and resources to Ontario health teams as they fulfill their role in delivering care and helping patients navigate the health care system.

This is the first time that any government has undertaken the hard work necessary to transform Ontario's health care system so that mental health and addictions services are considered as being as important as physical health services. Working with the new centre of excellence, we will continue to improve the quality and delivery of mental health and addictions services across Ontario as we roll out our mental health and addictions plan.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Minister, for your response and for your leadership on the file. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that our government has worked to make clear, historic, real actions on mental health and addictions services all across our province, to help those who face challenges. From francophone communities to those living in rural and remote communities to First Nations and Indigenous communities and many communities that have diverse needs when it comes to health care, our government is taking action.

I am proud to be part of a government that has a clear commitment to helping those in challenged communities when it comes to investment in mental health and addictions services. I wanted to ask the ministers if they can continuously update this House on the investments we've made to mental health and addictions and how we are consulting with all key communities on the next steps of improving our services in mental health.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I want to thank the member for that excellent question as well. As we develop our mental health and addictions plan, we're consulting with a wide variety of communities and stakeholders. No government has ever attempted this kind of comprehensive reform before, and as we listen to those struggling with mental health and addictions, we want to make sure that we get this right.

We're also taking action now to improve services for communities across the province. Recently, I was proud to stand alongside the Minister of Health and the Minister of Colleges and Universities to announce an investment of \$1.2 million to improve access to culturally appropriate mental health and addictions services across several Indigenous communities.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, is committed to improving services and making sure that every Ontarian gets the care they need where and when they need it. We know that more work needs to be done, but it's absolutely critical to make these investments as we continue working to meaningfully improve these services as we finalize our mental health and addictions strategy.

1110

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question is about freedom of the press and the ethical and democratic standards set forth by the Premier.

People from across the country were appalled this weekend as they watched security guards literally block CBC's Mike Crawley while he was filing a report about the Progressive Conservative convention. The Premier's party scrambled to distance themselves from the incident, but the security company was clear: Their orders came directly from the PC Party. Why—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to interrupt the member. I'm going to give the member an opportunity to rephrase the question. So far, I haven't heard a question about government policy.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Why exactly is the Premier and his party sending security forces out to harass reporters when they're trying to file their—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): No.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I appreciate that, but the question does not satisfy the test of being a question about government policy.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There's no point of order. The member will take his seat.

The next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

The Premier likes to criticize the math of other opposition parties, so I want to take a moment to look at the

Premier's math. This might be the first government in Ontario history to spend more on education while students actually get less.

The Premier and the education minister talk about a \$1.2-billion increase to funding for education that they say is going into classrooms, but public estimates confirm that per student funding is actually going down in Ontario. Can the Premier explain how on earth his government can spend more money on education while students are getting less?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Replying for the government, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, what the public accounts confirm is that this government is spending more and providing more for school boards in this province—over \$24 billion to school boards in the province of Ontario. What the record will show is that we more than doubled mental health funding and increased transportation, special education, Indigenous education to the highest levels ever recorded in Ontario history.

But it's not just about investment. We've increased investment by 60% since 2003-04, and yet we still have more than half of our kids failing math in grade 6 in this province. We not only have to invest more; we need a commitment to improve the system, to deliver accountability and to ensure results for hard-working taxpayers in this province. That's what we're trying to achieve in negotiation: a good deal for kids that sees more money flowing into them, not 80 cents on the dollar in compensation, but more in their schools, in their curriculum and in their future.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, no one is buying the minister's spin on this, because there's clearly a disconnect between what the minister is saying and what the estimates say. And parents get it. On Friday, I spoke with a number of parents who were here at Queen's Park supporting educators. They told me that they do not want to see class size increases, they do not want to see mandatory e-learning and they especially do not want to see per student funding go down. They oppose this cut.

Speaker, will the Premier, will the education minister listen to parents, listen to students and reverse their cut to per student funding?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Our government is investing more in public education, in health care, in the social services that are consequential to the lives of everyday working people in this province. That is what we're doing, and we're doing that while keeping taxes low. We're doing that while ensuring affordability is the cornerstone of this government's political mandate. But most important when it comes to our kids is giving them the skills to be job-ready, to unleash the full potential of the incredible ingenuity of our young people and the diversity in this province.

It's about ensuring a greater return on investment. We are spending more in education, but we're not getting more in education. I think parents want the government of the day to stand firm for a higher return on investment that sees their child succeeding in life and getting the jobs of the future.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Attorney General. I hear from constituents all the time who have interacted with the justice system and asked why their experience could not have been easier, faster and more affordable. They often wonder why they need to hire someone to manage matters that seem simple, only to find out just how complex and outdated our court system is.

Can the Attorney General tell us what our government is doing to improve and modernize the way our justice system operates to make it simpler, to make it faster and to make it more affordable for people to access justice in this province?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you to the phenomenal member from Brantford—Brant, a man of great stature. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that we have inherited a badly neglected and very complicated justice system. We've heard loud and clear from people across Ontario that the justice system has grown too complex, it's outdated and it needs to better support the growth of our communities and make our communities safer, while standing up for victims of crime and law-abiding citizens.

That's why I was proud to table the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act in this House, a bill that proposes 20 smart and sensible reforms that will make Ontario's justice system more available, more affordable, better for consumers and businesses—and it will make our communities safer, Mr. Speaker, all while we're getting tougher on crime to ensure that criminals are not profiting from their illegal activities.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Attorney General for that answer. I think we can all agree that crime should not pay.

When the Civil Remedies Act was first created in 2001 by the Progressive Conservative government of the day, it was an innovative crime-fighting piece of legislation intended to deter, and successful in deterring, unlawful activity. This act allows police to seize property and funds used in, or gained from, illegal and criminal activity, and redirect it into the hands of victims and police programs that fight crime.

Unfortunately, while Ontario was once at the forefront of civil forfeiture rules, our province now lags far behind other jurisdictions that have updated their forfeiture laws. Criminals have taken notice.

Can the Attorney General tell this House what he is doing to address this growing problem?

Hon. Doug Downey: The member is absolutely right. Our province's civil forfeiture laws, along with our entire justice system, were neglected for 15 years by the Liberal government before us. They were more focused on helping their Liberal friends than they were on fixing the system. They let it decay and they let it rot.

We're here to fix this. This is the first government to take on the important work of modernizing our laws around civil forfeiture so Ontario can support the victims

and the front-line police officers, who do the hard work. We're going to make it harder for criminals to hold on to their proceeds from crime and do things that make our communities feel unsafe, and victimize our young people.

The Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, if passed, will simplify the procedure to seize the proceeds of crime and allow the funds to be redirected faster and more efficiently to the victims and the support programs they need, when and where they need them the most.

MIDWIFERY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, we learned that the Human Rights Tribunal has issued a historic win for midwives. They have ordered the Conservative government to end its gender discrimination policy against midwives.

It is shameful that midwives, a profession dominated by women, are not fairly compensated, despite the fact that they are primary care providers. They expertly guide people through their pregnancy, labour, delivery and first six weeks with a newborn.

Speaker, it is the 21st century. Women should not have to fight to prove that they deserve equal pay, but that's exactly what the midwives have had to do under the Liberal government for close to a decade. It's time to end gender discrimination and it's long overdue.

Will the Premier implement the Human Rights Tribunal order to fairly compensate all our midwives?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General to reply.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you for the question, to the member from Nickel Belt, who I know is an advocate for all things health.

Our government values the contributions of Ontario's midwives, providing safe and accessible 24/7 care for all Ontario families. We are reviewing the decision. Ontario has applied for a judicial review of the tribunal's decision. As the matter is now before the tribunal, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, for years the Liberals made a show about closing the gender wage gap, while at the same time battling with midwives in court so they could avoid paying them fairly. Midwives had to fight the Liberal government tooth and nail to win the right to fair compensation. Now, rather than awarding these vital health care professionals the compensation they deserve, this Conservative government is planning more unnecessary and costly legal proceedings against midwives.

Speaker, instead of compensating midwives fairly by immediately implementing the Human Rights Tribunal order, why is this Conservative government so determined to do exactly what the Liberals did?

Hon. Doug Downey: Since day one, our government has been absolutely clear, and we won't apologize for this. We're doing everything we can to make life affordable for Ontarians, while at the same time respecting the fantastic

work that midwives do across Ontario to protect our families and promote good health.

But as I mentioned, it is in front of the tribunal, Mr. Speaker, and we're reviewing our decision. I hope to have more to say in the days to come.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. Last summer, the Honourable Eileen E. Gillese, commissioner of the Public Inquiry into the Safety and Security of Residents in the Long-Term Care Homes System, released her final report. The report included a number of recommendations across several ministries to ensure the safety of long-term-care-home residents. At the time, you committed to reviewing the recommendations thoroughly and working across ministries to take swift action. Could the minister please share the actions our government has taken to address Justice Gillese's recommendations to strengthen long-term care?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for that important question and for their great work on behalf of the constituents in the riding. I'm pleased to report that our government has completed 18 of Justice Gillese's recommendations, with 40 others under way.

Acting on several key recommendations on medication safety, I have issued a directive to the sector on glucagon and hypoglycemia. It puts in place best practices for safe insulin policies, including clear expectations for staff training and the reporting of insulin-related medication incidents. Long-term-care homes will be required to follow clear, proactive guidelines for tracking medication incidents and identifying reoccurring staff compliance issues.

Addressing the public inquiry has given our government an opportunity to take account of Ontario's long-term-care system so that we can ensure that it meets the standard Ontarians deserve.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the minister for that encouraging update. I think all of us on both sides of the aisle can see the benefit of these changes to the safety and well-being of our loved ones.

Proper long-term-care staffing is also crucial to ensuring their safety and meeting their health care needs, but the sector is facing real challenges when it comes to recruiting and retaining personal support workers, nurses and other care staff. It was acknowledged in the public inquiry that there is a shortage province-wide of people to fill these rewarding, in-demand jobs. Could the minister please speak to the steps she is taking to address Justice Gillese's recommendations on staffing?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again to the member for the question. As a family doctor for almost 30 years, I know first-hand that personal support workers, registered nurses and other front-line staff are the backbone of long-term care, so recently I was happy to announce

the launch of a long-term-care staffing study led by an expert external advisory group. It will help inform a comprehensive staffing strategy that we will be developing and implementing by the end of 2020.

Part of this study will fulfill Justice Gillese's recommendation to determine adequate levels of registered staff. The study will also identify how we can help the sector to improve staffing, recruitment and retention. This important step will give our government the insight that we need to ensure the sustainability, safety and high-quality care for our growing and aging population in Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to talk today about parents in my riding like Nicole, whose eight-year-old daughter is medically fragile. Nicole's daughter attends the Beverley school in my riding, where children with developmental and physical disabilities work with skilled educators, but Nicole is terrified that due to this government's cuts, children like her daughter won't be able to get the attention they need to learn and thrive. In her words, "Learning is different for everyone. If teachers don't have the resources and training they need to support children like my daughter, kids with special needs will lose their right to an education."

Speaker, how can the Premier justify his education cuts and its impact on families like Nicole?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education to reply.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Obviously for Nicole and for all parents and children in this province, we are committed to ensuring investments continue to flow in the front of class when it comes to special education, to support the most vulnerable kids in our schools.

Speaker, how we're doing that: In the most recent negotiated settlement with CUPE, where we negotiated a voluntary agreement ratified by the union, hundreds of new EAs are being hired in classrooms right across Ontario. That's going to help improve support of those children in every region of Ontario. We are investing \$3.1 billion more in special education. That's the highest investment ever recorded in the history of Ontario.

We have doubled the mental health portfolio. We have hired 180 psychologists and psychotherapists. In high schools, we're making mental health and special education an important, central part of the physical health and education curriculum. We're absolutely committed to ensuring those kids have dignity, respect and the resources to succeed.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I also want to share comments from another parent. Kylie has a daughter at Kensington Community School in University-Rosedale. Because of this government's cuts, the school has had to lay off several educators and was forced to cancel their Mandarin lan-

guage program. Kylie's daughter loved learning the language. When it comes to this government's cuts to education, Kylie says, "I am heartbroken and furious."

Speaker, how can the Premier defend taking opportunities away from children who want to learn?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: In fact, in the context of our official languages in this nation, it's this government, under the leadership of this Premier, that is investing more in French-language education than any government in the history of Ontario, and we are proud of that, proud of ensuring that young people have the competencies of language to apply it in the marketplace.

But in the negotiation more broadly we are fighting and committing to protecting full-day kindergarten. We are ensuring that we're maintaining historic investments in special ed. We are keeping class sizes low, and we're ensuring that the hiring of educators is premised on merit. Those are our guiding principles in this negotiation, and it starts with ensuring that kids remain in a positive and safe learning environment.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES

Mr. Norman Miller: My question today is for the Minister of Health. Ipsos recently conducted a poll on the importance of mental health services for children and youth. Not surprisingly, Ontarians firmly believe, as does this government, that more should be done to improve the access that children and youth have to mental health services. This includes reducing wait times across the province.

We have acted to establish the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence within Ontario Health, and a mental health and addictions plan is also on the way. Could you please explain to the members of this Legislature how the centre of excellence can address the barriers that youth face when trying to access mental health services?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to thank the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for his question. Through our new mental health and addictions plan, supported by the centre of excellence, we will make sure that the people of Ontario can get the mental health care and services they need, including our children and youth. The Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence will break down barriers in accessing care, ensuring a more consistent patient experience across the province.

The centre will work with experts, providers in the community, people with lived experience, researchers and families to create a consistent set of services and standards for care. This will ensure that children and youth will not only be able to access mental health services, but also ensure that the care they receive is high quality and based on best practices. There is a clear need to expand and improve existing programs and invest in innovative solutions to tackle the gaps that have persisted for so long. Our mental health and addictions plan will be another very important step.

1130

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

Mr. Norman Miller: I want to thank the minister for her leadership on this important issue. Ontario governments have known for many years that our mental health system was insufficient. The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, of which the minister was a member, was set up in 2009 and made its recommendations in September 2010—almost 10 years ago. But until now, little has been done to improve mental health services.

Finally, through our continued investment in mental health and addiction services, it is clear that our government is on the right track to deliver meaningful change to the mental health and addictions system. Minister, can you please update the members of this Legislature on the investments we have made in child and youth mental health services?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I want to thank the member for that excellent question. This year, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, invested \$174 million more in community-based mental health and addictions services across the province. Included in this investment is nearly \$30 million for child and youth mental health services and programs across the province, as well as more than \$27 million to fund mental health supports in Ontario's education system, which will directly benefit schools, teachers and, most importantly, our students and their parents.

We will follow through on these investments, Mr. Speaker, with \$3.8 billion in total funding over the next 10 years through our comprehensive mental health and addictions plan that meaningfully improves our system and helps to build healthier communities.

We look forward to sharing more about our new plan in the coming weeks. Together, we can, and we will, create a connected, integrated mental health system that works for Ontarians of all ages—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My question is to the Premier. Over the past weeks and months, I have gotten so many letters and messages from parents concerned about cuts to education; like Ann, who wrote to me and said, "The government does not have a mandate to cut funding to our schools, especially when they are using those cuts to fund corporate tax breaks. They never campaigned on removing adults from our schools, on increasing class sizes ... or on cutting supports for students with special needs."

When is this government going to start listening to parents, do the right thing and reverse these heartless cuts?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are listening to parents and taxpayers, who want accountability for their investment. It's why we are asking our union partners, who we are negotiating with today, to accept the premise that hiring in this province must be based on qualification. If you want to improve the outcomes of our children, then

every member of this Legislature will accept that qualification, merit and diversity must be the cornerstone of hiring new educators in this province. That requires political courage to say it and to negotiate at the table.

It also requires a resolve to say that if we're going to be putting more money in those children's schools and their pockets in York South–Weston communities, it ought to go in schools, not in the compensation regime of the second-highest-paid educators in Canada.

That is our goal. It starts with keeping kids in class with a good deal. It keeps classroom sizes low, protects full-day kindergarten and, most importantly, continues to invest in our most vulnerable kids in our schools.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Again, my question is to the Premier. This is exactly what we have come to expect from the minister and his colleagues: Blame teachers, deflect responsibility.

On this side of the House, we are proud to listen to parents and to stand with kids. I have gotten notes of encouragement from parents, thanking me for standing up for their kids. These parents know teachers are on the side of their kids too. Like Vania, from here in Toronto, who told me, "There is too much at stake for families to sit back and accept the unprecedented and unnecessary changes and cuts that Conservatives are proposing."

Again to the Minister of Education: If parents are thanking me for being on their kids' side, whose side are the Conservatives on?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: This Progressive Conservative government is squarely on the side of students, fighting to ensure that the best teacher is in the front of the class. We are on the side of students, ensuring that more money flows in classrooms, not in compensation. We are on the side of our youngest kids in class by protecting, in writing, full-day kindergarten. We are on the side of our most vulnerable by continuing to invest more in special education than any government in Ontario. We will continue to do so, as we've demonstrated in the CUPE deal months ago, where hundreds of new EAs are being hired to help those very children in our schools.

Speaker, in this negotiation, we want a deal. Our kids deserve it. Let's get it done.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Will Bouma: After 15 years of successive Liberal governments, we saw Ontario's justice system become outdated and overgrown with unnecessary complexities. With this continued neglect, the needs of Ontario's law-abiding citizens and victims of crime also fell to the wayside. They've had to endure a system that is unresponsive to their needs and is difficult to access.

Mr. Speaker, can the Attorney General please tell us what he is doing to right these Liberal wrongs and ensure our justice system is working every day for law-abiding citizens and is supporting victims of crime?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you to the member from Brantford–Brant for the question. Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right again: Our justice system has grown complex and outdated, and we are the first government in 15 years to take on the vitally important role of fixing it. That's why we are proposing changes as part of the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act that would update so many important areas of Ontario's outdated justice system. The bill looks to make many changes that will stand up for law-abiding citizens. It stands up for victims of crime. It stands up for the front-line police officers.

One regulatory change we've announced will make it easier for victims to sue offenders who have been convicted of distributing an intimate image against their will. It should not be very difficult for anyone to understand that this crime can and has shattered lives, whether it be youth, whether it be people going through difficult divorces—anybody who has had an intimate image potentially sent. We've responded to provide victims with more tools to access justice and to send a strong message that cyberbullying will not be tolerated.

I'll have more to say in my supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the Attorney General for his answer.

Standing up for victims of crime is a driving force of our government's efforts to grow healthier and safer communities across Ontario. We know that many victims of cyberbullying, including those who have had their intimate images shared without consent, can suffer emotional, mental and physical pain and feel powerless. Can the Attorney General tell us more about how our government is making it easier for victims of this crime to get the justice they deserve?

Hon. Doug Downey: Many of Ontario's laws and rules were established before the Internet and mobile devices became staples in the lives of Ontarians. Google registered as a company only 20 years ago, Mr. Speaker, and, man, things have changed.

We want to make sure that the Internet is a safe, accessible place for everyone to connect, learn and grow. Those who choose to use digital technology to exploit victims or to deliberately and repeatedly harm somebody or a group need to be held accountable for their serious actions. That's why we've taken action to amend regulation 456/96 under the Victims' Bill of Rights that would make it easier for victims to obtain damages in civil proceedings against offenders convicted of these crimes. This is protection and peace of mind that in today's world is necessary and an important part of keeping everyone, including our children, safe online.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Thanks to years of underfunding and neglect from the Liberals, rural communities across the province were already struggling with school closures, dilapidated school

buildings and teacher shortages. The Conservative cuts to education are only making life worse. On Friday, tens of thousands of parents, students and teachers raised their voices against this government's cuts to education.

Speaker, unlike the Liberals and Conservatives, New Democrats are fighting for what matters—good schools for our kids and a strong public education system no matter where you live in this province—and so are thousands of families across my riding, from Manitowadge to Wawa to Chapleau, from Desbarats to Blind River, Elliot Lake to Espanola and from St. Joseph Island to Manitoulin Island. Why isn't this government doing the same?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I thank the member opposite for the question. I would agree that under the former Liberal government there was a decade of stagnation in scope and performance. We saw more monies being spent in education than ever before—a 60% net increase since 2003–4, 12% more teachers since then and less than 1% more students—yet, even still, we saw literacy tests stagnate. We saw math numbers, math performance decline. The question is, what was the result for that dramatic expenditure in education?

We expect better. We want to see our students succeed. We want to see graduation rates rise. We want to see more students entering the skilled trades and STEM education. We are going to do that by getting a good deal that protects the interests of rural education after the largest school closure program that devastated rural Ontario under the former Liberal government.

Rural Ontario has an ally in this government. We will maintain the moratorium until we can ensure the economic impacts are totally considered in the PAR guidelines under our review.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again to the Premier: Schools in my riding and in rural and northern communities across the province were closed down under the Liberals. Students are being bused long distances to get to and from school, preventing them from joining after-school activities and getting the full school experience. Students, parents and teachers hoped that this Conservative government would be different and would actually recognize the unique situation rural, remote and northern schools face. But this government's cuts to education are hurting kids. Will this government listen to students and stop these cuts?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you again to the member opposite for the question. You know, I just want to draw a contrast between what the former government did and their impacts on schools and what this government is doing. Under the former government, they made a decision to close more schools under one political party than every single government combined. No government closed more schools than the former Liberal government. That is their legacy in rural Ontario.

Our legacy is a \$550-million annual capital commitment to build new schools in rural, remote and northern

Ontario, to renew the spirit of northern communities and of rural communities who felt abandoned by the former government. We are listening to them. We are working with them to ensure that those kids feel equal, that they're not second-class citizens when it comes to their experience in education. We're going to continue to invest in new schools, we're going to continue to support rural Ontario, and obviously, Speaker, we are going to ensure that every student, irrespective of their locality, succeeds in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning. There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Parsa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day / Projet de loi 173, Loi proclamant le Jour de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to give a brief statement explaining his bill?

Mr. Michael Parsa: Ontario is home to approximately 14.5 million people, accounting for 38% of Canada's population. It is a rich and diverse province whose residents, both past and present, have made countless contributions to Canada's social, economic, political and cultural history.

By proclaiming June 1 in each year as Ontario Day, we are providing the residents of this great province an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the significant roles that Ontario and Ontarians have played, and continue to play, in Canada and around the world.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I move that the following changes be made to membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Coe replaces Ms. Park, and Mr. Rasheed replaces Mr. Cho, Willowdale; and

On the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Ms. Park replaces Mr. Coe; and

On the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Cho, Willowdale, replaces Mr. Rasheed; and

On the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, Mr. Pang replaces Mr. Gill.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that the following changes be made to membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Coe replaces Ms. Park; Mr. Rasheed replaces Mr. Cho, Willowdale; and

On the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Ms. Park replaces Mr. Coe; and

On the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Cho, Willowdale, replaces Mr. Rasheed; and

On the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, Mr. Pang replaces Mr. Gill.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

POST-STROKE TREATMENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to present this petition entitled "Ask the Government of Ontario to Support Young Adult Stroke Survivors."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's young adult stroke survivors continue to be denied OHIP funded stroke treatment/physiotherapy on the basis of age;

"Whereas stroke survivors on ODSP are denied treatment in violation of existing health care regulations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately eliminate all arbitrary age restrictions on post-stroke treatment and deliver publicly funded post-stroke treatment to all Ontarians."

I wholeheartedly support this, affix my signature and will send it to the table with Connie.

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas tow truck operators provide an important service across Ontario's road network; and

"Whereas motorists deserve reliable, timely service from their provider of choice across Ontario; and

"Whereas towing operators deserve a safe place to work in urban and rural communities across Ontario without being subjected to repetitive and punitive costs; and

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

"To protect motorists and towing companies providing important services by addressing issues around highway incident management;

"To include incident scene management in regulations to address the potential for improper actions on scene;

"To support the towing industry and reduce costs to motorists and third parties by mandating a single provincial towing licence;

“To introduce regulations that ensure long-term vitality of the towing industry;

“To implement a towing mobile rideshare application.”

I’m very pleased to sign this petition and give it to page Michael.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Ian Arthur: I have a stack of petitions here that I collected on Friday on picket lines across Kingston.

“Stop ... Education Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” the Ford government’s “new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes...;

“Whereas the changes will mean thousands fewer teachers and education workers and less help for every student;

“Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take at least” two “of their classes online with as many as 35 students” per class;

“Whereas” the Ford government “changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario’s education system by the end of the government’s term; and

“Whereas kids in Ontario deserve more opportunities, not fewer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government halt the cuts to classrooms and invest to strengthen public education in Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Aditri.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Christine Hogarth: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many Ontarians are looking to their government to demonstrate a real commitment to delivering transit faster for the people in the greater Toronto area, reducing congestion, and connecting people to places and jobs; and

“Whereas everyone can recognize that there is an increasing demand for safe and reliable transportation options; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has agreed to partner with Ontario to remain committed to removing roadblocks, engage local residents and businesses, as well as Indigenous communities; and

“Whereas Ontario deserves public transit that is more attractive, safe, affordable, and low-stress;

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

“Help deliver Ontario’s four priority subway projects on time and on budget by proceeding as soon as possible to pass Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act, 2020, so that:

“(1) Hearings of necessity for expropriations of property along the transit corridors if expropriations for the purpose of the transit are eliminated;

“(2) A mechanism is created by which utility companies may be required to remove utility infrastructure, if necessary for the transit;

“(3) Municipal service and right of way access may be required to be provided for the transit, with the process being based around negotiation, with the possibility for an order if negotiation fails.”

This is a great petition. I am more than pleased to sign my name to it. I will pass it to Paige.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’d like to thank Jim McLeod from Cambridge for collecting signatures. He has been separated from his wife for two and a half years. This petition is called “Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents’ Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

I will affix my signature and give this to page Hannah.

1310

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jane McKenna: I’m pleased to read this petition, the “Get Transit Projects Done” petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many Ontarians are looking to their government to demonstrate a real commitment to delivering transit faster for the people in the greater Toronto area, reducing congestion, and connecting people to places and jobs; and

“Whereas everyone can recognize that there is an increasing demand for safe and reliable transportation options; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has agreed to partner with Ontario to remain committed to removing roadblocks, engage local residents and businesses, as well as Indigenous communities; and

“Whereas Ontario deserves public transit that is more attractive, safe, affordable, and low-stress;

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

“Help deliver Ontario’s four priority subway projects on time and on budget by proceeding as expediently as possible to pass Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act, 2020, so that:

“(1) Hearings of necessity for expropriations of property along the transit corridors if the expropriations for the purpose of the transit are eliminated;

“(2) A mechanism is created by which utility companies may be required to move utility infrastructure, if necessary for the transit;

“(3) Municipal service and right of way access may be required to be provided for the transit, with the process being based around negotiation, with the possibility for an order if negotiation fails.”

I with pleasure sign this petition, and I will pass it over to Michael.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: This petition is for Rhéal and Bertha Levesque from my riding, and I thank Linda Adler for signing this petition: “Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part act.

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents’ Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;”

Therefore, they petition the Legislative Assembly “to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Aditri to bring it to the Clerk.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Will Bouma: It gives me pleasure to read in this petition entitled “Combat Anti-Semitism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, on December 29, 2019, five people were maliciously killed at the home of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi during Hanukkah celebrations in Monsey, New York;

“Whereas the horrendous events that took place on December 29, 2019, in Monsey, New York, coincide with an upward trend of instances of egregious acts of anti-

Semitic behaviour, including within the province of Ontario;

“Whereas anti-Semitism can manifest in various different ways and cannot be adequately countered if it cannot be properly identified; moreover, anti-Semitism is a multi-faceted problem that requires a multi-faceted solution;

“Whereas the province of Ontario prides itself on being a safe and welcoming place free from religious-based hate;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to ensure that all Ontarians are protected from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism by immediately passing Bill 168, the Combating Antisemitism Act, 2019, so that the government of Ontario” will “be guided by the working definition of anti-Semitism and the list of illustrative examples of it, adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary on May 26, 2016, when it interprets acts, regulations and policies designed to protect Ontarians from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism.”

I entirely endorse this and will be affixing my signature on it.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Ms. Sara Singh: I’m pleased to present this petition. I’d like to thank Evan Cameron from Brampton Centre for collecting signatures.

“Ensure that Low-Income Ontarians Have Access to Justice.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario has cut the funding for Legal Aid Ontario by almost one third;

“Whereas injured workers may lose their ability to appeal WSIB decisions without legal aid;

“Whereas access to legal aid is essential to low-income Ontarians who are facing legal proceedings in criminal, family, mental health, poverty law and child protection cases;

“Whereas the cuts will lead to backlogs and delays throughout the justice system, causing chaos in the courts and costing taxpayers more, not less;

“Whereas provincial funding for the immigration and refugee law program at Legal Aid Ontario has been completely cut;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario that have already begun to impact the most vulnerable” Ontarians.

I am very proud to affix my name to this and send this off with page Hannah.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the “Combat Anti-Semitism” petition.

“Whereas, on December 29, 2019, five people were maliciously killed at the home of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi during Hanukkah celebrations in Monsey, New York;

“Whereas the horrendous events that took place on December 29 ... in Monsey, New York, coincide with an upward trend of instances of egregious acts of anti-Semitic behaviour, including within the province of Ontario;

“Whereas anti-Semitism can manifest in various different ways and cannot be adequately countered if it cannot be properly identified; moreover, anti-Semitism is a multi-faceted problem that requires a multi-faceted solution;

“Whereas the province of Ontario prides itself on being a safe and welcoming place free from religious-based hate;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to ensure that all Ontarians are protected from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism by immediately passing Bill 168, the Combating Antisemitism Act, 2019, so that the government of Ontario be guided by the working definition of anti-Semitism and the list of illustrative examples of it, adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary on May 26, 2016, when it interprets acts, regulations and policies designed to protect Ontarians from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism.”

Of course I affix my signature. I give it to page Daniel M.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have a petition that is entitled “Improve Winter Road Maintenance on Northern Highways.” I’d like to thank the community of Espanola and the many who have signed the petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Highways 11 and 17 play a critical role in the development and prosperity of northern Ontario;

“Whereas the former Liberal government introduced private winter maintenance contracts, and the current Conservative government has failed to improve winter road conditions in northern Ontario;

“Whereas injuries and fatalities are twice more likely to occur on a northern highway than on a highway in southern Ontario, per capita;

“Whereas current Ministry of Transportation classification for winter highway maintenance negatively impacts the safety of drivers on northern highways;

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

“Classify all 400-series highways, the QEW highway and Highways 11 and 17 as class 1 highways;

“Require that the pavement on class 1 highways be bare of snow within eight hours of the end of a snowfall.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Rudra to bring down to the Clerks’ table.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many Ontarians are looking to their government to demonstrate a real commitment to delivering transit faster for the people in the greater Toronto area, reducing congestion, and connecting people to places and jobs; and

“Whereas everyone can recognize that there is an increased demand for safe and reliable transportation options; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has agreed to partner with Ontario to remain committed to removing roadblocks, engage local residents and businesses, as well as Indigenous communities; and

“Whereas Ontario deserves public transit that’s more attractive, safe, affordable, and low-stress;

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

“Help deliver Ontario’s four priority subway projects on time and on budget by proceeding as expediently as possible to pass Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act, 2020....”

I endorse this petition and will give it to page Paige.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available this afternoon for petitions.

1320

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING TRANSIT FASTER ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

SUR LA CONSTRUCTION PLUS RAPIDE DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Ms. Mulroney moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 171, Loi édictant la Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun et apportant des modifications connexes à d’autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I look to the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be splitting my time with Associate Minister Kinga Surma.

I’m happy to be here today to talk about our proposed legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act, and how it will get people moving in the GTA.

Monsieur le Président, je suis heureuse d’être ici aujourd’hui pour parler de notre projet de loi, la Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun, et de la manière par laquelle ce projet de loi permettra aux gens de se déplacer dans la région du grand Toronto.

It's no secret that transportation has been neglected throughout our province. Investment has not kept up with demand, and as a result, there's gridlock, aging infrastructure and overcrowded, outdated transit systems. From Toronto to Ottawa to Kenora, it simply takes people too long to get around. That's why our government is making transportation a priority. We have a plan that will make it easier for people to get around no matter where they live.

Right across Ontario, we are investing in infrastructure to fight congestion, to connect people to communities and to jobs, and to spur economic activity. Whether it's adding a bus service to connect rural and northern communities, improving major highways to fight congestion, or building transit infrastructure, our foot is on the gas. And of course, our commitment to delivering four new rapid transit lines in the GTA is a significant part of that plan.

Nous avons un plan qui permettra aux gens de se déplacer plus facilement, quel que soit l'endroit où ils vivent.

À travers l'Ontario, nous investissons dans les infrastructures pour réduire la congestion, pour relier les gens aux communautés et aux emplois, et pour stimuler les activités économiques. Qu'il s'agisse d'ajouter un service d'autobus pour relier les communautés rurales et celles du Nord, d'améliorer les grandes autoroutes pour réduire la congestion ou de construire des transports en commun, nous avons le pied sur l'accélérateur. Et bien sûr, notre engagement à mettre en place quatre nouvelles lignes de transport en commun rapide dans la région du grand Toronto constitue un élément important de ce plan.

Nowhere is the need to get people moving more apparent than in this region. As Minister of Transportation, I hear from a lot of people about the challenges they face getting to and from work in the GTA. I hear it from acquaintances, from my colleagues, and, since my appointment as minister, even from my friends and family.

People are frustrated. They're stuck in traffic wasting hours of their lives sitting on congested highways trying to get in and out of the city. Or they're crammed into overcrowded stations and trains that are all too often delayed.

Anyone who has been at the Bloor-Yonge station during a subway delay at rush hour knows what I mean when I say it's putting people in dangerous situations. When you're worried about your personal safety or missing appointments or being late for work, it weighs on you. The transportation experience has such a real impact on people's quality of life. We need to do better. The people who live in this city deserve better, and our government is going to give it to them.

People are suffering because greater Toronto area transit just takes way too long to build. But I'm happy to say that our government is taking action. We have committed to four new projects for riders, and we are doing it in record time—the first as early as 2027.

Building transit is what our government campaigned on, and we are delivering on our promise to build a public transit system that the people of the GTA so desperately need and deserve. People need to get home to their

families quicker, and everyone deserves to enjoy all that the greater Toronto area has to offer. From Ontario Place to the airport to the Ontario Science Centre, our plan will get people there quicker.

Our subway plan, now endorsed by the province, Mayor Tory and city council, is realistic, attainable and deliverable. It will bring subway infrastructure to new neighbourhoods across Toronto, Markham and Richmond Hill. That plan includes:

- the signature Ontario Line, delivered as early as 2027, which will bring rapid transit to neighbourhoods such as Liberty Village and Flemingdon Park, and will help address the dangerous overcrowding on the TTC's Line 1 and at the Bloor-Yonge station;

- the Yonge North extension, delivered by 2029-30, which will extend the TTC's Line 1 to major employment centres in Markham and Richmond Hill;

- the Scarborough subway extension, delivered before 2029-30, which will finally extend Line 2 further into Scarborough;

- the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, delivered by 2030-31, which will improve connectivity along Eglinton Avenue and enable future access to Pearson airport.

Our government is committed to working with the city of Toronto and the TTC to get shovels in the ground, to lay the tracks, to buy the trains and to deliver more transit for more people, and all with accelerated timelines. These projects and timelines are ambitious, but can we really afford not to be? By 2030, there will be over one million more people in the greater Toronto area, bringing the total population to over eight million. By 2045, that number is expected to hit 10 million.

Our existing transit network is already overburdened. Clearly, something must change. We need more infrastructure, and we need it immediately.

Building transit faster is critical to unlocking gridlock, relieving congestion and generating long-term economic and employment opportunities in the GTA.

Nous avons besoin de plus d'infrastructures, et nous en avons besoin immédiatement. Il est essentiel d'accélérer la construction des transports en commun pour débloquer les embouteillages, pour décongestionner, et créer des possibilités économiques et d'emplois à long terme dans la région du grand Toronto.

More transit relieves overcrowding, connects more people to places and shortens commutes, but it also has a ripple effect on the communities and the roads around it. More people on transit means fewer people on the roads.

In the GTA today, the average commute to and from work is 48 minutes, both ways, and for many people, it's even longer. Not only is this a significant inconvenience to our daily lives, but it has a cost to our province, and that cost is in a great deal of lost productivity. In fact, the C.D. Howe Institute has said that our region loses \$11 billion in productivity each year as a result of gridlock. And according to the Toronto Region Board of Trade, gridlock adds \$400 million to the cost of goods in our region. Just think about that for a moment. Those are staggering figures, and they're just for today.

These problems demand action. The GTA needs more transit to cope with the gridlock of today and the growth of tomorrow. Simply put, we are out of time. We must address our transit capacity as quickly as possible. To do that, the status quo is no longer an option. The current approach takes too long and does not produce transit infrastructure, and so changes need to be made. We need to clear the way of roadblocks and commit to doing things differently.

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Mr. Speaker, that's what this legislation is all about. If passed, the Building Transit Faster Act will cut bureaucratic red tape and break down the silos that have held up projects in the past. It will help us meet our ambitious timelines for our priority subway projects and deliver the transit network that people desperately need.

Madame la Présidente, c'est l'objet de ce projet de loi. Si elle est adoptée, la Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun permettra de réduire les formalités administratives et d'éliminer les silos qui ont entravé les projets dans le passé. Elle nous aidera à respecter les délais ambitieux que nous nous sommes fixés pour nos projets de métro prioritaires et à mettre en place le réseau de transport en commun dont les gens ont désespérément besoin.

Since Premier Ford first unveiled our government's historic \$28.5-billion subway expansion plan last spring, cross-government work has been under way to identify steps in the planning and construction processes where we can speed things up. Because we knew it wasn't enough just to plan the new lines. We needed to rethink the entire process if we were going to be successful. The legislation we are discussing today is a result of all of that hard work—and it is hard work, so I'd like to take a moment to recognize all of the staff at the Ministry of Transportation and all of the other ministries who were involved in bringing this legislation forward.

I know that there has also been a lot of collaboration with Metrolinx and with Infrastructure Ontario, as well as engagement with the city of Toronto and York region. A lot of work and time and energy has gone into this, but together we've identified several key challenges that have been faced in the past—and opportunities for acceleration.

The Building Transit Faster Act addresses five key challenges. The first challenge relates to unknown excavation and construction from neighbouring sites which can conflict with the construction of subway tunnels and stations, creating safety concerns and delays.

The second challenge has to do with securing municipal permits for provincial transit projects, which in the past have faced some delays, stopping work from taking place on schedule.

The third is the process of negotiating permission to enter lands to conduct soil testing or remove trees, which in the past has taken several months, or longer if expropriation is necessary.

The fourth relates to land assembly, where the hearing-of-necessity process can take up to five months and results in a decision that is non-binding, with land expropriation often still necessary.

And, finally, the last challenge is utility relocation. Transit projects can be delayed if utilities are not relocated in coordination with the project schedule, leading to increased project costs.

La Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun répond à six grands défis. Le premier concerne les travaux d'excavation et de construction inconnus provenant de sites voisins, qui peuvent entrer en conflit avec la construction de tunnels et de stations de métro, créant des problèmes de sécurité et des retards.

Le second défi concerne l'obtention de permis municipaux pour les projets de transport en commun provinciaux, qui ont connu par le passé certains retards, empêchant ainsi les travaux de se dérouler dans les délais prévus.

Le troisième est le processus de négociation de l'autorisation de pénétrer sur les terrains pour y effectuer des analyses de sol ou y enlever des arbres, lequel, par le passé, a pris plusieurs mois, ou plus longtemps si une expropriation devenait nécessaire.

Le quatrième concerne le regroupement des terrains, où le processus d'audience de nécessité peut prendre jusqu'à cinq mois et aboutit à une décision non contraignante, l'expropriation des terrains restant souvent nécessaire.

Enfin, le dernier défi est la relocalisation des infrastructures des services publics. Les projets de transport en commun peuvent être retardés si les services publics ne sont pas déplacés en coordination avec le calendrier du projet, ce qui entraîne une augmentation des coûts du projet.

These are the five key challenges that this legislation addresses. Each one has held up a major project in the past and has led to the type of delays that we can no longer afford. To support this proposed legislation, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will be looking at making regulatory changes tailored to the unique characteristics of these priority transit projects. The current system of environmental assessment does not offer the flexibility needed to align these timelines associated with the projects. For each of these challenges, we're proposing solutions that will help speed up the process while still treating people fairly.

I'd like to talk a little bit about each of those solutions in more detail, starting with utility relocation. Our proposed solution focuses on getting utilities relocated faster while still treating businesses and consumers fairly. Our legislation, if passed, would give Metrolinx the ability to require stronger coordination of utility relocations within the prescribed time frames.

La solution que nous proposons vise à accélérer la relocalisation des services publics, tout en continuant à traiter les entreprises et les consommateurs de manière équitable. Si elle est adoptée, notre loi permettra à Metrolinx d'exiger une meilleure coordination des relocalisations de services publics dans les délais prescrits.

Coordination with utility companies is an ongoing challenge for Metrolinx and has significant impacts on delivering transit projects through the P3 model. This would give companies deadlines for relocating their

utilities, such as gas or telephone lines, that would come along with clear guidelines for the industry to help get it done quickly. Utility companies would be responsible for ensuring that the deadlines are met, while Metrolinx will cover the relocation costs. If that doesn't happen, they'd be facing financial penalties.

We are also proposing to put in place a system that will ensure that if there are any disputes, they get escalated and resolved quickly so that things don't draw out for months and months. Madam Speaker, this is not an entirely new concept. It's similar to how we are already doing things for highway projects. There is no reason why this cannot be applied successfully to transit projects as well.

We also need to make sure that any costs incurred by utility companies as a result of missing deadlines are not passed along to consumers. To do this, we are proposing amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act that would prohibit the OEB from allowing provincially regulated utilities—electricity and natural gas—to pass costs along to consumers. That way, we'll ensure that rates are not going up as a result of this legislation. Adopting a more efficient relocation process while continuing to treat businesses fairly and ensuring that costs are not passed on to consumers just makes good sense, Madam Speaker.

We have many utilities already working with us, and I am pleased to say that we have just signed memoranda of understanding with Hydro One, Toronto Hydro and Enbridge. Our changes would help us bring up all utilities to the same standard.

The second area focuses on land assembly, something that often causes delays that plague public transit infrastructure projects. To build infrastructure, we need access to the land to construct stations, to conduct tunnelling and to prepare the sites.

Le deuxième enjeu se concentre sur le regroupement des terrains, qui est souvent à l'origine de retards qui nuisent aux projets d'infrastructure de transport en commun. Pour construire des infrastructures, nous devons avoir accès aux terrains nécessaires à la construction des stations, au creusage des tunnels et à la préparation des sites.

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Currently, there are redundant steps in the process that require us to repeatedly demonstrate the need for land related to infrastructure, one property at a time. With the proposed legislation we'd be removing the hearing-of-necessity step for any property related to the four subway projects. That means, once we have sufficiently demonstrated the need for a property, we wouldn't then have to go back and do the same thing over again at a hearing.

Of course, we will continue to treat people fairly and to compensate owners, tenants and others whose properties are required either temporarily or permanently. Nothing about that will change, as always. We will continue to compensate owners. We must also focus on delivering the urgently needed transit infrastructure while balancing the rights of residents and businesses along the transit corridor.

The next proposed solution addresses the challenges associated with obtaining permission for due diligence work, such as soil testing and tree removal—something that has caused significant delays in the past. The proposed legislation would grant us the ability to enter transit corridor lands to conduct due diligence work and to remove encroachments during the planning and construction phases without consent of the property owner.

La prochaine solution proposée concerne les difficultés liées à l'obtention d'une autorisation pour des travaux de diligence raisonnable, tels que l'analyse des sols ou l'enlèvement des arbres, ce qui a entraîné des retards importants dans le passé. La loi proposée nous donnerait la possibilité de pénétrer sur les terrains des corridors de transports publics pour effectuer des travaux de diligence raisonnable et supprimer les empiètements pendant les phases de planification et de construction, sans le consentement du propriétaire.

Of course, we'd be bound by limits and obligations, such as providing notice and time-of-day restrictions, so we wouldn't be showing up unannounced in the middle of the night to do soil inspections, and we will continue to be bound by rules requiring that property be restored to its original condition when the work is done, as well as requirements for things like tree replanting and compensation for damages. And this would not give us the right to enter a dwelling. Just like today, the intention would be to first work towards an amicable agreement with property owners to do this work.

But what this proposal does give us is a backstop that will prevent major delays in the case where an agreement cannot be reached. We're going to continue to treat people fairly, but we are not going to give people the opportunity to delay these projects by months because of a personal objection.

This brings me to the next area of our proposed legislation: requiring owners of adjacent lands to obtain a permit for the development of activities that occur along the transit corridor. This measure will ensure that our priority transit projects are not disrupted as a result of surrounding construction and development.

Cela m'amène au point suivant de notre projet de loi, qui exige des propriétaires de terrains adjacents qu'ils obtiennent un permis pour les activités d'aménagement se déroulant le long du corridor de transport en commun. Cette mesure garantira que nos projets de transport en commun prioritaires ne seront pas perturbés par des constructions et des aménagements environnants.

Our transit infrastructure has been neglected for over a generation. It's time to place at the top of our priorities the swift and efficient delivery of a modern rapid transit network. This common-sense approach would provide our government with a chance to review all projects surrounding the transit corridor, eliminating any safety concerns and construction delays that would lead to increased costs and the prolonged delivery of transit infrastructure.

People who ride transit to work each day have had to stand by and watch as these types of developments take precedence over investments in the kind of transit system

that gets them to work on time. Our proposed legislation prioritizes our subway projects in a way that will dramatically improve connectivity across the region while also delivering significant relief to critical congestion.

Another proposed solution would provide Metrolinx with authority to use or modify municipal assets like roadways and municipal services. We will establish a clear and consistent process that continues to foster a productive relationship with our municipal partners.

Une autre solution proposée donnerait à Metrolinx le pouvoir d'utiliser ou de modifier les actifs municipaux, comme les routes et les services municipaux. Nous établirons un processus clair et cohérent qui continuera à favoriser une relation productive avec nos partenaires municipaux.

This “collaboration first” approach will establish the scope and collaborative process with municipalities because both the city of Toronto and York region share our goal of getting transit built as quickly as possible. But experiences with past transit projects have shown us that there needs to be a path forward should our collaborative efforts reach an impasse. These types of impasses have led us to where we are today. We need to have processes in place that keep our priority transit projects on track and on budget. Our government, with the support of our municipal partners, will bring an end to the years of neglect of our transit network by ensuring that all parties are focused on one goal: getting transit built faster.

Finally, Madam Speaker, the last proposed solution is the modernization of the current system of environmental assessment. Our colleagues in the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks are proposing regulatory changes tailored to the unique characteristics of priority transit projects.

La dernière solution proposée est la modernisation du système actuel d'évaluation environnementale. Nos collègues du ministère de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs proposent des changements réglementaires qui sont adaptés aux caractéristiques uniques de nos projets de transport en commun prioritaires.

I can assure you that we take our responsibility to protect Ontario's environment seriously, and we know that everyone in this House does as well, but the current system of environmental assessment is lengthy and it does not offer the flexibility for innovation that P3 timelines require. We need to utilize our world-class P3 partners from the private sector at the table if we are to meet our ambitious timelines. The flaws in the current system of environmental assessment allow individuals to prolong the process long past the point that their concerns have received a fair hearing. These changes will balance our obligation to safeguard our environment with our commitment to building much-needed transit infrastructure quickly.

To be clear, this does not mean we are relaxing environmental protections. We are simply improving the speed and the efficiency of the process.

Madam Speaker, together these proposed solutions would save a huge amount of time in the planning and the

construction process and help deliver our subway expansion plan with accelerated timelines. In fact, it's estimated that if all of these solutions had been in place, the Eglinton Crosstown could have been completed up to three years earlier. That means that people could be riding trains today. That project is a perfect example of why the status quo simply isn't good enough. As we now know, Metrolinx has indicated that the fall of 2021 is no longer achievable for the project. Significant delays and some recent construction complications mean that we are not going to see the line open until well into 2022.

Ensemble, ces solutions proposées permettraient de gagner énormément de temps dans le processus de planification et de construction et aideraient à réaliser notre plan d'expansion du métro dans des délais accélérés.

En fait, on estime que si toutes ces solutions étaient en place, l'Eglinton Crosstown aurait pu être achevé jusqu'à trois ans plus tôt.

Cela signifie que les gens pourraient prendre le train aujourd'hui. Madame la Présidente, ce projet est un exemple parfait de la raison pour laquelle le statu quo n'est simplement plus suffisant.

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Comme nous le savons maintenant, Metrolinx a indiqué que l'automne 2021 n'est plus une échéance réalisable pour ce projet. En raison de retards importants et de certaines complications de construction récentes, la ligne ne sera pas ouverte avant une bonne partie de l'année 2022.

To say that I'm frustrated, Madam Speaker, is an understatement, and I can only imagine how the residents and businesses along Eglinton feel. But these unacceptable project delays are the main reason that we are proposing this legislation for our four priority transit projects. The people of Toronto cannot afford these kinds of delays. Simply put, we are out of time. This legislation, if passed, will prevent these types of delays and will deliver transit faster for the people of the GTA.

I want to be clear that these proposed solutions only apply to the four priority transit projects.

The need for a modernized environmental assessment process highlights another of our government's priorities: cutting the red tape preventing government and businesses from doing what is best for the people of Ontario. We are putting people first by taking steps towards cutting red tape and reducing the regulatory burdens facing our transit projects. Red tape causes frustration, delays and complication in everyday life. It can be small, like overly complicated forms or information that's difficult to understand, or large, like fundamental issues in regulations and processes like environmental assessments. But this kind of bureaucracy should not interfere with the government's ability to deliver on its commitments.

As we work to reduce regulatory burden, we must not sacrifice the right of the people who elected us to be their voice. I've had the great privilege of travelling throughout our great province and have had the chance to speak to them about the challenges that they face. Overwhelmingly,

I hear that government services are stuck in the 20th century and do not prepare Ontario for the future.

Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is making historic investments in the province's transit and transportation networks that will secure our future as the country's economic powerhouse.

The investments in the GTA's transit network will improve the quality of service and options available. We are fulfilling our commitment to getting people to where they want to go when they want to get there.

Notre gouvernement, sous la direction du premier ministre Ford, réalise des investissements sans précédent dans les réseaux de transport et de transport en commun de la province, qui assureront notre avenir en tant que moteur économique du pays. Les investissements dans le réseau de transport en commun de la région du grand Toronto amélioreront la qualité du service et les options disponibles. Nous respectons notre engagement à amener les gens là où ils veulent aller, quand ils veulent y aller.

I truly believe, Madam Speaker, that we are on the verge of the next critical era in transportation, not just in the city but in the entire province.

There have been three major moments in the evolution of transportation in Ontario.

Some 152 years ago, the Ontario Legislature debated An Act to authorize and regulate the use of traction engines on highways. That bill, introduced by a Conservative from Algoma, sought to establish the rules for how new technology—engine-powered vehicles—could share the roads with horses.

In the 1920s and the early 1930s, under Premiers Howard Ferguson and George Henry, the provincial highway network was expanded, recognizing the need to be able to connect communities by road to take advantage of the rapidly increasing number of cars in the province.

The third great moment started in the 1950s under Premier Leslie Frost, and saw the beginning of the use of rail as a form of everyday transportation for Ontarians, first with the subway in Toronto and eventually with the creation of the GO rail network in 1967 under Premier John Robarts.

I mention these moments because they are moments at which provincial governments of the past—all Conservative, I might add—recognized that the future demanded improved means of transportation. I highlight them now because right now in Ontario, we are expanding on each one of these moments and ushering in a new era in Ontario's transportation history, an era in which we think differently, we build more quickly and we deliver the vital infrastructure projects our province needs to keep up with a rapidly changing world.

Our plan for subway expansion in the GTA is exactly the kind of bold action that will address congestion and deliver transit infrastructure quickly and efficiently today for the Toronto of tomorrow.

We will continue to work diligently with our municipal and federal counterparts, and listen to public feedback as we move forward with our plan to get Ontario moving.

Toronto city council's vote in support of our plan this fall demonstrates that our co-operation—co-operation between the province and the city—has brought an end to years of political deadlock. Not only did council endorse our transit plan, but they also directed the city manager to work with us to “identify all opportunities to accelerate the delivery of the expansion projects.”

I want to take a moment to sincerely thank Mayor John Tory for his dedication and commitment to making this happen. Our partnership is truly a historic one. For the first time, the city of Toronto and the province have come together to endorse one single, unified plan for subway expansion in the GTA.

We will continue to call on the federal government to fund their share—a minimum 40% contribution—for these critical projects.

Pour la première fois, la ville de Toronto et la province de l'Ontario se sont réunies pour approuver un plan unique et unifié d'expansion du métro dans la région du grand Toronto. Et nous continuerons à demander au gouvernement fédéral de financer leur part—une contribution minimale de 40 %—pour ces projets essentiels.

Political will is required, and we have it. Together, we are going to build the Toronto of the future, because Toronto deserves better. The proposed legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act, represents another step along the path to equipping our government with the tools we need to deliver a modern, integrated rapid transit system.

We set ourselves some ambitious goals, with even more ambitious deadlines, but I've always found that formidable goals yield formidable results.

It has been one of my life's greatest privileges to stand here with all of you today as we work to secure a more prosperous future for Ontario.

I'd like to thank Associate Minister of Transportation Kinga Surma for being a champion for the people of Ontario and for all of their transportation needs.

I also want to thank Vijay Thanigasalam, my parliamentary assistant, for his ongoing support as we tackle this historic mandate.

Together, we will address the needs of the province as we build a safe and reliable transportation system that connects smaller communities to larger city centres and gets Ontario moving. We are building Ontario together. Nous bâtissons l'Ontario ensemble.

I'd now like to invite my colleague Associate Minister of Transportation Kinga Surma to say a few words.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you, Minister of Transportation, and thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House today to discuss this proposed legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act, and how, if passed, it will allow us to deliver the kind of integrated rapid transit network that the GTA desperately needs.

As many of my colleagues on both sides of the House know, years of squabbling over transit planning have left the province's transportation network severely, severely neglected.

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In the city of Toronto, we're still using solutions of the last century to address today's challenges. Aging infrastructure and an overcrowded and outdated transportation system have pushed more and more commuters to take their car to work each day with no real alternative. This is something I'm sure the members of the official opposition will agree is not a good thing. The increase in the level of traffic and congestion in this region over the last few years is truly a sight to behold.

Toronto's current subway network is one that is hardly befitting a world-class city. There aren't enough public transit options to connect people to local jobs, to help them get to school or appointments, and the transit service that does exist is unreliable, disjointed and too infrequent. Our government is bringing an end to this type of neglect and ushering in an era of bold investment in Ontario's transportation network.

Under the leadership of our Premier, our government is making transportation a top priority. Our plan connects communities and people in ways that will secure a prosperous future. We have committed to delivering four new transit lines in the greater Toronto area, and our proposed legislation, if passed, will ensure that we deliver these priority projects better and faster.

As you've just heard, the proposed Building Transit Faster Act targets processes that are most likely to delay a project such as utility relocation, municipal permitting, land assembly, corridor control and others. We're aiming to streamline timelines and redundant steps throughout the process, while still respecting property rights and maintaining high safety and environmental standards. This region has waited far too long for government to invest in transit infrastructure that serves the needs of commuters today and in the future.

Madam Speaker, in my time as the associate minister and as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation preceding that, I've had the opportunity to speak to countless people from across the GTA and beyond. Overwhelmingly, what I hear is that people are frustrated with the state of our transportation system. They are simply fed up. And I agree. I understand the frustration that they are feeling.

Our plan for GTA transit expansion is an ambitious one, but our residents need and deserve our ambition. We must deliver this now.

The new partnership between the province and the city of Toronto, which has been approved by Toronto city council, will allow us to move forward quickly with the priority transit projects that we have agreed need to be built. Our partnership with York region is critical as well.

And I want to assure the members opposite that the elements of our plan are about streamlining processes, not compromising any standards, and they relate only to our four key priority transit projects.

Our government is committed to eliminating the roadblocks that cause delays under the existing processes, while maintaining a "collaboration first" approach. We will continue to engage with our municipal partners,

including the city of Toronto and York region, to prevent delays. We are also committed to meaningful engagement with Indigenous and local communities as we move forward with these projects.

These processes are already under way. Metrolinx has started hold, and will continue to hold, community open houses as a chance for communities to learn more and share their feedback on our subway plan. Metrolinx will also establish local offices in the community to serve people and businesses impacted by the ongoing subway construction. By maintaining a healthy dialogue and engaging in relationship-building, we can better serve the needs of the communities that will be impacted by construction along the transit corridors.

As Ontario's Associate Minister of Transportation, my focus is on the GTA and delivering on our government's promise to improve our transportation network to better serve families, commuters and businesses. Here in the GTA, as Minister Mulroney has already mentioned, congestion is a serious problem. Travel times are increasing, taking away time that could be spent with family and friends. The time to build is now.

Not only must we catch up on years of Liberal inaction and delays, we must prepare for the needs of our future generations at a time when our region's population continues to grow.

As we've already heard, the solutions we're proposing today could have saved three years on the delivery of the Eglinton Crosstown, Madam Speaker—three years. Had the Liberals stepped up to the plate, as our government is doing, the Eglinton Crosstown would be in operation today.

Imagine what three years would mean to the people who live and work around Eglinton, to the folks who have businesses along Eglinton. I'm sure many of those people feel like the Crosstown has been under construction forever, and the frustrations are only growing as we've learned the project is now tracking for completion in 2022. The delays in completing this critical piece of transit infrastructure continue to impact local communities and businesses, not to mention all of the drivers who have been detouring around construction and finding alternate routes for years. Commutes are taking longer and the local businesses are suffering.

I think people understand that building major infrastructure projects can be disruptive. What would be equally harmful is not taking the opportunity to build transit faster. That is what this bill is about. Think about how much time, money and stress would have been saved if the project was already done—instead of 2022.

Ask anyone who rides the TTC to work each day and I'm sure they would agree that our transit network is long past due for significant upgrades.

I'm proud that we're working to build a world-class transportation network, where new transit is built faster and at a lower cost, getting people where they want to go when they want to get there.

Our plan to build transit faster, if passed, will provide reliable connections and complete travel experiences

sooner to support healthy and sustainable communities. We are being practical and sensible as we work to get shovels in the ground sooner. Cutting down the time it takes to build transit means a lot to the communities where the new infrastructure will be built.

Minister Mulroney said it, and I agree: Toronto is a world-class city, except when it comes to our transit network. When you compare Toronto's rapid transit network to other major cities, it is shocking: Tokyo has 285 subway stations; Madrid has 302; Chicago has 145; and Toronto only has 75.

World-class cities and world-class regions should have world-class transit and transportation networks. That's what people need, and that's what they deserve, and under our government, finally, it is happening.

We're transforming this region's antiquated transit system into a modern, integrated rapid transit network that will make life easier for people by reducing travel times and offering more options. After years of discussion, we finally have one single unified plan for subway expansion in Toronto. I can't tell you how long I've waited for that news.

I'm proud that our government is committed to building a world-class transit network that will be an attractive, affordable and low-stress alternative for Ontario workers and families.

We will deliver the largest subway expansion in Canadian history, increasing the length of the current system by 50%. That's major relief for commuters across the region. Our signature project, the Ontario Line, a brand-new 15.5-kilometre line, will double the length of the previously proposed downtown relief line. The Ontario Line will help reduce auto-generated greenhouse gas emissions and will carry approximately 389,000 riders daily by 2041. It will connect Exhibition Place and Ontario Place to the Ontario Science Centre, bringing transit to underserved communities like Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park. The Ontario Line will also reduce overcrowding significantly at the Union, Eglinton and Bloor-Yonge interchanges; it will provide critical relief for Line 1 and Line 2; it will provide important connections to the GO rail network; and it will take more cars off the road and reduce vehicle congestion.

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This new line will also put 154,000 people within a 10-minute walk of rapid transit, and would shorten commute times drastically for thousands. It would cut the travel time between Thorncliffe Park and downtown Toronto by 16 minutes, as one example. For someone living in Thorncliffe Park and working downtown, that saves you approximately 35 minutes every single day.

The Yonge North subway extension, stretching from Finch Station to Richmond Hill Centre, will provide a much-needed and long-awaited rapid transit connection to York region. It will mean direct subway access into the downtown core for thousands of commuters, and it will open up new destinations in York region for Toronto subway riders.

Of course, Etobicoke neighbourhoods will enjoy increased transit access with the Eglinton Crosstown West

extension, which will also enable future expansion to Toronto Pearson International Airport, which is an enormously important economic hub, not just for the GTA, but for the entire province. Finally, our city is within reach of a subway system that directly connects to an international airport, a real benchmark of a world-class city.

Scarborough residents will finally get their three-stop Scarborough subway extension, one that they have waited so long for. Scarborough deserves the same level of transit as the rest of Toronto, and we are delivering it. A functioning, efficient and well-planned transportation system is vital to the region.

As you heard from Minister Mulroney earlier, our plan is about more than just building transit. It is also about building it quickly and efficiently, in new and different ways, so that future generations won't be burdened with the congestion that plagues our region today.

The time to build is now. We simply can't afford to wait any longer. This legislation and our overall approach will get transit built faster and cheaper.

We're making smart and sensible improvements to the level of service offered by the region's existing transit network. The people of Ontario need and deserve more from their government, especially when it comes to building more transit infrastructure for the greater Toronto area. If we're going to meet the challenges on the road ahead successfully, we must work together and equip ourselves with the tools we need to get the job done right. The measures in our proposed Building Transit Faster Act, if passed, will allow us to move forward quickly on our priority transit projects.

When I go door-knocking in my riding each week, in Etobicoke Centre, I hear from my residents that they are struggling. Congestion in the region is unbearable, and many of them have challenges when they don't have a car to get around not only the riding but the city. Every minute we spend in congestion on our roads or waiting for transit is a minute away from our families and what is most important.

Just recently, I commuted with my resident Oksana to learn about her struggle. Oksana is a pregnant mother of two, with another one on the way. Both Oksana and her husband have full-time jobs and a busy life outside of work.

As we drove along Eglinton Avenue in bumper-to-bumper traffic, with her kids sitting patiently in the back seat, the journey reminded me of the incredible opportunity we have as legislators to make a real impact on people's lives.

The Building Transit Faster Act, if passed, will help us get shovels in the ground and deliver real relief for people like Oksana and her family, so they can take a subway to where they need to go or they can drive with fewer cars on the road.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you, Dave.

It will make a real impact on the lives of real people. That is why this government was elected and why we are so committed to delivering real transportation relief in the

region and across this province. I am truly passionate about connecting the people and communities of our great province.

I look forward to continuing to advocate for the transit needs of the people of the GTA. I thank Premier Ford for his vision, his leadership and his tireless commitment to getting the job done. I would also like to thank Minister Mulroney for continuing to champion the urgently needed investments in this region's transit infrastructure. I am so proud to be a part of a government that is working hard and that will finally build subways in the city of Toronto and in the region.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was obviously listening very closely because transportation is such an economic driver and very much related to my own critic portfolio. What I didn't hear—and this is a question to the Minister of Transportation—the Auditor General had made some recommendations about Metrolinx in her last report. She specifically called into question how Metrolinx has their priorities and that sometimes those do not align with the city of Toronto or with the province.

How is the government going to navigate these very complex relationships given the auditor's finding that Metrolinx sometimes had their own agenda that ran counter to the province and the city?

Also to the Minister of Transportation on the streamlining of land acquisition and land expropriation: Actions speak louder than words and even than legislation. How are you going to make that up to the good people of Hamilton when they spent \$110 million on expropriation?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for the question.

I think it's clear that our government has a new approach to building transit. We proposed an ambitious plan with four priority projects that will relieve congestion across the region and get people moving.

We're also, as part of this legislation, proposing real ways to actually get shovels in the ground sooner. We've done so in a bold way, but we've also done so in a collaborative way. Our plan involves, and at its foundation is, a partnership between the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario, with the full support of the federal government. This is unprecedented, and Metrolinx, which obviously is overseen by the province, is part of that plan, making sure that all levels of government and all government agencies are working co-operatively towards that same shared goal. Madam Speaker, that is how we're going to get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mrs. Gila Martow: The people of my riding of Thornhill have been promised for 30 years work on expansion of the Yonge subway and are anxiously waiting for the shovels to go in the ground. I would ask the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation and even the PA for transportation if they would like to come to my riding of Thornhill to talk to the actual people of Thornhill and assure them that, yes, shovels are going in the ground soon.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member for the question. As I was explaining to the member opposite, collaboration with the city of Toronto is at the foundation of our plan and, we believe, to its success.

We've also been working very closely with our partners in York region to deliver the Yonge North subway extension that has been long sought and long awaited. We truly believe that working closely with our partners back and forth and discussing how we're going to get shovels in the ground is how we're going to be able to meet the timelines that we've set, but also provide the kind of transit that reflects the needs of the local communities, because that's what we're committed to doing. We're not working here just at Queen's Park; we are working with our city partners and with our partners at the region, and we're going to continue to engage with our regional partners as we move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. One thing I noticed in the legislation was the issue of no guaranteed compensation to municipalities if you take over a municipal asset. The reason why this could be important is that when we're talking about the Eglinton Crosstown, the TTC has had to pay an estimated \$50 million to \$60 million to provide augmented bus service because of the delays in the construction. They have been talking to Metrolinx, who promised them that they would receive compensation for that, and Metrolinx has not been forthcoming with that funding. Now we see with this legislation that there is no commitment to compensation for costs at all. Why is there no compensation for costs to municipalities in this legislation?

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Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for the question.

As I've said, we are working very closely with city staff at the city of Toronto to identify measures that are essential to being able to accelerate the delivery of transit. One of the major roadblocks that our partners have all identified is in working with the city when it comes to getting rights-of-way on roads—and to use municipal services. That's why it's essential that we, through this legislation, provide an opportunity for a way to remove that roadblock.

But we are committed to working closely with the city, and that's why this measure is proposed as a backstop. We intend, first and foremost, to work closely with the city so that we can meet our shared goals and find a way to deliver on our transit priorities in a way that reflects the city's needs as well as the province's needs. Madam Speaker, in many cases with the legislation, negotiation is our first approach, and a lot of these measures are intended as a backstop.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to the minister for her speech.

In my riding of Barrie–Innisfil, over 80% of people in Innisfil commute to get to work. Many of those individuals

go to the Vaughan subway, and then from there they take other subway lines to get to work, but they're limited.

The first thing I heard from many constituents when you first announced the transit plan was the fact that it's actually going to create jobs locally for people in my riding.

So I was wondering if the minister could tell us how this plan is going to not just work for the GTA, but all of Ontario.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, thank you very much to the member for the question. Obviously, finding ways to relieve congestion, as I've discussed many times in this House, is a way to increase economic activity. But in my own riding in York region, 50% of the people commute out of York region for work, so it's essential that in order to create those opportunities to improve their quality of life and create more opportunities—we need to relieve congestion.

But the transit lines that we are proposing, on their own, are going to create employment opportunities for people across the region. In order to get shovels in the ground, we're going to need people to actually put those shovels in the ground. That's where we'll be working closely with the Minister of Labour on a lot of his work to make sure that we have people who have the training and the skills needed so that we can deliver on those projects.

We are going to be creating opportunities by building these subway projects and by also creating connections that don't exist currently. The Ontario Line, which is double the size of the previously proposed downtown relief line, will also create connections in regions, in the neighbourhoods of Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park, and give those residents opportunities—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is back to the Minister of Transportation. You didn't answer my question around the compensation piece for municipalities.

One of the reasons why this legislation is being introduced is to make it easier to have P3s move forward with building these new transit projects. And on that issue of P3s, the Crosstown was paid \$237 million more to deliver a project on time and on budget, and now we know that this company will be delivering its project late. Is this government going to be asking for the \$100 million in a premium that it gave this company to deliver the project on time?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As I've said many times, obviously this legacy project that began many years ago under the previous Liberal government has been delayed. It was announced by Metrolinx that it will not be able to open on time. Instead, it will be opening well into 2022, and this is incredibly frustrating.

But many of the reasons for the delays are the motivation for this legislation that we're bringing forward. The P3 model itself is the way to deliver complex transit projects that carry with them a great amount of risk. With respect to the Eglinton Crosstown, the public-private sector proponent will be bearing the cost of those delays, and that is part of the Eglinton Crosstown project.

Madam Speaker, we are committed to not repeating the mistakes of the past that the Liberals brought in in the transit projects that they proposed, which is why it's so essential that we pass the Building Transit Faster Act, so that we can deliver the transit people in the GTA need and deserve, on time and on budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: To the minister: Minister, I've been coming to this city for many years, either on business or with just my car, and it keeps getting worse. The amount of cars on the road just keeps getting worse all the time. To get out of the city to go home on Thursday night is an adventure a lot of the time.

I know that businesses, when they decide to do something, put the permits in order and get it done. That's the way business works; that's the way our farming community works. So why is it taking so long to make real progress in getting public transit built in the GTA?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The minister for a very quick response.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I want to thank the member for the excellent question.

I think the ways of the past have not worked. That's why it's important that, as part of our transit plan, we provide a new way forward to build transit faster.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for the comments and speeches made by the Associate Minister for Transportation and the Minister of Transportation.

Before I talk about the act itself, I do have a few comments about the Minister of Transportation's presentation. One is on the genuine issue of overcrowding, and the need to relieve gridlock in the GTHA. There's no question that that needs to happen, and it's good to hear that this government also sees it as a priority.

It's also important to remember that if this government wanted to reduce overcrowding and relieve gridlock in the near term, they would invest in municipal transit agencies across the GTHA and beyond, instead of cutting the gas tax increase. They would properly fund Metrolinx's operating budget, so we could stop the fare hikes that, starting on March 31, all GO riders who also use the TTC will be experiencing. They would reverse the bus cuts that we are seeing from Milton to Durham, which are forcing commuters in that region to turn to their cars instead. If you are looking at improving transit in the near term, that is the way to do it.

The second piece that I just want to address, before I go into my comments on this bill, is the notion that the city of Toronto is being adequately consulted and that the province is working in collaboration with the city of Toronto. We just need to put that in perspective for a minute.

The province stole the right to plan subways from the city of Toronto. The province got the city's agreement to support these four priority projects on the condition that they wouldn't steal the rest of the subway. They also got it under the condition that the city of Toronto wouldn't

have to spend a cent on any of these new four priority projects, even though, when this first announcement was made, the province wanted the city to contribute their fair share. So, this government has paid a big price in order to get the city of Toronto's support, and it's important to put that in perspective.

It's also good to hear the Minister of Transportation admit that all parties in Ontario have contributed to the delaying of transit construction. When the Minister of Transportation was saying that, the first thought that came into my head was what the Harris government did when they filled in the subway hole at the Eglinton West site, because if the Harris government had not done that, we would have had an Eglinton Crosstown decades ago.

Now I want to go into the bill itself, the Building Transit Faster Act.

The purpose of this act, as it stated, is to speed up transit construction for the Scarborough subway extension to Sheppard, the Yonge line extension to Richmond Hill, the Ontario Line, and the Eglinton West extension as well.

What I intend to do today is summarize some of the key parts of the bill, as we see it, and then also move to this larger issue of what is the best way to improve transit and speed up construction.

I want to start off by saying that the need for transit in the GTHA is certainly real. I certainly agree with the Ontario government and the Minister of Transportation about the issue itself. Investing in transit and speeding up construction is of course something in principle that we support, and increasing ridership—which construction done right, should do—helps tackle our environmental crisis.

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There are many reasons why we would want to invest in transit. There's no doubt that poor transit has significant environmental consequences. Even today, transportation is one of the biggest contributors to the climate crisis. Transit congestion also has significant economic consequences, as the Minister of Transportation pointed out. Up to \$11 billion is lost each year in productivity because we're stuck on the 401 or we're stuck on the TTC because it has been delayed again. That's a big problem.

It's also the unfortunate reality that the GTHA has some of the longest commute times in North America. For a world-class city, that's nothing to be proud of. What is also concerning is that the trajectory is not improving, despite all the talk. Ridership overall continues to be stagnant. The latest research has shown that the amount of greenhouse gas emissions per person in our region is actually on the increase. People are driving more and they're driving further.

That speaks to a lot of failures on our behalf. It's a failure in transportation planning and investment in transit. It's a failure of governments to properly regulate our housing market so that homes are affordable where people work and play and they're not motivated to buy further and further or rent further and further out. It's a failure in urban planning, because it's forcing us to rely on personal automobiles in the first place, and it has contributed to this

overall sense of frustration and anger and disbelief at the failure of governments time and time and time again to not get it right and build transit.

Something needs to be done. The question is, will this bill do it?

I want to move to some of the key elements of the bill to see if the bill meets this claim that it will speed up transit approval and construction, and if it does, then what are the consequences of that?

There are numerous pieces of the bill. One that we've had a lot of comments on in my riding and across Toronto is this issue around expropriations. What this bill proposes to do is eliminate the right to a hearing of necessity. Now, what is a hearing of necessity? Essentially, if a government wants to take your land, the owner of the land has the option to contest the decision in front of an officer, who decides if the expropriation is fair, sound and necessary. Then the officer reports to the ministry, and the ministry decides.

That seems like due process, which is important in a democracy. If you're someone who has built your life in a neighbourhood—your kids go to the local school; you've put years of renovations into the home; you know many of your neighbours—and the government comes forward and says, "We want to take your home," it seems fair to me that there is some fair due process that is set up to make sure that this expropriation is fair, sound and necessary. I can imagine that all of us, if our home was on the block, would expect this same right to due process.

I've had a lot of residents contact me in the Riverdale south and Booth Avenue area, where, for some of these residents, Metrolinx has put a hold on their home for many years because of the relief line, and they've been unable to sell and they've been unable to move because Metrolinx has wanted their home for expropriation. You cannot believe the anger they now feel when they're hearing that the plans could change and they don't know if their home is going to be expropriated or not or if they're going to get it back or if they're going to get compensation. It is a big deal. And when something is a big deal like this we should have a fair process, which includes a hearing of necessity. Because it does raise some questions, like what happens if the government's evaluation is too low? Or what happens if the government makes a mistake? They're good questions and they should be part of a process that, if the government uses its power to expropriate, those decisions should be fully thought through.

The second piece that we have some concerns over, or certainly some questions, is around this issue of the ministry—or the government—being able to take a municipal asset, like an intersection, in order to speed up transit construction. In theory, that might sound like, "Okay. Well, that makes sense. Transit is a real need, and we do need to build, so let's just take over that intersection, build the Eglinton Crosstown as quickly as we can, and get it done."

The logic here is that, clearly, the Ontario government wants to provide more certainty and less risk to private companies, who want a guarantee that they can build with

the timelines that the government and the company have set for themselves.

Here are some challenges that I urge this government to think through, as you're moving this legislation through committee. One is that when you speed up the pace of construction, there are consequences to that. What it means for locals is that the pain of construction moves, essentially, from being a very big headache to a never-ending migraine that never goes away. We see this with the Eglinton Crosstown.

One example that we heard a lot about in the news was the issue of Metrolinx wanting to close the Bathurst and Eglinton intersection for seven months, in order to facilitate the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown. For those of you who live downtown, the Bathurst and Eglinton intersection is a major intersection, and shutting it down for seven months is a very big deal. There was public outcry. Councillor Josh Matlow did get involved, along with residents, and a compromise was reached. Construction could continue, but a compromise was reached. That's important.

There is this argument that communities don't want construction and that's it. But that is not the case in the GTHA right now. Communities understand that construction has to happen. We're dealing with it all across the GTHA with the expansion of GO service. We have communities on Lakeshore East who are dealing with 24/7 construction because of the expansion of the GO tracks. Their kids don't sleep at night. They hear constant vibration. There's constant noise. There's very little consultation or announcement. We've got communities in the Davenport Diamond that negotiated with Metrolinx to get some kind of compromise, so that the overpass could be built but the community gets some kind of benefits as well.

The reason why I bring up these examples is not to say that construction is bad. It's not; it's good. The reason why I bring up these examples is because a balance needs to be had. There needs to be proper consultation, there need to be proper conversations, and there needs to be mitigation when it's reasonable.

When we give the power for a foreign company or a ministry to make decisions about shutting down the TTC, which is a municipal asset, or shutting off an intersection for months at a time, without any serious level of accountability, then the balance of the pendulum might be swinging too far in one direction. That is a concern, because communities should not be sacrifice zones. When we make legislation like this, it opens the door to that potentially happening.

I also spoke to some city of Toronto employees about what the impact of having municipal assets taken over by Metrolinx would actually mean, in terms of the day-to-day reality of the city of Toronto's operations.

This is from one employee. She did express concerns and said, "What happens if Metrolinx shuts down the TTC every weekend in order to complete the Yonge line extension?" This legislation allows you to do it." Then there were additional comments.

There are knock-on effects and financial consequences to these decisions that the municipality and local

communities will need to pay. If you shut down TTC service, which you might need to do if you're going to build the Yonge line extension, it means the TTC loses money. Who is going to pay the municipality for that lost revenue, or for these knock-on effects? Because as the legislation is written here, there is no requirement for Metrolinx or the contractor to pay compensation for the knock-on impacts that this will cause.

As I mentioned earlier, in my question, these impacts can be significant. When we look at the example of the Eglinton Crosstown, and the construction on the Eglinton Crosstown, because of the construction delays, it meant that it took longer for buses to run along the Eglinton Crosstown, so they had to run more buses to meet the service standard. The TTC estimates that they're out about \$50 million to \$60 million on that alone. That's \$50 million to \$60 million that Toronto taxpayers will now be paying or are currently paying, because at this point Metrolinx is refusing to pay that compensation like they said they would.

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It looks like that situation could get even worse if this legislation, as it is currently written, gets approved. I've got to say, it doesn't seem that fair that a company that is making a large profit can inflict the pain of construction on a neighbourhood and on a municipality, but it's the municipality and Toronto taxpayers that have to foot the bill. That is concerning, and I think that needs to be looked at a little further.

The third point of this bill that I'd like to address is the requirement that Metrolinx can force utilities to relocate assets. What that would mean is that the government could direct utilities—maybe Enbridge; maybe Bell—to move their sewage, water or telephone lines quickly so that transit construction can move ahead.

When I first read this, I thought, "Oh. Huh. Wow. Is that a problem?" And then I thought, "Maybe that could be good. This could be supportable." And maybe it is, because we don't want a situation where an intractable utility is refusing to move a sewage system in order for a transit construction project to be built.

Then I did some more digging. I spoke to some engineers and I spoke to people who deal with this regularly, and some new issues arose that I think are worth bringing into this House so that the legislation that we create is the best that it can be. I want to share some of the concerns that I've heard from some city officials who have had direct experience with utility management with the city of Toronto—which is the municipality that will likely be most affected—about what it would mean if Metrolinx had the right to move to the front of the queue when it comes to moving utilities.

This is what they had to say. They expressed concern about the power to force utilities to move their utilities and having it trump all other utility worker needs. And they mentioned that it would mean that other departments and agencies like the TTC or sewage and water or hydro will likely have to spend more money and delay their own work and experience more inconvenience because the priority projects would jump to the front of the queue.

For instance, the TTC has about \$11 billion in state-of-good-repair projects to complete over the next 10 years, including the maintenance of Line 1. These projects could be delayed because work on the priority projects takes precedence. The reality is this: The TTC can't handle more people on Line 1 unless state-of-good-repair on the current routes are completed on time. They just can't. And the issue—this person continues—of how utilities are moved and when is very, very complicated. Utilities include, like I said, sewage, TTC, bridges, water, telecommunication, roads etc. The city actually has a public utilities coordinating committee to deal with these competing needs and issues and to determine timelines and priorities.

That is a lot of fancy speak. But in my area, where I have to deal with Bloor Street being ripped up year in and year out because of a sewage issue or a water issue, from a practical point of view, I know why they're coordinating. This is why: Because if you're going to dig up a road, you want to make sure it only gets dug up once so that you can do multiple repairs and multiple upgrades at the same time and you can do it with a minimal amount of inconvenience. It could cost the city a tremendous amount of trouble if we would have to alter our timelines accordingly, and it could have a deleterious effect on the capital works program if the full-priority projects trump everything else. Essentially, the public loses the value of coordinating utility work.

I had never thought of that before.

There are consequences of this bill that I encourage this government to consider because it will have impacts on all the city building work and all the maintenance and all the repairs along these transit corridors that are important. Sewage is important. Telecommunications are important. The state-of-good-repair for the TTC is very, very important. And running roughshod has consequences that other municipalities and utilities and residents will have to bear. It needs to be done right and thoughtfully, and it needs to be done with collaboration.

The fourth point I want to address is around corridor control. I have less to say on this issue compared to the other ones around forcing utilities to relocate assets and taking over municipal assets. They do seem to be the bigger ones. But one issue that a few people have raised to me is around the issue of compensation. With section 12—this is when a partial expropriation or part of a building could be removed in order to move forward with a transit construction project—it seems like there's a lack of clarity around if compensation would be allowed if only part of a property was altered in some way. My request is to look at that issue to make sure compensation is broad enough to include those people as well.

The second piece, section 25, says that if anyone attempts to hinder the work of transit construction or freeing up the transit corridor they could lose the right to compensation. It does make sense to clarify what "hinder" actually means, because if someone goes to court to contest a wrong, does that mean that they lose their right to compensation? That seems pretty unfair to me, so that should be clarified as well.

The final piece I want to address before I go to some of the bigger issues is the concerns around speeding up the environmental assessment process. It's important to remember what the environmental assessment process actually assesses. It's not just to cater to the concerns of neighbours who live nearby who are concerned about how this project will impact their property values. It's far broader and more comprehensive than that. It looks at the impact of the project on air quality, noise, vibration, transportation services, roads, utilities, sewage, tree rights, lakes and rivers, health facilities and more. It's important. An EA—environmental assessment—must also provide recommendations for mitigation and must share them with the public. That's the purpose of an environmental assessment project.

The challenge I see with changing the environmental assessment process is that this legislation and the regulations that are accompanying it would essentially allow the environmental assessment process to happen at the same time as early construction. The challenge with that is it makes it a lot harder to mitigate issues if you've already started construction. It also takes the idea of a rubber stamp to a whole new level, because if you've already started construction, often it means that you've already locked yourself into a plan, especially if the construction is allowed to be things as significant as new stations and corridor development. That's a concern. It brings to mind the idea of "fire, aim, ready," which has been levelled at this government many times, and I think it also applies in this situation as well. Instead of "ready, aim, fire," where you plan well to build right, in this case you start building, you plan as you go, and maybe it will work out okay. I don't know if it's going to work out okay.

Then there's this issue: "Well, the reason why we're doing it is because the environmental assessment process takes such a long time and we're under these very harsh deadlines so we need to rush, rush, rush." Okay. The challenge, though, is that the current environmental assessment process for transit projects is already extremely short. It's already streamlined. It's very efficient; it's only six months. It's important to remember that the environmental assessments for three of these four lines have already been approved. So to say that the environmental assessment process is delaying the construction of these lines is simply not true.

When I read these changes and I read the power that it gives Metrolinx, it brings to mind the overall attitude of this government towards the people of Toronto, and what it's trying to say. I think it's important to remember that people in Toronto are not the enemy. People who live in South Riverdale or Davenport or in some of these areas that are experiencing the pain of construction are not the enemy. The city of Toronto is not the enemy. Introducing legislation that takes power away from individual homeowners, to the city of Toronto, has a level of condescension and arrogance which I have a lot of concerns about, because I think that if we want to build good transit projects, it needs to be done with true collaboration and respect.

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Now that I've talked a little bit about some of the concerns that I have around elements of the bill, I want to get to this larger question: If we want to truly speed up transit, improve people's commutes and speed up transit construction, what are some more effective ways to do that? Because if we really want to get sensible transit built, the reality is that it's not the construction process and it's not the environmental assessment process that are holding us back.

I have spoken to academics who specialize in looking at transit construction in Ontario and around the world. They were very clear to point out to me that on an international scale, Ontario is actually pretty good. Once we've decided on the project, and the funding is in place, we're pretty good at building transit fairly quickly, compared to other western regions around the world. In fact, that's not Ontario's issue.

The real issue that has led to many of the transit construction delays, and the huge level of frustration that people from Scarborough to Etobicoke especially feel, is political and financial. That's the real issue here.

What we are seeing, and what has led to many of these delays, is that governments change their minds. They rip up a transit project that is already in the works.

The second reason why transit construction projects don't get built in the GTHA is because governments don't want to cough up the money to build these projects in the first place. They want to win elections, and promise to build new transit, but they don't want to pay. That's the reason why we're not getting transit built in this region.

This government has changed its mind. This government has thought that the relief line is not good enough, and that the Ontario Line is a better idea. Okay, but it has led to delays; there's no question about it.

I want to give some examples of projects that are in the works, and look at what has led to them being delayed. The first one I'd like to talk about is the relief line.

For the relief line, the environmental assessment process was approved in 2018, so it was ready to go, shovel-ready for 2020. We could have shovels in the ground right now if we were wanting to be serious about transit. It was identified as a need in 1900, so we've been waiting a while. Work finally began on it in a serious way in 2016, when the provincial government actually coughed up \$150 million to do the planning. That's when the idea on a map was turned into an actual planning process: when the money appeared.

There were two years of city consultation with the community; the city led it. A route was chosen. The community has accepted it. Expropriations have been identified. The project is at 15% design. All three levels of government supported it. The environmental assessment process was approved by the Minister of the Environment in 2018. It was ready to go.

And then, at the eleventh hour, the Premier, in secret, in three months, threw those plans in the bin and, with one consultant, came up with an entirely new Ontario Line plan.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No way.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes. Now we're in a situation where they're shaking their heads and saying "Oh, other governments are the reason why transit projects are being delayed." No, no, no. You changed your mind—and when governments change their minds, this is what happens.

So now we're in a situation where there is no defined route. Even Metrolinx is saying there's no defined route. They have a map, but when you actually ask Metrolinx, "Okay, what is the route?"; they don't know. They haven't decided. There is no EA process.

The project is contentious. With the relief line, people who were going to lose their homes, people who were going to be near construction, had made peace with the relief line, because the consultation was done well. In this situation, residents are organizing on the Ontario Line route.

I experienced this anger at a town hall at the Ralph Thornton centre a few months ago, where over 150 people attended. People were furious. They are furious at Metrolinx and they are furious at this government for ripping up a plan that they'd made peace with, for something that they knew nothing about.

That's a problem. If you don't have community support in an area that stands to benefit the most—the most—from the relief line and you don't have their support, that's a problem.

Then there's this issue around different levels of government and whether they have the support. So the federal government, at this point, hasn't coughed up any money for the plan, so you don't necessarily have their support. The city of Toronto: You have their support. Okay. They voted to support it. But they now don't have to contribute any money to any of these lines. So you've said to them, "Okay. I know, but can you just support it? You don't have to pay any money for it." And you agreed to not upload the rest of the subway system. So I've said this before: The city of Toronto had a gun to their head. You offered them a very nice deal where now they don't have to pay any money towards this project, even though you really wanted them to, and so they're supporting it. In my perspective, the city got the deal of the century, and this government—this government—is left holding the bag.

So now the cost of this project is on you. You've got communities pissed off or annoyed, you have no EA, you've got no route and you haven't even started yet. That's a problem. So when you're talking about delays, it's not about the environmental assessment process being a little quicker; it's that you've pressed the reset button on something that was ready to go.

Another example that I would like to draw attention to is the Eglinton Crosstown. Just to point out this larger issue that the construction process is not the reason we have delays, it's this issue of a lack of funding and a lack of commitment. So with the Eglinton Crosstown, we have heard this minister say that the Eglinton Crosstown could have been built three years earlier if the changes in this legislation had already been approved a few years back—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Who said that?

Ms. Jessica Bell: The Minister of Transportation.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: What's the evidence for that?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes. I would love to see the evidence of that, and if I'd had more time in the question and comment period, that would have been my next question to ask the minister, because that is not what other people are saying right now.

It's also important to remember that the consortium was paid an extra \$237 million to finish the project on time, and they're late. Even though they were paid a premium at the start to finish on time, and then they were paid \$237 million extra to finish on time, but—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: But they're late.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The cost is on us.

So the jury is out on whether it's true or not that the project could have been finished three years more quickly, and I'm looking forward to seeing the evidence from the minister about how this government came up with that timeline.

But it's important to step back and look at that bigger picture of why exactly has it taken so long for the Eglinton Crosstown to be built. The first thing that comes to mind is that example of Premier Harris filling in the Eglinton subway tunnel in 1995. The Eglinton Crosstown could have been built decades ago if a government had stuck to the plan, put up the money and built the line, but they didn't. Instead, they filled in a subway hole—just like the Hamilton LRT has been cancelled, just like the Mississauga loop for the Hurontario LRT has been cancelled: You changed your mind.

So then what happened is the Liberal government took over and delayed funding, shrunk the plan and then delayed construction for the Eglinton LRT, which the city of Toronto wanted. So the original plan was to have a line from Pearson airport to Kennedy station—33 kilometres, 41 stops—by 2016. That was the plan that the city of Toronto had. Then the Liberal government changed it. Now, we're getting a plan that is much shorter. It's very good that it's being built, but we're getting a transit plan that's much shorter. So it's important to put that in perspective when we're looking at what impact these construction pieces of legislation would have when we look at the overall picture, because that's the reason we're waiting.

The final example I would like to give is the example of Transit City. I'm sure some of you remember Transit City. So in Transit City, under Mayor Miller, the city had a plan to build numerous light rail plans all across the city:

—the Eglinton, from Pearson to Kennedy, as I mentioned, which would have been built by now;

—the Sheppard extension, which would have been built by 2014;

—the Finch West extension, which, if we'd stuck to our plans, would have been built in 2019;

—the Eglinton East extension, which would have serviced the University of Toronto Scarborough; and

—the waterfront LRT, which would have serviced the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore's area, and all the areas in between to downtown Toronto.

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That would have been the plan. If all levels of government had stuck to that and funded it like they would have, we would have had that already built by now in the city of Toronto.

But two things happened. Number 1, the Liberal government cut funding to that plan and delayed it; number 2, Rob Ford got elected and he threw those plans in the bin. He came up with a new map and a new slogan: "Subways, subways, subways." That's what happened. I was there. Over those four years in the city of Toronto, the former mayor put no funding into transit, and he changed his mind on what should be built. As a result, for four years nothing in the city of Toronto got built. That's the reason why we don't have those transit plans and why we don't have the transit today. It feels like history is repeating itself right now.

I want to get to the larger issue around the purpose behind Bill 171 and the idea of why we want to build transit now. The reason why we want to build transit is because we want to get people out of their cars and onto public transit. That's our goal, right? That's why we're building these transit construction projects; that's why we want to build them quickly. That's the motivation for why this government is building and it's the motivation behind Bill 171. But I think it's also important to take a step back and consider all the other things that we can do along the way to improve public transit, increase ridership and encourage people to leave their cars at home. It's not just about building transit quickly, although we certainly support it.

If this government wants to achieve the goals of this bill, to increase ridership and encourage people to leave their cars at home, then this government needs to stop taking the steps that it's taking to harm transit riders. I want to go through a few.

Last year, the Ontario government cut Metrolinx's operating subsidy by 36%. When you cut an operating subsidy of a transit agency by 36%, it affects riders in a very real way. We're seeing the impacts of that all across our region. It has led to a reduction in bus service on many key routes that commuters take—commuters who have contacted me and talked about how they now have to take their car instead. That includes buses in Milton, Durham, Cambridge and Bolton. So even though this government is talking about building new transit lines, at the same time they're cutting service that already exists and they're hurting people who have made that decision to take public transit and encouraging them to take another method instead. I don't think that is a good move forward for the region.

As a result of the operating subsidy cut, we are also seeing significant fare hikes that are coming down the pipe. Starting March 31, Metrolinx will be eliminating the GO-TTC \$1.50 discount double fare program. What that means is that if you take GO from Bowmanville, Pickering, Malton, Brampton or Kitchener and you go downtown to Union Station and then you transfer to the TTC, you get a \$1.50 discount each way—\$3 a day, and it

works out to be about \$720 a year. The whole purpose of that is to do exactly what Bill 171 intends to do: It encourages people to leave their car at home and to take public transit instead. But because of these cuts, that discount double fare program will be eliminated on March 31. It means that the many GO riders all across our region are going to be facing a \$720-a-year fare increase. What that means is that some people will say, “This transit riding business is too much for me. I’m going to take my car instead,” and it will turn Highway 401 into more of a parking lot than what it already is. That’s not where we want to go.

It has also created a situation at York University which I really do think is worth mentioning, because I know that there have been numerous members across the aisle who have contacted me about this issue because it affects residents in their riding. The issue is this: Students used to take the GO bus directly to campus, but because of the new Line 1 extension, they now get dropped off at the Highway 407 TTC stop and they have to pay an extra fare to take a one-kilometre subway ride into York University. So before, they just had to take one transit ride; now they have to take two and pay more, which doesn’t make sense. Now, because of the Metrolinx cuts, they’re going to be paying an extra \$3 more a day. That’s a problem.

If this government wants to encourage ridership, then you need to make it fast, efficient and reliable. Making decisions where people have to transfer on public transit when they didn’t have to before, and making people pay \$720 a year more—it undercuts the purpose of this bill. I encourage you to look at that.

Another thing that I think is especially concerning that I’ve seen this government do, which undercuts the purpose of Bill 171, is that you’ve cut gas tax funding to municipal transit agencies. When the Ontario government was running in the 2018 election, they promised to keep the Liberal government’s commitment to increase gas tax funding to municipal transit agencies—107 municipal transit agencies all across Ontario—and that was a good decision. The reason why it was a good decision is because it meant that fares could be kept more affordable, more buses could be built, and a state of good repair and maintenance could be done on transit agencies everywhere, from London to Barrie to Sudbury to Toronto to York.

When we look at what best increases ridership, maintaining and improving local municipal services is one of the best ways to do it. But this government decided to cancel that plan, and it’s caused a lot of transit agencies to make very tough decisions which are having a real impact on transit riders all across the region. We’re seeing big fare hikes in London, we’re seeing the state of good repair in Toronto being delayed, and we’re seeing agencies that aren’t York and Toronto—in Malton and Brampton—having to make some tough decisions about what they’re going to do now that they don’t have that gas tax funding. That’s a problem.

What’s also a concern is that right now, the gas tax is under review. We have transit agencies contacting me

saying, “Look, Jess, we thought the gas tax allocation was coming. We have been spending revenue over the last 10 months assuming that that gas tax money is coming, and it still hasn’t come.” They’re now 10 months into the hole, hoping that this Ontario government is going to honour its new lower commitment to provide them with critical funding.

I urge you to do that. The reason why I urge this government to do that is because it will have a significant effect in the near term on your constituents, and it would achieve the goal that you so desperately want by building these transit construction projects quickly. It will achieve that goal in 2020. It will improve the commutes across our region in 2020. But that’s not what I’m seeing this government do, and it’s a real concern, because it is the single best way to increase service and make fares more affordable. It will reduce the last-mile problem that we’re seeing near GO stations all across the region and it will dramatically increase service all across municipalities.

To conclude, if this government wants to improve transit, that’s the way to do it. If you want to build transit—and we fully support your plan to build transit; we support the idea of wanting to build transit—it needs to be done right. That means giving communities due process. It means working in collaboration with municipalities so that their needs are considered. It means doing proper utility coordination so that good city planning can be done all across the board. It means doing a proper environmental assessment process so that you plan well in order to build right. And it means keeping transit public, because when you use P3s, quite frankly, it leads to the situations that we’re seeing in Ottawa and it leads to the significant cost overruns that we’re seeing with the Eglinton Crosstown, where the company has paid a premium to build the project, but when it comes to taking on the risk, residents find that, time and time again, they’re the ones taking on the risk.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Questions for the member for University–Rosedale?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Can the member from University–Rosedale—and thank you very much for your presentation—tell us what the NDP’s plan is to solve the congestion crisis in the greater Toronto area?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that excellent question. First and foremost, the most important thing that needs to be done is for the Ontario government to match municipalities’ funding contributions to transit agencies. Because if we do that, it means that every single transit agency, the 107 transit agencies across Ontario, would see an immediate increase in funding, which would allow them to do a few key things, such as dramatically increase service on all routes all across the region. When it comes to the TTC, we could see a 20% increase in service on every route in the city of Toronto if we did that.

It would allow cities to keep basic states of good repair, so that there are less delays and breakdowns. It would allow for more fare affordability, so that people are financially incentivized to leave their car at home and take public transit to work. It is very simple; it works.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would like to commend the member from University–Rosedale for your wonderful presentation. I learned a lot today, so thank you for sharing your expertise with us here today.

I am the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. We had a transit project, the LRT, that was being planned for many, many years, and that was just ripped away from the city without any explanation, without real numbers, without any further plan. Everything seems to be happening in secret. I would say that, as you said, exactly the wrong way to build transit across municipalities is to do things like that.

So my question for you is, can you please talk—when you’ve already had this engagement around the relief line—about how residents are going to feel, and whether they have confidence in this government to do what’s right for the municipalities, when we see across the province that they just unilaterally rip projects away from communities?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that question. We have been talking with residents across the Danforth riding—Riverdale South, the Booth Avenue area. Many of them are very concerned about the impact of this new project, and they’re very concerned that the relief line has been cancelled, because they’ve just gone through a two-year process and agreed to a project that they could see a lot of benefit from. When they see a government rip up a plan which is already in the works, and replace it with something that they know very little about, there is a loss of trust.

What is important, when we build transit projects, is that we have the trust of communities, and that we have the support of all levels of government, so that we can plan well and build right for the entire community. So they are concerned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: As we’ve just heard, there was a reference to a project that is no longer going forward in my city of Hamilton. The member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas referenced that this is going to be cancelled. I’m very pleased that we are going to be keeping the money in the city of Hamilton. The city of Hamilton has a billion dollars; it’s unprecedented. I think that the people of Hamilton are embracing the fact that the city of Hamilton now has a billion dollars to build transit, as we move forward in 2020.

The member mentioned that this was done without any real due process. As the member opposite realizes, the cost of this project had ballooned to in excess of \$5 billion, and \$3.7 billion was the cost of building the LRT in Hamilton. It had initially come in, under the previous government, allegedly at \$1 billion, but when we actually looked at the project, it was \$3.7 billion—simply unsustainable, for a 14-kilometre stretch of LRT that people in the city of Hamilton did not want—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you. The member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I can speak a little bit more about the Hamilton LRT issue. There are a few points to consider. One is that Hamilton city council did agree to the Hamilton LRT process. When governments decide to override a municipality and change their minds, it can cause a lack of trust.

In addition, we do have a lot of concerns around how this Ontario government is arguing that the costs have ballooned, because it seems like they’ve factored in the cost of maintenance and operation over a long period of time, which is not how you determine the cost of a project.

Finally, we do have a lot of concerns around the process that is being used to determine how the billion dollars will be spent in the city of Hamilton, because the decision-making process—the panel—is not transparent and it’s being done in secret.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to commend the member from University–Rosedale for her comments that she added to this.

There is no disputing the fact that here in Toronto we have some overcrowding, congestion, the longest commute hours and the impact that overcrowding is going to have on community travel, but also on the economy.

The one question that I do have for her is that there are some significant discussions that are happening and they’re happening very quickly. What are the negative impacts that these discussions—or the lack of discussions—are having where this government is planning to gut the environmental assessment process, and how are those concerns coming to you from your constituents?

Ms. Jessica Bell: That’s an excellent question. When you move forward on building a transit project you are looking at spending billions of dollars, and you want to make sure that it’s done right, because if you do it wrong you could have a situation like we have with the Union Pearson Express, where the Liberal government spent millions of dollars building a transit line that didn’t serve the needs of the community and cost \$27.50 to ride in the beginning. That’s what happens when you don’t listen to communities. That’s what happens when you don’t do proper planning and consultation. You spend millions of dollars on a project that could be so much better. We don’t want that to happen in this situation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Once I got elected and I came to this House, the very first opportunity and subsequent opportunities I had were to convey the messages of my constituents, which is one of the reasons I was always taking the opportunity to ask about transit, because the transit project to Richmond Hill had been previously promised to our community multiple times by the previous government, and once they got elected they forgot all about it.

But once our government got elected and the proposal was brought in, we were excited. All members of Richmond Hill—small-business owners, families, students—

were happy and excited about this. Then once the subsequent initiative with this bill—the Building Transit Faster Act—came in, we were even more excited because we're now able to build this transit faster for the people.

My question to my honourable colleague across is, tell us what the NDP's plan would be to solve the gridlock and the congestion in the GTA, please.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I did address this question earlier. The first thing we would do is ensure that the provincial government matches all municipal transit agencies' funding contributions because it would lead to immediate service improvements and fare reductions all across the region and across Ontario.

But this issue of the Yonge line extension—the Yonge line extension is something that the NDP supports. In addition, it's important to remember that the environmental assessment for the Yonge line extension was approved in 2009. The approvals process is not what is holding up the Yonge line extension. It's funding and flip-flopping. My hope is that this government does not do what the previous government did: promise a lot and then change its mind.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Any more questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you once again for the opportunity to ask a question. Can you just talk a little bit more about some of the comments? It's clear that the government side doesn't understand that cancellation of projects, changing their minds, creating projects on the back of a napkin at the eleventh hour is not how we're going to build transit. We support the idea that we need to build transit, but not in this manner. Can you speak a little bit to that?

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Ms. Jessica Bell: I've been working on transit for nearly 10 years now in the GTA, and I cannot tell you the number of times I have been to a press conference or read a news article about a new transit plan that is going to be bigger, faster, better than anything else—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you.

I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that on the ballot list draw of November 4, 2019, Ms. Kusendova assumes ballot item number 6 and Mr. Kanapathi assumes ballot item number 10.

Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I'm very pleased to be here today to talk about our proposed legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act. I'm proud to be part of a government that is taking bold steps to improve our transportation network and is dedicated to connecting people to places right across the province.

As Ontario's parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I have had the opportunity to speak to people and organizations from all corners of Ontario. Just a few weeks ago, for example, I had the opportunity to do a four-day northern Ontario driving tour to discuss the

ways our government can get Ontario moving and keep our roads and highways safe. And everywhere I go, I hear people expressing their frustrations and concerns with the state of the current transportation system. People want to be able to get around more easily; they want more choices and more convenient transportation options. And I'm not referring only to northern communities. In my riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park, I regularly hear from unhappy commuters who live in an urban community with limited transit options to connect people with the places they need to go.

We need a safe and reliable transportation network that helps people travel easily within their communities but also provides seamless connections to large city centres and economic hubs. Our government understands that a safe, efficient and connected transportation network is the foundation of a healthy and prosperous province.

Madam Speaker, getting to your destination shouldn't leave you stressed or angry by the time you arrive. For too long, families, neighbours, commuters in my riding and right across the GTA have been stuck waiting for past governments to deliver transit options that address the productivity-killing congestion we face.

Those days are over. Since Premier Ford unveiled the historic GTA subway expansion plan last April, our government's foot has been on the gas. And the legislation that Minister Mulroney introduced, the Building Transit Faster Act, is proof that our government is done waiting. We are taking action. Our government is committed to building the world-class transportation network for the GTA that will boost economic growth, relieve congestion and get people to work and home to their loved ones faster.

Our government is building better public transit and transportation infrastructure, delivering faster service and putting people first by making public transit an attractive, affordable and low-stress alternative for individuals and families. We are making the single largest capital contribution to new subway builds and extensions in Ontario's history and creating a truly integrated regional transit plan. To do this, we are taking a new approach to the way we think about and deliver major transit projects. The old way of doing things led to costly delays again and again. Madam Speaker, it's time to look forward. We need to do things differently, and that is what this legislation is all about.

I'm pleased to say that, if passed, the Building Transit Faster Act will cut bureaucratic red tape and break down the roadblocks that have held up projects in the past. It will help us meet our ambitious timelines for our priority subway projects and deliver the transit network that people desperately need.

Our government has made cutting red tape a priority in everything we do, and this proposed legislation is a great example of how doing that can make a huge difference. By cutting red tape and redundant, outdated steps in the transit delivery process, we stand to save years in the delivery of our priority rapid transit projects while still respecting property rights and negotiating in good faith.

While we are determined to eliminate roadblocks that cause delays, we are also committed to maintaining a

“collaboration first” approach with our municipal partners and stakeholders. As Minister Mulroney has explained, there are six key challenges that this legislation and the supporting regional changes address:

- (1) limited flexibility for innovative solutions with the existing environmental approval processes;
- (2) the potential for adjacent construction to create safety concerns and delays;
- (3) no established process for municipal permits when collaborative efforts are unsuccessful;
- (4) no streamlined process to enter lands to address encroachments or to conduct due diligence work;
- (5) the need for a structured, consistent process for engaging and coordinating work with utilities; and
- (6) timely access to the land needed to construct transit infrastructure.

Each one has held up major projects in the past and led to the type of delays we simply cannot afford any longer. For each one, we are proposing solutions that will help speed up the process while still treating people fairly.

The elements of our plan are about streamlining the process, not changing outcomes, and they relate only to our priority transit projects. These priority projects must be delivered quickly, and, if passed, this legislation will help get shovels in the ground faster.

These four projects are very exciting for people who live and work here in the GTA. We are delivering the largest subway expansion in Canadian history, increasing the length of the current system by over 50%, and, with new partnerships between the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto, we are delivering a unified plan to modernize and expand our subway network.

People need to get home to their families quicker, and everyone deserves to enjoy all the GTA has to offer. Our plan will help people get around more easily so they can spend less time travelling and more time doing the things they want.

I’m very proud to be part of a government that is investing in a historic \$28.5-billion subway expansion. Our subway plan, now endorsed by the province, Mayor Tory and city council, is realistic, attainable and deliverable. It will bring subway infrastructure to new neighbourhoods across Toronto, Markham and Richmond Hill, and it will make a huge difference in the lives of families and commuters all across the GTA.

The signature Ontario Line, delivered as early as 2027, will bring rapid transit to neighbourhoods such as Liberty Village and Flemingdon Park. It will stretch 15.5 kilometres, creating a new axis across the city centre, connected to the Osgoode, Queen and Pape subway stations, plus the future Eglinton Crosstown station at Don Mills. It will be double the length of the previous proposed downtown relief line. The Ontario Line will remove greenhouse gases and will carry approximately 389,000 riders daily by 2041.

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This new line will provide real relief. It will reduce dangerous overcrowding at some of the biggest and busiest stations on the network. For example, it will reduce

crowding on Line 1 by 14% and reduce crowding at Bloor-Yonge Station by 17%. The Ontario Line is also expected to put over 150,000 people within a 10-minute walk of rapid transit and shorten commute times drastically for thousands. For example, it will cut the travel time between Thorncliffe Park and downtown Toronto by 16 minutes. That’s over 30 minutes a day that commuters will save and have more time to spend with their loved ones.

The Yonge North extension delivered by 2029-30 will extend TTC’s Line 1 to major employment centres in Markham and Richmond Hill. It will stretch from Finch Station to Richmond Hill Centre and will provide much-needed rapid transit connecting to York region. Plus it will mean direct subway access into the downtown core for thousands of commuters and open up new destinations in York region for Toronto’s subway riders.

Etobicoke neighbourhoods will enjoy increased transit access with the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, which will also enable future expansion to Toronto Pearson International Airport. Finally, our city is within reach of a subway system that directly connects to an international airport, a real benchmark of a world-class city.

Finally, something that I’m particularly excited about, the Scarborough subway extension, delivered before 2029-30, will finally bring a long-awaited subway extension for the residents of Scarborough. For too long, Scarborough has been treated as second class when it comes to rapid transit. The people of Scarborough deserve a subway extension—and more than just one stop. Under our government, it’s happening.

Together, these projects will transform Toronto’s subway network into one that people can be proud of. That means more than just lines on a map; it means real, tangible benefits for people across the region. More subways and a more connected network mean people can get where they need to go faster and more reliably. Instead of riding on a crowded bus, thousands more people will be able to hop on a subway and get where they are going in minutes. That makes it easier and much less stressful to get to work on time, get to appointments and school.

Making transit more convenient and lower-stress means more people will choose it as an option every single day. These four projects will get thousands more people on transit and help reduce congestion on roads. That’s especially important when you consider the million-plus people who are expected to move to the GTA in the next decade. Less congestion means less time wasted sitting in traffic and fewer greenhouse gas emissions. It will cut down on the billions in lost productivity costs every year.

These projects will give thousands of people more direct access to rapid transit near their homes and workplaces. This will vastly improve the quality of life for the people who live and work in these areas. Plus, with connections to other subway lines, surface routes and the GO network, these projects will make getting around the region a much more seamless experience.

Madam Speaker, new neighbourhoods and destinations all over the city will be reachable by rapid transit,

including some of the city's premier tourist attractions, such as Exhibition Place and the Ontario Science Centre. That's great news for families. The people of Toronto will finally have a transit network they can be proud of. They will no longer be looking at other major cities and their networks with jealousy.

We know that it takes great transit to make a city great. Thousands of people across the city will be able to get to their jobs faster and more reliably, and thousands more will be able to walk out of a transit station and be at their workplace within a 10-minute walk.

The projects will create new job opportunities in neighbourhoods that are currently underserved by transit, and the new subway projects will generate billions in economic benefits. That is an incredible achievement, one that we can all be proud of.

Our plan to build transit faster, if passed, will provide reliable connections and complete travel experiences sooner, to support healthy and sustainable communities.

We are focused on building transit practically and reasonably, to get shovels in the ground. Cutting down the time it takes to build transit means so much for the communities where new infrastructure is being built. It reduces the strain on local businesses and residents that, unfortunately, comes along with major projects. Our plan is ambitious, but it is attainable. We'll make sure the new Ontario Line and the extensions are built quickly.

We'll continue to work with the city of Toronto and York region to meet our shared transit goals. We are also committed to meaningfully engaging with Indigenous communities and local communities as we move forward with these projects. Working together, we'll get our transit network built quicker, at less cost to taxpayers and benefiting the most people.

Bureaucratic red tape will not get in the way of building the subways Toronto needs. To get transit built quickly, we need to remove hurdles and create processes that work faster and better for people, creating jobs and bringing economic benefits for our communities.

We are putting people first. We are investing in transit and putting it on the front burner. We are going to build transit in record time, and we are going to do it in a way that benefits people most.

We are committed to delivering groundbreaking new ways of making the space around transit work for people, by building complete communities with transit-oriented development, because that has real benefits for real people.

The lack of reliable and accessible transit has created barriers for commuters and businesses for far too long. The measures in our proposed Building Transit Faster Act, if passed, will change that.

Every day, I take pride in knowing that we are building a smart, fiscally sustainable government that puts the people at the centre of everything we do. We are finally making the smart, long-term investments that address congestion, while providing commuters with more options that will get them to their destinations. We are building a world-class transportation network that focuses on getting

people where they want to go when they want to get there. Our government is investing in transportation to bring relief and new opportunities to transit users and commuters.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I am grateful to have the chance to support Minister Mulroney as our government makes historic investments in our province's transportation network.

I am committed to working for the residents of Scarborough—Rouge Park and the people of Ontario, as we build a transportation network that better serves families, commuters and businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I would like to thank the member opposite, from Scarborough—Rouge Park, for his debate. I have to say that I missed the first part of your debate—I'm sorry; I was just coming into the House—but I heard the second half of it, for sure, and I did listen intently.

I have to say we have some concerns with this bill as it stands. Specifically, I'd like to ask the member opposite about any concerns that he may have about the ability that Bill 171 provides to private contractors, in the case of P3 transit projects, to essentially turn neighbourhoods into never-ending construction zones. Specifically, the innovative measures that you're putting in here to allow a contractor to determine how to fulfill a certain deliverable rather than having a contract explicitly state that out—do you think that contractors should have the power to unilaterally turn our neighbourhoods into construction zones?

1540

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

The provisions related to utility corporations are the only ones given directly to Metrolinx. The legislation, if passed, provides Metrolinx with the ability to coordinate utility relocations and the ability to seek compensation if timelines are not met. Metrolinx can only delegate operational function related to utility corporation relocations to another entity that has been engaged to plan or construct transit. These operational functions include notifying the utility company of the removal or change to its infrastructure and negotiating the time frame for completing the relocation. Delegating these authorities would allow for more efficient coordination of construction activities. The ability to enter the land is similar to what currently exists for highways. Delegating these—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: It has been so interesting listening and learning about transit, its construction, the delays and everything else, and how different governments have failed the system. I can remember on my dairy farm, growing up, that it was so quiet along the gravel road that when we saw a car go by, everything kind of stopped just to see who it might be. We don't live in that world anymore, by a long shot; I guess that dates me quite a bit.

I was listening with interest to some of the opposition members, my neighbours here, speaking about the concerns that they had from staff members of the different

municipalities about getting this thing done, and I was wondering if I could ask our member from Scarborough–Rouge Park about what exactly this government’s relationship is like with the city of Toronto at this point as we move forward with these construction projects.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member for that question.

We have reached a pivotal moment in our history where all three levels of government agree on one single unified plan to get subways built. The consensus is clear: This is the time to build better public transit.

In June 2018, the people of Ontario voted overwhelmingly for a government committed to getting the province moving. Last fall, the city of Toronto council endorsed our subway plan with an overwhelming vote of 22 against three. In addition, only one member of the council voted against a motion to accelerate the delivery of transit expansion in Toronto. This would include working with municipalities to develop and facilitate—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Question?

Ms. Suze Morrison: To the member opposite: When you speed up construction without respecting local communities, the pain of construction that communities are facing during these transit projects moves from being a small headache to a large migraine and a significant inconvenience.

We saw this with the Eglinton Crosstown. Metrolinx wanted to close the Bathurst and Eglinton intersection for more than seven months, but a compromise was found after public outcry. We need balance in this decision-making. Communities shouldn’t be sacrificed to never-ending construction as we work through these transit projects.

Does the member opposite believe that a foreign company, not elected officials, should have the power to make those decisions that rightfully belong in the offices of elected officials in this Legislature around how long communities can be shut down for significant construction?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Madam Speaker, public consultations are an important part of the process, which is why there will be ongoing engagement with local communities and businesses throughout the design and construction processes. To assist local residents and businesses, Metrolinx will have community offices fully staffed with a team of community relations and communications specialists within the project corridor, where staff can answer questions and address any concerns. We want to keep people informed, so that’s why we have set up an online hub, ontario.ca/buildingtransit, for all things related to subways, including community meetings, events and consultations. We want to hear from everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Question?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to ask the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation if he could tell us a little bit about the difference

between his ministry’s plans to build residences, retail and commercial on top of subway stations versus what we saw the Liberals do, which was stand-alone, very expensive mega-subway stations.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member for that question.

The Ontario Line and the other three subway projects will deliver not just to get rid of congestion, but also to create cohesive communities, where people can live, work and play. It will offer commuters who have waited long enough—and especially less privileged communities, hard-working people travelling to work, students going to school and the millions who rely on transit every day.

Madam Speaker, our subway plan is bold. Our legislation that aims to help achieve our plan is reasonable. That’s why we’re introducing this new legislation which, if passed, gives the province the tools to make sure that the four priority transit projects, the brand new Ontario Line—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Question?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I’m going to have to ask the member opposite what happens in Toronto if Metrolinx decides to shut down the TTC every single weekend in order to complete Yonge line extensions, for example. According to this legislation, they would be allowed to do it. We know there’s an economic cost the city would bear as a result of substantial shutdowns like that.

Transit congestion has huge economic consequences. My colleague the member from University–Rosedale stated earlier that \$11 billion in productivity is lost to transit congestion in the city every year.

Do you think that a private corporation should be allowed to unilaterally make decisions that have such broad economic impacts on a community, like shutting down our entire transit system or an entire line, to complete their scheduled projects? Do you think a company should have that power to make such broad economic impacts on our communities?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: We are working closely with our municipal and federal partners and listening to the construction sector and public feedback as we move forward with our plan to get Ontario moving. We look forward to consulting with various private sector stakeholders now that the proposed legislation has been introduced. Through this process, Metrolinx will continue to work to identify which priorities are required, and will only be acquiring properties that are absolutely necessary to get transit built.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Burlington, but it’s going to have to be quick.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. We just heard the member from Toronto Centre saying that the member from University–Rosedale was saying that there’s \$11 billion lost in productivity.

My question, sitting in here listening to this today, is: Can you tell us—I don’t know. I’m just wondering, with your constituents—my constituents all say the same thing. They’re exhausted from not having shovels in the ground. They’re thrilled with this. You’ve got to put up with a little

bit of pain to get things done. Can you tell me what your constituents are saying? Are they happy as anything just to have this going?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member has seven seconds remaining.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The people of Ontario just want to get the subways built.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very pleased to bring my voice to this debate and those of the people from my community. We're discussing Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts or, in short, the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020.

1550

I would say I've also got some cute nicknames for it. Really, the "you're not the boss of me act" is what comes to mind when I read this. It's 22 pages that outline pretty heavy-handed "thou shalt" to partners like public utilities and cities with different agencies in order to ram these projects through.

There isn't anyone in this Legislature who hasn't heard about the need for transit—but it's the need for transit done well, and the need for transit done properly, so that we are not hearing about, like in the Eglinton area, things drawn out forever and affecting communities, affecting families, affecting businesses. Transit should be done properly. Transit should be well planned.

I have concerns with a lot of the pieces of this bill that give this minister and this government some pretty significant powers that I don't think are necessary. I would say they're not necessary because if the government actually planned with other folks; if the government didn't just write things on a napkin, or a map, or a "mapkin," or whatever they're making; if they planned properly with their community agencies and partners, then they wouldn't be hitting roadblocks and walls the way that they are anticipating. Pick up a phone, work with folks, and do the planning well the first time. Then you don't have to have all of these heavy-handed penalties, and threats of taking them to court, and obstruction removal, and police powers and force for how to enforce these different pieces. Do things well. Do things right the first time.

I've been standing in this Legislature a lot lately, talking about how poorly the licence plate mess has been handled, and how poorly that rollout has gone, not just for this government, but for everyone in a vehicle across the province.

Okay, but that's just licence plates, and arguably, licence plates have one job. So if that can't be handled properly, how on earth are we to have any faith in this government when it comes to building transit?

Actually, I'm looking forward to getting into the weeds of this bill and getting into it piece by piece. I won't do a show of hands, because that's not really a fair measurement, but I'm tempted to know how many government members have read their own legislation. It's only 22

pages. It's not a big, fat omnibus bill. It's very focused, and it's very specific. It really does give bull-in-a-china-shop powers to the minister or the minister's designate—in this case, Metrolinx.

I have an article, Speaker. I don't normally read an article in its entirety, but I'm going to today. Why reinvent the wheel? Although, if I were this government, I might try—blue wheels, or something that is square. Anyway, here we are. I have an article from the Globe and Mail, and this is relevant because this is someone's opinion on what this rollout will look like and how these lines are going to be handled.

The title is: "A Bold Prediction: The Ford Government Will Build the Ontario Line in the Lake." It's by Robyn Urback, February 21, 2020.

"It is never wise to publish a hard prediction, but I will eschew convention and make one anyhow: The government ... will accidentally build the Ontario Line into the lake.

"It is inevitable coming from the government that, last year, printed stickers that didn't actually stick to warn gas station patrons about the federal carbon tax. Then, earlier this month, it began circulating new licence plates that become illegible after the sun goes down. I can only assume, therefore, that the ... government will follow by either cutting the ribbon on new long-term-care beds for which it will forget to order mattresses, or build its prized Ontario Line in the wrong direction after someone mistakenly scans the map upside down."

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was listening very intently to the member from Oshawa. I believe that I overheard an unparliamentary term used, implying that the government is lying. I would ask that she withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you for the point of order. I did not hear that.

Back to the member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I most assuredly did not and would not.

But this is absolutely relevant, in case that's their next point of order, that the Building Transit Faster Act—there are concerns about the speed and what will happen if we don't dot our i's, cross our t's and do due diligence.

I will continue: "In past and present, when confronted with its peeling stickers, washed-out licence plates and faded dreams, the Ontario government will insist its products have previously gone through rigorous testing. Indeed, when asked Tuesday about reports that the new licence plates cannot be seen in the dark," the "Minister of Government and Consumer Services ... responded by saying Ontario's new plates 'are actually very readable'....

"Anyway, according to" the minister, "the new, street-racer-approved Ontario licence plates still constitute an improvement on 'the flaking and peeling Liberal plates,' which, in some cases, would become unreadable after

years of use, as opposed to the new ones that become unreadable from the time they are made....

“What this all suggests is that there is a higher-than-zero chance that Ontario’s ambitious new transit plan—which was Toronto’s downtown relief line until the Premier scratched off ‘Mayor John Tory’ and penciled in ‘Doug’—will be accidentally built underwater, right into Lake Ontario.”

She continues: “The government will realize that the entire north-south portion of the Ontario Line was accidentally just built south, with eight stops entirely submerged and leading out in the water to nowhere. The trains, which will only be operational once, will cruise merrily past Queen’s Quay, beyond which they will become waterlogged and sink to the bottom of the lake. Look out, quagga mussels—there’s a new invasive species coming to Lake Ontario.”

“Back on land, the government will assemble a hasty news conference to respond to reports of missing trains and angry and exhausted passengers swimming up to Cherry Beach. There, the minister of transport will assure reporters that the Ontario Line trains were subject to rigorous testing (not rigorous testing underwater, mind you, but rigorous testing all the same) and that the plans for the transit expansion were reviewed dozens of times.

“Anyway, the minister will add, ‘The previous Liberal transit line was noisy and disruptive. Ours is unobtrusive and remarkably quiet.’”

It goes on. You know what? I’ll read the last paragraph: “And so, in the end, a fleet of broken trains, useless tracks and wasted hours will be thrust into the province’s ‘do-over’ pile, which is already flush with unsticky stickers, unreadable licence plates, the government’s initial autism program overhaul, the plan to retroactively cut municipal budgets, the plan to cancel construction on a French-language university and scheduled cuts to the province’s legal aid system—among other things. Really, though, when it comes to this government, what’s one more mulligan?”

Speaker, I tell you that to tell you this: The province, broadly, is losing faith in the government’s ability to do things well—if it had it in the first place. What we’re faced within this act, the Building Transit Faster Act, is giving them massive authority and power to override and overrun agencies and community partners who absolutely should be respected in the work that they do.

I’m reading directly from the bill, Speaker: “The purpose of the act is to expedite the delivery of the following four priority transit projects for the greater Toronto area, by removing barriers and streamlining processes that may result in delays to the timely completion of these projects, while enhancing coordination and engagement with and being fair to public and private sector stakeholders:”—I have no idea who defines “fair,” but there we have it.

- “1. The Ontario Line.
- “2. The Scarborough subway extension.
- “3. The Yonge North subway extension
- “4. The Eglinton Crosstown west extension.”

Flipping through, we see that there is information here about permits and what’s required to get those, and

obstruction removals. Obstruction removals makes me a little bit nervous as well. This is that they can remove an obstruction: “The minister may determine that the construction of a priority transit project requires the alteration or removal of any of the following things, whether or not they are there in violation of section 3:

“structures

“(1) A structure on or under,

“i. transit corridor land, or

“ii. land within 30 metres of transit corridor land.

“This does not include the removal of a building, road or utility infrastructure, but does include the removal of part of a building”—I wonder if it’s a big part, a little part or a vital part—“trees, shrubs, hedges” and “a prescribed thing”—I can’t wait for regulations to know what “thing” would be.

I see that in this bill—this might seem like a small thing, but it isn’t—there’s a section in this bill that does outline that the government would “plant trees to replace any trees that were removed, and do so in accordance with ... any regulations on tree replacement, or,” if there weren’t regulations, “in accordance with the applicable municipal bylaws on tree replacement....”

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The reason I’m mentioning that just briefly is that I want to flag for this government that we have really awesome projects along the Highway of Heroes, the living tribute, where there was a goal to plant two million trees between Trenton and Toronto. That wouldn’t fall under municipal bylaws, but if you’re going to be pulling out trees in future and in different areas, I do hope you’ll replace them, even if you don’t have to. I recognize that that area isn’t a part of this, but it’s sort of that, going forward, this government and how they seem to approach the environment leaves a lot to be desired.

Construction danger inspection and elimination: This is fascinating to me. I’d like some clarification from folks.

“The minister may enter a property to inspect any of the following things that, in the opinion of the minister”—in the opinion of the minister—“may pose an immediate danger to construction.” I don’t know what that means. I don’t know what the minister knows about construction and what poses a danger, and when you flip back to the—we’re going to play the how-to-walk-through-a-bill game here. When you look back to the definitions, “immediate danger to construction” says, “It poses an immediate danger to the health and safety of persons working on a priority transit project,” or if “the work is not occurring, but, the minister is ready to have that work occur.” Okay. I don’t see the danger in that.

If the minister is ready and they want to move ahead, “the minister does not need to provide notice of the entry and inspection to anyone.” Let’s start imagining a scenario. This government is wanting to move forward with their transit plans, these lines. They’re going to come across different buildings, dwellings—as we read eloquently, things—that are in the way, and if the minister decides, even if there isn’t anyone working on it yet but they’re ready to work, that there is a danger, they don’t need to provide notice of entry and inspection to anyone.

So imagine someone knocks on your door and says, “We think that your property will cause a danger to work that hasn’t happened yet, as per the opinion of the minister.” “Oh, well, I didn’t get a phone call.” “Oh, no, we don’t have to provide notice.” “Okay. Well, I don’t want you here.” Well, it says, “The individual who carries out construction danger inspection and elimination may request police assistance and a police officer who accepts the request may use whatever force is necessary to assist the construction danger inspection and elimination.”

“Okay, I don’t want to let you in.” “Well, I’ve got the police here.” “Okay. But my kids aren’t home from school yet. Can you come back another time?” Well, here’s the next part:

“Obstruction

“33(1) A person shall not hinder, obstruct or interfere with a construction danger inspection and elimination.”

What constitutes interference? An argument? A discussion? A hesitation? Because then it goes on to say, “A person who hinders, obstructs or interferes with the carrying out of a construction danger inspection and elimination loses any entitlement to compensation....” So you are going to take my house and, because I don’t want you to, now I don’t get compensation when you carry out your plan? I have a problem with that.

There’s another fun part—I say “fun,” and I shouldn’t be sarcastic. There is a part that is actually quite concerning: “If the minister is satisfied that a person is contravening or not complying with a prescribed provision of this act or the regulations, the minister may, by order, impose an administrative penalty on the person in accordance with this section and the regulations.” There is another part that says that if I fight them—“I” being the person who got the knock on the door and was told to move my house or dwelling or building or structure or “thing”—that that constitutes an offence.

I recognize that the folks across there are thinking, “What is she talking about? That’s never going to happen. We’ve got the best of intentions and we want to get transit moving and we would never have that kind of scenario come up.” Oh, yeah? How can you be sure?

I know the government is saying that these powers are about—what is the word? That these powers are intended only as backstops to good-faith negotiations with stakeholders, such as the city of Toronto, utilities, developers, property owners and local communities. I have no faith that this government understands good faith. We’re not seeing it at the bargaining table now. We certainly don’t get a sense from the community that folks have faith in the government’s ability to bargain or negotiate in good faith.

Further to that, some of the concerns when it comes to agencies like the TTC or public utilities, for which there are powers laid out in this bill: Agencies like the TTC and public utilities will likely have to spend more money, delay their own work and experience more inconvenience because the priority projects will jump to the front of the queue.

No matter what the agency is, if they have short-term, mid-term or long-term projects that are moving forward in

the community and that people have planned, there has been investment and there has been due diligence. And now we’ve got these priority transit projects, and those trump the others. I understand that you want to move forward with this, but this government says all the time that they want to get rid of red tape, but they’re creating so much red tape now by all of these agencies and public utilities that may have to stop their projects, be taken to court and deal with their partners. All of that is red tape, but all of that is a mess that would be avoidable if you were good and responsible planners.

Obviously, the issues of how and when utilities are moved would be very complicated: sewers and TTC, infrastructure—you’ve got bridges, water, telecommunications, roads, all of that. This government should be coordinating with them. If you’re going to be digging up a road, there should be coordination. And what is in this bill creates consequences for those community partners, and expenses. This government has put in writing that if they disagree, then basically, they can take them to court. If a utility company fails to comply with a notice—and that notice is basically when the government tells them to do it—then a judge of the Superior Court of Justice may, on an application made by Metrolinx, either order the utility company to comply or authorize Metrolinx to carry out the work described in the notice anyway: “A utility company shall compensate Metrolinx for a loss or expense incurred” because they’re not complying with your turnarounds, your timelines and your “thou shalt.” This really is bull-in-a-china-shop legislation at its finest, which is, I’d say, a problem.

I do have a question. Extrapolating these powers, extrapolating the situation—but because we’re talking about transit projects, I’m standing here as the representative of the folks in Oshawa and Durham region, and we are excited and looking forward to an extension of train service to Bowmanville. In the Durham region, while we’re all excited and we’re hopeful, we still have our agencies that are waiting for that phone call from Metrolinx. And I hope that it comes and says, “Here’s our project manager. Here’s the plan,” and collaborates with them to look at what their projects are now and in the future to do their best as a planning partner to make sure that we’re not creating obstacles to that future project. That’s how things should get done. If you pick up the phone and you call the folks across Durham region and say, “Hey, utility company, hey, municipality, what do you have in the works that we don’t want to trip over, we don’t want to have to dig up, we don’t want there to be a problem? Let’s work together now and plan so that that line can move forward to Bowmanville.” That would be the right way to do this.

You haven’t done that with Toronto. You haven’t been collaborative partners, and now we see a bill that says, “Well, we don’t need to be. We can just give this to Metrolinx and we can do what we want,” whether it’s expropriating, knocking on the door and saying, “We’re deeming you a danger”—whatever. It’s really heavy-handed. To suggest that this is only if things go off the rails—why let it go off the rails in the first place? Do your

best to be forward-looking partners, because that is what transit should be about. It's about community. It's about what's best for people's experiences, getting them where they need to go, not just digging yourself a hole and then shoving everybody else into it. That is not how to govern and not how to build transit.

I hate to bring it back to the licence plates. It just feels so familiar, though, because they're giving me so much opportunity. But if they can't get licence plates right, we worry about transit. Please reassure us. Thank you.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Hon. Bill Walker: It's interesting to hear the member from Oshawa, I think the transportation critic, who was railing against us at all opportunities recently. She, in her remarks, quite early asked the question, how many members of our government read the bill? I would like to just turn this around and ask her, how many members of her party read their platform that had a \$7-billion gap in it, and how they would be proposing to plan to actually solve the congestion crisis in the GTA with that \$7-billion gap in their platform? How many read it, including their leader?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm always glad to have the opportunity to talk about our platform, because we had a platform, Speaker. We had a platform. We will always prioritize transit and the experience of community members, who need to be able to get to work, get to their families, get home, get where they need to be.

Speaker, how we would go about building transit—the first stop on this journey would be to collaborate, would be to ensure that we are being responsible partners with municipalities, with agencies like the TTC, with our public utilities, with folks across the community who are working on projects, who are doing their due diligence, seemingly unlike this government. We would ensure that we were a responsible level of government, again unlike what we are seeing from this government, and that is how you move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: This is the first time I get to stand up and talk with this new system. I will tell my colleague across the road that we did have a platform and a very good platform, unlike the Conservatives.

Now, Metrolinx paid the Eglinton Crosstown P3, a public-private partnership contract—think about this—an extra \$237 million, supposedly to keep the project on schedule. You've got to pay a private contractor more money to keep it on schedule. It makes absolutely no sense—but \$237 million.

My question is, does the member believe that's fair, and should we be supporting P3 projects that cost the taxpayers in the province of Ontario an extra \$237 million, which wasn't in your platform?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to have the opportunity to talk about P3s and the challenge that we find ourselves, as taxpayers and as folks who live in the communities, bearing the brunt of these poor choices when there is a massive additional cost beyond what had originally been budgeted or been promised. This government, at

every opportunity, celebrates the P3 concept, talks about it and is excited, instead of recognizing that they have a responsibility as a government to provide strong public services. They love to just hand it off to someone else—maybe they know them, maybe they don't, but it's not their responsibility. We have concerns when those projects—time after time, we hear horror stories—are not done well.

My colleague, earlier, brought up this concept of innovation. The government is allowing P3s to use innovation. We would love them to explain what that means.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The NDP seems to be the spokespersons for the urban working class. In 2010, the working families of Ontario spoke very loud and clear in favour of building subways by giving the late great Rob Ford a popular majority vote, becoming mayor. An NDP-dominated city council—as well as the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, who upheld the NDP support—resisted Rob Ford in every way.

With subways still in demand by the people of the GTA, Madam Speaker, my question to the member from Oshawa is, why is it that the NDP is still opposed to this desperately needed act to get families moving?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm going to share something that was actually brought up in the Legislature the other day by my colleague from Toronto—St. Paul's to answer that question. This is her question to the government: "Businesses in my riding of St. Paul's are paying the brunt of continued delays in delivering the Eglinton Crosstown. Another year of delays means that businesses that were already barely hanging on ... are being faced with deeper debt and distress.

"My constituents know how important it is to expand transit, but everyday families and business owners shouldn't have to pay the price for government incompetence....

"Business owners are getting desperate. They've been asking for help for years now. Will the government finally commit to ensuring that businesses and families have the support they need to survive another unnecessary delay...?"

The reason that I answer his question with that is because families are very frustrated, because there isn't anything predictable about transit, and a bill that is giving this government the power to run roughshod does not reassure them that this will move forward in a good way.

Certainly, this government loves to do things fast, just not well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Everybody was standing up. I wasn't sure what was going on here. This is new here.

I want to say, just to that response to that, that Bill 171 empowers the government to speed up construction without such payments by unilaterally imposing more intense construction on communities. Think about that. You aim to tell communities exactly what they can do, so you're taking that power away from communities. I've sat on city councils.

My question would be, to my colleague: Is that fair and reasonable to communities?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: In answer to his question, no, it isn't fair and reasonable to communities.

I just read the question from our colleague, whose constituents are dealing with the ongoing, never-ending, disappointing situation because of the Eglinton Cross-town.

But also, there are expenses happening that are not just the experience of the folks in that community. The project has cost the TTC another \$50 million or \$60 million, to increase bus service to keep the riders moving. They haven't been reimbursed for that, and it would appear, by this bill and just sort of the spirit that I'm picking up on, that there is no intention to reimburse. Compensation is not forthcoming in many, many places in this bill.

So it's very frustrating to businesses, to community members, and to the province as a whole, to imagine that things cannot move forward well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Gila Martow: I think we can't really have it both ways. I'm going to ask the member from Oshawa if she would agree that we can't have sympathy for the plight of the business owners on Eglinton, the commuters who need to get through the area, and the residents who live in the area while also allowing the delays that this bill seeks to solve.

Highways being built—this is what we're following, the models of how highways are built, that it's streamlined it's more efficient. We can't have people delay and appeal. This way, we can do things consecutively instead of concurrently, and we can speed up the process. This way, it helps the exact same constituents that she's talking about.

My question is, does the member support that we streamline and make the process more efficient, to build the subways the way we build the highways in Ontario?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I find it so interesting when the member opposite said that they can't have it both ways, to have sympathy for the commuters but also for businesses and the people living in the community. Yes, we absolutely can.

The thing is, if this government understood its role as a planning partner and did their math, did their homework and did due diligence with the different agencies, they could avoid some of these challenges.

I recognize that in this bill, there's an enabling of the use of innovation by P3 contractors. "Innovation" means that those contractors are free to decide how to bring something about, how to make it happen, rather than having the contract-specific language that would tell us how we get there. So we're seeing delays and we're seeing problems, and you don't think that that's avoidable by having better agreements, better contracts and better relationships and partnerships? That's on you, and I think that this government needs to recognize that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that.

To my colleague on the other side who just mentioned—I don't understand how you think doing P3s and allowing foreign companies the power to disrupt communities is going to help us with transit. All you have to do is take a look at the 407. That was sold to a foreign company and it now costs you an arm and a leg to go from one end of the 407 all the way to the other. I just thought I'd raise that.

Do you think that's fair and reasonable?

1620

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a problem with this government washing its hands and giving blank permission to contractors and folks and not taking responsibility for the property owners and the communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to speak on Bill 171, the government's "Let's rip up the local planning bill to speed up transit." Speaker, while I think it's important to figure out how to facilitate and build transit faster, we have to do it in a way that's right. And doing it in the right way means respecting local planning processes. It means not circumventing the expropriation process. It means not short-circuiting the environmental assessment process. Good planning takes time, and in order to take time, that's how you get it done right and ultimately save time in the long run. If you think about what has delayed transit planning in the GTHA, for the most part, it has been politics.

We could have a 17-stop LRT servicing Scarborough right now, but we had a previous mayor's administration rip the Transit City plan up. We had an environmental assessment approved for the Ontario relief line with shovels ready to go in the ground now. Ask the people in Hamilton who want an LRT what they think about delays in transit.

Best practices for transit planning require community engagement, engaging local experts, engaging in a proper planning process. If you short-circuit that process, it could actually lead to more delays.

If you look at the delays on the Eglinton LRT right now, none of those delays would be addressed by this bill. As a matter of fact, there are parts of this bill that could even make that situation worse if the government rushes through it too fast.

I'm deeply concerned about what happens if the government short-circuits the environmental assessment process, begins moving forward with projects and then they find out in the environmental assessment process that you have a problem. You've already spent hundreds of millions of dollars moving forward on the project. Is the government then going to say, "Oh, we're going to write off those sunk costs because we now have a problem"? Or are they going to address the problem? I think there are a number of communities that want an answer to that question ahead of time.

There are also a number of homeowners and businesses that want to know, "What's going to happen if my property is expropriated and now I don't have a tribunal process to

go through in order to make sure that it's done properly and I'm adequately compensated etc.?"

So my caution to the government is: You can speed things up in a way that you actually get it wrong. So take the time to engage in a proper planning process to get it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Michael Parsa: To my honourable colleague from Guelph and members of the opposition, I have this question to ask. We know that transit needs to be built. We all know it. It helps commuters. It helps businesses—especially small businesses—families, students. Madam Speaker, the previous government constantly promised this in election after election. They didn't follow through on their promise when they got elected; we did. We promised it. We brought it in last year, and the opposition voted against it. Now this bill will not only build it, but it will build it faster for the people of Ontario. Why is the opposition having such a hard time with this? This is what the people of Ontario want. If you go to your constituents, they're going to tell you, "We want transit, we want it built, and we want it built fast." Why would you oppose this?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to remind my honourable colleague that most of the reason transit hasn't been built is due to political meddling. We could have a 17-stop LRT in Scarborough right now, but we had a previous mayor come into Toronto—maybe related to the Premier—who ripped up a transit plan.

The environmental assessment of the Ontario relief line had already been approved. We could start building the relief line now, but the government came in and ripped up those plans.

Talk to the people in Hamilton who wanted to build an LRT and had that ripped out from underneath them.

It's political meddling that is leading to the problems in getting transit built. If the government moves forward with this and doesn't engage in proper planning, it could actually lead to longer delays in the long run.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the remarks from the member for Guelph. I wanted to ask him to expand a little bit about his concerns over speeding up the environmental assessment process. What are the pitfalls of making that process, which is already compressed and less rigorous than other environmental assessment processes—what are the dangers that we face by what's proposed in this bill?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague.

The environmental assessment process is really designed to identify problems, challenges that will arise. It's an opportunity to engage community and hear from small business owners and residents, planners and other experts to make sure you get it right, to identify potential problems. The failure to do that could actually lead to significant costs for the province.

I feel like I'm standing up here and asking for fiscal responsibility, to add a little caution to the process, because my fear is, if we move this along and we have co-

development happening, and the environmental assessment identifies a problem and the government has already thrown hundreds of million of dollars at the project, will they recognize the problem, back off and stop, or will they plow ahead and make the problem worse?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I had a question for the member opposite—just the fact that we currently have an environmental assessment process for GO Transit and it has not hindered the environment at all—in fact, zero times on record. This would be no different than that, so are you opposed to having more GO Transit built while increasing environmental protections?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: To the honourable member: Thank you for the question. In some ways, you're actually kind of making my point for me. We have an environmental assessment process. It's more complex in urban areas because you have more density, you have more stakeholders, you have more existing development, you have more hidden infrastructure. There's a whole host of complexities that need to be addressed.

If you don't address them properly, and again, if you sunk hundreds of millions of dollars into a process before you identified problems, is the government going to plow ahead? Are they going to eat that sunk cost? It raises a number of questions that require an answer. To me, the fiscally responsible approach is to get it right in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to ask the member for Guelph to elaborate a little bit about the Eglinton Crosstown. He did mention that many of the problems that were experienced with the Eglinton Crosstown would not be addressed by Bill 171.

Now, I understand that, in fact, Bill 171 could make what happened with the Eglinton Crosstown even more of a concern with some of the other transit projects that are under way or that are contemplated, because of the additional powers that it gives the government to accelerate construction without compensation. I wondered if the member shares those concerns or if he would like to elaborate on that.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member for London West asking a question again.

One of the challenges you face on any major transit project—and I think most homeowners would understand this as well—is that oftentimes as you move things forward, you experience unexpected challenges or problems which then lead to delays. So one of the reasons to engage in proper planning and taking the time to do it right is that you actually look at what the contingencies are. Have we thought through all of the contingencies, potential challenges that we might face to ensure that we avoid the kinds of complications that you see with the Eglinton Crosstown?

Now, sometimes you just don't know until shovels go in the ground or you start tunnelling or open a wall or whatever. You don't know what the complications can be. But the more planning you do ahead of time, the more you

can recognize and avoid those complications and avoid the additional costs and delays associated with them.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm listening intently to the member from Guelph. You're saying that government has a responsibility to get people moving and out of their cars. Well, Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act, does just that. So I'm curious: Why do you oppose spending \$28.5 billion on creating jobs and getting people moving? You need to pick a track. Can you tell me what track that is?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Getting people moving on transit is an absolute priority. That's the lane I've picked. I've been very clear about that. It's one of the reasons I have concerns about this bill—not every aspect of the bill. But one of the reasons I have concerns around fast-tracking this bill is that in the end, it could actually lead to more delays if you don't do proper planning, if you don't get it right.

The member earlier talked about some of the challenges this government has had when it has rushed things through: We have licence plates that you can't see; you have stickers that don't stick; you have an autism program that doesn't work. Those are the kinds of things that happen if you rush things through quickly.

The reason I want to get planning right is precisely because I want transit built, precisely because I want to give people an opportunity to get out of their cars and get on transit. I want it done right, and I want it done in the most fiscally responsible way.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: To the member for Guelph: The government has said that one of the goals that it hopes to achieve with Bill 171 is to align the rules for transit construction with P3 procurement and, in particular, to enable the use of innovation by P3 contractors. I wonder what his thoughts are on that. Is that a worthwhile public policy goal, to have more P3 procurement?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to the honourable member for the question.

I have some deep concerns about facilitating P3 development. We had an Auditor General's report not that long ago that talked about how P3s increased costs by \$8 billion for various construction projects that the government engaged in. So I would caution the government about going down the P3 model, because history has shown that it oftentimes increased costs. In some ways, what you are doing is privatizing profits and socializing risk. That socializing of risk falls on the backs of the citizens of Ontario, the people who pay the bills around this place.

That's exactly why we need to get it right. That's exactly why we need a public planning process to get it right. It's exactly why we need people who are operating in the public interest to get it right. That's ultimately how we're going to get transit built. It's ultimately how we're going to get transit built that puts the public interest first. It's the way we're going to get transit built in a way that's most fiscally responsible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm pleased to rise to speak to the Building Transit Faster Act. In fairness, this has probably been a piece of legislation that I have been awaiting since my election. I couldn't be happier to speak to it today.

Over the last little while, some folks started referring to me as the “subway, subway, subway” guy, and it's not just because I love Subway sandwiches. It's because I love the subway, and it's something I'm very excited to talk about today.

As a Toronto MPP, public transit is one of the most important issues in my riding. York Centre is home to four subway stations—Downsview Park, Sheppard West, Wilson subway station and Finch West—with thousands of Ontarians passing through York Centre's public transit every day to travel from work, to see family, and to navigate the city safely and efficiently. Public transportation is the heartbeat of my community, and I would know, as I proudly take the TTC almost daily. I love getting on the subway at Sheppard West Station. I catch up on my morning reading. I love seeing the true representation of our diverse city. I get off at Queen's Park, and unless there is a signal problem or an emergency alarm activated on board a train, I'm at work in 40 minutes, door to door. It's great.

I've been to almost every single one of Toronto's 75 stations. I even know what some of them smell like. I invite you to join me at Eglinton Station or Sheppard Station and smell the Cinnabon bakery shop or the coffee shop at Bloor, or the historic hot dog stand at Union Station before a Raptors game or a Blue Jays game. That area has not been occupied for close to a decade, with the debacle that is Union Station.

If you live in Toronto and love Toronto, you probably love the subway. I love riding the Rocket. It's why I talk “subways, subways, subways” every chance I get—because the subway is the very best possible solution to move around a large metropolis like Toronto. It's great because it's fast. It's great because it has huge capacity, and it's wonderful for the environment, because it is mostly below grade, which means it helps to decongest the road and reduce emissions. Anyone who cares about the environment must advocate for the subway to decongest and to relieve gridlock. Why wouldn't you?

Unfortunately, Toronto has one of the longest commute times in North America. It's unsustainable. It's regrettable. It's costing us money and productivity. It's costing us time with our family. It's not good for quality of life. This is why we must build subways and not shy away.

But let's have a look at where we are today. By way of capacity and accessibility, most experts would agree that we're about 25 to 40 years behind. Props aren't allowed in the House, so unfortunately I can't show you a map of other world-class cities and what their subway map looks like. I invite you to visit Madrid or Barcelona, London or Paris, New York or Chicago. Even Montreal has a good subway network. But why? Toronto is a world-class city. We have world-class entertainment. We have the best

restaurants and vibrant financial markets. We have Drake, the world's best rapper. We're home to the Toronto Raptors, NBA champions. And yet we don't have a good subway. We deserve better, and we should do better. Why is this happening? Why are we behind 40 years? Why can't we get shovels in the ground and built?

Madam Speaker, I was born in what is known today as St. Petersburg, Russia. At the time, it was called Leningrad, in the Soviet Union. Did you know, Madam Speaker, that St. Petersburg has one of the best subway systems in the world? It has a similar population to the GTA, and it builds a new subway station almost every month. Every month, they open a new subway station. They don't approve line by line and then wrangle over it for years, fund it and defund it and waste time; they just build, just like a number of Chinese cities that build a subway station almost every month. That's great for traffic, and that's great for housing. It's great for lifestyle.

Instead, what do we have here in the GTA? An antiquated subway system. You need a subway plus one or two buses to get anywhere around Toronto. You need multiple transit networks and authorities to get around the GTA. In the last 25 years, no development other than the University-Spadina subway extension of six stations only, and the Eglinton LRT—a decade-long disaster, and half of it is above ground. Why is this happening? Why don't we move forward with planning and building? Because we seem to be unable to.

First, we can't agree on it. City council first agreed on the Scarborough subway in 2011. That's nine years ago. Nine years later, and not a shovel in the ground. Toronto city council voted on the Scarborough subway 12 times. That's why I'm so proud of Bill 5, which was finally able to bring streamlining of decisions at Toronto city council.

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Typically, a project is approved at a certain cost, then the studies begin and the planning begins. Then, by the time those end, the costs balloon and the timeline changes. Then they'll have a different mayor or a different elected government and priorities change and the project dies. It's very, very sad.

Let's look at a few examples: the Spadina-University subway extension. I live at Sheppard West subway station. That was the last stop, formerly known as Downsview station, from which the extension originated. The initial cost estimate for the Spadina extension was a billion and a half for six stations. The final cost is more than double that. It's \$3.2 billion. Construction started in 2009. It was supposed to finish in 2015. Construction delayed instead and finished in 2017 at more than twice the cost. What a disaster.

Eglinton LRT, 25 stations: The construction start date was 2011. The project was initially expected to be completed in 2021, and now the estimated completion is 2022, and it's only buried from Laird to Black Creek. Half of it is above ground, and still it's taking a decade.

The St. Clair streetcar—oh, I remember that. When I came back from law school, I lived at St. Clair and Bathurst. I'm exhibit A for the disaster on St. Clair. I

remember what that was like. It wasn't only that the local coffee shop or the local restaurant closed; my dry cleaner had to shut down. My dry cleaner wasn't able to continue operations because of the disaster and the length of time that project took.

It was first approved in 2004 with a cost estimate of \$48 million. The final price tag was \$120 million, and it only finished in 2010. It took them six years. From St. Clair and Yonge to St. Clair and Dufferin—six years. And it's a streetcar; it causes congestion.

Mr. Speaker, this cannot continue. We're seeing this project to project

Union Station, what a disaster. This is a city initiative. It started in 2009, 11 years ago. The initial cost for Union Station was \$640 million and it was supposed to be completed in 2015. It's now over \$800 million, and we're told that it's going to be completed in 2020. I think it will never be done. Union Station was pushed back three times.

This is funny. Originally, Union Station was supposed to be finished in 2015 in time for the Pan Am Games. Then the Pan Am Games come along and Union Station isn't finished. You know what happens? The media is all over the city of Toronto saying, "What's going on?" The city comes out and says, "What do you mean? Did we tell you that we're going to be finished in time for the Pan Am Games? We never told you that. Where'd you get that idea?" This is what happened with Union Station. And of course, they weren't ready for the Invictus Games in 2017. I seriously doubt that Union Station will be ready for the 2026 FIFA World Cup soccer that Canada is going to co-host with the United States and Mexico.

This is utterly sad. This is unacceptable. This is why we don't build anything anymore, Mr. Speaker. We can't do it on time. We can't do it on budget. People doubt us. Residents doubt us. And why? We lost the stomach for it. We lost the stomach for serious infrastructure and transportation projects. We can't handle the cost overruns anymore; we can't handle the delays anymore; so we just stopped building. It's shameful that we don't have the political will to build transit.

We are Canadian. We built this country on a train. We can do it. We must do it. We have no choice. You can't drive in the city anymore. We needed a subway 20, 30 years ago. Enough is enough.

This is where the Building Transit Faster Act comes in. If passed, the Building Transit Faster Act would give the province the tools we need to deliver the transit Ontarians want, on time and on budget.

You see, cutting through the red tape, creating efficiencies in the planning and the environmental assessment process, can cut through the gridlock of building transit. Until we cut through the gridlock of building transit, we are not going to build any transit and we are going to be stuck in gridlock. That's what this piece of legislation is about. This is terrific.

There is another element. Probably one of my favourite elements in this bill is the transit-oriented communities.

I speak to folks in my riding. York Centre is home to one of the most senior populations in the province and one

of the youngest populations in the province. The main issue plaguing young people, the issue that I hear about most from millennials, is housing. They can't afford housing in the city of Toronto. It becomes even more difficult when they want to ameliorate their lifestyle, when they don't want to be stuck in traffic for two to three hours a day, and they're trying to live near a subway station. A one-bedroom apartment near a subway station in Toronto is now about \$2,600, \$2,700 a month. This is unsustainable.

So we have to deliver to people what they want, and what they want is to live near major transit, to live near a subway station. To do that, we have to increase supply. We have to build capacity. There is no way around it.

The opposition deny economic realities. I'm old-fashioned. I still believe in supply and demand, and I want us to provide supply. I want this government to be serious about providing housing supply, so people in York Centre can live close to Sheppard West subway station, so they can live close to Wilson station.

I want condo development near Finch West station. We have a very exciting project coming up in Downsview Park, potentially, down the road. Downsview Park is surrounded by two subway stations—major aspirations. We need to make it feasible, we need to make it sensible, for folks to want to live there. That's what this bill does. It encourages development around subway stations.

It makes so much sense. It makes sense from every perspective: from a development perspective, from development charges, to helping finance construction and to expediting construction, which is what this bill intends to do.

Speaker, we have had it. We have been talking about this for probably 20, 25 years. We have not made a dent since Mayor Mel Lastman, who was able to get Sheppard built—at least part of Sheppard—to which our government has committed in phase 2, something that is very, very near and dear to me.

Sheppard is not a part of this bill. The bill covers our four priority projects: the Ontario Line; the Eglinton Crosstown, the Yonge North extension and the Scarborough subway.

1650

I think about the people of Scarborough. We have, I believe, five members elected out of Scarborough. We have neglected Scarborough, Mr. Speaker. We have failed it traditionally, but not anymore—not this government. It was Rob Ford's vision—it was his line in the sand to get the Scarborough line built. We did not seek office and get elected not to deliver on our subway commitment. No way.

And it's not going to happen until we get through the planning process and the EA process. Because it's typically the planning, the EAs, the land assembly, the municipal corridors, the utilities—that's what's holding us back. These are all very, very important elements. They must be worked out together in consultation, they must be negotiated, and they must be thought through appropriately, but they cannot be litigated with no end in sight, because what happens is that the project goes off the rails.

I'm looking forward to hearing more debate. I'm glad that I got to stand up in the House and explain why we're doing this, as opposed to the mechanics of the bill. I'm proud to support this legislation. I can't wait to drive down Scarborough or to drive on Eglinton or drive in the east side of the city, or to walk or to bike, and see shovels in the ground—actual shovels in the ground—as a result of this piece of legislation. I'm proud to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now it's time for questions.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I just want to address the member's comment that the government is not failing the people in Scarborough. If you look at the three-stop subway in Scarborough, they are definitely failing the people in Scarborough. This three-stop doesn't even go to the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. This is the largest area of commuters in the area, so I would like to get an answer about why it's not going up to the University of Toronto Scarborough campus.

Also, there are 500,000 people in the Scarborough area and three subway stops? That's ridiculous. I can look out my window here and see three subway stops.

So they're really failing the people of Scarborough. If they think they're not, well, they definitely are failing the people of Scarborough. It's going to take a good 15 years to fix and to build.

I want to get an answer from the member as to why he thinks that they're not failing Scarborough when it's not even going to the areas for the people who need it most.

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm actually really surprised by the question posed by the member from Brampton. Not only was the plan for the Scarborough subway to always end up at the Scarborough Town Centre, it was actually the member's friends on Toronto city council that wanted only a one-stop subway line to Scarborough. This government said, "No, we're going to deliver three stops instead of one stop."

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Seventeen.

Mr. Roman Baber: No, no, the member is talking about a streetcar. This government is not going to be building streetcars; we're going to be building subways.

Again, the member's friends on city council wanted a one-stop subway. This government is delivering three stops.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I wanted to compliment the member for York Centre on his presentation.

I want him to speak a little bit more about why it has taken so long to make real progress on getting public transit built in the greater Toronto area.

Mr. Roman Baber: Thank you to the member from Whitby for that question.

Every year, we lose billions of dollars due to gridlock. But it's not just a loss of productivity that is costing Ontarians and folks in the GTA; it's a matter of lifestyle. People don't want to be stuck in their cars for two and a half hours a day. Our average commute is between 45 minutes and 50 minutes a day. This is unsustainable.

I think we got into this business to make life not just more affordable for folks, but to make life better for folks, and better transit and faster commutes are going to make life infinitely better. I can't wait for that.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: The member from York Centre, in his remarks, said that we've lost the stomach for building serious transit in the province of Ontario. I would suggest to him that what the constituents of Toronto Centre—the people in my riding—have really lost the stomach for is a government that keeps ripping up existing transit plans and redrawing them, seemingly on the backs of napkins or, as my friend and colleague from Oshawa called them earlier, mapkins. I really liked that one.

If we stuck with any one of the plans that we've had over the last 20 years and actually built them instead of ripping them up to put political interference and put a partisan stripe on our transit plan, we'd actually have transit systems that compared to London or compared to Paris.

My question to the member is: Will you call on your leadership, on your Premier, to get the partisan political meddling out of our transit system, and just let the city build transit the way that our community members want to see it done?

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm not sure who said it, but someone said that the best indication of future performance is the past. I just outlined what the city of Toronto has done in the last 25 years. It has done one subway extension, the city of Toronto Spadina-University subway extension: six stops, from Sheppard West, two years late, at a significantly higher cost. That's it. I ask the member from downtown Toronto to start getting serious. We have not seen any evidence that the city is capable of building any serious transit projects.

The province came in, we came up with a good plan by April, and we are on track to deliver the Ontario Line by 2027. This is going to be terrific and, not to mention, it will significantly benefit the residents of Toronto Centre, as the line is going to be considerably longer. The city's line was going, I believe, until Bloor Street; the Ontario Line is going to go to Eglinton. The city's line was going to go to Osgoode; the Ontario Line is going to go to Ontario Place.

I am delighted with the Ontario Line, and I know that with the province of Ontario in charge of planning and in charge of construction, we are finally going to build new subways.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm going to go to the member from Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the member for York Centre for his passion for transit and for his attention to the priority of transit in the GTA.

I just want to give the member an opportunity to correct some of the odd assertions we've heard from the opposition benches today about how somehow we're not working with our municipal and federal partners, or not working with utilities—a very odd assertion in this context. I wonder if you could just fill us in, in this House,

on what we're doing to work with our municipal and federal partners, and what we're doing to work with utilities to get transit built in the city of Toronto—finally, these four priority lines that Toronto has been waiting a long time for.

Mr. Roman Baber: I thank the member from Durham for that question. This is a very important question, because compounded by the fact that the planning process and the environmental process typically take so long that the authority planning the project experiences a re-election or another election and political priorities change, it becomes even more difficult when we're working with a number of levels of government and they experience a political change. But, lo and behold, look at what transpired when it comes to GTA transit and this government's transit plan. Toronto city council overwhelmingly voted for our subway plan. In a vote of 22 to 3, they voted for our subway plan. The federal government came out and said that they're going to pay their fair share for the Ontario Line. This is wonderful news. It is unprecedented that, finally, all three levels of government are working together to deliver on the GTA's transit priorities.

1700

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to address another subject that the member from York Centre touched on in his debate, and that's the issue of housing and how that relates to transit planning in our city.

I would suggest that the member has accurately identified that we're in the midst of a housing crisis that is affecting all of our constituents. The rising cost of rent in Toronto Centre is absolutely outrageous and is pushing many of our community members out of the city, in fact. But I would ask the member across, then, why is your government slashing rent control? Why are you not investing in the \$2-billion backlog in community housing? Why is there a 15-year wait-list for community housing in the city? If you care about your constituents and you care about addressing the housing crisis in Toronto, why are you not making those investments where they're needed most, and why are you slashing rent control?

Mr. Roman Baber: On a normal day, I would challenge the member's question as being irrelevant. But I actually welcome that question, because you can't get away from the principle that if you build more, you will be able to help the price. That's what this bill is about, in part: transit-oriented communities. This will encourage the construction of additional housing.

By the way, speaking of that, I don't know how much purpose-built rental was built in the city of Toronto for the last 40 years. I think the answer is close to none.

I hear from stakeholders every day that we're finally going to have—we have plans for real purpose-built rental housing in the works. I forget the exact number of units. It's in the many, many thousands. For the first time, we're seeing a revival of purpose-built rentals in the city of Toronto.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see you on the chair—so much enthusiasm.

I rise today to speak about transit. As a member representing a riding in Scarborough, it truly is an honour for me to represent the good people of Scarborough, who are having a really difficult time when it comes to transit.

I've got to say, I hear a lot of members from the government side use Scarborough as a talking point sometimes, a pawn to address whatever issue they want to talk about when it comes to transit. We just had the member from York Centre do the same when it came to his speech as well.

It's really interesting, because this bill that we're looking at doesn't actually expedite anything, if you really look at the details. And the devil is in the details; that's what the saying is, right?

First, I want to point out that this bill—and it's a very concise, small bill, unlike the other bills we have seen by this government. There were a lot of omnibus bills brought forward by the government, where we had things from something-heritage month to health care all pushed into one. But this one I can actually deal with, because we're looking at, what, just 20 pages or so, focusing on transit.

For this one, if I understand correctly, the goal is to align the rules for transit construction with P3 procurement—that's essentially what this is—and to look at environmental assessments and make them easier, I would say, for public-private partnerships.

It really breaks my heart to see the government take that kind of approach. Is this really the bar that we're setting when it comes to doing any work, in terms of making it easier for public-private partnerships or any other entity? Shouldn't the goal for the government be to focus on what the people really need, the actual constituents of this province? I shouldn't even have that expectation because we have seen, whether it's education, whether it's autism, whether it's health care, it has always been about the friends of this government. It has always been the rich 1% of friends and donors of this government's members who are really benefiting from the way that bills are passed in this House.

I also want to point out, being a deputy whip now, that I get to learn a little bit more in terms of what goes on in terms of bills passing and all that. I think we're all a little bit shocked, coming back just last week. It's important to point out that the standing order changes that have been made now allow for bills like this one to be passed within a week, where you can bring them back and forth, without the ability for local people to understand what's going on.

I ask all the members opposite, from the government side, to actually answer whether they have spoken with their local constituents, and whether their local constituents know that that's what the standing order changes really mean.

Local people, when they look at a bill, for example—first of all, the nuances—they will take some time to understand. They will email their local member, their MPP. They have questions. Sometimes maybe they have some concerns, and they want to meet. All of that is

eliminated by the way the timeline is set now. Essentially, what it does now is, the timeline for passing bills has been expedited and kind of compressed into a limited amount of time. I just want to point that out, because it really is something that infringes upon democracy.

But anyway, I digress. I'm going to go back to Bill 171, which is the Building Transit Faster Act.

It's really funny, because from my time in city hall to here, I've heard every politician, every government, talk about building transit faster. Yet, being in Scarborough, I still see someone who is 85 years old, with her little trolley, sitting at a bus stop, waiting for her bus to come, and then one comes by that says, "Not in service." It's cold; it's freezing; there's snow. Then another one will come, the next, in another 30 minutes or so. That's the reality of a lot of people living in Scarborough and, I would say, province-wide. That's the real concern that we face.

This bill will give a lot of power—and pretty much, that's what the core of this bill is. It's allowing for this government to have P3 partnerships in terms of making sure those rules work along together, but also giving the minister and Metrolinx a lot of power.

Now, as someone who has a Metrolinx yard in her riding right now, I can tell you what local people are facing, dealing with some of the Metrolinx construction in their backyard,—literally in their backyard. I'm talking about them looking out the window, and that's where things are being stored. Their lives are not the same. They don't have a backyard anymore. They don't go out to enjoy the air anymore. Kids don't go out without rushing to school or getting in their car. You know how you clean the snow on top of your car? People have to clean the top of their car because of the pollution, because of the soil, that's on top of their cars. That's what we're dealing with.

I just have so many thoughts, so I'm going to try to really organize my thoughts and get it all in here.

This bill gives the government, the minister and Metrolinx a lot of power, but it doesn't really set out the accountability measures for these powers: What does that really mean, and who is accountable for that?

We've also seen that with the previous health care bill, where the Minister of Health was given a lot of power, and we didn't really have any accountability in terms of how much information, how much data, was going to be shared.

The focus was to make sure that they settle any disputes that are happening in the delivery of transit infrastructure.

What makes me worried about this is that just recently, in 2017, Metrolinx paid an Eglinton Crosstown P3 contractor an extra \$237 million—\$237 million—because the project that was scheduled was not happening and was delayed.

This is the type of thing that we're dealing with. I mean, just recently, we found out that we'll be waiting another, what, two years for Eglinton?

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It's really mind-boggling in the sense that there is no limit, no accountability measures for what this government wants to do. It is shocking, Speaker, because they

already have so much power to do what they're doing. They already have so much power. Right now, we're seeing it in terms of the way the education file has been carried out, in terms of the way the families and the advocates for autism have dealt with this government.

I really want to focus on the issue of trust. When you have a lot of power, people need to trust you. When we're elected to these seats here—I don't have a right to speak unless my people in Scarborough Southwest have given me that right. That goes for everybody, including the Premier. That power we're given is temporary, and we're only given that power because people have trusted us. They have trusted us to do something very important, which is to make sure that we represent them and that we serve them. We serve the people of our constituency.

But when I look at the work that this government has done so far, and the examples they have set, can we really trust them? My colleague so beautifully talks about, every single morning, just hearing about the licence plates—I can't even say it with a straight face. The licence plates: If we can't trust this government to do licence plates right, how can we trust them to do actual construction of transit right? I mean, it's—

Mr. Kevin Yarde: We have to close our eyes.

Ms. Doly Begum: That's it; just close our eyes. Yes, that's what it is. That's pretty much what will happen.

Are we going to come back and actually rethink what the colour or what the shape of this assessment will look like? Because clearly they haven't really thought about what the actual plan is. That's pretty much what it is with every single bill, every single agenda item they have brought forward with this government that we have seen.

One of the first things this government did was cancel the tree planting. So when I look at this bill, I get really worried, because environmental assessment—and we actually talked about this. The member from Guelph pointed out that the environmental assessment is supposed to make sure that we look at the risks, we look at the viability, we consult with our constituency, we consult with advocates, we consult with experts, and make sure that we are doing the work properly, make sure that we're not doing something—we're not doing undue strains or injustice to the community, but also we're making sure that we're actually helping our environment. I have no faith whatsoever in this government doing something for the environment.

Just starting from the first day with the throne speech and the amount of times you mentioned the environment, I'm quite clear as to what this government really will do for the environment. And that example of cancelling the tree planting program—I mean, what does the Premier or this government have against tree planting? Who cancels tree planting? I'm just shocked.

When you do something like that, then how can I trust that this government wouldn't use this tremendous amount of power that they have to just bulldoze through the lands of different communities and not really focus on anything in terms of the environment, in terms of community needs? There are no standards or limits for the construction disruption that will happen in a community.

They actually set aside some sort of accountability measures for how they will—

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Checks and balances.

Ms. Doly Begum: Yes, there are no checks and balances, and it's really something that we should worry about.

I mentioned the Metrolinx yard, the current destruction that it has had in terms of pollution. There was a 94-year-old woman who recently passed away. For the last few months, she stopped going out of her house because she just could not breathe because of the air quality in that area. If anyone wants to check it out, I'm welcoming anybody to come and just do a tour with me of the St. Clair yard. That's just one example. Let me tell you about the kid whose basketball net was basically pulled and dragged by the trucks.

I understand those are very small examples, but that's someone's livelihood, that's someone's life on a regular basis, people going to work, people going to school. For that senior woman, going out for a walk is probably the only thing that she could do. That's the reality that we're facing with just the storage space that's there right now in my riding.

Now, can I really trust the minister and Metrolinx to have so much power without any accountability to take on this entire task?

Interjection: No. Come on.

Ms. Doly Begum: Yes. I rest my case.

It's really mindboggling. I have the member from—I'm not even sure—trying to heckle me here. The responsibility that you have—and I'm going to quote a very famous line, which is, "With great power comes great responsibility."

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, my God. Any responsibility.

Ms. Doly Begum: Yes, any responsibility. If there's one thing we know, it's that this government doesn't really like taking responsibility, and that we noticed just a few days ago, when the Minister of Government and Consumer Services blamed it on 3M, or when the education minister decides that he's not going to take responsibility for what he's doing with our education system. It really is something that's so important, to make sure that whenever you're given a tremendous amount of power, you have to have a level of responsibility to make sure that you're not abusing that power.

Without proper planning, and when you're rushing, it will cause problems. What I'm really worried about is not only will it cause problems, but it will actually cause more delays, which we're already facing with transit. That's inevitable when you have planning like the type of planning that we see from this government.

If we're going to talk about how some of the government members have tried to portray this bill as, "We're going to make it more efficient; we're trying to really change the way transit is seen; we're trying to modernize; we're trying to really fix this whole delay problem"—are you really? Because let me ask you, what are you really doing for young people through your transit plans? What

are you doing for seniors through your transit plans? If University of Toronto students in Scarborough do not have access to proper transit, then what are you really doing for Scarborough? You're not doing much. If it takes a student from Malvern hours just to get from one bus to another bus to get to Scarborough Centre, and from there he has to take another bus to come to his campus, the whole connection there makes me so frustrated, because some people don't even have a clue what people face on a daily basis in terms of the multiple buses and subways and LRTs that they have to take.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: In the poorest neighbourhoods, too.

Ms. Doly Begum: And these are some of the poorest neighbourhoods.

I have had so many conversations with a lot of seniors as well. When we talk about seniors, we have to make sure that we talk about how we're making things accessible. Are we making sure that they're able to have access to transit?

And let's talk about affordability, because I'm running out of time. If we're talking about affordability, I go back to the students who have been advocating—and as someone who was involved in student movements in my past life, we have been fighting for that for many, many, many years now. Speaker, I've got to tell you, it's something that's actually an investment for our province. Allowing accessible and affordable transit is an investment. But can I really trust this government to do anything for younger people, for seniors?

You talk about trust and you talk about giving yourself so much power. What have you done to actually show that we can trust you? I mean, just look at what happened to the 407: the fact that you sold off something, the fact that this—or your friends, the Conservative Party—decided to sell off something that was owned by the people of this province. The people of this province built that, and you decided to sell it off.

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And you know what's really, really sad? Right now you're doing similar things with our health care system, with our transit system. And I'm really scared when it comes to our education system as well, because with the chaos that this government has created, we're leading towards a path where—you know what? I'm going to say it: This government wants to privatize that as well. And it really, really is concerning, because when you have so much power and you do things like that, you're going to come back—and maybe it won't be you, but your children, your grandchildren will be the ones who are suffering. We don't really have to look far. We can just see the way we're suffering with the 407. Right now we would have been enjoying—the reason the 401 is so, so—

Interjection: It could have paid for the subway.

Ms. Doly Begum: Yes, you could have paid for the subway. Don't mind me; I'm not saying the Liberals were any better, because they sold off Hydro One and were no better than you all.

So can I really trust this government with so much power that this bill will give you? I'm sorry, Speaker,

because I cannot. And that goes for every single legislation that this government has put forward. They have given themselves a tremendous amount of power and they have taken zero responsibility.

Interjection: Power corrupts.

Ms. Doly Begum: And power corrupts. What they have done shows that they have no interest in actually helping the people of this province in whatsoever way. What they're really doing is helping their good friends and donors, but really, the people of this province are suffering, and they're paying for it too. Their tax dollars are paying for all of us in this House. Their tax dollars will be paying for the transit plans that will get cancelled and then rebuilt, and the same thing goes for when the Conservatives cemented over an NDP plan—literally cemented.

So I ask you again: Think again, for any legislation, for anything that you do in this House, because you have so much power. And with great power comes great responsibility. Thank you, Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: There have been many speakers in the time that we've been starting here, and more recently the speaker from York Centre. In his remarks, and others' remarks, we spoke about the plan to get four priority subway projects built, four priority projects built. We also have a plan to accelerate the delivery of these projects. Can the member from Scarborough Southwest speak about her party's plans to effect the priority projects that are so important to her constituents?

Ms. Doly Begum: It's always a great opportunity for me to talk about the plans that we have. And let me tell you, we would not be power-hungry to give ourselves more power, and make sure that we would be listening to the people of this province. We would be consulting. We would be doing risk assessments, and we would be making sure that we don't hurt this environment and the people of this province.

When I would look at transit, my first priority is to make sure that if I'm looking at Scarborough, I actually talk to the groups in Scarborough that have been advocating for years and years in Scarborough. And also, the three subway stations that we talk about do not even connect Scarborough within itself. The fact that in my riding we have Warden station, Kennedy station and Victoria Park station, and still people have to take multiple buses—and it doesn't really solve the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Oakville North—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Sorry, Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Speaker. I wasn't sure if you couldn't see me because of my colour scheme and licence plate attire.

My question is to the member for Scarborough Southwest. I appreciate listening to her passion on behalf of her community, which understands very well what it is like to live in a construction zone. This government has said that the goal of this bill is to align the rules for transit construction with P3 procurement, and it will allow P3 contractors

to use innovation. By innovation, they seem to mean that contractors can decide to do whatever they need to deliver the product, but without being specific or exactly clear on what work will be done. A bad P3 contract could require the government or Metrolinx to use these powers if that P3 contractor decided to create a construction sacrifice zone rather than working with the community. Why do you see that as a problem, or do you see that as a problem?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for her great question.

Let me just give you an example of what is happening right now. The construction that is happening in the St. Clair yard that I was speaking about before—sometimes the hours are almost a 24-hour cycle, which means that people can't sleep at night. People literally cannot sleep at night because the construction will start—it's basically from, say, Monday to Saturday, and that's how it goes. That's how difficult it is for some people who have lives—and this is just in their backyard.

In the name of innovation, we should really be careful. I don't even know why I'm asking this government to be careful or have exceptions or have any expectations—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Response.

Ms. Doly Begum: Yes. It should be given. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I know the member from Scarborough Southwest will agree that Scarborough residents, for many, many years, have really been left out of any effective transportation and transit options in Toronto. So I would hope that you would agree that we have a plan here that will work and that we have three levels of government that have come together to see it through.

I'd like to ask the member: How would you justify to your constituents why you are going to be against a bill that would, in fact, deliver the transit relief that your constituents in Scarborough Southwest and across Scarborough have been waiting for, for these many years? How would you justify that?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to the member for the question, because it really lays out why I'm having a really difficult time with this bill. My constituents are the ones who are looking at this bill and saying, "But it doesn't really help me." When it doesn't help them, why would they support something like this? The problem is, when you have those three-stop subways and they can't get to their campus, their educational institution, does it really help them? When it doesn't help them get from home to work, are we doing something that's going to help their cause?

And they will be paying for it. We know this. It's tax dollars that will be paying for it, but when it doesn't help them personally or their families—because they're not getting the service they need, because the three stops won't help them.

Like I told you, within my riding of Scarborough Southwest, I have three subway stations. Scarborough has hundreds of thousands of people, so it won't really help those people, with three subway stations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always important to participate in the conversation on Bill 171, but what's surprising to me on the transportation file—I'm surprised there are absolutely no Liberals here this afternoon to participate in it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to remind the members that you cannot refer to someone's attendance or lack of in the House.

Back to the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I just thought if you named the name, it was saying—I was naming the whole party. So I apologize.

I want to say real quick that on the P3, Metrolinx paid \$237 million. Now think about that: \$237 million. Then it says here—and this one here, all you Conservatives have got to read this; this is interesting—a foreign company will make a premium if it finishes on time. Not only are we going to pay a foreign company to build construction, we're actually going to give them a bonus for finishing on time. Do you think that's right?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to the member for this great question, because it's not right.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The Liberals—supported by the NDP, by the way—had from 2011 to 2014 to build better transit in Toronto, and then the Liberals had another four years to do so, from 2014 to 2018. Our government is cleaning up a mess that they created.

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My question to the member is simply: Why didn't it happen over the eight years that you had supported the government of the day?

Ms. Doly Begum: It's really unfortunate, because I cannot say the words "misinformation," "lie" and "faulty"—all those things in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): You cannot even indirectly imply what it is that you're saying. You can't imply in the House. I'm going to ask you to withdraw.

Ms. Doly Begum: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): You may continue.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, that is just not the case, that the NDP propped up the Liberals.

You know what? When there are good—

Interjections.

Ms. Doly Begum: If the members heckle me, then I can't really answer the question.

What's important is that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order.

Ms. Doly Begum: I think it's really a little bit humorous that there are questions that I also asked in terms of why the 407 was sold off. If anybody in this House on this side can tell me: Why was the 407 sold off?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Roman Baber: I know that the member from Scarborough is passionate about delivering the best result for her community. I don't doubt her intent. So I ask her, in simple terms, why do you not support the Scarborough people when they clearly repeat that they want a subway?

For a decade now, the Scarborough subway has not been going anywhere. So my question to you is as follows: Do you oppose the construction of the Scarborough subway, and do you believe that Scarborough residents oppose the construction of a Scarborough subway? And if that's not the case, then why would you not support this government when it's trying to build the Scarborough subway?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for this question.

Do you know what I believe? I believe that we should provide transit for Scarborough. That's what I believe in. And I believe that the constituents in Scarborough deserve to have efficient, affordable transit, which they have not gotten for the last 30 to 40 years.

And the promises keep on going. Pardon me that I don't have any trust or any faith in this government to actually deliver that—because so far, with everything else that this government has done, I cannot have that trust that you will actually provide transit in Scarborough.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and to discuss this important piece of legislation, Bill 171. I must say, I feel completely inadequate to the task. I was listening to the member from York Centre over there talking about this. He's forgotten more about subways than I will ever know.

It was fascinating also listening to the member from Scarborough Southwest talking about this legislation. It made me think. She talked about the tax burden that the taxpayers will face and how awful it is that we're doing P3s. And then she brought up the example of the 50 Million Tree Program.

I would just like to remind her for a second, if I could: I did a quick little bit of research, which is why I had my phone on my desk. This is from CBC, posted June 5: that we cut the 50 Million Tree Program, which was planting less than two million trees per year at a cost to the taxpayer of over \$2.50 per tree. I find that interesting, because I spent my university summers in northern Ontario. Thank you to Wilderness Reforestation in Wawa for teaching me how to work. I planted thousands of trees in northern Ontario. Do you know how much they cost the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, Madam Speaker? Zero. Not a dime. This program of planting trees through a P3 partnership of reforestation with our forestry companies plants almost 70 million trees a year at no cost to the taxpayer. So our government cancelling a wasteful program that planted less than a fraction of those trees, at a cost to the taxpayer of \$2.50 a tree, seems an excellent example of why we need to move forward with more P3 partnerships in construction.

I thought that was a great way to segue into what we hope to do with this legislation, Bill 171.

I want to start off, then, by saying that Ontario is growing. Our population is growing, our economy is growing, and as a result, our infrastructure needs to be growing.

I know I won't be adding much to all the debate that has been made already. There are people with much more knowledge base about subways in this House than I have. But it is as true in Niagara Falls as it is in Brantford–Brant, as it is in the GTHA, in the great city of Toronto, that we need to get going on moving people. Our government understands this. That's why it has been making the investments needed in our critical infrastructure, whether that be in communications infrastructure, roads, highways and much, much more.

We also understand that making investments in transit infrastructure is one of the most important things that we can do, given the demands of a growing population. That's exactly what our government has set out to do, and we're going to do it as efficiently, as cost-effectively and as time-sensitively as we possibly can. Do you know why, Madam Speaker? The taxpayers of the province of Ontario deserve absolutely nothing less, and that's why our great minister has introduced Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act.

This act includes a number of measures which will assist us in getting much-needed transit built more quickly. These measures include a requirement to notify Metrolinx of nearby construction, which may impose delays on transit projects; improvements in coordination for utility relocation; proposals to help assemble project lands; and the streamlining of the hearings process for the four priority transit projects.

What we're doing is tearing down the silos that keep these projects from moving forward, and we're going to get this done for the people of Ontario—that is, to get high-quality transit built without the unnecessary delays, and in a cost-effective way that respects taxpayer dollars.

We understand that building a modern, integrated and robust regional transportation system is critical to ensuring the long-term prosperity of our province. In fact, it's necessary. It's needed, to get people where they are going in an affordable and in a sustainable way. That is just as critical in Brantford–Brant as it is right here.

I've talked to many people who do the exact same commute that I do every day, and they are as reliant on a fast, integrated transportation network as anyone who lives in the GTHA, because they come here every day.

We understood that, when we introduced our comprehensive vision for transportation last spring. That vision includes a landmark \$28.5-billion investment for subway system expansion. It includes four separate transit priority projects. These are the Ontario Line, with 15 stations to be delivered by 2027; the Scarborough extension, with three stations to be delivered by 2029-30; the Yonge North extension, by 2029-30; and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, by 2030-31.

This expansion is not just vital to the people who live in the GTHA. It is vital for the entire province—especially in the GTHA, but for the entire province—as we continue to grow.

Our projections say that this city will grow by an average of over 100,000 people per year. That's a million people who will be moving into this great city over the next 10 years. Think of the pressure that this will put, not just on our plans to build more, but on the existing infrastructure that we already have. To put it plainly, without a fast and effective expansion of our transit capacity, the GTA would experience paralyzing traffic congestion, worsening air quality and diminished economic vitality.

To begin with, we all know congestion is one of the foremost problems facing the people in the GTA today. I would bet that each and every person in this House has experienced the appalling traffic congestion on the way into Toronto and its suburbs. I hear this over and over again from my colleagues, from my friends, from my family and from my constituents that have to commute here or commute through the GTA.

Congestion like this has real negative effects on many different areas of life. Number one, it certainly harms our economy by making it difficult to have employees and goods and services travelling back and forth across the area. And we've heard that already earlier this afternoon. Traffic congestion is responsible for over \$11 billion in annual productivity losses, and adds up to \$400 million to the cost of goods and services in the GTA. This puts a significant strain on the regional and provincial economies.

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Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, all the different ways, all the different needs that we could spend that \$11 billion of lost productivity on? We talk about autism. We had a presentation today. I got to sit on the tile floor outside of the Lieutenant Governor's quarters with a group of students who had FASD and just talk to them about what's going on in their lives. I look at our falling-down infrastructure in health care and the demands placed upon our long-term-care facilities—I see the Minister of Long-Term Care sitting there—and what our needs are. It is so big, what we could spend that on.

It could go toward families, just paying for the necessities of daily life, like groceries. It could spur local business investment, or go toward starting a new business, or it could help Ontarians save for retirement. Instead, that money is sitting in traffic congestion on the highways that surround our city.

Bumper-to-bumper traffic doesn't only have an economic cost, as staggering as that may be. It also—and we've heard that again this afternoon, too—has a staggering environmental cost. It's responsible for a large portion of the greenhouse gas emissions that our city sees. It also reduces the air quality of our cities. This results in environmental degradation and health risks, including exposure to harmful airborne toxins.

In addition to the health risks posed by these toxins in the air, traffic congestion also results in people spending more time sitting in their cars and less time being physically active. As a result, it's correlated with obesity and other chronic health conditions, which makes the

problems with our health system and hallway health care even worse.

Finally, excess traffic congestion has a very real human cost. Every hour that we spend stuck in congestion, stuck in commuting, is an hour that we cannot spend with friends and with family. This can have a very real impact on our province's mental health.

In summary, congestion poses one of the most pressing challenges in the GTA and the whole of Ontario. Without action, these issues will likely only increase as the GTA's population grows.

One of the best ways to resolve this is to get people out of their cars and onto transit. That's something that every single person in this House agrees on. But for that to happen, we need a good and reliable transit network, and we have a responsibility to the people of Ontario to build such a network.

Increasing transit capacity will get people out of their cars and onto transit, thereby reducing traffic congestion, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving regional economic development. In short, it will get Ontarians to where they're going quicker, cleaner and faster. That's why we are introducing this legislation to get the four priority transit lines built as quickly and efficiently as we can.

We've set ambitious timelines for the delivery of these projects. This bill, if passed, will give our government the tools necessary to ensure that for once, we hit these targets. The people of Ontario expect nothing less from us, and it is for these reasons that our government has introduced Bill 171. We want to deliver these important projects on time and on budget. If passed, this legislation will provide us with the tools to help deliver an integrated and world-class transit system within the project's ambitious timelines.

It is critical that we do this. Toronto, as I'm sure we all agree, is a world-class city. I know we have a world-class basketball team. We need to make the appropriate investments and efficiently deliver critical and much-needed transit infrastructure, and that is what we are doing with our four priority transit projects. Let me remind you, Madam Speaker, they are the Ontario Line, the Scarborough extension, the Yonge North extension and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension. We are creating the underlying communal infrastructure that will power the city of Toronto, the GTHA and our province into the future, and that's why this is important for the people of Brantford—Brant and, I would say, just as important for the people who live in this great city.

To begin with, this legislation will introduce a requirement in which the owners of adjacent land and infrastructure must obtain a permit to conduct any development that could interfere with transit construction activities. Currently, there is no such requirement, and that is a problem because it slows things down. It silos the activities. Without it, conflicts could occur between transit construction and adjacent development.

By streamlining these processes, it will make everything work better. We need to tear down these silos, and

that's what this bill is here to do. These conflicts could cause real safety concerns and significant delays to the completion of any of the subway projects. This could in turn affect our ability to meet our ambitious timeline for their completion and will further increase costs to the people of Ontario.

This new requirement would then permit the prior review of all development and construction in the project corridor. As such, we are ensuring that these transit projects will receive priority over adjacent construction. I'm sure you'll agree, Madam Speaker, that we need to do this. This will prevent unnecessary delays, improve safety and decrease the costs that we've seen in other projects. Given the importance of these priority transit projects, these are delays that we cannot afford.

Secondly, this legislation, if passed, will provide Metrolinx with the ability to require coordination with utility companies for utility relocation. We understand that utility relocation is complex, and it impacts the lives of nearby residents and businesses. It's also a significant factor in causing disruptive delays to transit projects. I don't have to tell the people of Ontario that when you're doing a construction project, if hydro doesn't show up or gas doesn't show up or if the water company doesn't show up, it delays your projects by a lot, because you can't get inspections and you can't move forward. In fact, coordination between Metrolinx and utility companies has historically been a significant challenge. This again causes delays, disruptions and cost overruns.

The proposals contained in this bill will significantly help by requiring strong coordination between Metrolinx and utility companies, not so that they would fight with each other, but so that we would break down those silos and that they would work together on this. It would also require the coordination of utility relocation within certain time frames, so that they can't wait too long, and therefore prevent unnecessary delays of these critical infrastructure projects. To summarize, this bill will give Metrolinx the ability to require that utility companies relocate their infrastructure within a given time frame to get transit built on time and on budget.

This coordination between Metrolinx and the utility companies is critically important to delivering good transit to the people of the GTA in a timely fashion, but in order for it to work, the coordination must be high-quality. That's why this bill also sets out a consistent, structured and predictable process within which this coordination will take place. The process will be similar to that which is used for the coordination involved in highway projects. We believe that it will work on transit projects also.

Finally, this legislation will ensure that consumers do not suffer from increased costs from utility companies if they don't meet their deadlines. It will do this through amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act. If a provincially regulated utility misses a deadline to relocate their utilities and is penalized for that, then we, the government of Ontario, will ensure that rates for end consumers do not go up as a result. Our goal is to get transit built faster and not to put increased costs on the families and small businesses of our great province.

Before I go on, I just want to reiterate the significance of the transit projects we're undertaking and the importance of getting them done right and done on time. Critical infrastructure, such as the four priority subway projects, are the backbone of our modern society. Getting these transit lines built will encourage positive growth in the GTA and ease the increasing burden that is being placed on our existing infrastructure. The Building Transit Faster Act will improve our province's economic and social capacity, and most importantly, it will make the lives of everyday, ordinary Ontarians easier, more comfortable and more affordable.

With that being said, this bill also contains a number of other measures which will assist our province as we work with the various municipalities, including Toronto, to get infrastructure built. We will work closely with our municipal partners to quicken the time it takes for municipal permits to be issued. We've seen that. I mean, Toronto city council had huge, overwhelming support for what we're going to do. But if no consensus can be reached, this bill contains further proposals which would allow these projects to move ahead anyway because of their critical importance to the people of Ontario.

One of these proposals concerns rights-of-way access and municipal services. This bill, if passed, would give Metrolinx the ability to use municipal assets such as roadways and municipal services in those situations in which an agreement cannot be reached. Again, this is all with the goal of getting important transit projects done without excess delay and without unnecessary cost.

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Currently, one of the most significant and common causes for delay in projects similar to the four priority transit projects is assembling the required land. This bill will help to ensure that this is no longer the case. We know that land assembly is one of the most important and time-consuming components in building large-scale transit infrastructure projects. We know that in order for those to be done on time, our partners must have access to the land they need in a timely fashion. However, while we know that getting transit built on time is a must, our government also understands that landowners must be treated fairly in the process and property rights must always be respected. Let me reiterate this: We will be streamlining our approach to project land assembly but will at all times continue to respect the property rights of landowners.

This bill aims to balance the interests of residents and local businesses and the interest of getting transit built quickly, on time and on budget. Currently, onerous and time-consuming hearings of necessity must be done in order to assemble the land needed for all these sorts of projects. The hearings can be a source of delay in and of themselves.

Then lastly, Madam Speaker, because I see that, as usual, I've talked too much and taken too much time and the clock is running down, I want to say that we are not doing away with or watering down in any way the important environmental protections that we hold so dearly in the province of Ontario. What we are doing in this bill is

streamlining, getting rid of the silos and the process of hearings and consultations so that duplicative and onerous processes are removed.

This will have a number of effects. It will, firstly, as the bill is named, help to get transit built more quickly. The consultation process will continue to respect the vital issues and reasons for which it exists in the first place, and we will continue to maintain strong environmental considerations for every step of the process. These will not be watered down in the least. Also, if I may add, because in my riding I am pleased to have the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the people who used to live and meet right in this place right here, Madam Speaker—I pledge and our government pledges to make sure that we don't tromp on any of those rights whatsoever.

Thirty-six seconds left—hHow can I finish? I've got pages left to go. I will just say that, at the end of the day, we all agree in this House on what the GTA needs. We all need to work together to make that happen. We cannot continue to have these projects take forever and then have huge cost overruns. Bill 171 will go a long way in making sure that this can happen for the entire province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: It's getting harder and harder to trust this government to do what it says. We have recently seen the licence plate fiasco. How do we know this bill will actually build transit faster, as it says it will? It seems as though the government is just asking us to trust them and that future projects will be better. If that is truly the case, I think that is wonderful.

But part of being in government is not only to think into the future, but to help folks who are suffering right now. I know the transportation minister has heard of countless store closures and that business nearby are boarded up due to long-overdue construction. How will this bill help those people now?

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate very much the question from the member from York South–Weston, and I feel that the people are very frustrated by how things have gone in the past. All I can say to you, and to the people who are listening, is that we pledge to make sure that this happens the way it's supposed to. My father-in-law used to say, before he was struck down with Lou Gehrig's disease, how do you eat an elephant? And his response was always, one bite at a time. We have this elephant in the room in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Will Bouma: Make fun of me if you will and of my father-in-law, dearly departed; that's great. I don't mind that whatsoever. But the fact of the matter is that we will get this done.

I would love to have your support. I would appreciate your support. I would appreciate your suggestions on how we can do this better instead of just criticism.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We know that Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act, aims to streamline land assembly for the building of transit in the GTA. Madam Speaker, will the wonderful member from Brantford–

Brant elaborate on what steps are being taken to make land assembly by our government both fair to the community and efficient for taxpayers who need better transit?

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the question from my friend from Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

The real trick there is to break down the silos that exist between Metrolinx and the municipalities, which is what we're doing. And yet, as I mentioned in my speech, we are putting provisions in there also so that, if necessary, if we cannot come to those agreements, Metrolinx will have the ability to use the municipal assets that are there in order to get stuff done. Because it's such a priority to the people, not only of Toronto, but all of Ontario, to make this happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Brantford–Brant. I just wanted to clarify that earlier we were laughing about eating the elephant. I'm just saying that we don't actually eat elephants, but we get the parable.

Two things stood out for me on this, and I have a question about them. The minister's powers may be delegated to Metrolinx or another public body, and then Metrolinx may delegate some of their powers in respect of a utility company to a construction contractor. I have a concern about that, because I don't remember anyone electing Metrolinx for anything.

Also, in 2018, the Eglinton Crosstown P3 project fell behind schedule and Metrolinx proposed to shut down the Bathurst-Eglinton intersection for seven months. They backed off after a huge public outcry. Bill 171 would give Metrolinx and the government more power to dismiss such concerns. Is there any concern from the government about giving all this power to Metrolinx? It just seems like an odd thing for a government to do—to hand over all sorts of power to a large contractor.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the member from Sudbury for that question—and I completely agree. That's why this will be done through the oversight of moving forward with this project, also. While that wasn't part of my speech, we have to move forward, break down the silos between these things and have everyone working together to make this go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I would ask the member for Brantford–Brant if he has any suggestions for how our government can work better with communities to build transit hubs, so that we don't see what the Liberals built, which are stand-alone subway stops with nothing built on top of them, and if he looks forward to seeing that being built by our government.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to thank the member for her question. I very much appreciate it, because she's absolutely right. What we've seen is stations out in the middle of nowhere, where people have to commute to get there, and what we really need to focus on is to build stations where the people are.

Even in my community of Brantford–Brant, I've been approached by a number of people who would love to be able to see a GO station some day in Brantford and Brant, and to be able to work with the developers to build all of

that infrastructure and the housing right there, so that we could actually build a walkable community to the transit infrastructure.

I think that's one of the key pieces of this legislation: to be able to open up those opportunities where you can see people coming together and doing things that make our communities walkable to transit hubs.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We don't really have enough time now for another question.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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